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The Goths' Return to the Hrubieszów Basin. The Social Use of Archaeological Heritage for Building a Local Identity

ABSTRACT

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Archaeological investigations of the Gothic culture in the Hrubieszów Basin started in 1977. From the very beginning, they attracted great interest of the local community. In 2002, after the excavations were declared officially over, the residents of Masłomęcz, together with the archaeologists, local self-authorities, NGOs and the Hrubieszów Museum, decided to take advantage of the archaeological heritage to build a local identity. As a result of many activities and bottom-up initiatives of the residents of Masłomęcz, a historical reconstruction group was established, followed by the Goths' Village open-air museum, which combines educational, tourism, and scientific functions.

Keywords: Goths, Goths' Village, Masłomęcz, Hrubieszów Museum, popularisation

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The role of archaeology

Archaeology has special significance for the Hrubieszów region. The archaeological wealth of the interfluvium of the Huczwa and Bug rivers, which is a territory regarded as very promising from the vantage point of new sensational discoveries, has attracted researchers of Antiquity for many decades. Regardless of whether they were focused on the Stone Age, Bronze Age or Iron Age, they could all count on interesting findings, which were significant in terms of their discipline's development. It should therefore be unsurprising that in the over fifty years of operation of the Stanisław Staszic Museum in Hrubieszów archaeology has played one of the most important roles almost from the very beginning (cf. Bartecki and Hyrchała 2015, 50–72; Kokowski 2015, 8–19).

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The popularisation of the archaeological heritage of the region, which is more and more frequently the subject of separate studies (e.g. Chowaniec 2010), took on a special form in the case of the Hrubieszów Museum. This was due to the extraordinary archaeological discoveries made in Masłomęcz, Gródek, Moroczyn, Strzyżów, Rogalin, as well as Hrubieszów. However, it is not the results of the excavations that are the most important in this case, but the communities' response to these results and the friendly atmosphere which helped the archaeologists in their work almost from the very beginning of the Museum. The popularisation efforts peaked in the last ten years, when it was decided to use the results of the completed excavations in the Masłomęcz cemetery, widely known in the scientific world, to build a local identity.

Despite its popularity in the media, archaeology, like other disciplines, is a very hermetic science and, in its strictly scientific form, a very inaccessible and unattractive one. Scientific publications written by archaeologists are only read and understood by other archaeologists. The romantic vision of uncovering mysteries disappears in the face of the necessity to produce hundreds of tables, statistical analyses, and spending an entire season near construction machines building the next section of the long-awaited ring road. In the eyes of the public, an archaeologist is also a person who has the right, often for completely obscure reasons, to stop the construction of someone's dream house for several hours or days, because a few potsherds were found in the foundations. Proper popularisation efforts can help with conflicts between the investor/field owner and the archaeologist; even more importantly, they may encourage people to voluntarily notify the appropriate authorities about accidental archaeological discoveries.

Popularisation of archaeology among hard-working farmers from small towns and villages should seem doomed to fail. It should be equally difficult to convince the oldest generation (the retirees who remember the Nazi German attack on Poland in 1939) that they could be proud of their Germanic (but ancient) past and, most importantly, that the Germanic ancient past could become the foundation for building a local identity in a community with "Slavic blood". It was doubtful that the local community, without specialist education, would be able to take care of its heritage thanks to bottom-up initiatives – and that it would do so precisely on the basis of hermetic, inaccessible archaeological knowledge.

Challenges

The Hrubieszów Museum, together with NGOs and the local authorities, decided to disprove such theories. Some problems and proposals of how to solve them are illustrated by the case of the community of the Hrubieszów region, the eastern-most corner of Poland. Here, popularisation of archaeological heritage took on a form which is unique in Poland and may be a model for other regions in many ways. This field has become an opportunity to mobilise the elderly and the unemployed. It became an alternative way of spending free time for children, young adults and adults. Most importantly, the field has also been acknowledged by the local authorities as a genuine opportunity to develop thematic tourism, and as the starting point for improving the entire region's economic situation. Implementing projects whose slogans refer to the old period of prosperity in the 2nd–4th c. AD not only made it possible to build a supralocal brand, but also to create new jobs, to organise popular science open-air events, and to build a tourism infrastructure. The place where the process of building a local identity on the basis of archaeology started in 1977 was Masłomęcz – a small village near the town of Hrubieszów. The key role at the first stage of this process was played by archaeologists, and after they left the site, the popularisation of archaeological heritage became the work of the local community and the staff of the Hrubieszów Museum (Fig. 1).

Masłomęcz – the beginnings

In the autumn of 1977, a group of Archaeology students from the Institute of Archaeology of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, supervised by Andrzej Kokowski (today a Professor, an MA at that time), came across artefacts from the Roman period during archaeological surface surveys near the villages of Czerniczyn and Masłomęcz in the Hrubieszów region. Among the finds collected from the surface of freshly ploughed fields were fragments of clay pots, a bone comb dated to the 3rd c. AD, and other small artefacts. At the same time, the archaeologists started to cooperate with the residents of the village, who provided valuable information about earlier accidental finds. The next year, excavations started, which – as it turned out – were to last for twenty-five years and became the most important



Fig. 1. Masłomęcz's archaeological career started in the field of the Mazur family (Photo by B. Bartecki)

chapter in the modern history of Masłomęcz (Kokowski 2004, 13). To the archaeologists working in Masłomęcz, equally as important as collecting extraordinary finds was creating a bond with the villagers. The sceptically-minded community, which initially took the “alien” group of scientists with a grain of salt, showed their interest more and more boldly in each successive season. Over the twenty-five years of excavations, 536 graves were discovered in the Gothic cemetery from the 2nd–4th/5th c. (Kokowski 2007, 14). A characteristic feature, which decisively contributed to the career of these investigations in the media and in science, were the extraordinary funeral customs of the Germanic people of Goths, who had migrated from their Scandinavian birthplace. The custom of fragmenting the bodies of the dead, simultaneously using traditional burials (inhumation) and cremation, and ritualistic opening of graves became the basis for distinguishing the “Masłomęcz group” in archaeology (Kokowski 2008, 99). Visually attractive artefacts from these excavations also became an important element of many Polish and European museum exhibitions. Gothic graves commonly



Fig. 2. The excavations in the region provided a lot of interesting information and valuable exhibits for the Museum (Photo by A. Kokowski)

contained dishes, ornaments and garment parts made of gold, silver and bronze, combs, as well as glassware, which was very valuable in Antiquity (Fig. 2).

First popularisation efforts

The unique nature of the discoveries made in the Gothic cemetery in Masłomęcz was very quickly noted and used by the media. Archaeological press, radio and television reports are always positively received, as they offer an opportunity to take a momentary break from the present. Mysterious macabre practices and rituals of the Goths quickly made the headlines. They were widely commented on and one of the farms where the archaeological works took place, more and more frequently hosted representatives of radio and television. However, if it had not been for the constant feeding of the media's interest, and the accessible, and even attractive to laypeople, manner of presenting the findings, the excavations in Masłomęcz would quickly have been

forgotten. Therefore, it was of utmost importance to cooperate with the local media in the first place, as was the case in the Hrubieszów region. One of the main local newspapers, “Tygodnik Zamojski” (“The Zamość Weekly”), had a regular column which published information about the newest discoveries during excavation seasons, as well as interviews with the archaeologists (Kokowski 2004, 119). In this way, awareness of the rank of the discoveries and pride in the opportunity to participate in these events were created. Equally as important were national campaigns organised by Polish Radio 3 (Kokowski 2014, 123–124). During the “Summer with archaeology” series of broadcasts, news about the phenomenon of Masłomęcz Goths reached listeners in the entire country, and the village of Masłomęcz even became a reference point for locating the invaluable Renaissance city of Zamość on the map. The constant presence in the media and participation in television programmes thus became something very natural, even expected, to the villagers from Masłomęcz. The distance and initial scepticism towards the work of the archaeologists from Lublin were replaced by the common mission of informing others about the specialness of the place they came from. The invaluable, prestigious role in the promotion of Masłomęcz’s archaeology was played by participating in the archaeological exhibitions in Italy and Germany, during which the Gothic antiquities from Hrubieszów occupied the spotlight. The impressively large, richly illustrated exhibition catalogues became the benchmark for telling history in a visually attractive and accessible way (Kokowski 2014, 26–29). We should also mention two other issues concerning the popularisation of archaeological investigations in the Hrubieszów region. Firstly, it was the small district and village schools that noted the virtually elementary need to introduce lessons about the archaeology of the Hrubieszów Basin into the school programme. The most gifted elementary and middle school students have been competing in archaeological contests, regularly organised by the Hrubieszów Museum and the District Community Centre in Hrubieszów for many years (Kokowski 2014, 130–133). Students from Hrubieszów’s secondary schools regularly participate in Professor Andrzej Kokowski’s museum lessons. The other issue concerns prestige. In 2002, the head of the municipality of Hrubieszów and Professor Andrzej Kokowski (the director of the Institute of Archaeology, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin), decided to create an honorary



Fig. 3. The education of the youngest generation became one of the Hrubieszów Museum's projects (Photo by J. Fuchs)

award called “Laur Masłomęczki” (“The Masłomęcz Laurel”). This was done to honour people who made particularly special contributions to building the cultural and economic image of the Land of Zamość. “The Masłomęcz Laurel” is a small statuette of a bird-shaped fibula, which is regarded as the symbol of archaeology in Hrubieszów and of the Gothic “Masłomęcz group” (Kokowski 2014, 32–35). The award winners include archaeologists, museologists, and politicians (Fig. 3).

Conclusion of excavations

In 2002, after twenty-five years of continuous excavation works in the Gothic cemetery in Masłomęcz, they were officially completed. The international career of this place was reflected in scientific and popular science publications, in hundreds of press reports and radio

broadcasts, and at least a few dozen television programmes (Kokowski 2004, 122–123). Artefacts from Masłomęcz were viewed by thousands of visitors in numerous museums, and the exhibition catalogues continue to be an invaluable source of knowledge about the Goths, not only those from the Hrubieszów Basin. A quarter of a century was a chapter which was supposed to end in 2002, during a splendid celebration with friends of Hrubieszów's archaeology from near and far. However, as it turned out, the many years of building archaeological awareness among the inhabitants of the region resulted in a completely new chapter of Masłomęcz's history. Although the archaeologists left Masłomęcz and covered up the last trenches, in the next few years the village was to become the centre of other popularisation efforts, initiated by the villagers themselves, and supported by the NGO sector and local authorities.

Bottom-up initiatives

Already in 2003, it was indicated that there was a need to organise a meeting between the residents of Masłomęcz and the archaeologists with whom they had cooperated so well for so many years. Although the excavation campaign had finished, in the summer of 2003, as a sort of commemorative ceremony, an Archaeological Fête was held, during which the previous twenty-five years of the village's history were remembered. Similar meetings, during which – alongside archaeological themes – performances of the local singing groups and presentations of folk artists were an important part of the programme, started to be held regularly. Over the next few years, during summer holidays, Masłomęcz remembered the archaeological excavations in the Gothic cemetery, cherishing the memory of the region's oldest past. Each meeting for the next four years strengthened the conviction of the villagers, archaeologists and representatives of the local authorities that they should tap into the archaeological potential of the Hrubieszów region. The decisive role in the process of forming the idea of creating a new showcase for Masłomęcz was played by the local community. The regular summer meetings which centred around archaeological themes proved insufficient. One afternoon in a year when Masłomęcz's archaeology was reborn left the people feeling thirsty throughout the rest of the year, when Masłomęcz's recognisability was noted only in

scientific publications or archival newspaper issues (Gurba 2003). According to the local community, there was a need to build a tangible, material memorial of the Gothic past, which would remind both the locals and random visitors about the archaeological heritage of the region all year round.

Projects

The first, most important, innovative project aimed at promoting Masłomęcz's archaeology and the archaeological heritage of the region was called "Remnants of the Goths – prehistory of the land of Hrubieszów as an element of the European cultural heritage". It was implemented from March to September 2007 by the "Better Tomorrow" Hrubieszów-Mircze Society Local Action Group, under the Pilot Project Leader + Scheme II in the municipalities (*gminas*) of Hrubieszów and Mircze. The project's main objectives were to promote cultural heritage and to increase the tourism attractiveness of the municipalities



Fig. 4. First steps towards creating a Gothic group (Photo by A. Hyrczała)

of Hrubieszów and Mircze. Taking direct advantage of the scientific achievements of the archaeologists from Lublin, a number of actions relating to archaeology were prepared.

The project involved, among others, building a museum exhibit of a hut of the Goths in Masłomęcz, which was a symbolic reconstruction of a housing structure discovered in Hrubieszów-Podgórze; marking out the “Trail of the Goths” tourist path, leading through the places connected with the main archaeological discoveries, as well as interesting landscapes and cultural and historical places; and publishing a book entitled *30 powodów do dumy z mieszkania w krainie Gotów (30 Reasons to Be Proud of Living in the Land of the Goths)* by Professor Andrzej Kokowski, about the most interesting events, discoveries and issues related to the investigations in the Hrubieszów region. The book’s promotion took place during the Archaeological Fête which wrapped up the realisation of the project objectives.

During the several months when the project was being implemented, the expectations of the local community with regard to promoting the archaeological heritage of their village and region were met. The Gothic hut, accompanied by an information panel and figures representing old residents of Masłomęcz became a visible and recognisable element of public space. It also became a springboard for further promotional efforts, which is unquestionably associated with the archaeological episode in the village’s most recent history. The long bibliographical list of scientific publications about the Masłomęcz Goths was expanded to include the popular science book which was the most important one to the villagers (Kokowski 2007). Thirty years after the excavations started in Masłomęcz, a book was written for and about the villagers of Masłomęcz, and dedicated to them. Its title, *30 Reasons to Be Proud of Living in the Land of the Goths*, was a deliberate attempt to draw attention to the specialness of the place from which they come. The book became an invaluable material promoting the Hrubieszów region, because it listed both tourist attractions and places important from the point of view of archaeology. The 2007 project in fact started a series of other large-scale ventures, in which the Hrubieszów Museum played an important role.

In 2008 another project was implemented, together with the Hrubieszów Museum, which was aimed at promoting and reconstructing the cultural heritage of the municipality of Hrubieszów, in particular

the archaeological achievements related to studies on the Gothic civilisation in Masłomęcz. The project "Life in the Land of the Goths – promotion and reconstruction of the cultural heritage of the village of Masłomęcz" was financed by the Civil Initiatives Fund for 2008. The tasks implemented under the project were, however, completely different from the ones started in 2007. This time, the villagers from Masłomęcz and its vicinity were the direct beneficiaries; a series of training sessions showcasing the old crafts and customs of the Goths from the Hrubieszów Basin was organised for them (Figs. 5a, 5b).

The first stage of training for the residents of Masłomęcz involved pottery classes, which would enable them to make earthenware on their own. During the two weeks of regular theoretical and practical classes, following the models of authentic finds from the excavations in Masłomęcz and Gródek, several dozens of clay pots were made under the supervision of an expert ceramicist. The workshop participants had previously acquainted themselves with the entire database of panels, illustrations and photographs. To expand their knowledge before reconstructing the process of making "Gothic" wares, the participants were also acquainted with the exhibits from the Hrubieszów Museum (Figs. 6a, 6b).

The project also included workshops on making ornaments used by the Goths in Antiquity, as well as a series of classes on old weaving techniques. A group of three generations of people wearing Gothic garments made on their own became a recognisable image of the Hrubieszów region. The greatest success was convincing the villagers, who in their day-to-day lives are not at all connected to reconstruction groups, to perform in front of their neighbours and family members in the attire of the old Germanic inhabitants of the Hrubieszów Basin. The official presentation by the group (which has over twenty members) took place in front of the Gothic Hut in August 2008. The event was given a lot of media publicity, comparable to the one which accompanied the most important discoveries in Masłomęcz at the time when the excavations were being carried out there. After several years of absence from the media, thanks to bottom-up initiatives, Masłomęcz took care of the popularisation of its archaeological heritage on its own. All these tasks, carried out by instructors experienced in historical reconstructions, led to integrating the village community, to mobilising a few generations, and to showing ideas for alternative ways



Fig. 5a and **Fig. 5b**. Experimental archaeology illustrated by firing ceramics (Photo by A. Hyrchata)



Fig. 6a and **Fig. 6b.** Popularisation through the recreation of old wool dyeing techniques (Photo by B. Bartecki)

of spending free time. The bottom-up initiative to create a memorial of the archaeological excavations transformed into a social and educational project. It quickly turned out that the skills learned by the “new” Gothic community are desirable to the pupils and teachers from local schools. Living history lessons became an important element of the daily life in the village, which initially brought only satisfaction, but later also became a source of income.

From January until July 2009, another project (under the patronage of the archaeological department of the Hrubieszów Museum) was implemented, aimed at creating an intergenerational team cultivating the cultural and historical heritage of the municipality of Hrubieszów. Its formula was very similar to the 2008 project. Again, the residents of Masłomęcz, under the supervision of experienced instructors (craftspeople, historians, and archaeologists) learned skills related to old

crafts. Over the seven months, the project team organised workshops in Masłomęcz on processing skins, bones, and wood, weaving on vertical looms, as well as ancient cuisine. As part of these activities, experimental archaeology classes were also offered. This training consisted in preparing a large number of ceramic pots modelled on archaeological finds and firing them in an open kiln, using the historical method. The last, most eagerly awaited project, was to assemble, train and equip a group of Gothic warriors. Already at the stage of implementing these tasks in the small village of Masłomęcz in 2008–2009, the bottom-up initiative of the local community was noted and appreciated on a larger, even national scale. The newly created Gothic community was invited to participate in many campaigns promoting local democracy and all sorts of open-air events, during which they presented their skills, attire, and knowledge of ancient Masłomęcz. The reach of Hrubieszów's archaeology again far exceeded the Lublin region. The crowning event of the two projects leading to the creation of a historical reconstruction group was their participation in the Festival of Ancient Culture in the Bulgarian town of Svishtov in September 2009. This event had two aspects to it. On the one hand, this was one of many (as it later turned out) foreign trips during which Hrubieszów's archaeology was promoted; on the other hand, for many members of the Gothic community, this meant overcoming another barrier. The bottom-up initiative of commemorating the excavations carried out in their home village transformed into an opportunity to open up horizons, have new experiences and get to know new people in circles which undertake similar activities. The projects, implemented together by three sectors: the private sector, NGOs, and the local authorities, were the topic of many conference presentations and numerous publications about ways to use EU funds and so-called good practices (e.g. Bartecki 2010; 2012; Kokowski 2011).

Welcome to Gothania

The idea of promoting Masłomęcz's archaeology emerged in a small group of people. From the very beginning, the bottom-up initiatives were consistently supported, in terms of organisation and administration, by the municipality of Hrubieszów, which appreciated the value and significance of its cultural heritage. The Institute of Archaeology of

the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin and the Hrubieszów Museum were in charge of aspects related to science. The activities undertaken by the residents of Masłomęcz were quickly noted, and their effects far exceeded the borders of the municipality. Accordingly, it was decided to cooperate with many municipalities (*gminas*) from the three neighbouring districts (*powiats*). The experience and achievements of the Gothic community of Masłomęcz in turn became the starting point for much bigger projects. According to the original idea, developed in 2009, the project "Welcome to Gothania" involves generating socio-economic capital through building a supralocal brand, which will be associated by possible investors and tourists with the region of Hrubieszów, Tomaszów and Zamość. Seven municipalities of the Hrubieszów district, two municipalities of the Tomaszów district, and one municipality of the Zamość district participated in the project. According to the partnership agreement, all of them were partners in the project. The territory on which the project was implemented is a homogeneous and uniform area in geographical, socio-economic, historical and cultural terms. Taking advantage of these qualities e.g. for the purpose of developing tourism, and the implementation of common activities related to introducing and promoting a supralocal brand can bring tangible effects of socio-economic development. It is not by coincidence that the project title includes the word "Gothania". Based on the findings of historical studies and archaeological excavations, in the old times the Goths inhabited the region involved in the project and the intention is for the brand to include the Goths, with their wealth of achievements, which the local authorities intend to recreate and use to facilitate economic and cultural success. The partners' initiative to create a brand strategy (using a cohesive system of visual identification, and creating compatible promotional and investment plans intended to develop an infrastructure to introduce the brand) was aimed at increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the region and was meant to translate into the municipalities' more rational and effective economy.

The projects started in 2008 by the partnership of municipalities were continued in later years. Masłomęcz's archaeology and the activities of the Gothic group were presented as an example of taking advantage of cultural heritage to create an interesting tourism initiative. The commission which allocates the funds of the Swiss Fund was invited

to Masłomęcz (as a representative locality of the region of Gothania) were it was welcomed very warmly by the villagers wearing Gothic garments. The project “From a vision to modern management of the Gothania subregion”, submitted in partnership, was selected for funding by the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme. In this case as well, the objectives, chosen top-down, offered hope that the archaeological heritage would be skilfully and responsibly used. The project is a consequence of a partnership initiative undertaken by the local authorities and is the next, largest step in the direction of creating key product and promotional initiatives specified in the brand strategy, which would attract and keep tourists, which in the intentions of the Brand Strategy of GOTHANIA, completed as part of the first partnership programme “Welcome to Gothania – a project of building and promoting the supralocal brand of the region of Hrubieszów, Tomaszów and Zamość”, will translate into increased income for the municipalities and households of the territory of Gothania. The project tasks, apart from funding new jobs, training, career counselling and study visits to Switzerland, also included the organisation of international promotional events – Festivals of Ancient Culture – Gothania.

Publications

When the “Goths’ Village” Society was established on the initiative of Masłomęcz’s residents, an opportunity arose to obtain funds for the Society’s statutory activities. The earlier projects had been implemented with the help of the municipality of Hrubieszów and the “Better Tomorrow” Local Action Group. After it was registered, the Masłomęcz Society could independently apply for EU funds for activities proposed by its members. New bottom-up initiatives were closely related to the Society’s statute. The first of the independently prepared, implemented and settled projects consisted in publishing a bilingual popular science book entitled *Gocka дума Masłomęcza/ Gothic Pride of Masłomęcz*. The book was meant to be an updated, expanded and translated into English version of the first publication, *30 Reasons to Be Proud of Living in the Land of the Goths*. Since that book had been published, so much changed in Masłomęcz that it was decided together that there was a need for a publication of this kind. The growing interest (also abroad) in the phenomenon of

contemporary Goths from Masłomęcz meant that it was necessary to prepare the book in two languages. In 2012, another project (co-financed by the EU under the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013) was implemented which resulted in publishing 2,000 copies of a visually attractive, easy to read popular science book (Kokowski [ed.] 2012). Copies of the book were sent to several dozen academic centres in Poland and abroad, but most of them reached those residents of the Hrubieszów region to whom the archaeological topic of the Goths had been almost completely unknown. As a result of sending the book to all libraries in the Hrubieszów district, tourist information centres, and persons who work in tourism, the awareness of the archaeological heritage visibly increased, and Masłomęcz became one of the frequently visited places on the map of the Lublin Voivodeship (Figs. 7a, 7b).

It was also decided, by a group of local community members, to prepare a mobile exhibition, equally visually attractive as the previously published book, consisting of over a dozen thematic panels. In this case, three parallel columns in Polish, English and German, with illustrations and photographs of the original monuments, presented the most important and most interesting issues related to the Gothic migration across Europe, old crafts, and funeral customs. The exhibition, easy to transport, was meant to be lent out free of charge to schools, libraries, community centres and museums. It was also used as an element of exhibitions during conferences and tourism fairs. Apart from the dominant Roman period, the mobile exhibition also included panels about other periods of prehistory, ranging from the Stone Age to the Early Middle Ages (the time when so-called Cherven' Towns existed). This was meant to present other, equally as rich and interesting, archaeological discoveries in the Hrubieszów region.

The Goths' Village open-air museum

The Gothic hut built in 2007 was originally supposed to recall the archaeological discoveries in Hrubieszów. The 1:2 scale model was in fact only a symbolic memorial of the excavations, which could not aspire to the name of an archaeological reconstruction. This was because, at the time when it was decided to construct the building, nobody could have predicted the direction in which this initiative would go.

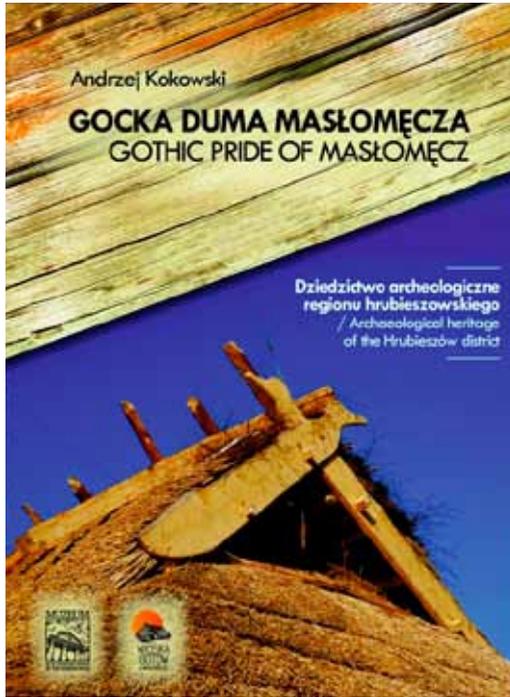


Fig. 7a and **Fig. 7b**. Publications and exhibitions – joint initiatives of the “Goths’ Village” Society in Masłomęcz and the Hrubieszów Museum



After a Gothic community representing a few generations was created and the historical correctness of the presented aspects of everyday life 1,700 years ago became important, there was a need to build the infrastructure for future popularisation efforts and educational and tourism activities. It turned out that this economically poor region had a chance to build an attractive tourist destination for a specific type of client. The popularity achieved as a result of the efforts of the municipality of Hrubieszów, the Museum, and the Society, as well as the idea of building the local brand of Gothania, meant that it was also noted on the voivodeship level that there was an opportunity to increase visitors' interest in the Lublin Voivodeship. Together with the Society and under the patronage of Hrubieszów, the project "The Goths' Village in Masłomęcz" was conceived, which is being implemented by the municipality of Hrubieszów. The project involves the construction of a large archaeological open-air museum, consisting of over a dozen reconstructed buildings. So far, eight buildings have been completed. The most important one is the so-called longhouse, which is an attempt to reconstruct an 11x21m housing building discovered in Hrubieszów-Podgórze. At the moment the complex consists of several thematic huts related to pottery making, weaving, dyeing, smithery and ancient trade. The buildings are connected by a network of wooden tracks and surrounded by a wattle fence. The main objective of this initiative is to preserve, as much as possible at the moment, the historical correctness of the techniques and materials used in construction. More buildings are planned in the next few years (Figs. 8–10).

The Goths' Village in Masłomęcz is a valuable place in terms of education and entertainment. It is the stage for living history lessons, old crafts workshops and archaeological open-air events. The space is also used for performing archaeological experiments, such as firing pots, preparing food, making and dyeing fabric from the flax which grows in the village, or from sheep wool (sheep, along with goats and geese, are kept in the village).

The open-air museum was opened in May 2014. In the same year, an expanded version of the book about the Gothic pride of Masłomęcz was published (Kokowski [ed.] 2014). The open-air museum has been under the supervision of the Hrubieszów Museum from the very beginning. The Goths' Village has been visited by thousands of visitors from Poland and abroad (Fig. 11).



Fig. 8. Archaeological fêtes in Masłomęcz attract thousands of tourists to the Goths' Village (Photo by Ł. Mazurek)

As a result of the involvement of many people (enthusiasts, scientists, and members of the local authorities), it has been possible to interest the public in the local archaeological heritage without the need to emulate foreign models. Cherven' Towns and Bolesław the Brave's campaign against Kiev in 1018 are talked about here with equal passion as the Gothic funeral customs. Good cooperation, and the local teachers' approach, plays the key role here. As a result of the initiative of a few teachers from the local schools, it was possible to organise classes about the Goths and prepare students to test their knowledge in archaeological contests. A skilful and attractive way of conveying information about the discoveries and participation in events organised by scientists from around the world also made it possible to stir people's imagination with regard to small finds found on regularly ploughed fields. This imagination, shaped – to an extent probably unknowingly – by the archaeologists from Lublin, brought results directly after the excavations had finished. The bottom-up initiative of the local community, the motivation to act in the local environment, and openness to innovative



Fig. 9 and **Fig. 10**. Reconstructed cabins in the Goths' Village (Photo by B. Bartecki)





Fig. 11. Living history lessons in the Goths' Village have become a tourist attraction for all age groups (Photo by B. Bartecki)

ideas started a completely new chapter in the history of Masłomęcz, where the Goths returned to the Hrubieszów Basin.

The community's increased awareness means that cases of accidental discoveries of finds on the surface of freshly ploughed fields are reported more and more frequently. As a result of such reports, it was e.g. possible to examine and publish the results of findings from the Early Bronze Age site in Rogalin (Hyrchała and Bartecki [eds.] 2015), and the early medieval cemetery in Gródek on the Bug. Police officers from the entire Hrubieszów district also show archaeological awareness; knowing to expect new archaeological sites in the region, when informed about an accidental discovery of human bones, they first telephone the Hrubieszów Museum and summon an archaeologist, rather than the district attorney.

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