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50 YEARS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH BY JERZY MAIK, NOT ONLY ON ANCIENT TEXTILES

Born into a family in the textile business in the textile-manufacturing city of Łódź, Jerzy Maik is considered today to be one of the most eminent archaeologists specialising in prehistoric and medieval textiles. His conviction of the importance of textile manufacture was supported during his archaeological studies with the help of Adam Nahlik, the initiator of technological research on ancient textiles in Poland. This sparked a passion which has culminated in numerous publications that are exceptionally important for expanding our knowledge of various aspects of old textile production. Books, articles, and reviews on this subject represent more than 80% of everything he has written. This unequivocally demonstrates a precise research passion, but also somewhat distorts any assessment of the nature of his scientific output.

Indeed, over the course of his fifty years of scientific activity, Jerzy Maik was able to go beyond the sphere of textiles on many occasions, researching on a variety of other topics. At the Łódź branch of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in the 1960s and 1970s, he initiated innovative interdisciplinary studies on many topics related to medieval period (especially late Middle Ages) including research on rural settlements, military masonry, cities, and armaments.


On commencing his work at the above-mentioned branch of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Jerzy Maik joined a team headed by Tadeusz Poklewski, who conducted large-scale archaeological research into late medieval castles. Lasting over 20 years, this research focused on castles built on the initiative of King Casimir the Great, who was aware of the need to strengthen the state with new fortifications and understood the need to locate these new castles in such a way as to create defensive

border lines. During the first few years of his professional work, Jerzy Maik participated in research on castles in Bolesławiec nad Prosną, Przedbórz, Kalisz, and Koźmin. Notably, he co-authored the publication of detailed analyses of the oldest levels at the Bolesławiec nad Prosną castle, attesting to the activities that created the defensive building there. This research contributed to our broader knowledge on the origins of castle building in Poland, as the castle at Bolesławiec, having a fully-enclosed masonry perimeter, a small castle house, and an independently standing tower, is an example of the early phase of Polish masonry fortifications.

The research in Bolesławiec also contributed to Jerzy Maik's interest in the history of medieval weaponry. Professor Andrzej Nadolski, the creator of the so-called 'Łódź school of arms studies' at the Łódź centre of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, also had a significant influence.

Although not formally a member of the team dealing with ancient weapons, Jerzy Maik took part in weapon-related seminars and discussions with great interest and passion. The experience he gained in this way was also used in the case of the aforementioned research on the castle in Bolesławiec. The remains of a gun emplacement from which the castle gate was fired upon during military operations in 1396 was a significant find.¹ Jerzy Maik analysed and published research on the relics of the late medieval militaria found at the site, which included iron armour plates (originally mounted on a leather vest), a fragment of a tin-plated armoured glove, a fragment of a sword hilt, axes (including a rare ornamented one), a lance-head, almost a hundred bolt-heads, six stone shells of various calibres, and early heavy field guns.²

Jerzy Maik's treatments of military science prove his ability to prepare formal-chronological analyses

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¹ Maik and Grabarczyk 1982, 39.

² Maik 1997, 19-38.



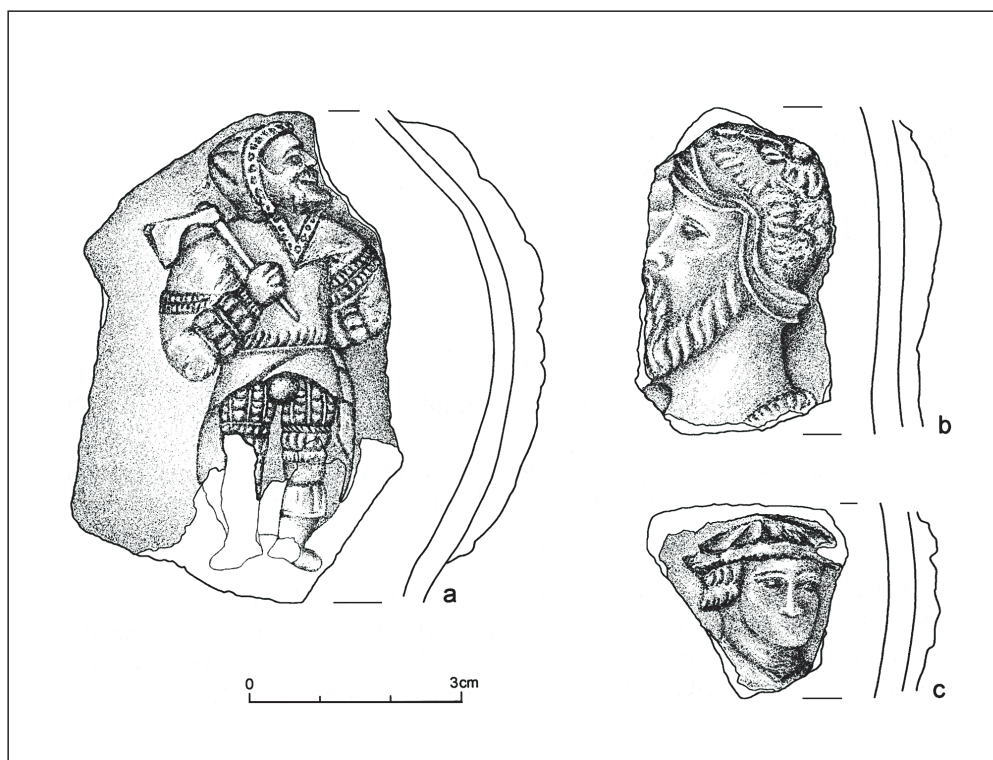


Fig. 1. Depiction of armed men on ceramics from the castle in Bolesławiec nad Prosną. Graphic design: E. Wtorkiewicz-Marosik.

and his openness to searching for innovative research leads. He was able to incorporate interdisciplinary sources – archaeological, iconographic, written – into these studies. For example, he assessed the images of armed men appearing on ceramics discovered during the above-mentioned research carried out in the castle of Bolesławiec³ (Fig. 1).

Using the city of Elbląg's account books and his knowledge of textiles, he studied the supply of clothing to the army and town guard in the 15th-century city.⁴ In another case, together with T. Kurasiński and W. Świętośląwski, he attempted to assess the scale of use of textiles in medieval Polish arms production.⁵ Maik's interest in military subjects combines the professional sphere with that of a hobby. As a passionate model-maker, Jerzy Maik creates meticulously detailed models of 20th century war planes and ships, as well as medieval naval vessels. He was able to reflect this passion and precision in his scholarly activities by making an analysis of an iconographic image of a cog on the late medieval town seal of Elbląg⁶ (Fig. 2).

The same team with which Jerzy Maik carried out archaeological research on castles also carried out multi-season archaeological excavations on medieval towns

such as Przedbórz, Kalisz, and Dąbrówno (which was particularly important to Jerzy). The town of Dąbrówno was founded by the Teutonic Knights on the site of a Prussian settlement located on an isthmus between two lakes. Guarding an important route connecting Prussia and Masovia, it was burnt down by Polish troops on the eve of the Battle of Grunwald (10 July 1410). Centuries later at the end of the Second World War, Dąbrówno was burnt down for the second time by Soviet troops, and today has been reduced to a village. These two fires gave archaeologists the chance to carry out extensive archaeological research and to establish precisely the chronology of the strata discovered. Jerzy Maik participated in 12 seasons of research on this former town. In addition to supervising the research work and carrying out its recording, he undertook several research projects of particular importance for this site: on the origins of the urban structure and on the transport system.⁷

Jerzy Maik has great respect for his masters who taught him archaeology and the study of ancient textiles. His published works include reminiscences of several of them who were his scientific guides and teachers: Andrzej Abramowicz,⁸ Konrad Jażdżewski,⁹

³ Maik 2007c, 201-208.

⁴ Maik 2011a, 243-257.

⁵ Kurasiński et al. 2010, 7-16.

⁶ Maik 2011b, 57-64.

⁷ Maik 2002a, 231-243.

⁸ Maik and Żemigala 1997, 7-10.

⁹ Maik 2007a, 33-40.

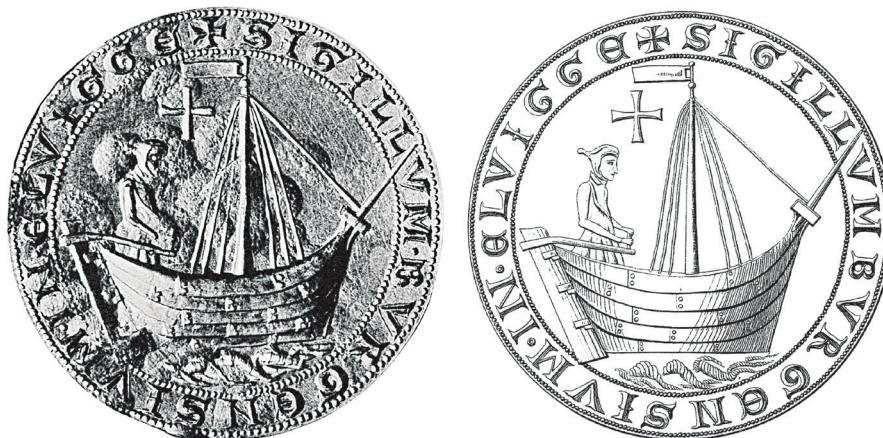


Fig. 2. Image of a cog on the town seal of Elbląg from 1242. Graphic design: E. Wtorkiewicz-Marosik.

Adam Nahlik,¹⁰ Tadeusz Poklewski,¹¹ Irena Turnau¹² (in alphabetical order).

Looking at Jerzy Maik's publication output, it is easy to see that in terms of chronology, his research interests in ancient textiles apply equally to both the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. This flexibility of his archaeological activity facilitated his active involvement in large-scale rescue excavations during the late 90s and early 2000s, preceding major industrial and road projects. Jerzy directed many such investigations, mainly in Kuyavia and Central Poland. This has resulted in publications of his sole authorship or co-authorship, mainly concerning the remains of prehistoric Bronze Age and early Iron Age settlements.¹³

To conclude, it is still worth mentioning a minor article, which nevertheless contains an important message

for archaeologists. By carrying out precise research, Jerzy Maik identified a unique Leclanché cell from the turn of the 20th century, an object that was previously mistakenly thought to be a foundry mould from Late Antiquity.¹⁴ This is a good example of the need to be cautious in the identification of objects found on sites, and to avoid generalisation in archaeological assessment, especially on multi-phase sites.

The examples of the diversity of Jerzy Maik's scientific interests presented above allow us to form a clear conclusion: it is possible to reconcile focusing on one's main research passion with skilful multidisciplinary activity for many decades. He has done much for the study of prehistoric and medieval textiles, but he has also made an important contribution to expanding our knowledge of other aspects of the past.

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¹⁰ Maik 2007b, 91-95.

¹¹ Maik 2002b, 29-41.

¹² Maik 2008; Maik 2009, 231-235; Maik 2010, 242-247.

¹³ Dudak et al. 2002; Maik 2003, 122-139; Maik 2004, 107-128; Maik et al. 2009a, 179-230; Maik et al. 2009b, 271-329; Dudak et al. 2014.

¹⁴ Maik et al. 2007, 451-461.

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