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Photographs from 1887. New sources for the study of the architecture of the Romanesque Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław

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PHOTOGRAPHS FROM 1887. NEW SOURCES
FOR THE STUDY OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE
ROMANESQUE CHURCH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN
MARY IN INOWROCŁAW*

Słowa kluczowe: Meydenlender, kościół Najświętszej Marii Panny, Inowrocław, fotogrametria

Keywords: Meydenlender, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Inowrocław, photography

Abstract: Based chiefly on nineteenth-century source materials, the paper seeks to recognise the state of preservation of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1887. This was largely accomplished through the analysis of photographs taken by Meydenlender.

The Romanesque Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary¹ is one of the most important architectural monuments of the late twelfth and early thirteenth-century Piast domain. Notwithstanding several redevelopments, including the twentieth-century attempts at the restoration of its original Romanesque form²,

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¹ For the discussion on the invocation of the Inowrocław church and its derivatives, see M. Danielewski, *Romańskie zabytki architektury sakralnej Inowrocławia i Strzelna w świetle fotografii Meydenlendera z 1887 roku*, *Archiwa Biblioteki Muzea Kościelne* 98 (2012), p. 27.

² J. Sikorska, *Dzieje, zabytki, okolice, legendy*, Inowrocław 1997, pp. 65-67; Z. Świechowski, *Architektura romańska w Polsce*, Warszawa 2000, p. 78. The 2011 alternation was the

the structure is ranked as one of the pearls of medieval architecture of Kujawy. The church is noted for numerous stone reliefs that cover its external walls. A total of eighteen reliefs have been preserved until the present day³; thirteen of them decorate the north wall of the edifice. It is most unfortunate that some reliefs changed their original location following some restorations⁴. In this context, photographs from 1887 showing Blessed Virgin Mary's Church in Inowrocław, which I have already discussed elsewhere⁵, take on an added significance. Produced using photogrammetry, the photographic material furnishes valuable information on the architecture of the church. This paper seeks to evaluate the potentiality of the photographs for the assessment of the extent of alternations made to the structure from 1887 to 2011.

He photographs were most likely taken by Regierungsrat Meydenlender, who came to Poznań from Berlin in August 1887. Sometime during his stay in Poland, Meydenlender visited Strzelno and Inowrocław in order to document selected architectural monuments (Holy Cross Rotunda and the Monastery Church of the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary in Strzelno, and the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław)⁶. For scholars, the author of the photographs has remained an almost anonymous figure. There is, however, a striking similarity between the name Meydenlender and

last major interference into the original structure of the northern wall. I have published my critical comments on the redevelopment in research journals and popular magazines, see M. Danielewski, *Reliefy z murów kościoła Panny Marii w Inowrocławiu*, *Roczniki Historyczne* 77 (2011), pp 29, 33; I. Słojewska, *Czy uda się złamać kod?*, [interview] *Czwarty Wymiar* 1 (2013), p 18.

³ A dozen or so research papers have discussed the reliefs from the Church of the Blessed Mary the Virgin. For the recent analyses of the images on the reliefs, see e.g., Z. Sroka, *Zagrożenia i lęki średniowiecznych inowrocławian (problematyka płaskorzeźb i rytów na kościele pod wezwaniem Imienia Najświętszej Marii Panny w Inowrocławiu)*, *Materiały do Dziejów Kultury i Sztuki Bydgoszczy i Regionu* 6 (2001), pp 106-122; K. Hewner, *Funkcja rzeźb i rytów na murach romańskiego kościoła pw. Imienia NMP w Inowrocławiu*, *Ziemia Kujawska* 17 (2004), pp 213-217. Figures were collated in a table in a 2011 paper, see M. Danielewski, *Reliefy*, pp 11-13 (Table 1).

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 29-31, 32, 33.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 9, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33; M. Danielewski, *Romańskie zabytki*, pp 27-36, 38-39, 42-44; *idem*, *Fotografie z 1887 roku jako źródło ikonograficzne do badań nad romańską architekturą sakralną Strzelna*, [in:] *Z dziejów pogranicza kujawsko-wielkopolskiego*, vol. 3, ed. D. Karczewski, [in press].

⁶ See M. Danielewski, *Romańskie zabytki*, pp 29-30 for a comprehensive bibliography cited therein and nineteenth-century sources covering Meydenlender's stay in Poznań.

the name of a figure noted for his engagement in the field of photogrammetry. Albrecht Meydenbauer, from 1885 the director of the Royal Prussian Institute of Photogrammetry established in Berlin, made a major contribution to the development of photogrammetry in Germany⁷. The Institute of Photogrammetry managed to record over 2600 architectural structures⁸. It is therefore not beyond the bounds of possibility that the name 'Meydenlender' was misspelled in *Kurier Poznański*⁹. In November 2014 and March 2015, I carried out some queries in the archives of Berlin, but in our present state of knowledge, this issue is still unresolvable. Therefore, in this paper I use the original name 'Meydenlender', as spelled in *Kurier Poznański*, hoping that further queries and research will unravel the mystery surrounding the author of the photographs. If confirmed, the attribution of the authorship to A. Meydenbauer would be a real research revelation.

The photographs from 1887 were hitherto largely neglected in the subject literature. The photographic material pertaining to the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław was used by an art historian from Toruń, Jerzy Frycz, to illustrate his 1975 and 1982 publications. Frycz published five of the six photographs relevant to my studies¹⁰. In his work on the restoration of Romanesque architecture, Antoni Szymkowski included a photograph showing the south-west view of the church. Neither researcher knew the name of the author or the year the photographs were taken¹¹. Szymkowski mistakenly took the photograph for material illustrating the church in Inowrocław after the First World War¹². The authors were apparently unfamiliar

⁷ Some questions regarding Albrecht Meydenbauer have been addressed in several research papers, e.g. R. Meyer, *Albrecht Meydenbauer - Baukunst in historischen Fotografien*, Leipzig 1985; J. Albertz, *Albrecht Meydenbauer - pioneer of photogrammetric documentation of the cultural heritage*, [in:] *Proceedings 18th International Symposium CIPA*, ed. J. Albertz, Potsdam 2001, pp 19-25; A. Siuciak, *Biblioteka Muzeum Zamkowego w Malborku*, Forum Bibliotek Medycznych 6 (2013), no. 1, pp 251-253.

⁸ J. Butowitt, R. Kaczyński, *Fotogrametria*, Warszawa 2010, pp 13-14.

⁹ *Kurier Poznański* 16 (17 August 1887), no. 186.

¹⁰ J. Frycz, *Restauracja i konserwacja zabytków architektury w Polsce w latach 1795-1918*, Warszawa 1975, p 256; idem, *Architektura i sztuka Inowrocławia*, [in:] *Dzieje Inowrocławia*, vol. II, ed. M. Biskup, Warszawa 1982, fig. 7 p 425, fig. 8 p 426, fig. 10 p 428, fig. 16 p 442.

¹¹ This problem was thoroughly discussed in my 2012 paper, see M. Danielewski, *Romańskie zabytki*, pp 33-35.

¹² A. Szymkowski, *Problemy konserwacji zabytków architektury romańskiej kręgu kujawsko-wielkopolskiego*, *Zapiski Kujawsko-Dobrzyńskie*. Series C. Oświata i Kultura (1980), p 71.

with the entire collection of Meydenlender's photographs, which also comprises photos of architectural monuments from Strzelno and Poznań.

Consisting of sixteen photographs, the collection that provides a basis for my studies is housed in the Iconographic Laboratory of the University Library in Poznań. I came across the photographs in 2011¹³. A similar, yet more numerous set (containing twenty-eight photos) is kept in the Museum of the City of Poznań¹⁴. Both collections were presented in detail in my 2012 paper¹⁵. The collection under study includes six photographs of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, nine photos documenting the Romanesque structures from Strzelno and one showing the Convent of the Dominican Sisters of St Catherine in Poznań. Most important for my analyses are six photographs, numbered from 519 to 524¹⁶. The numbers are to be found on the back of the photos, along with several other numberings and the stamp of the Berlin photogrammetric office with a yearly date 1906 and the signature: Kgl. Pr. Messbild – Anstalt Berlin W. 56. Schinkelp. 6.¹⁷They were probably assigned to photographs in the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Bibliothek. The photographs pertaining to my analyses show: the church from the south-west (519), the church from the north-west (520), the north wall of the structure (521), its southern wall (522), the gallery and the inside view of the towers (523), an inside view of the presbytery (524)¹⁸. Besides being of great significance for the study of the architecture of the church, the photographs amply illustrate the alternations made to the structure throughout the past hundred years or so.

Four dates are probably of key significance for the study of the architecture of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1834, the edifice was burnt

¹³ I am deeply indebted to Jakub Skutecki, an employee of the University Library in Poznań, who was of great assistance to me in localising the collection.

¹⁴ The collection of the photographs from the Museum of the City of Poznań was fairly thoroughly examined in 2004, see M. Mrugalska-Banaszak, *Jeden dzień z Ratuszem w tle. Poznań 13 sierpnia 1887*, Poznań 2004; eadem, *Od Brauna i Hogenberga do radcy rejencyjnego Meydenlendera. Wizerunki ratusza z 1618-1887*, Kronika Miasta Poznania (2004), no 2, pp 250-258.

¹⁵ M. Danielewski, *Romańskie zabytki*, pp 31-33.

¹⁶ Pracownia Ikonograficzna Oddziału Zbiorów Specjalnych Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Poznaniu [Iconographic Laboratory of the Special Collections Department of the University Library in Poznań] (hereafter PIOZS BUPń), no 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

down and fell into disrepair¹⁹. It was rebuilt in the years 1900-1902²⁰. Some alternations made to the church at the time have been barely mentioned in the subject literature. The 1950s saw some attempts at restoring the original Romanesque form of the church interior, designed by Stefan Zarębski and Henryk Kosicki-Kossak²¹. The most recent redevelopment of the church took place in 2011 and was related to the insertion into the wall of the church of two stone blocks with reliefs²². These dates are crucial when we examine the photographs taken by Meydenlender in 1887, as they evidence the state of preservation of the church still in the 1880s.

The reconstruction of the church in the years 1900–1902, with a noteworthy role of Julius Kohte²³, was a moment of paramount significance for the history of the structure. After a long period in ruins, the church was ultimately restored. It is nevertheless incumbent upon us to assess the invasiveness of the restoration and the justifiability of the alternations made to the structure. Some elements of the church seem to have been precipitately altered. There is a general consensus among the researchers, distinctly voiced in the subject literature, that knocking down the authentic entrance to the gallery, located in the southern crypt, and constructing a new one, this time from the north crypt, was an unreasonable act. That was related to the destruction of the original Romanesque vaults²⁴. The redevelopments become visible also if we check Meydenlender's photograph no. 520 against the present day state of this part of the building. While there is no doubt that the restoration of the brick section of the tower was advisable – the photograph shows it to be heavily damaged – it is evident that the reconstruction of the tower at the level of stone blocks was a misguided idea. These redevelopments were also associated with the construction of a new entrance to the gallery. Sometime during the restoration, a stone block with a concave relief, showing a horseshoe pointed upwards and a cross pointed down, was embedded into the stonework of the western wall of the north tower.

¹⁹ Cz. Sikorski, *Kościół Imienia Najświętszej Maryi Panny w Inowrocławiu*, Inowrocław 1991, p 10.

²⁰ The restoration was directed by Julius Kohte, see J. Frycz, *Architektura i sztuka*, p 426.

²¹ J. Frycz, *Architektura i sztuka*, p 432; J. Sikorska, *Dzieje*, p 67. Cf. Z. Świechowski, *Sztuka polska. Romanizm*, Warszawa 2005, p 144.

²² M. Danielewski, *Reliefy*, pp 19, 29.

²³ A. Rzempoluch, *Pruski konserwator polskich zabytków*, Spotkania z Zabytkami 8 (2007), p 16.

²⁴ Cz. Sikorski, *Kościół*, p 22; Z. Świechowski, *Architektura romańska*, p 79.

The original Romanesque apse was remodelled sometime in the course of history into a square chancel, largely of bricks, which is well illustrated in photograph no. 521. The existence of an apse prior to the square chancel was rightly surmised as early as in the nineteenth century²⁵. The Romanesque foundation of the apse was uncovered in 1891 by J. Kohte²⁶. It was a common view that the church should terminate in an apse from the east, if and when a general restoration were carried out²⁷. A new apse was indeed erected, having been modelled on that of St. Margaret's Church in Kościelec Kujawski²⁸. While the very idea to restore the apse to its original shape was in my opinion valuable, its implementation turned out to be a failure. First, the 1950–1952 investigations demonstrated that the originally the apse was smaller than now²⁹. Second, during the reconstruction of the chancel, the stone blocks in the north wall of the apse were somewhat rearranged. Photograph 521 shows that the rearrangement was done in a zone, where the stonework of the chancel changed into brickwork³⁰. It must have been related to the dismantling of brickwork and construction of the apse during the renovation of the church in the years 1900–1902. Following the demolition of the brick part of the chancel, the stone blocks were probably re-embedded, albeit not in original positions.

Significant alternations were also made to the tower system. Photographs 519, 520, 521, 522, 523 show rectangular and square holes that were used for receiving the ends of poles to form scaffolding during construction. More than a hundred of such putlogs are noticeable in the photographs. Unfortunately, all but two were filled in sometime in the course of the 1900–1902 restoration novation of the church, a controversial decision considering that they dated back to the time of the construction of the towers, i.e.,

²⁵ W. Łuszczkiewicz, *Kościóły i rzeźby duninowskie w Strzelnie na Kujawach*, Pamiętnik Akademii Umiejętności. Wydział: Filologiczny i Historyczno-Filozoficzny 3 (1876), p 116

²⁶ J. Frycz, *Architektura i sztuka*, p 426.

²⁷ J. Łepkowski, *O zabytkach Kruszwicy, Gniezna i Krakowa oraz Trzemeszna, Rogoźna, Kcyni, Dobieszewa, Gołańczy, Żnina, Gąsawy, Pakości, Kościelca, Inowrocławia, Strzelna i Mogilna*, Kraków 1866, p 143.

²⁸ Cz. Sikorski, *Kościół*, p 22. St. Margret's Church has been examined in detail, by e.g., K. Hewner, *Kościół św. Małgorzaty w Kościelcu Kujawskim*, Inowrocław 1998.

²⁹ *Sztuka polska przedromańska i romańska do schyłku XIII wieku*, part 2, ed. M. Walicki, Warszawa 1971, p 697.

³⁰ PIOZS BUPń, no 521.

the late twelfth or early thirteenth century³¹, particularly if preserving the original structure of the building was the intention of its restorers.

During the 1900-1902 renovation of the church, the nave was elevated by a few courses of stone blocks, and consequently the height of the roofs changed³². How much the nave was raised during the restoration becomes evident when we compare its present height to the height of the north wall, notably its eastern end, as shown in photograph 521. Visible in photograph 521 above a flat relief showing a bald head with marked moustache (and perhaps tiny ears) are four stone blocks; there could possibly have been one or two more. At present, there are as much as ten stone blocks built in above the relief. These calculations show the scale of alternations. Besides, stepped stone blocks are noticeable in the eastern ends of the north and south walls, probably demonstrating the original height of the nave walls.

The 1950s witnessed attempts at restoring the original Romanesque form of the body of the church. The alternations affected mostly the interior of the structure and consisted, inter alia, in hacking the existing plaster and brick face off the walls³³. As a result, the present church is marked by its bare inner stone walls. Photographs from 1887 that illustrate the interior of the temple (nos. 523 and 524) unmistakably show the walls to be covered with plaster. The decision to remove plaster during the reconstruction and later restoration of the Romanesque character of the edifice shaped its present-day cold and austere interior. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that in the Middle Ages inner walls were typically whitewashed and covered with colourful polychrome³⁴.

The most recent major alternations to the structure were made in 2011. Back then, I demonstrated that the decision to embed two stone blocks with flat reliefs into the north wall of the church was ill informed³⁵. Meydenlender's photograph no. 521 was apparently unknown to the authors of the project. Zygmunt Świechowski was right when he noticed twenty years

³¹ Z. Świechowski, *Architektura romańska*, p 80. Cf. *Sztuka polska*, p 697; A. Tomaszewski, *Romańskie kościoły z emporami zachodnimi na obszarze Polski, Czech i Węgier*, Wrocław 1974, p 140.

³² This issue has already been discussed in the subject literature, cf *Sztuka polska*, p 697; Z. Świechowski, *Architektura romańska*, p 79.

³³ Cz. Sikorski, *Kościół*, p 23.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p 23.

³⁵ M. Danielewski, *Reliefy*, pp 28-29, 30.

earlier that the north wall of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław was the least altered or remodelled section of the structure³⁶. These remarks were probably neglected during the 2011 conservation, yet photograph 521 unmistakably corroborates Świechowski's opinion. A meticulous analysis has demonstrated that both stone blocks with concave and flat reliefs and some other remained in their original positions until 2011, except maybe for those located near window openings or in the upper section of the wall. Four years ago, six original stone blocks were removed (one of them was subsequently re-inserted, yet in a different location) and two other stones blocks were laid in lieu thereof. They were brought back to Inowrocław from the Kórnik Library – Kórnik Castle, where they had been housed since the second half of the nineteenth century as part of Tytus Działyński's collection³⁷. A stone block with flat relief showing a bald head with bulging eyes, a distinctive beard (also interpreted as a tongue) and his mouth in a grimace is known to have been set in the upper section of the north wall³⁸. On the other hand, the original location of the second stone with flat relief, showing a beardless and hairless head with mouth open wide, is unknown³⁹. It is possible that the block does not come from the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at all. Such stone blocks with reliefs are known to have been present at Płowce, as reported, for example, by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz⁴⁰, in the context of the images from Inowrocław. This issue, however, should be further elaborated upon.

To conclude, the Church of Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław has undergone at least three major conservatory works since 1887, some of them, admittedly, worthy of praise, such as those from 1950s. Other works, such as the reconstruction of the church in the years 1900–1902 were certainly essential, if this Romanesque monument was to be retained for future generations. Yet, it is difficult to form a definitive judgement of the work done. While the activity of J. Kohte must undoubtedly be appreciated, considering that the structure was in ruin, the mistakes made at the time heavily altered

³⁶ Z. Świechowski, *Sztuka romańska w Polsce*, Warszawa 1990, p 171; idem, *Sztuka polska*, p 144.

³⁷ S. Sroka, *Zagrożenia i lęki*, p 110.

³⁸ M. Danielewski, *Reliefy*, p 28.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 24, 29.

⁴⁰ J. U. Niemcewicz, *Podróże historyczne po ziemiach polskich między rokiem 1811 a 1828 odbyte*, Paryż-Petersburg 1858, p 241.

the original structure of the church. There is, however, no doubt that the 2011 conservatory interference into the most original wall of the church was an absurd idea. I can only express my condemnation of the decision to remove several stones that had been preserved in place probably since the second half of the twelfth century and insert two stone blocks with flat reliefs instead. Such incomprehensible interference speaks ill of those who came up with the idea to remove the original stone blocks. What happened to the stone blocks from the north wall is unknown to me⁴¹. All these evaluations of each conservatory work would be hardly possible or limited, if it were not for the photographs taken by Meydenlender in 1887. This partly unknown (until 2011) photographic material (one photo), very rarely used (five photos), is of great significance for the study of the history of the architecture of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław. It is hoped that it will be taken into account in any conservation works this Romanesque structure will possibly undergo in the future.

Photographs from 1887. New sources for the study of the architecture of the Romanesque Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław

The paper examines a collection of nineteenth-century photographs housed in the Iconographic Laboratory of the Special Collections Department of the University Library in Poznań. These unique photos were taken by *Regierungsrat* Meydenlender in 1887. Some additional prints of Meydenlender's photos are also kept in the Museum of the City of Poznań. Illustrating the state of preservation of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, showing the then damage to its walls and alternations done to the church in the course of 1900–1902 reconstruction, the photographs provide a valuable source for any conservatory works. The article explores several issues related to this barely known photographic material.

Translated by: Agnieszka Tokarczuk

⁴¹ One of the stone blocks (the one currently replaced by the relief with a beardless and hairless head and with mouth open wide), is currently housed in J. Kasprowicz Museum in Inowrocław. This information has been provided by Marcin Woźniak, an archaeologist with the Museum. I do not have any knowledge on the fate of other stone blocks.

Photographs:

Photo 1. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, present view. Photo by M. Danielewski.

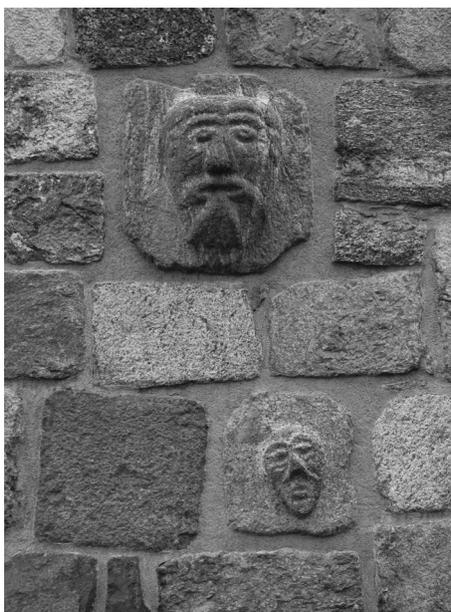


Photo 2. Stone blocks with flat reliefs embedded in the north wall of the church. Photo by M. Danielewski.



Photograph no. 519. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, south-west view. Photo by Meydenlender, 1887 (Iconographic Laboratory of the Special Collections Department of the University Library in Poznań).



Photograph no. 520. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, north-west view. Photo by Meydenlender, 1887 (Iconographic Laboratory of the Special Collections Department of the University Library in Poznań).



Photograph no. 521. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, north view.
Photo by Meydenlender, 1887 (Iconographic Laboratory of the Special Collections
Department of the University Library in Poznań).



Photograph no. 522. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, south view.
Photo by Meydenlender, 1887 (Iconographic Laboratory of the Special Collections
Department of the University Library in Poznań).



Photograph no. 523. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, inside view of the gallery and tower. Photo by Meydenlender, 1887 (Iconographic Laboratory of the Special Collections Department of the University Library in Poznań).



Photograph no. 524. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Inowrocław, inside view of the presbytery. Photo by Meydenlender, 1887 (Iconographic Laboratory of the Special Collections Department of the University Library in Poznań).