

A Portrait of Professor Zdzisław A. Rajewski (1907–1974), Scholar of Many Talents

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Zdzisław A. Rajewski was one of a group of the most outstanding twentieth century Polish archaeologists. He was a student of Professor J. Kostrzewski and his assistant in organising the 1934–1939 archaeological excavation of the Early Iron Age fortified lake village of the Lusatian Culture in Biskupin. After the Second World War, Z.A. Rajewski continued to excavate at Biskupin and, starting from 1949, was also actively involved in running the national *Millennium* programme of research on the origins of the Polish statehood. For a quarter of a century (1949–1974), Rajewski was Director of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw. Next to the archaeology of Biskupin and its micro-region, his other research interests included prehistoric and early medieval symbolic culture, battlefield archaeology, innovative methods of research and museum sciences.

KEY-WORDS: Zdzisław A. Rajewski (1907–1974); history of archaeology, archaeology of Poland, archaeology of Biskupin, State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw

EARLY DAYS

Professor Zdzisław Adam Rajewski is without doubt one of the great figures of Polish twentieth century archaeology. On 22nd October 2007, we celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the birth of this scholar of many talents, researcher of Biskupin, Director of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw¹. Rajewski was born in Dubin, a small locality between the towns of Rawicz and Krotoszyn, in a part of Poland incorporated during late 18th century into the Prussian state. A family photograph

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¹ Professor Zdzisław A. Rajewski was one of the key figures in Polish archaeology of 1945–1974. After his death, many commemorative biographies of this researcher were published. They are listed among the references on the archaeological excavation at Biskupin, the period 1933–1983 (Piotrowska 2008: 432). Two recent more extensive biographical contributions are: Piotrowska 2000; Tabaczyński 2005.

taken in 1912 shows Zdzisław with his parents, Gabriela and Antoni Rajewski, and siblings (Fig. 1). Rajewski started his elementary education in a Prussian grammar school. After Poland regained independence in 1918, he continued studying in a Polish classical secondary school with an ambitious curriculum in the humanities. A less well-known episode is Rajewski's career as a singer with various choirs with which he performed a number of pieces of religious music intended for the Roman Catholic mass composed by his future brother-in-law, Z. Durczewski (1908–1944), musicologist and archaeologist.



Fig. 1. A family photograph, taken in 1912. Zdzisław (at centre) with his parents, Gabriela and Antoni Rajewski, and siblings. Private collection of Sława Nowińska and Jolanta Stachowska, daughters of Professor Z. Rajewski

UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN POZNAŃ

At twenty, Rajewski entered the University in Poznań, choosing prehistory as his main subject, which he studied under Professor Józef Kostrzewski (see Lech 1997–1998: 34–55; Piotrowska 1997–1998: 256–275). He completed his studies in 1931, presenting a thesis on the prehistory of the district of Rawicz and obtained his master's degree in prehistory, anthropology and ethnography. His period at the university was not an easy one for the future investigator of Biskupin: Konrad Jążdżewski (1995: 48–51), a fellow student whose family was much better off, remembered helping Rajewski,

then short of money, to pay for his lodgings. Jażdżewski was also the one who encouraged Rajewski to join the group of young enthusiasts who, parallel to following the courses at the University, worked as volunteers, for a few hours every day, in the Prehistory Department of the regional museum (Muzeum Wielkopolskie) in Poznań. One of his jobs was recording finds and entering them in the Museum collections (Piotrowska 2000: 21; Tabaczyński 2005: 54–55).

Z.A. Rajewski started his professional career while still a student when he took the post of Junior Assistant at the University of Poznań; he occupied this position, with some interruption, between 1928 and 1931. As part of his university education, Rajewski joined several field surveys and excavation projects in the region of Poznań, Łódź and other areas of Poland (Silesia, Pomerania). After his graduation (Fig. 2), he became Senior Assistant to Professor Kostrzewski (1885–1969). His excellent organisational abilities soon became apparent. Rajewski was an outstanding character among the young prehistorians then graduating from the Polish universities (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2. Z. Rajewski as Senior Assistant to Professor J. Kostrzewski in the Prehistory Institute University of Poznań. Private collection of Sława Nowińska and Jolanta Stachowska, daughters of Professor Z. Rajewski



Fig. 3. Z. Rajewski (wearing a white lab coat) in company of participants of the Second Congress of Prehistorians in Poznań in 1935. Courtyard of the Poznań Society of Friends of Learning building. In the background, standing, first at right, Professor J. Kostrzewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

A NEW OPENING: THE EXCAVATION AT BISKUPIN

At first, Rajewski specialised in what was then a new field of archaeology – studies in early medieval archaeology – but in 1934, his focus shifted to the investigation at Biskupin.

During the early 1930s, peat extraction had begun on a peninsula on Lake Biskupin had come under. On this occasion, enigmatic wooden structures were uncovered, fragments of pottery vessels, some of them carefully ornamented, tools of antler or stone, and fragments of worked antler. In the summer of 1933, the drought had been so severe that the water level in the lakes of the Gniezno Lake District subsided (Kostrzewski 1933; 1970: 195–197). Low water exposed ancient revetments in the shores in the western and northern part of the peninsula. News of these structures reached Poznan and Professor Józef Kostrzewski. Intrigued, Kostrzewski paid a visit to Biskupin. He identified the timber structures as the remains of a fortified lakeside settlement from the early Iron Age. This he dated to around the middle of the first millennium BC. Based on ceramic finds, Kostrzewski associated the discovery with the people of Lusatian Culture, a unit of the Urnfield complex (1933). He linked this culture unit with the “proto-Slavs”. Persuaded by the rarity of similar settlements and the fine level of preservation of the timber structures at Biskupin, J. Kostrzewski took the decision to make a reconnaissance excavation in the summer of 1934; all the necessary arrangements and the running of the fieldwork he entrusted to Z.A. Rajewski and the University of Poznan Students Society. During the first season, the investigation was assisted by the Prehistory Department of the regional museum (Muzeum Wielkopolskie) and the Prehistory Institute of the University of Poznan (though in name only). J. Kostrzewski was research supervisor of the investigation. Thus began the greatest research project in the career of Z.A. Rajewski.

At the outset, the fieldwork proceeded in quite Spartan conditions. A letter of 15th June 1934 addressed by Rajewski from the Prehistoric Institute of the University of Poznan to Mr. W. Szwajcer (the schoolteacher who had discovered the site at Biskupin) announced the arrival of archaeologists in Biskupin in the following words:

“To Mr. Szwajcer
at Biskupin

Please be so kind as to speak on the subject of the future excavation with Messrs Jerha, Dobersztyn and Folaron. In the coming days, they will be advised about the protected status of the peninsula (as an area of valuable archaeology). We ourselves are coming to see them in person on Wednesday. Please be so kind as to make

arrangements for the supply of dairy products, vegetables and straw for the research team.

Zdzisław Rajewski MA
Senior Assistant”

The dairy products and vegetables would be the mainstay of the archaeologists’ diet, the straw would be their bedding.

Excavation work began on Saturday, 23rd June 1934². From early in the morning, “25 shovels set to cutting the turf in an area of 200 m²” (Rajewski 1947: 7), opening a trench in the northern part of the peninsula situated next to the peat working and in due course was extended to an adjacent area having an area of 250 m² (Fig. 4). The remains uncovered included the remains of seven dwellings ranged in rows, sections



Fig. 4. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. The first archaeological trench of 1934 showing finely preserved timber structures. On the left, floor and hearth of dwelling no. 19. In the background, camp of the University of Poznan Prehistorians Society. State Archaeological Museum collection

² Z. Rajewski (1947: 7) noted the date as 24th June but in 1934, this was a Sunday, so this is an evident error.

of two intersecting roads and assorted small finds. An average of 35 labourers was employed. In a test trench cut near the western shore of the peninsula was discovered a fragment of the footing of a rampart enclosing the settlement as well as a timber breakwater. Never before had an archaeological investigation made in Poland yielded so detailed a picture of a prehistoric village. No wonder the discovery was recognised as sensational (Kostrzewski 1934: 80).

The results from the fieldwork of 1934 persuaded the Prehistory Institute University of Poznan to embark the following year on a regular investigation, performed on a large scale and continued until the outbreak of World War II. Excavation was carried out every year from May to October. Professor Józef Kostrzewski was its supervisor, planner and main interpreter of the results in scientific terms. Z.A. Rajewski worked at Biskupin as assistant supervisor and field director of the excavation team from the University of Poznan. The fieldwork in Biskupin was decisive for Rajewski's later career; in future, his name would be remembered in connection with the archaeology of Biskupin.

In 1936, parallel to excavating at Biskupin, Rajewski defended his PhD dissertation at the University of Poznan; its subject was early historic cemeteries in Wielkopolska (Wielkopolskie cmentarzyska rządowe z okresu wczesnodziejowego [Les cimetières protohistoriques de la Grande Pologne]), his research supervisor was Professor Kostrzewski (Rajewski 1939). In this dissertation, Rajewski examined symbolic culture as manifested in the funerary rite which he approached from an innovative perspective. In interpreting his material, Rajewski drew on the findings from ethnography and ethnology to a much greater extent than was usual in the 1920s and 1930s. He was well equipped for this, having complemented his studies in archaeology with a course from the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Poznan under Professor Eugeniusz Frankowski (1884–1962), authority on ethnology and museum sciences. Frankowski was a scholar with extensive research interests; in his studies, he drew from the evolutionist tradition to which he added elements of ethno-geography and ethno-psychology; Frankowski was also familiar with archaeology (Posern-Zieliński 1973: 97, 102–105; Sokolewicz 1973: 146, 160–162; Piotrowska 2000: 33).

Analysing early medieval cemeteries, Rajewski concluded that by their specific alignment the burials reflected the beliefs of the people; he concluded that some items of the grave goods (for example, beads, finger-rings, decorated eggs, pails, sherds, coins) had a symbolic significance. In his analysis, Rajewski drew on the research of leading Polish ethnologists, e.g., Stanisław Poniąkowski (1884–1945), Adam Fischer (1889–1943), Jan Stanisław Bystron (1892–1964). In his conclusions he continued the line of argumentation taken both by evolutionists and the Austrian-German culture-historical school of ethnology (Rajewski 1939). It seems that after a time, during the War, the course charted by Rajewski was adopted also by Professor J. Kostrzewski, Rajewski's senior colleague, then working clandestinely on an important study on proto-Polish culture – *Kultura prapolska* (Kostrzewski 1947: 346–392; 1949).

From the very outset, Rajewski occupied a central place – next to Professor Kostrzewski – in running the investigation at Biskupin (Fig. 5). The excavation work supervised by Professor Kostrzewski and his assistant exposed the remains of two fortified settlements dating from the early Iron Age, built by the people associated with Lusatian Culture of the Urnfield cycle (Lech 1997–1998: 43–44; 2010: 178–179; Piotrowska 1997–1998: 259–260; Marciniak 2010: 197–198). The peninsula of Lake Biskupin yielded the remains of sturdy timber ramparts; they helped defend two villages which had an area of about 2 ha and a regular layout (Fig. 6). The two settlements had been built one after the other, by the same people. In the calendar chronology accepted in those early days, these findings were dated to 700–400 BC (Kostrzewski 1936: 1; Piotrowski 1998).

After several seasons at Biskupin, Rajewski went on to become an authority on the archaeology of Biskupin and the Lusatian Culture settlement. He also proved an expert manager and skilful promoter of the excavation in Biskupin. Nothing was too difficult for him. Thanks to Rajewski, the research at Biskupin, before and after the Second World War, experienced many successes; and Rajewski was instrumental in organising the Archaeological Open Air Museum in Biskupin as it is today (Piotrowski 1998: 94–103; Piotrowska 2000: 21–33). One can find a lot of important facts and colourful anecdotes associated with Z. Rajewski in the memoirs of Professor Bogdan Balcer who



Fig. 5. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. Excavation in 1936. From the left: Z. Rajewski, J. Kostrzewski and Nils Åberg (1888–1957), Swedish archaeologist, author of “*Bronzezeitliche und früheisenzeitliche Chronologie*” (1930–1935). State Archaeological Museum collection



Fig. 6. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. General view on the north-east area of the excavation in 1937. Photograph taken from a balloon. State Archaeological Museum collection

worked many years under his leadership at Biskupin and in the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw (Balcer 2014; 2015).

In those early days, the Lusatian Culture was commonly identified with the proto-Slavs and the discoveries made in Biskupin became a major sensation (Piotrowska 1997–1998: 259–266; 2004a: 102–115; Kaczmarek 2017). The site was visited by politicians and archaeologists from Poland and abroad (Figs 5 and 7). An archival photograph, published in *Archaeologia Polona*, which would not be out of place in a motion picture, shows Dr Rajewski overflowing with energy showing the site to German researchers, Professor W. Unverzagt from the Berlin Museum and Dr W. Kothe from the State Archive in Berlin (Lech 2004: 37, Fig. 16).

Biskupin owed much of its fame to the efforts of Professor Kostrzewski who was the chief supervisor of the research. Z.A. Rajewski, his energetic assistant, skilfully promoted the results of that research using all the media available at the time, first of all, the press and the cinema (Kostrzewski 1936: 3; 1970: 201–202; Rajewski 1938a; 1938b). Lively interest taken by the public in the investigation in Biskupin is documented for example, by two pages of humorous drawings published in 1937; they accompanied a satirical report on the archaeology uncovered at Biskupin: “Biskupin. Osada bagienna rok 700 przed Chrystusem” [Biskupin. A swamp settlement in the year



Fig. 7. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. 1937. Visit of Marshal E. Rydz-Śmigły (at centre), Inspector-General of the Polish Army and second in importance only to the President of the Polish Republic. On his right, Z. Rajewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

700 BC] published in the popular magazine *Ilustracja Polska* and illustrated, in caricature, the activities of archaeologists and scenes taken from prehistory. Among different cartoons was published also a caricature with the following subtitle: “The excavation team of the Poznan University, or the discoverers of the Polish Pompeii...” (Fig. 8). In



Fig. 8. Caricature drawing showing the members of the Excavation Team at Biskupin. Third from the left (wearing a cap) Z. Rajewski. According to *Ilustracja Polska*, 1937

it, Walenty Szwajcer, local schoolteacher, surrounded by his pupils, is showing Professor Kostrzewski where to excavate. Behind the professor and his son Bogdan are Rajewski and other participants of the excavation (Piotrowska 1997–1998: 256–266; 2000: 21–25).

SECOND WORLD WAR (1939–1945)

The excavation at Biskupin was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II on 1st September 1939. Some of the participants of the fieldwork were killed in battle. The western region of Poland was incorporated in the Third Reich; a large number of Poles, educated people and entrepreneurs, were expelled to resettle farther east, in an area of Poland turned by the Germans into the *Generalgouvernement*, also under Nazi occupation, with Cracow as its capital (Kostrzewski 1970: 223–226). Some Poles, fearing arrest by the Gestapo, took refuge in the east. Among these refugees were Professor Kostrzewski and Doctor Rajewski. Kostrzewski (1970: 227–245) during the five years of occupation had to remain in hiding to avoid arrest and execution. He was a special target of the Gestapo simply for being a Polish intellectual and, perhaps more importantly, arguing in the past that the early Iron Age Biskupin was a proto-Slav settlement. Rajewski was slightly better off: thanks to his resourcefulness and energy, he avoided much of the severe deprivation most Poles had to endure during five years of Nazi occupation. Jazdzewski (1995: 163) reminisced that during the war, Rajewski:

“...became a financial potentate of sorts; he was in charge of a potato-buying venture in a small town (Grójec) near Warsaw. Now and then, Rajewski would help out his fellow archaeologists from the disbanded State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw supplying them with substantial shipments of potatoes”. Rajewski also helped financially his mentor-in-hiding, Professor Kostrzewski (1970: 232).

1945 AND BEYOND

Immediately after the War ended, Rajewski found employment at what was known as the Western Institute, set up by the Government and in charge of Polish-German relations; he became actively involved in developing new targets for Polish archaeological research. In 1946, he also returned to Biskupin with Professor Kostrzewski. Rajewski (Fig. 9) soon became chief supervisor of the investigation as Deputy Director the Institute for the Study of Slav Antiquities of the University of Poznan (Rajewski 1945; 1950; see Lech 2004: 46–48).

New opportunities for archaeology materialised when Witold Hensel (1917–2008), Rajewski’s fellow student from the University of Poznan, started a nationwide project



Fig. 9. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. Z. Rajewski shortly after the war (1947). Private collection of Sława Nowińska and Jolanta Stachowska, daughters of Professor Z. Rajewski

of archaeological and historical study on the origins of Poland; the millennial studies, as they were known, were meant to celebrate the approaching 1000th anniversary of the creation of the first Polish State (in 1966) and conversion to Christianity (Hensel 1946: 1; Lech 1997–1998: 65–69). Hensel's ideas fell on fertile ground. The programme received the official stamp of approval from the Ministry of Culture and Art. The main protagonists in the grand project were to be museums, headed by the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw (founded in 1928), then the largest institution of its kind in Poland. Its Director in those days was Ludwik Sawicki (1893–1972) – specialist in Palaeolithic archaeology and Pleistocene geology, and a Marxist (Piotrowska 2003: 34; 2004b: 255–260, 284–286; 2007: 102).

In a questionnaire sent out by Sawicki on 10th March 1949, archaeologists across Poland were requested to return their “individual programmes of research... and report on the current state of and the most urgent organisational needs of prehistory and proto-history”. In his reply, written from Poznan, Rajewski listed the following priorities of research under the national programme:

- 1) archaeology of Poland's territory during the early historic period and earlier, including the preparation for the millennial celebrations;
- 2) archaeology of the Early Iron Age – Pomeranian Culture and Lusatian Culture;
- 3) the farmer cultures of the Neolithic;
- 4) cultures of the Palaeolithic;

Rajewski stressed that the priority line of research was the archaeology of Poland of the early medieval period. As one of the most experienced field archaeologists, Rajewski was highly critical of the level of organisation of research into prehistory and proto-history in Poland. He observed that team excavations were being carried out without any rational planning, without cooperation from specialists from other fields of research; there were no rescue excavations, no cooperation with archaeologists outside Poland, seriously limited circulation of publications and lack of opportunity for researchers to travel outside Poland. It was a priority to organise an institute responsible for planning and running of research in cooperation with autonomous archaeological branch units in the field, made up of archaeologists and specialists from other disciplines³.

After several months' consultation with researchers, on 3rd April 1949, the Ministry of Culture and Art appointed a Committee for Research on the Origins of the Polish State, in the person of Professors Aleksander Gieysztor (1916–1999), Kazimierz Majewski (1903–1981) and Zdzisław Rajewski. In 1955 Rajewski took his professor's degree. K. Majewski and Z. Rajewski were both members of the recently created Polish United Workers Party (Lech 1997–1998: 66–68; Noszczak 2002: 37, footnote 110).

Following the developments described earlier, L. Sawicki stepped down and Rajewski was appointed Director of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw. He received his nomination on 1st July 1949 from the Minister of Culture and Art. With the coming of the new Director, the activities of the Museum became much more dynamic. Rajewski soon had the Museum excavating at a number of important early medieval sites in the Mazowsze region of Poland around Warsaw, as well as in other regions of the country. One of these sites was the early medieval stronghold in Bródno Stare, in the northeastern suburbs of Warsaw. During this period, Rajewski worked in close cooperation with Aleksander Gieysztor, eminent historian, Head of the Origins of Poland Committee. Gieysztor visited Rajewski in Biskupin and joined him in inspecting various archaeological sites investigated across Poland financed by the Committee. The programme of the Millennial research created the opportunity for Rajewski to develop at Biskupin a comprehensive investigation of a complex of early medieval settlements. His association with the site was so strong that when he became Director of the Warsaw Museum, for the duration of the next five decades the excavations in Biskupin would pass under the management of the Museum. In 1950, as Director of the Warsaw Museum, Dr Rajewski instituted the Museum in Biskupin, which for a time had the status of a unit of the State Archaeological Museum (Rajewski 1968: 263; Abramowicz 1991: 155–159; Lech 1997–1998: 65–82; Piotrowska 1997–1998: 270–275; 2003: 22–23; Noszczak 2002: 31–48; Tabaczyński 2005: 57–60; Reichenbach 2017: 14).

³ From the archival documentation of the Scientific Documentation Section of State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw.

DIRECTOR OF THE STATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM IN WARSAW

The building which had previously housed the State Archaeological Museum had suffered seriously during the War. Thanks to Rajewski's efforts, in 1950 his institution was given a new building, one with a modest area of 2 300 m³ (Fig. 10). There were no exhibition halls and the building soon turned out to be too small for the rapidly expanding museum. Obtaining a larger building in those days, in a city so devastated by the War, was impossible (Rajewski 1952c: 26–27; 1968: 262–263; Lorentz 1970: 238; Piotrowska 2007: 49–51).

The Polish People's Republic, which originated as a result of the conference in Yalta, was following "the socialist road", along a model brought from the Soviet Union. During the Stalinist period 1949 to 1955, the state system was totalitarian. Researchers and other intellectuals and the public at large were under pressure from the state authorities to adhere to the Marxist-Leninist ideology (Lech 1997–1998: 57–64, 84–91; Piotrowska 2007: 50–54). Early in the 1950s, archaeological research came under serious



Fig. 10. Warsaw. Building of the State Archaeological Museum in 18 Chocimska Street, 1950–1958.
State Archaeological Museum collection

reform. The study of prehistoric archaeology was replaced by the study of material culture, subject to an obligatory version of historical materialism imported from the Soviet Union. In keeping with the new programme of studies, archaeological training camps were organised in Biskupin in 1951–1956; their supervisor was Dr Rajewski, starting from 1955, Associate Professor (Fig. 11). According to official reports, the camps in Biskupin successfully inculcated a “socialist work discipline in university students taking part in the training”. But in fact, the camps primarily provided training in the archaeological profession and in new methods in archaeology. During this difficult and rather unhappy period, the Museum in Biskupin and the excavations run by Rajewski made an invaluable contribution to Polish archaeology; they became a school of field archaeology, provided training in the most up-to-date methods and techniques, including laboratory techniques. Students were also trained in the principles of a Marxist analysis of archaeological evidence. This was Marxism in the Lenin-Stalin version that was being promoted throughout the Soviet Union and the entire Soviet bloc. Thanks to the training camps organised and run in Biskupin by Rajewski, during



Fig. 11. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. Commemorative photograph of participants of the archaeological training camp in September 1951. In the second row near the centre, standing, Dr Z. Rajewski, Camp Supervisor. State Archaeological Museum collection

the early 1950s the State Archaeological Museum and its branch unit in Biskupin played an important role in the process of educating students in archaeology; this was the generation which later went on to develop modern archaeology in Poland (Rajewski 1952a; 1952b; 1953a; 1956; 1957; Gąssowski 1954; Piotrowska 1997–1998: 2007: 58–59; see also Balcer 2015: 72–78).

Rajewski was the first in Polish archaeology to introduce the concept of “...exhibitions with a decidedly historical outlook, based on Marxist methodological assumptions and a materialistic understanding of the past” (Rajewski 1953b: 78). In Warsaw, greatly ravaged by the recent War, he developed the concept of an exhibition devoted to the past development of archaic, ancient and early medieval societies in Poland “Dzieje rozwoju społeczeństw pierwotnych, starożytnych i wczesnośredniowiecznych na naszych ziemiach” [History of the development of archaic, ancient and early medieval societies in Poland] (Fig. 12), displayed in the former hot house of the splendid baroque Palace in Wilanów, on the southern outskirts of Warsaw. The exhibition opened in early August 1952; this first “permanent” exhibition organised by the State Archaeological Museum after the War, was considered: “... a breakthrough, a turning point in the field of exhibition by our archaeological museums”, thanks to “...an effort to bring together all the archaeological phenomena, trace the development of early societies – instead of, as formerly was the practice, examining isolated brief sections of the timeline with focus placed on one specific early culture”. The aim of the exhibition was to “show the sources which gave rise to a class society”, which, true to the spirit of the Stalinist age, made the exhibition a useful tool for “ideological training” but also helped promote archaeology among the general public. According to



Fig. 12a, b. Warszawa-Wilanów. The 1952 exhibition “History of the development of archaic, ancient and early medieval societies in Poland”: a – fragment of display on Lusatian Culture with a model of the fortified settlement in Biskupin; b – historical writer, publicist, author of popular archaeological reportages and a synthesis of Polish history in essay style, Paweł Jasienica (1909–1970), in the company of Dr Zdzisław Rajewski visit the exhibition in Wilanów prepared by the Museum.

State Archaeological Museum collection

A. Gardawski (1917–1974), archaeologist and one of the exhibition supervisors, Z.A. Rajewski’s close colleague:

“The exhibition was to be based on the achievements of Marxist **science** on the development of society from the primitive state, through barbarian stages, to civilisation. It was supposed to illustrate the **evolution** of fundamental principal **historic forces** which had shaped the development of human societies: the development of the tools of production, methods of production; next, the development of the relations of production, dependent on the former, finally, as far as possible, the development of forms of systems of society” (Gardawski 1953: 79, 81; see Jasienica 1952).

Under Rajewski’s direction (Fig. 13) the *Wiadomości Archeologiczne* periodical of the State Archaeological Museum continued as the main publication in Poland dealing



Fig. 13. Z. Rajewski, Director of the State Archaeological Museum at the Ninth Conference of Czechoslovak archaeologists in Prague, 25–30 September 1954. Standing, from the left: Wilhelm Unverzagt (German Democratic Republic), Artemij W. Artsikhovskiy (USSR), Friedrich Behn (GDR), Jaroslav Böhm (Czechoslovakia), Ferenc Fülep (Hungary), Petr P. Efimenko (USSR), Jan Filip (Czechoslovakia), Zdzisław Rajewski (Poland). State Archaeological Museum collection

with prehistoric and early medieval archaeology. Starting from 1954, the journal started to be released with improvements made to its contents and graphics (Fig. 14). The importance of this new development was emphasised by the Editorial Board, formed by leading specialists in archaeological museum science in Poland and led by Professor W. Hensel, Deputy Director of the newly established Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences. New issues of the journal began featuring a growing number of articles devoted to more general subjects, of interest to a wider circle of readers. In 1954, the State Archaeological Museum was exchanging its publications with 61 research institutions in Poland and 330 abroad. This wide-ranging exchange made possible a rapid expansion of the library resources of the Warsaw Museum which then numbered over 16 000 volumes.

For the instruction of students taking courses in material culture and of the museum staff, in 1952–53 Rajewski wrote a manual of archaeological museum sciences (“Muzeoznawstwo archeologiczne” [Archaeological museum studies] (1955)), the first

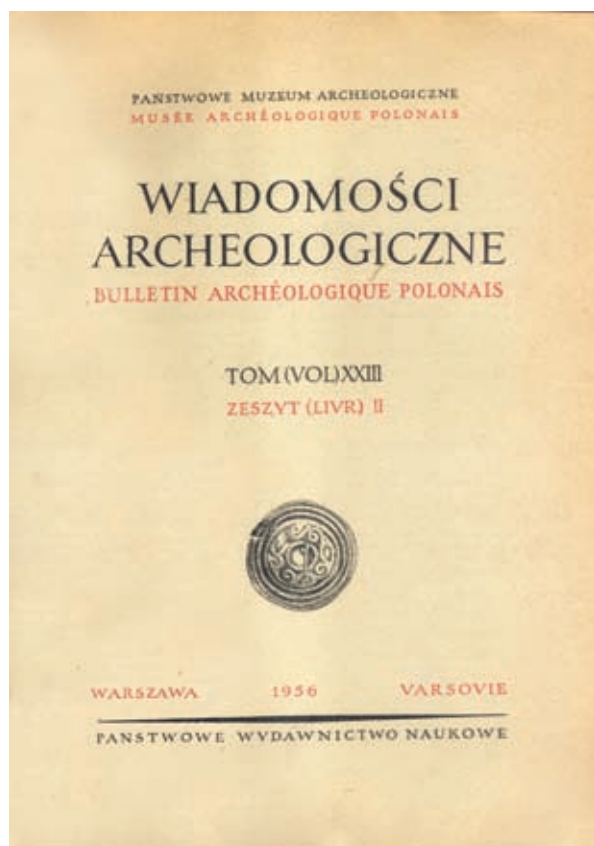


Fig. 14. New improved cover of the journal *Wiadomości Archeologiczne*

of its kind in the history of Polish archaeology. The tasks of archaeology and related museum sciences were spelt out consistent with contemporary ideological assumptions and the prevailing Marxist ideology. The tasks of archaeological museums were defined as follows (1955: 22):

- a) collecting (securing) archaeological material;
- b) preservation of the said material;
- c) storing it in suitable facilities;
- d) analysis of archaeological materials;
- e) promoting public awareness of the history of early societies, mainly by means of museum display”.

The manual also outlined the structure of an archaeological museum that had taken form during the first decade after the end of the War and is still viable today. Rajewski was also member of the Board of Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences which had been established in 1954 (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15. Zdzisław Rajewski (at right) with Boris Rybakov from Moscow (at left) and Włodzimierz Hołubowicz during a session of the First Archaeological Conference of the Institute for the History of Material Culture Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, 4–8 May 1955.
State Archaeological Museum collection

A handbook of Polish prehistoric and early medieval archaeology was published in 1957, under Rajewski's supervision and with his participation (Gardawski *et al.*, 1957). It was addressed to students, teachers as well as to a wider circle of readers. Amply illustrated, written in an accessible style from the perspective of the methodology of historical materialism, in the 1950s this textbook was the first modern publication of its type. The authors tried to “break through the culture-historical mindset promoted in the past by textbooks on prehistory and the early medieval period”. From our modern perspective, we can only say that the fruits of this instruction in historical materialism turned out to be rather modest (Abramowicz 1991: 146–155; Lech 1997: 179; 1997–1998: 62–63, 91–94).

With an increase in the number of its staff and activities, the small building which had housed the Warsaw Museum was no longer suitable (it was later the building of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). In 1953, Rajewski (Fig. 16) approached the authorities for permission to obtain for the Museum the historic building of the Warsaw Arsenal freshly reconstructed after wartime depredations. The building, dating back to the 17th century and rich in history, had a total size of 40 000 m³. As such, it was well suited for organising permanent displays and exhibitions and offered good perspectives for the development of the State Archaeological Museum. In the favourable atmosphere that attended the Millennial project, Rajewski was able to gain the building of the Arsenal for his institution. At last, after several years of effort, the Warsaw Museum took possession of the old Arsenal building in October 1958 (Fig. 17).

With a new spacious building, the Museum soon organised its first large exhibition – “The Beginnings of the Polish State”. Professor Rajewski was Supervising Officer



Fig. 16. Z. Rajewski, Director of the State Archaeological Museum. Photograph from one of his identity cards, mid-1950s. State Archaeological Museum collection



Fig. 17. Warsaw. The building of the former Arsenal, seat of the State Archaeological Museum since 1958. State Archaeological Museum collection

of this exhibition, which was one of the key items on the agenda of the millennial festivities. The exhibition occupied two levels in the northern wing of the Arsenal (Fig. 18). Completed in June 1960, the exhibition was a great success of the entire team of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw led by Professor Rajewski. It was opened by Aleksander Zawadzki, State Council Chairman (Fig. 19), in the company of the most distinguished personages from the academic world and arts community as well as guests from abroad. One of the latter was the respected archaeologist Jan Filip (1900–1981), Deputy President of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

The aim of the exhibition was to present in the form of a museum display the most recent findings from the interpretation of evidence on the origins of the Polish state



Fig. 18a, b. Warsaw. June 1960. Exhibition “The Beginnings of the Polish State” in the new building of the State Archaeological Museum. State Archaeological Museum collection



Fig. 19. Warsaw, June 1960. State Council Chairman Aleksander Zawadzki (at centre) in company visiting the exhibition “The Beginnings of the Polish State”. Behind him is Witold Hensel, Director of the Institute for the History of Material Culture. The person showing the Chairman around the exhibition is Zdzisław Rajewski – Museum Director; next to him is Tadeusz Kotarbiński – Chairman of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Photograph: T. Biniewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

(Trawkowski 1960: 1107). The exhibition had a display area of *c.* 2000 m²; its introductory section presented an overview of the development of early societies in Poland; its main section was devoted to the development of early feudal societies, with special focus on: “the process of formation of elements of the state apparatus and consolidation of the Polish State of the first Piast princes, through to the 12th century”. The “Beginnings of the Polish State” exhibition was an important event in the intellectual and cultural life in Poland of the early 1960s (Trawkowski 1960: 1107–1108; Dąbrowski and Okulicz 1962; Piotrowska 2007: 67–73).

In 1965 Professor Rajewski organised an international exhibition in the Warsaw Museum, on “Early Medieval Slav culture” (Kaczyński 1968), followed by “The Culture of Poland in the Early Middle Ages” (1966). Among the many visitors were the Minister of National Defence – Marshal M. Spychalski – and his young deputy minister, General W. Jaruzelski (Fig. 20) – who was later to play a role in Poland’s later history.



Fig. 20. Warsaw. Building of the State Archaeological Museum. Z. Rajewski (first on the right) showing the management of the Ministry of National Defence around the exhibition “The Culture of Poland in the Early Middle Ages” (1966). In the foreground, the Defence Minister Marshal Marian Spychalski (1906–1980) and, on his left, Deputy Ministers – Generals Jerzy Bordziłowski (1900–1983) and Wojciech Jaruzelski (1923–2014). Photograph: T. Biniewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

Under Professor Rajewski, the Archaeological Museum, well-organised and dynamically run, suitably financed from the state budget, offered to its staff a fine opportunity for professional advancement (see also Balcer 2015: 83–92). Many of its members were able to take their scientific degrees. The period starting from 1956 was a favourable one, it brought new opportunities for cooperation with specialists from outside the Soviet bloc and for improved exchange within the bloc itself (Lech 1997–1998: 81–82). In 1969, the Museum hosted the first large exhibition from western Europe, on Hallstatt, brought from the *Naturhistorisches Museum* in Vienna thanks to an agreement concluded with the Institut für Österreichkunde in the Austrian capital. To bring the exhibition from Austria in the late 1960s, Professor Rajewski had to apply for permission to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Art, and the Polish Academy of Sciences (Fig. 21).

As Director of the State Archaeological Museum, Z. Rajewski was an active member of the International Council of Museums (Fig. 22). He took part in the work of its archaeology and history museum committees and delivered numerous papers with



Fig. 21. Exhibition “Hallstatt – the most valuable prehistoric artefacts from the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna”, displayed at the State Archaeological Museum in 1969. Photograph: T. Biniewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

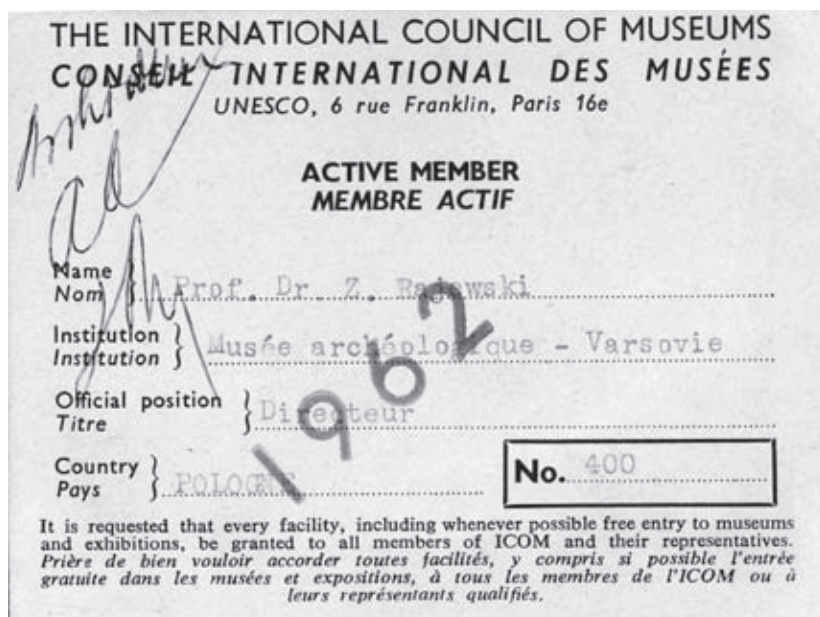


Fig. 22. Zdzisław Rajewski's ICOM membership card, 1962. State Archaeological Museum collection

much focus placed on his experience with providing access to the excavation site at Biskupin. At the September 1970 ICOM conference in Moscow and Leningrad (Fig. 23), Rajewski delivered a paper entitled "Exhibiting settlement archaeology in museum display rooms".



Fig. 23. Zdzisław Rajewski with other ICOM members visiting an exhibition during the sessions of the 9th–18th September 1970 conference in Moscow. State Archaeological Museum collection

RESEARCHER OF BISKUPIN, A FAMOUS BATTLEFIELD AND SYMBOLIC CULTURE

During the 1950s and 1960s, Professor Rajewski continued to supervise the investigation in Biskupin and its microregion; he continued to be involved in post-excavation analyses and publication, until his death in 1974 (Rajewski 1959; 1960b; 1970a). Next to the fortified villages of Lusatian Culture (Fig. 24 and 25), investigation of the peninsula on Lake Biskupin had led to new discoveries: a settlement from the 2nd–4th century AD and a small early medieval stronghold and some dwellings, with phases of use dated, with some interruption, from the late 6th/early 7th century until c. 1040. During the 1950s, Rajewski focused on investigation of early medieval rural settlements in the Biskupin microregion, of which the medieval settlement in Biskupin was a fine example (Rajewski 1955; 1960a).



Fig. 24. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. View from the north-west on the archaeological reserve in the lake peninsula, 1960. Photograph taken from a helicopter: T. Biniewski.
State Archaeological Museum collection

The contribution made by Professor Rajewski to investigating the archaeology of Biskupin was second only to the one made by Professor Kostrzewski (Piotrowska 2008: 273–291). He successfully promoted its archaeology among the general public and with the state authorities; he helped make the Iron Age lake village a symbol of the achievements of Polish archaeology in the twentieth century. Biskupin is the only archaeological site so well known in all corners of Poland. This is mainly because it had been widely promoted as “Pompeii of the proto-Slavs” and had become a national symbol and a cause for patriotic pride during the 1930s and after the War, during the 1940s and 1950s (Piotrowska 1997–1998; 2004a: 102–131; Piotrowski 1998).

An important item of the programme of the 1000th Anniversary of the Polish State in 1966 was the commemoration of the 550th anniversary of the victory of Poland-Lithuania over the Teutonic State at Grunwald in 1410. In those days, it was common for similar festivities to be filled with a political context and much was done in their preparation. Starting from 1958, archaeological investigation of the extensive battlefield was conducted under the supervision of Professor Rajewski. The area of the battlefield, estimated as more than 50 km² (Rajewski 1963), was penetrated using specialised army equipment, e.g., mine detectors (Fig. 26). Research focused on the remains of “material

5. Opis dokumentacji. A. Plany. Kreslark A. Wawrzyński wykonał plan warstwy II d-e arów 170 i 171.

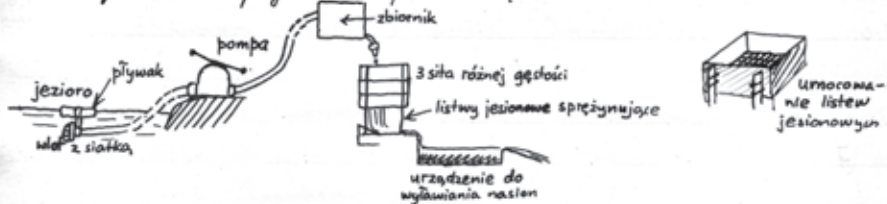
6. Kubatura - 1,5 m³.

7. Proble. Wczoraj wieczorem przejechał do Biskupina do Kaj, ichtyolog, który dziś zagnobra rozpoznać dotąd wyspane próbki rybactwa. Według pierwszego stwierdzenia pobierano w domostwach mu.-kult., dotąd słamowanych, znajdując się kości lososza, okonia, płoci, lina, sumy i szczupaka. Dr Kaj zmienił uwagę na sbył szczupła, ilość pobieranych próbek i zaprojektował projekt do przepłukiwania materiału.

8. Numery inwentarsowe. Dziś odnieszono do skopiarni umyte skompy i kości u następujących arów: 134 F u. II e, 134 da. H u. II e, 174 A u. II g, 174 D u. II c, 218, działki: C, E, M u. II mech, 6 oraz działki J, L, u. m. II 5, oraz 202 M, wartecki II g i II h. Kwaliezono dziś m. i. przysięli ziemny dwustronny, ułamek łurzyckiego mazyruia nitowatego, ułamek rymli rogowej (numery inv.: 701 - 703/50) oraz kilka kawałków podkładek glin.

11. Uwagi. Dr Kaj podniósł niedogodności przemieszania ziemi i odkłamywania rybnego. Zamiast niechbył nowoczesnego odsiewania materiału proponuje urządzenie słamujące, dużo dokładniejsze i, według niego, łatwiejsze. Jako wzór proponuje płuczkarki (robotników) poszukiwany stota.

Na tymczasem zaprojektował proste urządzenie do słamowania



Agardowski

6. września 1950 r. Środa.

1. Liczba osób zatrudnionych: 3 pracowników naukowych, 1 techniczny, 23 fizycznych.
2. Warunki atmosferyczne: nocą padał bardzo ulany deszcz. Do godz. 10 pochmurno

Fig. 25. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. A page from the diary of an investigation made of the lake peninsula in 1950 showing a design for a flotation device developed by ichthyologist Dr Józef Kaj (entry made 5th September). From the collection of the Archaeological Museum in Biskupin



Fig. 26a, b. Z. Rajewski directing the archaeological investigation at Grunwald, site of the great medieval battle of 15th July 1410. In this research he was assisted by the army. a – Z. Rajewski on the battlefield at Grunwald; b – Zdzisław Rajewski (at centre) before boarding a helicopter for reconnaissance purposes. Photograph: T. Biniewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

components” from before, during, and after the battle. The findings from Grunwald and its region included the remains of villages and Teutonic watch-towers that had been set on fire, collective graves of the fallen in battle and elements of weapons and armour. After investigating the battlefield at Grunwald, Professor Rajewski made a similar study of the battlefield at Legnica, from the time of the 1214 Mongol invasion. Here also, he sought assistance from the army (Fig. 27).

It is much less known that, next to the archaeology of Biskupin and archaeology of famous battlefields, Professor Rajewski took a lively interest in the study of religious beliefs and magic from the prehistoric and early medieval periods, even though he had been attracted by the subject back in the 1930s while working on his PhD dissertation.



Fig. 27. Lower Silesia (Poland). The site of the medieval battle of 9th April 1241 fought north-east of Legnica by Polish, German and Czech knights against a Mongol army. On 27th–30th March 1972 Zdzisław Rajewski made an attempt to identify the site and recover the relics of medieval weaponry and armour using mine detectors. Photograph: T. Biniewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

Professor Rajewski (1968: 86–87; 1970b; 1974) took the view that “spiritual culture”, as defined by evolutionists, or “symbolic culture”, as we sometimes say today, is inherent in some hoards and clay vessels deposits discovered on lake margins, river banks and in other watery places. These he interpreted as votive offerings made to propitiate the potentially unfriendly spirits (demons) inhabiting these water-bodies. Rajewski was inclined to associate timber structures preserved in the peatland near Biskupin with worship; he linked them to the Globular Amphorae Culture and to finds discovered while investigating the sources of fresh water at site 15a in Biskupin (Fig. 28).

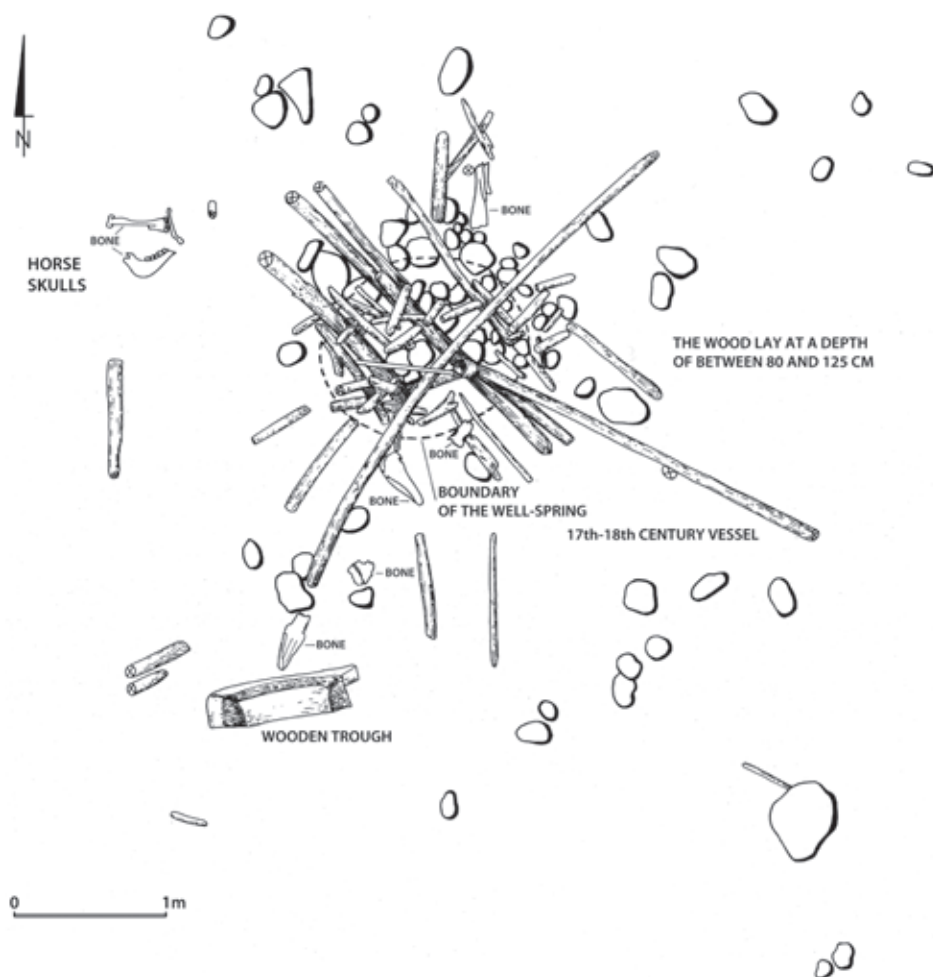


Fig. 28. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. Site 15a. A documentation drawing from the search for a well-spring possibly used in prehistoric rituals. After: Z. Rajewski and F. Maciejewski (1957)

Although Rajewski (1958: 200–201; 1968: 86; 1975: 555; Rajewski and Maciejewski 1957) was convinced that in studying ancient beliefs archaeologists derive most of their input from cemeteries – of inhumation or cremation type, he admitted that the spiritual element (ritual practices, magic etc.) may be present also in other areas of existence of prehistoric and early medieval communities. He observed, for example, that the “village square” at Lusatian Biskupin could have been used for ritual ceremonies; he also believed that the rich geometric and figural designs seen on urnfield pottery had a symbolic content, one we are unable to decipher (Rajewski 1968: 87–88).

Interested in ancient rituals and worship, Rajewski was aware that the potential of archaeology in these areas depends closely on the method of excavation of relevant sites and on the cooperation of archaeology with other branches of the humanities and natural sciences. It is worth recalling Rajewski’s original views (1975: 555–557) on the study of urnfields and other types of cemeteries (Fig. 29). He recommended the



Fig. 29. Grzybiany, distr. Legnica. Z. Rajewski on a visit to consult the 1973 investigation of a cemetery from the 6th–5th c. BC. State Archaeological Museum collection

making of very detailed observation during excavation and the need to record even the apparently insignificant details; he noted that rituals associated with worship of the dead often leave traces barely tangible to archaeologists. In this regard, his postulates were convergent with those of the contextual archaeology that was developed some time later in England. Rajewski also stressed that in investigating burial sites, archaeologists should do more than just make formal-typological and functional analyses of portable finds. Rather, it is important that they investigate the cemeteries in a more comprehensive manner, recalling all the while that these sites were considered sacred and functioned as focal points for ritual practices in their prehistoric communities. Therefore, archaeologists are advised to make a broad comparative study and first of all to draw on the most recent findings from ethnography and history. It would seem that Rajewski's postulates, formulated 70 years ago, have lost none of their relevance today (Piotrowska 2000: 33–37).

SCHOLAR OF MANY TALENTS: CLOSING REMARKS

Z.A. Rajewski was an archaeologist of outstanding managerial talent, very active, with great energy and broad interests (see also Bąbel 2015: 33). He attached great importance to applying innovative technical methods to archaeological research. During the 1930s, he was the first in Polish archaeology to document an archaeological excavation using airborne photographs taken from military observation balloons and to turn to methods of underwater archaeology. During the 1960s and in early 1970s as Director of the State Archaeological Museum, he took pains to create an up-to-date research and finds conservation laboratory (Fig. 30).

For all his varied interests and valuable endeavours Professor Zdzisław A. Rajewski (Fig. 31) is remembered in Polish twentieth century archaeology first and foremost as the man who investigated Biskupin, as an excellent manager and promoter of archaeology (see also Piotrowski 1991: 95). Before closing, let us quote the words of Professor Kostrzewski, Rajewski's Mentor (1970: 148–149), taken from his memoirs written late in life:

“My other student, Zdzisław Adam Rajewski, had taken his PhD from the University of Poznan having presented a dissertation on early medieval inhumation cemeteries in Wielkopolska. From 1934 until the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, he was my deputy at Biskupin; largely thanks to his enthusiasm, energy and resourcefulness the settlement complex in Biskupin became the leading archaeological site in Poland. After the war, as Director of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw, he helped greatly to develop this institution: he secured a splendid new facility for the Museum (the historic building of the



Fig. 30. State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw. Zdzisław Rajewski at work with a microscope in the Conservations Laboratory. Photograph: T. Biniewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

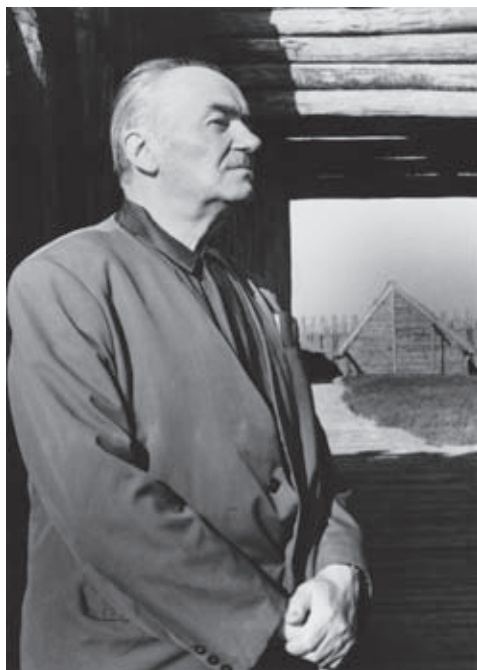


Fig. 31. Biskupin, distr. Żnin. May 1974. One of the last photographs of Zdzisław Rajewski standing in front of the life-size replica of the Lusatian Culture fortified settlement constructed under his supervision. Photograph: T. Biniewski. State Archaeological Museum collection

Arsenal); he continued to publish the Museum journal *Wiadomości Archeologiczne* as a quarterly and launched a new publication – *Materiały Starożytne* which today numbers no less than nine imposing volumes. Rajewski's main achievements lie in the field of management and promotion of public awareness[of archaeology]”.

Zdzisław Rajewski, eminent and colourful figure in Polish archaeology of the last century, respected specialist in museum science, for a quarter of a century, Director of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw, died on 2nd June 1974. By the staff of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw and of the Archaeological Museum in Biskupin he is remembered fondly as the man who helped make our two institutions what they are today (Piotrowska 2000; 2007; Brzeziński 2003; Tabaczyński 2005).

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