

DOI: 10.15584/anarres.2018.13.13

Agnieszka Stempin\*

## The Early Piast Settlement on Ostrów Tumski (Cathedral Island) in Poznań – the Popularisation of Heritage from the Standpoint of the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve

### ABSTRACT

Stempin A. 2018. The Early Piast Settlement on Ostrów Tumski (Cathedral Island) in Poznań – the Popularisation of Heritage from the Standpoint of the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve. *Analecta Archaeologica Ressoiviensia* 13, 257–286

In 2012, a new department of the Archaeological Museum in Poznań – the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve – was established on Ostrów Tumski (Cathedral Island) in Poznań. The island is a unique historical space, where archaeological excavations have been underway since 1938. It is thanks to them that the scope of knowledge about the beginnings of both the Polish state and the city of Poznań has improved significantly, and the results of these works have altered historians' knowledge. The reserve has been designed so that visitors can learn about the earliest history from the point of view of science, and accompany archaeologists and representatives of other modern disciplines in discovering the secrets of long forgotten areas of history. The structures of the perfectly preserved rampart of the Poznań stronghold and the soil profiles have been made accessible to visitors in the form of an archaeological excavation site. With the use of multimedia, discreetly placed throughout the exhibition, the entire spectrum of information about the Piast settlement from the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century is presented, as is the rich collection of archaeological relics collected during many years of excavations. The article outlines the reserve's activities to date and discusses the problem of reaching out to adults who seek a deeper and organised contact with culture.

**Keywords:** archaeological heritage, early medieval stronghold, defensive constructions, museum exhibition – forms of presentation.

**Received:** 12.12.2018; **Revised:** 28.12.2018; **Revised:** 28.12.2018; **Accepted:** 30.12.2018

### Introduction

Popularising science, especially disciplines related to history, is a significant aspect of museums' activity, and museologists are, to a large extent, mediators who build public awareness of new discoveries and the current state of knowledge. Therefore, the role of the quality,

---

\* Archaeological Museum in Poznań, *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve, Ks. Ignacego Posadzego 3, 61-108 Poznań, Poland; agnieszka.stempin@muzarp.poznan.pl

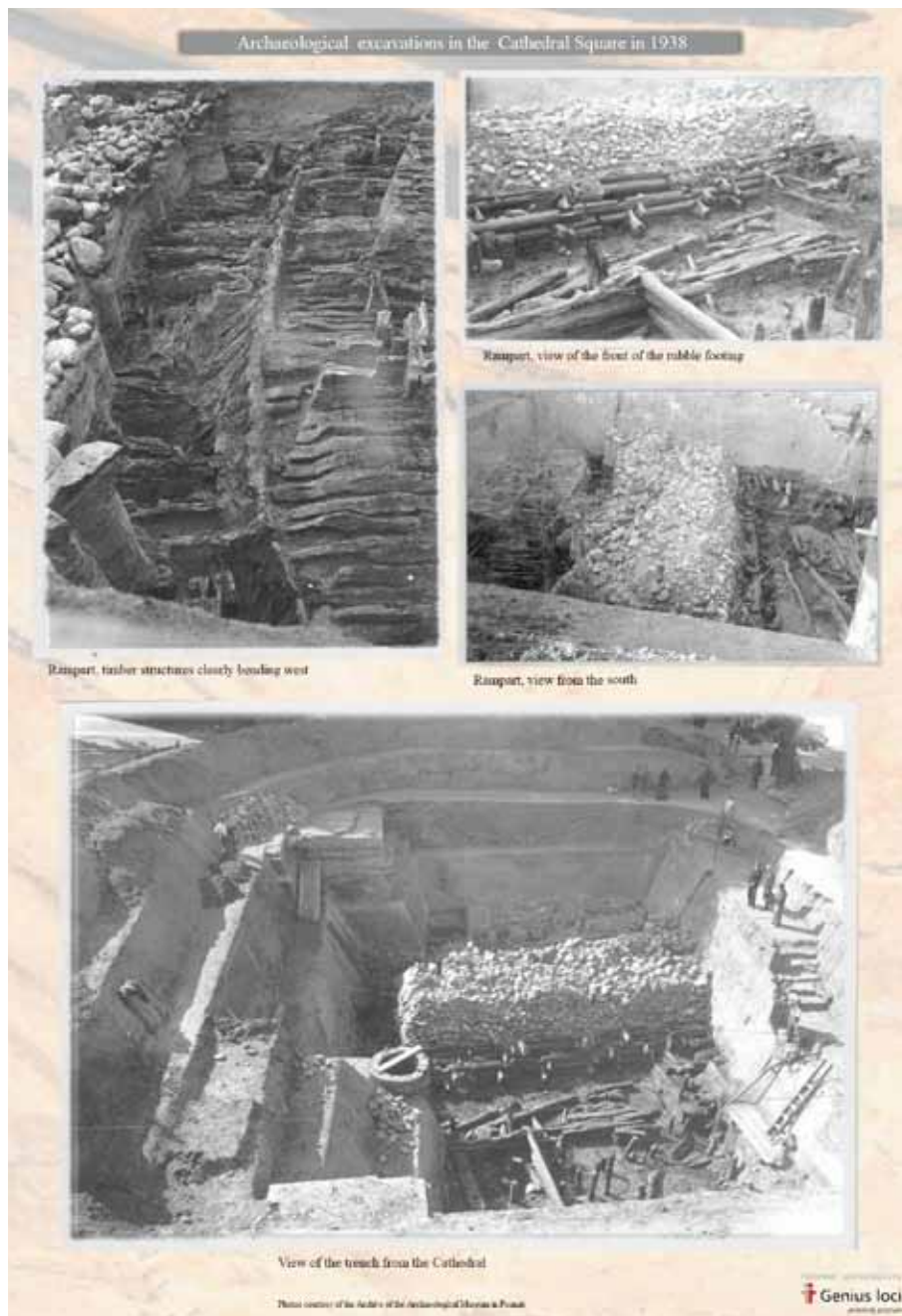
clarity and level of the message which is constructed, although often underestimated, seems to be an incredibly important matter. In the case of creating a new museum, all aspects, from the thematic concept and architectural form, to the choice of instruments of transmitting information, will determine its overall public reception and the success of its mission to develop people's understanding of cultural heritage. Many aspects had to be considered when we started to arrange the exhibitions of the Archaeological Reserve on Ostrów Tumski in Poznań; those elements were related both to the specific nature of the topic and to many years of efforts made by archaeologists to make the oldest relics from Cathedral Island available to visitors. The stronghold's location started to attract interest in 1936, when the Historical Commission of the Poznań Society of Friends of Science decided to start looking for the old city, since the memory about its oldest history had become blurred. The first investigations were conducted in 1938, on the initiative of Professor Józef Kostrzewski, who managed to convince the city's mayor at the time, Tadeusz Ruge, to organise and finance works on the Cathedral Square (Kóčka-Krenz 2013, 119–134). The spot to be excavated was selected intuitively; there was a conviction that the Cathedral must have been the most important dominant feature of the city and its vicinity and it was there that the oldest embankments should be looked for. The results of the excavations exceeded all expectations; the archaeologists revealed structures of early medieval fortifications in excellent condition (Fig. 1.) Witold Hensel, who was in charge of the works at that time, wrote in his report summarising the first season of excavations:

The Poznań rampart is at the moment unquestionably the best example of fortifications from the times of Mieszko and Bolesław the Bold. [...] Poznań must have been an outstanding centre of Poland at that time, [...] if it was fortified in this most assiduous manner. The superior role of Poznań in relation to other strongholds seems completely obvious to us in the light of our observations. [...] Based on facts learned from the excavations, Poznań's role as the capital city of Mieszko's Poland seems to be obvious (Hensel 1938b, 507).

The enthusiasm which accompanied the discovery was enormous, to the extent that a spontaneous initiative to build a special archaeological reserve on the site was launched<sup>1</sup>, in the hope that donors would provide

---

<sup>1</sup> This was the first attempt of this kind in Poland.



**Fig. 1.** Structures discovered in the Cathedral Square in Poznań in 1938. Chart from the exhibition 'Archaeological Excavations on Ostrów Tumski in Poznań', presented in the open air on Ostrów Tumski by the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve (Curated by Mateusz Sikora)

the funds for its construction. As Professor Józef Kostrzewski wrote in September 1938 in ‘Kurier Poznański’ (‘The Poznań Courier’),

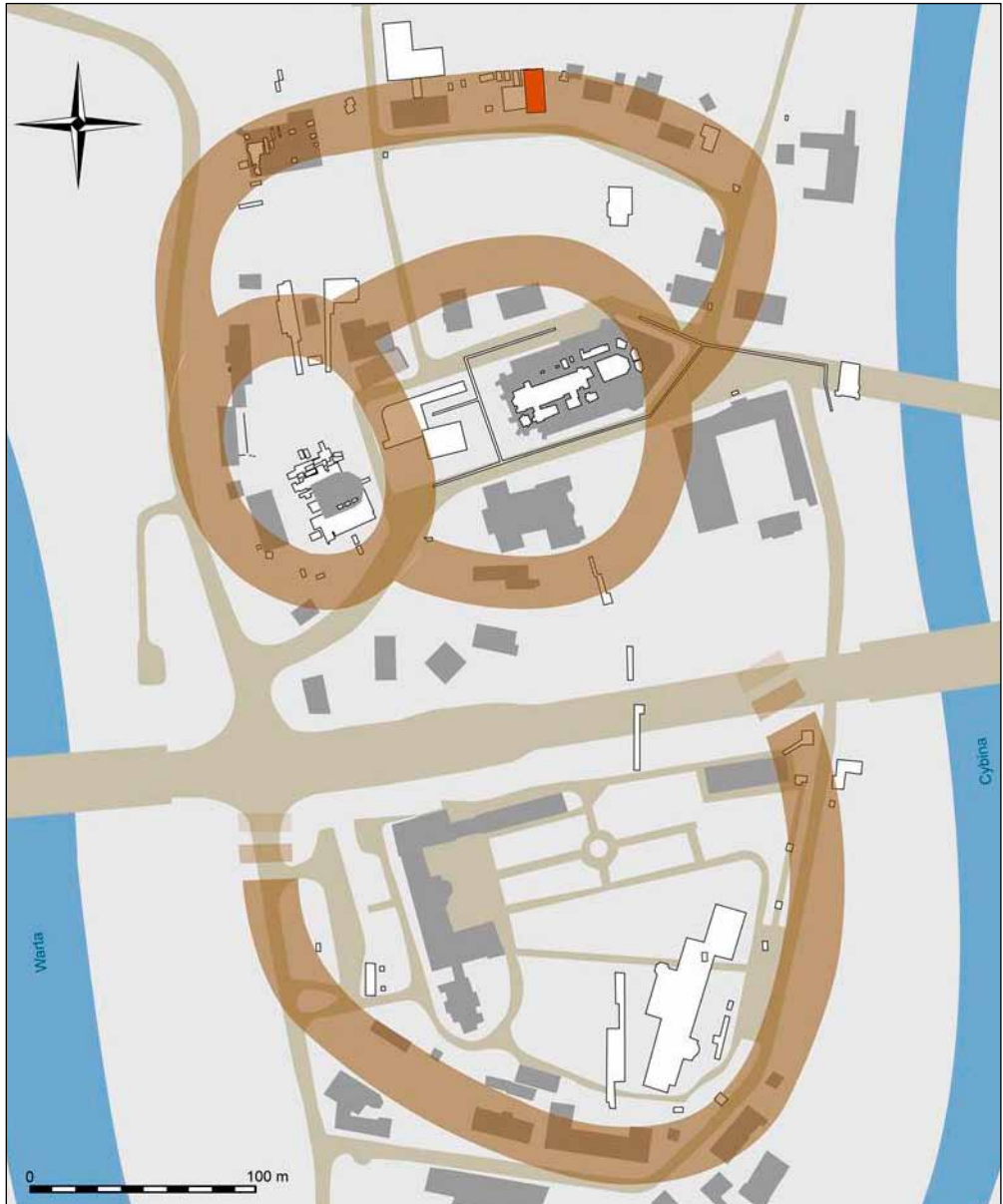
(...) we believe that funds can be collected to preserve such a valuable relic left by the first builders of our state, whose strongest fulcrum at the dawn of its existence were strongholds such as the one in the capital city of Poznań (Kostrzewski 1938, 16).

Witold Hensel argued in his article ‘Zachowajmy na zawsze pozostałości po kolebce Poznania’ [‘Let us preserve forever the relics of Poznań’s cradle’], published in ‘Dziennik Poznański’ (‘The Poznań Daily’):

(...) unfortunately, the Prehistoric Institute of the University of Poznań, which does not have the sum of more than 20,000 zloty needed to erect an underground reinforced concrete construction, must appeal to the public’s generosity. By joining our forces, we can undoubtedly complete the undertaking, which will offer the best glimpse into the culture of the people who lived in the capital city of Poznań (Hensel 1938, 7).

Despite this collective initiative, it was impossible either to raise the necessary funds or to complete the building project. After World War II, works on Ostrów Tumski started in 1946 and continued in various parts of the island; especially at the beginning, they focused on the vicinity and interiors of the most important buildings: the Cathedral and St. Mary’s Church. The implementation of the largest projects (such as the so-called millennium research project) was prioritised, but it should be noted that all efforts of several generations of archaeologists gradually contributed to increasing our knowledge about the stronghold and to restoring the memory about its leading role during the early stages of the Piast state (Fig. 2; Kóčka-Krenz 2013, 119–134). The idea of creating an archaeological reserve was revisited in 2009. Collaboration between the Archaeological Museum in Poznań and the Institute of Archaeology, Adam Mickiewicz University; the Metropolitan Curia’s decision to donate some of its land to educational purposes; the Marshal Office of Greater Poland obtaining funds from the European Union; and the Poznań City Hall providing its financial contribution<sup>2</sup> all combined to complete the project, which had originally been conceived 75 years earlier by the first discoverers of the Poznań stronghold (Szmyt *et al.* 2013, 7).

<sup>2</sup> The project was mainly funded from the Wielkopolska Regional Operational Programme for 2007–2012, which was under the jurisdiction of the Marshall Office of the Wielkopolska Region in Poznań. The remaining costs were covered by the city of Poznań, and the entire investment was carried out by the Archaeological Museum in Poznań.



**Fig. 2.** Fortifications of the Poznań stronghold against the background of contemporary streets, with marked spots where archaeological excavations took place and the dig for building the reserve (Drawn by O. Antowska-Gorączniak, based on Sikora 2014, 90)



**Fig. 3.** Archaeological excavations before the reserve was built (Photo by B. Walkiewicz)

However, the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve was not constructed on the spot where the original excavations took place before World War II, but at the location where the outer side of the stronghold's ramparts (the youngest ring of fortifications of the Poznań stronghold, dated to the 970s) was discovered (Wawrzyniak 2005, 91–110) during the excavations conducted in 5 Posadzego street<sup>3</sup> from 2001 to 2004 by Piotr Wawrzyniak (Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property in Poznań) and later by Professor Hanna Kóčka-Krenz (Institute of Prehistory, Adam Mickiewicz University). The presence of structures similar to the mighty ramparts in the Cathedral Square had been indicated by the investigations conducted by Professor Wojciech Kóčka just before the outbreak of World War II in 1939 (Kóčka-Krenz 2013, 122)<sup>4</sup>. The following seasons of excavations in 5 Posadzego street, carried out in 2009 and 2010, were completed in preparation for the construction of the archaeological reserve and included both the previous and new, adjacent trenches (Fig. 3). During these works,

<sup>3</sup> This was the numbering at the time, at present this is number 5 Posadzego street.

<sup>4</sup> The documentation of these excavations was lost during World War II.



**Fig. 4.** The building which houses the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve (Photo by K. Zisopulu-Bleja)

the embankment was cut perpendicularly to the direction of its line. The trench was 7 by 16 metres and was oriented along the N-S line. The works were conducted by Olga Antowska-Gorączniak, with Professor Hanna Kóčka-Krenz providing scientific supervision. This research space was a consequence of both the architectural design of the future museum and the concept of the spatial arrangement and message of the future exhibition, created by the Archaeological Museum in Poznań. The idea was that the reserve would present the history of the beginnings of the Polish state and the city of Poznań from the archaeological standpoint, and that shedding light on the methods employed by archaeology and various related disciplines would make it possible to offer a reliable answer to the question frequently asked of archaeologists: 'How do you know this?' By documenting the excavations and the process of building the exhibition, and by later faithfully recreating the entire investigated area, including soil profiles, we created an actual excavation space where the work had been carried out. As a result, visitors can accompany the

archaeologists; they can unravel the mysteries of the underground world on their own; they can collect information and see with their own eyes on what basis the current knowledge about the oldest stages of Polish statehood is built. The museum building is a modern design (Fig. 4), which combines concrete, glass and brick, creating the impression of cross-sections and a medley of layers. This corresponds with the main idea of the exhibition: to show a cross-section of Poznań, both with regard to knowledge about the city's ancient history and its very name. The exhibition displayed in the reserve consists of three main parts, which together make one uniform whole, toured according to archaeological logic, i.e. moving from the most recent to the oldest times. The fourth part of the exhibition is devoted to the inhabitants of the settlement – the people who created these structures.

## Elements of the permanent exhibition – stages of touring

### City walls

Following the chronological levels, we begin our tour of the reserve from the youngest relics, i.e. the remains of the city walls which surrounded the bishop's town from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards<sup>5</sup>. Already in 1838, Ignacy Łukasiewicz noted that there was a need to protect the clergy's property, writing:

Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, access to these lodgings, mostly made of timber, was open on all sides. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, the chapter, wanting to protect the church's and its own property from attacks, in 1505 decided to surround all lodgings of the cathedral's clergymen with a wall; and indeed, in the same year the wall started to be built, and a few years later it was completed (Borwiński 2015, 183).

The construction of the walls, akin to Poznań's fortifications, was started on the initiative of Bishop Jan Lubrański. As Father Józef Nowacki wrote, the walls were raised

to protect the cathedral and its vicinity from attacks of bands of highwaymen, which were prowling the area at the time (...) in 1504 the

---

<sup>5</sup> In 1253, as a result of exchanging land, the settlement on Cathedral Island, which had originally been a ducal seat, came into the ownership of the Bishopric of Poznań, and the city was located on the left bank of the Warta River (on land which had previously belonged to the Church).



construction of a defensive wall made of stone and brick [was started] around Ostrów Tumski, with towers and crenels, and with defensive gates and towers by both bridges (Nowacki 1956, 117; Borwiński 2015, 184).

A mighty brick wall, seated on a stone foundation, was connected by two towers situated by the bridges on the Old Warta and Cybina Rivers<sup>6</sup>. The gates built into the towers marked out the main road across the island, which ran from the east to the west. In the present-day landscape on Ostrów, there are no traces of this great project, whose construction was protracted until 1549, and which solidified the clear separation of the urban space surrounded by the wall on the left bank of the Warta and the bishop's space similarly fortified on Cathedral Island (Budzan and Karłowska-Kamzowa 1999, 93; Borwiński 2015, 184). The walls, which lost their function in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> c., were disassembled. A relic of these structures can be found in the first exhibition room of the reserve and can be viewed



**Fig. 5.** The first exhibition room – relics of the walls surrounding Ostrów Tumski from the early 16<sup>th</sup> c., so-called Lubrański's wall (Photo by M. Zakrzewski)

from above, by walking on a glass floor (Fig. 5). This is a fragment of the stone substructure and a brick arch, which belonged to the foundation part of the wall, built in the form of an arcade.

<sup>6</sup> In recent years, scholars have raised the problem of the earlier existence of the walls surrounding Ostrów Tumski in Poznań already in the 1470s (Borwiński 2015, 183–194).

### Soil profiles – a section of Poznań

In order to build an authentic space of an archaeological trench and its real view, it was necessary to create soil profiles, whose considerable dimensions (16×7 m – east profile and 6×7 m – south profile) posed an enormous challenge to the conservators. The motivation behind these efforts was the wish to explain to future reserve visitors how to read stratigraphy and, on this basis, how to build knowledge about the successive stages of how the island was used. This meant that a special method had to be developed<sup>7</sup>, which involved removing individual fragments of the cross-section. They were created by gradually infusing small parts of the original soil layers with a consolidating bind already during fieldwork, so that 24–48 hours later they could be moved to the conservation laboratory in blocks ca. 70 cm high and 10 cm thick. There, larger surfaces of the removed profiles were formed by adding two layers of reinforcing mesh to them, supporting them with an additional base, filling them in and concealing the points of contact between individual profiles using soil collected from the trench, and finally strengthening them on the reverse side with binding resin (Sikora 2014, 92–94). Profiles prepared in this way were deposited in the exhibition area, as a result of which the process of the earth ‘piling up’ is perfectly visible, which resulted in the ground level rising by 5 to 6 metres in comparison to the 10<sup>th</sup> c. (Fig. 6). Analysing the stratigraphy of the east and south profile of the trench, it can be assumed that the height of the entire construction reached ca. 11 metres, together with the now lost crown of the rampart, which was probably formed by a palisade and a platform, which functioned as a walkway (Fig. 7). In the first decade of the 11<sup>th</sup> c., the bank of the rampart was widened by adding new layers of grillage. In this way, the width of the discussed fragment of the fortifications of the Poznań stronghold reached an impressive 27 to 28 metres (Brzostowicz and Stempin 2015, 27–45).

### Relics of early Piast ramparts

The layout of the reserve’s interior guides visitors through successive chronological levels six metres under the ground, until they reach the

---

<sup>7</sup> The method was developed by Robert Rogala from the Institute for the Study, Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and based on techniques similar to preserving wall decorations. In the field, the conservation works were conducted by Andrzej Lewandowski (Sikora 2014, 91).

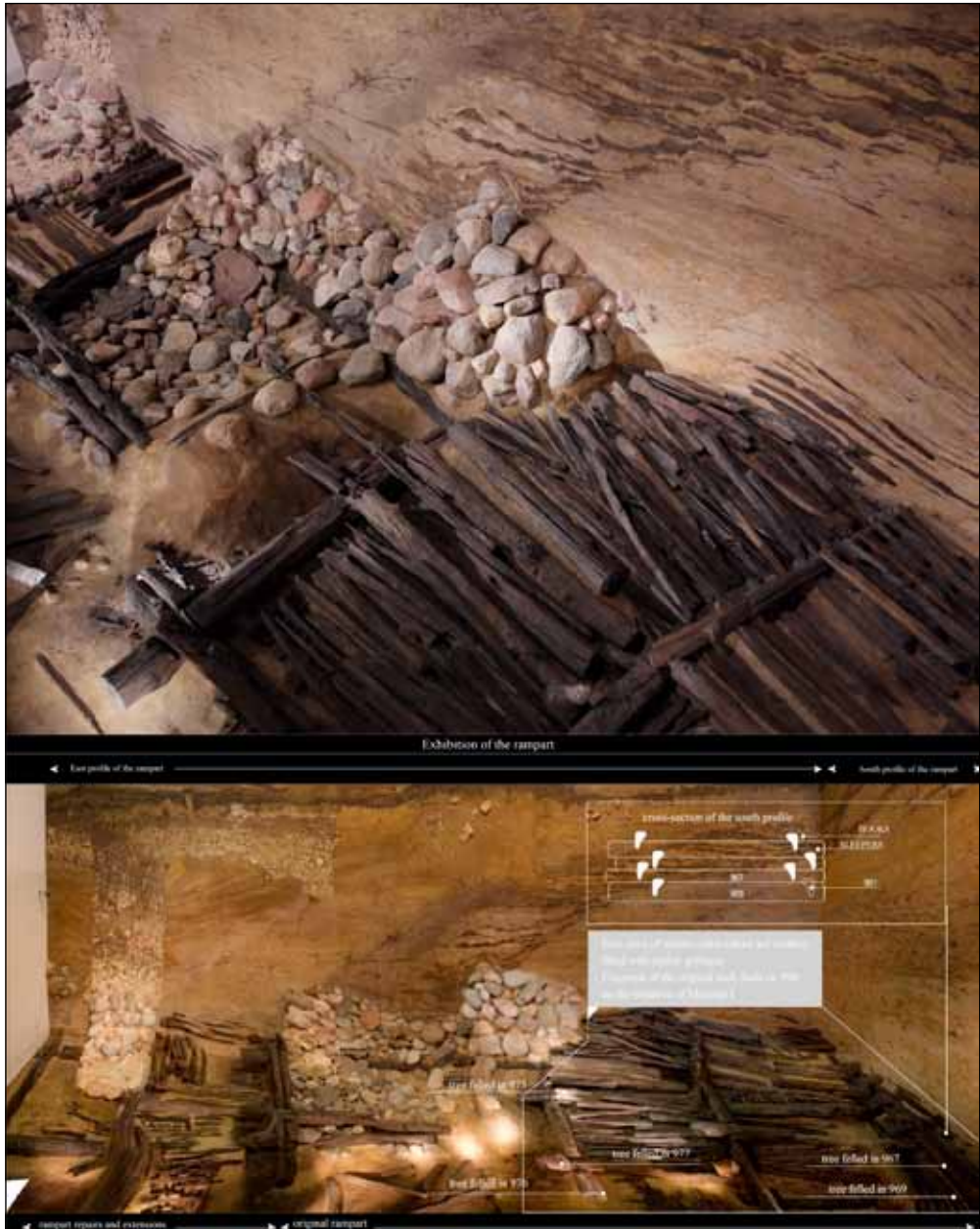


**Fig. 6.** Inside the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve – soil profiles (Photo by K. Zisopulu-Bleja)

oldest fortifications, which are a thousand years old. On the lower terrace, visitors can see up close the precision, the builders' craftsmanship, and the monumental size of the timber constructions protecting the elites of the young Polish state, which were part of the ramparts from the late 10<sup>th</sup> c. (Fig. 7). As Professor Józef Kostrzewski wrote:

The very size of the rampart and the enormous amount of work which went into building it, and even more so the method of its construction, fill us with great admiration for the first historical rulers of Poland, the creators of this impressive structure, and shed an entirely new light on the art of fortification at that time (Kostrzewski 1938, 16).

This is the main and most important part of the exhibition. The ramparts shown in the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve are the most thoroughly studied part of the Poznań fortifications, where we can find all the most important elements characteristic of early Piast defensive



**Fig. 7.** Exhibition of rampart relics with dendrochronological dates of individual oak laths (Photo by K. Zisopulu-Bleja)

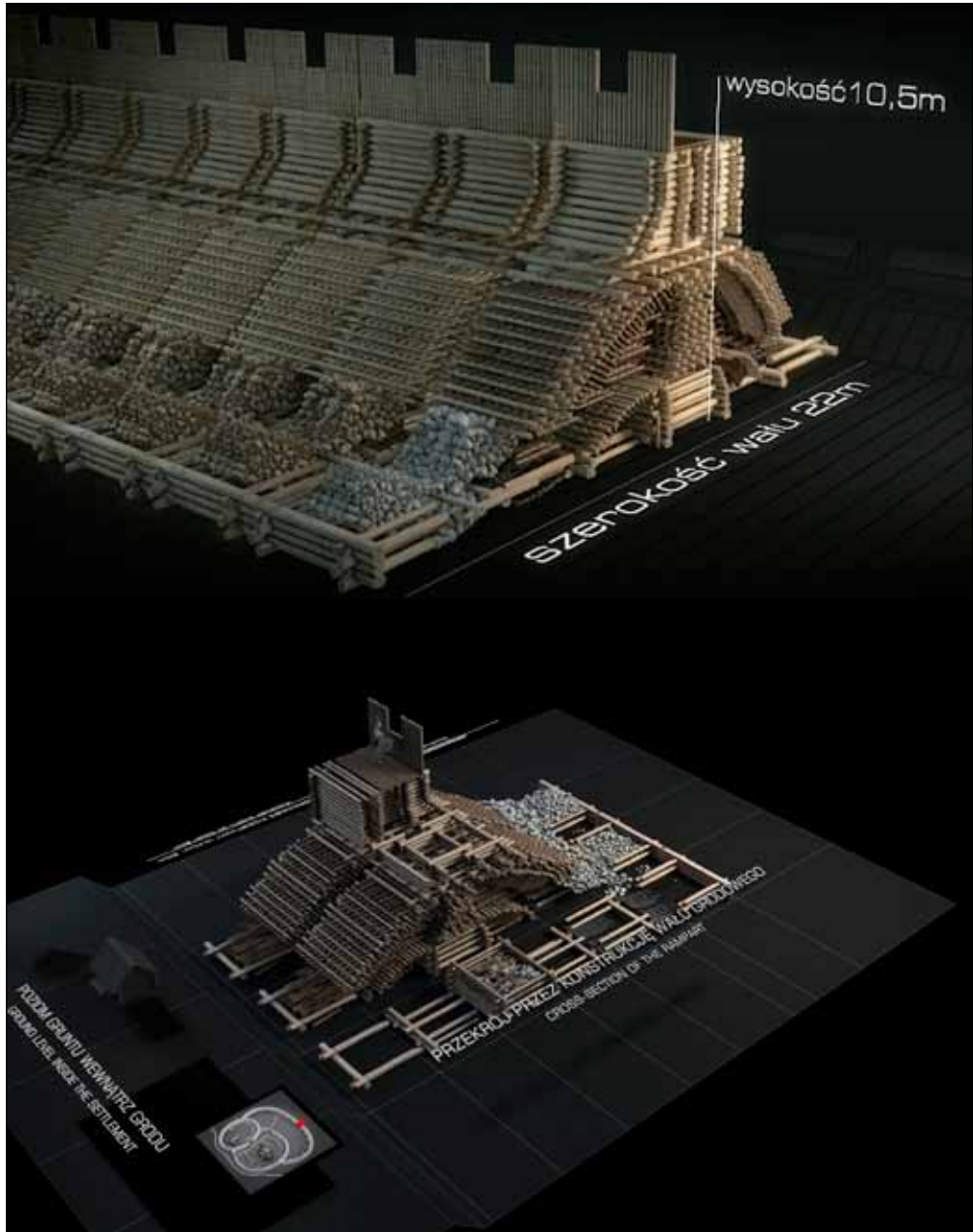
architecture (Antowska-Gorączniak 2013, 7–19). The approximate line of the fourth, youngest section of the stronghold currently runs along present-day Dziekańska and Posadzego streets, all the way to the present building of the Archdiocesan Museum (former Bishop Lubrański Academy). It can be estimated that the line makes up ca.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the entire circumference of the stronghold's ramparts on Ostrów Tumski. Based on the numerous dendrochronological datings carried out in this section, it must be concluded that the decision to build this part of the youngest section of the rampart was made at the turn of the 970s and 980s (Krapiec 2013, 285–293). The exhibition was arranged as a faithful reconstruction of all the structures found *in situ*, which enables visitors to view all the phases of the fortifications' construction, from preparatory work before the building started, which involved adapting the ground and erecting the foundations, to forming the bank of the rampart (Antowska-Gorączniak 2013, 52–53; Brzostowicz and Stempin 2015, 27–45). Traces of the original building efforts are visible in the form of stones, branches of various deciduous trees, and fragments of oak beams (Stępnik 2013, 269–285), while 'carpets' composed of lattices, meant to stabilise the surface of the boggy, wet ground, were used on a considerable portion of the excavated surface (Kaniecki 2004, 125).

The main construction of the rampart was based on modular crates<sup>8</sup>, duplicated many times along and across the rampart, and elevating the entire structure. The foundation was made of five rows of oaken crates with lap joints, reinforced by beams with hooks, which were made using appropriately cut branches. They were assembled in such a way that they had one shared side, interlocking successive elements and preventing them from separating, which could happen under the pressure of the top layers<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 8). Since the construction of the fortification started from the middle crate, it was the only one whose sides were completely closed around its entire perimeter. The next modules were coupled onto it, both in the direction of the ward and the outer part of the rampart,

---

<sup>8</sup> Other variants of construction are also suggested in the opposite part of the stronghold, where the grillage form of construction was used on the rampart (Kara 1998, 27).

<sup>9</sup> It has been calculated that the structure's pressure on the ground was 124 tons in the case of a one-metre long fragment of the structure. The weight of one metre length of just the rubble footing reached up to seventeen tons (Niesiołowska *et al.* 1960, 91, 95).



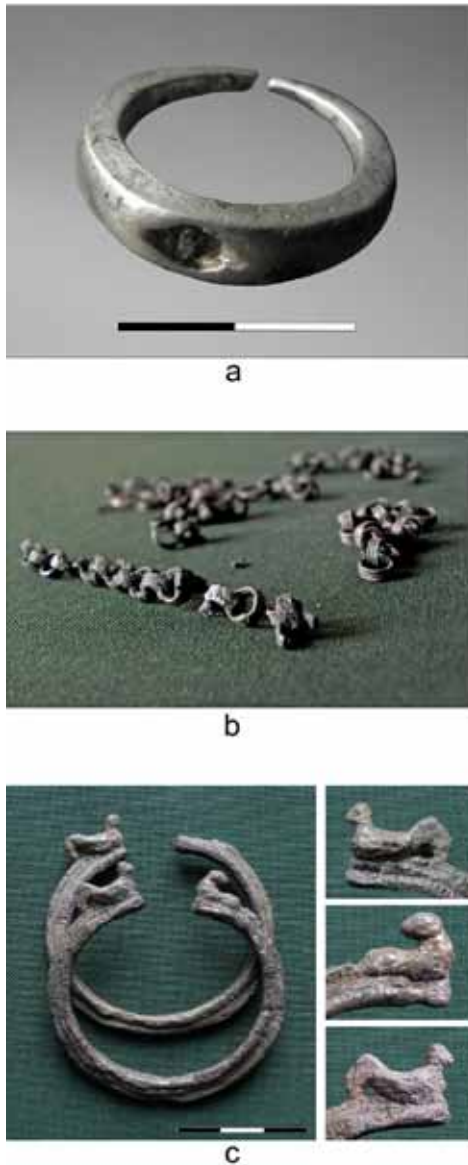
**Fig. 8.** Cross-section of the early medieval fortifications on Ostrów Tumski in Poznań (on the Fig. in Polish: szerokość wału 22 m = rampart width 22 m; wysokość 10.5 m = height 10.5 m)

which meant that the successive crates always had a shared side (north or south one). In one row of crates, various technical solutions were found. Most frequently, however, two beams with hooks were placed on the fascine; they were meant to hold an oak sleeper, perpendicular to them, in place. Analogous jobs were repeated upwards, and the hooks were alternately placed upwards and downwards, on each level, moving towards the centre of the crate. The crates were filled with wooden laths, usually placed in layers and sandwiched with sand and clay, which made the rampart's core heavier and more stable. The embankment was constructed in segments, probably because it was possible to easily add on more rows during the long process of building a ring of fortifications. This also offered an opportunity to organise the work simultaneously in various places, as well as dismantling individual modules if such a need arose. It has already been mentioned that during the 10<sup>th</sup> century the settlement on Cathedral Island was constantly modernised and rebuilt; the ramparts were moved, expanded and repaired many times, and the ease with which the decisions to move them were made creates the impression that it must have been done with deliberation (Antowska-Gorączniak 2013, 19–60).

After the structure was formed in this manner, the rampart's bank needed to be moulded. This was done by building grillages which inclined evenly towards the core of the structure. On the inner part of the stronghold, the rampart 'braced itself' against the ground, which was situated slightly higher. The situation was different on the outer curve, which required a solid reinforcement and stabilisation, preventing it from coming apart. This function was performed by two rubble footings, which are well visible in the exhibition (Fig. 7). The structure, finished in terms of engineering, was then plastered using sand and clay on its banks. This measure completed the set of procedures which insulated the rampart against fire and weather conditions, and protected the timber grillages and crates against pests. All the described elements are visible in the reconstructed part of the rampart, which enables visitors to follow the entire building process and, by analysing profiles, also the gradual destruction of these fortifications.

### **The inhabitants of the settlement**

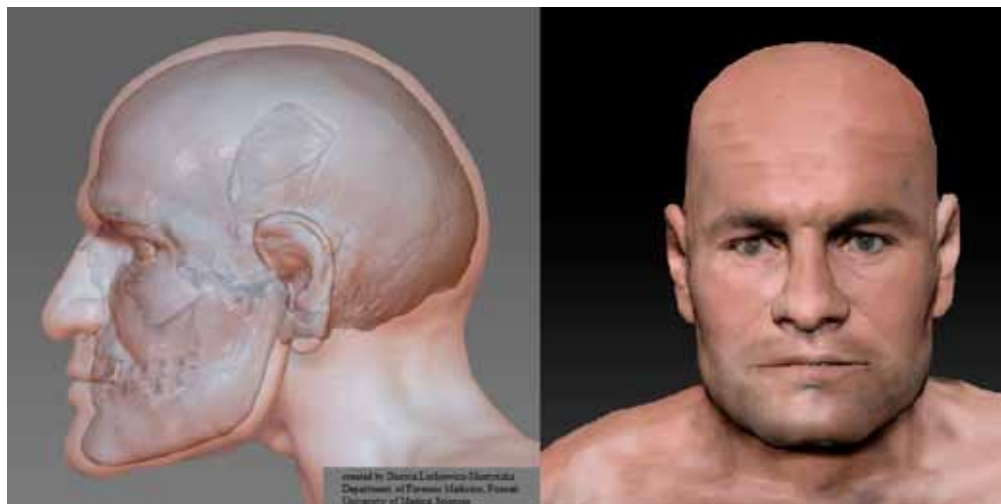
Early Piast ramparts are a feat of very specialist engineering. They command respect and compel admiration for their builders.



**Fig. 9.** Archaeological finds from excavations in the necropolis in Śródka: a – Poznań-Śródka. Grave 170, Silver ring (inventory no. 51/2012/WG); b – Poznań-Śródka. Grave 170, Fragments of silver chain (inventory no. 48/2012/WG); c – Poznań-Śródka. Grave 170, Temple rings (inventory no. 47/2012/WG and 54/2012/WG), made from an unidentified alloy of non-ferrous metals. On the right – close-ups of birds and a lamb (Photo and descriptions by P. Pawlak)

Therefore, one of the important elements of this exhibition is to show aspects of the settlement's community; not only their everyday life, but also important details about the physical condition of the entire population. The cemetery discovered near the settlement offers such an opportunity; it has been excavated since 1994 by Paweł Pawlak from Henryk Klunder's Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property. According to the most recent findings, the graveyard was one of the first Christian necropoleis in Mieszko I's young state (Pawlak and Pawlak 2015). The cemetery had been predated by a settlement, whose population was moved to the *suburbium*, and the terrain was levelled and covered with a layer of sand. On this surface, first burials were located, which can be dated to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. The cemetery was used until the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The relics discovered by archaeologists, which had furnished the graves, give an account of the daily life, extensive contacts with various regions, as well as a high quality of local craftsmanship (Fig. 9). Nearby, on the island, the mighty structures of the Poznań settlement were raised. Certainly, the inhabitants of the excavated huts, and later those who were buried in the local cemetery at the end of the century, participated in the building of the town and numerous extensions which continued throughout the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thanks to well-preserved bone remains, scientists obtained information about the people who lived in the Poznań





**Fig. 10.** Reconstruction of the appearance of the man from grave 195 in the Śródka cemetery (Approximation by D. Lorkiewicz-Muszyńska)

settlement (Fig. 11). 2D and 3D computer methods, which are more and more frequently used for identification purposes to prepare facial approximations, enabled scientists to recreate the appearance of five people (graves nos. 170, 195, 273, 295, 275) and also made it possible to incorporate both anthropological and genetic studies into the tour of the reserve (Fig. 10). The presentation uses 3D models obtained as a result of processing biomedical imaging data recorded in the DICOM format and created in cooperation with the Department of Forensic Medicine, Poznań University of Medical Sciences, represented by Dorota Lorkiewicz-Muszyńska, who was in charge of the work, and with the Poznań University of Technology, where Michał Rychlik conducted a digital analysis. The models are shown using holograms, created by the Spatial Imaging Studio, University of the Arts in Poznań, headed by Jarosław Bogucki and Szymon Zwoliński.

### Methods of presenting information in the exhibition

The concept behind a historical exhibition must not only determine a consistent way of presenting its topic and of understanding the individual aspects of its subject matter, but also consider the consequences of the choices we make in terms of forms of communication with visitors.



**Fig. 11.** Drawn reconstructions of burials 195 and 170 from the Śródka cemetery (Drawn by M. Kuźma)

In the last few decades, there have been changes with regard to museum exhibitions which, through the rapid growth of multimedia, have opened up entirely new spaces for presenting exhibits and the information that accompanies them. It is impossible to ignore these changes and not take advantage of them in the present-day world. It would be irrational

and detrimental to the idea of popularising cultural heritage. However, a museologists must also realise what dangers lie in the increasingly frequent reversal of exhibition priorities and set clear limits of a mindless 'multimedia armament race'. This limit is set by approaching 'a relic as a commodity which needs to be sold in an attractive form, suited to the taste of the average consumer' (Tomaszewski 2012, 117). This inevitably leads to getting rid of actual exhibits and replacing them with someone's vision or interpretation, with creating a *simulacrum* – a copy which lacks the original (Pasek-Gawlikowska 2013, 57–66). As Professor Andrzej Tomaszewski rightly noted,

(...) a question arises whether these images and information which are put in front of our eyes by clicking the mouse are in line with our views on the need to shape members of our society from a very young age in the spirit of respecting the authenticity of heritage (Tomaszewski 2012, 117).

Therefore, the matter of preparing the message we want to include in an exhibition is not a simple one and requires a great deal of attention.

In the Archaeological Reserve on Ostrów Tumski in Poznań, we have made an effort to find a balance between giving priority to the most important 'characters' of this place – the archaeological relics – and innovativeness. Without doubt, the monumental remains of the ramparts were helpful in this case, as it is impossible to go past them indifferently; they call for an explanation and provoke visitors to look for answers to their emerging questions. The method of presentation was based on the following guidelines: after a tour of the reserve, visitors should be able to assess by themselves the scale of the project of constructing Piast fortifications and to find the fragments of the former defences in the landscape of Cathedral Island. Archaeology's role in increasing our knowledge of the earliest stage in the history of the city and state is another matter. This discipline, with the entire scientific apparatus at its disposal, has become the main element of explaining and depicting knowledge about the past in our exhibition. We have not shied away from showing many hypotheses put forward about various topics; we want the visitors touring our exhibition to understand the dynamics of new discoveries leading to the evolution of earlier assumptions. Another element which we want to present is the wealth of interdisciplinary studies which come together to create a coherent historical picture.

An important guideline established at the beginning of our work was for the tour to include elements of modern art, which focuses on the presented relics using modern aesthetics and sensitivity. The Piasts' settlement is viewed in this exhibition as a feat of medieval engineering, as an important strategic place of the emerging state, as the location of the first monumental constructions, where its builders lived and died, and where today we can study its most ancient history thanks to the excellent condition in which the thousand-year-old structures have survived. The presentation of the subject matter shown in the reserve rests on informing the visitors about the chronological direction of touring and the authenticity of the structures they are viewing. The visitors' introduction to the topic takes place by means of showing them a short popular science film projected in the dedicated multimedia room. The introduction was filmed by two scholars, Professor Hanna Kóčka-Krenz and the late Professor Zofia Kurnatowska. It was important to us that the discoverers and scientists to whom Ostrów Tumski owes the process of rebuilding the memory of its early medieval golden age would become recognisable figures and that they would guide visitors through various parts of the exhibition, drawing their attention to specific problems. This is the function of the information kiosks (infokiosks) located on the middle level of the exhibition, which are meant for visitors individually watching videos about the archaeological excavations on Cathedral Island. In line with Jan Długosz's words about<sup>10</sup> *Poznań, the old castle of Polish kings, the seat, capital and burial place (...)*, the exhibition could not lack a presentation of the discovery of the structure housing a palace and a chapel, which was made as a result of the excavations conducted by Professor Hanna Kóčka-Krenz from the Adam Mickiewicz University since 1999. The works revealed the entire outline of the *palatium* and the accompanying St. Mary's chapel, which was founded by Duchess Dobrawa, according to tradition (Kóčka-Krenz 2010, 23; 2012). Including this topic in the tour of the reserve enables us to better explain the role and rank of the fortifications, which protected the most important persons in the young state and the buildings constructed there. The third presentation shows the results and progress of the works in the settlement's cemetery in nearby Śródka; it is presented by Ewa and Paweł Pawlak, who studied this site for many years, and by the anthropologists who processes the

---

<sup>10</sup> Długosz I, 42.

bone material. Here, we can also see archaeological relics from various works on Ostrów Tumski and Śródka, including mosaic cubes from so-called Dobrawa's Chapel and the furnishings from the grave of the 'princess' (grave 275), discovered in the stronghold's necropolis (Fig. 9). Above the remnants of the ramparts, in the upper part of the permanent exhibition, a visualisation of the anticipated height of the fortification is projected, and from time to time there is a video-mapping performance, in which the leading role is played by the people whose remains were discovered in the cemetery in Śródka and the relics found with them.

On the lowest, third level of the exhibition, visitors are invited inside an archaeological trench. This place gives an idea of the comprehensive approach to the plan of building a mighty stronghold. Visitors can see a scale model of the ramparts' structure shown in a cross section<sup>11</sup> and compare the proportions, as well as see which fragment of the fortifications is presented. In this space, an unusual 'gallery of ancestors' is shown, in the form of holographic images based on the facial approximations of the five persons buried in the already mentioned stronghold cemetery.

On the lower terrace of the exhibition, there are discreetly placed infokiosks with touch screens, where the visitor can find numerous multimedia presentations which offer a closer look at the current state of research about the medieval times and Poznań's Ostrów Tumski, as well as disciplines such as dendrochronology and anthropology, whose findings have made this exhibition much richer. The division into presentations addressed to children and adults makes it possible for visitors to acquire more information on a preferred level. Additionally, in each of such points, there is a map of the exposition with described fragments and dendrochronological dates superimposed onto individual oak beams. It is also possible to watch an animation of the model of the construction and the stages of building the ramparts. In this part of the exhibition, there are also two holograms showing views of Poznań at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the complexity of the construction of the discovered fortifications.

One of the methods of presenting historical information developed since the reserve started its operation was to introduce artistic interpretations of the displayed structures. Collaborations with many

---

<sup>11</sup> The model was made by students of the Bolesław I the Brave Vocational Secondary School during school workshops.

art schools enabled us to create a specific language of communication, in which, through using one-thousand-year-old fragments of wood from the stronghold's ramparts, the archaeological material has taken on a new meaning. Although it is still a museum exhibit, everybody can touch a contemporary sculpture. In the words of one of the authors of a wooden boat, entitled 'A walk with an afterimage', which welcomes visitors in the reserve's foyer:

Suddenly, it turns out that the ability to touch can be a strong point of access in the age of touchscreens. Just as fingerprints on the touchscreens in the museum bring us joy, because they are testimony to activity, to the will to obtain information, 'creative recycling' (of archaeological wood) can mean that the same number of fingerprints will be left on a piece of art, at the same time bringing the visitors to the Genius Loci Archaeological Reserve closer to the historical times (Gruszczyński 2015, 111).

## Activities

The reserve's activities have been discussed many times in various publications (Stempin 2014; 2015; 2016), so I will only mention the main directions of our activity and plans for the future here.

We endeavour to present new archaeological topics in many temporary exhibitions. So far, twenty-five such exhibitions have been organised by the reserve, most of which, as travelling exhibitions, also served as an element of promoting our institution in various regions of Poland, as well as schools. We should mention here the archaeological series 'When Poznań was a stronghold...', which included the exhibitions 'The land of strongholds' (curated by Anna Połuboczek), 'Family and child in the Middle Ages' (curated by Klaudyna Bronowska), and 'Archaeological investigations on Ostrów Tumski in Poznań' (curated by Mateusz Sikora, Fig. 1). On the 1050<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Poland, we organised the exhibition 'Generation 966' (curated by Agnieszka Stempin), and accompanying open-air and mobile exhibitions called '*Tempora Christiana*' (curated by Magdalena Sprenger and Anna Połuboczek) and 'The world around 966' (curated by Małgorzata Żukowska). Since the reserve was opened, another exhibition-related aspect of our activity has also been developed, which involves creating an educational programme in Poznań's art schools, inspired by the archaeology and medieval history of Ostrów Tumski.

The implementation of the project 'Contemporary beauty of ancient wood' was based on the idea of combining a raw material which was the building material of the fortifications from a thousand years ago with the creativity of the youngest generation of artists (Stempin 2015, 60–67). The project brought together artists, lecturers from Poznań's educational institutions (Faculty of Architecture, Poznań University of Technology; University of Fine Arts in Poznań; P. Potworowski Secondary School; and Bolesław I the Brave Vocational Secondary School), who led the work on projects which involved contemporary reflection on the city's oldest past and the beginnings of the Polish state. As part of the project, the exhibition '1,000 years of necklaces' was also organised in collaboration with designer Anna Orska<sup>12</sup>.

The Archaeological Reserve also participates in interdisciplinary scientific programmes which provide conservation supervision over the exhibited constructions and offer a discussion panel about the proper monitoring of the condition of ancient timber<sup>13</sup> (Stempin 2014; Sikora 2014; Olek *et al.* 2015).

Some of our educational tasks include standard activities, which have been offered by museums for many years, such as thematic lessons (Fig. 12) and weekend workshops (Fig. 13). Teachers and caretakers can choose from a multitude of topics, closely connected to the archaeology and history of Ostrów Tumski. Classes about engineering from a thousand years ago are the most popular, and they include building a model of a rampart. The reserve's staff have also developed their own educational project in the form of year-round meetings with selected groups of schoolchildren and teenagers. In this project, a literature and art class called *WRITE, PAINT* was very successful. The project involved young children imagining and describing the adventures of children their age who lived on Ostrów Tumski in Poznań when it served as Mieszko I's stronghold. The project concluded with the publication of a children's book entitled *Historia Poznana (The Story of a Boy Named Poznan)* (Sprenger 2015). Older schoolchildren were involved in vocational workshops, during which they built two wooden scale models (Stempin 2015, 60–67).

---

<sup>12</sup> All the works created during the programme belong to the Archaeological Museum in Poznań and are non-commercial.

<sup>13</sup> The project was part of a programme of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and its continuation under the National Programme for the Development of Humanities.



**Fig. 12.** Class for schoolchildren using archaeological relics during the *WRITE, PAINT* project (Photo by M. Sprenger)



**Fig. 13.** Workshops and weekends in the open air at the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve (Photo by K. Zisopulu-Bleja)



In recent years, we have also offered programmes for adults who are prepared for intellectual activities, open to personal development, and looking for their cultural identity. These projects have been implemented in response to requests made by visitors to the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve, who have brought up the problem of the devaluation of European values and difficult access to interesting forms of acquiring knowledge. In scientific research, the enormous potential of individual research is noted, and we have activated this potential in two projects implemented so far, 'Walks with Aristotle' (Stempin 2017) and 'The glow of *Christianitatis*' (Stempin 2018a; 2018b).

An important area of our activity is releasing scientific and popular science publications, which we try to do regularly, concluding each project with a publication (publishing series of the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve: 'Archaeology of Thought' and 'The Genius Loci Academy').

## The future

At the moment, the reserve is working on a new project, which will considerably increase the previous space in which we have been active so far. This is an investment financed from EU funds, entitled 'Tu się wszystko zaczęło – ekspozycja świadectw początków państwowości polskiej na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu' ('This is where everything started – an exhibition of testimonies to the beginnings of Polish statehood on Ostrów Tumski in Poznań'). The programme is aimed at showing relics of Poznań's oldest golden age to the general public: the majestic stone buildings of Mieszko I's Palatium and the first Cathedral (Kurnatowska 1993). The main architectural element of the exhibition in progress is, at the moment, St. Mary's Church *in Summo* from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Around and inside it there are relics of Mieszko I's Palatium, which is not visible in the present space of Ostrów Tumski (Kóčka-Krenz 2016, 21–47). Rescuing this building from oblivion and emphasising the rank of the early medieval palace and chapel is the project's main objective. However, it cannot be separated from the functional context set by the outlines and structures of the Piast stronghold, craft and trade centres, and the necropolis.

The stratigraphic complexity of these structures will be the chronological axis on which the programme of the exhibition (scattered across the island's landscape) will be based. The exhibition is anticipated

to include three areas, on which the information and educational base of the project will rest. These spheres are a natural consequence of dividing Ostrów's space, which – through implementing the project's results – will become universally accessible for an unlimited time. The project plans for marking the outline of the Palatium's walls outside and inside the church, and for installing educational presentations there. It will be possible to show them to all visitors, but the screens will be put in places discreet enough not to be visible when celebrating the sacraments. The expanded exhibition of the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve will systematise and put into order the entire subject matter. In Posadzego street, right next to our building, a three-dimensional artistic installation is being constructed, which will serve to show the size of the ramparts in the form of a full-scale cross-section<sup>14</sup>, and in many spots of the island time-travelling stations will be created, where it will be possible to follow the changes in the archaeological landscape of Ostrów from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> c.

### Recapitulation

The *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve is located on the northern side of the early Piast settlement, which means that visitors walking towards this building go past lines of old fortifications, invisible in the present-day landscape of the island.

They are unaware that they are moving in a space marked by a thousand years of history, which is recorded under the ground. The reserve's exhibition requires visitors to be mindful and involved, to experience an intellectual adventure. It lets the visitor appreciate the engineering genius of the stronghold's builders and the grand scale of the investment of building a medieval state (Fig. 14). To archaeologists, the underground world is a reservoir of unimaginable treasures. Frequently, however, it is difficult to show their real value. Constructing a building dedicated to telling this story was meant to make the contemporary visitor more sensitive to the need to protect the archaeological heritage and to reveal its incredible scientific wealth.

Finally, it is worth explaining the genesis of the reserve's name. The idea of 'the spirit of the place' has been known since Antiquity, and its

---

<sup>14</sup> Designed by the artist Łukasz Gruszczyński from the University of Fine Arts in Poznań.



**Fig. 14.** Graphic showing the Poznań settlement in the 11<sup>th</sup> c. (view from the south). Exhibition of the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve

meaning has evolved from the original sense of a special area which was favoured by some supernatural force – the *genius loci*, which ensured prosperity to the people who were in its range. In Christendom, such places were tombs of well-known saints, special relics, and temples built to house them. In the field of cultural heritage, Alois Riegl's 1903 essay became the manifesto of how to look at a relic:

a monument is <the place of a spirit>, a place which contains the history of the creation and life of the monument as a witness to historical events (...). It is because of this value – non-material, higher than the other (artistic, utilitarian) ones (...) that we read it as a cultural good and that we feel obligated to protect it (Tomaszewski 2012, 76–77).

Ostrów Tumski in Poznań certainly has its spirit of the place, and the *Genius Loci* Archaeological Reserve has been established to foster it.

## References

### Written sources

Długosz Ioannis Dlugossii. *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*. J. Dąbrowski [et al.] (eds.). Varsaviae: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. 1964.

### Literature

- Antowska-Gorączniak O. 2013. Badania na stanowisku przy ul. Posadzego 5 w 2009/2010 – charakterystyka nawarstwień. In H. Kóčka-Krenz (ed.), *Poznań we wczesnym średniowieczu*, vol. VIII. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 19–60.
- Borwiński J. 2015. Kanonia i mury obronne przy ul. Ostrów Tumski 11 w Poznaniu. Nowe ustalenia naukowe. *Ochrona Zabytków* 1, 183–194.
- Brzostowicz M. and Stempin A. 2015. Sztuka inżynierii średniowiecznej. Relikty wałów grodowych w Poznaniu na tle innych konstrukcji drewnianych z X wieku. In A. Stempin (ed.), *966 – pamięć w dębie zachowana*. Poznań: Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu, 27–45.
- Budzan P. and Karłowska-Kamzowa A. 1992. Działalność fundacyjna biskupa poznańskiego Jana Lubrańskiego. In *Kronika Miasta Poznania 1999/2*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Miejskie Poznania, 93.
- Gruszczyński Ł. 2015. Przeszłość jest tu, przyszłość jest teraz. In A. Stempin (ed.), *966 – pamięć w dębie zachowana*. Poznań: Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu, 109–115.
- Hensel W. 1938a. Zachowajmy na zawsze pozostałości po kolebce Poznania. *Dziennik Poznański* no. 204 of 07 September 1938, 7.
- Hensel W. 1938b. Zagadnienie początków Poznania i kwestia jego stołecznego charakteru w świetle wyników prac wykopaliskowych na Ostrowie Tumskim. *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, vol. XVI, no. 4. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Miejskie Poznania, 484–507.
- Kaniecki A. 2004. *Poznań. Dzieje miasta wodą pisane*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo PTPN.
- Kara M. 1998. Początki i rozwój wczesnośredniowiecznego ośrodka grodowego na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu. In T. Janiak and D. Stryniak (eds.), *Civitates principales. Wybrane ośrodki władzy w Polsce wczesnośredniowiecznej*. Gniezno: Wydawnictwo DiG, 26–29.
- Kóčka-Krenz H. 2010. Pozycja Poznania w X wieku w źródłach archeologicznych. In A. Wójtowicz (ed.), *Tu się wszystko zaczęło. Rola Poznania w państwie pierwszych Piastów*. Poznań: Instytut Chemii Bioorganicznej PAN, Ośrodek Wydawnictw Naukowych, 33–60.
- Kóčka-Krenz H. 2012. *Na wyspie Ostrów, przy której dziś jest Poznań...* Poznań: Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu.
- Kóčka-Krenz H. 2013. Archeolodzy uniwersyteccy na Ostrowie Tumskim. *Folia Praehistorica Posnaniensia* 18, 119–134.
- Kóčka-Krenz H. 2016. Palatium poznańskie na tle wczesnośredniowiecznych zespołów rezydencjonalnych. In M. Przybył (ed.), *Archeologiczne tajemnice*

- palatium i katedry poznańskiego Ostrowa*. Poznań: Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu, 21–47.
- Kostrzewski J. 1938. Zachowajmy na wieki gród Mieszka i Bolesława. *Kurier Poznański* no. 420 of 4 September 1938, 16.
- Krapiec M. 2013. Dendrochronologiczne datowanie wału grodu na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu, przy ul. k. I. Posadzego 5, w 2009 r. In H. Kóčka-Krenz (ed.), *Poznań we wczesnym średniowieczu* 8. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 285–293.
- Kurnatowska Z. 1993. Poznań w czasach Mieszka I. In J.M. Piskorski (ed.), *Polska Mieszka I. W tysiąclecie śmierci twórcy państwa i Kościoła polskiego* 25 V 992 – 25 V 1992. Poznań: Ośrodek Wydawnictw Naukowych, 73–90.
- Niesiołowska A., Perzyńska M. and Żak J. 1960. Badania na posesji Ostrów Tumski 13 w latach 1950–1953. In W. Hensel (ed.), *Poznań we wczesnym średniowieczu*, vol. II. Wrocław–Warszawa: Ossolineum, 67–219.
- Nowacki J. 1956. *Dzieje Archidiecezji Poznańskiej*, vol. 1. Poznań: Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha.
- Olek W., Majka J., Stempin A., Sikora M. and Zborowska M. 2015. Hygroscopic properties of PEG treated archaeological wood from the rampart of the 10th century stronghold as exposed in the Archaeological Reserved Genius loci in Poznań (Poland). *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 18, 299–305.
- Pawlak E. and Pawlak P. 2015. *Serce miasta jest po prawej stronie*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Kontekst.
- Pasek-Gawlikowska A. 2013. Kultura masowa i co dalej...? *Rozprawy społeczne* 2 (7), 57–66.
- Sikora M. 2014. Rezerwat Archeologiczny Genius loci na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu. Ustalenia i opis dotychczasowych działań archeologiczno-konserwatorskich, jakim poddawano drewniane konstrukcje wałów grodowych. In A. Stempin and W. Olek (eds.), *Dąb wczesnośredniowieczny – zapis poznania. Badania nad zabezpieczeniem i ochroną konstrukcji wałów grodowych eksponowanych w Rezerwacie Archeologicznym Genius loci na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Poznaniu, 87–101.
- Sprenger M. 2015. *Historia Poznana*. Poznań: wyd. Zysk i spółka i Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu.
- Stępnik T. 2013. Wał wczesnośredniowiecznego grodu na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu przy ul. k. I. Posadzego 5, w świetle analizy surowcowej. In H. Kóčka-Krenz (ed.), *Poznań we wczesnym średniowieczu* 8. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 269–285.
- Stempin A. (ed.) 2017. *Spacery z Arystotelesem*. Poznań: Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu.
- Stempin A. 2014. Wstęp. In A. Stempin and W. Olek (eds.), *Dąb wczesnośredniowieczny – zapis poznania. Badania nad zabezpieczeniem i ochroną konstrukcji wałów grodowych eksponowanych w Rezerwacie Archeologicznym Genius loci na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Poznaniu, 9–48.
- Stempin A. 2015. Tworzywo edukacji historycznej. In A. Stempin (ed.), *966 – pamięć w dębie zachowana*. Poznań: Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu, 60–67.

- Stempin A. 2016. Rezerwat Archeologiczny Genius loci. In S. Czopek and J. Górski (eds.), *Między nauką a popularyzacją. Muzea i parki archeologiczne*. Kraków: Universitas, 177–203.
- Stempin A. (ed.) 2018a. *Blask Christianitatis, Akademia Genius loci*. Poznań: Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu.
- Stempin A. 2018b. Nie takie zwykle muzeum. Czyli jakie? In *Muzeum formy i środki prezentacji* (in press).
- Szmyt M., Stempin A. and Śniady P. 2013. Przekrój Poznania. Rezerwat archeologiczny *Genius loci* na Ostrowie Tumskim: idea, realizacja, działalność. In H. Kóčka-Krenz (ed.), *Poznań we wczesnym średniowieczu* 8. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 7–19.
- Tomaszewski A. 2012. *Ku nowej filozofii dziedzictwa*. Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury.
- Wawrzyniak P. 2005. Badania wykopaliskowe wczesnośredniowiecznych umocnień wałowych przy ulicy ks. Ignacego Posadzego 5, na Ostrowie Tumskim w Poznaniu, w latach 2001–2004. In H. Kóčka-Krenz (ed.), *Poznań we wczesnym średniowieczu* 5. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 7–19.