

BURIED DESIRES: MOTIVES FOR MODERN DAY TREASURE HUNTING IN POLAND

ZAKOPANE PRAGNIENIA: MOTYWY WSPÓŁCZESNYCH POSZUKIWAŃ ZABYTKÓW W POLSCE

Diana Mroczek

Faculty of Archaeology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
ul. Uniwersytetu Poznańskiego 7, Poznań
diana.mroczek@amu.edu.pl

ABSTRACT: In 2018, an amendment to the Act on the Protection and Care of Monuments of 2003 was introduced in Poland, aimed at combating the problem of treasure hunting and its impact on national heritage. Despite the consequences, especially a potential penalty of up to eight years in prison, treasure hunting remains an attractive pastime for some. The article aims to find motives of treasure hunters through literature review and studying online forums, including a Facebook groups, to gather information for further action to protect the archaeological heritage. The author identifies seven main motivators of individual treasure hunters, which include: passion for history, adventure seeking, intellectual challenge, collecting, need for fame and recognition, personal satisfaction, and finally financial gain. Each of the above is explained and showed through treasure hunters own public admissions.

KEY WORDS: treasure hunting, metal detectors, archaeological heritage

The popular media often presents a romanticized image of archaeologists and treasure hunters, often blurring the lines between the two roles. Movies and video games, show both groups as essentially the same, with one distinction – while archaeologist returns antiquities to museums or communities that own the artefact, the treasure hunter does not. Sometimes, this act of “giving back” is designed to portray a redemption arc well done by heroes, as was done in the popular PS4 game “Uncharted: The Lost Legacy”. In real life however, the exciting adventures are replaced by bu-

reauracy, searching the terrain, tedious excavations and less-than magical artefacts. Some of those special, original artifacts in extreme circumstances are being sold to highest bidder in countries or continents away or are simply being destroyed for either profit or ideology. The present-day Poland is fortunately not suffering from war or any social instability that usually prompts arrival or creation of looters. This stability however seems to trigger more treasure hunting activity who treat it as a hobby and individual expression of interest in history.

In this article, I will make a preliminary attempt to identify the primary discernible motivations of treasure hunters active within Poland. To achieve this goal, I will provide an overview of current understanding of motivations of treasure hunters. Using open-source data from online forums like Facebook, I will look for clear statements from treasure hunters to see what are their declared motivations to participate in what is still, legally, a criminal act. This article aims to provide an understanding of various factors that drive this activity in Poland by proposing of treasure hunters and their motivations. It is my hope that this analysis will help to inform future efforts to protect archaeological heritage and promote responsible treasure hunting, also known as “movable archaeological artifact searching”.

This article utilizes a combination of literature review and analysis of open-source data from online forums, mainly from “POLSKA Grupa Poszukiwaczy” (eng. Polish Group of Seekers (implied: treasure hunters)), “Pasja Eksploracja” (eng. Passion of Exploring), “DETEKTORYŚCI – Poszukiwacze Skarbów, identyfikacja, wykrywacze metali” (eng. Detectorists – Treasure Hunters, identification, metal detectors)¹, to explore the motivations behind treasure hunting in Poland. I have systematically searched these forums to identify discussions related to treasure hunting and archaeological heritage in Poland to better understand their drives. This article emphasizes the preliminary nature of the exploration of treasure hunting in Poland through entries on various forums. Conducting a review of different websites is a crucial step in source analysis, allowing for an understanding of the existing references. The act of engaging with these forums constitutes an essential phase in the analysis of sources, offering a window into the mindset of those involved in this illicit activity. By inspecting the discussions and narratives circulating within these online spaces, achieved is a clearer..., a clearer comprehension of the existing references concerning treasure hunting in Poland is achieved. The analysis of these online discussions provides insights into the values and motivations that drive people to engage in treasure hunting, as well as the challenges and tensions that arise from interactions between professionals and amateurs in the field. It is important to note that a comprehensive investigation into the motivations behind treasure hunting using metal detectors, whether legal or illegal, and its impact on archaeology has not been carried out in Poland. Therefore, my article is based on observed opinions that have been stated online, on literature and parallel studies relating to treasure hunting conducted by researchers from Finland (Immo-

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/pasjawykopki>; <https://www.facebook.com/groups/168800289801061> [Accessed: 30.04.2023].

nen, Kinnunen, 2020), England and Wales (Thomas, 2012; Winkley, 2016), Denmark (Dobat, Jensen, 2016) and Norway (Axelsen, 2021). Recently, due to a new proposed amendment to the Protection and Care of Historical Monuments Act of 23 July 2003 the discussions all over social and popular media have gained strength. Delving into this exploratory endeavor, the review of these websites emerges as an indispensable facet of source analysis. This process unveils the intricacies of the mindset driving individuals to pursue such activities, often disregarding the legal and ethical implications associated with the looting and illegal trade of historical artifacts.

This objective does not however encompass an analysis of every individual entry in every social media space, an endeavour that would not be possible. Instead, the emphasis rests directly upon meticulously selecting and scrutinizing entries that exhibit a representative nature, thereby offering an insightful perspective within the confines of the article's specific aims and scope. This judicious approach allows for a meaningful exploration of a subset of entries that mirror the broader landscape while circumventing the impracticality of an all-encompassing evaluation.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABOUT METAL DETECTING

The “hobby” of metal detecting has been gaining popularity in the country since the 1990s, but there is still a lack of... lack of comprehensive statistical studies that investigate the underlying motivations of treasure hunters and the impact of their activities on the archaeological heritage. This short overview aims to synthesize and analyse selected literature on the topic and highlight the need for further research on this issue.

In an article *Metal detectors – a science instrument or barbaric tool* Andrzej Kowowski (1999, p. 1) proposed to distinguish five different groups of users of metal detectors. Accordingly, the first group is comprised of seekers of valuables who try to earn extra money by looking for lost items on beaches after the end of summer holidays. The second group are treasure hunters who are described by Kowowski as individuals looking specifically for mythical treasures, as for example, forgotten treasures of Wehrmacht or Templars gold. The third group of people focuses more on military memorabilia and modern movable objects. This group is deemed to be the largest among those using metal detectors, who are at least somewhat legal, gathering in historical societies and working in collaboration with museums or archaeological digs. The fourth group is comprised of “often educated historians and archeologists, who are using their professional knowledge and science publications” for locating best spots. The last group that is without a doubt the most harmful are looters focused on archaeological sites, who without regard destroy it in pursuit of antiquities.

Further, Zbigniew Kobyliński and Piotr Szpanowski (2009, p. 19) differentiated two motives that drive metal detectorists: “the first of these is purely pecuniary: searching for and digging archaeological sites for profit. The other is the desire to possess ancient artefacts, to find them and to collect them” (Kobyliński, Szpanowski,

2009, p. 19). Authors noticed that both of those motivations can occur together, however they pointed to accompanying them need of exchange or trade of antiquities to enlarge collection. In Poland engaging in those actions means engaging in the black market (Grzegorzcyk, 2016, p. 32).

Also, Maciej Trzciniński in a book *Przestępczość przeciwko zabytkom archeologicznym. Problematyka prawno-kryminalistyczna* (Trzciniński, 2010, p. 248–249) has divided perpetrators of offences against archaeological heritage. Based on their motives and methods he identified two distinct groups of offenders. The first group is composed of seekers of movable items that may or may not be archaeological artefacts. It usually happens that people who engage in treasure hunting find both property items that have some historical value as well as those that are relatively new in chronological terms. Sometimes, however, they do find archaeological artefacts. Trzciniński notices that treasure hunters have somewhat limited knowledge and not many accessible, reliable sources regarding archaeology, so it often happens that when the person engaging in illegal activities is apprehended, the material found in their possession mixed. The most common tool for identification for these group of people seems to be the Internet. Worth noticing though is the fact that some hobbyists spend many hours researching the subject, and have successfully expanded informative resources by themselves such as Buttonarium, where one can find a compendium of information about buttons².

The second group identified by Trzciniński is the damaging one, whose primary objective seem to be looting of archaeological sites for financial purposes. Trzciniński (2010, p. 249) points out that this group is better equipped to search for antiquities with specialized knowledge regarding both archaeology and geography. He also notices that even though the evidence pointing towards it is not exactly conclusive, some of these treasure hunters seem to be working on commission to seek specific groups of antiquities.

Marcin Michalski (2019, p. 86–87) proposes different values for motives such as object of interest, tools, methods, attitude towards the law and finally the motive. The most important motivation listed by Michalski is the innate need to collect. This drive is closely followed by economic gain. He also points to two motives as described by treasure hunters themselves i.e. the need to protect archaeological and any movable historic object from destructions, for example through agriculture, and to discover personally, by a “hands-on” approach, local history in the patriotic impulse. However, both of those motives seem to be only excuses.

Both Michalski (2019) and Alan King (2021), a forensic psychologist based in North Dakota, tend to view treasure hunters as a kind of subculture within society. Within this subculture, individuals who possess more valuable treasures, more “fertile” spots or more sophisticated methods, are considered to be of higher rank on the social ladder. This suggests that the act of treasure hunting is not simply a hobby but is rather a means of gaining social status and prestige within a specific community.

² <https://www.buttonarium.eu/> [Accessed: 28.04.2023].

Some published works has also been directing conversation towards relationships between archaeologists, treasure hunters and broadly understood public (Makowska, Oniszczyk, Sabaciński, 2016), as for example the project entitled “Legal and illicit trade with cultural heritage”, supported by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (Florjanowicz, 2013, p. 77). It aimed to analyse, amongst other things, social perception of cultural heritage. One of its questions regarded searching for portable monuments and their ownership. The expressed opinions were highly different, with some suggesting that precious finds should be kept or sold, while others proposed giving them to museums for a financial reward (which could be seen as a form of selling). There were also those who recognized the social value of such discoveries. However, the interviewees agreed that illegal treasure hunting should be severely punished. These findings were reported by Korporacja Badawcza Pretendent in 2011 (p. 12–13). The views of the respondents regarding metal detectorists can be summarized in the following percentage values: 1. harmless eccentrics (40%), 2. save monuments (29%), 3. steal monuments (17%), 4. destroy monuments (14%) (Florjanowicz, 2013, p. 78).

In more recent Phd dissertation by Irmelin Axelsen entitled “What’s the deal with old things? An exploratory study of attitudes and practices towards certain old things among archeologists and metal detectorists in Norway” (Axelsen, 2021) the author has identified different motives driving people to pursuing careers in archaeology or dedicate resources for a new hobby of metal detecting. She collected personal statements from groups of archaeologists and metal detectorists, both in the form of open-ended questions and questionnaires. She categorized motivations into scheme of four sub-categories: origins (childhood dream, accidental, milestone, familiarity), protecting (threats (ploughing), posterity), value (discovery (to uncover), information (jigsaw), closeness, storytelling, authenticity) and recognition (Axelsen, 2021, p. 144).

This strained relationship between treasure hunters and archaeologists takes on added significance within the context of the proposed new amendment to the Act. The different viewpoints of these two groups intersect with the potential changes in regulations, fueling concerns about the preservation of archaeological heritage and the potential consequences of altering the existing legal framework that is still quite strict. As heated discussions continue regarding the implications of the proposed legislation, I will present the overview of the current legislative system of archaeological heritage protection in Poland.

The existing system is a complicated issue that necessitates the application of numerous rules and regulations. The most important act is *de facto* the legal basis is the Act of 23 July 2003 on the protection of monuments and the care of monuments, which “defines the subject, scope and forms of protection and care of monuments, the rules for creating a national program for the protection and care of monuments, as well as financing conservation, restoration and construction works on monuments and organization of monument protection authorities” (art. 1). The Act does not work in isolation but functions within a broader legal context, most notably: Act on the

protection of monuments are: the Act of 27 March 2003 on spatial planning and development; Act of July 7, 1994 – Construction Law; Act of 16 April 2004 on nature protection; Act of August 21, 1997 on real estate management; Act of February 3, 1995 on the protection of agricultural and forest land; the Act of September 28, 1991 on forests; the Act of January 31, 1959 on cemeteries and burial of the dead, and finally the Act of June 17, 1966 on enforcement proceedings in administration. The legislator, when creating the Act on the protection and care of monuments, introduced new penal provisions, which were grouped in the content of chapter 11, which consists of 12 articles – 108–120. Criminal provisions on offenses and crimes against cultural property are included in articles 108–119. The Act lists five types of crimes, namely: “(1) destruction or damage to a monument, (2) illegal removal of a monument from the country, (3) falsification of a monument, (4) introduction into circulation of a falsified monument, and (5) all kinds of electronic and technical devices and diving equipment”. Some offenses are prosecuted under the Penal Code Act under Chapter XXXV Crimes against property, treating the activity of treasure hunting as a theft (Penal Code no. 88, 553). The appearance of this provision may sometimes be the only penal sanction that affects persons committing petty offenses and crimes in this area, due to evidence problems in the attribution of the perpetrator of the act of theft under art. 278 § 1 in connection with art. 294 § Penal Code or appropriation – art. 284 § 1 in connection with art. 294 § 2 Penal Code (Ciura, 2016, 166).

The impending legislative amendment – parliamentary bill – act of July 13, 2023 “amending the act on the protection and care of monuments” encompass several significant changes within the context of the new legislation project. The introduction of an artifact notification application represents a pivotal feature of the proposed legislation. The submission process for treasure hunters that enables them to submit requests easily, demanding only number PESEL or passport number for people who do not possess one. The other set of information is the date and localization of planned searches, as well as only a statement from the owner of the lot agreeing to their activity. Needed would also be a declaration from the notifier, affirming their willingness to promptly report any object they suspect to be an archaeological or any other movable heritage item. It’s important to note that the changes being proposed in the legal rules for protecting archaeological heritage in Poland through the discussed law revision are stirring up a controversy, especially within the scientific community. Those in favor of this new approach argue that making things easier for treasure hunters might spark more interest and cooperation from these groups. However, there are some real concerns that simplifying the process of registering and reducing government oversight over exploration activities could lead to misuse, put archaeological sites at risk, and compromise the historical context of artifacts. The proposed mobile application is nonexistent as of yet, as well as its project. The idea behind is dictated by the questionable success of the Portable Antiquities Scheme operating in the United Kingdom³. The other, in my opinion, dubious assumption is

³ Welcome to the Portable Antiquities Scheme Website (finds.org.uk).

that treasure hunter will dig only through areas that are not archaeological sites. It is safe to assume that a huge number of sites is not yet discovered, or not put into the registry. Some of them might be larger than the terrain put in the registry, as happens for example with cemeteries.

Given these circumstances, conducting thorough research on this topic is more crucial now than ever, given the potential upcoming changes in legislation related to protecting our national heritage. Unfortunately, the bill proposing changes to the Act on Monument Protection and Heritage Care has gained approval from the parliamentary assembly in recent months and is currently awaiting a decision from President Andrzej Duda. The amended Act, set to be effective from May 1, 2024, and endorsed by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on July 13, 2023, aims to introduce tweaks to the regulations around archaeological exploration.

MOTIVES

The study of motivation in human behaviour, as well as intention and goals is a multifaceted subject, studied across many branches of scientific fields including psychology, sociology, philosophy and criminology. The concept of motivation is complex one and is defined in many different ways (Veresha, 2016). For instance, Obuchowski (1972, p. 33) defines it as verbalizing the goal and program enabling a person to undertake a specific activity what shows the schema for regulating psychological behaviour of a person as he or she follows and regulate it. Following this, the individual engages in the comprehensive formulation of an operational plan encompassing the entirety of their intended undertaking. Upon the conclusion of this meticulous planning phase, a discernible motive is crystallized, thus providing the necessary impetus for the initiation of the activity. This, in turn, paves the way for the individual to effectively embark on the execution of the conceived program, all within the overarching framework established by the newly defined motive. If the behaviour is not regulated by the motive, the activity can be classified as unconscious or unmotivated, as suggested by Świtka (1975, p. 256). Furthermore, any value that can be obtained, whether it is pleasure, spiritual, psychological, or physical, can be regarded as a motive. It is an inherent state of the organism that propels or prevents it from engaging in an activity and directs it towards a goal aligned with the individual's underlying needs, which form the foundation of its creation, expressed through the state of inherent electrostatic energy, which provides strength and vitality to the motive (Niedzielska-Popek, 2007, p. 79–80).

The concept of motive is particularly relevant in the study of criminal behaviour. It is important in understanding or even predicting the behaviour of those who commit crimes, including misdemeanours. Motive helps to characterize the way a crime is committed – the motivation behind a crime provides insight into how it was planned and executed. Understanding motivations is also critical for law enforcement to identify and apprehend suspects.

In criminal law, intention refers to the deliberate goal that motivates a person to commit a crime that is prohibited by law or that is the potential to result in an unlawful end (Sahin Miah). The intention is expressed by the use of specific measures that result in the commission of a crime – it reports to a person's will or a plan or a program. When people perform an activity intentionally, it means they are willing or planning to do so, as opposed to an accident or mistake where they are aware of the consequences. The primary factor in determining responsibility is the purpose or goal of the action, regardless of whether it was done with good or evil intentions. If a person intentionally and consciously violates the law, she or he will be held criminally liable (Penal Code, Chapter I, art. 9, § 1–3). A purpose is driven by their motive, which is the fundamental reason behind the commission of an act of a crime. The motive is the incentive that drives the accused to commit a crime because it reveals their reasons for acting or refraining from acting in a specific way.

Treasure hunting poses dual intellectual and physical challenges that holds special appeal for some hobbyists who seek adventure to enhance the quality of their lives. Technological advances have opened up new opportunities for world exploration, on a big and small, local scale. Contemporary treasure hunting can be as pedestrian as geocaching or as extraordinary as the chase for the Fenn treasure described in the study by King (King, 2021). The subculture of treasure hunting has been glamorized through its portrayal in reality TV shows and other media outlets – now treasure hunting escapades are often shown live on platforms such as Facebook or TikTok. The potential risks and rewards are all quite real as everyday treasure hunters explore the edges of their comfort zones. It is the thrill of this chase that has attracted many new members into the treasure hunting community (King, 2021, p. 74–75).

Despite the fact that treasure hunting using metal detectors and neodymium magnets, and any other technological or manual method without permission, or outside of its scope, is strictly forbidden in Poland as of now, it has not slowed down treasure hunters and enthusiasts who actively participate in this activity. It is noteworthy how individuals engaged in this pursuit demonstrate unwavering determination, often disregarding legal boundaries to indulge their fascination with the romanticized prospect of discovering buried or submerged artifacts. Some of the treasure hunters do possess specialist knowledge regarding both artifacts they find as well as archaeological procedures and terminology. This phenomenon is deeply intertwined with the rapid proliferation of information and its access through various online platforms and social media, as well as never before seen easy access to professional knowledge through publications and other materials available on-line. As individuals are inundated with information, ranging from reputable scientific studies to pseudo-scientific claims, the demarcation between those who possess specialized knowledge and those who do not becomes less distinct. This process has been described by Harry Collins (Collins, 2014), as he delves into the concept of expertise in the modern world, particularly in the context of scientific knowledge and its relationship with public understanding. It is not surprising that people who are partaking in the activity of treasure hunting consider themselves a specialists in the subject. However, these non-experts are as-

sessing scientific claims, especially considering the issues concerning protection of archaeological heritage. This crates the notion of blurred lines between an expert and non-expert, where non-experts, seeing shortcomings of either the academic environment or the system of protection itself, challenge them by performing defiant actions against it. Collins raises concerns about the oversimplification or misinterpretation of complex scientific ideas by non-experts. Even though increased access to information empowers individuals to engage with scientific discussions, treasure hunters seem to usually not be interested to adding on new ideas regarding archaeological discourse, rather just collecting artifacts for their personal pleasure. This is closely intertwined with what Czerner and Nieroba describe in their book (2017, 285) – about the late modern fall of the authority. It is salient to highlight the fact that the modern wide access to knowledge is a good thing, as well as the fact the previously indisputable character of the scientist is taken into scrutiny.

Andrew Dillon (2019, p. 256–257), a researcher in the field, highlights the human desire to collect and control resources as a fundamental aspect of human psychology, passed down through our history, from our hunter-gatherer’s ancestors. He points out that throughout human history, collecting has existed in one form or another. At its fundamental level, human psychology has always included the desire to acquire and control resources, including objects of all kinds. Despite the prohibition on treasure hunting in Poland, it seems that the allure of this activity and the desire to acquire rare and valuable objects still drive many to pursue this hobby.

The most common, self-described motives of treasure hunters that can be found on on-line forums, dedicated websites and magazine articles written by enthusiasts are concentrated around personal freedom regarding passion for history, as well as the heroic realm of protection against imaginary threats to archaeological heritage. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, it appears that the majority of these motivations are actually focused on internal needs and external rewards. Many treasure hunters are motivated by the thrill of the hunt, the exhilarating potential of discovering rare and valuable objects, and the satisfaction of adding them to their personal collections. One illustrative example of this behaviour is a conversation under the post by P. T.⁴ titled *My treasures* that includes a photograph of a box with different kind of memorabilia. S. K. replies: “Police eagle for a hat or side cap. [...] really cool find. I would really like to buy it or exchange it so I could add it to my collection”⁵. Furthermore, the pursuit may also fulfil certain internal needs, such as a sense of adventure, participation in a community, a feeling of mastery, or a need for recognition. Other external rewards associated with the activity, such as the potential economic gain from selling valuable finds or the social recognition that comes with having an impressive collection, may amplify these internal needs.

⁴ For privacy reasons I will be using just initials of authors of posts and comments used in this text.

⁵ “Orzełek policyjny na czapkę lub furazerkę. [...] bardzo fajny fancior. Chętnie bym go odkupił lub na coś wymienił, aby mógł dołączyć do mojego zbioru”.

Below, I propose the motives that are discernible from the discussions on on-line forums available on Facebook.

Passion for local history. First motivation that is very popularly amongst metal detectorists seems to be directed inward and be the most prevalent in the community: researching local history and the history of the country. It also serves as a manifestation of a national pride. Some of metal detectorists seem to be inclined to actively participate in discovering the past and to be a contributor in building the “new” narration. It seems to be a kind of universal motivation, regardless of the country. For example, studies among metal detectorists from Wales and England (Thomas, 2012) as well as from Denmark showed that “metal detectorists seem to consider their work not only to be contribution to cultural history in general but also as a way to contribute to the writing of Danish national history” (Dobat, Jensen, 2016, p. 75).

Adventure seeking. Passion for history coupled with the lure of adventure makes perfect mix that could be called passion. The pursuit of adventure is a compelling and exhilarating undertaking that many individuals find irresistible, coupled with sensational reporting about archaeological discoveries such as ever-so special new tomb founds in Egypt⁶ and from our own country the discovery by the Archaeology Institute of Nicolaus Copernicus University during excavations of a 17th-century cemetery in the village of Pień, near Bydgoszcz, of a “vampire” burial that has become a viral sensation⁷. When this pursuit is combined with a strong interest in history, the result is a perfect marriage that can only be described as intense and fervent. This thirst for knowledge is fuelled by an innate human curiosity for unravelling the mysteries of the world. These feelings are demonstrated in countless posts asking for advice for a person starting “an adventure” with metal detector or treasure hunting. As P. G. is saying in his comment to a question about places where metal detecting is legal: “Go [...] to the forest and dig. Or to the field. Do not let anybody see you. There are no certain places. And if there are, someone probably was already there. Remember, be spontaneous! It’s the adventure that counts, not extraordinary finds. Cheers”⁸ or E. P. “Well, walk wherever you want, only your mind limits you. Free yourself from fear. Realize your passion”⁹.

Intellectual challenge. The individual might also seek challenge that comes from analysis of many different sources to find the best “spot” or best “found”. This aspect takes up a lot of space in Facebook forums as every other post asks for identification of finds. For some, the intellectual challenge of treasure hunting is a significant motivator. The process of both searching for artefacts and then later researching what

⁶ <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2023/01/30/egypt-unveils-new-incredible-discoveries-including-two-tombs-and-gold-covered-sarcophagus> [Accessed: 29.04.2023].

⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/07/poland-vampire-grave-uneearthed-sickle/> [Accessed: 29.04.2023].

⁸ “Idź [...] do lasu i kop. Albo na pole. I nie daj się zobaczyć. Nie masz pewnych miejsc. A jeśli są, to pewnie już ktoś tam był. Pamiętaj, spontan! Liczy się przygoda, a nie super fanty. Pzdr.” (original spelling).

⁹ „A chodź, gdzie chcesz, tylko umysł cię ogranicza. Uwolnij się od strachu. Realizuj pasję”.

has been found can be both complex and demanding, as it requires individuals to sift through a vast array of data and information, evaluate its relevance and reliability, and then use critical thinking skills to synthesise and apply this information in a meaningful way. The work, reminiscent of solving a puzzle, put into this processes, when is completed, can be satisfying enough.

Collecting. Collecting artifacts is often a main motivator for individuals engaged in treasure hunting. For many, the desire to accumulate valuable and rare artifacts serves as a driving force in his activity. Individuals must identify and acquire items of historical or cultural significance, which often necessitate extensive research and investigation to locate the most valuable pieces. Having more or more valuable pieces would mean that their owner is higher in the hierarchy of other collectors, improving his or her social standing amongst members of his or her community. Most treasure hunters are focused on collecting and presenting their collections to themselves, their families, or friends who are also interested in this activity. One of examples of that kind of small-scale collection is what S. K. showed under the post made by G. M. from January 28th showing a picture with a coin of a palm of, presumably, the author. S. K. also send a picture with 7 coins of the same type, G. M. exclaims the number, to which S. K. explains “well, they weren’t in the same place of course and not at the same time, it slowly gathered up”¹⁰.

Fame and recognition. With potential of finding the “next big thing” in archaeology one of the motivators is the need for recognition and fame. Some individuals are motivated by the desire for notoriety and the satisfaction of being recognized for their accomplishments, either by their community online, media or their social media followers. Gundersen (2019, p. 130) stated that when the goal of a treasure hunter are especially valuable objects:

looking for a potentially good site, they often use the same sources, methods, and criteria for evaluating the find potential as professional archaeologists. Hence, when private metal detectorists deliberately look for sites hoping to find archaeological objects, they are in many cases actually searching on (until now unknown) sites [...]. Moreover, when a good site is identified, some will want to continue to search at this site. At the same time, seeking recognition, both from fellow detectorists and professional archaeologist, many detectorists want their finds to be recognized as archaeologically significant.

In one instance, one of the group members, P. S. is reporting the story about the fibulae that he found during his searches and then later handed it over to the Voivodeship Office for the Protection of Monuments. This occurrence led to examination of the finding spot by archaeologists and conservators, who finally registered it as an archaeological site. The story is entitled *Fibula, cz. III*. In the comments fellow members are reacting twofold. Some react very positively, like R. W. saying “Well done, master... now just keep an eye on this topic... fame awaits you... and I told you, didn’t

¹⁰ “no ale nie w jednym miejscu oczywiście. I nie od razu, tak pomału się uzbierało”.

I? Yes. And it turns out I was right... Once again, congratulations...”¹¹ and P. S. “If all of us, history enthusiasts, people with a true passion, showed big heart, then archaeologists, regional conservators officials and other, would be favourable towards our common passion”¹². On the other, there are also less positive reactions, as for example “I wonder how the owner of the field feels like”¹³ by J. A. or, bitterly, by A. A. A. “And another dot on the map of archaeological sites”¹⁴.

Financial gain: Unfortunately, for some treasure hunting is a lucrative business opportunity. Some sell movable objects on e-commerce platforms such as olx.pl or even e-bay.com. There is also some evidence that some treasure hunters do realize orders for specific items (Trzciński, 2010). The discovery of valuable ‘treasures’ such as ancient artifacts can lead to substantial financial rewards, however there are not many awarded individuals. This lack of freedom to sell found objects is, in the eyes of treasure hunters, one of the many flaws in Polish legislation. When it comes profiting from illegal excavations the evidence is more elusive, as most forums automatically delete all posts or even mentions of trade, as it is strictly forbidden, in fear with potential blocking of the accounts or the whole groups. However, some e-commerce platforms do not adhere to rules strictly. On a website olx.pl one can find tens or even hundreds offers with historical movable objects, as well as archaeological artefacts. The latter seem to be very popular – one advertisement offering “Roman ring from excavations” added early May 1st the same at night has already 319 views. Additionally, seller does not really know what he or she is selling as they often use expressions like “some yellow metal” and “some glass stone” to describe the ring¹⁵.

Personal Satisfaction. For many treasure hunters, the ultimate goal is not financial gain or fame, but personal satisfaction, sometimes even life altering experience. The sense of fulfilment that comes from discovering hidden objects, researching them and the history of region can be a strong motivator. For some individuals, this sense of accomplishment can be even more powerful when they perceive themselves as acting in defiance of the Polish government and mainstream archaeologists as they are on a mission. One of the commentators on the forum has put this feeling put his feelings into this words::

It is a very infectious hobby, indeed. Yesterday in Pomeria it was cold, there was snow in the forest, permafrost, and me sick with this passion, stabs the soil with a trowel so after 40 minutes I can get a pull tab from canned beer. By the evening he (referring to himself) returns back from the forest, brain filled with emotions so that he was at excavations and

¹¹ „Brawo mistrzu... teraz tylko pilnuj tego tematu... sława przed Tobą... a mówiłem?... no i wyszło, że miałem rację... raz jeszcze gratuluję... moja szkoła, mimo że nie byłeś moim uczniem... pozdrawiam serdecznie...”.

¹² „Gdyby wszyscy z nas, miłośnicy historii, ludzie z prawdziwą pasją, wykazali się tam dużym sercem, to grono archo, wcz i inni też byłiby przychylni naszej wspólnej pasji...”.

¹³ „Ciekawe, co na to właściciel pola”.

¹⁴ „I kolejna kropka na mapie stanowiska archo”.

¹⁵ https://www.olx.pl/d/oferta/rzymiski-pierscionek-z-wykopkow-CID4042-IDTq1hJ.html?reason=seller_profile [Accessed: 29.04.2023].

that he blew off steam. Output: a shell from *pepeszka* (PPSh-41) and several pull-tabs from cans. I sleep better than ever, as if I jumped with a parachute. And so on and so forth, this morning I'm shuffling my feet, because I'm already eager to head out for the excavation¹⁶.

This sentiment sounds very similar to what Angus Forsyth, a Hong Kong solicitor and famous collector of East Asian Antiquities, said in the context of his connections to Douglas Latchford: "Collecting is a sort of a disease really. Those with the disease like to find fellow sufferers"¹⁷.

All those abovementioned motivations show how complex and multifaceted activity can treasure hunting be. The desire to uncover the rich cultural heritage of country or a particular region is not professional researchers are unfamiliar with. Many individuals who engage in this activity see themselves as amateur archaeologists, seeking to uncover hidden artifacts and preserve them for future generations. They believe that professionals do not make enough efforts in this regard and that treasure hunting provides an opportunity for them to contribute to this effort. However, such line of thinking about the treasure hunting, done illegally, outside of jurisdiction of

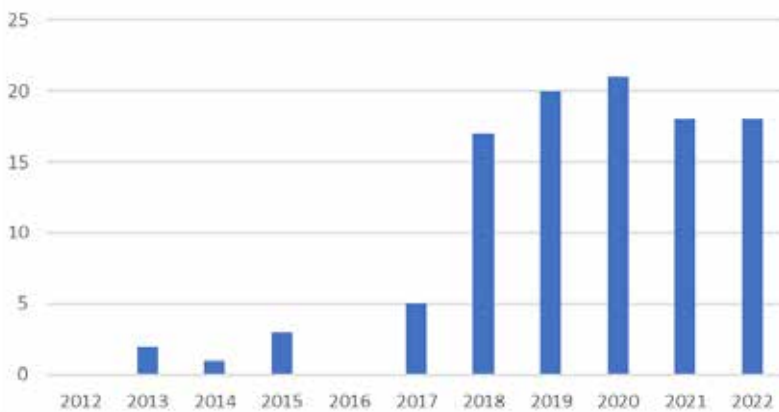


Fig. 1. Applications for a permit to search for movable monuments, Provincial Office for the Protection of Monuments with its seat in Przemyśl, Regional Office in Krosno

Ryc. 1. Wnioski o pozwolenie na poszukiwanie zabytków ruchomych, Wojewódzki Urząd Ochrony Zabytków w Przemyślu, delegatura w Krośnie

¹⁶ "To bardzo zaraźliwe hobby, naprawdę. Wczoraj na Pomorzu zimno, śnieg w lesie, zmarzlina i taki chory na tę pasję jak ja dźga nożo-łopatką glebę jak kilofem, aby pozyskać po 40 minutach zrywkę od puszkowego piwa. Pod wieczór szczęśliwy powraca z lasu, mózg przepełniony emocjami, że był na wykopkach i się wyżył. Urobek: łuska od pepeszki i kilka zrywek od puszek. Śpię dobrze jak nigdy, jak gdybym odbył skok ze spadochronem. I tak w kółko, dziś z rana przebieram nogami, bo już bym na te wykopki pobiegł gdyby nie praca".

¹⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/met-museum-cambodian-antiquities-latchford/> [Accessed: 20.04.2023].

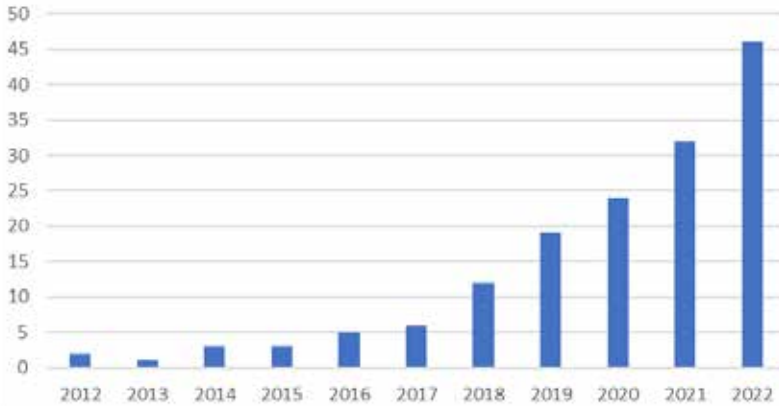


Fig. 2. Applications for a permit to search for movable monuments, Provincial Office for the Protection of Monuments in Kielce

Ryc. 2. Wnioski o pozwolenie na poszukiwanie zabytków ruchomych, Wojewódzki Urząd Ochrony Zabytków w Kielcach

the office of regional conservators, shows cognitive fallacy, as most of found artefact are accumulated in personal collection, exchanged between members or sold. However, not only positive values determine behaviour of treasure hunters. After the aforementioned strengthening of the law in 2018 some abandoned the passion for good. According to statistics, there is also significant increase in permission applications occurred in 2018 – it points to the fear of being criminally liable as stimulus to pursue legal way of participating in the activity.

CONCLUSIONS

Treasure hunting has seen a surge in popularity in recent years, both because of easy access to all information through the Internet and television, and, of course, easy access to technologically advanced metal detectors. These tools, along with widely available professional literature, maps, aerial and satellite imagery, and instructions created by experienced treasure hunters and looters, all contribute to the mosaic of components that comprise the picture of modern threats to Poland's archaeological heritage. Unfortunately, the proposed amendment to the Act is only going to hurt the archaeological heritage of Poland, something that should be held dear to all sides of the conflict. The voices of change into the Act are coming also from within the archaeological community (Wrzosek, 2017), often in the voices that are current and disappointed, as was famous now statement made by Zalesińska¹⁸.

¹⁸ 09_zalasinaska.pdf (ratuj-zabytki.pl) [Accessed: 20.08.2023].

The implications of treasure hunting for the preservation of cultural heritage are complex, and all stakeholders must consider them carefully, especially archaeologists and hobbyists. Finally, the responsible preservation of cultural heritage necessitates a collaborative effort on the part of professionals, amateurs, and the general public.

REFERENCES

- Axelsen, I. (2021). *What's the deal with old things? An exploratory study of attitudes and practices towards certain old things among archaeologists and metal detectorists in Norway*. PhD Thesis. Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History of Humanities. University of Oslo.
- Ciura, A. (2016). Karnoprawna ochrona dóbr kultury w Polsce. In M. Różański, N. Kasperek (eds), *Ochrona dóbr kultury. Aktualne wyzwania* (brak numeracji stron). Łódź: Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie.
- Collins, H. (2014). *Are We All Scientific Experts Now?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Czerner, A., Nieroba, E. (2017). *Na styku historii i codzienności. Społeczność lokalna wobec miejsca pamięci*. Opole: Wydawnictwo i Drukarnia Świętego Krzyża.
- Dillon, A. (2019). Collecting as routine human behavior: motivations for identity and control in the material and digital world. *Information and Culture*, 54(3), 255–280.
- Dobat, A. S., Jensen, A. T. (2016). “Professional Amateurs”. Metal detecting and Metal Detectorists in Denmark. *Open Archaeology*, 2, 70–84.
- Florjanowicz, P. (2013). The value of archaeology: Resource, heritage or pure fun? In A. Lagerlöf (ed.), *Who cares? Perspectives on Public Awareness, Participation and Protection in Archaeological Heritage Management. EAC Occasional Paper* (p. 73–38). Internet Archaeology.
- Grzegorzczak, K. (2016). Pojęcie *res extra commercium* a ochrona muzealiów w prawie polskim. In P. Dobosz, M. Adamus, D. Guzek, A. Mazur (eds), *Węzłowe problemy prawnej ochrony dziedzictwa kulturowego* (p. 31–63). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kasper.
- Gundersen, J. (2019), No Room for Good Intentions? Private Metal Detecting and Archaeological Sites in the Plow Layer in Norway. In S. Campbell, L. White, S. Thomas (eds) *Competing Values in Archaeological Heritage* (p. 125–138). Switzerland: Springer International.
- Immonen, V., Kinnunen, J. (2020). Metal detecting as a social formation: A longitudinal survey study from Finland. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 20(3), 313–334.
- King, A. (2021). Treasure Hunting as an American Subculture: the Thrill of the Chase. *Human Arenas*, 4, 74–98.
- Kobyliński, Z., Szpanowski, P. (2009). Metal Detector Users and Archaeology in Poland: The Current State of Affairs. In S. Thomas, P. G. Stone (eds), *Metal detecting and archaeology* (p. 13–24). Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.
- Kokowski, A. (1999). Wykrywacze metali – instrument naukowy czy barbarzyńskie narzędzie. In W. Brzeziński, Z. Kobyliński (eds), *Wykrywacze metali a archeologia* (p. 19–35). Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Naukowe Archeologów Polskich.
- Makowska, A., Oniszczyk, A., Sabaciński, M. (2016). Some Remarks on the Stormy Relationship Between the Detectorists and Archaeological Heritage in Poland. *Open Archaeology*, 2, 171–181.
- Michalski, M. (2019). Działalność „poszukiwaczy skarbów” jako zagrożenie dla dziedzictwa archeologicznego w Polsce. In M. Sabaciński, M. Trzeciński (eds), *Meandry ochrony dziedzictwa kultury. Aspekty prawnokarne i kryminalistyczne* (p. 79–93). Warszawa: Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa.
- Niedzielska-Popek, S. (2007). Motywy zabójstw. *Roczniki Wydziału Nauk Prawnych i Ekonomicznych KUL*, 3, 79–100.
- Obuchowski, K. (1972). *Psychologia dążeń ludzkich*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Świtka, J. (1975). Krytyka kodeksowego pojęcia „pobudka”. *Annales UMCS, Sectio G* 22(17), 255–269.

- Thomas, S. (2012). How STOP started: Early Approaches to the Metal Detecting Community by Archaeologists and Others. In G. Moshenska, S. Dhanjal (eds), *Community Archaeology. Themes, methods and practices* (p. 41–57). Oxford: Oxbow.
- Trzeciński, M. (2010). *Przestępczość przeciwko zabytkom archeologicznym. Problematyka prawno-kryminalistyczna*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wolters Kluwer.
- Veresha, R. V. (2016). Determination Motive Through the Prism of the General Concept of the Motives of Human Behaviour. *International Journal of Environmental & Science Education*, 11(11), 4739–4750.
- Winkley, F. (2016). Talking to Metal Detectorists in the Field: A Methodology for Analysing Motivations and Attitudes to Landscape. *Public Archaeology*, 15(4), 1–28.

Legal acts

- The Act of 6 June 1997 – the Penal Code.
- The Act of 23 July 2003 on the protection and care of monuments.
- The Act of 1959 nr 11.
- The Act of 1966 nr 24 poz. 151.
- The Act of 1990 nr 30 poz. 179.
- The Act of 1991 nr 101 poz. 444.
- The Act of 1994 nr 89 poz. 414.
- The Act of 1995 nr 16 poz. 78.
- The Act of 1997 nr 115 poz. 741.
- The Act of 1997 nr 88 poz. 553.
- The Act of 2003 nr 162 poz. 1568.
- The Act of 2003 nr 80 poz. 717.
- The Act of 2004 nr 92 poz. 880.

BURIED DESIRES: MOTIVES FOR MODERN DAY TREASURE HUNTING IN POLAND

Streszczenie

Nowelizacja ustawy o ochronie zabytków i opiece nad zabytkami z 2003 roku, która weszła w życie w roku 2018, była krokiem w kierunku rozwiązania problemu poszukiwania skarbów i jego negatywnego wpływu na dziedzictwo narodowe. Mimo nowych, potencjalnych konsekwencji, takich jak kara pozbawienia wolności do 8 lat za niszczenie dziedzictwa narodowego, poszukiwanie skarbów nadal jest dla niektórych atrakcyjną rozrywką.

Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu identyfikację motywacji poszukiwaczy zabytków w Polsce przez analizę forów internetowych, szczególnie grup na platformie Facebook. Autorka identyfikuje siedem głównych motywatorów, które kierują poszczególne grupy lub indywidualnych detektorystów: zamiłowanie do lokalnej historii, chęć przeżycia przygody, wyzwania intelektualne, kolekcjonerstwo, sława i uznanie oraz chęć wzbogacenia się na sprzedaży zabytków. Pierwszą wymienioną motywacją jest zamiłowanie do lokalnej historii. Wielu detektorystów traktuje swoją aktywność jako wkład w historię narodu. Poszukiwanie przygód jest również dominującą motywacją. Wyzwanie intelektualne, jakim jest poszukiwanie zabytków, jest również istotnym czynnikiem. Dla niektórych poszukiwaczy proces zaczyna się od wertowania literatury tematu oraz starych map wybranego regionu, a następnie badania znalezionych przedmiotów, co wymaga od nich poświęcenia wielu godzin wolnego czasu. Kolekcjonowanie rzadkich i cennych artefaktów to dla wielu główny powód poszukiwania zabytków, tak samo jak chęć pieniężnego zysku, sprzedaży lub wymiany zabytków.

Wreszcie – niektóre osoby są motywowane pragnieniem uznania i sławy, a ich siłą napędową jest możliwość znalezienia czegoś o znaczącej wartości archeologicznej.

Oprócz motywacji, zarówno wewnętrznych, jak i zewnętrznych, które pchają osoby do powzięcia poszukiwania zabytków znane są również przesłanki, dla których wielu poszukiwaczy z niego zrezygnowało lub zdecydowało się na zalegalizowanie ich działalności. Jednym z najlepiej odnotowywanych takich momentów było wejście w życie nowelizacji, która określała poszukiwanie zabytków z użyciem urządzeń technologicznych jako przestępstwo.

Duża liczba poszukiwaczy, którzy niszczą zabytki oraz stanowiska archeologiczne oraz ich aktywność w mediach społecznościowych i tradycyjnych, spowodowała niechęć do siebie środowisk archeologów i poszukiwaczy zabytków. Niechęć ta jest często werbalizowana w przestrzeni publicznej. Niestety również media romantyzują oba rodzaje działalności, także odkrycia archeologiczne, w podobny sposób jak przedstawiane są znajdowane „skarby” przez poszukiwaczy. Skutki poszukiwania skarbów dla zachowania dziedzictwa kulturowego są złożone i wszyscy zaangażowani w jego dobro, szczególnie archeolodzy i hobbyści, muszą je dokładnie rozważyć.

