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POLISH ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE ‘MILLENNIUM’ RESEARCH
ON THE EARLY POLISH STATE, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS
ON THE POZNAŃ RESEARCH CENTRE.
MAJOR RESEARCH PARADIGMS

This paper outlines major research paradigms in Polish archaeology underpinning the so-called millennium research project conducted between 1948/1949 and 1970. The main focus of this study is the Poznań research centre. The millennium project was an answer to the 1000th anniversary of the Polish State and the Baptism of Mieszko I, the first historical ruler of Poland, celebrated between 1965 and 1966. The research paradigms of the then archaeology were noticeably determined by research issues explored by the historiography of the Middle Ages. First independent archaeological studies on the early Piast state (*regnum*) were conducted only in the late twentieth century. Their results were based on archaeological evidence from the so-called millennium research in Wielkopolska. During carefully planned and methodically conducted excavations conducted by archaeologists from the Poznań centre, archaeological sources were impeccably recovered, documented and very well preserved along with the field data and documentation.

KEY WORDS: the 1000th anniversary of the baptism and the formation of the Polish state, medieval archaeology, historiography of the Middle Ages, strongholds, Poznań cathedral, Wielkopolska (Great Poland), Gniezno, Poznań, Kruszwica, Aleksander Gieysztor, Witold Hensel, Krystyna Józefowiczówna (Józefowicz), Kazimierz Tymieniecki

The initiative to celebrate ‘the great anniversary of the millennium of the Polish State’, which should be preceded by solid research work, was launched by W. Hensel, a native of Wielkopolska, an archaeologist and a newly promoted Doctor of Philosophy. His specialised field of research was the archaeology of the Middle Ages of Poland and Europe (Kurnatowska 2008; 2009). In 1946, W. Hensel put forward the proposal on behalf of the University of Poznań. The University’s scholarly milieu, archaeologists included, was then at the

forefront of research on the formation of the Piast state. It was suggested that archaeologists should resume pre-war excavations in selected strongholds dating from the Piast period (e.g., Gniezno and Poznań) and conduct multi-seasonal archaeological investigations at several other early medieval strongholds in today’s Poland, corresponding territorially to the monarchy of Bolesław the Brave (Kruszwica, Giecz, Ostrów Lednicki, Łąd, Santok, Wolin, Kołobrzeg, Wiślica, Kraków, Wrocław and Opole). The idea gained immediate approval of the

scholarly community and the lasting favour of the society and political authorities (Noszczak 2002, 29ff; see also Kurnatowska 2007; 2010).

There was a general understanding that apart from unquestionable scholarly merit, archaeological research would provide a number of spectacular discoveries, comparable at least to those of the pre-war period, which should add glamour to the celebrations of the *millennium* of the Polish State. It was thus hoped that archaeological research would contribute to the consolidation of the Polish nation within newly set, yet deeply historically justified Polish borders. Initially, the jubilee was treated almost literally as the 1000th anniversary of the existence of the state (this was clearly suggested by Gieysztor 1954, 110 and footnote 46). Yet, as early as in 1948, the idea was abandoned by the scholarly community in connection with the then postulated idea of research on the genesis of the state and the Polish nation in the entirety of the historical process (Gieysztor 1948, 391ff; 1954, 103ff). The earlier nomenclature of the jubilee was not renounced because of the explicit socio-political acceptance of the fact. From now on, the term ‘the *millennium* of the Polish State’ stood for two complementary historical anniversaries: the 1000th anniversary of the ingress of the Polish state into the historical arena in 965 (the allegedly uncertain year 963 had been previously excluded from the historic timeline of Poland) and the 1000th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity by the Polish state in 966, a commonly perceived threshold for the civilisatory advancement (Noszczak 2002, 29ff). While the Catholic Church decided to hold solemn *millennium* celebrations of the Baptism of Poland in 1966, the Communist authorities chose to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the Polish State in 1965 as part of a series of commemorative events celebrating national anniversaries. These had been selected five years earlier to match the ideology of the PRL (Polish People’s Republic, Noszczak 2002, 134ff; Labuda 2003, 268). It is symptomatic that no concluding central celebrations were planned at the time. Organised in 1966, central state celebrations attended by W. Gomułka, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party, were an *ad hoc* response to the 1000th anniversary celebrations of the Baptism of Poland held at the time by the Catholic Church. The state celebrations intended to present ‘the traditions and achievements [...] of the nation in the past millennium with a special emphasis on

the attainments of the twenty years of the Polish People’s Republic’ (after Noszczak 2002, 205). Deliberately competitive, they were sometimes an organised, purposeful confrontation aimed against religious celebrations with the Polish Episcopate. This happened for example in Poznań.

Between 1948 and 1949, the ‘millennium’ project of archaeological research was ultimately transformed into a multidisciplinary research programme – at least such was its intention. It was carried out mostly by historians and archaeologists until about 1970¹. The programme was therefore very much a grassroot initiative of a part of the scholarly community that quickly gained widespread social support. This needs to be voiced since a prevailing opinion nowadays in various publications, including the press, is that with the ‘millennium’ research certain scholarly milieus, primarily archaeologists, purportedly fitted with the research programme proposed by the then communist authorities. This view, however, is unsupported. In truth, the idea of a multidisciplinary research project first emerged in the scholarly community and only then gained a secondary political ‘footing’. The communist authorities of the People’s Republic of Poland saw the funding of the ‘millennium’ project as a unique opportunity to strengthen the social legitimacy of their power and even acquire historical arguments for taking over the so-called Recovered Territories by the Poles. The decision was allegedly prompted by the collaborators of J. Cyrankiewicz, the then-Prime Minister of Poland, who saw the benefits of bestowing the aforementioned archaeological project with the patronage of political authorities (Dudek 2016, 8).

Reprinted in 2002, a two-volume *Księga Tysiąclecia* [The Book of the Millennium] entitled *Początki państwa polskiego* [The origins of the Polish state] edited by K. Tymieniecki and published in Poznań forty years earlier provides reliable data on the results of the ‘millennium’ project, its research priorities and methods of implementation. The book reflects, among others, the relations between history, archaeology and the history of architecture at the time, a consequence of uneven development of the academic disciplines in question. A section of historiography boasting already established methodology, research problems and

¹ 1965-1966 were the peak years of the programme.

postulates, the history of the Middle Ages manifestly dominated over the other two². For this reason, most papers in this volume were written by historians-medievalists, who also provided some quasi-synthesising studies and were responsible for the editorial work. One chapter was written by a philologist and one by an art historian. Four chapters were offered to archaeologists, who were entrusted with the analyses of specialised problems in the field of (mostly material) culture or the organisation of armed forces, the issues of interest for the history of the Middle Ages. The editors wanted *Księga Tysiąclecia* to be a synopsis of the 'millennium' research, an interdisciplinary project by design. During the preparation stage, historians-medievalists put forward a working proposition that 'the plan of early historical excavations should be based mostly on information derived from written records' (Gieysztor 1948, 394). The idea was further elucidated by T. Manteuffel, who put it bluntly that 'The suggestions for what to dig must come from historians, who will accept the field rectification of prehistory' (after Gieysztor 1948, 409). The proposals were rejected in favour for the thesis of an equal co-operation between history and archaeology. The autonomy of both academic disciplines was nevertheless to be retained, an idea hitherto postulated on the grounds of Polish medieval studies (Tymieniecki 1939-1946). Autonomy was understood as the entitlement to write separate syntheses and formulate distinct conclusions, and yet historians did not intend to abandon their own autonomous interpretations of archaeological research results. This held true especially for strongholds, which they considered, in line with prehistorians, to be fortified multifunctional organisation and settlement centres (cf. Gieysztor 1948, 391-397, 407-410, therein views of Tymieniecki, Jakimowicz, Gieysztor and Wardołowska). It was expected that the planned excavation research would provide important information about 'the whole process of the emergence of our statehood in its various econom-

ic, social, cultural and political forms' (Gieysztor 1948, 397).

In reference to this postulate, a collection of papers and studies on the society, culture, economy, political and legal organisation and the European context of the early Polish state was finally published. The articles were selected based on their reference to medieval studies. Although the information contained in the studies, critically juxtaposed with earlier findings, was only later to be used by historians to compose an objective, multi-faceted synthesis of the earliest history of the Polish state, the fact that *Księga Tysiąclecia* includes studies written by representatives of disciplines related to historiography, specifically archaeologists, makes it a truly exceptional book. It is noteworthy that in *Księga Tysiąclecia*, the opinions expressed by archaeologists were treated on an equal basis with the views of historians. This set a new model for the research into the origins of the Polish state, a previously indisputable domain of historians. Once this tendency was overcome, many Polish medievalists became increasingly cognizant of the achievements of archaeology. With this came a general acknowledgement of the usefulness of the results of archaeological record analyses in historical studies, a notion previously expressed by K. Tymieniecki (1939-1946; 1951), Z. Wojciechowski (1955) or A. Gieysztor (1948; 1954). It is worth noting that the direction of research proposed in *Księga Tysiąclecia* somehow resembles the research model organised at the time by F. Braudel in French historiography (the milieu centred around *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*). Have a preference – after M. Bloch (1960, 45ff) – for the idea of the so-called global history, F. Braudel assumed that historians (including medievalists) should become more open to the findings of affined disciplines. He believed that this should provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the past (Geremek 1960, 1159ff; Geremek, Kula 1976, 5ff; Topolski 1994, 159ff; Samsonowicz 2002, 13).

The history of the Middle Ages used archaeological evidence dating from the time of the Piast monarchy in a unilateral and static way, grossly undervaluing its potential cognitive merits. It is significant that the archaeology of the millennium era did likewise (Kurnatowska 1997a, 25ff; 1997b, 152ff; 2000, 388). The reasons for this lie, among others, in the underdevelopment of the research interests of the then archaeology of the Early Middle

² The history of the Middle Ages of the millennium era clearly drew on the achievements of its discipline, either referring critically to the predecessor's views or treating earlier theses as the starting point for new studies – see, e.g., Łowmiański 2002a; 2002b. Historians drew also on foreign scholarly legacy, especially that of Soviet, German and French historians.

Ages, a very young field of research developed in Poland just before the outbreak of World War II (cf. Kurnatowska 2000). Consequently, archaeology was forced to look for inspiration in ethnography, economic history, and above all, the history of the Middle Ages. Though related to medieval archaeology, the history of the Middle Ages employed different sources and research methods, focusing on issues related to the politics, ethno-geography, system, economy and law, sources and diplomatics.

At the root of the imperfectness of the then archaeological analyses lay their serious difficulties with chronology. This was due to the considerable shortage of comparative materials and an almost complete lack of typological and chronological schemes for most categories of artefacts. Intensive work on the classification of portable finds came only with the progress of the ‘millennium’ excavations³. Just how serious the problem was is well-illustrated by the method used for determining the chronology of the stratigraphic sequences at almost all major Piast strongholds and the relics of stone architecture excavated between 1946 and 1970. What archaeologists did was synchronise stratigraphic levels with historical information, previously found by historiography to have been somehow related to a given stronghold or church/palace⁴. This aptly demonstrates the weakness of

³ In the early stages of the ‘millennium’ research, all scholars had were published materials from a few early medieval settlements investigated during the interwar period. Particularly attractive were finds from the strongholds of Santok, Biskupin, Gniezno and Kłeczek due to their usefulness in comparative analyses (differentiation of forms, connection with complex stratification systems; cf. *Zantoch* 1936; Rajewski 1938; *Gniezno* 1939; Hensel 1939-1948; 1948a).

⁴ In accordance with this method, scholars interpreted the earliest relics of the pre-Romanesque basilica in the Poznań stronghold as the cathedral of Bishop Jordan and assumed that the structure was erected sometime around 968, the starting day of date of Jordan’s service (Pieczyński 1962, 287ff; Józefowiczówna 1963, 37ff; Józefowiczówna upheld her views in her later work – Józefowicz 1988, 133ff). Particular historical events were also reflected in the chronology of the stronghold of Gdańsk determined by archaeologists. The origins of this fortress, which relics were uncovered at site 1, enclosed by the Radunia and Motława rivers (now Rycerska Street) were concatenated with the year 997, the year of mass baptism of Gdańsk inhabitants by Bishop Vojtěch of the Slavnik clan. At the same time, burnt matter in the youngest stratigraphic layer was interpreted by archaeologists as the relics evidencing

the research methodology of medieval archaeology of that time. The sequences dated largely by reference to written documents served as a chronological bench for other archaeological stratifications. But when finds from such dated strata or features were re-analysed (verified by dendrodates and/or 14C AMS measurements), it turned out that most chronological findings from that time were inaccurate (see, e.g., Krąpiec 1998, 5ff; Kara, Krąpiec 2000, 307ff; 2005, 211ff; Łosiński 2001, 51-62; Kara, Przybył 2003, 255ff; Kóčka-Krenz, Kara, Makowiecki 2004, 131ff; Kościński, Paner 2005a, 9-12; 2005b, 11ff).

In archaeology, the state formation process was analysed almost exclusively through discoveries in the main Piast centres, which were only occasionally studied in the context of broader chronological and functional systems. Neither were comprehensive analyses undertaken on the position or function of the strongholds in the organisation and settlement structure of the Piast state. This structure was in turn perceived almost statistically due to it allegedly having strong roots in the tribal organisation, which was consistent with the so-called ‘dynastic legend’ (Gallus Anonymus I.1-4). Some attempts were thus undertaken to demonstrate the early origin of fortified settlements. At the same time, suburbia were interpreted primarily as the seats of merchants, craftsmen and rank-and-file knights (the so-called *milites pogrodschi*, corresponding to the Sorbian *Vethenici*). Suburbia were thus perceived as the embryo Slavic towns (see Kurnatowska 1997a, 25ff; 1997b, 147ff; 2000, 381ff; Moździoch 2002, 200ff; for examples see Hensel 1953, 77ff; 1956, 321ff; 1958, 127ff; 1959, 721ff; 1960, 9ff; 1963, 83; Rajewski 1961, 117). In this case, archaeologists directly referred to the ideas put forward by

the military seizure of Gdańsk by the Teutonic Knights and accordingly dated to 1308 (Jażdżewski, Chmielewski 1952, 74-81; Jażdżewski 1955, 142, 144; Jażdżewski, Kamińska, Gupieñcowa 1966, chronological table; also Barnycz-Gupieñc 2005, 34ff). Referring to the information provided by Cosmas (II.2) about the Bohemian occupation of Giecz in 1039, archaeologists investigating the defensive settlement dated archaeological strata based on a burnt layer identified with the event (B. Kostrzewski 1962). Noteworthy is also an attempt to synchronise certain layers of the Poznań stronghold with the cataclysm recorded in historical records. In this case, specific sediments were interpreted as sludge of the flood that inundated Poznań in 1253 (Niesiołowska, Perzyńska, Żak 1960, 113).

historians, especially the views of K. Tymieniecki or T. Lalik, where these questions were discussed with reference to economic and legal findings as an element of the social process (Tymieniecki 1956, 205ff; Lalik 2002, 107ff; important for the discussed issues are also the ideas of Wojciechowski 1955, 273ff, here legal-historical aspect). There was little interest among archaeologists in the models of early Slavic towns, as proposed by H. Ziółkowska (1968) and A. Gieysztor (1968), based on sociological and cultural definitions of urban organisms. In accordance with the view shared by some medievalists, occasional attempts were made to minimise the significance of long-distance trade as the prime state and town formation factor (e.g., Hensel 1950, 42). Embedded in the Marxist theory, the view was somewhat merely declarative. It is interesting to note that in another place of the quoted work (1950, 32), W. Hensel argued that the intensification of trade in the triangle: the Roman Empire – the Black Sea area – the area enclosed by the Vistula and the Oder rivers was among the main reasons behind the early state formation in the Polish lands at the end of antiquity. According to Hensel, trade relations with the Roman provinces near the limes going back to the third or fourth centuries AD decided (in conjunction with earlier socio-economic transformations) about the formation of a proto-state with the institution of the duke-*kuning* (the concept concerned primarily the alleged 'state' of the Veneti allegedly destroyed in the fourth/fifth century)⁵. The importance of long-distance trade for the early Slavic towns in Pomerania was emphasised by L. Leciejewicz (1962), who attempted to adjust the cultural phenomenon to the theory of historical process.

Such formulated research paradigms matched the expectations of the then historiography and legitimised the results of its analyses (cf. e.g., Tymieniecki 1956, 157ff, 205ff; Wojciechowski 1955, 273ff; Lalik 2002, 107ff). As such, they prevailed in the investigations of early medieval fortified settlements. Analogous to the then history of the Middle Ages, the archaeology of the millennium era opted for the tribal origins of the majority of the

Piast strongholds, also those deemed to be central, thereby losing any effective ability to trace back the state formation process in the excavated remains of settlement structures, which presented chronologically differentiated functional and spatial systems.

Out of four Bolesław the Brave's major strongholds listed by Gallus Anonymus (I.8), i.e., Poznań, Gniezno, Władysław (Włocławek) and Giecz, only a heavily fortified fortress of Gniezno was therefore believed to have been of a very early origin – the late eight or the early ninth century at the latest. This was supposedly evidenced by coincident chronological results of pre- and post-war excavations conducted in different parts of Góra Lecha [Lech Mountain] (Kostrzewski 1938, 3ff; *Gniezno* 1939; Żurowski 1957, 181ff; 2002, 61ff; Hensel 1960, 18ff; Mikołajczyk 1972, 162ff; the author upheld her conclusions in a later work – Mikołajczyk 1994, 63ff). Other fortified settlements were considered as tribal or tribal-state investments from the second half of the ninth or the early tenth century at the earliest, hence younger than Gniezno. Admittedly, the Poznań centre was perceived as competing with Gniezno for the primacy of the capital seat of Duke Mieszko I (Hensel 1938, 131ff; 1947, 123; 1950, 41, 43; 1953, 79, here eight/ninth century as a hypothetical origin of the earliest fortified settlement of Poznań; 1958, 124ff, 132ff; 1960, 140, 152; 2002, 164ff)⁶. There were some (this time hypothetical) attempts to date the fortified settlement of Kruszwica somehow as early as Gniezno, which according to W. Hensel (1960, 82ff; 1967, 76ff; Hensel, Broniewska 1961, 52ff) marked the centre of a great territorial union of the Goplans and at the same time the last refuge of the Popelid dynasty of Gopło in their struggle against the Piasts of Gniezno. Hensel was inclined to link Kruszwica with the final stage of events described by Gallus Anonymus (I.3) in the legend of the Piast dynasty, namely the death of Popiel, expelled from his kingdom to a nameless island (*ostrów*). Hensel claimed that that happened in the second half of the ninth century on the fortified island of Kruszwica, now called Ostrów

⁵ The issue of trade in the state formation context was later developed by archaeologists in the studies on proto-states. See also Tymieniecki 1951; 1961; Gieysztor 1954; 1971, 23ff – and the views of medievalists similar to that of W. Hensel.

⁶ Consistently preached by W. Hensel since 1938, the view of the capital character of early Piast Poznań between 966 and 1000 contributed to the resumption of the discussion on the function and character of the Poznań stronghold in the first Piast state initiated by O. Balzer in 1916, see Kaczmarczyk 2002, 98ff, here positive opinions; for the criticism see Buczek 1965, 127ff; Labuda 1946, 205.

Rzepowski. Since then, Kujawy was an integral part of the realm of a new dynasty of the Polans, a foothold for further conquest of the Piasts (Mazovia and Eastern Pomerania). Despite its cognitively attractive form, the conception of the capital status of Kruszwica in the first Piast state formulated by W. Hensel basically as early as in 1939⁷ was never popular with the medievalists. This was undoubtedly due to the lack of reliable evidence (see Lalik 1961, 275ff; Łowmiański 1976, 105, footnote 71; similarly Labuda 2002, 22). Even J. Bieniak (1963, 29), who allowed, after W. Hensel, for the possibility of the tragic death of quasi-legendary Popiel in a wooden tower on the island in Kruszwica, criticised other elements of the hypothesis. According to him, ‘the attempt to link the legend [recorded by Gallus Anonymous – M.K.] with [Bavarian – M.K.] Geographer by attributing to Popiel the character of the Duke of the Goplans, fighting with the insurrection of the Polans led by the Piasts’ is highly unsuccessful. Bieniak argues that ‘[a]s long as we wish to treat Popiel as a historical figure, we can only perceive him as a duke of Gniezno. The text of the Gallus’ *Chronicle* makes any other interpretation unjustified’ (Bieniak 1963, 29).

It should be emphasised that the presence of fortified settlements at islands in Kruszwica and Poznań prior to the year 900 was presumed by the ‘millennium’ archaeology merely hypothetically. The early dating of the two strongholds was allegedly confirmed by the concentration of a couple of open settlements located in the vicinity of both islands. Dating from the early phases of the Early Middle Ages (the eight-ninth centuries), these were allegedly inhabited by early class communities, which should therefore have had adequate social and material potential to erect a stronghold – the centre. In this case, archaeological evidence from the open settlement was interpreted in the spirit of historical materialism. For example, an iron spur with in bent hook-like catches found at open set-

tlement in Luboń near Poznań was declared the property of the local noble feoffor (Hensel 1953, 75ff). It is important that recent research has not confirmed the presence of any fortified settlements prior to the year 900 in either Gniezno or Kruszwica. Giecz is thus far the only stronghold in the Gniezno Upland and the Poznań Lake District, adjacent to the Gniezno Upland from the west (the area of the earliest Piast *patrimonium*) to date from the second half of the ninth century (Kurnatowska 2002, 38ff; Kara 2004, 264ff; 2009, 203ff, 290ff; 2017, 38ff)⁸.

It is worth noting that, unlike historiography, the archaeology of the millennium era hardly ever formulated original theses. It merely presented working hypotheses to be discussed in a broader scholarly community. In their cognitive dimension, the synthetic accounts of the origins of Poland published by W. Hensel (e.g., 1960; 1964; 1967) constituted somehow a conglomerate of views laid out by J. Kostrzewski in *Kultura prapolska* (1947; 1949; 1962) and the ideas presented by K. Tymieniecki in his monograph *Ziemie polskie w starożytności. Ludy i kultury najdawniejsze* (1951). These were enriched by Hensel, among others, with Tymieniecki’s findings concerning the identity of the Lendians and Polans (see Hensel 1964; 1967, and the references cited therein). The quoted works of W. Hensel were also somehow inspired by Z. Wojciechowski’s (1955, 285ff) views on the state for-

⁷ Hensel 1939, 84 – three forefathers of Mieszko I, mentioned by Gallus Anonymous (Siemowit, Lestek, Siemomysł) allegedly established some early state organism comprising the lands of the Polans, i.e., the territories marked by the strongholds of Poznań, Gniezno and Kruszwica. It is likely that some attempts to organise the Polish state could have been undertaken in Kruszwica independent of Gniezno, but these were destroyed by the competitive centre of Gniezno.

⁸ The earliest stronghold complex at Ostrów Tumski in Poznań could have been erected at the end of the ninth or in the late ninth/early tenth centuries (in any case not later than at the turn of the second quarter of the tenth century – Kara, Makohonienko, Michałowski 2016, 100), a view advocated in recent literature especially by H. Kóčka-Krenz (2003; 2005; 2008). Some more precise findings shall perhaps be available once the NPRH research project (No. 11H 13 0216 82), currently underway at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, is completed. The project entitled *The clarification and verification of the chronology and periodisation of the so-called central strongholds in the first Piast monarchy (Gniezno, Poznań, Giecz) on the basis of AMS radiocarbon dating* is headed by M. Kara (2014-2019). The Poznań stronghold complex ‘absorbed’ the alleged ritual and cult site, probably also serving meetings and periodic exchanges, which origins can be definitely dated before the year 900 (Kara, Makohonienko, Michałowski 2016, 123ff). A similar situation occurred in Gniezno, Ostrów Lednicki and Giecz, although the alleged ritual-cult site was located there near the stronghold (Kara 2009, 176ff).

mation process in Poland. Wojciechowski attempted to revive Gallus' (I.1-4) laconic descriptions of the early days of the formation of the Piast monarchy with some fresh historical content, using, among other things, archaeological evidence. In both accounts (that of Wojciechowski and Hensel), the roots of the state of Mieszko I (ca. 960-992) allegedly lie in the ninth century, and more specifically in the above-mentioned conflict between the Goplans and the Polans. Initially in an advantageous position, the Goplans from Kruszwica even managed to seize Gniezno temporarily, yet were ultimately conquered by the Piasts of Gniezno, henceforth successively extending their state. In spite of favourable reviews by most eminent medievalists (K. Tymieniecki, B. Zientara emphasised, for example, that Hensel's works were well-illustrated and that the author took an active position in text design, supported by his thorough knowledge of the subject⁹), W. Hensel's monographs did not have any significant impact on the 'millennium' research into state formation. That was because they were largely consistent with historiographical concepts, while strictly archaeological hypotheses, despite their frequently emphasised brilliant character, were too controversial for medievalists to provide a critical reference to their findings.

Arguing for the early dating of most medieval Polish strongholds, particularly later Piast *sedes regni principales*, archaeologists modelled themselves on the historians of the Middle Ages and attempted to link the construction of fortified settlements with the feudal process. Special attention was paid to temporal changes in socio-economic relations within analysed microregions. Some attempts were undertaken to relate groups of strongholds of varying chronology (along with adjacent open settlements, cemeteries and mostly silver hoards) to certain political organisms: pre-feudal (tribal or tribal-state) and early feudal (early state; Hensel 1950; 1967, 42ff). It was a common belief that feudalisation was a local, deeply evolutionary process on Polish soil. This process was presumed to be identical to the state formation process, split in turn into smaller genetic-functional strands in socio-economic transformations, which were ultimately to lead to the development of a ruling, already feudal class (Hensel 1950)¹⁰. Consequently, archaeologists sought

to demonstrate how the mentioned social group, supposedly comprising the nobles from noble militarised families who performed important social functions (including elite mounted warriors), was related to excavated fortified settlements, usually dated generally between the eight (or ninth) and tenth centuries. Favoured were here structures with a small interior area and solid wooden-earth fortifications, sometimes reinforced with stone structures (Hilczerówna 1960, 81; 1967, 262ff, 280ff, and the references cited therein)¹¹. Some scholars believed, albeit this was not a widely held view, that all representatives of the ruling class owned landed property. It was at the same estimated that the accumulation of great estates was possible in the tenth century at the earliest, basically in the second half of the tenth century.

The presence of a powerful, stratified feudal (knightly) class in the tenth-century Poland, which possessed both strongholds and land properties around their own manors were supposedly evidenced by the tenant names of Poznań, Giecz and Radzim (in accordance with the then views, strongholds built in Wielkopolska in the tenth century at the latest); the spatial distribution of early metal hoards, usually discovered away from contemporaneous fortified settlements; and the location of several richly furnished inhumation cemeteries (with graves containing luxury weapons and spurs) near major Piast strongholds (first of all Łubowo near Gniezno and Luboń near Poznań; Hensel 1950, 40ff; Ślaski 1953; Tabaczyński 1958; Rajewski 1961, 103ff, here archaeology on the early feudal relations in Pałuki). In addition, stone churches and palaces erected in the second half of the tenth and in the eleventh centuries in Poznań, Gniezno, Trzemeszno, Ostrów Lednicki or Giecz were interpreted by 'millennium' archaeology in the context of the early emergence of feudal or class-feudal order in Polish lands (see e.g., Hensel 1950, 1953;

feudal formation are the earliest early medieval strongholds (from Ziemia Lubuska and Lower Silesia – M.K.). They reflect the formation of a new system of social relations [...]. This period saw the slow maturing of a new medieval society and the forms of proto-or early state organisms accompanying the transformations'.

¹¹ The parameters, construction techniques and the presence of stones in the fortifications of the examined fortified settlements prompted W. Hensel (1950, 35, 40, 43) to introduce the term 'stronghold-castle' or 'small stronghold-castle', the terminology Hensel himself soon abandoned.

⁹ See W. Hensel 1967, 8, footnote 1.

¹⁰ See also Dąbrowski 1968, 310ff: 'Most important in the research on the earliest manifestations of the early

1967, here more moderate interpretation; for the recent results of research on the early Piast monumental architecture see Krysztofiak 2005; 2009; Janiak 2006; Bukowska 2009; 2013; Kóćka-Krenz 2016). At the same time, it was emphasised that 'In the period under discussion, the role of the Church was similarly progressive as progressive feudalism was with respect to the previous epoch, i.e., the epoch of the primitive community. It is not surprising that various magnificent sacred buildings are built to facilitate the work of the Church' (Hensel 1953, 89).

Archaeological works carried out between 1946/1951 and 1956 at Ostrów Tumski in Poznań inside the then reconstructed cathedral provide a nice example of both the accomplishments and research difficulties of Polish archaeology of that time. The leading archaeologist at the site was K. Józefowiczówna. Her correct reading of stratigraphy and the accuracy of the spatial plan of the relics of Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque architecture drawn on the basis of stratification (Józefowiczówna 1963), at least in general terms, have been recently autonomously confirmed by archaeologists and art historians (Kurnatowska, Kara 2004; Bukowska 2009; 2013) and can undoubtedly be ranked among archaeological achievements of that time. It should be emphasised that no re-analyses would be possible if it had not been for the high standards of archaeological work in the 'millennium' 'Poznań-cathedral' expedition (cf. Kurnatowska 2001). This is not only about proper methodological exploration and documentation of finds, but also about their effective protection for future generations of researchers (including the construction of an archaeological vault under the cathedral in order to protect the exposed relics of medieval architecture). Such research practices were not always followed in Polish 'millennium' archaeology'. In Wielkopolska, such standards were observed as early as in the pre-war period in expeditions headed by Prof. J. Kostrzewski and his students, the members of the so-called Poznań archaeological school (Kurnatowska 1997b; see also Kurnatowscy 2000). On the other hand, among the drawbacks experienced not only by the 'millennium' investigators of the Poznań cathedral were earlier mentioned difficulties with the precise dating of archaeological sources.

It is interesting that archaeological evidence showing severe damage to ramparts and/or structures inside strongholds dating from the ninth and

tenth centuries, caused by violent fires and often marking the end of functioning of fortified settlements, were usually interpreted by 'millennium' archaeologists as an evidence of the Polans' (i.e., the Piast state) military expansion to the neighbouring territories (especially the Upper and Middle Odra region), or a similar expansion of Great Moravia and then Bohemia of the Přemyslids down the Oder and Vistula river basins (Hensel 1948b, 185, 187; 1967, 60ff; Hilczerówna 1960, 84; 1967, 273ff; Rajewski 1961, 109ff). Tribal or early state fortified settlements were believed to be fortresses that just like medieval castles were to be erected for a specific person or social group, usually under a specific political threat (*vide* the term 'stronghold-castle' or 'small stronghold-castle' employed by W. Hensel). The basic functions of fortified settlements were related to the settlement, economy and administration, hence their interiors, especially the so-called suburbia, should be built up, and the buildings themselves must reveal hierarchical differences (cf. B. Kostrzewski 1962, 17ff, Fig. 12; Hensel 1967, 158ff). Most emphasised were, however, refugial and military functions. Compact groups of contemporaneous fortified settlements were perceived as defensive lines of political organisms. Shared by some to this day (cf., for example, Wyrwa 2006), the thesis seems to have been influenced by the realities of the feudal system of Western Europe. There is no doubt that that system of medieval feudal castles provided a model, although not the only point of reference for the reconstruction of the model of the medieval culture in Poland by the 'millennium' archaeology. The inspirations were shared, albeit not uncritically, with the then history of the Middle Ages (e.g., H. Łowmiański – cf. Hilczerówna 1967, 262, and the references cited therein).

Sticking to pre-war views (Hensel 1939), archaeologists saw Duke Mieszko I as an architect of the first ever solid state-like (early feudal) stronghold organisation on Polish soil. In this case, archaeologists advocated views different from those supported by mostly former historiography, which presumed that behind the decision to erect heavily fortified settlements stood the son of the Mieszko, King Bolesław the Brave¹². It was believed that

¹² For a gradual transformation of the views of historiography on the significant input of Duke Mieszko I into the process of state formation see Piskorski 2004, and the references cited therein.

Mieszko founded the legacy handed down to him from his predecessors (the apparently indigenous Gallus-confirmed origin of the Piast dynasty was emphasised here) on a strong organisational basis. It included, among others, a network of strongholds, initiated by Mieszko and further developed by his successors, based mainly on earlier, yet thoroughly remodelled fortresses, which were thus well adapted to fulfil their new military, administrative and economic functions (cf. Hensel 1939; 1950; 2002).

In their descriptions of the state ruled by Mieszko I, archaeologists eagerly referred to the notes scribbled down by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub in the 960s. Mieszko's state was perceived as an extensive, well-organised (especially in militarily terms) solidified feudal structure that to some extent evolved from subsequent proto-state, pre-feudal formations and was partly established as a result of the conquest of the 'Lechitic' tribes by the Polans and the wars led by Mieszko I with the Veleti at the beginning of the second half of the tenth century for the sovereignty over Oder Pomerania, and with the Přemyslids over Silesia and Małopolska [Little Poland] in the fourth quarter of the tenth century (Hensel 1967). Important for the reconstruction of that process was the concept of a proto-state, formulated in the period of the 'millennium' research, an original scholarly achievement of the then Polish archaeology. The 'millennium' historians of the Middle Ages approached the idea warily, unsurprisingly so since they were using a well-developed definition of a tribal or tribal-territorial state. H. Łowmiański (1976, 93) even found the term 'proto-state' to be contradictory in content. While terminological doubts are understandable, the very essence of the concept does not seem as unfounded as it was suggested. This is because it refers to the issue of the transitional stage between chieftain systems and organisms with state systems discussed in the social sciences, also at present (cf. Tymowski 1985, 184ff, 244ff; 2015, 75ff; Posern-Zieliński, Kairski 2004, 328ff; Vorbrich 2015, 91ff – and the references cited therein).

The social culture of the first Polish state was another major area of concern for the 'millennium' archaeology. The social culture was subordinated to the questions related to material culture (now called technical). This indicates the influence of ethnography and economic history on the problems of archaeology going back to the pre-war period (Kurnatowska 1996, 5ff; 1997a, 25ff; 2000, 381ff; Tabaczyński 2001, 27ff; for examples see Kostrzewski 1914;

1923; 1947; 1949a; 1949b; Krukowski, Kostrzewski, Jakimowicz 1939-1948, 361ff; Hensel 1952; 1956; 1959). There was much less interest in the symbolic culture, referred to as spiritual culture. This aspect was studied mostly based on grave finds, which were commonly analysed using the premises of historical materialism (cf. Gąsowski 1957; for the criticism of some findings see Dąbrowska, Zollówna 1959).

Of no less importance were the inspirations drawn from the history of the Middle Ages. The preferred vision of the processes of early-Piast culture formation was that assuming evolution (sometimes even in its extreme version). The tribal roots of the culture and advanced social stratification were emphasised, the latter believed to have been a result of feudal relations, which were to deepen as the state structure expanded. The concept, however, was incompatible with the idea of the high-level culture of the early Piast population, territorially and socially comparable (Hensel 1946a, 24ff; 1950). This was supposedly evidenced by similarities between archaeological record from the main strongholds of the monarchy (Gniezno, Poznań, Kruszwica) and the finds recovered from provincial fortified settlements (e.g., KłECKO, Biskupin), open settlements (Niestronno near Mogilno) or several inhumation cemeteries dating back to the Piast period (e.g., Luboń, Lubowo, Lutomiersk). Yet, the resultant portrayal was that showing a highly flattened, 'static' structure in the periodic sense, a result of the then dating possibilities of the Polish archaeology. For example, the 'millennium' prehistory typically characterised cultural phenomena within broad chronological frameworks that encompassed a couple of centuries (usually the second half of the ninth century or the ninth/tenth-eleventh/twelfth centuries). As a rule, no narrower chronological horizons were identified, partly due to the earlier mentioned difficulties with the dating of the finds. Such attempts were made only for single categories of artefacts (e.g., pottery, armaments, jewellery, selected toiletries), yet archaeologists failed to even try to determine any relations between them.

The model of culture (an identifier of the state society) was thus reconstructed independently of the genesis of the phenomenon. This was done within the framework of a static system, because it lacked in elements of periodisation, which would allow to determine important moments in the development of the investigated structures (Kara 2000, 57ff; 2004, 253ff; 2009, 253ff).

The culture of the population inhabiting the Piast monarchy was perceived through settlement finds (mainly from strongholds) and hoards of hacked silver, more rarely cemetery finds. It was therefore characterised by the richness of the phenomenon, including the presence of the so-called imports that were interpreted (as historians-medievalists did) through interregional links connecting the creators of the analysed culture with foreign ethno-cultural backgrounds (see, e.g., Hensel 1956, 423ff; Nadolski, Abramowicz, Poklewski 1959; Leciejewicz, Łosiński, Tabaczyńska 1961, 83ff; J. Kostrzewski 1962, 300ff, 442ff; Leciejewicz 1962; Żak 1962, 135ff; 1963-1967; Hensel, Żak 1964, 268ff). The earliest stone architecture on Polish lands was similarly interpreted as elements of foreign culture adapted by the Piast society. Architectural relics were considered elements of a wider, universal cultural system of Latin Europe (cf. Józefowiczówna 1963, 37ff; Świechowski 2002, 245ff).

Most exciting for archaeologists were nevertheless native trends in the Piast culture. These encompassed chiefly various branches of artistic culture (see Abramowicz 1962) and the associated types of allegedly professional crafts. To them assigned were particular categories of discovered artefacts, an idea modelled on earlier models successful in Polish (J. Kostrzewski, *Kultura prapolska*, 1947) and Soviet archaeology (B. A. Rybakov, *Remeslo drevnej Rusi*, 1948) (cf. Hensel 1953, 91ff; 1958, 125ff; 1967, 106ff; J. Kostrzewski 1962, 15ff; 2002, 7ff; Lalik 2002, 107ff). Archaeologists emphasised the dominant position of artefacts of allegedly local origin, especially juxtaposed with the list of 'imports' (see e.g., J. Kostrzewski 1962, 300ff) along with the magnitude of the Piast craft, its variation and especially the high level of workmanship. There was a general consensus that in some cases (e.g., in goldsmithing or armaments production), the producers could have adapted foreign patterns or started to imitate them early (cf., e.g., Nadolski 1954, 30ff; Hilczerówna 1956, 111ff; Żak 1959, 7ff; 1960, 297ff; Hensel 1967, 106ff). Guided by the belief in the social stratification of the Piast culture, a supposed result of the feudal state order, archaeologists sought to categorise groups of finds as related to certain classes. This often resulted in gross misinterpretations (e.g., Szafrński 1961, 134ff, Fig. 12). According to the then views, the Piast culture began to flourish no earlier than in the twelfth century. In this context, archaeologists pointed out to the impact

of the secular and ecclesiastical Romanesque art, already well grounded in Polish lands, on the egalitarian local culture. Since then (with clear symptoms beginning to sprout in the second half of the tenth century), the local culture was thought to have split into two stable strands: the elite and the plebeian one (Hensel 1950, 43ff; 1971, 354)¹³. At the same time, the development of the traditional (mainly plebeian) culture, which interacted with the elitist culture, was believed to have ultimately brought about the emergence of traditional folk art (Abramowicz 1962, 114, Fig. 62; Hensel 1971, 354ff).

'Millennium archaeology' saw the earliest traces of such perceived Piast culture (or a serious part of this culture, especially its elitist version) in the mid-tenth century, when the first historical Piast (Duke Mieszko, the son of Siemomysł) began his rule. The tribal origin of the Polish state was unquestioned. This provided the basis for J. Kostrzewski's claim (Kostrzewski is the founder of modern Polish archaeology) that the origins of the Polish state 'go back several generations ago, that is, state formation started in the early tenth century or even at the end of the ninth century' (Kostrzewski 2002, 7). Just like historians, archaeologists saw the baptism of Duke Mieszko in 966 as a landmark event in Poland's history. The millennium anniversary of the event or the arrival of Dobrawa to Mieszko a year earlier was recognised by the scholarly community as the criterion for celebrating the 1000th anniversary of the Polish State. This was for example reflected in the finalisation term of research work related to the anniversary. Above all, excavations were gradually concluded between 1965 and 1970 (see Kurnatowska 1997b, 147ff)¹⁴.

¹³ A. Abramowicz (1962) suggested the local culture was divided even earlier (even before 966).

¹⁴ Archaeology attributed the symbolic dimension to these historical events. In a 1946 paper, a kind of a research manifesto, W. Hensel postulated that various historical disciplines should undertake long, complementary studies on the formation of the Polish state, due to the forthcoming 1000th anniversary of the Baptism of Poland. This obviously included archaeological research (Hensel 1946b). For this reason, the article was read even from pulpits in the churches of Poznań (Hensel 2001, 189). Under the influence of Marxist methodology, historical events of 965 and 966 were regarded as the culmination points of a long process, which eventually led to the formation of the Piast state – a nucleus of modern Poland (cf., e.g., Malinowska 1958, 46).

The research paradigms of 'millennium archaeology' outlined above were implemented in accordance with a certain fieldwork methodology, which was particularly well developed in the Poznań research centre. Noteworthy in this context is the attention paid by Poznań researchers to archaeological sources: they were unearthed, recorded and protected in accordance with excavation methodology developed in Poznań since the pre-war years. All expeditions from Wielkopolska operating under the general scholarly guidance of Prof. W. Hensel in the period the 'millennium' research were obliged to comply with that methodology (cf. Kurnatowska 1997b; Kurnatowscy 2000)¹⁵. Sources were not only discovered, but also interpreted.

This methodology used one overriding principle, and that was a carefully planned location of excavation trenches. The practice was based on the pre-war experience of the so-called Poznań school of J. Kostrzewski obtained in the course of excavations at early medieval strongholds in Biskupin, Kłeczek, Gniezno or Poznań. Other archaeological centres simply laid out trenches within the ramparts, but archaeologists from the Poznań school investigated the relics of strongholds also in the open area adjacent to the ramparts. Their preference for wide and long trenches usually excavated perpendicular to the foot of the fortifications is obvious. Such oriented excavation trenches guaranteed relatively reliable cross-sections through ramparts. They also provided artefacts from settlement layers, which enabled archaeologists to determine the chronology and periodisation of the stronghold as a functional and spatial structure. This was very important, because other expeditions typically dated strongholds on the basis of pottery recovered from the relics of ramparts, thus most often from secondary deposits, which makes it impossible to determine *terminus circa* of construction.

Cultural layers were explored according to stratigraphy. Only thick sediments were excavated within smaller mechanical layers, yet the ceiling and the floor of the layer were not cut across, in order to avoid the mixing of portable artefacts depos-

ited at the contact point of explored cultural layers. Excavations were continued down to undisturbed subsoil, the parent rock level being not reached only in conditions not conducive to exploration.

Not only artefacts were collected, but samples were also taken, for example of wood, grain or rocks. Animal and human bones were also recovered. Explored layers were screened to record small, often poorly preserved artefacts, such as beads or coins.

All finds and samples were carefully documented using inventories. The so-called single finds were drawn at a certain scale and particularly interesting specimens were also photographed. Features and cross-sections of trenches were recorded graphically. Ordinary colour 1:10 site plans were drawn, while in some expeditions (e.g., in the Poznań cathedral) more important discoveries were documented independently by at least two drawers in order to avoid misinterpretations. Plans were described in ink and inventoried. The photographic documentation of the explored objects as well as the most important cross-sections of excavation trench walls was prepared on a regular basis. Photographic films were described and protected in special albums, therefore photographic documentation, just like scaled drawings of discovered relics have not lost their cognitive values (cf. Kurnatowscy 2000; Kurnatowska 2001). Excavation notebooks recorded daily not only concise information about the exploration of a given trench on a particular day, but also contained functional and chronological interpretations of exposed relics. These interpretations were often modified – and recorded – as the work progressed (see, for example the documentation prepared by the 'Daleszyn' or the 'Poznań-cathedral' expeditions, stored in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznań)¹⁶.

¹⁵ Initially, these expeditions were operated by the Head of Research on the Beginnings of the Polish State. After 1953, they were transformed into expeditions of the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences (now the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences) – see Ostojka-Zagórski 1967.

¹⁶ On this basis, some historians mistakenly (!) interpret field notebooks as a sort of disordered research diaries, complemented by archaeologists with new, often mutually exclusive interpretations, often formulated many years after excavations were finished, while the researchers' memory could be elusive. I believe that such opinions provide another argument that the Polish humanities are in dire and urgent need to establish an interdisciplinary scholarly specialisation called medieval studies, with archaeologists, art historians, historians of Middle Ages and historical and cultural anthropologists working together. The rewarding experience of the Czech scholarship speaks in favour of this initiative.

The fact that the archaeologists from Wielkopolska meticulously secured the material from the millennium excavation works and the field documentation prepared at the time have turned out to be of major importance for recent archaeological research. It allowed the staff of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Poznań to undertake multi-disciplinary, comparative archaeological investigations on the process of the formation of the Piast state (realm) based on modern autonomous methods of fossil source analysis at the end of the last century (see Kurnatowska 1997a; 1998; 2002; Kara 2000; 2004; 2009; Kurnatowska, Kara 2010). Remarkably, re-analyses of drawings and photographic documentation confirmed that in the vast majority of cases the ‘millennium’ archaeologists read the stratigraphy correctly. This proves that the then researchers, who studied archaeology at the University of Poznań under the guidance of Professors J. Kostrzewski or W. Hensel, were very well prepared for their work.

To go back to the ‘millennium’ research programme, it is worth to emphasise once again how diverse and extraordinary the discoveries of that

time were. While goals and methods for the ‘millennium’ project were still being formulated, the vast majority of historians believed that the rhythm of the programme would be determined by the historians of the Middle Ages. Yet, when the programme was in full swing, the respect for archaeology, its methods and cognitive possibilities was gradually increasing. The period of the so-called millennium research in Wielkopolska was therefore not lost. On the contrary, it was then that the essential feature of archaeology as a scholarly discipline emerged – its cumulative nature. This means that archaeological field investigations produce significant results if they are implemented methodically and well planned. Then, even if several years have passed, autonomous (!) archaeological re-analyses of their outcomes can bring surprising research results. This becomes obvious when we look at recent studies by the late investigators from the Poznań research centre, namely Z. Hilczer-Kurnatowska, S. Kurnatowski and A. Łosińska, concerning either various aspects of the first Piast state formation or the history of major strongholds in the Piast realm (see Kurnatowski 1994; Kurnatowska 2002; *Międzyrzecz* 2015).

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