

TADEUSZ SARNOWSKI (1945–2019)

Tadeusz Sarnowski – PhD in archaeology and full professor affiliated with the University of Warsaw – was one of the most prominent Polish scholars involved in archaeological investigations of Roman provinces in general and Roman *limes* in particular. In the course of his 54-years-long academic career, he authored over two hundred publications, thus establishing himself among the very few historians and archaeologists specialising in the Roman army and Latin epigraphy respected in Poland as well as abroad. He educated a host of students, many of whom are now recognised scholars forming his school. As a scholar, he was entirely devoted to his work, an outstanding intellectual marked by exceptional modesty. His passing is a great loss for the Polish academia.

His mother was a teacher of French from Volhynia, whose wartime story included a deportation to a Soviet labour camp near Arkhangelsk in February 1940 and then, after the Sikorski-Maïski Agreement was signed in 1941, a perilous journey through Iran all the way to Cape Town in the Republic of South Africa. There, on 9 October 1945, Tadeusz Sarnowski was born. For young Tadeusz, their stay in Africa and the later travel north, across the continent and towards the Mediterranean coast, were formative experiences which impacted his future scholarly interests. Later, he would often return to the Maghreb, which fascinated him not only with its relics of Roman towns but also because of the climate and cuisine of the African coast. There, his excellent command of French served him well during establishing scholarly networks and publishing his research on Roman Africa.

After his return to Poland and graduation from high school in Żołyńia, Łańcut district, he enrolled at the University of Warsaw to study Mediterranean archaeology. His master's thesis dealing with Bronze Age Greece was supervised by Professor Kazimierz Majewski, former Chair of the Ancient History Department at the University of Lviv – a man of exceptional rigour and strictness, whose teachings had a lasting effect on Tadeusz Sarnowski, then a young graduate student. In 1960, on the initiative of Professor Kazimierz Majewski and Professor Dymitr Dymitrov from the Institute of Archaeology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, archaeological excavations were started in Novae, northern Bulgaria – a Roman legionary camp and a late Roman town. Since 1969, initially as a PhD student in classical archaeology and then as a fully-fledged PhD, Tadeusz

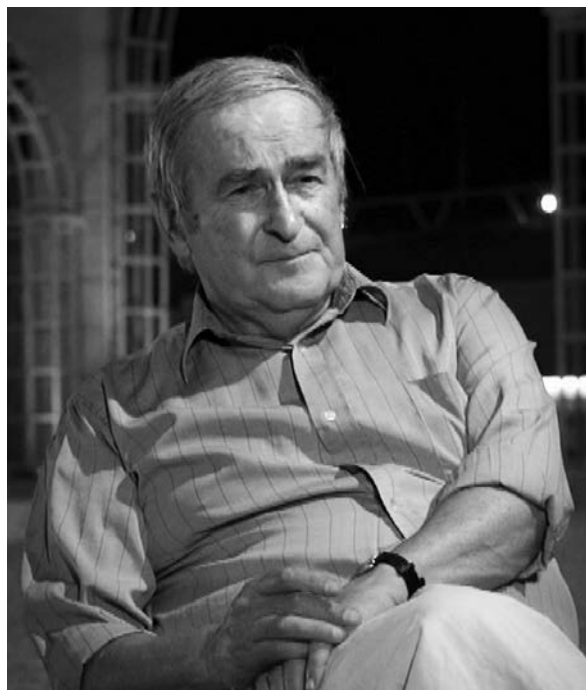


Photo by P. Zakrzewski.

Sarnowski regularly participated in excavations at this site, to which he remained closely attached throughout his whole life.

In the years 1967–1969, he studied at the School of African Studies at the University of Warsaw and immediately after his graduation started his PhD course at the Faculty of History at his *Alma Mater*. His doctoral dissertation, titled *Architektura willowa w późnoantycznej ikonografii mozaikowej Afryki rzymskiej* [*Iconography of villa architecture in late antique mosaics from Roman Africa*] was supervised by Professor Kazimierz Majewski. In June 1974, he submitted and defended his thesis. His reviewers were Professor Tadeusz Lewicki and Professor Ludwika Press – a long-time participant and future Director of the Archaeological Expedition in Novae. His dissertation, published in 1978 as a monograph under the French title *Les représentations de villas sur les mosaïques africaines tardives*, became one of the most important scholarly works on the subject and remains a fundamental resource for studies on villa architecture in Roman Africa. It was through his efforts, as well as reputation,

that joint Polish–Tunisian excavations were started at the site of Musti (Mest Henschir).

In 1973, soon after completing his PhD course and before defending his dissertation, he was offered assistantship at the Department of Mediterranean Archaeology of the Faculty of History, University of Warsaw. Teaching soon emerged as his true calling. For many years, he offered courses on archaeology of the Mediterranean and Roman provinces, which earned him a name as a great and praised teacher.

As an active field archaeologist, on the other hand, he did not limit himself to the excavations in Novae. In the years 1971–1973, he participated in investigations at the site of Mucking in Great Britain, the largest European archaeological excavations of the 1970s and a dense, multi-period landscape palimpsest ranging from the Neolithic to medieval times, including Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon burials. Another important site where he gained his expertise was Apamea in Syria, excavated by the Centre Belge de Recherches Archéologiques. During his cooperation with Belgian archaeologists in 1977–1979 and 1982, he benefitted from the skills obtained earlier in Mucking and Novae. He worked also at Polish excavations (Gdańsk, Radom, and Majdan Królewski). As a field archaeologist, he had a keen interest in modern documentation methods. It was through his initiative that, for the first time in Polish Mediterranean archaeology, planigraphy was prepared for two sites in the vicinity of Novae – in the years 1971–1979.

Since the 1970s, first as a participant of the Expedition directed by Prof. Majewski and, later, Prof. Press, then a Director of the Archaeological Expedition of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, he investigated the very heart of the legionary fortress in Novae, where he managed to unearth a monumental building of the legionary headquarters (*principia*). The fieldworks, and the related documentation, had become his life's work, crowned by creating a visualisation of the building within the framework of a EU-funded project whose objective was to establish the Archaeological Park right in the middle of the camp of Novae. Tadeusz Sarnowski published several dozen articles showcasing the architecture and topography of Novae as well as epigraphical relics. Each of his publications excelled in terms of scholarly quality and many of them were major contributions to broader areas of study, e.g. on the structure of the Roman army.

In 1982, he had received a second-degree award from the Polish Ministry of Education and Science, whereas in 1984, already a young PhD, he was granted a one-year A. von Humboldt scholarship in Frankfurt-am-Main. At the same time, he advanced within the academia through junior and senior assistantships to the position of an assistant professor at the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Warsaw. The studies he was conducting

at the time were capstoned by his habilitation thesis, later published in Warsaw in 1988 as a Polish monograph titled *Wojsko rzymskie w Mezji Dolnej i na północnym wybrzeżu Morza Czarnego* [*Roman Army in Lower Moesia and the Northern Coast of the Black Sea*] and a comprehensive article titled “Das römische Heer im Norden des Schwarzen Meeres” [“Roman Army in the North of the Black Sea”] (*Archeologia* 38, 1988, 61–98). These two publications, abounding with information, remain largely up-to-date even today and still pose a challenge to scholars of the field. Since 1989, he was a university reader at the Faculty of History, University of Warsaw.

Beginning from the 1990s, in parallel with his archaeological investigations in Novae, he conducted excavations in Crimea, in the vicinity of today's Sevastopol, where he unearthed a temple of Jupiter Dolichenus. Next, he turned to investigating the rural areas of Tauric Chersonesos, quickly becoming the foremost expert dealing with this region in the Roman period. Over the last twenty years, Professor Sarnowski authored numerous papers in Polish, German, and Russian, thus earning himself recognition among Russian-speaking scholars. He attended many academic conferences in Russia and Ukraine and gave lectures on invitation at such institutions as the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow or the Kazakhstan National Science Academy. His knowledge and expertise were valued both in Poland and abroad, even in faraway countries.

Two main branches of Professor's research interests – the Roman army in the lower Danubian provinces and Roman military presence beyond the Imperial borders – became his showcases. In the early 1990s, soon after his *Alma Mater* granted him the title of associate professor, he founded the Department of Archaeology of the Roman Provinces, which he directed until his retirement. Extraordinarily quickly, as early as 2002, Tadeusz Sarnowski was awarded full professorship in appreciation of his scholarly accomplishments.

Professor was also a long-time member of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut as well as of editorial boards of the leading Polish periodicals on the Mediterranean archaeology – *Archeologia* and *Światowit*.

He dedicated his final years to the task of reconstructing the sculptural decoration of the legionary headquarters in Novae. He would no longer conduct excavations and instead concentrated on the previously discovered statues situated within the *principia*. His planned monograph dedicated to Novae was intended as a consummation of several decades of work. Sadly, he was unable to see it completed.

As a teacher, Professor was highly-praised both in Poland and abroad. He ran courses or gave lectures as a visiting professor at the universities in Łódź, Poznań, Algiers, London, Newcastle upon Tyne,

Frankfurt-am-Main, Berlin, Prague, Sofia, Simferopol, Bern, Lausanne, Geneva, Zürich, Basel, Freiburg, and even Almaty. At the University of Warsaw, he chaired seminars and presented lectures on Roman provinces with a particular focus on Roman military presence in the lower Danubian provinces and beyond the Imperial borders – along the northern Black Sea coast – as well as on archaeology of North African provinces. Having retired, he used any spare time to travel with his beloved wife and visit North African cities. In spite of his severe illness, he went on his last tour in May 2019 and travelled along the Adriatic coast in Dalmatia.

Professor educated many graduate students, as well as a number of postgraduates, who formed a circle of his close co-operators. He was our Master – a father figure and mentor. He often cared to ask about our families or mood while paying little attention to his own comfort. In his cherished Novae, where he worked for a long time, he had a dense network of friends and acquaintances which included labourers – simple people who had unusual respect and affection for him. During two decades of our cooperation in Novae, I was privileged to learn from

him, and this learning extended well beyond archaeology and history of Roman provinces – it encompassed such secrets of the trade as the specificity of doing research in Bulgaria or the nuances of local culture and customs. As Director of the Expedition he strictly followed certain rules and rituals. The first and foremost principle was respect for the labour of simple men.

This year, in August, he planned to visit Novae yet again. He passed away on August 7, having made sure his Expedition was heading out to Novae. Now, upon his sudden departure, we are determined to carry on his principles. We see it as a way to cherish the memory of him as an outstanding man, not only an exceptional scholar.

Exegisti monumentum aere perennius... Vale!

Novae, September 2019

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