

## BOOK REVIEWS

Stanisław Tabaczyński (ed.), *Sandomierz. Badania 1969–1973, I (Sandomierz. Research in 1969–1973, vol. I.)*. Warszawa: IAE PAN 1993, pp. 415.

Reviewed by Sławomir Moździoch

The publication of the results of the research conducted from 1958 in the area of Sandomierz is an important event for Polish archaeology of the early Middle Ages. It should be noted that this is the first of two planned volumes; the second one is going to present the results of investigations carried out in the yard of Collegium Gostomianum. The reviewed monograph is to some extent untypical for it is the result of the work of a considerable group of specialists, which does not often happen in the case of such, or even larger sites. The work is composed of three main parts: *I. Problems — Sources — Methods*, *II. The Sandomierz settlement complex*, *III. Specialist papers*. The interdisciplinary character of this work is definitely an advantage. The importance of interdisciplinary studies in reconstructing the history of microregions is discussed by Teresa Rysiewska and Stanisław Tabaczyński (pp. 93, 95, 98) in their paper “*The archaeological record and its role in the research on Sandomierz*” and supported by the article by Elżbieta Kowalczyk “*Żmigród — analysis of historical and linguistic data*” based, e.g., on the analysis of linguistic sources.

From the point of view of the discussed problem and in order to put the research in the historical and geographical context the chapters from the first part, which place Sandomierz in time and space, are particularly important. Also important is the detailed discussion of the natural environment and elements of the landscape in the area of Sandomierz (Andrzej Buko, *Natural environment of Sandomierz and elements of its primitive landscape*, pp. 19–48). Two papers by Tadeusz Lalik help in the understanding of the historical background (*Sandomierz in the light of written sources*, pp. 49–72; *Medieval capitular houses of the collegiate church*, pp. 50–73). No less interesting is the article on the archaeological sources and their role in studying the history of Sandomierz, which presents the limitations of studying history through archaeological sources (Rysiewska and Tabaczyński, *The archaeological record and its role in the research of Sandomierz*, pp. 90–105). The inclusion of this paper as well as the preceding ones is a new idea, in my opinion, worthy of recommendation. The remarks presented in this chapter are of considerable value since many well-known principles of conducting research are not applied in practice, and still too little attention is paid to the processes of preparing the sources.

I thus believe that the way of presenting the problems connected with the interpretation of sources at a given site, as well as placing the site in its geographical and historical context applied in the reviewed publication is crucial for the information presented further, for it allows for the understanding to why the authors included respective pieces of information about the sources in that particular way (which features and facts they stressed having their own vision of history).

Before passing to chapter 2 I would like briefly to discuss the way of presenting the information which I would expect to find in a publication of source material. It should include simplified (but not necessary in all cases) information about the location of archaeological data in space, *e.g.*, on the macro scale the location of the site (a map, a plan, geographical coordinates, or  $x, y, z$  in the Archaeological Record of Poland). On the micro scale this would be the location of trenches, and this condition seems to be fulfilled in the discussed publication. The discoveries at the Old Town Hills were located and described rather less sufficiently. This certainly results from the fact that these were rescue excavations, yet a more complete documentation in the form of drawings of plans and sections could be helpful (no scale in fig. 1, location plan of the Old Town Hills; the same: Żmigród, fig. 1, p. 324).

Another important matter is the analysis (description) and the interpretation of stratigraphy which extends knowledge about the spatial distribution and, as a result, of layer forming processes (occupational and non-occupational layers — although like other distinctions of this kind it is dubious because of the interrelations of layers). The description presented in both parts presenting the material (site Castle I, site Castle II) is relatively clear and logical, the drawings with their interpretations, diagrams presenting the arrangement of layers and the index of stratigraphic units make up a concise whole. The location of the index of stratigraphic units and their content is a purely technical problem. It may have been more clear to put such an index under the description of a given unit (occupational layer, *etc.*), as it was done in the publications of materials from Szczecin, Opole, or Wrocław, or, parallelly to the description in the second column. It does not seem justified to separate it from the analysis and interpretation of stratigraphical units. Moreover, the content of the layers should be summarily presented in the form of tables. This would simplify the chapter containing the index of units and shorten both the analysis and discussion of small finds. In my opinion Table 1 from the analysis of small finds (pp. 148–51) could be joined to the index of stratigraphic units (pp. 126–9), which, in turn, would be more clear in the form of a table, so that it would be possible to easily notice the numbers of the respective determined animal species or small finds.

Further doubts are inspired by the chapter on the finds of pottery vessels (Maria Dąbrowska, Mirosława Gajewska and Jerzy Kruppe, *Post-medieval pottery vessels. Characteristics and analysis of the materials, the layout of the report*, pp. 130–9). Regrettably, after having made the obvious reservations about the accidental character of the pottery aggregates in respective layers, their untypical character, *etc.* (see the remarks in the introduction), the authors did not apply the same system in the case of modern pottery, not marking it as in the case of other objects, *i.e.*, did not give their stratigraphic position (horizontal — the plots and vertical — the layers) and register numbers. Instead, they quite unexpectedly applied the system of chronological phases. This was probably done to facilitate the analysis. However, the fact that the analysis of modern pottery was divided into three parts did not improve it and the first part contains very little information. This strikes the reader rather unpleasantly the more so that the next paper — on glass vessels (Eleonora Tabaczyńska, *Glass finds from Zamek I in Sandomierz*, pp. 156–69) — is based on the layer system presented in the index of stratigraphic units, and the same is the case of the paper on early medieval pottery by Buko. The reservations made repeatedly by the authors about the obtained results inspire doubts whether the discussed material should have been submitted to analysis or only to a simple classification since it is a set of elements put together by accident. Perhaps it might have been better to consistently fulfill the conservator's duties and present the spatial location of the artefacts. The authors might have left it to the readers to assess to a what extent the finds from occupational layers from phases IV–VI are completely mixed up chronologically. This can not be seen in the diagram of stratigraphic units divided into phases (fig. 2, p. 173) and the authors themselves say, in page 235 that “the set of sources was obtained during the exploration of rubble layers resting on the slope of Castle Hill. These layers were formed from the earth removed from the castle yard in different times and for various reasons.” Thus this was not one layer.

It is also regrettable that besides the number of complete vessels the number of their fragments was not given, but this is a question of the adopted method. It is worse, however, if the aim of the paper was to provide complete and objective factual information. Perhaps even the proportion or percentage of late medieval as compared to modern vessels in respective layers might have provided a key to their interpretation. Otherwise, some kind of information is *a priori* lost. For example, Buko (*Early medieval ceramics from Castle Hill (site Zamek II)*, pp. 215–21) was not discouraged by the appearance of prehistoric pottery together with the early medieval pottery in the layers of the dyke, where one can also speak about rubble layers. Moreover, in the paper on animal bones, phases IV and V were analysed even though the material found in them was considerably mixed (p. 366ff.).

It is a technical question how the tables were designed in the paper by Małgorzata Gula and Teresa Rysiewska (*Small finds from site Castle II at Sandomierz*, pp. 262–79). The description of the material could have been considerably simplified and perhaps separate tables for respective categories of finds could have been made to avoid the large vacant spaces. The table would be smaller by half. If I have understood correctly that each small find has a register number, it would be worth eliminating the column “No.” and add to the register number only the numbers of those finds which were described in detail. These finds should perhaps be described with respect to the layers and that would connect this paper with the index of stratigraphic units.

It should be granted that in comparison to many publications of source materials, the volume devoted to Sandomierz reveals real care in the presentation of the facts, especially as regards the location and description. The description is clear and precise and no further simplifications seem justified, except, perhaps the changes in the tables and joining of the articles on modern and late medieval pottery. It should be stressed that the clarity of description has been achieved without unnecessary codification. As we know from the experience of recent years, attempts to make a codification according to one, generally accepted model may result in becoming restricted for many years to one vision of history. As it has proved in the case of earlier epochs, such a violation of the freedom of interpretation may appear even in the case of very detailed data such as technological and stylistic features of pottery.

As my interest focuses not so much on the content as on the method of publishing of the source material, I would like to stress the importance of some features frequently underestimated by the reviewers of source monographs. For example, the quality of illustrations is important, and, except for the photographs, I have no reservations in the case of Sandomierz. The drawings are clear and provide appropriate comments to the text and are themselves important sources of information. In some of them the scale is missing, and in the case of small finds (pp. 152–3) the lack of linear scale is in my opinion uncomfortable. With the present technical resources it would have been easy to introduce it and make things clearer. I can not believe that all the finds are presented to the scale 1:2. The utilization of this scale may cause mistakes which have appeared. In fig. 2, knife 30 (probably added later) was given the scale of the whole illustration, *i.e.*, 1:2, while it is doubtlessly bigger. The figures and photos might have been given consecutive numbers for the whole publication.

Of course, there are no conclusions. These shall be presented in the second volume. It is not a serious drawback, but it does not seem justified to make large footnotes in the parts presenting a synthesis, while in the case of papers discussing the source material, it is right and commendable. Another bad side of the book is its poor fixing, and due to this after one reading the book disintegrates. If one assumes that such a book should be accessible to a foreign reader, not abstracts but longer summaries should be added and the titles of tables and illustrations should be translated.

The publication of materials from Sandomierz, despite the few above-mentioned drawbacks, is an example of a very good, clear, interdisciplinary publication of archaeological data from a multi-layer site and presents not only a clear description (a particularly clear presentation of stratigraphic units) but also explains, thanks to a wide historical background, the research procedures of the authors. If this method of preparing a publication (interdisciplinary character, clear scheme of stratigraphic units

together with an inventory of small finds) were combined with some aspects of the presentation of the monograph of Szczecin (excellent analysis of pottery, tables) and Opole (detailed inventory and very good drawings of the finds) one would obtain a perfect model for presenting many early medieval sites which are awaiting publication.

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