



The Museum Appropriation of German Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of Allenstein/Olsztyn

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Abstract

The article examines the contested legacy of German cultural heritage in regions such as Warmia and Masuria, which now belong to Poland. After the Second World War, these areas were transformed through destruction, re-Polonization and the erasure of German identity. Cultural artifacts were looted, destroyed or reinterpreted to fit Poland's nationalist narratives, as exemplified by the museum in Olsztyn. However, recent efforts have been aimed at overcoming these divisions by recognizing the common multicultural history of these regions. The article calls for a more inclusive approach to cultural heritage, which takes into account complexity and promotes dialogue, rather than maintaining narrow national perspectives.

Keywords: German cultural heritage; post-WWII re-Polonization; Museum of Warmia and Masuria in Olsztyn; looting and appropriation; common history; museum narratives

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Remarks on the Historical Context and Research Questions

Like other countries in East Central Europe, Poland has been affected by many border shifts, forced migrations, and changes of regimes and political systems over the past three centuries. In particular, the former German territories in present-day Poland were subject to unprecedented “social engineering” after the end of the Second World War. The implementation of the Potsdam Agreement resulted in the transfer of millions of people: the flight and expulsion of German civilians living there, and the forced resettlement of Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians and other ethnic and religious groups to these regions.¹

The new inhabitants of what had become northern and western Poland were confronted with a landscape characterized by German cultural heritage, visible in the buildings and their structure, and in the appearance of individual houses and objects of daily life. For decades, the history of these regions remained alien, linguistically inaccessible and ideologically manipulated. The reconstruction of the destroyed towns and villages went hand in hand with a national recoding. The process of appropriating the new territories was accompanied by changing interpretations of history and definitions of cultural heritage.² Whatever suited the identity agenda of the new state – soon to be called “People’s Poland” (*Polska Ludowa*) – was delivered. What was unwelcome was often destroyed, pushed aside, hidden and redesigned. The humanitarian tragedy was thus closely linked to enormous cultural losses (Jasiński, 2000, pp. 19–58).

However, the arrival of Polish population was not the only factor contributing to the massive destruction of German cultural heritage in the formerly German parts of Poland (Knercer, 2002, pp. 122–126). Much of this heritage had already been destroyed during the war or devastated by the invading Soviet army, which subsequently looted movable cultural property on a mass scale, often using the so-called looting brigades (*Rus. trofeinye otriady*). In the firm belief that the conquered German cities should be razed to the ground, parts of the central areas of Danzig, Allenstein, Oppeln, Landsberg an der Warthe, Stolp and Stettin (Gdańsk, Olsztyn, Opole, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Słupsk and Szczecin) were deliberately set on fire and almost completely destroyed by the Red Army.

But Red Army soldiers were not the only ones looting. In the first months after the withdrawal of German troops, more or less everyone looted “post-German” (*poniemieckie*) property. Postwar hardship forced, drove and encouraged appropriation. Among the looters were also the Germans left behind and struggling to survive, roaming Soviet deserters, robbers and traders from central Poland hoping for profit, and the slowly arriving new settlers. The virtually unguarded and

1 This article can only provide a rudimentary description of the historical context of the immediate postwar period in Poland and in the former German territories. For a detailed account, see Strauchold (2003) and Kozłowski (2002).

2 The notion of “cultural heritage”, which is crucial to the appropriation process, evokes historical continuity and the preservation of a significant legacy, and in particular aims at the transmission of cultural material values as well as certain historical orientations in society (Tauschek, 2013, pp. 17–19; Young & Haley, 2009, pp. 268–287).

unprotected property of the fleeing Germans also tempted many of the newly arrived party and administrative cadres. The unstable political situation, low or non-existent salaries, and the prevailing arbitrariness and violence meant that administrative posts in the new regions were often filled by people of dubious suitability. Corruption and abuse of office were rife.

Massive looting and robberies were part of the postwar chaos, a period of hunger and destitution. Anything that could be taken was taken, including works of art and handicraft. For Maria Rutkowska, the sheer scale of the plunder makes it impossible even to estimate what was looted from German museums, churches, palaces, mansions, houses and apartments (Rutkowska, 2020, p. 3). The new population, which arrived from all directions, did not feel responsible for the protection or handling of cultural objects, whether found or stolen. However, it would be unjustified to see this neglect as generally “anti-German”. The view, often found in the literature, that the destruction of German cultural heritage was politically motivated certainly needs to be put into perspective. Most of the looting and plundering had little to do with ideological convictions, but rather was the result of necessity or the desire to improve one’s own material situation, or simply lack of respect to abandoned property. Anti-German sentiment helped to legitimize the crimes and violations committed.

The popular claim that the new Polish government, which took over the administration of the former German territories, aimed to erase all traces of German culture should also be nuanced. Certainly, an anti-German policy prevailed in postwar Poland. The past was suppressed and ignored as part of the communist authorities’ intensive efforts to bring the new regions into line with the rest of the country – or, as it was officially called, “re-Polonization” (Klementowski, 2018; Magierska, 1978).

However, despite this clear political line, the practical handling of German art and cultural property was anything but straightforward and unambiguous. As early as 10 March 1945, the Provisional Government issued a special Army Order entitled: “Instruction to the Units of the Polish Army Marching into the Areas Returned to Poland, Concerning the Protection and Safeguarding of Movable and Immovable Cultural Property in the Areas Between the Western Border of Poland of 1939 and the Rivers Oder and Lusatian Neisse and the Czechoslovak Border”³ (Rutkowska, 1997, pp. 257–266). The order listed in detail the objects to be protected and secured, including works of art of all kinds, sacred and secular buildings and their contents, archaeological sites, libraries, book collections and old musical instruments. The “March Instruction” also requested that lists of objects found should be drawn up and delivered to the General Directorate for Museums and Protection of Monuments (NDMiOZ) in Warsaw (which had recently been established within the Ministry of Culture and Art) to inform it where they had been found and stored (Rutkowska, 1997, p. 265).

3 “Instrukcja dla formacji Wojsk Polskich wkraczających na tereny przywrócone Polsce, dotycząca ochrony i zabezpieczenia zabytków ruchomych i nieruchomych na terenach między granicą zachodnią Polski w roku 1939, a rzekami Odrą i Nysą Łużycką oraz granicą z Czechosłowacją”.

The General Directorate was also responsible for the establishment, organization and effectiveness of Polish museum institutions in the incorporated northern and western regions. Initially, the office recruited specialists to protect the scattered and war-damaged German cultural heritage from destruction and looting so that it could be incorporated into the newly established Polish museums. But very few people were ready to take on the task of protecting and safeguarding the valuable art and cultural objects in the “Recovered Territories” – it was a job that was seen as posing a threat to life and limb, not to mention it was extremely difficult (Jasiewicz; see also Vetulani, 1972, pp. 76, 211). Indeed, the looters and new owners of stolen cultural property were not exactly willing to cooperate: armed and violent, they often defended their newly acquired possessions. To make matters worse, whenever the few specialists did succeed in recovering lost or stolen objects, they had to deal with mundane problems, such as lack of transport, incompetent helpers, unsuitable storage facilities, power-hungry local officials or unpaid bills.

The list of problems encountered by the experts commissioned by the General Directorate for Museums and Protection of Monuments in the course of their work in the former German territories clearly shows the enormous achievement they made. It is largely thanks to their tireless efforts that at least a small part of the German cultural heritage of the region was spared destruction, dispersal and looting. The state-ordered appropriation was almost the only way to preserve the cultural heritage that was in danger of being lost, regardless of how the history of the “rescued objects” unfolded and how the Polish cultural and scientific institutions dealt with them.

I will try to explain how the relocation of collections and individual objects took place in the immediate postwar period using the example of the Museum of Local History in Allenstein, which later became the Masurian Museum in Olsztyn (today: Museum of Warmia and Masuria). My aim is not to provide a comprehensive and detailed account of the history of these two museum institutions and their collections. Rather, the aim of this article is to show the basic lines of the development and appropriation of a formerly German museum after 1945, and thus to provide an example of a historical structural change that also applies to other museums in the former German territories.

The Museum Conception of the Region up to 1945: Reconciliation Museum in Allenstein⁴

At the beginning of the twentieth century, history teachers and amateur historians took the initiative to establish a museum of local history in Allenstein. They wanted to emphasize the fact that the Catholic region of Warmia and its largest city belonged to East Prussia and thus to the German Empire. Their private local history collections were to be incorporated into an institutionalized framework and made accessible to the general public. In an eth-

4 An abridged version of this section has been published in German (Pufelska, 2020).

nically and religiously heterogeneous area such as Warmia, where the German-speaking population was by no means the majority, it was politically important to emphasize that the museum belonged to Germany, and not just geographically (see Fig. 1). The Polish dialect-speaking Catholic inhabitants of Warmia were also supposed to feel committed to the German national idea (Herget & Pleitner, 2008).



Fig. 1. Postcard "Allenstein plebiscite area East Prussia". Nordost-Institut, Lüneburg.

In order to achieve this homogenizing sense of belonging, the Association for Local History (Verein für Heimatkunde) in Allenstein postulated that the historical uniqueness of the common Warmia region should be presented in a museum. In doing so, they followed the trend of the time to establish local history museums (Kolland, 1988, p. 24). The first such museums in Germany were founded at the end of the nineteenth century and served primarily educational purposes. At a time when science was declared a national treasure, the local history museum was to take on the role of a national educational institution (Roth, 1990). The founding document of the Märkisches Museum in Berlin explicitly states: "A sense and understanding of the achievements of modern times and a love of the German homeland are to be awakened and cultivated for the benefit of the community and as a blessing for our dear fatherland" (Kolland, 1988, p. 24). In this context, the early local history museums (not all of them, of course, and this is not a generalization) could be characterized as missionary centers of learning that imposed a concrete and one-sided narrative on the objects they collected and displayed. This narrative was driven by patriotism, regionalism and purposeful knowledge transfer, and it linked past, present and future in a linear and monocausal manner. In local history museums, individual objects were grouped together for a pre-defined purpose of knowledge, in order to convey a self-contained appropriation.

The Museum of Local History (Heimatismuseum) in Allenstein was planned to focus on three main themes: prehistory and early history of the region, local nature, and folk art. This tripartite division was characteristic of contemporary concepts of local history museums.

The only difference in the Allenstein project was that the museum of local history was created from the existing “plebiscite museum”.

When in 1920, as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, a referendum was called to decide whether southern East Prussia (Warmia and Masuria) should remain part of Germany or fall to the newly formed Polish state, the Polish-speaking population clearly voted in favor of Germany (Gałęziowska, 2020; Gelles, 1983; Kossert, 2001, pp. 243–300). This declaration of loyalty deserved to be recognized and immortalized in a museum. For this reason, in 1922, a “plebiscite museum” was established in Allenstein, housed in the local Gothic castle. However, it did not last long: in 1927 it was transformed into the Museum of Local History on the initiative of the association mentioned above (“Heimattstunde. Die Einrichtung des Heimatmuseums in Allenstein”, 1927).

The aim of the newly established museum was to “arouse the interest of the province in local history” and to provide “a comprehensive picture of the entire district”. Four rooms in Allenstein Castle were rented for this purpose (see Fig. 2). The thematic subdivision into “The Region” (Masurian and Warmian farmhouse), “The Great War in East Prussia”, “The Referendum of 1920” and “Prehistoric and Natural History Collection” clearly shows the political message connected with the idea of local history (Skurpski, 1947, p. 4). Unfortunately, we do not know what specific exhibits were on display. The few surviving photographs show everyday objects whose ethnographic significance was probably recognized only by very few visitors. At first sight, the chests, woven carpets and brightly painted earthenware bowls were little different from those found in other museums of local history. The laconic sign “Masurian farmhouse parlor” (see Fig. 3) tended to obscure the regional significance and intrinsic functional value of the individual objects. Moreover, the folkloristic exhibits displayed in the large, high-ceilinged rooms of the original fourteenth-century castle of the Teutonic Order, where Nicolaus Copernicus had been a canon for several years, seemed rather out of place, disruptive and alien (see Fig. 4) (Skurpski, 1947, pp. 1–10).



Fig. 2. Interior of Allenstein Castle. Bildarchiv Ostpreußen.



Fig. 3. Postcard depicting a Masurian parlor. Nordost-Institut, Lüneburg.



Fig. 4. Postcard depicting Allenstein Castle and its interior. Nordost-Institut, Lüneburg.

Indeed, its establishment, its staging and its stagnant development for more than ten years testify to the fact that the museum was rather a political necessity of the situation and therefore was not very well thought out from a museological point of view (Hein, 2000, p. 55). The significance of the collection it presented was severely limited by the political message imposed on it. In order to convey an unrealistic domestic idyll, the objects on display were deliberately deprived of their independence. With political zeal, the museum's founders attempted to construct a local identity that ignored all the region's current economic and political contradictions and deficits, such as the German-Polish conflict. The museum's folklore objects served as symbols of a harmonious, homogeneous German-Warmian community, from which everything "foreign" had to be excluded.

The Museum Conception of the Region after 1945: Regional Museum in Olsztyn

After the Second World War, the museum in the castle found itself in Poland. At the Potsdam Conference (summer 1945), the Allied leaders finally decided on the westward shift of Poland's borders. Former German territories, including parts of former East Prussia, were placed under Polish administration, while eastern Polish territories fell to the Soviet Union. Millions of Germans and Poles had to leave their homes in 1945 and put down roots in the new regions. Allenstein became Olsztyn. Most of the German inhabitants were expelled, resettled or left the newly defined city voluntarily. Those who moved into their houses, apartments and farms, were not only Polish or Ukrainian expellees but also immigrants from the war-torn regions of central Poland (see also Lewandowska, 2012, pp. 19–86).

Olsztyn survived the war relatively well (Rzempoluch, 2004). It was only shortly before the German surrender that the Red Army set fire to the city, even though the Wehrmacht had long been retreating. In contrast to the old town, which lost up to 50 percent of its ancient buildings, the castle was almost intact (Łukaszewicz, 1987; Tomkiewicz, 2003). It was converted by the new Polish administration into a storage facility for works of art and cultural artifacts that had been rescued, secured or looted. Most of these objects came from small local museums in the area, the often badly damaged Protestant churches, the estates and manor houses of the East Prussian nobility, and the art depots set up by the retreating German army that had not been transported westwards in time (Skurp-ski, 1970, pp. 557–585).

After the war, the entire castle was turned into a museum. Hieronim Skrupski, who was sent from Warsaw as the new director, had a big problem to solve as soon as he arrived. Although the castle building had suffered little damage, very little of the original collection remained. In the immediate postwar period, the museum's furnishings and local history exhibits seemed to be its undoing. The people who remained in the city were just

as interested in them as the Red Army or the new settlers: objects such as earthenware, iron tools, wooden chests and cupboards, hand-woven bedspreads and carpets were gone (Vetulani, 1972, pp. 43–52). In order to fill the many rooms of the castle museum with attractive exhibits, Skrupski and his small team had to rely on the storage facility mentioned above. This meant that the collection of the new Olsztyn museum, which opened its doors to visitors in November 1945, was exclusively German for the first few months of its existence.

At least the first exhibition in 1945, which was entitled *European Painting* and presented paintings from the East Prussian manor houses and churches, largely contradicted the propagandistic orientation. Although the entire exhibition consisted of formerly German objects, there was no reference to the origin of the exhibits. Only portraits of those East Prussian noble families who were in the service of Polish kings or were related to Poles were presented. The descriptions of the paintings only mentioned information such as the depicted motif and the painting school, e.g. “Italian landscape”, “Flemish school” or “French portrait painting” (Vetulani, 1972, pp. 122–124). In the strongly anti-German Poland of the immediate postwar period, the exhibition was a politically daring decision, despite all the omissions. In response to the massive criticism from the Ministry of Culture in Warsaw, the Olsztyn curators ruefully replied that the exhibition did not convey any concrete content and was only intended to “bind the local population to the museum” (*Sprawozdanie wydziału kultury i sztuki*).

In order not to repeat such “mistakes and deviations” in exhibition practice, the Union of Polish Museums (Związek Muzeów w Polsce) passed the following resolution in 1946:

No former German museums should be reconstructed in the recovered territories, but new ones should be established, whose concept serves the Polish scientific, educational and national interest. The old German collections should only be used for the establishment of the new museums if they correspond to the new Polish museum concepts. (*Uchwały XVII Zjazdu Delegatów Związku Muzeów w Polsce*; see also Bocheński & Kopera, 1947)

The newly conceived Masurian Museum (Muzeum Mazurskie) in Olsztyn, which became the central museum of the entire administrative province, also followed this pattern. The exhibitions organized from 1946 conveyed a politically enforced image of the “eternally” Slavic region of Masuria as a center of Polish folk culture, which had been suppressed by the Germans for centuries (Antoniewicz, 1948). The second special temporary exhibition of 1946, devoted to Nicolaus Copernicus, fit seamlessly into this concept. As the astronomer had also been chapter administrator and provost of the Prince-Bishopric of Warmia, resided at Allenstein Castle, and was regarded as a good administrator and friend of the peasants, a museum narrative was created that portrayed him as a Pole, or at least as a great friend of Poland (Ritter, 2015). His Catholic dignity, his residence in the “Piast territory” and his alleged rudimentary knowledge of Polish were enough to appropriate and honor him as a Polish national hero.

The concept of the Masurian Museum as a place of learning, as a mediator of knowledge about the Polish folk culture of the region (Simonides, 1988), was finally spelled out three years after its opening, when a new ethnographic section was established in 1948, focusing on “Polish peasants in the region”. The exhibition catalogue clearly states the motivation for turning to folk culture:

The viewer will easily notice the connection and relationship of the objects presented here – both in their form and through their decoration – with objects from other parts of Poland. The aim of this section is, among other things, to confirm the connection of this area and its close relationship with the rest of Polish folk culture. The Masurian-Warmian region is an example of the north-eastern territorial expansion of Polish culture, contrary to all the tendentious lies of German scholars. (*Muzeum Mazurskie Olsztyn-Zamek, 1947*)

However, the exhibition of Polish folk culture required a period of preparation and the collection of objects and sources: what was available was insufficient, although a number of objects from the collections of local history museums in the area had been transferred to the storage facility operating in the castle. In order to accomplish this task, extensive fieldwork was conducted in search of suitable evidence of rural culture in the region, and appeals to the public were made in the press (Gładkowska, 2016). The fact that many of the objects found or received were from the prewar period and had belonged to East Prussian estates or farms until 1945 was of little importance. Without reference to their provenance or individual previous owners, they were veiled in an aura of national heritage and presented as evidence of local Polish history of everyday life (Jakutowicz, 2010). In addition to the historical objects acquired, contemporary works of woodcarving, ceramics, wrought iron and weaving contributed to the development of the collection, which was awarded prizes at numerous folk art festivals (see Fig. 5). In the end, however, the focus was on historical objects, especially those related to household and private life, including agricultural, craft and domestic tools, textiles, furniture and objects of children’s culture.



Fig. 5. Masurian Museum in Olsztyn, Warmian chamber. Photo from the 1960s. Bildarchiv Ostpreußen.

Thanks to the vigorous and extensive collecting activity, from the 1950s the museum had a sufficient collection to open other departments. The ethnographic, prehistoric, art and natural history sections were responsible for the final profile of the museum (Guska, 1985). The individual sections were initially based on the museum's own objects, which came from the storage facility operating in the castle immediately after the war. The acquisition of the few remaining objects from the former East Prussian museums in the area, and the requisitioning of valuables and sacred objects looted from German manor houses and Protestant churches, only occasionally helped to remedy the collection's shortcomings. This meant that exchange with other museums in Poland was both necessary and helpful. However, during the phase of shaping the museum landscape, inter-institutional exchange and the allocation of historically valuable collections to specific museums were centrally regulated and controlled. The Warsaw-based Department of Museums at the Ministry of Culture and Art, which was responsible for the nationwide conceptual planning of museums, was in charge of the distribution of deposited collection groups to individual institutions. In the case of Olsztyn, it was the representatives of the National Museum in Warsaw who first decided which exhibits should leave and which could stay or enrich the collection of "a museum of Masuria" (*Muzeum Mazurskie w Olsztynie*).

As a result of the centrally regulated transfer and relocation of former German cultural assets, the museum in Olsztyn lost more objects than it received. As a collection point for objects confiscated in the area, the castle housed many works of art, furniture and book collections that did not fit in with the new museum's enforced popular orientation. The Ministry of Culture therefore quickly decided to sort out the most valuable cultural assets and transfer them to the National Museum in Warsaw. After a thorough inspection of the items stored in the castle, several trucks full of cultural objects left Olsztyn for Warsaw (*Rewindykacja XVI*). The ministry justified this decision on the grounds that there was no possibility of restoring the objects in Olsztyn because there were no workshops. The conservation situation in Poland in the immediate postwar period was indeed very difficult (Rutkowska, 1997, pp. 292–293). Given the massive destruction and devastation of cultural heritage, there was a constant lack of specialists, equipment, materials, transport and financial resources to ensure the necessary protection and optimal care of the cultural objects that had been saved. In this respect, it is thanks to the untiring efforts of the museum staff in Olsztyn and Warsaw that the objects looted in the area and stored in the castle were saved as far as possible and then conserved and restored, albeit in a different location than Olsztyn.

The rapid and massive removal of former German cultural assets from the new Polish territories led to a severe cultural impoverishment there. Efforts by the Olsztyn museum in the 1950s to repatriate these objects were largely unsuccessful. However, this was not so much due to political reluctance in Warsaw as to the fact that the removal and transfer of objects was largely uncontrolled, without detailed inventories and records of provenance. As a result, it is still almost impossible to determine which art and cultural objects from

the postwar storage facility in Olsztyn Castle are in Polish museums and storerooms, which have passed into private hands, and which have been sold abroad, also with the help of the state art trading company “Desa”.

Concluding Remarks

Since 1989, the once homogeneous facade of regional identity has been steadily fracturing, a process driven in no small part by generational change. Cultural heritage, once subordinated to and shaped by the political system, is increasingly recognized and embraced in its diversity by younger generations. This more nuanced engagement with the past is transforming how heritage is inherited, how traditions are cultivated, and how static legacies are transmitted and reimagined. These shifts usher in a fundamental redefinition of heritage and inheritance, accompanied by a new understanding of identity. The emerging focus is on the concept of a multicultural identity for regions like Warmia and Masuria, or, as it is often highlighted, an “open regionalism”, which reflects a dynamic and inclusive perspective on the past and present (Zalewski, 2014, p. 31). This is not only about a new dimension of dealing with German cultural heritage, but also about its appropriation as common heritage. It remains to be seen whether a transcultural regional identity can be established through the recognition of German cultural heritage.

The newly established museums in the former German territories had to follow the political dictates of “re-Polonization”. In accordance with this principle, the regional museum in Olsztyn built up a collection designed to demonstrate and illustrate the Polish character of Warmia and Masuria. German artifacts and exhibits were rarely displayed because there were hardly any left. The few that remained were either sold as Polish, with all evidence of their German origin removed, or appropriated as Polish and included in exhibitions and/or kept in storerooms. The importance of the German past for the process of collecting and inventorying has only been recognized in recent years. Attempts to restore the cultural heterogeneity of the exhibition have been more or less successful. However, the problem is, on the one hand, the dominance of the Polish context and, on the other hand, the fact that the German past should not be concealed. The search for a balanced practice of representation continues, confirming once again that canonized object complexes and their respective patterns of representation are not constants and convey time-specific content.

Museum objects from the former German collections in Polish museums implicitly embody a dynamic understanding of regionalism and thus carry categories of heterogeneous recording and description into the present. Against this background, it is important to avoid object-based interpretive sovereignty, and to understand museum appropriation practices as dynamic processes. The aim is to take the long overdue step of presenting an exciting and tension-filled history of the historical German-Polish border regions beyond national

dividing lines, beyond irreconcilable enemy images, and even beyond identity-forming paradigms. This means nothing less than relying on topoi other than those of the nation state in a museum narrative.

The prerequisite for this is that the possessive, mostly national identifications with museum objects are made transparent, so that the focus is directed to different mediation and representation needs. It is important to emphasize how formerly German, now Polish regions with multiple attributions and an extremely fractured recent history are constructed and mediated in museums through different historical-political and cultural narratives.

However, this does not “free” the collections from interest-based appropriation. They continue to be understood in the usual sense, as a store of knowledge to be explored and its contents to be communicated. The re-contextualization of the formerly German objects in Polish museums must therefore be precise enough to allow them to tell their stories in the context of an exhibition.

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Zawłaszczanie niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego przez muzea. Studium przypadku Allenstein/Olsztyna

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje ślady kwestionowanego niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego na Warmii i Mazurach, które obecnie należą do Polski. Po II wojnie światowej obszary te uległy przekształceniom na skutek zniszczenia, repolonizacji i wymazywania niemieckiej tożsamości. Niemieckie artefakty zostały splądrowane, zdewastowane lub zreinterpretowane tak, aby pasowały do polskiej narracji nacjonalistycznej, czego przykładem jest muzeum w Olsztynie. Jednak ostatnio podejmowane wysiłki miały na celu przezwyciężenie podziałów poprzez uznanie wspólnej wielokulturowej historii tych regionów. Autorka wzywa do bardziej inkluzywnego podejścia do dziedzictwa kulturowego, które uwzględnia złożoność sytuacji i promuje dialog, zamiast zachowywać wąską perspektywę narodową.

Słowa kluczowe: niemieckie dziedzictwo kulturowe; repolonizacja po II wojnie światowej; Muzeum Warmii i Mazur w Olsztynie; grabież i zawłaszczanie; wspólna historia; narracje muzealne

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