

Preface. Jan Machnik (20 September 1930 –7 October 2023)

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PREFACE

JAN MACHNIK

(20 September 1930 – 7 October 2023)

On October 7, 2023, we were saddened to learn of the death of Professor Jan Machnik – an outstanding Polish prehistorian, long-time head of the Department of the Archaeology of Małopolska [Lesser Poland] of the Institute of the History of Material Culture (currently: Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology) of the Polish Academy of Sciences, editor of “Sprawozdania Archeologiczne” in the years 1967-2003 (volumes 19-55). Thanks to his work this journal has become one of the most important Polish archaeological periodicals. Polish science has suffered an immeasurable loss. Above all, however, his death means the passing of a person with whom the lives of several generations of Polish archaeologists were closely linked. For many of them, he was a scientific mentor, promoter, project partner and friend. He was an exceptional personality whose legacy also includes unforgettable memories, emotions and anecdotes.

We would like to dedicate issue 75/2 of this journal to Professor Jan Machnik. The short memoir presented below is the first of many that will probably be published on various occasions in the coming years. I belong to the generation that has had contact with him for many years. The Professor was also the supervisor of my doctoral thesis. But, when I first met him in the early 1990s, he seemed like a person from another world. It was though he was always immersed in the vanished past of his Podkarpacie [Subcarpathian region], and faithful to time-honoured patriotic and religious principles. The roots of this are unclear, but he was an uncritical admirer of Marshal Piłsudski and a “militarist” admiring cavalry traditions, showing a weakness for bladed weapons (Fig. 1). During the times of the People’s Republic of Poland, he was an anti-communist. I heard that at archaeological conferences in Western Europe, he gave out badges of the banned trade union “Solidarity” to his colleagues. While in Georgia, I heard a story about Professor Machnik who, during an evening meeting while on a study trip there in the early 1980s, took a sabre from the

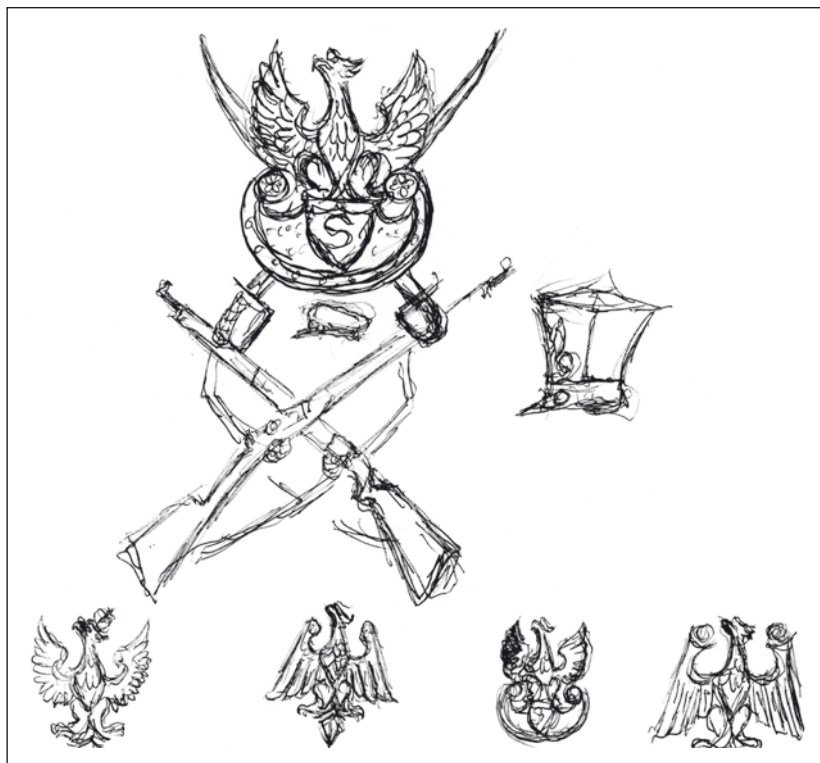


Fig. 1. "Machnik's eagles". Part of a page of notes from the conference in Niepołomice (2007), collected by Barbara Burchard. While listening to the lectures, Jan Machnik often doodled – either eagles, or beakers and battle-axes of the Corded Ware culture

wall and brandished it, shouting and singing anti-Soviet slogans. In the 21st century, times have changed, but despite the passage of the years, the Professor remained as characteristic and expressive as ever. Both in Poland and abroad you can hear many colourful stories in which he was the main character.

Since the 1950s, Jan Machnik was deeply engaged in dealing with the issues of the Corded Ware culture. In 1966, he wrote a classic work on this subject: "Studies on the Corded Ware Culture in Lesser Poland." This book can be compared with the works of, among others: P. V. Glob, K. H. Struve, M. Malmer and M. Buchvaldek. It focused research on the Final Eneolithic of Lesser Poland for the next several dozen years. Until the end of his life, the Professor continued to reflect on the problems presented in this book. Since the late 1960s, he was also strongly involved in research on the Early Bronze Age in south-eastern Poland. As one of his collaborators, Józef Ścibior, used to say humourously, "Machnik invented the Early Bronze Age in Lesser Poland for the good of his own career and material profits". The Professor developed his own concept of the chronology, taxonomy

and spatial development of the Mierzanowice culture, absolutely believing in and constantly persuasive about the truthfulness of these findings. To this day, most researchers believe Professor Machnik on this matter. In the 1970s, the Professor led large-scale research on the Mierzanowice culture settlement in Iwanowice, carried out as part of a Polish-American project. He entrusted Sławomir Kadrow with the processing, analysis and publication of the materials coming from these excavations. The resultant publications of the results of this fieldwork have become of fundamental importance for studies on the Early Bronze Age in Lesser Poland. In several joint works, both researchers have in addition used the results of the research in Iwanowice for exploring and discussing several more general aspects of prehistoric phenomena.

Field research has always been Jan Machnik's favorite professional activity. In the 1980s, he returned to his native Podkarpacie to discover traces of the little-known prehistory of the end of the Stone Age in the region. At the beginning, in collaboration with Jan Gancarski, He examined two burial mounds in Bierówka near Jasło. Later – in the 1990s – together with Ewa Sosnowska, he conducted research on several burial mounds in the Dynów Foothills. At the same time, he was the mentor of the project of excavation of burial mounds in Grzęda Sokalska [Sokal Ridge], carried out by Jolanta Bagińska and Wiesław



Fig. 2. Jan Machnik during field research on the Tanew in 1956 (Lubaczów expedition in the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands). Photo J. Potocki



Jan Machnik during the 70th birthday celebration
(hall of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków).
Photo P. Włodarczak

Koman. He thus returned to the years of his youth, when he participated in research projects on burial mounds in the Roztocze region. These are only some of the most important archaeological sites related to the Professor's field activities.

Professor Jan Machnik made enormous contributions to the implementation of research projects that transcend state and national barriers. In the 20th century, the areas of scientific research projects in the eastern part of Central Europe were, for many reasons, usually limited by state borders. Political changes in the 1990s, however, and consequent more frequent international collaboration opened up new opportunities for organizing joint ventures with researchers from Slovakia and Ukraine. The Professor was able to take advantage of these circumstances to organize such projects. Moreover, he made numerous friends there. Today, many successors from several Polish research centres continue this international adventure.

For most of his professional life, Jan Machnik was associated with the Department of Archaeology of Małopolska at the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences – being its head for many years. Starting from the 1980s, famous seminars were held in the palace at Igołomia under his aegis. The discussions held there shaped generations of archaeologists from all over Poland. Many current professors emphasize how much they owe to these meetings. Later, Professor Jan Machnik became a lecturer at the University of Rzeszów. He played a key role in establishing the Institute of Archaeology there.

Once, following a slight altercation about something or other, Professor Jan Machnik brought me a photo, claiming that he would show me a picture of myself as I am now. What he showed me was a photo of himself taken by Jan Potocki in the 1950s during research in Roztocze (Fig. 2). “Look...”, he said, “an angry young man. He thinks he knows and understands everything!” He then ordered me to confirm that this was how it looked. This was the essence of Professor Jan Machnik.

Piotr Włodarczak

