

# Editorial

The goal of archaeology as a scientific discipline – in the classical approach used since the mid-19th century – has been to learn about the history of societies from the earliest times to the appearance of the first written sources. This definition, although still valid, has begun to undergo significant revision in the last half-century. First – in European areas – the acquisition of sources using the method of archaeological research covered medieval and early modern times, then, gradually, closer and closer to the present day. These shifting boundaries were not sharp, just as the boundaries between historical eras are blurred.

About fifty years ago, the methodology of archaeology first began to be applied more consistently to the issue of obtaining historical data concerning events and processes of the 20th century, up to the end of World War II and the immediate post-War period. The archaeology of these times gradually grew into an essential and attractive branch of the historical sciences. It covered a broad spectrum of cultural phenomena in the first half of the last century. However, there was a noticeable concentration of interest on the sites and phenomena related to the Great War (later called World War I), and the issues of World War II. Generally, this area of research can be called conflict archaeology (Theune 2018). This can be divided into more detailed sections – the archaeology of battlefields, sea and air skirmishes, prisoner of war camps, concentration camps and places of extermination, military structures, etc.

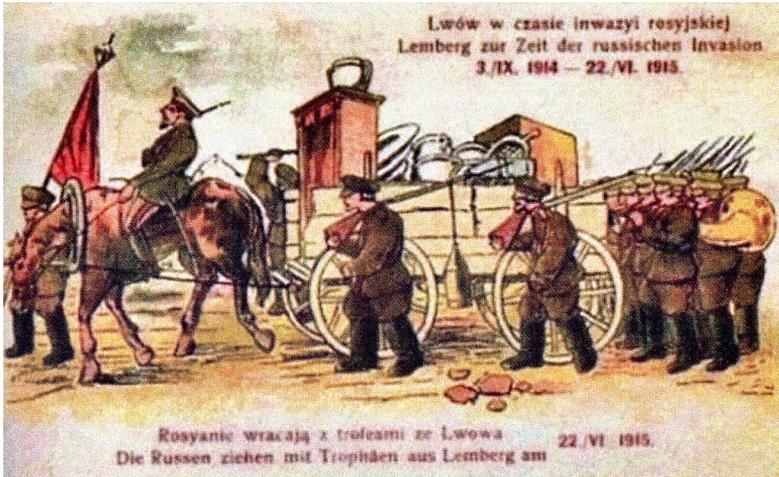
There are several reasons for the increased interest in this phenomenon. It seems to us that one of the most important is – or should be – providing objective information in cases where written sources are missing, incomplete, censored, intentionally falsified or destroyed. Contrary to appearances, such situations are relatively numerous. An additional important aspect of the discussed activity has a cultural or social dimension; this concerns the use of such research in the creation of an emotional attitude to a specific area by obtaining data allowing one to recognize a fragment of space as a place of memory, with all the consequences resulting from this designation (Traba 2000; Szpociński 2008; Zalewska 2019). Equally important is the recovery and dignified burial of human remains related to violent events of the period, including efforts to identify the victims of conflict and commemorate them (Florek 2020). It is also essential to obtain finds during archaeological work that can be used as museum objects as part of giving the results of scientific research an educational role.

Conflict also leads to other kinds of losses, for example in culture. In studying periods like this, it is also worth emphasizing the importance of attempting to trace the fate of various objects – often of high historical and scientific value – which changed owners during wars or were lost, perhaps irretrievably. The plunder of conquered countries is nothing new in recent history, it is basically a rule in the history of conflicts (Fig. 1). What has survived to our times, what is housed in museums and non-museum collections, is a tiny part of the heritage of our culture. Each of the wars that have swept through time and space has led to the loss of a significant part of the material record of history. We are currently observing this process in Ukraine during the full-scale war declared by the country's eastern neighbour. The full scale of the losses in this respect already signalled there will only later be fully known...

In the current volume of *Archaeologia Polona*, we present a set of articles with varied content, presenting archaeological echoes of wars that have swept through the areas of Central Europe in recent times. The volume opens with the article Matouš Holas, which is an archaeological and historical record of the so-called Battle of Sadowa, during the Franco-Prussian War in 1866, the result of which shaped the history of the centre of our continent for many decades (*Austro-Prussian War of 1866, Landscape Archaeology of the Battlefield of Sadowa-Königgrätz*, pp. 7–29).

The following three articles concern research into the material remains of the Great War. Martin Vojtas, Jakub Těsnohlídek, Michaela Prištáková, Jan Petřík, Martin Fojtík, Jiří Zubalík, Radim Kapavík and Peter Tajkov present the issue of the archaeology of battlefields in north-eastern Slovakia (*Battlefield Archaeology of the First World War in Northeastern Slovakia*, pp. 31–59). In the following paper (pp. 61–74), Angelika Bachanek focuses on the issue of restoring historical memory to places of military activity of soldiers of the Great War (*Why is Archaeology Inalienable in Learning about the Traces of the Great War in Kozienice Forest and Restoring the Memory of the Forgotten History of a Century Ago?*). This is followed by the text of Natalia Bułyk and Roman Berest describing the archaeological community of the Lviv region in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy during the Great War (*The Lviv Archaeological Milieu During World War I*, pp. 75–104).

The following nine articles cover various archaeological aspects of World War II. This opens with a text by Piotr Alagierski, Katarzyna Kuczara-Alagierska and Maciej Sokołowski describing research on the site of the fall of a German V-2 rocket – a miracle of technology at that time – in the Chodzież area, against the background of German tests with this weapon in Nazi-occupied Poland (*Discovery of a German V-2 Rocket Fall Site in the Area of Chodzież, in Greater Poland*, pp. 105–126). Krzysztof Tunia presents the results of archaeological-and-exhumation work at the site of the execution of 125 people in Cracow-Glinik (*Cracow's Glinik – World War II Executions*



**Fig. 1.** Austro-Hungarian propaganda graphic from the Great War – *The Russians return with trophies from Lviv. June 22, 1915.* Author's collection.

*Place, Forgotten over the Years and Restored to the Collective Memory. Preliminary Results of Archaeological-and-Exhumation Research*, pp. 127–142). In a presentation also connected with investigations of war-crimes, Anna Drażkowska dealt with the identification of the Polish victims of the Soviet atrocity in Kharkiv, based on the analysis of finds from the graves (*Importance of Particular Groups of Objects in the Identification of Victims of the Katyn Massacre in the Case of Finds from Kharkiv*, pp. 143–158).

The next three articles concern archaeological research on the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp complex – Sylwia Foks, Dariusz Goiński and Błażej Targaczewski present an outline of the archaeological research on this facility (*Archaeological Research on the Former KL Auschwitz I and KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau site*, pp. 159–171), Wojciech Tabaszewski and Kamila Peschel dealt with the finds of plastic from excavations conducted there (*Plastic Artefacts from Archaeological Investigations Carried out at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp Complex in 2015–2022*, pp. 173–200), while Paweł Lewicki and Magdalena Mazurkiewicz discuss attempts to create a system for classifying finds from excavations in concentration camps (*Classification and Significance of Material Culture from Archaeological Research of Section BIb of the Former KL Auschwitz II – Birkenau*, pp. 201–218). Still, on the subject of Nazi concentration camps in Poland, Kamil Karski and Dawid Kobiałka presented the archaeological issues of the concentration camp in Cracow – KL-Plaszow (*If Archaeology is Not Just About the Past. The Landscape of the KL Plaszow Memorial*, pp. 219–237).

In the following paper, focussing on the people involved in, and often displaced by conflict, Piotr Włodarczak and Urs Leuzinger described archaeological works in Switzerland carried out by Polish soldiers interned there (*Soldiers on the Digs. Archaeological Excavations in Switzerland Involving the Deuxieme Division des Chasseurs*, pp. 239–267). The paper of Jakub M. Niebylski, Damian Stefański and Przemysław Wierzbicki explores how archaeological methods, including the use of LiDAR, can be applied to research on the activity of the Polish People's Army units in eastern Poland at the end of World War II (*The Formation of the Units of the Polish People's Army (1944–1945) in Eastern Poland. The LiDAR Evidence*, pp. 269–287).

The thematic block of the volume ends with an article by Gediminas Petrauskas on investigations of the site of a training camp of the Lithuanian Liberation Army in Samogitia, Lithuania, in the times immediately after the end of the military operations of World War II employing landscape archaeological techniques and a metal detector survey (*Landscape of Resistance. Traces of the Military Training of the Lithuanian Liberation Army in Plokštinė Forest, Samogitia, Northwestern Lithuania*, pp. 289–313).

The volume ends with a review by Magdalena Sudoł-Procyk (pp. 315–323) of Laure Fontana's book (*Les Sociétés de Chasseurs de Rennes du Paléolithique Récent en France – Économie, Écologie et Cycle Annuel du Nomadisme*) devoted to the reconstruction of reindeer migrations in the context of territorial movements of reindeer hunters in France at the end of the Pleistocene – 30,000–15,000 cal BC.

Krzysztof Tunia  
Marzena Woźny

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