

## THE COLLECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES CONCERNING WILD PLANTS ON THE DIGITAL PLATFORM OF THE POLISH ETHNOGRAPHIC ATLAS

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The specificity of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas (PEA) research work and the potentialities of applying atlas materials have been largely discussed over the last few years. What should be reminded here is that the research activity of the PEA is based on two mainstays: the documentary one (collecting fieldwork materials, museum and library search) and the interpretative one (elaborating appropriate systematics which take into account various forms and varieties of the investigated phenomena, preparing maps and concluding on the basis of the spatial ethnographic image). The first stage has been already completed – therefore, the Cieszyn Atlas Unit has rich ethnographic archives, the only one of such a size in Poland. The collection comprises several thousand interview questionnaires, surveys, fieldwork photographs and other archival materials, obtained by Polish ethnologists in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century nearly all over Poland. The second mainstay of the atlas activity concerns the elaboration of the collected source materials in the form of maps and some corresponding commentaries as well as in the form of special electronic catalogues.

What the article aims at is presenting the specificity of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas in the context of documentation, preservation and popularization of cultural heritage of the Polish countryside. Source materials of the Atlas constitute a unique source of rural history and, in contrast to other ethnographic studies, they comprise the whole territory of Poland. Arduously collected over the decades, the Atlas sources are a precious part of the material cultural heritage. Presenting and popularizing them is needed e.g. by local communities, which turn to their cultural roots to build their local/regional/national identity. Currently, the Polish Ethnographic Atlas is starting long-term documentary work concerning scientific processing and popularization of source materials essential for conducting and developing the research on the digital platform [www.archiwumpae.us.edu.pl](http://www.archiwumpae.us.edu.pl).

*Key words:* ethnology, Polish Ethnographic Atlas, wild plants, protection and preservation of cultural heritage, digitalization

What becomes an important task of contemporary science is the digitalization of written documents, including archival resources. Grzegorz Płoszajski emphasizes the significance of this process: “In many countries, the digitalization of the objects of cultural heritage – understood as the process of making digital copies – is taking place on a wide scale. This is mostly aimed at providing access to these copies and at their long-lasting (permanent) preservation as a form of protecting the cultural heritage for future generations. The significance of digitalization for wider accessibility of cultural goods has increased due to the development of IT networks as many digital resources have become available on-line – fast, easily and often without charge. At the same time, the access to the cultural heritage complies with the goals formulated in the field of education not only of the young but also of the whole society. The digitalization of cultural heritage has become a concern of UNESCO and is supported by the European Union, which (within the i2010 initiative) aims at the idea of the European digital library and appropriate recommendations for governments” (Płoszajski, Kalota, Paradowski, Schmidt, 2008: 9).

What seems particularly valuable for the representatives of social sciences and humanities are the ethnographic bases presenting the collections of data which are not widely known. In order to fulfil the expectations, the Research Unit of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas (PEA) in Cieszyn has undertaken an innovative attempt at scientific processing, digitalization and providing access to some selected atlas materials. The major aim is popularization of the PEA, understood as “building the awareness of the existence of some collections accumulated by particular institutions among the recipients who have had no opportunity so far to familiarize with them or who even have not known about their existence” (Digitalizacja, 2010: 31).

Similar scientific activities are undertaken in other countries of Central Europe. For instance, in 2008 Koordinačné centrum tradičnej ľudovej kultúry (Coordination centre of traditional folk culture) along with Ústav etnológie SAV (Institute of Ethnology, Slovak Academy of Sciences) elaborated a digital encyclopaedia entitled *Tradičná ľudová kultúra Slovenska slovom a obrazom – Traditional Slovak folk culture in words and pictures*. It comprises over 1800 entries which familiarize us with various manifestations of the folk culture of Slovaks and some national minorities in a synthetic way.<sup>1</sup> Several years later, Masaryk University in Brno created a geographical information system devoted to folk culture (the so called Gistralik), which presents maps with ethnographic data specified both in space (Morava) and in time (1750–1900). The system enables searching in one base for various information on the documented phenomena in material and non-material culture as well as providing its location at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the presented article is aimed at the familiarization with a unique ethnographic collection of wild plants in the context of the digitalization works currently implemented by the Polish Ethnographic Atlas at the University of Silesia. The discussed collection will comprise nearly 300 questionnaires devoted to using these plants for medical treatment and consumption. This oldest and most valuable PEA collection completed in 1948–1952 has substantial documentary value (also due to the attached plant specimens) but is not widely known. However, it is going to be presented on the digital platform of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas in the near future,

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1 More on: <http://www.ludovakultura.sk/index.php?id=11>, access: 2016, 10 June.

2 More on: <http://gistralik.muni.cz/o-projektu.html>, access: 2016, 10 June.

which will be discussed later. Thus, the article will comprise a brief description of the specificity of atlas works, the characteristics of the discussed collection, the way in which it is prepared for digitalization, the process of digitalization and other planned work on sharing the data on the Internet.

**Previous atlas work in Central Europe.** The ethno-geographic method is mostly applied for preparing the ethnographic atlases which present spatial cultural diversification. The first ethnological atlas in the world was *Atlas Africanus* (see: Frobenius, 1929–1930) and the first European – *Atlas kultury ludowej w Polsce* (see: Moszyński, Bytnarówna, Klimaszewska, 1935; Moszyński, Klimaszewska, 1934, 1936). A couple of years later, the pre-war series *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* was issued (1936–1940). In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several other works of this type appeared, out of which only the examples from the neighbour countries will be indicated. In Germany the works on *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* were continued (1958–1979), in Austria– *Österreichischer Volkskundeatlas* was elaborated (1959–1978). *Etnografický Atlas* (1971–1988) – from the third volume called *Etnografický atlas Čech, Moravy a Slezska* (2000–2009) came into being on the Czech territories and *Etnografický atlas Slovenska* was issued in Slovakia (1990). The above mentioned ethnographical atlases came into being in different periods and were based on different sources. They also used various systems of organizing and elaborating the material. These problems were assumed to be solved by *European Ethnological Atlas*, which was meant to be “the first more complex attempt at international agreement and negotiating the theoretical standpoints concerning the spatial presentation of folk culture elements in the area of Europe as well as at explaining the reasons of this diversification” (Staszczak, 1979: 221). So far, only the volume dedicated to the terms associated with ritual fires in Europe has been published (see: Die Termine, 1980) – most probably the project will not be continued. However, what has lasted unceasingly since 1945 are the works aimed at finalizing the Polish Ethnographic Atlas (more in: Kłodnicki, 2001, 2005; Pieńczak, 2015).

**Current activity of the PEA.** The contemporary scientific and research activity of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas has been discussed in some previous works (see: Pieńczak, Diakowska-Kohut, 2013; Pieńczak, 2015). What can be mentioned here is that the PEA materials have been collected over several decades, first by the Polish Ethnological Society in Lublin and later by the Institute of the History of Material Culture at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw (now: the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology at the Polish Academy of Sciences), along with the ethnographic units in Poznań, Kraków and Wrocław. In 1998, the rich PEA collection was moved to Cieszyn and it found a home at the Cieszyn Branch of the University of Silesia (now: the Faculty of Ethnology and Education of this university). This took place with the support of the above mentioned Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology. The atlas studies have been continued in Cieszyn under the supervision of Ph.D. hab. UŚ Prof. Zygmunt Kłodnicki. At first, the focus was on completing the field research and publishing activity associated with elaborating and publishing the consecutive volumes of *Commentaries to the Polish Ethnographic Atlas* (see: Drożdż, 2002, 2009; Drożdż, Pieńczak, 2004; Lebeda [Pieńczak] 2002; Pieńczak, 2007; Zwyczaj, 2010, 2013). Currently, the PEA Research Unit is implementing a long-term project, consisting in scientific elaboration and dissemination of the atlas collections on the Internet (Table 1), which ideally complies with the modern digital revolution observed in the academic environment since 2000.

Table 1.

Major currents in the scientific activity of the PEA Research Unit (2001–2016)

Years	Activity of the PEA Unit in Cieszyn	Participants
2001–2003	Finalizing the field studies in Eastern and North-Eastern Poland	<b>Supervisor and editor of PEA:</b> Ph.D. hab. Prof. UŚ Zygmunt Kłodnicki <b>Research coordinator:</b> M.A. Agnieszka Pieńczak, M.A. Anna Drożdż <b>Researchers:</b> M.A. Anna Drożdż, M.A. Agnieszka Pieńczak, ethnology students (UŚ, Cieszyn Branch)
2000–2013	Elaboration and publishing of consecutive volumes of <i>Commentaries to the Polish Ethnographic Atlas</i> (Vol. 6–9, Part II)	<b>Supervisor and editor of PEA:</b> Ph.D. hab. Prof. UŚ Zygmunt Kłodnicki, Ph.D. Agnieszka Pieńczak (co-editor of the series ) <b>Contractors:</b> Ph.D. Anna Drożdż, Ph.D. Agnieszka Pieńczak, M.A. Edyta Diakowska-Kohut, M.A. Sabina Gruszka, M.A. Przemysław Kopp, M.A. Kamil Podzorski, M.A. Renata Zowada
2014 – to date	Implementation of the grant: <i>Polski Atlas Etnograficzny - opracowanie naukowe, elektroniczny katalog danych, publikacja zasobów w sieci Internet, etap I /Polish Ethnographic Atlas - scientific elaboration, electronic database, publishing the resources in the Internet, stage I/</i> (0049/NPRH3/H11/82/2014)	<b>Supervisor:</b> Ph.D. Agnieszka Pieńczak <b>Main contractors:</b> Ph.D. hab. Prof. UŚ Zygmunt Kłodnicki, Ph.D. Agnieszka Pieńczak, M.A. Joanna Koźmińska, M.A. Edyta Diakowska-Kohut <b>Other contractors:</b> Ph.D. Michał Rauszer, M.A. Bartłomiej Chromik, B.Sc. Krystian Firla, M.Sc. Krzysztof Kasprzyński, M.A. Jacek Szczyrbowski, M.A. Sławomir Szewieczek

Source: own elaboration

Digitalization became possible owing to the funds obtained from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education within the National Programme for the Development of Humanities, which supports long-term documentary, editorial and research work of fundamental significance for national heritage and culture. What has been implemented since July 2014 at the Faculty of Ethnology and Education in Cieszyn is the project *Polski Atlas Etnograficzny - opracowanie naukowe, elektroniczny katalog danych, publikacja zasobów w sieci Internet, etap I /Polish Ethnographic Atlas - scientific elaboration, electronic database, publishing the resources on the Internet,*



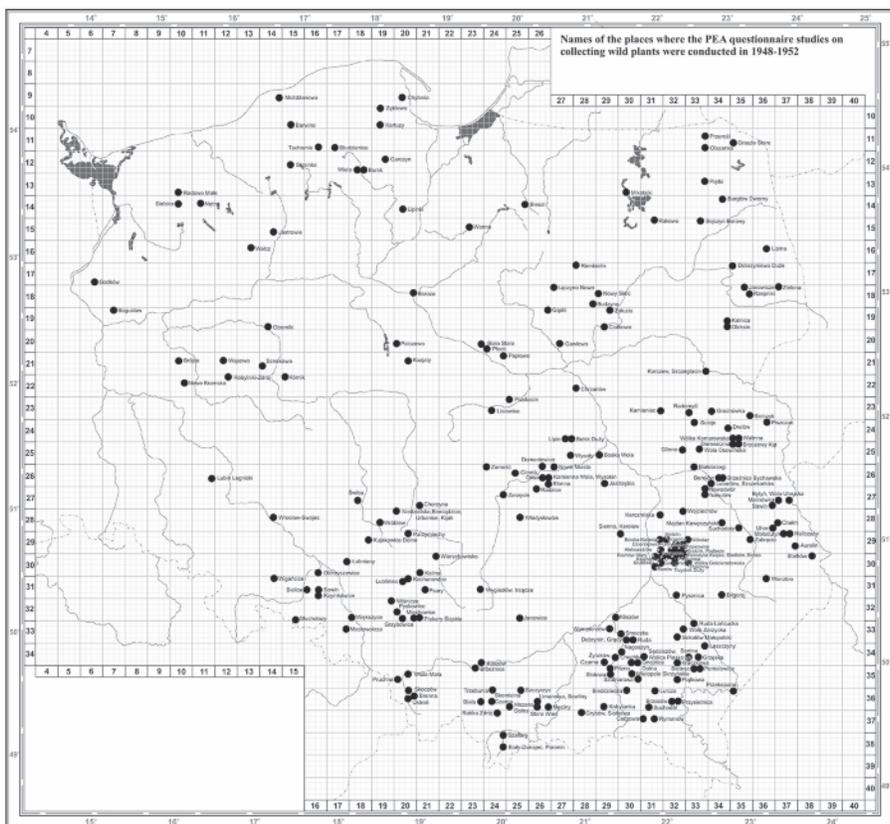
Photograph 1 The digital platform of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas for indexing and providing access to archival resources (source: 9 February, 2016, screenshot, [www.archiwumpae.us.edu.pl](http://www.archiwumpae.us.edu.pl))

stage I/ (supervisor: Ph.D. Agnieszka Pieńczak). The grant is aimed at the presentation and dissemination of some selected PEA materials through scientific elaboration and Internet sharing of three unique collections, comprising field work photographs, the oldest questionnaires with herbaria and the published atlas maps. Owing to the support offered by the Ministry and the Faculty of Ethnology and Education in Cieszyn, a special PEA digitalization research unit has been founded (supervision: A. Pieńczak) as well as a digital platform on the university server ([www.archiwumpae.us.edu.pl](http://www.archiwumpae.us.edu.pl)). This was possible owing to the collaboration of the University of Silesia with the Polish Institute of Anthropology (a project partner), the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Ethnological Society. Some of the digitalized data are available for the users at the public interface (Photograph 1), the majority can be seen in the administration panel.<sup>3</sup>

**The criteria for selecting digitalized objects.** The resources of the PEA are hard to estimate – there are several dozen meters of ethnographic materials and they comprise questionnaires, maps, photographs and other broadly understood documentary files. They require many years of indexing and preservation at first and only then – the digitalization work.

In the first stage of the undertaking, due to the wealth of the atlas resources only some objects were chosen for digitalization, which was compliant with the principles of *Katalog Dobrych Praktyk Digitalizacji Materiałów Archiwalnych /The Catalogue of Good Practices in Digitalization of Archives/*. Three criteria suggested in this document have been taken into account, all of which are associated with the condition of the collection: 1. The highest historical value, 2. Bad preservation condition, 3. The threat

<sup>3</sup> The resources will be available after obtaining from the author or his heir a publication permit (licence agreement). About 500 photographs have been shared so far (<http://www.archiwumpae.us.edu.pl/items/browse> (access: 2016, 9 February)).



*Names of the places where the PEA questionnaire studies on collecting wild plants were conducted in 1948–1952; Source: own elaboration*

of damage or physical destruction as a result of wide accessibility (of the object)<sup>4</sup>. Eventually, it has been decided that digitalization will be indispensable in scientific elaboration of three ethnographic collections. The biggest of them comprises over 12 100 black and white field work photographs (the 1950s – 1970s), the second consists of nearly 300 questionnaires on collecting wild plants for consumption and medical treatment (1948–1952) and the third involves 770 published atlas maps (1958–2013). However, what are focused on in this study (due to its subject matter) are the documentary aspects of the second collection.

**The characteristics of the discussed resources.** The presented collection comprises 235 places (see the map) in which originally all questionnaires on collecting wild plants (labelled with the numbers I–IV) were to be carried out. It is estimated that the collection consists of 3 000 charts and nearly 400 questionnaires with various numbers (the research is still being conducted).

4 In the document, the requirements concerning the digitalization of archival materials were defined, which aimed at ensuring long-term preservation of digital copies and maintaining access to them. See: *Katalog Dobrych Praktyk Digitalizacji materiałów archiwalnych*, p. 1 (access: 2016, 8 February) (<http://www.nina.gov.pl/media/43762/katalog-praktyk-i-standard%C3%B3w-digitalizacji-materia%C5%82%C3%B3w-archiwalnych.pdf>).

In each of the examined places, carrying out the questionnaires was planned with the use of the following surveys:

- **Questionnaire No 1:** the cover with the address of the Polish Ethnological Society, the address of the local correspondent and a post stamp (p. 1); the column for recording the names of wild plants aimed at consumption and of their edible parts (pp. 2-3); the instruction on fulfilling the questionnaire (p. 4);

- **Questionnaire No 2:** the franked address of the Polish Ethnological Society and the correspondent's address (p. 1); the questionnaire which provides the exact geographical location of the village (municipality, county and voivodship) and the correspondents' personal data (first name, surname, age) (p. 2); the informants' personal data (first name, surname, age, occupation, birthplace, address in 1939), the instruction on fulfilling the questionnaire (p. 3) and the appropriate herbarium which contained the same questions on each page for each plant (pp. 4-23). In an indicated place, there is a framed space to which a particular plant should be pinned or stuck. The analysed questionnaire comprised 14 entries altogether:

1. *Write down the local commonly used name.*
2. *Write down other names more rarely used in this place.*
3. *Provide the surname, age and birthplace of people who call this plant in a different way.*
4. *Specify the place where the plant was picked (forest, field, meadow, balk, etc.) and the date of this.*
5. *Mark with a cross in an appropriate square the months in which people collect this plant as food.*
6. *Write down folk names of the edible parts of this plant.*
7. *Was the plant collected in the past? Could the oldest remember this? In which years?*
8. *Is it collected nowadays?*
9. *If collecting this plant is not practiced anymore, find out the reasons.*
10. *Who deals with the collecting (children, seniors, women, men)?*
11. *Is it maybe collected only at pre-harvest or in famine years (e.g. during wars)? Specify precisely!*
12. *Is the plant collected and eaten only by children or also by adults?*
13. *Provide names of the dishes prepared from this plant.*
14. *Do people make winter food reserves out of this plant? How is it preserved?*

*The place for a correspondent's other comments not included in questionnaire entries.*

- **Questionnaire No 3:** the cover with the address of the Polish Ethnological Society, the address of the local correspondent and a post stamp (p. 1); the space for recording the names of the diseases treated by the villagers with wild plants, the symptoms which help to diagnose particular diseases, the names of healing plants (pp. 2-3); the instruction on fulfilling the questionnaire 3 and 4 (p. 4);

- **Questionnaire No 4:** the franked address of the Polish Ethnological Society and the correspondent's address (p. 1); the questionnaire which provides the exact geographical location of the village (municipality, county and voivodship) and the correspondents' personal data (first name, surname, age) (p. 2); the informants' personal data (first name, surname, age, occupation, birthplace, address in 1939), the instruction concerning the arrangement and fulfilling of the questionnaire (p. 3) and the appropriate herbarium which contained the same questions on each page for each plant (pp. 4-23). In an indicated place, there is a framed space to which a particular plant should be pinned or stuck. The analysed questionnaire comprised 16 entries altogether:

1. Write down the local commonly used name.
2. Write down other names more rarely used in this place.
3. Provide the surname, age and birthplace of people who call this plant in a different way.
4. Specify the place where the plant was picked (forest, field, meadow, balk, etc.) and the date of this.
5. Mark with a cross in an appropriate square the months, moon phases, and the time of the day or night in which people collect this plant as a medicine.
6. Is this herb collected also for other reasons? What reasons?
7. Which part (flowers, fruits, leaves, stems, roots) of the plant is used as a medicine?
8. Was the plant collected in the past? Could the oldest remember this?
9. Who deals with the collecting (children, seniors, women, men)?
10. Are there special people who collect this plant as a medicine? How are they called?
11. How and where is this plant preserved?
12. Write down the names of the diseases treated with this plant?
13. Why are these particular diseases treated with this plant?
14. Are there any special recipes for preparing the medicine from this plant? What are they?
15. How is the treatment with this plant administered?
16. Are there special people who treat people with herbs? How are they called?

*The place for a correspondent's other comments not included in questionnaire entries.*

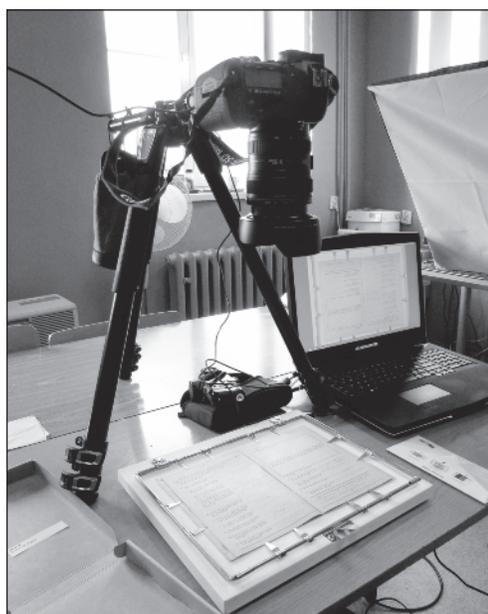
The ready-made questionnaire sheets were sent to local correspondents, whose task was to fulfil and send them back. The first were sent mainly to the representatives of the authorities and clergy in a particular place, e.g. priests, teachers, municipality workers, village heads. Yet, not all the questionnaires were filled to the same extent and some did not return to the PEA at all – therefore, the collection is not complete. Generally, this was the problem of various atlas questionnaires – about 35% of filled questionnaire sheets came back, out of which 10% did not have significant documentary value (Bohdanowicz, 1993: 19).

**Preparing archival materials for digitalization (conservation).** The questionnaires on people's collecting are among the oldest materials gained by the Polish Ethnological Society (the seat of which was Lublin in 1948–52) with the aim of fulfilling the PEA. They have unique scientific and documentary value as they constitute the only (of this type) collection of ethno-botanical data in Europe, which was accumulated in a systematic way (more in: Łuczaj, 2008). Due to the age of the collection and bad condition of the sheets, some rescue activities were necessary to preserve it, which was indispensable for starting the planned digitalization work. These undertakings were aimed at stopping the destructive processes and restoring the usability of the discussed objects.

Most of the questionnaires were in a poor physical state, which confirmed their advanced deterioration and justified the necessity of specialist conservation before starting the research. Many questionnaires were very dirty, especially at the edges. There were numerous yellowish spots and intensive damp patches, tears and missing parts – also many plants got crumbled (Photograph 2). The planned conservation work assumed numerous activities which consisted in: disinfection of the objects, preparing the photographic and descriptive documentation, disassembling the questionnaire, ripping out the blocks, separating the plants, mechanical cleaning of the cards, de-acidification in water bath or by the dry method, straightening the cards and filling the missing parts, assembling the cards, sewing in compliance with the original scheme,



Photograph 2 The preservation state of selected questionnaires before conservation. Wrocław, 15th March 2015. Photograph: D. Kordowska (source: *Konserwacja 207 obiektów z zielnikami* documented on CD, PEA archives in Cieszyn)



Photograph 3 Digitalization of the questionnaires with the use of SLR camera. Cieszyn, 25th October 2015. Photograph: A. Pieńczak

strengthening the plants and placing them on the cards and making the boxes for protecting the objects while preserving (Kordowska, 2015: *Karta Identyfikacyjna*).

**Scanning.** The process of digitalization of the discussed resources is conducted in the special digitalization unit of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas, which is situated near the seat of the PEA. Due to the fragility of objects and the presence of dried plants, digitalization is carried out without the use of flat scanners. Therefore, the technique of photographic reproduction was applied with the use of a 22 megapixel digital photo camera. Its technical parameters allow for recording detailed pictures in high quality, which is important in the presentation of such specific objects as herbaria (see: photographs 3).

After photographing all questionnaires (the estimated number of pages: 3 000) they will be given new inventory numbers. This requires earlier verification of the names of places on the covers and the corresponding signatures which indicate the geographical location.<sup>5</sup> Due to the specificity of the discussed PEA resources, the new numbering contains four components: the abbreviated name of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas, the general numbering for the whole set of archives, the signature of the place and the number of a particular questionnaire (see: Table 2).

*Table 2.*

*New inventory numbers of selected PEA questionnaires with numbers I-IV (1948-1952)*

Abbreviated name of the institution maintaining the archival resources	Numbering of the archival resources	Signature of the place	Questionnaire number
PAE /PEA/	A1	6.17.XV	04
PAE /PEA/	A1	7.19.II-II	03
PAE /PEA/	A1	7.19.II-II	04
PAE /PEA/	A1	10.13.XIV	01

*Source: own elaboration*

**Providing access to the resources.** What has become useful for indexing the atlas collections and their publication on the Internet within the discussed project is the specialist web application Galeneo.<sup>6</sup> It offers many possibilities, among which the following seem most significant: indexing and archiving the resources, presenting some selected objects and the related information on public websites, describing objects with the help of a set of standard spaces or individual descriptions, labelling the objects or organizing them in a line, etc. These functions enable appropriate archiving and professional presentation of the PEA source materials in the public interface.

The taken photographs are not planned to be graphically processed, apart from the necessary cropping. Some working copies and copies with lower graphic parameters aimed at wide sharing will be performed from the obtained digital copies (RAW format). In order to present the data effectively on the PEA digital platform, they will be converted into the PDF format. This will allow for juxtaposing one single catalogue card with all the questionnaires filled within a particular place. The files will be protected with a watermark (with the logo of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas) and introduced into the catalogue along with other data in the Dublin Core scheme.

## ENDING

Currently, the scientific research of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas is associated with the start of broadly designed and long-term activities aimed at elaborating a coherent digital base of archival resources and their professional sharing on the Internet. The

<sup>5</sup> Many of the marks are unreadable or hard to identify, some are changed or erroneous.

<sup>6</sup> As the authors assume (the firm Zafado), the software is addressed not only to museums but to a broader range of recipients, e.g. institutes, archives, art galleries (access: 2016, 8 February, <http://zafado.pl/co-to-jest-galeneo/prosta-obsługa/>).

discussed collection of questionnaires concerning wild plants in the feeding and medical aspect, which is being created on the PEA digital platform, is just an element of this base. In the future, an extensive electronic database will come into being. It will comprise many thousands of records, which will constitute a unique source of the history of Polish villages in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This will certainly enhance the development of scientific studies and will help to understand and appreciate the significance of the atlas research not only for the local, regional or national heritage, but also, in broader terms, for Slavic and European one.

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