

THE NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES OF MEDIEVAL STUDIES IN POLAND

On December 7–8, 2000, a conference took place in Warsaw on *The Needs and Perspectives of Polish Medieval Studies*, organized by the Institute of History of Warsaw University. The topic was suggested by Professor Wojciech Fałkowski, who also introduced the meeting. On behalf of the Institute of History of Warsaw University authorities the conference was opened by its Director, Professor Bronisław Nowak.

The object of the conference was to present critically the state of research in particular branches of medieval studies and to formulate the principal postulates of further investigation. There was a good reason for such a meeting, for although numerous symposia and congresses devoted to various medievalistic topics have been organized in recent years, the methodological reflection is relatively modest. The fact that the conference was attended by many medievalists representing all academic circles as well as other scholarly institutions, such as the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, provided a good basis for discussion. The problems tackled by the authors of papers centred round four main issues: social and religious, legal and political, sources and editorship as well as the contribution of Polish medieval studies to European research.

The socio-religious issues were initiated by Jerzy Wyrozumski (Cracow), who discussed the hitherto research into medieval Poland's society. Halina Mańkowska (Warsaw) devoted her paper to one of its particular aspects, i.e. urban history. The author suggested a new approach to it, inspired by the experiences of Italian and French historiography; she proposed to regard the medieval city as a separate urban civilization and drew attention to the need for comparative studies that would embrace a wider context than before, especially examples of Romanic countries. Two papers were devoted to religious problems. Stanisław Bylina (Warsaw) talked about research into the medieval Polish Church, especially religious life in the late Middle Ages. Józef Szymański (Lublin) devoted his paper to the Church's organization, and laid emphasis on the study of canon law, especially important to the research into the beginnings of the Church's organization. The author emphasized the achievements of Lublin Catholic University and the influence of Gabriel Le Bras' research on the attitude of this academic milieu. Feliks Kiryk (Cracow) presented the problems of regional studies and focussed on the example of research into the history of particular localities in Little Poland. The author showed two currents in this research: scholarly, and amateur, and drew attention to the problems resulting from the shortcomings in the scholarly workshop represented by the lovers of the history of their cities or neighbourhoods.

Fewer papers were devoted to the problems of broadly-understood political history, although, as Stanisław Bylina said in the discussion, this branch of historical studies has been satisfactorily developing in recent years. Lech Tyszkiewicz (Wrocław) presented the state of research into the history of early medieval Poland, pointing out that it should be viewed against the background of general history. Two papers dealt with late-medieval Poland. Jacek Matuszewski (Łódź) discussed research into the history of law, pointing out that the analysis of sources should be deeper and more sources should be published. Krzysztof Ożóg (Cracow) in his paper devoted to the research into the politics and culture of the revived Kingdom (end of the 13th – the 15th c.) indicated that

this line of studies could be enlivened by a broader consideration of the part taken in political life by the intellectual élites and a more careful study of who they consisted of, and their influence on state politics. Jan Tyszkiewicz's (Warsaw) paper on nomadism in medieval Europe dealt with political and ethnic problems, too. The author drew attention to the underestimation of this subject in the works of Polish medievalists, who should analyse it against the background of the history of Eastern Europe and take into account Byzantine sources.

Two, but very important papers dealt with the position of Polish medieval studies in European research. Wojciech Fałkowski (Warsaw) discussed Polish research into the history of early-medieval, especially Caroline Europe. The author considered the question how far it is at all possible for Polish historians to systematically pursue the study of general history, pointing out at the same time that such research contributes to the deeper understanding of the history of Poland. Stanisław Szczur (Cracow), analysed the foreign reception of Polish historical studies. He drew attention to the very poor acquaintance of foreign researchers with the work of Polish medievalists, the fact that these works are not given enough acknowledgement in international bibliographies and that Polish historians' publications seldom appear in renowned foreign journals.

A whole block of papers dealt with sciences auxiliary to history, and with the study of sources. Maria Koczerska (Warsaw) discussed the state of research by auxiliary sciences, focussing above all on the disciplines that help in the analysis of documents: paleography, diplomacy, sphragistics, heraldry as well as genealogy. She postulated the preparation of a bibliography presenting the achievements of particular auxiliary sciences and works introducing us into the problems of each discipline, on the model of the French *Typologie de sources*. Two papers presented editorial needs in the sphere of sources for the history of Poland till the 12th c: Jerzy Strzelczyk's [Poznań] (paper read in the absence of the author), and Tomasz Jasiński's [Olsztyn], dealing with late-medieval sources. The former author called for giving more consideration to foreign sources, e.g. Arabic, concerning early-medieval Poland, and for reprinting earlier-published texts. Tomasz Jasiński emphasized the necessity to prepare or complete the works on district diplomatic codes (e.g. those of Kujawy or Sieradz-Łęczyca). He also emphasized the usefulness of electronic publications of, especially the already numerous late-medieval, sources. This method is much faster than the traditional and allows to publish a facsimile of the manuscript, while electronic media are much more durable than print.

A substantial element of the conference was a very lively discussion which dealt many topics that surfaced during the session. Among the more important statements one should mention those by Leszek Kajzer (Łódź) and Przemysław Urbanczyk (Warsaw), pointing out the underestimation of archeology by specialists in medieval history and the bad co-operation between archeologists and historians. Marek Derwich (Wrocław) and Stanisław Rosik (Wrocław) mentioned the problems of co-operation between historians and theologians, Stanisław Alexandrowicz (Toruń) and Maksymilian Grzegorz (Toruń) spoke of the access of Polish historians to manuscript sources abroad. While closing the discussion Wojciech Fałkowski emphasized that its tenor showed history, especially medieval studies, should be treated as an interdisciplinary science. His suggestion to organize medievalist congresses on a regular basis met with much acclaim.

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NEW PUBLICATIONS OF THE POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

It is a well known fact that in the humanities is difficult to have an 80–90 page study published; 80–90 pages is too much for an article in a periodical and not enough for a book. This is a problem that authors specialising in the humanities are often faced with, for studies dealing with exact sciences are usually very short and can easily be published in a periodical. In order to prevent these studies from being wasted or from being drastically shortened, which would lessen their value, or being needlessly expanded, the Section for the Social Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences has recently taken a very valuable initiative: it publishes treatises in the form of small pamphlets to present the latest achievements in the field of social sciences. The following three issues have so far appeared in the "Historia" series: O. Kłec, *Kościół ewangelickie w Wielkopolsce wobec kwestii narodowościowej w latach 1918–1939 (The Attitude of Great Poland's Protestant Churches to the Nationality Question in 1918–1939)*, Warszawa 1995; J. Kolenko, *Les recherches sur l'Antiquité menées par des Polonais en France au XIXe s.*, Warszawa 1997, and L. Gluck, *Napoleona Bonaparte inicjacja polityczna (Napoleon Bonaparte's Political Initiation)*, Warszawa 2000. As this shows, various questions have been discussed; the pamphlets have a wide thematic and chronological range, from national and religious questions to universal political history and historiographic studies.

A similar diversity characterises the series "Historia sztuki" (History of Art). The series opened with an extremely interesting treatise by J. Pokora, *Nosce te ipsum. Studium z ikonografii błazna (A Study in the Iconography of the Clown)*, Warszawa 1996, which examined little known aspects of the presentation of a subject which is important for historians of social psychology. The second issue of the series was R. Mączyński's study *Pijarski pałac Collegium Nobilium w Warszawie (The Piarist Collegium Nobilium Palace in Warsaw)*, Warszawa 1996, which has enriched our knowledge of the architecture of old Warsaw. The series "Archeologia" opened with a study by B. Ruszczyk, *Kościół pod wezwaniem Świętej Dziewicy w Tell Atrib (The Holy Virgin's Church in Tell Atrib)*, Warszawa 1997, which presents some results of the work conducted by Polish archeologists in this important centre of ancient Lower Egypt. The first issue of the series "Literatura" was M. Zawodniak's study *Literatura w stanie oskarżenia (Literature in the Dock)*, Warszawa 1998, which dealt with the history of literary criticism during the period of socialist realism. The second issue was S. Wrzosek's treatise *Świat historii Stanisława Wyspiańskiego (Stanisław Wyspiański's Historical World)*, Warszawa 1999, which depicted this great artist's poetical vision of Poland's history against the background of his time.

All pamphlets are on a high scholarly and editorial level. They are equipped with notes and illustrations. Some include indexes. It is a pity though that they have not been furnished with short summaries in English or French so as to acquaint foreign readers with their content. However, encouragement can be drawn from the fact that one pamphlet (by J. Kolenko) has been published in French. Is it too much to hope that more studies will appear in a foreign language?

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