

Summary

THE NEED FOR CONTINUITY

Iconographic collections in the Polish lands in the 19th century

The book is devoted to iconographic collections, which can be briefly described as collections of graphic and drawn images. They included all kinds of images, both those depicting a specific theme and, precisely because of the subject matter, attracting the interest of collectors, as well as works by specific artists considered to be original artistic creations. While such collections sometimes included outstanding graphic works by old masters, for the most part they consisted of images created in the 19th century using reproduction methods characteristic of that time. These collections therefore included drawings, engravings, sketches, historical prints and contemporary copies, press illustrations, postcards, and finally, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, photographs. These collections are considered to be a 19th-century collecting phenomenon, where traditional expertise in engravings, primarily developed in the 18th century, intersects with the reproductive potential of graphic and photomechanical techniques invented during the 'long century', and the desire to collect illustrations in a broader sense—various aspects of human life and elements of the surrounding world—or in a narrower sense, visual documentation of a single theme or the work of a single artist. This phenomenon is analysed through forty-five iconographic collections that existed in the Polish lands in the 19th century. The main protagonists include Ambroży Grabowski, Maria Celestyna Boczkowska, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Władysław Bartynowski, Dominik Witke-Jeżewski and the Iconographic Archive of Bronisław Gembarzewski.

The book consists of eight chapters, with Chapter I serving as an introduction. It contains case studies analysing the activities and concepts of ten collectors, with other collectors appearing in the background. The collections are presented in a chronological order similar to their development during the 19th century. They start with the collections of Izabela Czartoryska (née Fleming) at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries and end with the Iconographic Archive of Bronisław Gembarzewski, established in 1914. The book describes private collections reflecting personal motivations, such as the creation of commemorative

albums (Maria Celestyna Boczkowska), as well as collections established by researchers (Zygmunt Gloger and Stanisław Tomkowicz), and institutional collections (the National Museum and the Museum of Technology and Industry, both in Krakow).

The seven chapters that follow attempt to answer the following questions: What was collected? How was it collected? Why was it collected? Chapters II and III show what heritage meant in 19th-century iconographic collections. Chapter II deals with the subject matter of the illustrations that found their way into the collections, describing the most popular and recurring motifs of the representations, as well as elements of the cultural heritage that was taking shape at the time. Chapter III uses these to propose an interpretation of iconographic collections through the prism of a discussion of national and regional heritage.

Chapters IV and V focus on the increasing prevalence of illustrations in nineteenth-century society. Chapter IV discusses the reproduction techniques that were characteristic of this period and that are most commonly found in contemporary collections. Chapter V outlines the engraving market in Poland and the network of contacts between collectors.

Chapters VI and VII address the purpose of iconographic collections. Chapter VI discusses the scientific function of collections, and introduces the key issue of how to organise a collection. The chapter aims to demonstrate various methods of classifying engravings and different traditions of organising collections, the origins of which date back to modern times, but which remained highly relevant in the 19th century. It also highlights the significant number of images depicting various human activities. By the end of the 19th century, this number had grown to such an extent that it began to exceed the capabilities of human comprehension and existing systems of organisation. This change influenced the methods of sorting book collections that were perfected at the turn of the 20th century, and is also reflected in the challenges that collectors faced in systematising their collections, as exemplified by the Iconographic Archive established by Bronisław Gembarzewski.

Chapter VII addresses the function of iconographic collections, exploring the purposes they served. Throughout the 19th century, these collections existed at the intersection of entertainment and pleasure, and the acquisition of knowledge. The close relationship between amusement and learning has been acknowledged since ancient times. However, this became more complicated with the specialisation of scientific disciplines in the second half of the century. Researchers, who by this time were professional scientists, experts and university and college employees, required research tools, including collections of illustrations. Art historians required photo libraries (collections of reproductions of works of art), archaeologists needed documentation of excavations and ethnologists needed sources on folk culture. In this context, Bronisław Gembarzewski's efforts to align the Iconographic Archive with the needs of Polish science can be seen as a final attempt to establish the iconographic collection's place in the scientific world, elevating its status beyond that of a purely utilitarian or entertainment-focused collection.

The final chapter proposes an answer to the question of what motivated the desire to create, arrange and store collections of iconographic illustrations. These collections reflected the 19th-century desire to preserve the surrounding world, including not only traces of the past, but also the current state of objects, images of living people, ancient monuments and contemporary works of art.