

PhD thesis summary

**Public Archaeology in Contemporary Poland in a Comparative Perspective**

The dissertation entitled "Public Archaeology in Contemporary Poland in a Comparative Perspective" investigates the phenomenon of public archaeology, which over the years has developed a range of methods allowing it to become a fully-fledged sub-discipline of archaeology, focused on popularizing archaeological knowledge and research.

This branch of archaeology has been presented in its main forms, with original research conducted on some of the most well-known archaeological sites from the Stone Age, which today function as museums and reserves with open-air exhibitions. The intent behind this choice is to engage in discussions surrounding issues related to archaeological sites that are particularly challenging to exhibit and interpret.

Public archaeology in Poland has been presented from a comparative perspective, leveraging experiences of public archaeology in selected countries, namely, the United States and South Korea. These two nations serve as models for promoting science in general, with public archaeology playing an extraordinarily crucial role.

The dissertation is structured into eight chapters.

The first chapter is an introduction, discussing the purpose and source base of the dissertation.

The second chapter introduces the key question: "What is public archaeology?". To answer this question, it proposes a series of definitions established mainly in Anglo-Saxon countries, but also recently in Poland. The definitions show that this area of archaeology carries very different connotations, depending on the country, author, and time it was considered. This chapter highlights the main branches of public archaeology: 1) community archaeology, involving collaboration with various social groups and populations; 2) "public sector" archaeology, associated with methods of protection and conservation of heritage and

cultural goods; 3) archaeological education, geared towards interaction with tourists and visitors for educational purposes; 4) popular archaeology, the practice of using public media to inform the public about archaeological discoveries and promote archaeology in “new media” ways; 5) academic public archaeology, a sub-discipline that studies all other branches of archaeology from an ethical, economic, educational, legal perspective, etc. Moreover, the second chapter briefly discusses how archaeology “weaves” into daily social life and why exactly public archaeology is so important in promoting archaeological discoveries. It addresses issues such as how without implementing public archaeology, ancient human history may be misinterpreted or freely interpreted, which can negatively impact the correct understanding of human history.

The third chapter outlines the birth of public archaeology. It focuses on the countries most important for the development of this field – namely, the United States and Great Britain, as public archaeology, in the form it exists today, originates from there. Furthermore, this chapter compares the American and British approaches to popularizing archaeology and related cultural heritage protection, explaining that at the beginning of the discussed field, these two models differed significantly. The American model is primarily about managing archaeological heritage, deriving directly from cultural resource management (CRM). In contrast, the British version of public archaeology initially focused on making museum offerings more attractive, thereby attracting tourists to these cultural institutions. Additionally, the chapter briefly characterizes public archaeology activities in South Korea. This is an example of the precise implementation of both the American and British models of public archaeology into its archaeological doctrine.

The fourth chapter mainly describes events associated with the beginnings of popularizing archaeology in Poland, which took place just before World War II and after its end until today. The issue of archaeological museums, their history, and their current functioning is discussed here. A detailed analysis of this phenomenon is very important for Polish public archaeology because it was from the idea of museums that institutions now known as archaeological reserves were born. These reserves can be associated with the beginnings of popularizing Polish archaeology. This chapter provides definitions and guidelines for classifying archaeological reserves – places of protection and accessibility of archaeological sites where such institutions (*in situ*) are built. Furthermore, it discusses the concept of the reserve and “open-air museum”, highlighting the similarities and differences

between these two ideas, where in Poland these two types of museums are distinct, even though both terms are often used interchangeably.

Chapter Five provides a description of two of the most famous prehistoric archaeological reserves in Poland: the Biskupin Archaeological Museum and the Krzemionki Archaeological Museum and Reserve. This chapter includes the history of the discovery of both sites, the research conducted at them, and the use of their potential for promoting archaeology. The first one, Biskupin, is described through the lens of one major part of the reserve, pertaining to the Stone Age. The reconstructed Neolithic village and Mesolithic hunter-gatherer campsites serve both as a source of education about the earliest times for tourists and as a setting for conducting archaeological experiments by reconstructors. The activities of a reconstructive group working at the Biskupin Museum, which includes students and staff from various universities in Poland, are discussed. The second reserve described in this chapter is the Museum and Reserve in Krzemionki. The Neolithic striped flint mine, inscribed on the UNESCO list in 2019, is a unique archaeological site and reserve on a European scale. In this case, Krzemionki is presented through the lens of popularizing and educational activities. Its parts – the archaeological park (open-air museum), the main tourist route running both above and in the flint mines, and the modern museum building – are discussed.

Chapter Six introduces the characteristics of forms of public archaeology in Poland. These forms are described mainly based on authorial research conducted in the Biskupin Archaeological Museum and the Archaeological Museum and Reserve in Krzemionki. Five main forms of public archaeology implemented in reserves are described: digital archaeology, experimental archaeology, storytelling, archaeological festivals, and historical reenactment. The use of digital and multimedia tools in museums has fundamentally changed traditional archaeological museology, allowing for the creation of new, interactive, and visually attractive exhibits. These exhibits, with their "multisensory" nature, engage most of the senses of tourists during their visit, and not just visual perception as before. Experimental archaeology, especially that conducted in front of spectators, has become a form that is both visually and educationally appealing. Education derived from archaeological experiments is beneficial not only for the popularization of knowledge among the general public but also for archaeologists themselves. Storytelling, in turn, is nothing more than a better, more attractive, and more interestingly led popular science lecture. It is a necessary element of "lecture evolution" for popularizing archaeological knowledge among society. Archaeological festivals are a form of

public archaeology that should incorporate other forms mentioned in this work. It can also be noticed that the festival period is a kind of "revival" of selected historical epochs. As a result, a tourist can interact with re-enactors of ancient history, all delivered in an accessible, often entertaining form. The last main form implemented in reserves is a historical reenactment. It involves a high commitment of reconstructors to so-called "living history", where, for example, during a festival, historical re-enactors try to live like the communities of a selected era. This form of public archaeology mainly serves for the tourist to "immerse" themselves in the history told during a particular festival and feel as if they are actually taking a journey through time, which in turn is intended to facilitate the easier assimilation of additional information about people and their lifestyle in the ancient times. As can be seen, all these forms have in common that they are not only educational tools but also serve to build a bond between the past and the present.

Chapter Seven characterizes three reserves, which are among the most popular in South Korea, the Czech Republic, and the United States. Observations and authorial research were conducted at these places. The first of these is the Jeongokri Museum in South Korea. The reserve and museum were created on the site of a sensational discovery of Acheulian handaxes in East Asia. This discovery was so significant that the archaeologists responsible for this site were keen on establishing a protective zone in the form of a museum and archaeological reserve. This is how one of the most famous museum objects in South Korea was created. This place is represented by a unique, futuristic museum building and a recurring archaeological festival, attracting hundreds of thousands of tourists and promoting not only archaeology but also the region and local folklore. This represents the highest level of archaeology commercialization of the reserves discussed in this dissertation. The second object is the Archeopark Pavlov, located in the southern Moravia region. This is an incredibly well-known site for world archaeology. It could be said that it is the most famous settlement site representing the cultures of mammoth hunters. Popularization in this place is more focused on education and the toned-down character of festival events. What distinguishes the Archeopark is both the unique architecture of the museum, presented in the form of a large archaeological excavation, and the interior of the building, which combines a traditional exhibition with highly advanced multimedia techniques, strongly impacting tourists. The last of the foreign archaeological museums and reserves is the Hudson-Meng Education and Research Center in Nebraska (USA). This is a reserve protecting a still-explored bison kill site, where numerous bison bones and artifacts in the form of flint points were discovered.

The findings suggest that the site is related to the cultures of the Paleoindian period. This object embodies the epitome of public archaeology in the American context. Here, archaeology is promoted in the spirit of respecting archaeological research and the ancient cultures that inhabited these lands thousands of years ago. In the later part of this chapter, a comparison was made of the activities of these reserves with the previously discussed Polish archaeological reserves. The similarities and differences between these five reserves were shown through the lens of the five main forms of public archaeology implemented in such reserves.

In the conclusion of the work, the importance of analyzing and sharing the results of archaeological research with society was emphasized, indicating archaeological reserves as places where public archaeology plays a key role, enhancing their educational value and promoting an understanding of our heritage.

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