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## MUSEUMS IN FORMER RESIDENCES: CASTLES, PALACES AND MANOR HOUSES

**Abstract:** The article concerns former residences in Poland and their contemporary use as museums. The authors present the history of Polish residences, the development of museums in castles, palaces and manor houses, their spatial distribution and the relations between the type of building and that of the museum collection.

**Key words:** museum, residence, castle, palace, manor house, cultural heritage.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Museums as a tourism asset are an important destination. According to *KOBiDZ*<sup>1</sup>, about 95% of museums in Poland are located in historical buildings – former churches and monastic complexes; urban buildings such as town halls, old tenement houses; and in industrial buildings such as factories, granaries, etc. The authors decided to focus particularly on museums located in former residences: castles, palaces and manor houses.

For the purposes of this article, castles, palaces and manor houses are referred to as ‘former residences’. They are either single, individual buildings or building complexes, including elevations, pavilions and outbuildings (KUBALSKA-SULKIEWICZ 1996). The authors also discussed the museums situated within the premises of palace-garden and manor house complexes but outside the main residential building, as well as the museums located in urban palaces that used to belong to great manufacturers (the palaces of Upper Silesian cities and Łódź).

### 2. RESIDENCES IN POLAND – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Residences in Poland were being built for nearly 1000 years, from the times of the formation of Polish statehood until World War II. First as castles and fortified manor houses (until mid-17<sup>th</sup> c.), and later as palaces and baroque, neo-classical, historicist and

eclectic palaces. The word ‘castle’ is used to describe a 19<sup>th</sup> c. residence whose architectural style recalls gothic or renaissance edifices such as the neo-gothic castle in Kórnik or the neo-Renaissance castle in Gołuchów.

Chronologically, castles can be divided into medieval and modern castles (GUERQUIN 1984). The medieval ones were built in the gothic style, and adapted to vertical defence (e.g. the castles in Chęciny, Olsztyn near Częstochowa, Niedzica, Bolków, Międzyrzecz, Swobnica, Gniew, Malbork, Czersk, and Kwidzyń). They were built until the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> c. as royal, princely, knightly, episcopal, capitular and monastic castles (Teutonic stronghold-monasteries and castle-treasuries built by the Order of St John). From the 16<sup>th</sup> c. onwards, due to the common use of firearms, castles were built so that they were prepared for horizontal defence. They were the *palazzo in fortezza* type of castles (e.g. Krasiczyn, Janowiec), the bastion castles in the renaissance and mannerist style (e.g. the Krzyżtopór castle in Ujazd), and the already existing, modernized medieval castles (e.g. the castles in Pieskowa Skała, Danków). From the 18<sup>th</sup> c. the defensive character of castles weakened and the *palazzo in fortezza* type (Nowy Wiśnicz, Ujazd, Łañcut, Baranów Sandomierski) is treated as a transitional form between a castle and a palace. They were usually residences of wealthy aristocratic families such as the Lubomirscy, Ossolińscy, Potoccy or Leszczyńscy. The construction and distribution of

castles was severely affected by the fragmentation of Poland, the emergence of the Teutonic state on the Baltic Sea, the building activity organised by the Order of Saint John and King Kazimierz (*Casimir*) the Great, as well as the territorial development of Poland under his rule. Land endowments on merit and for civil functions also contributed to the appearance of huge 'latifundia' and estates, mainly in south-eastern Poland, as well as the building of family seats.

In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> c. palaces appear in Poland – at first as baroque and rococo *entre cour et jardin*, i.e. palace and garden complexes (e.g. Nieborów, Białystok, Radzyń Podlaski), and from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. as neo-classical palace-park complexes (e.g. Śmiełów, Dobrzyca). Later palaces were built in the romantic, neo-gothic, neo-renaissance or eclectic styles. Originally, palaces were two-storey buildings, but of differing arrangement of the floors: the *piano nobile* type of palace had its reception area on the first floor (Nieborów), with a *casa di villa* on the ground floor (Śmiełów) (MIŁOBĘDZKI 1982).

The development of the Polish manor house lasted for nearly 1000 years. According to Rydel (1993), the period from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> c. was the time when the fortified manor house was developing as the home of the 'knight-landowner'. At the beginning they were medieval *fortalitia* (Oporów, Dębno), and later renaissance *castelli* (Szymbark, Frydmark). Defensive manor houses were one-storey buildings because of their function. The period between the mid-17<sup>th</sup> c. and the penultimate decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. was the time when the manor house with 'corner annexes' was developing (Ożarów, Koszutycy) as the countryside home of landed gentry. It was followed by the neo-classical manor house – typically Polish (e.g. the manor houses in Lusławice, Rożnów, Legonice), whose development lasted until 1863. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. until World War II historicist and eclectic influences could be seen in the development of the Polish manor house. The style also appeared in hunting lodges and presbyteries. Starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> c., manor houses had only one floor, were surrounded with a yard and a garden, orchard, farm buildings, fish breeding ponds, etc. The existence of each manor house was based on land property. Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between a small palace and a large manor house, and similarly, between a medieval castle and a fortified manor, called a *fortalitium*. Full agreement on this subject cannot be found in the literature either. As a result of historical turbulence, Polish noble's palaces and manor houses appeared in Central Poland, and others, belonging to Prussian gentry, on the territory previously annexed by Prussia.

Palaces and manor houses as a social phenomenon ceased to exist in 1944. The agricultural reform liquidated all property with over 50 hectares of arable land, and on the territory annexed by Prussia (due to a different ownership structure) – of over 100 hectares of land in general. Very often, however, smaller property was parcelled up as well. The majority of landed gentry as a social group disappeared as a result of the reform. In the years 1944–8, 9707 estates were taken over by the state. Palaces and manor houses still exist as an architectural phenomenon, however, and in Poland there are 5190 residences: 418 of which are castles, 2018 are palaces and 2754 are manor houses (KOBiDZ). A large number of these, especially palaces and manor houses, are in very bad condition, often in ruins. There are about 450 very interesting or well preserved buildings of this type, including 150 castles, 244 palaces and 53 manor houses (KACZYŃSCY 2001, OMILANOWSKA 2005).

### 3. MUSEUMS IN RESIDENCES, ACCORDING TO CATEGORY

Among the 5190 residences in Poland, only 208 have been turned into museums, which is only 4% of all the residences, although as much as 47% of the 'most interesting' ones<sup>2</sup>. The castles which house museums constitute 1.4% of all the residences, palaces – 1.4% and manor houses – 1.2%. The percentages are very similar, but it must be stressed that castles make up only 8% of all residences, palaces – 39% and manor houses – 53%. Thus, it is the castles that are mostly used as museums (17%). They are followed by palaces (3.7%) and manor houses (2.3%). The limited use of the latter two categories should be linked to the fact that they perform other functions (they are often used as hotels, offices, libraries, schools, kindergartens, social care homes, hospitals, etc.).

In total, 920 museums all over Poland were analyzed, which means that 23% of them (208) are situated in former residences, including 71 in castles (34%), 75 in palaces (36%) and 62 in manor houses (30%). Locating museums in this kind of building gives the latter a chance to remain in as good a condition as possible, survive and maintain their character. Organizing a museum in a former residence certainly raises its significance and prestige, and the attractiveness of the place (history, architecture, the surroundings) attracts more people. It must be stressed that residences are a good background for exhibitions. This is reflected in expressions such as Castle-Museum, Palace-Museum, Manor house-Museum, which combine the former and the present functions of the residences, high-

lighting both the value of the museum exhibits and the qualities of the building.

#### 4. THE TIME OF MUSEUM FOUNDATION IN FORMER CASTLES, PALACES AND MANOR HOUSES

Museology in Poland dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> c. when the 'Sybilline Shrine' and the 'Gothic Cottage' were created on the initiative of Princess Izabela Czartoryska (in 1801 and 1809, respectively). They are considered to be the first museums in Poland, and were part of the idea propagated by Stanisław August Poniatowski, called *Museum Polonicum*. Their main task was to create a sense of national unity, make people proud of their past and national memories. This idea was important because at that time Poland did not exist on the maps of Europe, and Polish territory was split among occupants. What made the king's idea difficult to realize was the fact that the museums were private, not public.

Generally speaking, until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. public museums in Poland were rare. The situation started to change after Poland regained independence and after the world wars. Some legal decisions made during the inter-war period were helpful, such as the *Public Museums Protection Act* from 1933. In the late 1940s there were about 200 museums (CEMKA 2001) and from the 1950s onwards the number steadily grew. According to GUS (Central Statistical Office) records, in 1970 there were 335, in 1980 – 427, in 1990 – 563 and in 2005 – 690 museums in Poland (according to KOBiDZ – 881).

Museums located in former residences are part of Polish museology. It was the private collections belonging to wealthy families in the 19<sup>th</sup> c, kept in castles, palaces or manor houses that made Polish culture strong and enriched it with valuable items which today are the core of many museum collections. Museum-residences, founded by the aristocracy and landed gentry (the castle in Kórnik – the Działyński family, the castle in Łańcut – the Lubomirski's, the Potocki's, the palace in Rogalin – the Raczyński's, the palace in Nieborów – the Radziwiłł's), followed the example set by the Czartoryski Museum, and their idea was based on emotions and feelings such as respect for the national past, need for freedom, etc. (AJEWSKI 2001). The phenomenon is illustrated in Fig. 1, presenting the number of museums in residences from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. until the present day. After the war this was certainly caused by two important events. The first one was the agricultural reform in 1944 as a result of which the state became the owner of land and many residences, mainly palaces and manor houses. As regards castles,

the state took over those which had already changed their function from defensive to residential and were in the hands of their former owners' descendants.

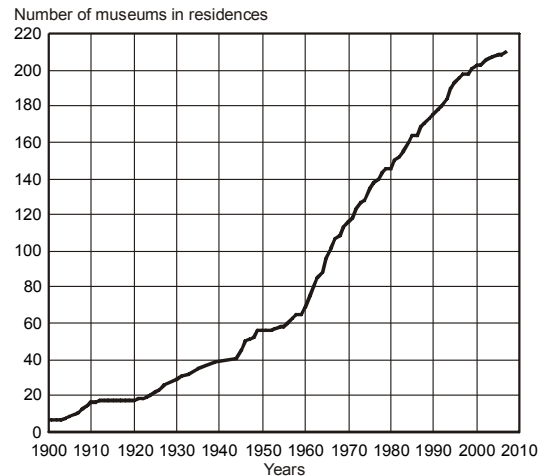


Fig. 1. The number of museums in former residences in 1900-2008  
(s o u r c e: authors' compilation)

The other important event was the passing of the *Cultural Goods Protection Act* in 1962. On the strength of this act, museums and museum repositories started to be organized (*muzealizacja zabytków*) in nationalized residences. The purpose was to preserve and protect architectural historical monuments for academic, didactic and educational reasons, as well as to create cultural institutions in them. Both the agricultural reform and the act aroused interest in former residences as museums and opened them to this kind of activity. As a result, about 23% of museums located in residences were founded in the 1960s alone. In the early 1970s the interest in residences as museums slightly dropped (Fig. 2), but they still played an important role and in the following decades new museums appeared in such buildings.

At first museums were founded mainly in castles and palaces (Fig. 2). The castles started to lose their original functions in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> c., while the palaces only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. Post-insurrection repressions, the aristocracy's loss of prestige, and later the political and economic transformations resulted in many buildings of this type, often deserted, going into the hands of the state sooner than the those that belonged to the landed gentry.

Museums founded in manor houses are a later phenomenon. They really developed only from the mid-1950s as a result of the agricultural reform mentioned above. A constant increase in the number of museums located in this category lasted until the end of the 1980s. Afterwards, probably due to

Table 1. Museums in former residences according to województwo

Województwo	Castles according to KOBiDZ (no.)	The most interesting castles (no.)	Museums in castles (no.)	Palaces according to KOBiDZ (no.)	The most interesting palaces (no.)	Museums in palaces (no.)	Manor houses according to KOBiDZ (no.)	The most interesting manor houses (no.)	Museums in manor houses (no.)	Residences according to KOBiDZ (no.)	The most interesting residences (no.)	Museums in residences (no.)	Museums in residences (%)
Dolnośląskie	100	20	6	485	23	4	187	0	1	774	43	11	1,4
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	25	9	2	88	7	1	235	1	2	348	17	5	1,4
Lubelskie	13	6	3	107	20	4	157	7	6	277	33	13	4,6
Lubuskie	23	4	1	129	8	1	77	0	1	229	12	3	1,3
Łódzkie	19	8	4	62	11	10	208	5	5	289	24	19	6,5
Małopolskie	32	18	10	66	14	3	217	10	18	315	42	31	9,8
Mazowieckie	14	9	7	155	31	17	347	15	8	516	50	32	6,2
Opolskie	28	6	2	73	10	1	80	0	0	181	16	3	1,6
Podkarpackie	19	9	4	52	19	5	152	2	5	223	30	14	6,2
Podlaskie	4	0	0	14	5	4	56	2	2	74	7	6	8,1
Pomorskie	13	7	6	73	11	2	156	2	3	242	20	11	4,5
Śląskie	37	15	5	86	17	6	85	1	1	208	33	12	5,7
Świętokrzyskie	18	6	2	30	10	3	67	1	2	115	17	7	6,0
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	28	15	8	99	12	1	188	1	0	315	28	9	2,8
Wielkopolskie	23	8	9	337	34	9	443	5	8	803	47	26	3,2
Zachodnio-Pomorskie	22	10	2	162	12	3	97	1	1	281	23	6	2,1
<b>Poland</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>2 018</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>2 754</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>5 190</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>4,0</b>

Source: Authors' compilation based on the materials of the National Centre of Research and Documentation of Historical Monuments (KACZYŃSKI 2001; OMILANOWSKA 2005).

privatization, they went more often into private hands, and became residential houses again or assumed a new function, for instance tourist (hotels, restaurants).

skie (6) *Województwo*s. The first three cover small areas, with relatively few residences, while the Podlaskie *Województwo* has the smallest number of residences (74) and they are mainly palaces and manor houses. The Zachodniopomorskie and

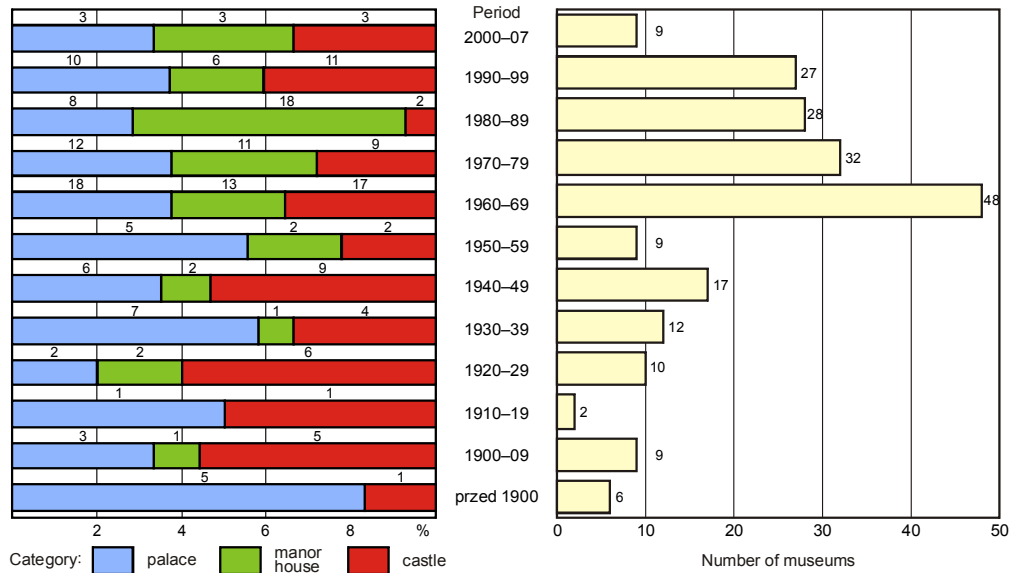


Fig. 2. Museums in castles, palaces and manor houses in order of appearance (s o u r c e: authors' compilation)

### 5. THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MUSEUMS IN FORMER CASTLES, PALACES AND MANOR HOUSES

The distribution of museums is determined by the location of castles, palaces and manor houses, and they are spread unevenly. Most residence-museums can be found in the Małopolskie, Podlaskie, Łódzkie, Mazowieckie, Podkarpackie and Świętokrzyskie *Województwo*s – from 6.2% to 9.8%, while the smallest number are from the Lubelskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Dolnośląskie, Opolskie and Zachodnio-pomorskie *Województwo*s – from 1.3% to 2.1%. This results from the number of residences and their category (Table 1, Fig. 3, 4).

An analysis of absolute figures shows that the majority of museums in residences (Table 1) are found in the Mazowieckie (32), Małopolskie (31), Wielkopolskie (26) and Łódzkie (19) *Województwo*s which are those with large cities: Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań and Łódź. They are at the same time areas where the castles, palaces and manor houses survived World War II in good condition and could be turned into museums. The smallest number is recorded in the Lubuskie, (3), Opolskie (3), Kujawsko-Pomorskie (5), Podlaskie (6) and Zachodnio-pomor-

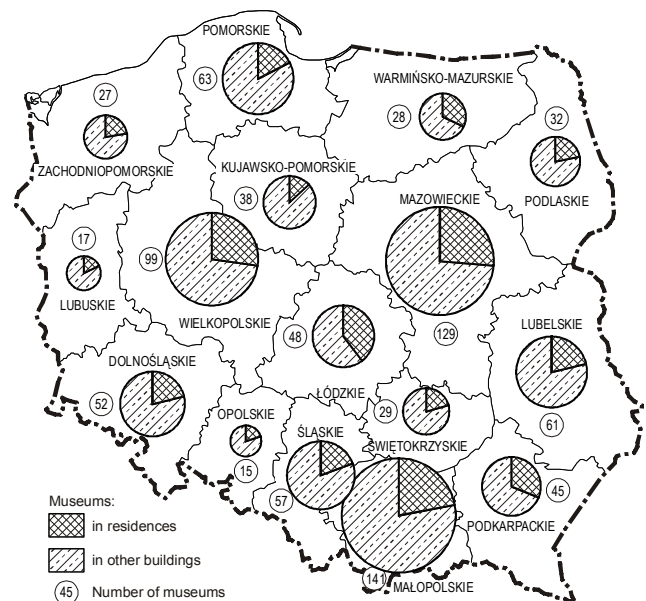


Fig. 3. The distribution of museums in former residences according to *Województwo* (s o u r c e: authors' compilation)

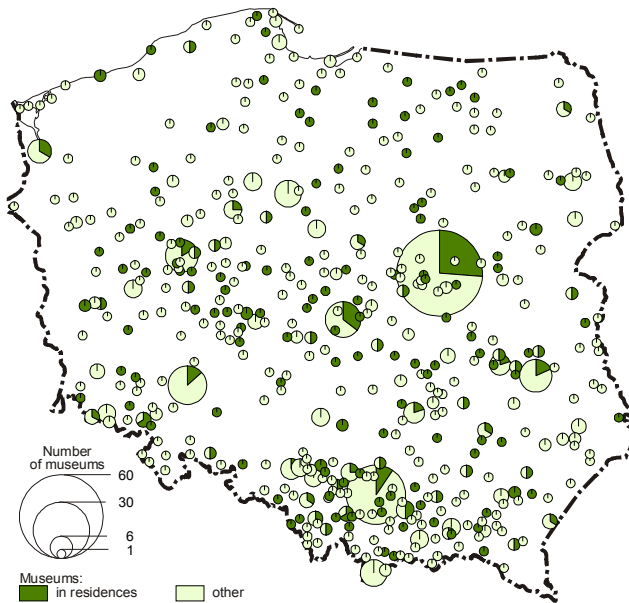


Fig. 4. The distribution of museums in Poland contrasted with museums located in residences (source: authors' compilation)

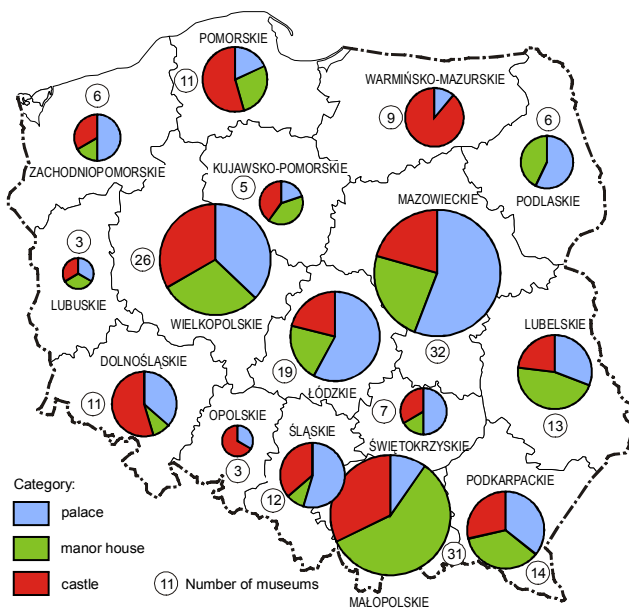


Fig. 5. The distribution of museums in residences according to the category (source: authors' compilation)

Lubuskie *Województwo* have few museums despite a significant number of palaces and manor houses. Probably, these buildings perform other functions or, due to their poor condition, are not suitable for development. It is also possible that there are some historical reasons behind the situation (those resettled from the east were not interested in founding museums).

The analysis of the relations between the occurrence of museums and the category of building shows the following regularities:

- in the majority of *województwos*, except Opolskie, Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie, museums are located in all types of residences: castles, palaces and manor houses. We can distinguish *województwos* with museums founded primarily in castles (Dolnośląskie, Pomorskie), palaces (Mazowieckie, Łódzkie, Śląskie) or manor houses (Małopolskie, Lubelskie),
- in Wielkopolskie and Podkarpackie *Województwos* the numbers of castles, palaces and manor houses with museums are in balance,
- in Podlaskie *Województwo* museums are located only in palaces and (mostly) manor houses, and in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Opolskie *Województwos* - in castles and (mostly) palaces (Fig. 5).

## 6. MUSEUMS IN FORMER CASTLES, PALACES AND MANOR HOUSES CONTRASTED WITH THE TYPES OF COLLECTION

The main objective of a museum is to collect exhibits and to present them to the public in the form of temporary or permanent exhibitions. Considering the types of collections, museums are divided into several groups, including multi-section, art, biographical, historical and specialist museums.

According to the Central Statistical Office, the majority of museums in 2006 were regional, multi-section museums. They present exhibits regarding different areas of life, divided into a number of sections (usually typical of a given region, e.g. archaeological, ethnographical, historical, etc.). Such places made up 29% of all the museums in Poland. They were followed by historical museums, presenting the history of cities, regions and communities (c. 17%), as well as art museums, collecting pieces of art or crafts (c. 12%).

Compared to the general classification of museums in Poland, the situation of museums in residences is slightly different. Although multi-section museums still dominate (81 - 38.8%), following the general pattern in the whole country, their percentage is higher than for museums in general (Fig. 6). This probably results from the fact that due to the importance and influence of their former owners, the residences are identified not only with one particular site, but with a larger region (its history) and treated as its 'visiting card' (e.g. the Museum of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, the Museum of Średzka district in Koszuty, the Regional Museum in Bełchatów). Multi-section museums located in residences are found above all in former castles (c. 50%). This shows



that the spacious, often austere interiors of these buildings lend themselves better to presenting exhibits from different areas one next to another than palaces or manor houses (Fig. 6).

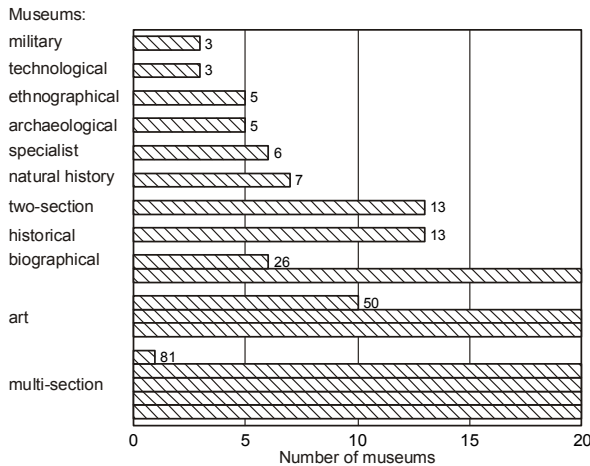


Fig. 6. Museums in former residences according to the type of collections  
(source: author)

High in the ranking are the residences with art museums, which make 24% of all the buildings (50). Pieces of art – paintings, sculptures and items of everyday use from different historical periods and geographical areas are exhibited in castle chambers, palace drawing rooms and in manor houses. Among the art museums, a special position is held by museums of interiors. In their publication on the most interesting Polish museums, SOŁTYSIAK & WIERZBIĆKA (2003) placed them into a separate group, although there were only thirty. The group includes museums like the Royal Castle in Wawel in Kraków, the Museum of Palace Interiors in Choroszcz, or the Museum of Manor House Interiors in Ożarów. Residences open to visitors and the fairly accurately recreated interiors, combined with appropriate explanations revoke the former atmosphere of those places. The former life in castles, palaces and manor houses is also revived by events organized in or around the buildings e.g. knights' tournaments (museums in Malbork, Gniew, Łęczycza), concerts of old music (museums in Łañcut, Tubądzin), or other (e.g. a Sunday at the Niechcic's – at the museum in Russów). Art museums are usually located in palaces, followed by castles.

Among the three most popular types of museums organized in residences are the biographical museums (26–12%). They are usually buildings directly connected with the lives and activity of famous people – writers, painters, composers or politicians (Sienkiewicz Museum in Oblęgorek, Matejko Museum

in Wiśnicz, Chopin's Birthplace in Żelazowa Wola). They present both the interiors and the items and souvenirs connected with a given person. It is worth noticing that this kind of museum is first of all typical of manor houses which accommodate about 70% of them. Palaces and castles play a small role in this case.

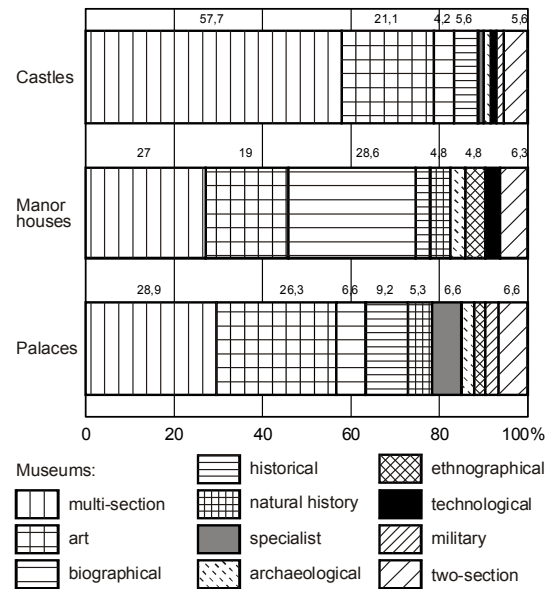


Fig. 7. Museums in former castles, palaces and manor houses according to the type of collections  
(source: authors' compilation)

These three groups of museums make up from 62% (palaces) to c. 82% (castles) of all museums, and outdistance all the remaining types. They are followed by historical and other<sup>3</sup> kinds of museums (6.2% each). As for residences, the most diversified and relatively evenly distributed collections are found in palaces which also house specialist, natural history and other types of museums.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Both the residences and the museums are parts of cultural heritage and contribute to the attractiveness of a country or region. Former residences, as the seats of rulers, aristocratic families or land owners, were built over a period of 1000 years. On the other hand, museums in Poland have existed for only about 200 years. Founding the first museum in a palace showed the right way of using residences, both in the past and today, as well as leading to a harmonious co-existence of the two institutions, both of which are important from the point of view of national heritage.

It seems that alongside the many functions currently performed by former residences, the museum function (a museum in a historical monument) is the most appropriate for this type of building; it certainly increases its value and provides additional aesthetic experience. It seems that it is the primary function of historical buildings today.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> KOBiDZ – the National Centre of Research and Documentation of Historical Buildings (*Krajowy Ośrodek Badań i Dokumentacji Zabytków*).

<sup>2</sup> The ones mentioned in the Muza publications: *Palace i dworki* and *Zamki*.

<sup>3</sup> The 'other' museums are two-section museums which cannot be included either in a single category (because of the kind of exhibits), or in the group of multi-section museums, for instance the Historical-Ethnographical Museum in Andrychów.

*Translated by Ewa Mossakowska*

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