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AN ANTIQUARIAN PASSION: EXPLORATIONS OF THE GRAVES OF POLISH MONARCHS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Abstract: The subject of this article is the antiquarian explorations of the tombs of Polish monarchs, carried out from the late eighteenth to the second half of the nineteenth century. I draw particular attention to three aspects of the phenomenon. Firstly, I present the explorations in the international context, taking the activities of British antiquaries as a point of reference. Secondly, I point out their close and singularly consequential links with the culture of collecting. Thirdly and lastly, I analyse their social reception. It was the collecting of grave goods that stirred up the greatest emotions and controversies among the public and provoked a fundamental transformation in antiquarian exploration.

I argue that Polish antiquarian explorations had their own distinctive idiom. After 1795, the political circumstances of being a nation without a state meant that in their early period of development antiquarian practices were not accompanied by the moral dilemmas and charges with which British antiquaries had to contend. And even later, when the exploration of graves and tombs became more controversial, the accompanying discourse did not lose its local specificity.

Keywords: antiquarianism, royal tombs, Wawel Cathedral, grave goods, historical relics.

I

There were many reasons and motivations for the opening of royal tombs, including political gain, concern for the preservation of the remains, *damnatio memoriae*, and plunder. Therefore, this practice is probably as old as the burial customs themselves.[1] Indeed, any and all classifications of

[1] This does not, of course, apply only to royal tombs. The same determination was applied to the exploration of the burial sites of saints and, somewhat later, from the modern era onwards, to those of other figures commonly thought of as 'great', such as leaders, artists, poets, and so on. Concerning the latter, see Stanisław Rosiek, *Zwłoki Mickiewicza: Próba nekrografii poety*, Gdańsk, 1997; Samantha Matthews, *Poetical Remains: Poets' Graves,*

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reasons for the exploration of graves and tombs are fallible. What for some was an expression of care and respect was for others a violation of the majesty of death; what for some was an act of supreme reverence was for others a sacrilegious act of violation of the integrity of the corpse; what for some was the noble practice of collecting of memorabilia and historical relics was for others simple theft. Furthermore, what the sensibility of one era considered acceptable, the morality of another viewed as deeply inappropriate, retrospectively discrediting those who acted in the best of faith. In exceptional cases, different — and even mutually contradictory — aspirations came together in a single event, triggering a whole spectrum of reactions and emotions.

The explorations referred to in the present study, that is, explorations motivated by scholarly curiosity, also aroused controversies. Indeed, scholarly curiosity often came hand in hand with other feelings, such as admiration for great historical figures or patriotism, and sometimes less noble (and never openly voiced) impulses played a role. I shall call such explorations 'antiquarian' explorations.

I consider antiquarianism a historical phenomenon, characteristic of the period circa 1650–1850 (although its genealogy dates back much earlier), and I define it as a scholarly attitude grounded on the conviction that material objects, directly and empirically experienced, are as credible — if not in some respects even more so — sources of knowledge about the past as written records.[2]

The subject of this article thus concerns antiquarian explorations of the tombs of Polish monarchs from the late eighteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth. But while the starting date is in no way controversial — as we can date the actual beginning of the phenomenon in question to the end of the eighteenth century — the end date is conventional and adopted for the purpose of the present study. After all, the exploration of royal tombs by no means came to an end in the nineteenth century; on the contrary, it is continued even today.[3] However,

Bodies, and Books in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford, 2004; *Schillers Schädel — Physiognomie einer fixen Idee*, ed. Jonas Maatsch and Chistoph Schmälzle, Göttingen, 2009; Thea Tomaini, *The Corpse as Text: Disinterment and Antiquarian Enquiry, 1700–1900*, Woolbridge, 2017, pp. 155–86; Claudio Povolo, 'Intrusions in Arquà Petrarca (1630–2003): In the Name of Francesco Petrarch', *Acta Historiae*, 27, 2019, 3, pp. 371–416.

[2] See Peter N. Miller, *History and its Objects: Antiquarianism and Material Culture Since 1500*, Ithaca and London, 2017, p. 7.

[3] In March 2022, during restoration work at the Chapel of Jan Olbracht in Wawel Cathedral, a group of archaeologists led by Tomasz Wagner discovered the burial crypt of this king, who had died in 1501. However, it was not decided to open and explore the royal tomb but only to carry out endoscopic examinations — a camera was

new theoretical frameworks on the one hand, and on the other, the development of modern analytical techniques, including anthropological and DNA studies, changed them insofar as they have gradually lost their unique antiquarian trait.

Antiquarian explorations of royal tombs have already been the subject of study. The opening and explorations of the Wawel tombs have been comprehensively investigated by Michał Rożek, who not only precisely reconstructed their chronology and course but also linked them to broader historical phenomena and the collecting culture.[4] As regards the latter, he was able to base his research on the earlier studies of Zdzisław Żygulski Jr, who, when analysing the collections of Izabela Czartoryska in Puławy, stressed the role of Tadeusz Czacki in the development of the collections of national memorabilia, including funerary relics obtained personally in the course of — as Żygulski put it — 'the archaeology of graves'.[5]

The present essay will deal only briefly with the issues hitherto taken up in the research and only to the extent that its general concept requires. This is because the aim of the text is to place grave explorations in broader contexts: firstly, to depict the endeavours of Polish antiquaries against an international (British) backdrop; secondly, to point out in greater detail their links with the culture of collecting; and thirdly, to analyse their social reception, that is the response of the public to the opening of graves and the practices accompanying such explorations.

Antiquarian opening of graves was not unique to Poland. On the contrary, such explorations could probably — although the state of research does not allow for a categorical settlement of this question — be considered an almost pan-European phenomenon, and in some countries this practice was much more developed and had a much longer history.[6]

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inserted through a small opening to take photographs that may provide material for further research.

[4] Michał Rożek, *Groby królewskie w Krakowie*, Cracow, 1977; Michał Rożek, 'Wawelskie eksploracje grobów monarszych', in *Wykorzystanie metod kryminalistyki i medycyny sądowej w badaniach historycznych*, ed. Jan Widacki, Katowice, 1983, pp. 11–24; Michał Rożek, *Wawel i Skałka: Panteony polskie*, Wrocław, Warsaw and Cracow, 1995, pp. 86–91, 101–07, 127–61; Michał Rożek, *Groby królewskie na Wawelu*, Cracow, 2008, pp. 177–213.

[5] Zdzisław Żygulski Jr, 'Dzieje zbiorów puławskich: Świątynia Sybilli i Dom Gotycki', *Rozprawy i Sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, 7, 1962, pp. 5–265 (pp. 35–45).

[6] Only British explorations have been properly analysed and described in the literature; studies are very scarce for other countries. For example, in an excellent monograph devoted to antiquarian practices in Spain, tomb explorations are not mentioned at all; see Miguel Morán Turina, *La memoria de las piedras: Antiquarios, arqueólogos y coleccionistas des antigüedades en la España de los Asturias*, Madrid, 2010.

Nevertheless, Polish antiquarian explorations had their own distinctive idiom. The unprecedented political situation of a nation without a state played a role in how antiquarian practices were perceived, insofar as at first such explorations were not considered morally dubious or even morally unacceptable, very much in contrast to the actions of European antiquaries who did face such accusations. And even later, when the explorations of graves and tombs became more controversial, national responses to the controversy could be described as unique in their local specificity.

The activities undertaken by British antiquaries will be taken as a point of reference. Antiquarianism became widespread in Britain very early on. The community practising this unique method of researching the past was exceptionally numerous, and the achievements and the findings of the British were extraordinary in scope.[7] It was in the British Isles that the practice of the antiquarian exploration of royal tombs developed, accompanied by the elaboration of a *sui generis* standard procedure, which was later adopted on the Continent. When, with a considerable delay compared to Britain and under specific and dramatic circumstances, the opening of royal tombs and the management of mementos from them began in France, the English model was used as a pattern.[8] All this, as well as the fact that in the second half of

[7] Concerning British antiquarianism, see Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries*, Oxford, 1956; Stuart Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism*, Edinburgh, 1976; Stuart Piggott, *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination*, London, 1989; Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838–1886*, Cambridge, 1986; Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford, 1995; Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500–1730*, Oxford, 2003; Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, London and New York, 2004; *Visions of Antiquity: The Society of Antiquaries of London 1707–2007*, ed. Susan Pearce, London, 2007; Jason M. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment*, New Haven, 2009; Rosemary Hill, *Time's Witness: History in the Age of Romanticism*, London, 2021. Grave explorations undertaken by British antiquaries have also been the subject of a separate reflection; for more on this topic, see Christopher Scalia, 'The Grave Scholarship of Antiquaries', *Literature Compass*, 2, 2005, RO 166, pp. 1–13; Tomaini, *The Corpse as Text*; chapter titled 'Grave Goods: The King's Four Bodies' in the book by Crystal B. Lake, *Artifacts: How we Think and Write about Found Objects*, Baltimore, 2020, pp. 165–92. On antiquarianism in a broader, pan-European perspective, see Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, with a Foreword by Riccardo Di Donato, Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1990, pp. 54–79.

[8] See Pascal Griener, 'Alexandre Lenoir et la modèle anglaise: la politique et l'histoire après la révolution', in *Un Musée Révolutionnaire: Le musée des Monuments français d'Alexandre Lenoir*, ed. Geneviève Bresc-Bautier and Béatrice de Chancel-Bardelot, Paris, 2016, pp. 203–12.

the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the enlightened Polish elite was very receptive to English culture, including scholarly culture, means that a direct inspiration cannot be ruled out,[9] and such a British reference can be legitimized. French culture, while otherwise a major point of reference for Polish elites during the Enlightenment, had little to offer insofar as concerned the exploration of monarchic tombs.[10]

Since grave explorations went hand in hand with the gathering of historical memorabilia, including bodily remains, it is essential to point out their implications for the development of collecting practices. It will be seen that it was this collecting aspect of the opening of graves — that is, the privatization of the artefacts taken therefrom — that generated the greatest emotions and controversy among the public and initiated fundamental transformations in the field of sepulchral archaeology.

[9] See Zofia Libiszowska, *Życie polskie w Londynie w XVIII wieku*, Warsaw, 1972; Richard Butterwick, *Poland's Last King and English Culture: Stanisław August Poniatowski, 1732–1798*, Oxford, 1998; Maria Antonina Łukowska, *Mit Wielkiej Brytanii w literackiej kulturze polskiej okresu rozbiorów: Studium wyobrażeń środowiskowych na podstawie zawartości wybranych periodyków*, Łódź, 2016.

[10] The first French exploration of royal tombs was the exhumation/destruction of the monarchic necropolis in the basilica of Saint-Denis near Paris, carried out by decree of the National Convention of 31 July 1793 on 6–10 August and 12–16 October of the same year. This act encapsulated an evident will to desecrate the royal corpses, an obvious political manifestation, an attack on a religious taboo (while utilizing elements of the religious ritual *à rebours*), and — albeit in the background — the element of historical inquiry and a hunt for historical memorabilia. The events at Saint-Denis, marked by brutality and terror — although the reactions of the witnesses included emotion, reverence, curiosity, empirical inquisitiveness, and, finally, attempts at protecting funerary tokens — could by no means serve as a model for Polish, or indeed any other, cemeterial archaeologists; they could at most serve as a warning, an anti-pattern. For more on the devastation of Saint-Denis, see Max Billard, *Les Tombeaux des rois sous la Terreur*, Paris, 1907; Elizabeth A. R. Brown, 'Burying and Unburying the Kings of France', in *Persons in Groups: Social Behavior as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe: Papers of the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*, ed. Richard C. Trexler, Binghamton, 1985, pp. 241–66; Elizabeth A. R. Brown, 'The Oxford Collection of the Drawings of Roger de Gaignières and the Royal Tombs of Saint-Denis', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 85, 1988, 5, pp. 6–33; Suzanne Glover Lindsay, *Funerary Arts and Tomb Cult — Living with the Dead in France, 1750–1870*, Burlington, 2012, pp. 30–37; Suzanne Glover Lindsay, 'The Revolutionary Exhumations at St-Denis, 1793', *Conversations: An Online Journal of the Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion*, 2014, doi:10.22332/con.ess.2015.2 [accessed 28 June 2024]; François Souchal, *Wandalizm rewolucji*, transl. Paweł Migasiewicz, Warsaw, 2016, pp. 299–310 (French ed. 1993).

II

It is impossible to fully comprehend sepulchral archaeology without a more thorough understanding of the antiquarian attitude. Thus a brief overview of the phenomenon is necessary. Our case study will make use of a British example, which was crucial to the practice of opening monarchal graves.

The origins of British antiquarianism can be traced back to the mid-sixteenth century.[11] In 1586, William Camden's *Britannia* was published. It was the first mature and for decades exemplary work of antiquarian writing. Subsequent editions of *Britannia* — including Philemon Holland's first English edition of 1610, and the revised and expanded editions published by Edmund Gibson in 1695 and Richard Gough in 1789 — would mark successive stages in the development of antiquarian reflections and practice. The circle of researchers of the past gradually widened; their working methods were refined; factual knowledge grew radically.[12]

By the end of the sixteenth century antiquaries were already well established in English society. They constituted a highly diverse but distinct and peculiar milieu among humanist scholars, and they were ascribed a distinctive set of characteristics.[13] In the popular perception, the antiquary was an obsessive collector of historical odds and ends; his work was cumulative. Overwhelmed by a mass of secondary and tertiary testimonies and detailed information — some downright fantastic — the antiquary was unable to impose control over them, that is, to arrange the data into a grand narrative about the past. In any case, the past that he was studying was unique. For he was not concerned with the political and military history of the nation. His horizon was local, confined to a parish, a town, or sometimes to a county. He was fascinated by the histories of individual institutions, genealogy, the history of law, and mintage.[14] It was a simplified and caricatured image, but nevertheless a not entirely false one. Richard Gough, the director of the Society of Antiquaries in London in the years 1771–97, thus described his research concept, paraphrasing Shakespeare: 'I have neither the object, the plan, nor the method of a Historian. Our materials are different, and my plan adopts only what his excludes. Great events, great personages, great characters, good or bad, are all that he

[11] For more on the 'prehistory' of British antiquarianism and its genealogy from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, see Thomas Downing Kendrick, *British Antiquity*, London, 1950.

[12] Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape*, pp. 33 and 44.

[13] Piggott, *Ancient Britons*, pp. 14, 21–27.

[14] Sweet, *Antiquaries*, pp. 4–5.

brings upon his stage. I talk of graves, of worms, of epitaphs, / And that small portion of the barren earth / That serves as paste and cover to our bones!'.[15] The antiquary was, in fact — to quote Arnaldo Momigliano's brilliant definition — 'the type of man who is interested in historical facts without being interested in history'.[16] At the same time, as Momigliano perfectly understood and emphasized, the contribution of antiquaries to the development of history was immense.[17]

The community of early antiquaries was highly diverse, comprising both distinguished and well-trained scholars as well as ambitious and not necessarily competent dilettantes. Many of them were interested in material evidence of the past; many worked almost exclusively with written sources; and nearly all had inclinations towards collecting. From the seventeenth century onwards, the paths of 'philologically' and 'archaeologically' oriented antiquaries slowly began to diverge. Especially the latter — 'archaeological' — gained in current importance and soon came to dominate antiquarian practices.[18] The interest in material evidence, and thus the treatment of artefacts — that is antiquities in the broadest sense, such as ruins, tombs, coins, inscriptions, and fragments of historical memorabilia — as carriers of knowledge became a hallmark of the antiquarian approach. As Rosemary Sweet writes, 'The most important underlying principle of antiquarianism was that antiquities could confirm and illustrate the facts of history, and occasionally provide information on matters upon which the historical record was silent'.[19]

Material traces of the past were increasingly sought by antiquaries during field research and the exploration of monuments *in situ*. Starting from the seventeenth century, antiquarianism took on a peripatetic air (to use the term coined by Daniel Woolf). Consequently, a map of 'historical sites' gradually took shape, and with it — supported by a growing number of printed antiquarian studies — a 'historical

[15] Richard Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain Applied to Illustrate the History of Families, Manners, Habits, and Arts, at the Different Periods from the Norman Conquest to the Seventeenth Century, with Introductory Observations*, part 1, London, 1786, pages unnumbered (*Preface*). The last sentence is a slightly altered quotation from Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

[16] Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations*, p. 54.

[17] Momigliano was the first eminent scholar of the history of historiography to draw attention to and appreciate the activities of antiquaries and to mention them as a significant inspiration for contemporary historians. While his theses were not published until 1990, he had been propagating them since the 1960s, starting at the 1961–62 Sather Classical Lectures at the University of California.

[18] Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past*, pp. 141–44.

[19] Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 13.

tourism' developed.[20] Tombs quickly became prominent marks on this map. Thanks to antiquaries, their status changed. They became not only a source of inspiration for melancholic musings or an opportunity to pay homage to ancestors, but also, and indeed above all, an object of critical study.[21] For the early generations of antiquaries-cum-grave researchers, Thomas Weever's *Ancient funerall monuments within the united monarchie of Great Britaine, Ireland, and the islands adiacent* served from 1631 as a guide and a standard reference. In the mature period of development of antiquarian research, a similar role was played by Richard Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain*, a work published in many volumes between 1786 and 1796. Gough was, at that time, the main advocate and, so to speak, the most important ideologue of antiquarian grave explorations.[22]

A whole series of royal exhumations were carried out in the British Isles in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and throughout the entire nineteenth. In May 1774, the tomb of Edward I in Westminster Abbey was opened; in 1784 — the alleged tomb of Aldfrith in the church at Little Driffield in Yorkshire; in 1789 — the tomb of Edward IV in St George's

[20] Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past*, pp. 150–54.

[21] Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 16; Barry M. Mardsen and Bernard Nurse, 'Opening the Tomb', in *Making History: Antiquaries in Britain 1707–2007*, London, 2007 [exh. cat.], pp. 95–107.

[22] In France, Michel Félibien's *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Denis en France* (Paris, 1706), and especially Bernard de Montfaucon's *Les monumens de la monarchie françoise* (Paris, 1729–33), fulfilled a similar role. Both these works help properly illustrate the difference between French and British antiquarianism, the former otherwise superbly developed. French antiquaries (most often referred to as *érudits*, and sometimes called *savants*, sporadically *antiquaires*) came for the most part from monastic circles, and this was true in the case of both aforementioned authors. They worked mainly with written sources, and the vast majority of their output were collections of transcriptions of historical documents. As a rule, material evidence played a marginal role in their practice. Obviously, we can identify authors for whom it was of greater importance; for example, Jean-François Pommeraye; François-Roger de Gaignières; Jean Mabillon; Antoine Lancelot; Félibien; and especially Montfaucon. It was Montfaucon who introduced the concept of the material monument as equivalent to the text of a historical source into the French tradition, of which it became a permanent element. At the same time, Montfaucon occupied himself — alongside architecture — with church sculptures and reliefs, stained glass and paintings, and ornaments and grave monuments, although not with the graves themselves. Moreover, Montfaucon's work did not receive the broad reception enjoyed by similar British publications. More importantly still, due to insufficient interest and the consequent lack of funding, it was never completed. Françoise Choay, whose research I am relying on here, characterizes the French antiquaries as highly methodical, very meticulous in their approach, and achieving a level of detail far beyond that of their British counterparts. However, the latter gathered historical material 'that is incomparable in both scope and coherence'. See Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, transl. L. M. O'Connell, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 40–50, quotation p. 50.

Chapel in Windsor; in July 1797, the tomb of King John Lackland was discovered in Worcester Cathedral and examined; in 1813 the tombs of Henry VIII and Charles I were opened in Windsor (the former opened again in 1861 and 1888); in November 1819 — the tomb of King Robert the Bruce in the Abbey Church at Dunfermline; in February 1868 — the tombs of Henry VII and James I in Westminster Abbey; in August 1871 — the tombs of Henry III and Richard II at the same location; and in 1899 — the tomb of Oswald in the Durham Cathedral.[23]

Beginning with the earliest exhumations, a *sui generis* script or procedure was established, and its essential elements would be continued until at least the end of the nineteenth century. This approach is worth a closer look, as the antiquarian explorations of the tombs of Polish kings would follow a similar pattern.

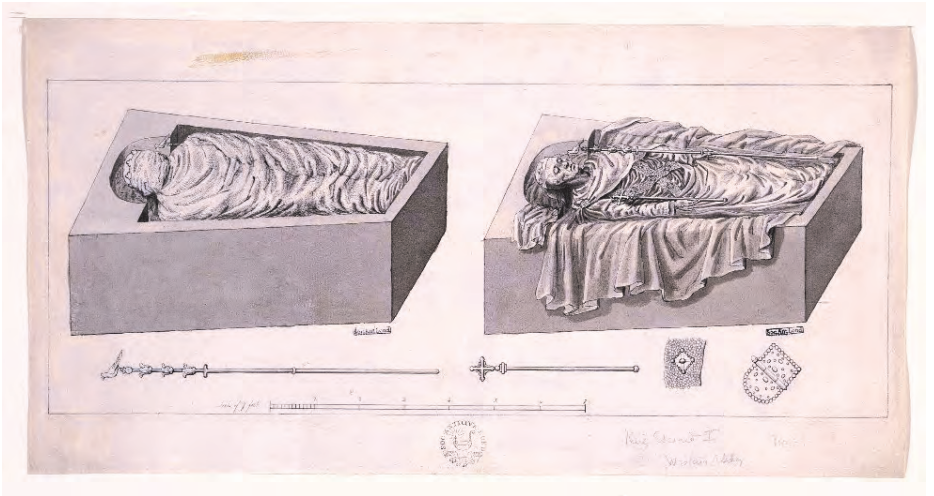
Firstly, the opening of a royal tomb was a collective — and some would even say, semi-official — undertaking in its nature. It was often conducted under the auspices of various institutions, most commonly the Society of Antiquaries. In addition to antiquaries, it would be attended by representatives of the clergy and, often, by lay personages, including state functionaries. The identities of the participants are generally very precisely known. Meticulousness in listing these persons was necessary, for they held the special status of witnesses, whose authority guaranteed, among other things, the veracity of the accounts of examinations of the graves.

Crucially — and this is the second important feature — the above-mentioned 'examinations' were diligently documented. The antiquarian explorations led to the elaboration of detailed descriptions, which, over time, took the form of protocols. Textual records were often supplemented with visual documentation, initially drawings, and later photographs: 'The arts of design [...]' — Richard Gough stressed — 'are the happiest vehicles of antiquarian knowledge', and 'A pencil is as essential as a pen to illustrate antiquities'.[24] Although no professional artist was present at the first exhumation of Edward I's corpse in 1774, Gough made sketches. These were then used to produce professional drawings, perhaps intended as the basis for engravings (which were never made) [illus. 1].[25]

[23] Compilation based on Aidan Dodson, *The Royal Tombs of Great Britain: An Illustrated History*, London, 2004.

[24] Richard Gough, *Anecdotes of British Topography or, an Historical Account of what has been done for illustrating the Topographical Antiquities of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, 1768, p. XVIII.

[25] The authorship of these drawings is attributed to William Blake, then apprenticing with James Basire, the official engraver of the Society of Antiquaries. Regarding



Illus. 1: William Blake (?), *Opening of the Tomb of Edward I on 2 May 1774*, 1774, drawing-pen and ink on paper, Society of Antiquaries of London, Bridgeman Images SOA1765221

Both the written accounts and the visual documentation were intended — and this is the third constant in the scenario of exhumation — for public circulation. Although they sometimes remained in the form of manuscripts and drawings and were distributed among a limited circle of scholars, they often appeared in print as separate small works, chapters in antiquarian studies, and finally as newspaper articles.[26]

This entire rather elaborate procedure was developed primarily for defensive purposes. Namely, it was intended to safeguard against accusations of sacrilege (hence the presence of priests); of devastation and robbery (hence the assistance of local authorities); and lastly, of dilettantism and incompetence (hence the detailed written and visual accounts and their matter-of-fact, dispassionate tone). This was because, almost from the beginning, antiquaries had to contend with ridicule (the persona of the antiquary had been the subject of satire since the end of the sixteenth century)[27] and criticism, and also defend their cause and distance

the (difficult) relationship between artists and antiquaries in the long nineteenth century, see Sam Smiles, 'Art and Antiquity in the Long Nineteenth Century', in *Visions of Antiquity*, pp. 123–45.

[26] See, for example, Joseph Ayloffe, Bart, 'An Account of the Body of King Edward the First', *Archaeologia, or, Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity*, 3, 1775, pp. 376–413; Valentine Green, *An Account of the Discovery of the Body of King John, in the Cathedral Church of Worcester, July 17th, 1797, from Authentic Communications; with Illustrations and Remarks*, London, 1797.

[27] Piggott, *Ancient Britons*, pp. 14–18; Sweet, *Antiquaries*, pp. 4–5.

themselves from undignified behaviour.[28] Already Weever, when mentioning the disturbances that occurred during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI in his *Ancient funerall monuments*, engaged in an unrelenting condemnation of the grave destroyers and grave-robbers operating at the time, calling the devastation of burial sites 'the foulest and most inhumane action of those Times'.[29] Antiquaries went to great lengths to avoid being recognized as *tomb-breakers*, *grave-rakers* and *gold-finders*, all of whom Weever censured. As we shall see, these efforts did not always prove successful.

In their defence, antiquaries argued first and foremost that their activities resulted in the growth of knowledge and that the exploration of graves, like their other undertakings, served to improve the understanding of the past. 'The proper business of an Antiquary', wrote William Borlase in 1769, 'is to collect what is dispersed, more fully to unfold what is already discovered, to examine controverted points, to settle what is doubtful and, by the authority of Monuments and Histories, to throw light upon the Manners, Arts, Languages, Policies and Religion of past Ages'.[30] But what knowledge exactly was expected to be gained through the exhumation of remains, and in what ways would it go beyond that gleaned from other sources, primarily written? Gough gave perhaps the most succinct answer to these questions in his *Anecdotes of British Topography*. He pointed out the need to confront textual records with material remains: 'Whoever sits down to compile the history and antiquities of a country or a town, should confirm the evidence he collects from books and MSS. by inspection of places described'.[31]

III

Antiquarianism developed in Poland late, only in the last decades of the eighteenth century, and under the unique conditions of the crisis of the state, to which the authorities tried to react by the introduction of systemic and economic reforms. Against the backdrop of these political efforts,

[28] For example, Francis Grose's extensive preface to *The Antiquarian Repertory: A Miscellaneous Assemblage of Topography, History, Biography, Customs, and Manners* (London, 1807–09) can be considered in its entirety as a defence of antiquaries and their output. Grose presented the work of antiquaries as indispensable to clergymen, lawyers, statesmen, military leaders and gentlemen in general.

[29] Weever, *Ancient funerall monuments*, p. 51.

[30] William Borlase, *Antiquities Historical and Monumental of the County of Cornwall*, 2nd edn, London, 1769, p. V.

[31] Gough, *Anecdotes*, p. XIX.

another less spectacular but equally important battle was taking place, namely a battle for a new vision of the past, a new collective memory, and a new historical awareness. The issue at stake was a redefinition of the concept of 'the nation', of its past, and, if one may allow oneself to use a somewhat ahistorical notion, of its identity. It is in this context, too, that we should analyse those actions and efforts which may be described as 'antiquarian' and which were undertaken in the circle of King Stanisław August Poniatowski, the Commission of National Education, and later, after the collapse of the state, the Warsaw Society of Friends of Science and similar societies founded in other cities of the former Commonwealth.

Adam Naruszewicz began to work on his grand historiographic project, namely the first synthesis of Polish national history; Jan Albertrandi, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, Franciszek Bohomolec and Tadeusz Czacki began their smaller respective studies.[32] In 1772, a plan was announced by Michał Mniszech to found Musaeum Polonicum, that is the first research and exhibition institution in Poland with a distinctly local profile.[33] A new genre of poetic travel accounts, whose authors reported on and described direct, personal experiences of visiting the monuments of the Polish past, was born in 1782 thanks to Ignacy Krasicki.[34] A plan to take inventory of Polish historical and artistic monuments was announced by Xawery Zubowski in 1785.[35] A drawn inventory of historical buildings was commissioned by the king and carried out over many years by the painter Zygmunt Vogel.[36]

The latter of these initiatives was continued in the nineteenth century under the auspices of the Warsaw Society of the Friends of Science and foreshadowed subsequent artistic undertakings focused on cataloguing, such as Michał Stachowicz's album *Monumenta Regum Poloniae*

[32] For more on Polish historiography of the era, see Andrzej Feliks Grabski, *Myśl historyczna polskiego oświecenia*, Warsaw, 1976.

[33] Michał Jerzy Mniszech, 'Myśli względem założenia Musaeum Polonicum', *Zabawy Przyiemne y Pożyteczne z różnych autorów zebrane*, 11, 1775, 2, pp. 211–26.

[34] Ignacy Krasicki, *Opisanie podróży z Warszawy do Biłgoraja w liście do Jaśnie Oświeconego Książęcia JMci Stanisława Ponitowskiego*, Warsaw, 1782. The genre was later represented by, among others, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz's *Podróże historyczne*, which he made in the years 1811–19, although the work was not published until 1857. Another work that was of particular importance for shaping the historical topography of old Poland was Tomasz Święcicki's *Opis starożytnej Polski*, whose subsequent editions were printed in 1816, 1828 and 1861.

[35] Xawery Zubowski, *Kollekcya starożytnych i z tegoczasowych osobliwości w kraiu y za kraiem znayduiących się Naród Polski interesujących*, Warsaw, 1785.

[36] Zygmunt Vogel, *Zbiór widoków sławniejszych pamiątek narodowych jako to zwalisk, zamków, świątyń, nagrobków, starożytnych budowli i miejsc pamiętnych w Polsce*, Warsaw, 1806. For a more lengthy treatment of Vogel's project, see: Krystyna Sroczyńska, *Zygmunt Vogel: Rysownik gabinetowy Stanisława Augusta*, Wrocław, 1969.

Cracoviensia, which was finally published in the years 1822–27,[37] and the increasingly numerous graphical 'picturesque' albums.[38] Also, many travel and history books devoted to the history and the monuments of the former Polish provinces were published at the time, including Kazimierz Puchała's *Opis historyczno-malarski departamentu Lubelskiego* of 1815 and *Opis historyczno-malarski województwa Sandomierskiego* of 1823; Ambroży Grabowski's *Historyczny opis miasta Krakowa i jego okolic* of 1822; and Wincenty Hipolit Gawarecki's *Opis historyczno-topograficzny ziemi wyszogrodzkiej* of 1823.

Although almost none of these earliest antiquarian initiatives were completed, and many never got beyond the project phase, even in this flawed form they served an important purpose. They enriched the cult of historical heroes (rulers, military leaders, warriors), which was already well established in Polish culture, with a sensitivity to monuments and all material traces of the past. Antiquarianism developed the ability to contemplate them personally and helped develop a language to describe the experience evoked by this type of 'encounter with the past'. The aforementioned processes provide the proper context for the earliest grave explorations in Poland. Of course, they were also fostered by the changes that had been taking place since the mid-eighteenth century in religiosity, funerary culture, and modes of cultural response to death. These included those described by Philippe Ariès as the reorientation of attention from 'one's own death' to 'thy death' and the consequent cult of graves and cemeteries which developed in the post-Enlightenment era and which acquired — almost as soon as it appeared — a public character ('extending from the individual to society'), while at the same time becoming politicized and nationalized, that is inscribed in the myths of permanence and continuity constructed by the emerging modern nations.[39] Thus, the graves of national heroes became the object of special

[37] Stachowicz's catalogue, comprising drawings of sarcophagi, coffins and royal tombstones at Wawel Cathedral, was created in the years 1814–17. Contrary to original intentions, it was published not in Cracow, but in Warsaw, with the support of Stanisław Kostka Potocki, while the engravings — based on Stachowicz's drawings — were made by Fryderyk Krzysztof Dietrich. See Jerzy Banach, 'Michała Stachowicza *Monumenta Regum Poloniae Cracoviensia*', *Folia Historiae Artium*, 12, 1976, pp. 131–56; Zbigniew Michalczyk, '*Szkicownik* Michała Stachowicza oraz nieznane materiały dotyczące Gabinetu Historycznego Jana Pawła Woronicza i *Monumenta Regum Poloniae Cracoviensia*', *Studia Waweliana*, 14, 2009, pp. 105–30.

[38] See Aleksandra Bernatowicz, *Malarze w Warszawie czasów Stanisława Augusta: Status — aspiracje — twórczość*, Warsaw, 2016, pp. 310–13.

[39] Philippe Ariès, *Rozważania o historii śmierci*, transl. Katarzyna Marczewska, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 68–83 (French ed. 1975).

attention and sophisticated cultural practices. These pan-European (or at least Western-European) processes were superimposed with local Polish needs and desires, which flowed from Poland's specific political situation. As noted by Ewa Grzęda, in the aftermath of the crisis of the state and its subsequent collapse, 'the issues and topics of death came to occupy a special place in the nation's consciousness and culture [...], growing over the course of this period into a constitutive feature of national culture. A unique role was played by [...] the cult of ancient and modern graves'.[40] Nevertheless, all these phenomena played a supporting role — at best conditioning, but not causal — for the issue at hand, that is the exploration of royal tombs. The decisive impulse came from the antiquarian thirst for knowledge derived from material evidence of the past, laden with patriotic emotion and a collecting fever.

IV

The history of antiquarian explorations of the graves of Polish kings begins with the visit of Tadeusz Czacki — an education activist, historian and bibliophile, serving at the time as starosta of Nowogród and member of the Crown Treasury Commission — to Wawel in the spring of 1791.[41] Czacki had travelled to Cracow on an official mission to assess, among other things, the state of preservation of the royal castle and to draw up a project for introducing governmental supervision over the building.[42] He was therefore equipped with royal plenipotentiary powers, presumably including permission to open the royal coffins. There was, in fact, already a precedent for the latter. In 1784, on the occasion of the transposition of the remains of John III Sobieski to the vaults of Cracow Cathedral (to be precise, to St Leonard's Crypt, which had been specially renovated for the purpose), Stanisław August Poniatowski ordered the coffin of Sigismund III, located in the crypt under the Vasa Chapel, to be opened. From then on, the casket

[40] Ewa Grzęda, *Będziesz z chlubą wskazywać synków twoich groby... Mitologizacja mogił bohaterów w literaturze i kulturze polskiej lat 1795–1863*, Wrocław, 2011, p. 15.

[41] The elaboration of an in-depth biography of Czacki, which would cover the diverse areas of his comprehensive activity, remains a postulate. See Antoni Knot, *Tadeusz Czacki*, in *PSB*, vol. 4, ed. Władysław Konopczyński et al. Cracow, 1938, pp. 144–46; Ewa Danowska, *Tadeusz Czacki, 1765–1813: Na pograniczu epok i ziem*, Cracow, 2006; Cecylia Langier, *Tadeusz Czacki: Pisarz, patriota, działacz oświatowy*, Częstochowa, 2007.

[42] The results of Czacki's activities included, among others, a report on the condition of the castle, drawn up for the Crown Treasury Commission and dated 26 April 1791, and *Opisanie zamku i katedry na Wawelu* from the same year, 1791. See Ryszard Skowron, 'Związki Tadeusza Czackiego z Wawelem. Część I: "Zamek ten [...] godzien jest, aby baczność rządową zastanowił"', *Studia Waweliana*, 8, 1999, pp. 179–93.

remained unsealed, and Sigismund's corpse could be inspected by those who were granted permission. In 1785, it was viewed by Canon Kazimierz Bodurkiewicz, and in June 1787 by Stanisław August himself,[43] who thus became, whether he was aware of it or not, an heir to the distant tradition of royal exploration of the tombs of kings [illus. 2].[44]

Illus. 2: Fryderyk Dietrich according to Michał Stachowicz, *Stanisław August Visiting the Royal Tombs at Wawel*, plate in *Monumenta Regum Poloniae Cracoviensia*, Warsaw, 1827

[43] See Adam Naruszewicz, *Diariusz podróży Najjaśniejszego Stanisława Augusta króla polskiego na Ukrainę i bytności w Krakowie, aż do powrotu do Warszawy dnia 22 lipca roku 1787*, Warsaw, 1787, p. 219.

[44] The origins of this tradition lie in Emperor Otto III's visit to Aachen on Whitsun of the year 1000 and his 'miraculous discovery' of the tomb (complete with the perfectly preserved body) of Charlemagne beneath the floor of the courtyard of the palace chapel (see Knut Görich, 'Otto III. öffnet das Karlsgrab in Aachen: Überlegungen zu Heiligenverehrung, Heiligsprechung und Traditionsbildung', *Vorträge und Forschungen der Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für mittelalterliche Geschichte*, 46, 1998, pp. 381–430; John F. Moffitt, 'Karlsgrab: The Site and Significance of Charlemagne's Sepulcher in Aachen', *Quidditas*, 30, 2009, Article 5). Charlemagne's tomb was reopened in 1165 by Frederick Barbarossa on the occasion of his canonization. The imperial remains were then removed from the sarcophagus and placed in a reliquary. Just two years earlier, the English King Henry II had personally removed the remains of Edward the Confessor — proclaimed a saint — from his tomb in Westminster Abbey and placed them in a reliquary.

There is nothing to suggest that the coffin of Sigismund III was opened because of scholarly curiosity. And Czacki clearly stated that he 'wished to see the Jagiellonian family' because of his antiquarian interests. His declared intention was 'that I would at one and the same time learn to study the traces of antiquity of this capital city, respect the works of my ancestors, and gain new insights into the greatness or mistakes of past ages'.

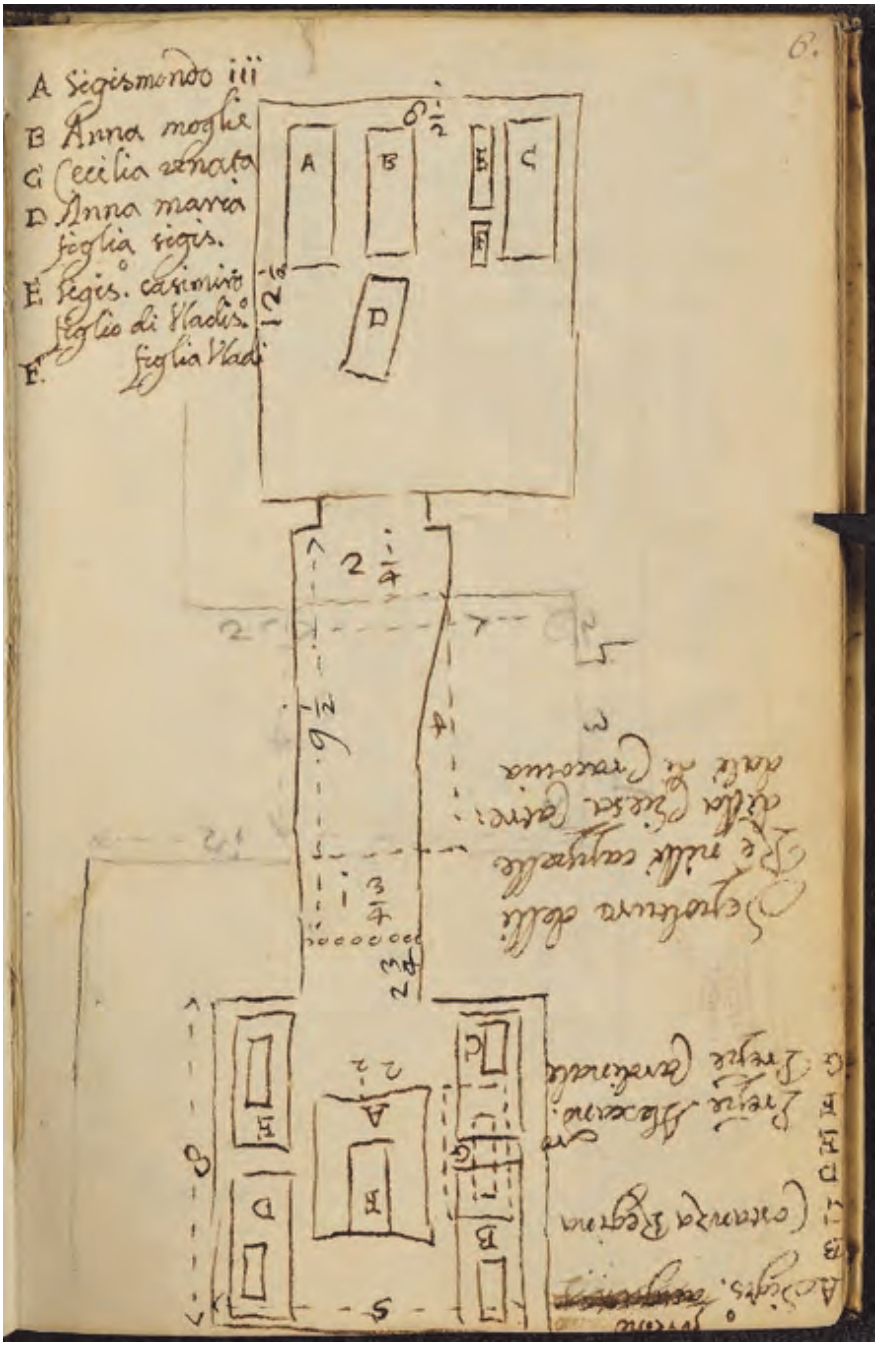
At the time, the caskets of kings (and of royal wives and progeny) were placed in two crypts connected by a narrow passageway and located beneath Sigismund's Chapel and the Vasa Chapel, in all probability in the same state of disorder that was recorded by Giovanni Battista Gisleni in his drawing from the mid-seventeenth century [illus. 3].[45] The body of Sigismund I the Old was laid in a stone sarcophagus, while the corpses of subsequent monarchs were placed in tin or copper coffins.[46]

The course of Czacki's exploration was broadly similar to that of English antiquarian exhumations. Although no official commission or committee was established, Czacki did not act alone. He was assisted by the builder Józef Le Brun, the Cathedral Custodian Benedykt Trzebiński, and in all likelihood Members of the Chapter. Czacki drew up a report on his inspection in the form of letters addressed to Stanisław August Poniatowski and Adam Naruszewicz, to which he most probably enclosed documentary drawings (no longer extant). Interestingly, he asked Naruszewicz to copy-edit the correspondence as he expected it to be published, which indeed took place soon. Already in 1791, the account — although it appears without the corrections of the learned bishop — was printed by *Gazeta Narodowa i Obca*.[47]

[45] The crypt beneath Sigismund's Chapel contained the caskets of Sigismund I (died 1548); Sigismund Augustus (died 1572); Anna Jagiellon (died 1596); Barbara Zápolya (died 1515); and of the royal children Catherine (died 1594); John Casimir (died 1608); and Anna Constance (died 1616); while the crypt under the Vasa Chapel held the coffins of Sigismund III (died 1632); and his wives Anna (died 1598) and Constance (died 1631); of the royal children Anna Maria (died 1600); and Alexander Charles (died 1634); of Ladislaus IV (died 1648); Cecilia Renata (died 1644); and of the royal children Maria Anna Izabela (died 1642); and Sigismund Casimir (died 1647); and of John Casimir (died 1672); Louise Marie (died 1667); John Sigismund (died 1652); Marie Casimire (died 1716); and Augustus II the Strong (died 1733). See Andrzej Witko, 'Groby królewskie w katedrze na Wawelu u schyłku XVIII stulecia', in *Katedra krakowska w czasach nowożytnych (XVI–XVIII w.)*, Cracow, 1999, pp. 171–80.

[46] On the latter more extensively see Katarzyna Kolendo-Korczak and Agnieszka Trzos, *Sarkofagi metalowe w grobach królewskich na Wawelu*, Katowice and Cracow, 2022; earlier literature ibidem.

[47] 'Opisanie grobów dawnych królów polskich w Krakowie przez P. Czackiego starostę nowogrodzkiego, komisarza Komisyi Skarbowej Koronnej do J. W. Naruszewicza, biskupa łuckiego i brzeskiego litewskiego przesłane', *Gazeta Narodowa i Obca*, 1791, no. 65, p. 262, no. 67, p. 270, no. 68, p. 274. The text was subsequently quoted, in whole or in



Illus. 3: Giovanni Battista Gisleni, *Plan of the Crypts Beneath Sigismund's Chapel and the Vasa Chapel*, drawing, c. 1649, in Giovanni Battista Gisleni, *Architekturstudien aus Krakau, Plock, Wilna, Warschau*, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Ca 67, card 6

In the letter-report, Czacki depicted his explorations of the coffins of the kings from the Jagiellonian dynasty: Sigismund I the Old (1467–1548, reigning from 1507 to 1548); Sigismund Augustus (1520–72, reigning from 1530 to 1572); and Anna Jagiellon (1523–96, queen of Poland from 1575). He devoted most of his attention to the first of these rulers. While doing so, he went to considerable lengths to ensure that there was no doubt that he was driven by a desire for historical cognizance supported by a patriotic impulse. The description is matter-of-fact, precise, and focused not on the royal corpses (which, unlike English antiquaries, he presented cursorily, indeed omitting the female remains of Anna Jagiellon altogether) but on their robes and, in particular, the objects accompanying them. The latter (especially insignia and jewels) were given a very detailed presentation, with the author meticulously transcribing the inscriptions affixed thereto, treating them as materials for Naruszewicz's historical analysis. In fact, his first visit to the crypt immediately resulted in a scholarly discovery. Namely, he stumbled upon the tiny casket of John Albert, the at that time unknown son of Sigismund and Bona, who was born and died in 1527, noting that 'This discovery will add one footnote to the genealogy and history of Sigismund I'. Other findings would result from further studies, including, as he noted: 'it is necessary to conduct a study to determine why the medal found on Anna's body was minted'.

Czacki's first initiative immediately set a *sui generis* standard procedure for at least several decades. Subsequent antiquarian explorations of royal tombs followed a very similar scenario, with the only difference being that it was steadily more formalized and consciously, even ostentatiously, observed. At the same time, antiquarian explorations became 'public' events in the full sense of the word.

Although the opening of the crypt containing the remains of Władysław Herman (c. 1043–1102) and Bolesław III Wrymouth (1086–1138) in Płock Cathedral on 22 July 1825, initiated by Bishop Adam Prażmowski, was primarily a religious or religious-political event,[48] owing to the

fragments; for the first time as early as 1817 in *Gazeta Warszawska* (no. 15, pp. 300–01), and then in Ambroży Grabowski's *Kraków i jego okolice*, Cracow, 1823, pp. 295–304 (also in subsequent editions of the book). All quotations after *Gazeta Narodowa i Obca*.

[48] The account of the Canon of the Collegiate Church of Pułtusk and Penitentiary of the Cathedral of Płock, Wawrzyniec Wszerecz (1583–1614), informs us that during the rebuilding of the cathedral in the mid-sixteenth century, Bishop Andrzej Noskowski buried in the newly built crypt at the entrance to the presbytery the bones of Władysław I Herman, Bolesław III Wrymouth and a dozen or so other princes of the Piast dynasty, which until then had probably rested beneath the church floor near the main altar. In 1818, on the initiative of Bishop Adam Prażmowski, 'who intended to honour these Monarchs', a public collection was announced for the erection of

interest of the Płock Scientific Society (of which Bishop Prażmowski was president),[49] and above all the activity of Wincenty Hipolit Gawarecki, it also acquired an antiquarian trait. Gawarecki, a lawyer by profession as well as the Royal Prosecutor at the Płock Civil Tribunal and a regional historian by avocation, was not only present at the exhumation of the corpses but also gave a detailed account of the proceedings, which was subsequently published.[50] He preceded it with a historical disquisition dedicated to the two monarchs and then went on to describe in succession: the search for the burial chamber; how it was accessed once finally found ('after digging all day, at around 6 o'clock in the evening'); the appearance of the corpses ('the bones [...] were of a dark yellow colour, and two heads and a few bones were purple') and the few objects found with them (the author explained this dearth by 'the changes occurring over time and the national events that took place since the deaths of Władysław Herman and Bolesław III Wrymouth'). Finally, he meticulously enumerated the witnesses present at the opening of the chamber, credible on account of their titles and offices, as guarantors of the appropriateness of the undertaking. Namely,

> at the time of finding these venerable remains, the following were present in the Church: JW. JX. Prażmowski, Bishop, Senator, Knight of Polish Orders; WW. JXX. Łukasz Przyłuski, Jan Staszkiewicz, Józef Moczarski, Sylwester Jaworowski, and Szymon Gutkowski, Canons of the Cathedral; Wincenty Hipolit Gawarecki, Royal Prosecutor at the Tribunal of the Voivodeship of Płock, Knight of the Order of S. Stanisław, Third Class, the author of the present letter, Kajetan Morikoni, Vice-Chancellor of the School of the Płock Voivodeship, Count Gabriel Podoski, Knight of the Order of S. Stanislaus, First Class, heir to the estate of Rusinowo and others,

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a marble monument to the rulers, which was in fact built in 1825. The ceremonial placement of the remains in it took place on 12 September of that year. Quoted from Wincenty Hipolit Gawarecki, *Pisma historyczne*, Warsaw, 1824, pp. 47–48. The political dimension of the erection of the monument has been noted by Mikołaj Getka-Kenig, *Pomniki publiczne i dyskurs zasługi w dobie 'wskrzeszonej' Polski lat 1807–1830*, Cracow, 2017, pp. 215–21. The tomb was reopened and studied in the spring of 1972; see Włodzimierz Szafrański, 'Widziałem kości monarchów polskich: Badania naukowe zawartości grobu piastowskiego w katedrze płockiej', *Notatki Płockie*, 18, 1973, 2 (71), pp. 23–32.

[49] The translation of the monarchal corpses was the topic of a session of the Society held on 13 September 1825. During the meeting there was a reading, among others, of Augustyn Żdżarski's *Wiersz z okoliczności wynalezienia zwłok Władysława Hermana i Bolesława Krzywoustego oraz uroczystego odsłonienia w katedrze płockiej pomnika wzniesionego dla tych królów przez JW. Adama Prażmowskiego biskupa płockiego, senatora Król[estwa] Polsk[iego] 12 września 1825*.

[50] Wincenty Hipolit Gawarecki, *Groby królów polskich w Płocku*, Warsaw, 1827, pp. 15–21; all quotations ibidem.

> Ignazy Hincz, Voivodeship Builder, Knight of the Order of S. Stanislaus, Fourth Class, and of the Polish Military Cross, and a large number of school youths. And after the discovery of the grave, various Judicial and Administrative Officials arrived.

The 'citizens of Płock of both sexes' also came in large numbers because 'everyone indeed wanted to see the venerable monuments of antiquity'. The exhumation and burial also became the subject of press reports.[51]

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the royal tombs in the Wawel Cathedral were opened quite frequently, always on the occasion of restoration work, as the royal coffins were mostly in a very poor condition.[52] In 1814, the caskets of the Princesses Anna Maria and Anna Maria Izabela were restored, being opened in the course of work. In 1838, while putting in order the church space near the tomb of Władysław I Łokietek, the burial chamber was partially uncovered, but it was not opened, and those present looked inside through a knocked-out opening. Towards the end of the 1830s, the coffin of Augustus II the Strong was opened and refurbished. In 1840, several more caskets were restored, including those of Anna Jagiellon, Ladislaus IV, Cecilia Renata, Sigismund Augustus and Barbara Zápolya, combining restoration work with exploration of the tombs. Ambroży Grabowski, a bookseller and historian from Cracow, was very much involved in these works, and it is him we owe a detailed report on the restoration works and an antiquarian description of the royal remains and the objects found in the coffins.[53] Shortly after the middle of the century, the remains of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki[54] were transferred to a new coffin, displayed in St Leonard's Crypt; and in 1868 the casket of Sigismund Augustus was reopened and once again refurbished. Finally, a large-scale, systematic restoration of the royal tombs was commenced in 1873.[55] This resulted in the opening of the following coffins: of Anne of Austria, Queen of Poland (6 July 1873); Constance of Austria (13 August); Sigismund III (3 September); and Anna Jagiellon and Barbara Zápolya (15 May 1874). Work continued until the spring of 1875, and Stephen Báthory's casket was opened and refurbished two years later

[51] *Gazeta Warszawska*, no. 146, 12 September 1825, p. 2006; no. 150, 19 September 1825, pp. 2054–55; *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 215, 10 September 1825, p. 974.

[52] More extensively on this topic; see: Rożek, *Wawel i Skałka*, pp. 127–61.

[53] Ambroży Grabowski, *Starożytnicze wiadomości o Krakowie*, Cracow, 1852, pp. 20–22; Ambroży Grabowski, *Groby, trumny i pomniki królów polskich w podziemiach i wnętrzu Katedry krakowskiej na Wawelu*, Cracow, 1868, pp. 33–34, 60–63, 92–100.

[54] 'Grób Michała Wiśniowieckiego, króla Polskiego', *Czas*, no. 162, 16 July 1856, pp. 1–2.

[55] See Andrzej Witko, 'Nowe urządzenie krypt królewskich na Wawelu w latach siedemdziesiątych XIX wieku', *Studia Waweliana*, 1, 1992, pp. 97–111.

(20 July 1877). The explorations were meticulously protocolled, including through documentary drawings (although these presented the coffins and their details, not the bodies of the monarchs [illus. 4]).[56] In January 1887, on the occasion of extensive restoration work in the cathedral, Queen Jadwiga's burial chamber was uncovered and examined.[57]

Illus. 4: Documentary drawing of the sarcophagus of Ladislaus IV, 1875, Museum of the Jagiellonian University, Łepkowski folder, 1627/II 3

[56] Documentation is kept today at the Jagiellonian University Museum (including minutes under catalogue numbers 1614/II, 2951-56/II, 2959-63/II). See Katarzyna Kolendo-Korczak, 'Dokumentacja rysunkowa sarkofagów królewskich z katedry na Wawelu ze zbiorów Muzeum Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego i jej wykorzystanie podczas prac konserwatorskich', *Opuscula Musealia*, 27, 2020, pp. 23–37.

[57] Mieczysław Tobiasz, 'Odkrycie i opis grobu królowej Jadwigi w 1887 r.', *Polonia Sacra*, 2, 1949, 3, pp. 233–44. The tomb was re-examined in 1949–50; see Mieczysław Tobiasz, 'Otwarcie grobu królowej Jadwigi w dniach 12–14 lipca 1949 r.', *Polonia Sacra*, 2, 1949, 3, pp. 245–58; Adam Bochnak, 'Groby królowej Jadwigi i królewicza Kazimierza Jagiellończyka w katedrze wawelskiej', *Studia do Dziejów Wawelu*, 1968, 3, pp. 149–73; Helena Hryszko, *Tkaniny z grobu królowej Jadwigi*, Warsaw, 2007. It is worth adding that in the first decades of the century, there must also have been arbitrary explorations, which remained outside any official control. At the time, it was difficult (but not impossible) to enter the crypts, but whoever succeeded — as the memoirs of Klementyna Hoffmanowa (*Dzieła Klementyny z Tańskich Hofmanowej. Wydanie nowe*, ed. Narcyza Żmichowska, 12 vols, Warsaw, 1875–77, vol. 5: *Opisy niektórych okolic Polski*, 1876, p. 238) and Aleksander Jełowiecki (*Moje wspomnienia*, Poznań, 1877, p. 59) attest — gained easy access to the royal remains. Perhaps this is the provenance of the funerary relics — if these are authentic — held in the collections of certain Polish museums. See, among

V

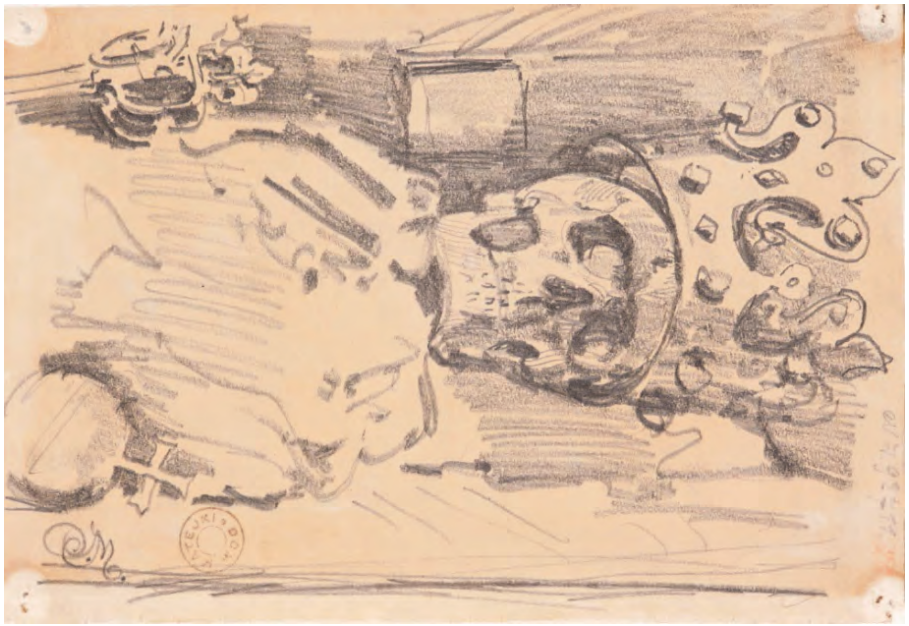
In the meantime, however, an event of watershed importance for antiquarian explorations of royal tombs took place: on 14 June 1869 the burial chamber of Casimir the Great (1310–70, reigned 1333–70) was discovered. Its examination marked the first time that a full inspection protocol was observed. It was also the first time that a study of royal tombs gained media status in the proper sense of the word. And for the first time, a heated debate flared up concerning the exploration, bringing together as if in a microcosm all the key problems of antiquarian sepulchral archaeology.

The discovery in question was made by accident. During the restoration of Casimir the Great's tomb, the relief panels decorating its sides were removed. Unwittingly or deliberately — accounts are not entirely consistent on the matter — the chipped brick offered a glimpse into the interior of the tomb where, as it turned out, the king's body was situated.[58] This was unexpected, as Casimir was thought to have been buried under the church floor. The hole was immediately bricked in, and the discovery was reported to the Cracow Chapter and the Cracow Scientific Society. The tomb was reopened the following day in the presence of a dozen or so persons, including the Cathedral Custodian Father Sylwester Grzybowski, Members of the Chapter, representatives of the scholarly and artistic community (among them the physician Józef Majer, former Vice-Chancellor of the Jagiellonian University and at the time President of the Cracow Scientific Society, and Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts), as well as members of the local authorities (including the

others, 'a shred of King Casimir the Great's vestment and rotten wood (in the shape of a cross) from his coffin, taken during the uncovering of his grave at Wawel in Cracow', preserved in an album created by Franciszek Maria Eysymont, presently in the collections of the National Museum in Cracow (catalogue number MNK IV-V-1877; see Andrzej Betlej, 'Naufragio ereptis?', in *Sztuka kresów wschodnich*, vol. 8, ed. Andrzej Betlej, Agata Dworzak and Anna Markiewicz, Cracow, 2024, pp. 11–62); or alleged fragments of robes from the graves of Sigismund Augustus, Anna Jagiellon, Stephen Báthory and Sigismund III Vasa, a strand of the hair of Cecilia Renata, and a splinter from the casket of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki in the collections of the Wawel Royal Castle (catalogue number ZKnW-PZS, inventory number 10391–10397; I would like to thank Professor Andrzej Betlej and Dr Weronika Rostworowska-Kenig for bringing these relics to my attention).

[58] See, among others Władysław Ludwik Anczyc, *Pamiątka odkrycia zwłok Kazimierza Wielkiego z dodaniem wiadomości o życiu tego króla spisanych dla ludu*, Cracow, 1869, pp. V–XXIII; Józef Szujski, 'Wydobycie zwłok Kazimierza Wielkiego i przyszły jego pogrzeb', *Przegląd Polski*, July 1869, booklet 1, p. 104; 'Die Auffindung der Überreste des Königs Kasimir des Grossen von Polen in der Domkirche von Krakau', *Mittheilungen der K.K. Central-Commission zu Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*, 14, 1869, pp. XCVII–XCVIII.

Cracow Member of Parliament Mikołaj Zyblikiewicz, and Józef Szujski, Member of Parliament for the Sądecki Region), and finally, members of the restoration committee — the Cathedral Curate Father Ignacy Patyński, Józef Łepkowski, a professor of archaeology at the Jagiellonian University, Paweł Popiel, the Government Conservator of Monuments, and the painter Jan Matejko. The latter two 'did not leave the open tomb, this in order to gain moral certainty that not even the smallest particle of the corpse or the objects located in the tomb may have been lost'.[59] Matejko made a series of documentary drawings [illus. 5, 6], and Walery Rzewuski took photographs

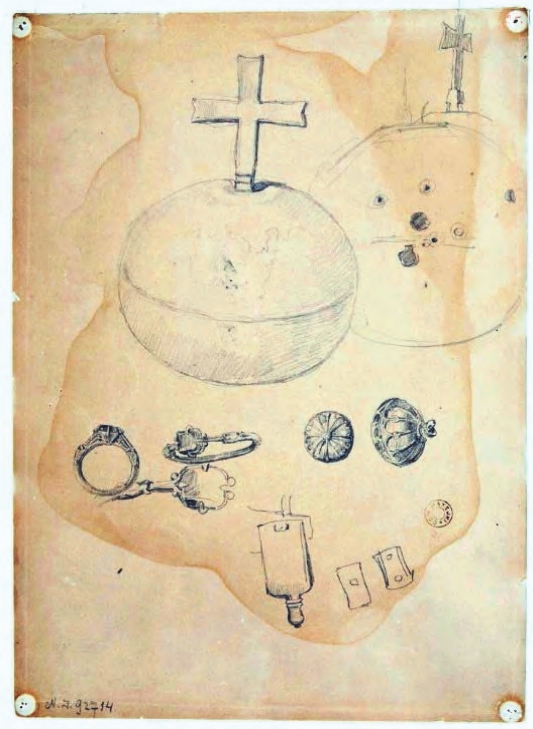


Illus. 5: Jan Matejko, *The Corpse of King Casimir the Great with the Royal Insignia*, 1869, drawing, pencil on paper, 16 × 11 cm, National Museum in Cracow, catalogue no. MNK IX-243

[illus. 7]. The tomb was whereupon walled in and sealed. Following animated discussions, it was decided on 21 June to reopen the grave, ceremoniously remove Casimir's corpse (Antoni Kozubowski and Józef Majer then made medical measurements of the remains),[60] place it in a new coffin, and

[59] *Czas*, no. 133, 17 June 1869, p. 1.

[60] Józef Majer, 'Postać Kazimierza Wielkiego, według wymiarów dokonanych przy przykładaniu szczątków jego w d. 7 lipca 1869 oznaczona', *Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego Krakowskiego*, 14 (39), 1870, pp. 223–43. See also Isidore Kopernicki, 'Physical Characters of Casimir the Great', *Journal of Anthropology*, 1, 1870, 1, pp. 51–56.



Illus. 6: Jan Matejko, *Objects from the Tomb of Casimir the Great — an Orb, Two Rings, Two Buttons, Spur Buckles*, 1869, pencil on cardboard, 30.0 × 21.5 cm, National Museum in Cracow, catalogue no. MNK IX-637

finally, on 8 July 1869, with great pomp, but not without controversy, rebury it.[61]

All the work was carried out collectively, with each stage being documented by detailed minutes (authored by Łepkowski) that were subsequently published in the newspapers. Interestingly, a fierce debate flared up in the press, the essence of which may, at first glance, appear surprising. The exhumation committee — which in the opinion of its critics was made up not of scholarly and political authorities but of 'grave robbers' and 'amateur gravediggers who intended to gain historical fame by means of the grave of Casimir the Great' — was accused of showing insufficient respect for the royal remains and of almost desecrating the monarch's burial site; and above all of stealing and privatizing national memorabilia.[62]

Indeed, the axis of the dispute was the question of the future of the objects found in the grave. Namely from the burial chamber, 'besides the bones, the following were recovered: a gilded copper crown, a silver sceptre [...] with three leaves of its top; an orb (of the world) with a cross (without stones), made of gilded silver; a gold ring with an amethyst; gilded copper spurs; ten silver buttons from a gown; fragments of material; and lastly the remains of hair, coffin nails, and the rotted remnants of a casket'.[63] All of these artefacts, along with the king's body, were

[61] For a detailed elaboration of this topic, see Józef Buszko, *Uroczystości Kazimierzowskie na Wawelu w roku 1869*, Cracow, 1970.

[62] 'Zwłoki Kazimierza Wielkiego, berło i korona', *Kraj*, no. 92, 23 June 1869, p. 1.

[63] *Czas*, no. 140, 23 June 1869, p. 2.

Illus. 7: *Sepulchral Insignia of Casimir the Great*, glass negative on the basis of a photograph by Walery Rzewuski from 1869, National Museum in Cracow, catalogue no. MNK XX-k-2970

removed from the tomb and placed in a temporary coffin, and 'the removal and handing over was performed in accordance with strict protocol'.[64] Controversy also arose with respect to their subsequent fate: should they all, as some wanted, be returned with the corpse to the tomb, or, as others advocated, should at least some be moved to the Cathedral treasury or the museum of the Scientific Society. The main Cracow newspapers, *Czas* and *Kraj*, normally polemical towards each other, unanimously published a sharply-worded 'Protest przeciw rozdzieleniu pamiątek z grobowca Króla Kazimierza Wielkiego' (Protest against the Separation of Memorabilia from the Tomb of King Casimir the Great), in which the planned removal of objects was explicitly called 'sacrilegious plunder', 'an unforgivable crime', and 'an insult [to] the history of both the Great King and the Great Nation'.[65] The position expressed in the 'Protest' prevailed: the remains exhumed from the grave retained their integrity and were reinterred in the royal tomb.

To understand the essence of this dispute, we need to go back to Tadeusz Czacki's first exploration and introduce an additional theme — that of the links between sepulchral archaeology and the collecting culture.

[64] *Czas*, no. 139, 33 June 1869, p. 2.

[65] *Czas*, no. 141, 24 June 1869, pp. 2–3; *Kraj*, no. 93, 24 June 1869, p. 1. The text also appeared as a stand-alone pamphlet under the even more expressive title 'Protest przeciw rozszarpaniu pamiątek z Grobowca Kazimierza Wielkiego' (Protest against the Ripping Apart of Memorabilia from the Tomb of King Casimir the Great).

VI

Czacki's letter-cum-report (cited above) is interesting not only for what it contains but also for what it passes over. Having concluded his account of grave explorations, Czacki proceeded to describe his search conducted in the cathedral library. Without any inhibitions — indeed almost with pride — he wrote about the several dozen rare books and manuscripts that he found 'in cabinets saturated with grease and dust' and which he took with him from Cracow.[66] However, he completely failed to mention that he also carried away some objects removed from the graves — not only from the Jagiellonian royal coffins mentioned in the account written for Naruszewicz, but also from those of Sigismund III and his two wives, Anne of Austria and Constance of Austria; and of Ladislaus IV and his wife Marie Louise Gonzaga. This was a justified act of caution, given that as far back as in the fourteenth century Janko of Czarnków[67] had been dismissed from the position of Deputy Chancellor of the Treasury and lost his fortune for allegedly attempting to take symbols of monarchal authority from the temporary grave of Casimir the Great. Also later, in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, taking remains and artifacts from tombs aroused great controversy in Europe. Understandably, this was the case primarily in England.

This 'collecting fever', with which almost all British antiquaries were infected, was sometimes uncontrollable, and the temptation to own a unique historical relic, even at the expense of the integrity or indeed survival of the monument and the risk to one's antiquarian reputation, was difficult to resist. Even Richard Gough was said to have succumbed to it. Rumour had it that during the exhumation of the corpse of Edward I in 1774, he broke off and attempted to stealthily appropriate a piece of the royal finger. This theft was however spotted by the Dean of Westminster Abbey, and he forced a resisting Gough (it is even said that his pockets were searched) to put the remains back in the casket. Whether the rumour was true is uncertain; in any case it received considerable publicity and simply would not go away. Almost half a century after the incident it was revisited by William Combe in the second volume of *The English Dance of Death* (1815–16); his text was accompanied by Thomas Rowlandson's later famous caricature entitled

[66] Nevertheless asking Naruszewicz that he, when submitting the letter for print, spare 'the good monks who publish and sell manuscripts'.

[67] Jan Dąbrowski, *Jan (Janko) z Czarnkowa*, in *PSB*, vol. 10, ed. Władysław Konopczyński et al., Wrocław, Warsaw and Cracow, 1962–64, pp. 446–49 (p. 448).

Death and the Antiquaries [illus. 8].[68] And yet Gough, if he had indeed tried to snatch a fragment of an exhumed body, was not alone. Truly scandalous scenes — the outright looting of a corpse — occurred during the opening of the casket of the poet John Milton at London's St Giles' Cripplegate Church

Illus. 8: Thomas Rowlandson, *Death and the Antiquaries*, 1816, aquatint, 14 × 24 cm, Society of Antiquaries of London, Bridgeman Images SOA1765210

in 1790.[69] And during the exhumation of Charles I in 1813 the exhumer, Sir Henry Halford, removed fragments of the king's hair and beard from the grave, as well as a piece of cervical vertebra and a tooth.[70] These and similar events cast a shadow over the reputation of antiquaries.

Czacki took away with him from Cracow, among others: jewels [illus. 9], a silver plate with an inscription, and the pommel and scabbard of a sword from the grave of Sigismund I the Old; Sigismund Augustus' pectoral cross, encrusted with stones; the royal orb and decorative chain with a numeral, taken from the coffin of Anna Jagiellon [illus. 10]; a gold chain from the

[68] William Combe, *The English dance of death, from the designs of Thomas Rowlandson, with metrical illustrations, by the author of 'Doctor Syntax'*, 2 vols, London, 1816, vol. 2, pp. 271–74. The event had also been previously described by, among others, the anonymous author of an article in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* in 1790 and Francis Grose in *Olio* in 1792. See Lake, *Artifacts*, p. 176.

[69] Matthews, *Poetical Remains*, pp. 47–49.

[70] In 1888, Halford's grandson presented the royal remains to Prince Albert Edward of Wales, who decided to rebury them in December of the same year.

Illus. 9: *Jewels, Removed in 1791 by Tadeusz Czacki from the Coffin of Sigismund I*, plate in Aleksander Przeździecki and Edward Rastawiecki, *Wzory sztuki średniowiecznej i z okresu odrodzenia po koniec wieku XVII w dawnej Polsce*, series 1, Warsaw and Paris, 1853–55, plate 32

Illus. 10: *Chain with a Numeral, Removed in 1791 by Tadeusz Czacki from the Coffin of Anna Jagiellon*, plate in Aleksander Przeździecki and Edward Rastawiecki, *Wzory sztuki średniowiecznej i z okresu odrodzenia po koniec wieku XVII w dawnej Polsce*, series 1, Warsaw and Paris, 1853–55, plate 36

casket of Constance of Austria; the Order of the Golden Fleece and a button from the coffin of Ladislaus IV; and a gilded tablet from the casket of Louise Marie.[71] He also probably took the gold chain removed from the coffin of Sigismund III, which was later reproduced in *Wzory sztuki średniowiecznej i z okresu odrodzenia* [illus. 11]. It is hardly surprising that he did not make these facts known to the readers of his account — and through them to the general public, as he was unsure of the latter's response. The removal of monuments from royal tombs — a procedure unprecedented in Poland — must have raised his doubts and prompted him to exercise restraint.

Soon, however, in the face of the political catastrophe of the collapse of the state, circumstances arose that allowed similar fears to be dismissed and created conditions under which private individuals could take over even the most respectable historical memorabilia, including corporeal remains, provided this was done in the name of patriotic exaltation. In 1795, as a result of the third partition, the Polish state was divided between three powerful neighbours, Russia, Prussia and Austria, and disappeared from the map of independent European states. This traumatic event created the conditions — with no other precedents in Europe, as far as can be judged in the light of current knowledge — for collecting sepulchral artefacts without any moral reservations.[72] The main beneficiary of this process, however, was not Tadeusz Czacki, but Princess Izabela Czartoryska, to whom most of Czacki's sepulchral spoils soon found their way.

Czacki moved the objects taken from the royal graves, just as he did the books, to his native Poryck in Volhynia, to the palace he had inherited from his father, and incorporated them into the library and collections of historical memorabilia that he was assembling there with great

[71] An incomplete list of 'ancient mementoes extracted from the graves of Polish kings in Cracow in the year 1791' has been given (on the basis of Czacki's manuscript) by Ambroży Grabowski (*Ojczyste spominki w pismach do dziejów dawnej Polski: Diariusze, relacje, pamiętniki itp., służyć mogące do objaśnienia dziejów krajowych*, 2 vols, Cracow, 1845, vol. 1, pp. 236–37). See also Zdzisław Żygulski Jr, 'Pamiątki wawelskie w zbiorach puławskich', *Studia do Dziejów Wawelu*, 1961, 2, pp. 377–413; Ewa Letkiewicz, 'Klejnot Anny Austriaczki czy Anny Jagiellonki', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 62, 2000, 1–2, pp. 231–37; Ewa Letkiewicz, 'Krzyż pektoralny z grobu Zygmunta Augusta', *RHum*, 50, 2002, 4, pp. 191–96. Some of the surviving objects were donated to the Treasury of Wawel Cathedral by Prince Adam Ludwik Czartoryski in 1929; see Ryszard Skowron, 'O powrót na Wawel królewskich pamiątek ze zbiorów książąt Czartoryskich', *Studia Waweliana*, 11/12, 2002–03, pp. 274–79.

[72] See Michał Mencfel, 'The Poet's Scull: National Trauma, a Passion for Graves, and the Collecting of National Memorabilia in Early Nineteenth-Century Poland', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 34, 2022, 1, pp. 157–74.

Illus. 11: *Cross, Removed in 1791 by Tadeusz Czacki From the Coffin of Sigismund III*, plate in Aleksander Przeździecki and Edward Rastawiecki, *Wzory sztuki średniowiecznej i z okresu odrodzenia po koniec wieku XVII w dawnej Polsce*, series 1, Warsaw and Paris, 1853–55, plate 39

determination and commitment.[73] At the beginning of the nineteenth century, on Czacki's initiative a second palace building was erected in Poryck, located opposite the first. In the mature period of the founder's life, when his enterprise was carried through to completion, the original palace was used for residential purposes, while the new building housed a library and collections in numerous rooms on the ground floor.[74] The book collection, in which Czacki took particular care and pride, occupied seventy-six cabinets. A separate cabinet, however, was dedicated to historical memorabilia, which Łukasz Gołębiowski — the long-standing librarian of Poryck and the person to whom we owe the most accurate information about these articles — dubbed 'curiosities'. These included sepulchral relics, among others 'the skull from the head of Bolesław I the Brave, with the seals of the Poznań Chapter and with a certificate of confirmation, issued by the same Chapter in 1801, on 22 August'; 'a silver plate [...] taken from the tomb of Sigismund I'; 'a cypher removed from the tomb of Anne of Austria, wife of Sigismund III, which had been placed on her breast'; 'a chain taken from the tomb of Constance of Austria, the second wife of Sigismund III, comprising ten large links of exquisite goldwork'; and 'a plate of gold removed from the tomb of Louise Marie, Queen of Poland'.[75] It was in Poryck that the model for the collection of historical memorabilia was initiated, soon maturing and taking on a grander scale in its exemplary form in Izabela Czartoryska's Puławy. Interestingly, Czacki himself recognized early on the primacy of the Puławy project over his own. Accordingly, in the second half of the 1790s and the early nineteenth century, he bequeathed to Czartoryska not only many of the objects extracted from the royal coffins in 1791, but also those gathered during subsequent grave explorations (conducted, among other places, in Zwoleń and Frombork). A few years after Czacki's death, in 1819, a considerable part of the book collection which he left behind, along with other historical artefacts, was also purchased for Puławy. Finally, as an aside, we may add that following his death, Czacki himself was, as it were, museumized in Puławy: 'a marble monument on a black oak pedestal of Tadeusz Czacki', complete with his seal and hair, appeared in the collections of the Temple of Sybil.[76]

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[73] See Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Podróże historyczne po ziemiach polskich między rokiem 1811 a 1828 odbyte*, Paris and St Petersburg, 1858, pp. 171–75.

[74] Roman Aftanazy, *Materiały do dziejów rezydencji*, ed. Andrzej J. Baranowski, 11 vols, Warsaw, 1986–93, vol. 5a, 1988, pp. 413–18.

[75] Łukasz Gołębiowski, 'Rejestr biblioteki poryckiej', BC, Cracow, MS 2916 IV T.1, fols 1–7. See also Łukasz Gołębiowski, 'Rejestr ogólny biblioteki poryckiej', BC, MS 3233 IV.

[76] 'Inwentarz Świątyni Sybilli w Puławach w Miesiącu Lipcu 1815 Roku Spisany', BC, Cracow, MS 3036 IV, fol. 16.

The history of the collections of Princess Izabela Czartoryska is well known and does not need to be recounted here.[77] The collection was on display in the garden pavilions located in the park surrounding the princess's mansion in Puławy, namely in the so-called Temple of Sybil, which was opened in 1801, and in the Gothic House, inaugurated in 1809. It is only worth emphasizing that the collecting formula developed by Czartoryska in a direct response to the political catastrophe of the Commonwealth ('In the year 1793, Poland died! [...] It was then that the idea first occurred to me to collect Polish memorabilia', Princess Czartoryska wrote in an oft-quoted fragment of her memoir),[78] proved very successful. It perfectly suited the needs of a nation that had been deprived of its country, especially in the first decades of foreign rule.[79]

Grave goods stood at the heart of the Princess's' project. Among other things, the Temple of Sybil contained — and I quote here from the 1815 inventory — 'part of the shin, four nails, a piece of a decorative handle and a fragment of rotted wood, from the coffin of Anna Jagiellon'; 'a tin [...] with the hair of Sigismund the First'; 'a fragment of the skull of Sigismund's son, Ladislaus the Fourth'; 'a piece of the robe of Sigismund Augustus'; 'a fragment of padding from the coffin of Anne of Austria'; 'a marble monument [...] wherein lie the bones of Bolesław I the Brave in a glass box' [illus. 12]; while apart from the royal relics is 'a marble tombstone with the head of Jan Kochanowski'; 'a black monument [...] with the bones and a piece of Jan Zamoyski's robes'; 'a black marble monument [...] with a bone from the hand of Stefan Czarniecki'; and 'a white monument [...] containing the head of Stanisław Żółkiewski'.[80]

[77] See, among others, Żygulski Jr, 'Dzieje zbiorów puławskich'; Alina Aleksandrowicz, 'Z problematyki nowego wieku (Wokół Świątyni Sybilli)', *Wiek Oświecenia*, 16, 2000, pp. 9–33; Adam Labuda, 'Musealisierung und Inszenierung patriotischer Sammlungen in polnischen Adelsresidenzen Puławy i Kurnik', in *Klassizismus — Gotik: Karl Friedrich Schinkel und die patriotische Baukunst*, ed. Annette Dorgerloh, Michael Niedermeier and Horst Bredekamp, Munich and Berlin, 2007, pp. 201–20; Hanna Jurkowska, *Pamięć sentymentalna: Praktyki pamięci w kręgu Towarzystwa Warszawskiego Przyjaciół Nauk i w Puławach Izabelli Czartoryskiej*, Warsaw, 2014; Aleksander Musiał, 'Mentem mortalia tangunt — Fragments and Fetishes in Puławy Landscape Garden (1794–1831)', *Oxford Art Journal*, 42, 2019, 3, pp. 355–72.

[78] Izabela Czartoryska, 'Mémoires et petits divers', BC, Cracow, MS 6067 IV T.2, fols 65–66.

[79] See Michał Mencfel, 'The Theatre of Affectionate Hearts: Izabela Czartoryska's Musée des Monuments Polonais in Puławy (1801–1831)', in *The Home, Nations and Empires, and Ephemeral Exhibition Spaces 1750–1918*, ed. Dominique Bauer and Camilla Murgia, Amsterdam, 2021, pp. 133–59.

[80] 'Inwentarz Świątyni Sybilli', BC, MS 3036 IV.

Illus. 12: Sarcophagus with the remains of Bolesław I the Brave, National Museum in Cracow, catalogue no. MNK XIII-2317

It was rumoured that some of the relics were acquired by Izabela on her own, sometimes against the knowledge and will of their possessors. This is how — to put it bluntly — as a result of theft the remains of Bolesław I the Brave were supposed to have found their way to Puławy from Poznań.[81] However, the vast majority of grave goods came into Czartoryska's possession legally, being donated to her by their guardians, who were strongly impressed by the Princess's patriotic work. The aforementioned initiator of the search for and translation of

[81] In his diary, Leon Dembowski described the events thus: 'In 1808, we were passing through Poznań, where, as we all know, Bolesław's body is buried [...]. Whereupon the duchess was seized with a desire to possess some portion of these valuable keepsakes and, with the stubbornness of a woman who wanted something so much, she announced that she would not leave Poznań until she had achieved her goal. At her request, the bishop himself, assisted by canons, opened the box, while Dr Khitel, who clearly had his wits about him, pointed out that there were three skulls instead of one. [...] When Khietel was making his observations over the open box, with the priests staring at him, the duchess [...] managed to appropriate a few fragments'; Leon Dembowski, *Moje wspomnienia z czasów W. Księstwa Warszawskiego i wojny polsko-rosyjskiej 1831 roku*, 2 vols, St Petersburg, 1902, vol. 1, p. 136.

the corpses of Władysław Herman and Bolesław III Wrymouth, Bishop Adam Prażmowski of Płock, wrote the following to Czartoryska a few weeks after the remains were found:

> God blessed the patriotic request of Your Reverend Majesty and Benefactor when he allowed me to find, after many efforts [...], the walled tomb [...] in which Bishop Noskowski [...] had deposited the bones of the Kings Władysław Herman and Bolesław III Wrymouth [...]. The casket broke into small pieces when it was moved, however I have the honour of sending the remains rescued therefrom to Your Excellency and Benefactor as a token of gratitude, together with the headdress that covered one of the heads.[82] [illus. 13]

Illus. 13: Sarcophagus with the remains of the coffin ('Assorted coffin iron') of Władysław Herman and Bolesław III Wrymouth, National Museum in Cracow, catalogue no. MNK XIII-2321

Similarly, the administrator of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul in Cracow, Father Franciszek Stachowski, had no compunction about handing over the remains of Piotr Skarga to Czartoryska in 1831. He wrote to the Princess: 'I hereby certify that the fragment thereof enclosed herein was

[82] Bishop Adam Prażmowski to Izabela Czartoryska, (Warsaw) 10 August 1825, in Dokumenty do niektórych przedmiotów muzealnych, BC, Cracow, MS 12234, document 8.

removed by me from the coffin of this great orator, defender of religion, lover of the homeland and friend of mankind, in order to send said relic to the collection of national memorabilia in Puławy'.[83]

The fact that the placement of corporeal remains, or grave goods in general, in a patriotic and museum context was accepted in the circles of the ecclesiastical elite is further evidenced by the fact that the famous Historical Study furnished in the Palace of the Bishops of Cracow by its then host, Jan Paweł Woronicz, housed, among other relics, a small sarcophagus containing a 'genuine finger bone' of Bolesław I the Brave, 'rescued from his scattered corpse' and supposedly gifted by Tadeusz Czacki.[84]

VII

The argument of patriotism, legitimizing the taking and *de facto* privatisation of articles removed from graves, including even bodily fragments, remained virtually unchallenged for the first quarter of a century after the collapse of the Polish state and, as Stachowski's cited letter attests, remained effective until at least the fall of the November Uprising in 1831. However, after that date its power began to wane. Consequently, subsequent collecting practices, lacking such an ideological underpinning, took on the worrying hallmarks of robbery.

Ambroży Grabowski, the aforementioned Cracow historian, was quick to take a vehement stance against them. He focused his ire on the most prominent representatives of this type of collecting, namely Tadeusz Czacki and Izabela Czartoryska, calling them 'Goths and Vandals of the new times' and 'plunderers', who hide 'under the beautiful banner of love for national memorabilia'. Czacki

> not only plundered the archives and libraries of churches and monasteries in Cracow and throughout Poland, but also opened the tombs of Polish kings and therein found various ancient and precious relics [...] about which we do not know where they have gone, since they are now absent from the royal coffins [...]. I surmise that [...] he assimilated them, and by iniquitous means became their owner, or perhaps

[83] Father Franciszek Stachowski to Izabela Czartoryska, (Cracow) 15 December 1831, in Dokumenty do niektórych przedmiotów muzealnych, BC, MS 12234, document 20b.

[84] 'Pałac biskupów krakowskich', *Pszczółka Krakowska*, 1, 1822, pp. 152–75 (p. 170). See also Lech Brusewicz, 'Gabinet historyczny Jana Pawła Woronicza tytułem do wiecznej chwały jego imienia', in *Sztuka i historia: Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Kraków, listopad 1988*, Warsaw, 1992, pp. 261–85.

> he placed their external value in the hands of the Honourable Canons, the guardians of this sacred storehouse, under whose watchful eyes it simply disappeared.

Czartoryska, on the other hand,

> committed sacrilege at the tomb of Casimir the Great, which she greatly disfigured. When founding the Temple of Sybil in Puławy and gathering for it ancient monuments *per fas et nefas*, she desired to possess the small pillars situated at this tomb, which, at her instigation (though voiced by a third person), were torn off by a church servant, the so-called sacristan.

'It is not right', concluded Grabowski,

> to insult with a sacrilegious hand the monuments and tombs erected by the piety of the contemporaries of the dead, and to strip them of ornaments that are a sign of attachment and a testimony to the grief of persons connected therewith by ties of blood, love, and friendship. And whatever aim, even the most scholarly, be given in support, such a transgression cannot be justified.[85]

Wirydianna Fiszerowa, who described the transfer of King John III Sobieski's corpse to a new coffin in 1784 in her diary years later, noted as follows:

> saw Sobieski carried on the shoulders of priests. His corpse was perfectly preserved. The features of his face were visible. He was only missing one half of his moustache. I learned that he had lost it not as a result of the passage of years, but that it had been taken care of by Princess Czartoryska, the general's wife whose many pursuits included collecting old Polish memorabilia. It is indeed her far-reaching Romantic passion, this haunting of graves, and the King's is not the only one she has plundered.[86]

Ludwik Łętowski, himself the Bishop Suffragan of Cracow from 1845, spared neither Czacki nor Benedykt Trzebiński, the Bishop of Cracow, who was supportive of the former's initiatives. Shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century, he wrote that Trzebiński

[85] Ambroży Grabowski, *Wspomnienia*, ed. Stanisław Estreicher, 2 vols, Cracow, 1909, vol. 2, pp. 171–74; all quotations ibidem.

[86] Wirydianna Fiszerowa, *Dzieje moje własne i osób postronnych: Wiązanka spraw poważnych, ciekawych i błahych*, transl. Edward Raczyński, London, 1975, pp. 123–24.

> belonged to those who opened the royal tombs. I heard from the old fathers, when I entered the Chapter some quarter of a century ago that he would send many things from the graves to one very great person [that is Czacki], with an eye to becoming the bishop of Cracow. The royal tombs were raided with [the aid of] a letter from King Poniatowski, in search of some treasure in the coffin of Sigismund III. At the time, coffin lids were broken; the rails over the tomb of Sigismund I the Old were sawed asunder; the linen in which he lay wrapped was cut; chains and rings were ripped from the kings; and Queen Jadwiga's shoe was removed from her leg and beads were taken from her hand. The Chapter looked upon the royal letter, and the person of Cup-bearer Czacki, with its arms folded, while Trzebiński was the Cathedral Custodian. This whole beautiful operation was to be a national enterprise. It is sad to encounter in this regard one of the names that is dearest to us.[87]

Even Ludwik Dębicki, librarian to the Czartoryskis in the second half of the nineteenth century and the author of a four-volume monograph on Puławy (written in an affirmative style), felt obliged to explain and justify the actions of Tadeusz Czacki and Izabela Czartoryska from a few decades earlier. Indeed, he wrote, there was 'something perverted in these actions — something contrary to the religious respect for the silence of graves, and there was especially a great deal of sentimental patriotic exaltation'.[88] But, he cautioned, 'at the time this custom neither offended nor shocked anyone', as it was considered 'an eloquent testimony to the noble intentions of those who collected relics of this kind'. Indeed: 'The bones of famous statesmen were extracted from their coffins, but not to be placed as objects in cabinets for the curiosity of visitors, or for an anthropologist to measure the skull and shin bones, but to see in them what the church recognizes in the relics of saints — an object of veneration'. It was, however, a rather desperate defence. The argument of exalted patriotism had long since lost its causality, being supplanted by ideals of a different kind, such as absolute respect for the corpse and the integrity of the historical monument.

Let us stress here that both these demands resonated particularly strongly in Cracow, and especially with regard to Wawel. For after 1815, along with the establishment of the Republic of Cracow (although the traditions of such thinking go back further), there developed and, in short order, became established the concept of Cracow as a city-monument,

[87] Ludwik Łętowski, *Katalog biskupów, prałatów i kanoników krakowskich*, 4 vols, Cracow, 1853–53, vol. 4, 1853, pp. 172–73.

[88] Ludwik Dębicki, *Puławy (1762–1830): Monografia z życia towarzyskiego, politycznego i literackiego*, 4 vols, Lviv, 1887–88, vol. 2, 1887, p. 269.

a city-pantheon, a city, as Ewa Grzęda put it, 'that is sacred, that occupies a central place in the "geography of the heart" as mythologized by the Romantics',[89] and thus subject to special care and protection, inviolable in its material substance.[90]

An important role in building this myth of Cracow and Wawel was played by events of a politico-funerary nature; namely the deposition in the cathedral vaults, in quick succession and in both instances with elaborate ceremonials, of the corpses of two particularly honoured heroes of the liberation struggle — Prince Józef Poniatowski (in 1817) and Tadeusz Kościuszko (in 1818). The Wawel crypts, hitherto serving as a royal necropolis, thereby gained the status of a national pantheon.[91] This myth of the city and the Wawel hill was also supported and sustained to a great extent in the literature, whether in the form of historical-topographical descriptions of the city (first and foremost Ambroży Grabowski's guidebook *Kraków i jego okolice* in its numerous editions, and a great number of other of his publications);[92] travel accounts (with particular emphasis on *Opisy różnych okolic Królestwa Polskiego* by Klementyna Hoffmanowa);[93] albums presenting views of Cracow (such as *Monumenta Regum Poloniae Cracoviensia*, containing the drawings of Michał Stachowicz, which was finally published in the years 1822–27); or lastly, poetic works (authored by the then popular 'Wawel poets', now largely forgotten: Edward Lubomirski, Franciszek Wężyk, Zygmunt Bogusz Stęczyński, Józef Łapsiński, Anna Libera, and others).[94]

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[89] Grzęda, *Będziesz z chlubą*, p. 110.

[90] See, among others, Janusz Tadeusz Nowak, 'Wolne Miasto Kraków: Panteon Serca Polski', in *Wolne Miasto Kraków: W poszukiwaniu nowoczesności*, Cracow, 2015 [exh. cat.], pp. 23–58; Mikołaj Getka-Kenig, 'Sebastian Sierakowski (1743–1824) i mit Krakowa w okresie napoleońskim i pokongresowym', *KH*, 126, 2019, 2, pp. 283–314.

[91] For a detailed discussion of the process of pantheonization of the Wawel Cathedral, see Weronika Rostworowska-Kenig, *Nekropolia wawelska w latach 1796–1846*, Cracow, 2023, pp. 41–56, 429–87. See also Petro Andreas Nungovitch, *Here All Is Poland: A Pantheonic History of Wawel, 1797–2010*, Lanham, 2019.

[92] Ambroży Grabowski, *Historyczny opis miasta Krakowa i jego okolic*, Cracow, 1822, and subsequent editions of this work as *Kraków i jego okolice*, Cracow, 1823, 1830, 1836, 1844, 1866; Ambroży Grabowski, *Groby królów polskich w Krakowie w kościele katedralnym na zamku*, Cracow, 1835; Ambroży Grabowski, *Przewodnik do grobów królów polskich w katedrze krakowskiej*, Cracow, 1868. See also, among others, Józef Mączyński, *Pamiątka z Krakowa: Opis tego miasta i jego okolic*, Cracow, 1845; Ludwik Łętowski, *Katedra Krakowska na Wawelu*, Cracow, 1859; Józef Łepkowski, *O zabytkach Kruszwicy, Gniezna i Krakowa oraz Trzemeszna, Rogoźna, Kcyni, Dobieszewka, Gołańczy, Żnina, Gąsawy, Pakości, Kościelca, Inowrocławia, Strzelna i Mogilna*, Cracow, 1866.

[93] Klementyna z Tańskich Hoffmanowa, *Opisy różnych okolic Królestwa Polskiego*, 2 vols, Wrocław, 1833.

[94] See, among others, Aleksander Zarzecki, *Duma o zamku krakowskim* (1819);

Cracow and Wawel thus acquired the status of priceless historical monuments and, at the same time, of places with an almost sacred aura, the violation of which could be viewed as profanation. The power of this phantasm is well illustrated by an excerpt from the diaries of Aleksander Jełowiecki, who, when recalling his early years spent in Cracow and his visit to the Wawel crypts, wrote that: 'Coffins large and small are awkwardly arranged, and some of them are easy to open. With religious feeling I touched the remains of the great Polish Kings [...]. Though it would have been easy, I dared not carry away from the royal tombs even a piece of their remains or their vestments, for I considered it sacrilege'.[95]

VIII

The depreciation of the romantic, as Fiszerowa called it, or the antiquarian, as we call it here, passion for exploring tombs was due to a number of reasons. Here, let us point out just two, albeit closely interrelated: the professionalization of the discourse on historical memorabilia (now called 'monuments') and the birth of modern conservation doctrines.

The change that took place in the middle decades of the nineteenth century in the first of these elements was perhaps most succinctly — and somewhat radically — characterized from the perspective of 1863 by the aforementioned Cracow archaeologist and historian, Józef Łepkowski. He wrote:

> Here, the Commonwealth then collapsed, so it is no wonder that passionate patriotism protected everything that was native. When Poland fell, the national spirit became numb, and so they were prepared to carry even handfuls of soil from the graves and tombs [...] to the shrines of Sybil. This love of memorabilia would have finally turned into no more than a sentimental caressing of every crumb of the past had it not been for the sober science which has come to distinguish the important from the trivial, the memento from the monument of art, and antiquarianism from exact research and study.[96]

Franciszek Wężyk, *Okolice Krakowa*; Edward Lubomirski, *Groby w dniu śmierci Tadeusza Kościuszki: Dumy rycerskie oryginalnym wierszem napisane przez tłomacza tragedii Faust* (1821); Józef Lewicki, *Duma o zamku krakowskim*; Józef Łapsiński, *Groby królów polskich na Wawelu*; Anna Libera, *Katedra na Wawelu*; Edmund Wasilewski, *Katedra na Wawelu* (1841); Zygmunt Bogusz Stęczyński, *Świątynia Polaków czyli Katedra na Wawelu w Krakowie: Poemat historyczny* (1864). More extensively on the topic, see: Grzęda, *Będziesz z chlubą*, pp. 124–42.

[95] Jełowiecki, *Moje wspomnienia*, p. 59.

[96] Józef Łepkowski, 'O poszanowaniu zabytków ojczystej przeszłości', *Biblioteka Warszawska*, 1863, vol. 1, pp. 122–31 (pp. 122–23).

This 'exact research and study', and, as the poet, publicist and university professor Lucjan Siemieński wrote in turn at the same time, the 'strictly scholarly significance' of historical relics[97] were henceforth cited as the proper method and purpose of interest in the evidence of the past, and slowly came to monopolize the official discourse about them. Professional scholars, that is those backed by authorities in specific disciplines of knowledge, representatives of the emerging fields of archaeology, history, art history, conservationism, as well as anthropology and medicine, affiliated to research institutes and especially universities, became the depositaries of this discourse and the guarantors of its credibility. They ensured not only professionalism, but also the appropriateness of measures and actions, or in other words, their compliance with the evolving guidelines for the preservation of monuments. During the period in question (1840–70), as Jerzy Frycz put it, Polish, or more precisely, Cracow school of art conservation and restoration was established.[98]

These transformations impacted not only the collecting of grave memorabilia, but also — and more seriously — grave explorations. Here too a distinction was made between 'antiquarianism' and 'research and exact study', with the former being discredited. It should be recalled that the exhumation of the body of Casimir the Great in 1869 took place under the auspices of the Cracow Scientific Society, and the committee supervising the procedure comprised, in addition to Church hierarchs who served to confirm its legality, university professors, including the just cited Łepkowski, and Paweł Popiel, the Government Conservator of Monuments. They endeavoured, despite all the patriotic exaltation, to ensure the entire procedure was carried out in a professional manner. It was supposed to be, as the Józef Majer wrote, 'a dry scholarly examination. Nevertheless it is difficult to order reason to remain silent because of pangs of the heart'.[99] But even this, as we have seen, proved insufficient to avoid the charge that 'we consider this whole business of handling the monarch's corpse to be purely private'.[100] Nonetheless, the general trend was unstoppable: exhumations were undergoing institutionalization, professionalization and academicization. All the above-mentioned explorations of royal tombs conducted in the last three

[97] Lucjan Siemieński, *Varia z literatury, historii, archeologii i przyrody*, Wrocław, 1881 (Dzieła Lucjana Siemieńskiego, 1), p. 127.

[98] Jerzy Frycz, *Restauracja i konserwacja zabytków architektury w Polsce w latach 1795–1918*, Warsaw, 1975, pp. 87–134.

[99] Majer, *Postać Kazimierza Wielkiego*, pp. 223–24.

[100] 'Zwłoki Kazimierza Wielkiego'.

decades of the nineteenth century[101] — as well as the numerous later undertakings organized in the twentieth century — required a similar professional base and the involvement of specialists from individual fields.[103] As elsewhere in Europe[104], so too in the Polish lands the antiquarian approach succumbed to the pressure of specialized, academic researchers of the past, certified by the possession of scholarly titles, who were unwilling to admit how much they owed to the antiquaries and how indebted to them they actually were.

(Translated by Maciej Zakrzewski)
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Summary

The subject of the article are antiquarian explorations — that is, those for which the declared justification was research curiosity — of the tombs of Polish monarchs from the late eighteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth. It demonstrates that Polish explorations had their own distinctive idiom; namely, in their early period of development, they were not accompanied by the moral dilemmas and charges with which other European antiquarians had to contend. The activities of British antiquarians have been taken as a point of reference for the Polish explorations. After all, it was thanks to the former that the practice of opening royal tombs developed, accompanied by the elaboration of a *sui generis* standard procedure which was later adopted throughout the Continent. The fundamental assumptions here were that the opening of a grave was collective in nature, that it was meticulously documented, and that the resulting reports were intended for public circulation.

[101] From among the numerous explorations of royal tombs organized in the twentieth century, we should mention those that resulted in the opening of the graves of: Anna of Cilli (in 1900); Sophia of Halshany (in 1902); Cecilia Renata (in 1923); Marie Louise Gonzaga (in 1924); Sigismund Augustus and Anna Jagiellon (in 1929); Stephen Báthory (in 1930); John III Sobieski, Marie Casimire and Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki (in 1938); Jadwiga (in 1949); Władysław Herman and Bolesław III Wrymouth (in 1972); and Casimir IV Jagiellon (in 1973).

[103] For example: the opening of the tomb of Queen Jadwiga on 22 January 1887 was participated in, in addition to the original discoverer, by — among others — the architect and conservator Sławomir Odrzywolski, two historians of art, Professors Marian Sokołowski and Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, the anthropologist, Professor Izydor Kopernicki, the painter-documentarian Jan Matejko, the Bishop of Cracow, Albin Dunajewski, and the Notary of the Chapter, Father Ignacy Polkowski (who authored the official report on the exploration of the vault).

[104] Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*, pp. 70–100; Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations*, p. 54.

The history of antiquarian explorations of the coffins of Polish kings begins with Tadeusz Czacki's opening of the caskets of the Jagiellons and Vasas in Wawel Cathedral in 1791, and the publication, later in the same year, of an account of these activities. Czacki's first initiative set a *sui generis* standard of procedure for the next several decades, and subsequent antiquarian explorations of royal tombs followed a very similar scenario — with the difference being that it became more formalized and more consciously observed over the years. The discovery of Casimir the Great's burial chamber in 1869 was a landmark achievement. For the first time, research into a royal tomb gained legitimate media status and triggered a heated public debate. The dispute focused on the question of what was to be done with the objects found in the tomb — should they be returned to the tomb along with the corpse, or should perhaps at least some be passed on to the cathedral treasury or the museum of the Scientific Society? The discussion resulted from an earlier phenomenon, namely, the taking of grave items for inclusion in collections of historical memorabilia. Such activities, practised in the first decades of the nineteenth century not only by Czacki, but also — perhaps first and foremost — by Princess Izabela Czartoryska, had been justified by patriotic exaltation and were originally viewed as uncontroversial; by the 1830s, however, they were considered unacceptable. Faced with the requirement to respect bodily remains and the integrity of historical monuments, many saw them as disturbingly tantamount to looting. The following were the key reasons for the depreciation of the antiquarian passion for grave exploration: the professionalization of the discourse on historical memorabilia; the birth of modern conservational doctrines; and the consolidation of Cracow's status as a city-monument and city-pantheon, inviolable in its matter. These processes did not stop the exhumation of royal graves, however their institutionalization, professionalization, and academicization were taking place.

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