

## Sławomir Marchel

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# Introduction

Dear Readers,

The latest issue of the *Ignatianum Philosophical Yearbook* includes a thematic section featuring articles prepared to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the State Archives in Opole—one of 33 such institutions within the network of Polish state archives. These anniversaries, which began in 2019 with the centenary of the Decree on the Organization of State Archives and the Protection of Archival Materials issued by Head of State Józef Piłsudski, provide an opportunity to revisit the invaluable historical sources preserved in archival storage. The jubilee of the Opole archives, celebrated in 2023, inspired researchers to embrace the idea of returning to the sources. Consequently, the presented texts are based on archival analysis and are primarily situated within the broadly understood discourse on the history of Silesia.

Mirosław Lenart takes us on a journey into the extraordinary world of meanings. The author conducts an in-depth analysis of selected decorative motifs found in the pages of the most valuable artifact housed in the Opole archives—the so-called Głubczyce Book. Recovered by Poland at the dawn of the third millennium after being considered lost for decades, this is the first comprehensive study of this subject, highlighting the profound symbolism of the “wild man” depictions, which have been largely overlooked by researchers until now.

The next article immerses us in the world of seventeenth-century religious struggles in Silesia. Maria Leśniowska examines a document

issued by George III, Count von Oppersdorf, aimed at combating Protestantism. Count von Oppersdorf was a member of a family that resided in Silesia for several centuries, establishing Głogówek as their seat in the sixteenth century. Notably, the castle in Głogówek was a refuge for King John II Casimir Vasa, who was forced to flee the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Swedish invasion in 1655. This was not the only instance of the Oppersdorfs' connections with Poles, a bond deeply rooted in their steadfast devotion to the Catholic faith and the Church.

Tomasz Ciesielski brings to light a little-known episode involving Frederick Augustus II Wettin, Elector of Saxony, during his stay in Opole. The ruler, en route to his coronation as the new king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under the name Augustus III, spent nearly three weeks in this Silesian city. Drawing on extensive archival research, the author not only details the circumstances of the king-elect's court residing in Opole but also highlights significant political and military events that shaped the backdrop of the final interregnum in the Polish-Lithuanian state.

Sławomir Marchel delves into the only surviving handwritten collection of drama scripts performed at the Jesuit college in Nysa. Briefly recounting the history of this esteemed educational institution that operated in Silesia during the 17th and 18th centuries, along with its associated theater, the author analyzes the content of the volume.

Barbara Sypko introduces us to the content of the *Statutes on the Admission of the Sick to St. Adalbert's Hospital in Opole*, a document from the 19th century that has so far been largely overlooked in scholarly literature. Connected to the caregiving work of the Franciscan Sisters, this text reminds us of the crucial role women's religious orders played in the history of medicine and patient care.

A multi-sheet topographical map from 1883 serves as a starting point for Przemysław Jagiełło's historical reflection on the process of determining the border between the Second Polish Republic and the Weimar Republic in 1921–1922. This cartographic material was used by the German delegation during the dispute with the Polish side, ultimately resolved by international commissioners.

A postcard from 1899, donated to the state archive by a collector, depicting a fragment of a now-lost castle garden, was the foundation for Roksana Rał-Niemeczek's reflections on the cultural significance of gardens. The pursuit of beauty and harmony, reflected for millennia in garden design, is a key element of Europe's shared civilizational heritage.

Similarly, a poster printed in 1902 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Municipal Theater in Nysa, discovered in the archive

storerooms, was the basis for Małgorzata Blach-Margos's narrative about the significance of this institution in the history of the city, which for several centuries was one of the most important cultural centers in Silesia.

Justyna Sowińska analyses in detail the holdings of the State Archive in Opole, created in the postwar period, focusing on the usefulness of the documents found for research into the fate of Jews between 1945 and 1950. As an example of the collection, which still requires deeper thematic inquiry, the author highlights selected archival materials from the Brzeg County.

The history of the Society for the Development of the Western Lands and its role in shaping the academic community's life is explored in Adriana Dawid's text. Drawing on the results of the analysis of sources, primarily gathered in the Opole archive, the author reveals both the real and propagandistic aspects of the society's activities, which aimed to instill in students not only the belief in the inseparable ties between Piast Silesia and Poland but also the righteousness of the path chosen by the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR).

In presenting this collection of texts to the readers, we firmly believe that in the 21st century, there is no longer a need to remind anyone of the cultural significance of archives that preserve historical resources. We hope that by building a narrative of the past on solid foundations, which are archival materials, we will collectively create a future based on the relentless pursuit of truth.

The editorial team has also included texts in the *Varia* section that are not related to the main topic but are connected to the core disciplines of the journal: philosophy, cultural and religious studies, literary studies, and history.

Enjoy your reading and may it be fruitful.

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