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PROFESSOR ANDRZEJ MAREK WYRWA (1955– 2022), DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM OF THE FIRST PIASTS AT LEDNICA

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The date 17 November 2022 marked the death of Prof. Andrzej Marek Wyrwa, an archaeologist, a historian, a 'Cistercian-specialist', Director of the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, and an associate professor working at the Department of Mediaeval History at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

Born on 22 March 1955 in Krzyż Wielkopolski, he and his family actually came from Drawsko where he grew up. Having graduated from the Henryk Sucharski Comprehensive School in Krzyż Wielkopolski in 1974, he subsequently studied history and also archaeology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. In 1978, he defended his MA thesis in history titled 'Genesis and Beginnings of Cistercian Monasteries in Greater Poland' written under Prof. Jerzy Strzelczyk. He defended his MA thesis in archaeology titled 'Role of Stone in Early-mediaeval Culture in Poland' written under Prof. Jan Żak in 1981. When still at university: in 1976, 1978, and 1980, he participated in the archaeological research into the ancient Roman town of Novae (today in Bulgaria) conducted under Prof. Parnicki-Pudełko.

Prof. Wyrwa's main academic focus was crystalized early, and it oscillated around questions related to the early Middle Ages, history of monasticism, and particularly the network of monasteries of monks, canons, and medicants in Poland and Europe, with a special emphasis on the history and culture of the Cistercian Order. He paid much attention to the founding processes of Cistercian monasteries in Greater Poland, but also to pre-Romanesque and

Romanesque architecture, settlement transformations in the early Middle Ages, and changes in the environment. Apart from the monasticism-related issues, his academic interest covered the questions of everyday life from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Furthermore, he devoted much of his studying to the questions connected with the mentality of the past, beliefs, forms of religiousness and piety, including funerary prejudices and anti-vampire procedures, as well as the movement of Polish pilgrims across Europe. In later years, he also developed interests related to the history of archaeology and to museology.

Prof. Wyrwa's greatest scholarly project in his career was a many-years' scrupulous archaeological research at Łekno near Wągrowiec in northern Greater Poland conducted uninterruptedly in 1982-2008 by the 'Łekno' Archaeological Expedition he had created. The excavations resulted in spectacular discoveries of a pre-Romanesque rotunda from the times of the Early-Piast monarchy, and of a Cistercian church and monastery founded in 1153 by Zbylut of the Pałuki family. The importance of those discoveries for the unravelling of the history of the first centuries of the Polish state cannot be overestimated, since they allowed to identify an important stronghold from the Early-Piast monarchy: important enough to boast a brick Christian church (the rotunda). Furthermore, the location of one of the two oldest Cistercian monasteries in Poland was identified. The research at Łekno was of a trailblazing character. It was there that the radiocarbon (of Carbon-14) dating method of mortar applied in

architectural facilities was used. Among other spectacular discoveries the identification of the treasure: early-mediaeval coins from Tarnów (Łekno) can be ranked.

Prof. Wyrwa's greatest successes include, among others, the rediscovery of the Church of St Nicolaus at Tarnów Pałuski, strongly bonded with the Łekno Cistercians, a jewel in the crown of wooden architecture. It was thanks the Prof. Wyrwa's efforts that detailed archaeological research could be conducted there (1999), and so were architectural and dendrological studies which allowed to date the beginnings of the current church to the 14th century (earlier, it had been dated to the 17th century), as well as to identify the relics of an earlier church from the mid-13th century. Thanks to those findings the church in Tarnow was for a long time regarded to be the oldest wooden church in Poland. It is greatly owing to Prof. Wyrwa that this priceless wooden building was renovated, and has been preserved until this very day. The results of the research conducted at Łekno and Tarnów Pałuski have been published in numerous papers which appeared in various journals, also in *Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Pałuk*, which Prof. Wyrwa established and edited, as well as in separate books.

Among the closest co-workers of Prof. Wyrwa in the 'Łekno' Archaeological Expedition mention has to be made of the following: Elżbieta Miłosz, Piotr Namiota (both from UAM), Maciej Przybył, PhD, and Tomasz Kasproicz (the latter two affiliated to the Archaeological Museum in Poznan). The research was also participated by archaeologists, historians, and anthropologists, as well as representatives of other disciplines.

It was the history of the Cistercian monastery at Łekno that was the closest to Prof. Wyrwa's sphere of interest, involving him entirely even many years after the conclusion of the archaeological research on that site. In 2016, he orchestrated an unusual ceremony: 'Peregrination of Zbylut's Documents to the Sources' on the occasion of entering the foundation document of the Łekno monastery from 1153, the oldest document found in Polish archives, into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. To commemorate the event Prof. Wyrwa financed a reconstruction of the Łekno bell from the 13th century. In 2007–2008, he also conducted an archaeological research at the former Cistercian monastery in Łąd on the Warta River, aiming to identify its respective construction stages.

At the same time, Andrzej Wyrwa followed his career of a university professor. As of 1984 he was a staff member at the Faculty of History at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. But even before that, still as a doctoral student, he had set up a 'Team to Investigate into the History and Culture of the Cistercians in Poland', operating at the University. In 1985, he defended his doctoral dissertation titled 'Chronicle of World Events by Alberic of Trois-Fontaines as a Source for the History of East Central and Eastern Europe', written under Prof. Jerzy Strzelczyk. In 1996, he was conferred a post-doctoral degree based on the book *Foundation Processes in Greater-Poland Cistercian Monasteries of the Altenberg Line. Łekno, Łąd, Obra* published in 1995.¹ In 1997, he became an associate professor, and in 2004, he was conferred the academic title of professor. In 2004–2009, he ran courses at the Greater Poland Academy of Tourism and Management in Poznan.



1. Professor Andrzej Marek Wyrwa (1955–2022), Photo J. Pawleta

An appreciated teacher, he always enjoyed a high turnout at his lectures on the pre-history of Europe. Owing to his lectures, MA seminars, and to field research, he was a teacher of several generations of archaeologists and historians, as well as specialists of akin disciplines. Prof. Wyrwa used to demonstrate that historical research could be a fabulous adventure involving methods of various sciences. He was unrivalled when speaking about the past and different meanders of researching into it. Whenever he began talking about distant history, customs of our ancestors, or the need to cherish the memory of the past generations, all the talks and whispers shushed. He had the gift for inspiring interest of young research novices in an outlook that differed from the one that dominated and has continued to dominate in Polish historiography. All this because he did not tackle the political and battle dimensions that everybody was acquainted with, but spoke about religiousness, old mentality, culture, cuisine; moreover, he revealed how to read the 'ephemeral spirit' of the old times in traces left by the past generations, provided one combined various scientific methods, as well as appropriate sensitivity and knowledge. Prof. Wyrwa had the skill at winning people's friendliness, identifying their predispositions, and at aptly guiding his students whom he almost immediately involved in the whirl of true research, which helped them improve their investigative skills in practice. He supervised four doctoral dissertations and a number of MA theses. The excavations run by the 'Łekno' Archaeological Expedition under his

supervision were for many students a true adventure and a training in archaeological and historical research, a school of interdisciplinary thinking, a spot where their passion for science was born. The Łekno formed dozens of future mature academics of many disciplines.

In 2008, he became Director of the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, composed of several branches located in Greater Poland: at Dziekanowice on Lake Lednica, and also at Giecz and Grzybowo. From its establishment in 1969, the institution continuously faced challenges resulting from the lack of back-up facilities such as buildings and spaces for displays, storage, and offices. At the very beginning, the problem was solved provisionally, as the buildings at the Greater Poland Ethnographic Park and of the state-owned farm, PGR, at Dziekanowice taken over in the 1990s, were adjusted for the purpose. As a result, the storages with heritage pieces, archives, as well as academic and educational labs were dispersed throughout many facilities of the Museum branches adapted to fulfil the above functions. All these spaces allowed to secure minimal standards of proper storage. From the very beginning of serving as the Museum's Director Andrzej Marek Wyrwa aimed at solving these problems. The first step to improve tourist and display infrastructure was the implementation of the programme of extending archaeological open-air museums at Ostrów Lednicki as well as at Giecz and Grzybowo where by 2013 new edifices housing display rooms and offices had been raised.

The next stage was aimed at solving the shortages in adequate display and storage spaces for Museum's collection related to Ostrów Lednicki. The main goal was to extend the building so as to allow to concentrate the main labs and provide rooms in which the most precious exhibits from the times of the early Piasts' monarchy could be properly stored and displayed. These goals were achieved in 2019–2022 when a new Museum seat was raised in the place of the old manor farm barn at Dziekanowice; previously, it had housed the main display room with an exhibition dedicated to Ostrów Lednicki. Officially, the opening of the new Museum seat was held on 7 October, 2022. Regrettably, Prof. Wyrwa's advancing illness did not allow him to personally attend the event, and he participated in it online. On his behalf, the ribbon was cut by Professor's son Witold. By having raised the Museum's seat Prof. Wyrwa made the dream of many generations of researchers and museum curators come true: the dream begun already in the 19th century by Albin Węsierski to display with all due respect the heritage of Ostrów Lednicki. Prof. Wyrwa was very meticulous about giving the appropriate prestige to the Lednica Museum so that it could duly reflect the historical value of the unique collection and site. Therefore, he was very hopeful about the plans for the Museum to be co-run both by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the local government of Greater Poland.

Furthermore, he was greatly focused on various academic projects which resulted in a thorough analysis of heritage pieces coming from archaeological excavations, this happening to the previously unrivalled extent. Greatly detailed studies of heritage pieces from the Museum collection have been published in studies extended on his instigation. A number of studies related to the research at Ostrów Lednicki, Giecz, Grzybowo, or Radzim near Murowana Goślina have been appearing. Apart from the *Studia Lednickie* periodical

published as of 1989, it was on Prof. Wyrwa's initiative that the publishing series 'Biblioteka Studiów Lednickich' was extended to the following series: A, B1 Fontes, B2 Fontes, C, and D of varied factual range.

Over the 14 years he served as Director of the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, Prof. Wyrwa initiated and promoted numerous important cultural events, including archaeological, historical, and ethnographic exhibitions. Many were appreciated with prizes and honours in the Izabella Contest (30 prizes and honourable mentions) and Sybilla Contest (seven prizes and honourable mentions). Let us name here the most important of the events which coincided with the 1050th anniversary of the Baptism of Poland. On that occasion, on 14 April 2016, a celebration attended by state authorities, representatives of the local government, and of the Catholic Church were held at Ostrów Wielkopolski, which was under the guardianship of the Museum. It was also on that occasion that a floating bridge to Ostrów Lednicki (for the third time in history) was built. To commemorate that event the Museum founded the 'Mieszko and Dobrawa' Bell. Over the discussed period, Lednica heritage pieces were shown at many prestigious European institutions, such as Copenhagen's Nationalmuseet or London's British Museum, or at the 'Benedictines in the Heart of Europe' Exhibition in Prague. Furthermore, Prof. Wyrwa was the originator of the prestigious Prize of the Piast Eagle awarded annually since 2009 by the Marshal of the Greater Poland Voivodeship for the contribution to the research into the Piast dynasty.

Prof. Wyrwa was greatly interested in the history of research into Ostrów Lednicki, particularly in the activity of Count Albin Węsierski who purchased the island from the Prussian government in 1856. He highly appreciated Count's contribution to the research into the site, predominantly for the fact that the latter had prevented the historic Lednica palatium from destruction. Prof. Wyrwa also accomplished a project to commemorate Węsierski with a commemorative plate in his burial chapel in the Parish Church of St Nicolas in Sławno. His interest in Count was crowned with the discovery of a previously unknown photograph of Count Albin in 2021.

In the recent years, Prof. Wyrwa became increasingly more interested in the questions of promoting museology. He was the instigator and Editor-in-Chief of the *Museion Poloniae Maioris* annual published by the Foundation of Museums of Greater Poland. One of the most recent volumes of the journal was dedicated to the history of museology in Greater Poland on the 100th years of the First Congress of Museums held in Poznan in 1921.² He was also involved in mounting the Conference 'The Museum of the 21st Century 100 Years after the First Congress of Polish Museums in Poznan' organized in Poznan on 1–3 June 2022. The Conference participants visited the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica.

Prof. Wyrwa authored over 62 studies, articles for general public, and feature pieces, including over 22 monographs, 64 collective works he edited, as well as papers in prestigious journals domestically and internationally. Not only did he write extremely valuable academic pieces, but also historical books for the youngest readers.³ From among his numerous publications let us mention a few major ones: *Procesy fundacyjne wielkopolskich klasztorów cysterskich*



2. Opening of the 'Knife: an Original Object' Exhibition at the Archaeological Reserve: Stronghold in Grzybowo, branch of the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, 22 May 2018, Photo M. Jóźwikowska

linii altenberskiej. *Łekno, Ląd, Obra* (1995),⁴ *Pietas Ecclesiae et fides plebis. Szkice z dziejów religijności i wierzeń na ziemi tekneńskiej od średniowiecza do czasów nowożytnych* (2006),⁵ *Święty Jakub Apostoł. Malakologiczne i historyczne ślady peregrynacji z ziem polskich do Santiago de Compostela* (2009),⁶ *Klasztory cysterskie w Łeknie i Wągrowcu* (2010),⁷ *Klejnot architektury drewnianej ziem polskich. Kościół św. Mikołaja w Tarnowie Pałuckim. Wielkopolska* (2011),⁸ *Zaprowadzenie chrześcijaństwa w Polsce. Krótkie studium obrazu Jana Matejki „Zaprowadzenie chrześcijaństwa R.P. 965”* (2013, together with Barbara Ciciora),⁹ *Gdzie – Gdzie. Scire est reminisci. Krótka historia wydobywania z zapomnienia rezydencji piastowskiej* (2014),¹⁰ *Cisterciana. Studia z dziejów i kultury Zakonu Cysterskiego* (2017).¹¹

Furthermore, he edited many publishing series and journals. Apart from the above-mentioned *Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Pałuk* and *Museion Poloniae Maioris*, also *Studia Lednickie* and *Biblioteka Studiów Lednickich* should be mentioned.

Importantly, Prof. Wyrwa was essentially involved in making cultural heritage available to the public in an appropriate way. He contributed to working out the concept of many important tourist trails across Greater Poland. From 1992 he was an academic coordinator of the Cistercian trail across Greater Poland, from 2003 he served as President of the Coordination Council for the Cistercian Trail in Poland. Moreover, he became member of the Programme and Academic Council for the Piast Trail founded in 2011. Thanks to his efforts, Ostrów Lednicki, a place where a tomb with a scallop shell was discovered, was in 2010 incorporated into the Way of St James.

Overall, we can say that through his activity and attitude, in a way he bridged the gap between various circles: academic, museum-related, artistic, historical, and archaeological. He had the gift for uniting them all around one project, perfectly integrating them.

Prof. Wyrwa was member of numerous associations, commissions, committees, and academic teams, including the Poznań Society for the Advancement of Arts and Sciences, Commission on Church Architecture of ICOMOS Poland, Centre Européen de Recherche sur les Communautés, Congrégations et Ordres Religieux at the Université de Saint-Étienne in France (in 1985–1989), Scientific Society of Polish Archaeologists, Commission on Archaeology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Commission on Church Comparative History of the Committee on Historical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, University Centre of Mediaeval and Modern Archaeology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Institute for the Historical Geography of the Church in Poland at the Catholic University Lublin, Honorary Committee of the Millennium of the Benedictine Abbey in Tyniec, Coordination Council for the Cistercian Trail in Poland run by the Abbot President of the Polish Cistercian Congregation, the above-mentioned Programme and Academic Council for the Piast Trail, and of many others. He also participated in the works of such organizations as the Society of Łekna Enthusiasts, Society of the Pałuki Region Enthusiasts in Wągrowiec, or the Society of the City of Poznań Enthusiasts, and many others.

For his accomplishments, Andrzej Marek Wyrwa received numerous awards, including the Prize in Culture of the

Marshal of the Greater Poland Voivodeship. Furthermore, he received e.g., Medal of the Commission of National Education, Silver Medal of the Gloria Artis Medal for Merit to Culture, 'silver ring of 2,000 Years and Christianity and 1,000 Years of the Wrocław Diocese' for his research into the Cistercians in Poland from Cardinal Henryk Gulbinowicz, 'For Merit to the Greater Poland Voivodeship' badge of honour, 'For Guardianship of Heritage' Golden Badge, as well as many distinctions.

The life of Prof. Wyrwa was filled with work which yielded outstanding results. However, it was not limited to the academic or museological career. Deep in his heart, he was an artist, and a very talented one indeed. In his leisure, he would play the violin, paint, and sculpt. When speaking

about art, he proved great competence, and he could talk for hours on end about birds, particularly about his beloved swifts.

Prof. Wyrwa's close co-workers were deeply saddened by the news of his death. Since it is unbearable to think that we will never again discuss with him history, or archaeological and archival discoveries. It is very hard to accept that we will never hear his characteristic bon-mots. He was the best boss one could wish to have, able to motivate everyone to act, while at the same time friendly to everyone regardless of their position, skilful at combining the sense of humour with sensitivity. Not only have we lost an outstanding scholar, a museum director, but first of all a good and warm-hearted person.

Abstract: The date 17 November 2022 marked the death of Prof. Andrzej Marek Wyrwa, a historian and archaeologist, a long-standing professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and Director of the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica. Born on 22 March 1955 in Krzyż Wielkopolski, he graduated in history (1978) and archaeology (1981) from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Bonded with his alma mater in his scholarly activity, where he worked uninterruptedly as of 1984, he was conferred doctoral degree in 1985, post-doctoral degree in 1996, and became professor in 2004. Having headed the 'Łekno' Archaeological Expedition in 1982–2008, he conducted excavations at Ł3 archaeological site at Łekno near Wągrowiec which resulted in a spectacular discovery of pre-Romanesque rotunda relics dating back to the Early-Piast monarchy, of a stronghold, and of a Cistercian monastery

founded in 1153. In many aspects that research into the whole settlement complex around Łekno was trailblazing, extensive, and interdisciplinary. Having become Director of the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica in 2008, over the 14 years of his contribution to that institution he implemented crucial projects enabling its operation. In 2013, he extended the archaeological reserves at Ostrów Lednicki, Giecz, and Grzybowo. He also extended the Dziekanowice seat of the Museum making the dream of generations of Polish scholars and museologists come true: to have Ostrów Lednicki's Piasts' heritage proudly manifested. Not so long ago, since on 7 October 2022, together with Prof. Wyrwa we happily celebrated the launch of the new Museum building. Furthermore, his academic legacy contains over 625 academic studies, works for general public, and pieces of feature writing.

Keywords: Andrzej Marek Wyrwa, Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, archaeology, history, museology, monasticism, Ostrów Lednicki, Łekno, Cistercian Order.

Endnotes

¹ A.M. Wyrwa, *Procesy fundacyjne wielkopolskich klasztorów cysterskich linii altenberskiej. Łekno, Ląd i Obra*, Poznań 1995.

² *Museion Poloniae Maioris* 8 (2021).

³ A.M. Wyrwa, *Jak książę Mieszko chrześcijaninem się stawał*, Poznań 2015.

⁴ *Idem, Procesy fundacyjne wielkopolskich klasztorów cysterskich...*, Poznań 1995.

⁵ *Idem, Pietas Ecclesiae et fides plebis. Szkice z dziejów religijności i wierzeń na ziemi łekneńskiej od średniowiecza do czasów nowożytnych*, Poznań 2006.

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⁸ *Idem, Klejnot architektury drewnianej ziem polskich. Kościół św. Mikołaja w Tarnowie Pałuckim. Wielkopolska*, Bydgoszcz 2011.

⁹ B. Ciciora, A.M. Wyrwa, *Zaprowadzenie chrześcijaństwa w Polsce. Krótkie studium obrazu Jana Matejki „Zaprowadzenie chrześcijaństwa R.P. 965”*, Dziekanowice–Lednica 2013.

¹⁰ A.M. Wyrwa, *Gdecz – Giecz. Scire est reminisci. Krótka historia wydobywania z zapomnienia rezydencji piastowskiej*, Dziekanowice–Lednica 2014.

¹¹ *Idem, Cisterciana. Studia z dziejów i kultury Zakonu Cysterskiego*, Kraków–Poznań 2017.

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