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# REGISTERS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE IN MUSEUMS FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ACT ON MUSEUMS IN 1996

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**Abstract:** The Act on Museums of 1996 regulated peculiar challenges faced by museums. At the same time it separated museum preservation of archaeological heritage from the system of the preservation of monuments. From that moment onwards those museums whose collections were movable archaeological heritage were obliged in their museum procedures to comply with the regulations of two acts: the afore-mentioned Act on Museum and the Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 2003, together with its implementing regulations.

The ordinance of the Minister of Culture and Art on the standard for registering heritage items in museums introduced quite a revolutionary change in the registering of archaeological heritage in those institutions as for object inventorying. The registering was to be from then on applied only to single tangible heritage items, and not to archaeological sites together with all the collections

like in previous years. The change implied quite a lot of organizational repercussions, including difficulties in defining the collection's countability and its financial worth, or the unequivocal item's identification. The challenges caused are, among others, problems with the decisions how to qualify different historic groups of scientific sources to be entered into museum documents. This is connected with the necessity to differentiate and define what archaeological mass finds versus museum objects are in museum registers. New principles of museum object identification were introduced, and their implementation in the documentation practice forced significant changes in the attitude to the traditionally perceived methodology of creating information on archaeological monuments. Furthermore, the value assessment of archaeological monuments is questionable. It is the lack of standards for assessing the value of this group of monuments that is related to this issue.

**Keywords:** specificity of archaeology, legal amendments, register standard, museum objects, mass finds, value of archaeological monuments.

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Upon the adoption of the Act on Museums in 1996,<sup>1</sup> peculiar problems, particularly of state museums, were normalized, and to a lesser degree of institutions of a museum character which are not cultural institutions,

but amass collections. At the same time, the Act separated museum preservation of archaeological heritage from the system of the preservation of monuments of history. From that moment onwards those museums whose collections

were movable archeological heritage were obliged in their museum procedures to comply with the regulations of two acts: the afore-mentioned Act on Museums and the Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 2003,<sup>2</sup> together with its implementing regulations.

Although neither of the Acts deals with the methodology of the way of discovering the remains of old cultures within historical space, these new ways of registering archaeological collections essentially impacted the processes of ordering knowledge with respect to museum objects isolated from them and the remaining heritage objects, which with the due progress of academic elaboration are separated from an enormous number of artefacts collected in museums' storage spaces. The alteration of the legal status from a monument to a museum object within archaeological collection is thus the result of research and conservation processes spaced in time, requiring appropriate staff, financial resources, organizational and storage conditions. In this collection there also exists mass material boasting the status of amorphous and collective movable monuments hardly countable and impossible to unequivocally identify. After the introduction of the legal amendments what we usually only speak of is a museum object: single identifiable archaeological monument.

The ordinance of the Minister of Culture and Art of 1997, and the new one of 2004<sup>3</sup> introduced quite a **revolutionary change** in the registering of archaeological heritage in museums as for object inventorying. The registering was to be from then on applied only to single tangible heritage items, and not to research sites together with all the collections, namely so-called archaeological sites.

Legal conditionings have the major impact on shaping the registering model and managing museum collections, since they constitute the framework in which the institution identifies its possessions and manages cultural heritage. They also constitute practical guidelines, collectively allowing to standardize approach to collections in various institutions. The reference points for the models can be found in remaining factors, such as tradition and history, as well as the methodology of a scientific elaboration of collections, and in the case of archaeological monuments, also the methodology of their acquiring. Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century rapid development of digital technology and a widespread application of IT have allowed transformation of the format of museum documents and of the management of the knowledge of the collections. Museological circles have realized the need to introduce a widely understood standardization into the managing of the institution and the collections, particularly the necessity to verify the so-far models of collection registering as a means to create the basis of knowledge potentially accessible through teleinformatic networks.<sup>4</sup> In modelling the collection register it was thus necessary to also take into account the conditionings of the functioning of the integrated database system allowing to effectively create and use the collected data. The task required proper structuralization of data and information, as well as the systemic opening to cooperation with other database systems, also the network ones which collect data related to archaeological and cultural heritage. Moreover, it called for standardization applied to the adopted terminology of extensive semantics, while at the

stage of creating the database, also to the discipline in the unequivocal character of the used terms, and consistency in calling objects and phenomena, as well as their essential and mutual relations. Institutions of culture, science, and of monument protection, can and should co-use the collected data, as well as share the knowledge they have created with different users.<sup>5</sup>

The presentation of the list of the main amendments related to the identification and management of collections after 1996 with reference to the earlier contexts, might allow to accurately look at the problem faced by museologists who wanted to properly carry out their mission of protection for museum objects and other movable archaeological monuments collected in museums. Particularly as the legislator in the justification to the bills standardizing the register neither foresaw the economic impact of the introduced changes, nor defined the transitory period for their implementation.

The legal grounds for the construction of the register of museum collections **before 1996** had been the Act of 15 February 1962 on the Protection of Cultural Goods and Museums,<sup>6</sup> in which the task of museums in the system of culture goods' protection was defined. In the Act as well as in the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and Art of 18 April 1964 on running inventory of museum objects<sup>7</sup> typological variety of the collections amassed by museums had been taken into account, and therefore detailed principles of creating templates for their registering, different for collections of art, archaeology, ethnography, nature, and technology, were provided.

Museums were obliged to **run museum objects' inventory** (Art. 1 of the 1964 Ordinance), composed of numerous documents, together allowing to identify museum objects and to manage them. The documents were enumerated in Art. 2.1, and were as follows:

- register of museum objects' accession,
- museum objects' storage file,
- inventory register of museum objects,
- academic catalogue of museum objects,
- deposit register of museum objects,
- register of museum objects' circulation.

For museums with archaeological collections it was also necessary to run a field accession register for accessions from currently conducted excavations (Art. 2.2). **Therefore, the set of documents creating the system of collections' identification and management was defined as inventorying.**

In the museums boasting archaeological collections, the inventory of museum objects was entered either sites or archaeological objects that were immovable archaeological monuments; it was only in relation to those that movable monuments were registered. This principle was phrased in Art. 6.2 of the 1964 Ordinance: *In an archaeological museum (department) the objects entered into the field accession register shall not be entered into inventory registers of museum objects; instead, the archaeological site for which the field accession register is run shall be entered.*

However, not all the archaeological monuments acquired by museums come from excavation research. It is through field research that museums acquired in the past and continue acquiring over 90 per cent of their collections,

while the remaining part coming from private collections could either be purchased or donated? to museums. In the latter case they qualify to be entered into inventory as individual entities, analogical to other museum collections of, e.g. art. Such a solution results in the lack of cohesion in the inventorying rules for monuments of one category.

The 1964 Ordinance was accompanied by the *Instruction How to Run Inventory of Museum Objects*,<sup>8</sup> in detail interpreting its respective provisions. In Art. 41 it was decided, among others, that as part of the number given to the site, numbers and categories of monument sets which can be identified in compliance with the criteria valid in archaeology have to be provided. The type of set can be seen in monuments or groups of monuments of a high academic or display value. As an example given were *10 axes from a treasure*. At the same time in the inventory books it was possible to give individual numbers to selected historical objects acquired during excavations, namely discovered at archaeological sites in the event when they are regarded to be objects of exceptional value.

In this way inventory items covered both respective objects and their groups (sites, sets, or monument categories), as well as objects belonging simultaneously to the inventory register of the site and selected at museum's discretion.

**An incoherent definition of the inventory object in museums for archaeological monuments in the regulations from the 1960s resulted in the fact that in the registering model of the collections immovable monuments (archaeological sites) were given an equal status to movable monuments (single specimens). Each of the above-described entities could be given an individual number in the inventory book.**

The 1996 change of the legislator's attitude to the inventory object, in relation to archaeological monuments, implied quite a number of organizational repercussions, including difficulties in defining the collection's countability and its financial worth, or the unequivocal item's identification in cases of the inevitable alteration to their preservation state. Changes in principles for identifying museum objects were introduced, and their implementation into documenting praxis forced essential changes in the attitude to the traditionally understood methodology of formulating information on archaeological monuments. In connection with the inconsistency of the legal regulations from the 1960s, a need arose, particularly in museums, to elaborate a new model of **registering** and managing museum objects, also taking into account the specificity of records in the existing museum inventories.

Thus the new notion of registering was introduced into museum terminology. The legislator included in it the whole system of the identification and of managing collections, in particular allowing for:

1. identification and designation of each object in the museum collection in the way allowing the quantitative- and -qualitative identification of the set;
2. documentation of the object's history from its creation to its acquisition by the museum (provenance);
3. documenting the history of the object in the museum, i.e. all the activities conducted by the museum while it is kept there (conservation, scientific research, making it available, e.g. participation in exhibitions, etc.).

Museums were obliged to run collection registers (Art. 1.2 of the 2004 Ordinance<sup>9</sup>), *which consisted in an appropriate entry in the following inventorying documentation:*

1. register card,
2. inventory of museum objects kept in the form of an inventory book,
3. book of deposits,
4. documentation of archaeological research and other field research allowing to identify each of the museum objects that are in the museum.

**This means that the concept of 'registering' following the adoption of the Act on Museums from 1996 supplanted the concept of 'inventorying'. earlier defined in the regulations from the 1960s.**

Inventorying in museums signifies currently the entry of objects that are museum's property (Art. 21, Act on Museums) into the document called Inventory Book of Museum Objects, and run in the format defined with the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture (Arts. 3.1–2 and 3.4–5; Art. 4.1, Art. 5.1–2, Ordinance of 2004).

Since 1996 the Inventory of Museum Objects has required the entry of particular movable archaeological cultural heritage objects. In Art.5.1 of the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture of 2004 this was phrased as follows: *each museum object shall enter the Inventory Book under a different number*. It is only in the cases when a set of objects constitutes an integral whole, e.g. a portfolio, a sketchbook, a set of furniture, that the inventory number can be slashed with respective numbers assigned to its elements (Art. 5.2, Ordinance of 2004). In any case identifying numbers must be attributed to respective movable monuments, and not to the archaeological site (immovable), as had been done in previous years. The thesis that the inventorying object had been changed is confirmed by a detailed analysis of the 2004 Ordinance. The set of information defined by the legislator that museum is obliged to include in inventorying documents unequivocally shows that it refers to respective archaeological monuments, not archaeological sites. The entries into the Inventory Book of Museum Objects (Art. 3.1) have to contain the information on the object's author or creator, provenance, value on the acquisition day, creation place and time, material, execution technique, dimensions, optionally weight of the inventoried object, and identification of its characteristic features. Arts. 7.1 and 7.4 enumerate additional features of museum objects that obligatorily need to be placed on register cards. These include: visual documentation, most frequently a photo or a drawing, value on the registering day, means of labelling in the museum, place where it is kept, and information on any relocation.

The regulations have left out all the issues of registering the spatial and historical contexts of the objects' discovery, namely all the determined connections of movable heritage objects, and thus museum objects too, with archaeological sites. What has remained is only the obligation to provide information on the place of the acquisition of the museum object. The Act on Museums with the 2007 amendments actually defines that inventorying can apply to immovable heritage objects, however this only in the case when due to the specificity of the collection a real estate that is museum's property enters the inventory, as is the case

of immovable heritage objects in open-air (ethnographic) museums. Archaeological sites (immovable heritage objects) from which collections of archaeological heritage objects (movable heritage objects) come, generally are not owned by museums. Thus a two-level information order had been simplified to one level only. The method of archaeological museum connotation: general-to-specific had been reversed with a legal-administrative procedure, this resulting in the necessity to alter the registering of collections and museum objects, in favour of exclusively registering museum objects.

The basic feature distinguishing movable archaeological heritage object from other museum collections can be seen in the fact that being products of human activity, and discovered in immovable heritage objects,<sup>10</sup> they are covered with the system of protection and guardianship still before they are taken over by museums. The principles of conducting the field research in the result of which monuments that are later transferred to museum collections are discovered, have been regulated in Polish legislation, and have to be reflected in the model of registering of archaeological collections in museums. This goes to say that the legal grounds for these models, apart from the Act of 21 November 1996 on Museums together with the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture of 30 August 2004 as for the Range, Form and Format of inventorying monuments in museums is to be found in the Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 23 July 2003 together with the statues, the latter including first of all the Ordinance on Conducting Archaeological Research and Documentations Standards (the latest amendment of 2 August 2018).<sup>11</sup>

One of the main museum procedures to acquire archaeological heritage objects, namely collection acquisition, is provided for in Art. 35 of the 2003 Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments. It provides regulations for handling movable archaeological discoveries made in the course of excavations conducted at immovable archaeological monuments, namely archaeological sites. It also regulates the mode and form of acquiring archaeological monuments by museums. The monuments are then transferred to the museum upon the decision of the territorially relevant Voivodeship Monument Conservator/Officer for Preservation of Objects of Cultural Heritage (on behalf of the Voivode as a representative of the Treasury of State) in compliance with a two-stage procedure: first as a deposit, and subsequently, upon the motion filed by the museum director, as property. The form of the decision valid for the monument preservation unit depends on the regulation of an administrative-and-legal character that museums have no impact upon. Additionally, these museums are obliged, just like all the museums in Poland, to receive collections by protocol, this having been included in Art. 2 of the 2004 Ordinance. This creates the necessity to apply peculiar procedures of receiving, registering, and managing them, which are more complex and slightly different from the procedures applied for other type of museum objects. Acquiring archaeological collections is a multi-stage process in which field practice intermingles with legal obligations, extensive cultural and natural research, also for conservation purposes.

The process begins at the stage of the field identification of the research object within the range enabling the issuing

of a permit to conduct the research by the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments/Officer for Preservation of Objects of Cultural Heritage. Archaeologists are required by Polish law to apply for such a permit, additionally submitting a document confirming *the readiness of a museum or another organizational unit to receive archaeological heritage objects discovered in the course of running the archaeological research* (Art. 9.3.7 of the 2018 Ordinance).<sup>12</sup> In practise, the entity applying for the permit provides museum director with information on the location of the planned archaeological investigation and on the predicted category of the site that can be uncovered on the grounds of preliminary research in archives and conservation documentation, as well as field prospection. The director makes to decision to declare readiness to receive the heritage objects in the event when both the research location, and the foreseen heritage object character complies with the policy of building the museum collections. One of this policy's elements is the territorial principle of preserving archaeological heritage objects in compliance with the country's division into voivodeships. An important element for the director's decision and his/her consent is the assessing of the potential number of movable archaeological heritage objects in view of the institution's storage and organizational-and-staff potential.

However, director's declaration may contain museum's additional expectations (apart from the need to supply field documentation specified in Annex 2 to the above-pointed Ordinance of 2018) related to the way of preparing monuments unearthed during the excavation, as well as their documentation format. It is the only legal form allowing the museum to participate in planning the archaeological research. The museum is not a party in the process of deciding detailed conditions for field research, although once this is completed, it is the organization that becomes responsible for the care of the movable heritage objects, in many a case without appropriately secured financing to store, keep, conserve, and elaborate them.

Following the completion of the field works, movable heritage objects as well as the produced documentation connected with the investigation process are not transferred to the museum that had earlier agreed to receive them, but to the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments/Officer for Preservation of Objects of Cultural Heritage; as a representative of the Treasury of State, the latter has owner's authority over all archaeological heritage objects. Upon the director's motion, the Conservator/Officer may transfer them to the museum, following a two-stage procedure.

The period over which the museum has the heritage object in deposit is used by the staff to conduct conservation works and a preliminary registering as well as scientific elaboration. It has to be borne in mind, however, that archaeological monuments when unearthed are most generally fragmented or defected. Therefore, in the museum conservation and reconstruction undertakings are carried out, as a result of which their number and typological definition may alter compared to the information contained in the field documentation. Such research can go on for a number of years, depending on numerous factors, these including the number of movable heritage objects found at the archaeological site, their preservation, as well as the

material they were made of, and the execution technique. It is only upon the completion of research works and the detailed identification of the set that the ascertainment of the total number of individualized monuments as well as the amount of the mass material received by the museum is possible; this, however, was impossible directly after the completion of the excavation works on the grounds of the field documentation. The museum director submits a motion to the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments/Officer for Preservation of Objects of Cultural Heritage to transfer to museum the ownership of the quantitatively and qualitatively verified set, boasting a preliminary museum documentation. The two-stage procedure of acquiring archaeological heritage objects, as specified in the Act on Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 2003 allows the museum their prompt entering into the museum inventory, i.e. (...) *within 60 days of coming into their possession* (Art. 4.3, Ordinance of 2004), and thus fulfilling the obligations resulting from legal regulations worked out for museology.

Under the new legal circumstances, the museums preserving archaeological collections have faced the decision challenge related to qualifying various historic scientific sources for the entry into museum collections. This is connected with the necessity to differentiate and define the difference between museum objects and archaeological mass finds in the system of museum registering. The Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments/Officer for Preservation of Objects of Cultural Heritage transfers all the scientific sources that come from the site to the museum, however without any pre-selection and not deciding which of them qualify to be entered into the museum inventory as museum objects. A substantial portion of the set transferred to the museum is usually mass archaeological material that, once appropriated by the museum, needs to be documented, analogically as individualized monuments, for the simple reason of the duty to take care of them (Art. 5 of the Act on the Preservation and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 2003) and of the implementation of the research purpose for which they were protected against destruction and acquired so as to scientifically investigate the remains of old cultures. In this way the museum becomes the owner of historical heritage objects that have the value of museum objects as well as objects that first of all have the cognitive value as academic sources. The borderline between both categories is not unequivocal, and it depends on the degree of the advancement of the scientific investigation which even years later may identify monuments that can be qualified as museum objects.

The mass archaeological material cannot be accompanied by identical records as museum exhibits, since it cannot be registered following the principles as provided for by the 2004 Ordinance on registering collections. Its Art. 1.2 specifies that *registering consists in an entry (...) allowing to identify each of the monuments in the museum*; further on, Art. 3.1 specifies in detail features that identify museum objects. Meanwhile, sets of the mass find character do not comply with this requirement, since they are not countable, and are sometimes characterized by changeable physical qualities and preservation state.

Mass finds are fragments of an unidentified number of

objects. Therefore, from the point of view of statistical calculations, there can be no equal sign put between monuments (even if preserved in fragments) and numerous fragments of an unidentified number of objects. Actually, for the majority of the material preserved as defected it is impossible and finally pointless to recreate (reconstruct) it. They are in majority fragments of objects of everyday use, i.e. vessels, production waste, construction elements. Mass material, however, is a precious source of knowledge of the place of the find: the archaeological site; it has to be recorded in detail and documented at the museum; moreover, it has to be investigated, since there always exists a chance to discover, even in the material destroyed over the years, such fragments and forms which allow new scientific conclusions or the reconstruction of a unique form of the object, and then it will be possible to include the object in the museum's inventory.

For archaeological finds what seems appropriate is the distinction of two groups in the model of registering museum collections. The core group, analogically as at all the museums, is constituted by the museum objects that are national good, namely those respective movable archaeological heritage objects that have been preserved in the state allowing their typological identification. The second group contains mass cultural heritage objects, complementing information on the museum's resources. What belongs to the latter are fragments of an indefinite number of objects preserved in such a fragmented state that does allow to enter them in the inventory according to the scheme of features identifying respective objects. Instead, they qualify to be registered in auxiliary documentation, namely registers created in a way that allows to identify groups of this material, and to cover it with museum's care. Such a decision is possible for the director thanks to Arts. 4.2 and 7.2. of the 2004 Ordinance.

To recapitulate, mass finds should not be registered in the museum inventory run in compliance with the currently valid legal regulations for three reasons:

1. It is impossible to define the number of objects whose fragments have been preserved, thus the number of museum objects which cannot be properly entered in the inventory; Art. 5.1 of the Ordinance of 2004 reads that *Each museum object is entered in the inventory book under a separate number*.
2. From the point of view of statistics no equal sign can be put between identified monuments (even if preserved in fragments) and numerous fragments of an indefinite number of objects: not every fragment is a museum object.
3. The number of mass finds is a changeable value over time (e.g. due to the material's little durability, or since it may be used to reconstruct or complete objects previously inventoried), this possibly leading to discrepancies in the inventory registers.

The premise to distinguish two groups of cultural heritage objects and two types of documents containing information relevant to them in the inventory model results in the fact that already at the stage of the field research documentation distinguishing scientific sources coming from the discovered archaeological site is produced. The principles ruling the ordering of information on those sources have been defined in the system of the protection

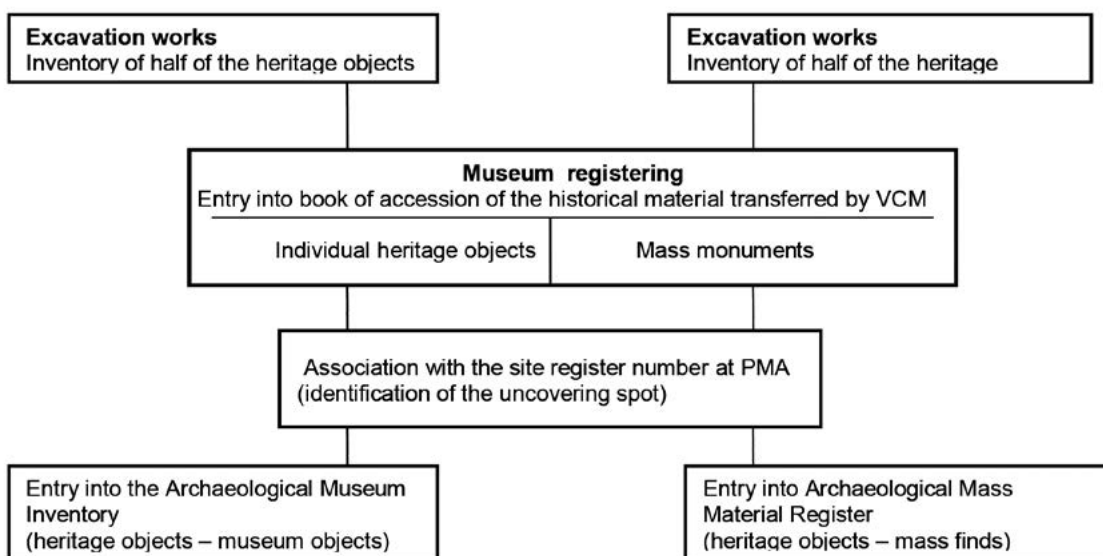
of monuments currently in force. It is in particular in Art. 1.5a of Annex 2 to the Ordinance of 2018 titled *Elements Contained in Archaeological Research Documentation* that the rules for creating the inventory of specified monuments are described, while in Art. 1.5b principles for creating the inventory of mass finds are provided. It seems that the museum, acquiring the collection together with the excavation and conservation documentation, this including the field inventory, while constructing the principles for registering collections, should also bear these standards in mind, and adjust the structure of museum information to the structure of source information, i.e. the documentation produced in the course of the field research. This is rational, also in view of the general digitizing of human activity, while as for the systems of knowledge dealing with cultural heritage, it results from the need to apply common principles of creating and sharing data.

In the model elaborated for the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw in 2004–6, and since then systematically implemented, I took into account the division of collections that occurs already at the stage of the field works. They are individual cultural heritage objects, preserved either entirely or in a part that allows to define for them individual identity features in museum notation (museum objects) and mass finds, including fragments of non-characteristic objects (mass material). The whole historic material is correlated with the spatial context of its discovery, namely the register of archaeological sites. The division of collections reflects the division into information categories, the latter being reflected in the structure of documents produced during the field research, and subsequently at the museum. I have also defined the role of the accession book as the key document supporting the supervision of the resources of cultural heritage objects owned by the museum. The book records all the acquisitions, reflecting the typological and material classification, with the acknowledgment of the legal ownership issue and the category of document in which

single heritage objects or groups of mass finds are identified in detail. What is transferred to the museum together with the heritage object is the research documentation, including field inventories, which in compliance with Art. 2.4 of the 2004 Ordinance are an element of museum records. I have deemed it pointless to copy the content of field inventories into the book of deposits, particularly as it is very likely that upon the completion of the research works conducted at the museum, the number and typological identification of the acquired heritage object will be changed.

The next issue that requires a solution in the model of museum registering is the implementation/adjustment implementacja of the set of information identifying museum objects and specified by the legislator (Art. 3.1, Arts. 7.1, and 7.4; Ordinance of 2004) to the specificity of the methodology of scientific elaboration of archaeological heritage objects. In the legal regulations that are currently in force the names of the features have been made to suit the set of working tools used by art historians. For collections of other types it is, however, essential to interpret and define these concepts on the grounds of museology trade categories.

For archaeological collections what requires interpretation first of all is the range of information related to the identification of archaeological sites, namely immovable archaeological heritage objects, within the area of which the archaeological material for the museum was unearthed and acquired. The association of respective movable heritage objects with the spatial context of their unearthing is the most essential requirement voiced by archaeologists in the documentation of the finds. As a matter of fact, respective movable archaeological heritage objects, without being placed within the spatial-and-cultural context definitely have smaller cognitive value than cultural heritage objects of definite unearthing location. A hierarchy of information on archaeological heritage objects is also the basis of the standard for archaeological research documentation, while



1. Rules for entering information on archaeological heritage objects valid at the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw.

the field documentation is the first record containing the specification together with a scientific description of the archaeological material being acquired by the museum.

In the museum register model archaeological site can be interpreted as the place of the creation (uncovering) of a movable heritage object entered in the inventory. The basic site identification is to be found in its address in relation to Poland's administrative division. Most generally this information contains: locality, community (*gmina*), county (*powiat*), and voivodeship (*województwo*), but more and more frequently another geographical location system is used (Spatial Information System), and information related to the kind and form of the uncovered site.

Moreover, analogically as in the case of the Register of Archaeological Heritage Objects run by the administrative organs of the monument protection, what is of major importance is for the museum to keep the register of all the locations of the unearthing of the collections that it keeps, since it is the only documented form of the existence of an immovable heritage object that could be entirely destroyed once the excavations are over (this relates to the facilities that do not feature in the register of historical monuments in a given voivodeship). This knowledge is essential to recreate settlement structures from the past, regardless of whether the historical monument exists in geographical structure (if

so, if it is covered with conservatory protection), or whether it does not exist in situ anymore; however, in the latter case the documentation from the field research and historical material are preserved at the museum. For this reason in the system of monument protection/preservation of objects of cultural heritage there should co-exist two registers of archaeological sites. One run by conservation services in order to protect the immovable heritage object existing in geographical space, the second in museums in order to document the existence of the immovable cultural heritage object prior to conducting excavation works and its destruction, currently constituting the archaeological context of the discovery of movable heritage objects preserved in museums. In the event of removing the site from the historical monument register following the completion of the excavation research, the site should be entered into museum register together with the registering of museum objects. In other words, the knowledge of the existing archaeological heritage object within geographical space, knowledge of archaeological historical monuments which were destroyed in the course of archaeological excavations, and the knowledge of movable heritage objects acquired in their course, should be preserved first of all in museums, this being the basic condition for correct scholarly concluding.

The next feature of the cultural heritage object required in

<b>Registering of museum objects: description structure in compliance with legislation</b>	<b>Registering of archaeological museum objects: proposed description structure</b>
accession no.	accession no.
title (name)	title (name)
author or producer	culture for prehistoric monuments
provenance: acquisition means	provenance: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. means of acquisition for the museum</li> <li>2. type of archaeological find (research)</li> </ol>
value on the acquisition date	estimated value
time of creation	time (chronology, or/and absolute time of creation)
place of creation	place of creation (discovery): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. address for the discovery of the archaeological site: locality name, SIS location</li> <li>2. type of archaeological site</li> <li>3. numerical ID of the site</li> </ol>
material	material
execution technique	execution technique
dimensions, optionally weight	dimensions, optionally weight
identification of characteristic features	identification of characteristic features
visualisation	visualisation
labeling	labeling
permanent place of storage	permanent place of storage
relocation	relocation

2. Implementation of the meaning of concepts defined in legislation as registering data applied for identification of archaeological museum objects.

registering documentation is the identification of the monuments' provenance: for archaeological collections at museums this constitutes two sets of information. One related to the legal means of purchasing the heritage object by the museum. Most frequently it is the transfer upon the decision of the Monument Conservator/Officer for Preservation of Objects of Cultural Heritage. However, there is also an option of the purchase of the object e.g. from a private collection, particularly if the object comes from outside Poland; acceptance of an object donated by its owner; or transfer from another institution. The latter set of information relates to the discovery of the cultural heritage object, namely the authorship and type of conducted archaeological research, or alternatively the conditionings of an accidental discovery. Depending on the type of the conducted research an appropriate field documentation is created, while its range has influence on the format of registering heritage objects at the museum. Both information sets constitute the knowledge of the provenance of archaeological collections, this containing the history of field research, author's scientific ascertainment, and the history of the collections.

Below presented is my proposal for the implementation and extension of the set of museum objects' features, obligatorily placed in register documents, prepared for the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw in compliance with the tradition and methodology of creating documentation of archaeological finds at museums.<sup>13</sup>

The piece of information that museologists find exceptionally challenging while working out the registering documentation is the definition of the archaeological museum objects' value. In compliance with the legal regulation in force (Art. 3.1, Ordinance of 2004) the value on the acquisition date is to be placed in registering documentation.

The problem stems from the fact that it is neither in the Act on Museums of 21 November 1996, nor in the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture of 30 August 2004 on the Range, Form, and Format of Registering Museum Objects at Museums, nor in the Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 23 July 2003 that it is precisely formulated who and how is obliged to define the value of archaeological heritage objects.

Movable archaeological heritage objects, before being transferred to museums and becoming their property, as well as becoming museum objects, continue the property of the Treasury of State, this in compliance with the provisions of Art. 35.1 of the Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 2003. The Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments/Officer for Preservation of Objects of Cultural Heritage, standing as the representative of the Treasury of State, makes administrative decisions to transfer them to museums. At the moment of transferring the heritage objects as museum's deposit or property, they do not have a define value. The value is not defined by the researcher or institution who conducted the archaeological investigation on the grounds of an appropriate administrative permission. Neither is the value of archaeological heritage objects defined by the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments/Officer for Preservation of Objects of Cultural Heritage at the

moment of receiving them from the researcher or institution who conducted the research, nor at the point of transferring them as museum's deposit or property. Additionally, the discussed group of monuments is theoretically and in the practice of public institutions excluded from trade, and as such cannot be attributed value with respect to market principles or any that approximate them. All the forms of trade in archaeological heritage objects are illegal, provided that these objects were acquired following the adoption of respective legal regulations.

What seems a solution is the setting up of standards of estimating the value of such objects; in the first place by putting together over 20-years' of experience of museums, and comparison of reference values estimated for respective monument groups or types collected in databases. When renting of monuments is involved, which implies the transfer and insurance of monuments, museums assess their estimated value, including: scholarly, historical, and artistic values, as well as the unique character of the object in collections. The value is defined by a commission on the grounds of the internally accepted regulations, which in a number of cases also cover principles of including these values in the system of the museum objects' register.

The standard to be adopted should cover evaluation criteria, as well as the importance given to the respective qualities having impact on the object's value. The assessment of its value should always be conducted jointly by a commission, as the results of the evaluation shall constitute the museum's assets in the understanding of Art. 3.1 of the 2013 Ordinance. Since archaeological collections do not boast any definite value at any of the earlier stages of their acquisition for the museum collections, it has to be realized that the value assessed in commission in respective museums, and entered in registering documents will be their value on the acquisition date. Following the general rules of this new procedure, each museum shaping its own model of collection registering can begin the process of assessing the value of the newly acquired heritage objects. The challenge faced by museums is the decision to ascertain individual procedure of the evaluation of the collections which were entered into the inventory prior to the entry into force of the 1996 Act on Museums, before which date museums had not been obliged to assess that. The reason being the traditional approach of museologists to archaeological collections, since they were regarded essentially to be scientific sources, and were actually excluded from trade. This lack of evaluation was possible thanks to the legal regulations from the 1960s. Art. 17.1 of the Ordinance of 1964 reads: *The value assessment does not apply to objects: 1) whose evaluation is not possible for the lack of grounds for their evaluation. This principle was implemented in records for over 30 years.*

For museums which currently would have to evaluate their entire archaeological collections numbering over 3 million objects, the registering model should take into account the many-years' plan of joint evaluation by commissions for registered monuments implemented for decades before the introduction of the current regulations.



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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Act on Museums of 21 November 1996 (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 5, Item 24).
  - <sup>2</sup> Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 23 July 2003 (Journal of Laws of 2003, No. 162, Item 1568).
  - <sup>3</sup> Ordinance of the Minister of Culture of 26 Aug. 1997 on the Principles and Means of Registering Cultural Goods in Museums (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 102, Item 656), and subsequently the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture of 30 Aug. 2004 on the Range, Form, and Format of Registering Museum Objects in Museums (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 202, Item 2073).
  - <sup>4</sup> The first national proposal for standardisation of the creation and sharing of information on museum collections with the use of IT was that proposal authored by Dorota Folga Januszewska and Agnieszka Jaskanis from 1996, judged by ICOM as one of the world standards, and called: Network System of Museum Information Sharing (SSWIM): A. Jaskanis, *Międzymuzealna sieć komputerowa SSWIM – standard udostępniania informacji o muzeach i muzealiach w Polsce* [SSWIM Inter-museum Computer Network: Standard for Sharing Information on Museums and Museum Objects in Poland], in: *III Forum Konserwatorów. Dobra kultury w obliczu zagrożeń* [Third Forum of Conservators: Cultural Goods Facing Threats], Toruń 2000, pp. 91-8, and *Sieciowy System Wymiany Muzealnej – standard udostępniania informacji o obiektach muzealnych* [Network System of Museum Information Sharing (SSWIM): Standard for Sharing Information on Museum Objects], in: *Informatyka w historii sztuki. Stan i perspektywy rozwoju współczesnej metodologii* [IT in History of Art. State and Prospects of the Development of Current Methodology], Series: *Cyfrowe spotkania z zabytkami* [Digital Encounters with Monuments], Wrocław 2009, pp. 40-50.
  - <sup>5</sup> I described the issue in the paper: A. Jaskanis *System informacji o zbiorach Państwowego Muzeum Archeologicznego w Warszawie* [Information System in the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw], in: *Efektywność Zastosowań Systemów Informatycznych* [Effectiveness of the Application of IT Systems], Vol. 1, Warszawa-Szczyrk 2002, pp. 85-100, and in cooperation: A. Jaskanis, A. Laszuk, M. Wrede, *Gromadzenie, wymiana i udostępnianie informacji o dobrach kultury przechowywanych w archiwach, bibliotekach i muzeach* [Collecting, Exchange, and Sharing Information on Cultural Goods Kept in Archives, Libraries, and Museums], 'Teki Archiwalne' 2004, Seria Nowa, Vol. 8(30), pp. 150-56, and A. Jaskanis, *Zarządzanie bazami danych o zbiorach archeologicznych w muzeum. O potrzebie standaryzacji* [Management of Databases on Archaeological Collections in Museum. On the Need for Standardization], in: *Digitalizacja dziedzictwa archeologicznego. Wybrane zagadnienia* [Digitizing of Archaeological Heritage. Selected Problems], R. Zapłata (ed.), Wiedza i Edukacja, Instytut Archeologii WNHIS UKSW, Lublin 2011, pp. 143-57.
  - <sup>6</sup> Act on the Protection of Cultural Goods and Museums of 15 February 1962 (Journal of Laws of 1962, No. 10, Item 48).
  - <sup>7</sup> Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and Art on Running the Inventory of Museum Objects of 18 April 1964 (Journal of Laws of 1964, No. 17, Item 101).
  - <sup>8</sup> *Instrukcja do rozporządzenia Ministra Kultury i Sztuki z dnia 18 kwietnia 1964 r. w sprawie prowadzenia inwentarza muzealiów* [Instruction to the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and Art of 18 April 1964 on Running Museum Objects' Inventories], 'Biblioteka Muzealnictwa i Ochrony Zabytków' 1970, B Series, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 117-32, published together with Decision No. 9 of the Minister of Culture and Art of 9 Sept. 1968 on the format of museum object's inventory form.
  - <sup>9</sup> This obligation was introduced in 1997 (Art. 1.2) with the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture of 26 Aug. 1997 on the Principles and Modes for Registering Cultural Goods in Museums (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 102, Item 656).
  - <sup>10</sup> See Art. 3.4 of the Act on Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 23 July 2003 (Journal of Laws of 2003, No. 162, Item 1568).
  - <sup>11</sup> Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 2 Aug. 2018 on Conducting Conservation and Restoration Works and Conservation Research in Relation to the Cultural Heritage Objects Entered in the Registry of Objects of National Heritage or List of Heritage Treasures, as Well as Construction Works, Architectural Research and Other Activities on Cultural Heritage Objects Entered in the Registry of Objects of National Heritage, and Archaeological Research and Search for Objects of National Heritage (Journal of Laws of 2018, Item 1609), Part II: Elements Included in the Archaeological Research Documentation. Earlier the issues had been regulated by the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 27 July 2011 on Conducting Conservation, Restoration, and Construction Works, Conservation Research and Other Activities in Relation to the Cultural Heritage Objects Entered in the Registry of Objects of National Heritage and to Archaeological Research (Journal of Laws of 2011, No. 165, Item 98.7), Part II: Standards for Archaeological Research Documentation, and the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 9 June 2004 on Conducting Conservation, Restoration, and Construction Works, Conservation and Architectural Research, and Other Activities in Relation to the Objects Entered in the Registry of Objects of National Heritage and to Archaeological Research as well as Search for Hidden or Abandoned Movable Heritage Objects (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 150, Item 1579), Part II: Standards for Archaeological Research Documentation.
  - <sup>12</sup> Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 2 Aug. 2018 on Conducting Conservation and Restoration Works and Conservation Research in Relation to the Cultural Heritage Objects Entered in the Registry of Objects of National Heritage or List of Heritage Treasures, as Well as Construction Works, Architectural Research and Other Activities on the Cultural Heritage Object in the Registry of Objects of National Heritage, and Archaeological Research and Search for Objects of National Heritage (Journal of Laws of 2018, Item 1609). This obligation had been introduced together with the Act on Protection and Guardianship of Historical Monuments of 2003 in the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 9 June 2004 on Conducting Conservation, Restoration, and Construction Works, Conservation and Architectural Research, and Other Activities in Relation to the Objects Entered in the Registry of Objects of National Heritage and to Archaeological Research as well as Search for Hidden or Abandoned Movable Heritage Objects (Art. 3.4.3).
  - <sup>13</sup> See A. Jaskanis *Specyfika zbiorów archeologicznych w procesie zarządzania kolekcją muzealną* [Specificity of Archaeological Collections in the Process of Managing Museum Collection], in: *ABC zarządzania kolekcją muzealną* [ABC of Managing a Museum Collection], 'Szkolenia Narodowego Instytutu Muzealnictwa i Ochrony Zbiorów' 2014, No. 3, p. 31.
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