

CHRONICLE

IN MEMORIAM

Professor Marek Gedl
(30 June 1934–26 September 2014)

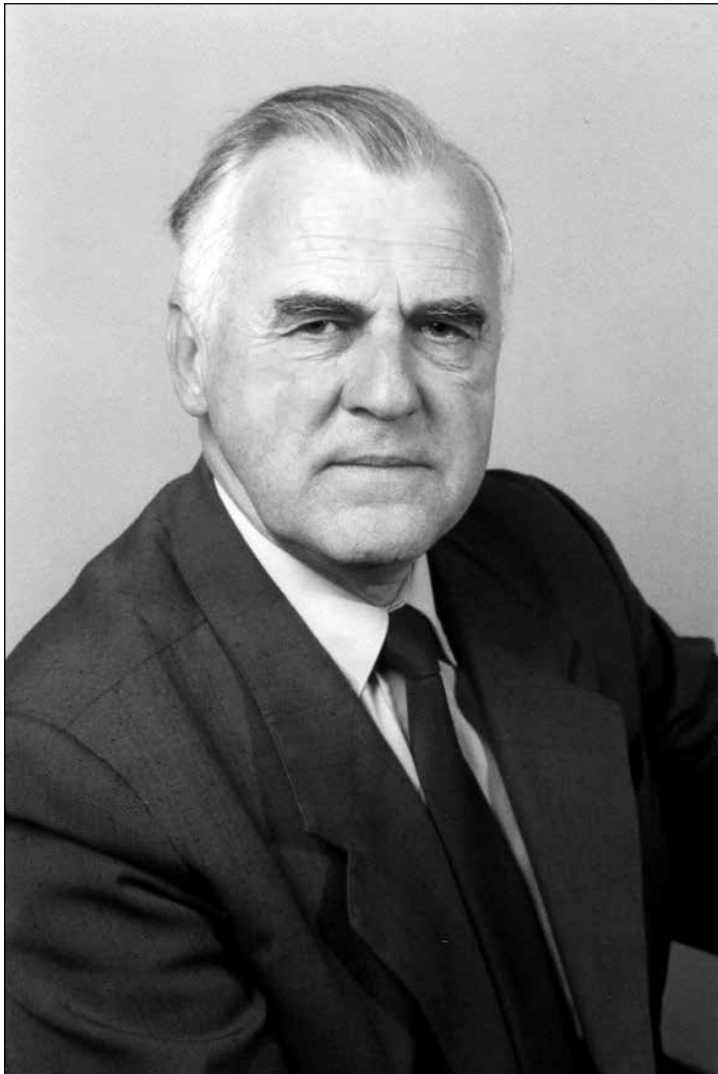


Fig. 1. Professor Marek Gedl. 1994; Photo by J. Chochorowski.

Death almost always comes unexpectedly and prematurely but this death took each and every one of us by surprise, whether we had been keeping in close touch with the Professor or not. Despite his illness, disability and pain, which had afflicted him for more than ten years placing constraints on his physical activity, he continued to be productive and present in the academic life as our Mentor and fellow researcher, always looked forward to and remembered in conversations at the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University which he had helped to elevate to its current academic standing. Was it not but recently — as it later turned out, two weeks before his death — that he had finished working on the professor's review and that his book had been submitted for print? But such are the decrees of providence that also quite recently (2 October 2014) we had to say goodbye at the Rakowicki Cemetery to Professor Mark Gedl, respected archaeologist, one of Europe's prominent scholars, academic teacher, associated throughout his professional life with the Jagiellonian University, teacher of several generations of archaeologists. He had been a Mentor and an authority for many of us, and for all of us — an upright man with a unique personality and a fine biography, filled with industry, service to science and his University, care for his Family and for the wellbeing of people close to him, but at the same time, a life rich in achievements and passions which gave colour and charm to His person. We said our goodbyes and this was as much a time to mourn and reflect on the mystery of passing as a time to reminisce and to draw strength from the Opus that the Professor has left behind and values he had embodied in life. Because for me and for not a few of Cracow archaeologists of my generation Professor Marek Gedl was more than an acknowledged Mentor — in all the glory of the academic meaning of the word — he was someone who left a mark on our professional life and, in a way, influenced even our personal life stories.

Marek Gedl was born on 30 June 1934 in Bielsko-Biała into a family of civil servants, lived his childhood years in Warsaw and after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, in which he lost his Father, was evacuated (as he reminisced — with all his belongings in one backpack) and moved with his mother to Cracow with which city he would be associated for the rest of his life (Fig. 1). Here he continued his education and — despite being expelled from school by communist authorities, for political reasons (e.g., being a member 1945-49 of the politically incorrect Polish scouts organization), a year before his *matura* final exams — he graduated in 1951, which opened the way for him to university studies. A youthful fascination with the past and its relics — castles, hillforts, fortifications (in Professor's words — *architectura militaris*) coupled with love of long walks and field prospecting, the true passion of His life, led Him to study archaeology (then available only as part of the ideologically correct course in “the history of material culture”), and to the Jagiellonian University. It was here, as the Professor would reminisce, where the atmosphere was still free — to some extent at least — of the ideological pressure of communism, one flavoured on occasion by attitudes and opinions of academics who held views independent of the official doctrine (like Professor Kazimierz Moszyński, so often invoked by Marek Gedl

when he spoke of those days) that politically discredited young people could hope to obtain a higher education.

Having entered the university in 1951 Marek Gedl concluded his studies with a master's degree awarded in 1955 for a dissertation on economic and social relations in "Lusatian Culture" in Lesser Poland and Silesia (*Kształtowanie się stosunków gospodarczo społecznych w kulturze łużyckiej na terenie Małopolski i Śląska*), subsequently published in an expanded version¹. Therefore, he chose to specialise in prehistoric archaeology of the Bronze and the Early Iron Age. His talent, passion for research and commitment to various research projects were recognized and valued highly by Professor Rudolf Jamka, then Head of the Chair of Prehistoric Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University; at his initiative, on 1 January 1955, still as an undergraduate student, Marek Gedl took the post of junior assistant deputy assistant. The course of his university career is charted by dates of his academic advancement; in 1960 — PhD², in 1966 — habilitation³, in 1976 — Assistant Professor⁴, and in 1983, Full Professor, and also, by duties that were placed on His shoulders. The Professor was a true "University man", a loyal and dedicated staff member, one to whom difficult and usually thankless tasks could be assigned with confidence. Of these tasks possibly the foremost was helping to organize the Institute of Archaeology at the Jagiellonian University — the first in Poland, founded in 1971, and an even more daunting job — with Professor Jamka seriously unwell — supervising the redevelopment and adaptation of the historic Collegium Minus building, the Institute's new seat. With similar dedication the Professor took upon himself in 1973 to organize an interdisciplinary, postgraduate course in museology which he then directed for eleven years. Operating in modest, not to say, rudimentary circumstances, the course would succeed — possibly only thanks to the Professor's energy and determination — in teaching history, art history, ethnography and archaeology to several hundred museum specialists from all regions of Poland. In 1981–1987 (for two terms) the Professor served at the Institute of Archaeology as Deputy Director for Student Affairs. From the time of the founding of the Institute until his retirement he would head first, the Department of the Archaeology of Poland, and after 1985, the Department of Bronze Age Archaeology. He concluded his academic service in the academic year of 2005/2006 after reaching an impressive 50th anniversary of teaching. During this time had acted as supervisor for about 100 MA theses and 7 PhD dissertations (Kazimierz Moskwa, Elżbieta Szydłowska, Antoni Jodłowski, Michał Parczewski, Anna Wałowy, Jan Chochorowski and Wojciech Blajer).

¹ M. Gedl, *Uwagi o gospodarce i strukturze społecznej ludności kultury łużyckiej w południowej Polsce*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Rozprawy i studia 32, Kraków 1961.

² M. Gedl, *Kultura łużycka na Górnym Śląsku*, Prace Komisji Archeologicznej PAN, Oddział w Krakowie 3, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1962.

³ M. Gedl, *Szkieletowy obrządek pogrzebowy w kulturze łużyckiej*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Archeologiczne 6, Kraków 1964.

⁴ M. Gedl, *Kultura przedłużycka*, Prace Komisji Archeologicznej PAN, Oddział w Krakowie 3, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1975.

Another way to measure the Professor's scholarly achievement is by the number of works published; a truly impressive oeuvre of well over 500 publications, 38 of them in book form and the recognition by the research community in Poland and the international community. Outside Poland he was offered membership of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), Austrian Archaeometry Association, Commission of the Copper Age and the Bronze Age of the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (UISPP); in Poland: membership of the Archaeological Commission of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow, Silesian Institute, the distinction of corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and an honorary degree *Honoris Causa* from the University of Rzeszów (Fig. 2). He was also a member of the Committee of Pre- and Protohistoric Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences (where he was Vice-Chairman), several Research and Museum councils (more notably, for the Archaeological Museum in Kraków, Archaeological Museum in Gdańsk, National Museum in Przemyśl, Regional Museum in Rzeszów, Museum of Opole Silesia, The Saltworks Museum in Wieliczka). He was also appointed to editing councils of several publishing houses; for many years he acted as Chairman of the Editorial Committee of *Acta Archaeologica Carpathica*.



Fig. 2. Profesor Marek Gedl after the *honoris causa* doctorate award ceremony, with prof. dr hab. Michał Parczewski and prof. dr hab. Jan Chochorowski; at the University of Rzeszów; Photo by E. Międlar-Wójcikiewicz (7.06.2008).

For his achievements and contribution Professor Marek Gedl received several awards from the Ministry of Education (most of them individual, 1st degree), the Commission of National Education Medal (1989), Gold Cross of Merit (1975), Knight's Cross (1977) and Commander's Cross (1999) Order of Polonia Restituta. The Jagiellonian University, with members of its ruling body in attendance, held two solemn celebrations of the Professor's Jubilees: on 15 June 1994 — his sixtieth birthday (Fig. 3), on 30 October 2007 — his fiftieth anniversary of service at the University, with two dedicatory publications⁵. On 23 June 2010, on its fiftieth anniversary, the Professor was honoured by his University with a solemn ceremony of the renewal of His PhD.



Fig 3. 60th Birthday Celebration. Professor Marek Gedl receiving birthday wishes from prof. dr hab. Janusz Ostrowski, Director of the Institute of Archaeology Jagiellonian University; at right, Mrs. Barbara Gedl and prof. dr hab. Aleksander Koj, HM Rector of the Jagiellonian University; Photo by K. Pollesch (15.06.1994).

The Professor kept in regular touch with several archaeological centres, Central European in particular. One expression of this were the terms spent as visiting professor at universities in Münster, Halle, Stralsund, Bratislava, and

⁵ J. Chochorowski (ed.), *Problemy epoki brązu i wczesnej epoki żelaza w Europie Środkowej. Księga jubileuszowa poświęcona Markowi Gedlowi w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin i czterdziestolecie pracy w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim*, Kraków 1996; J. Chochorowski (ed.), *Studia nad epoką brązu i wczesną epoką żelaza w Europie. Księga poświęcona Profesorowi Markowi Gedlowi na pięćdziesięciolecie pracy w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim*, Kraków 2007.

also, Kyiv, another, the presentation of individual papers and participation in numerous conferences. Especially lively was his cooperation with many institutions of German archaeology into which he drew not only a large group of his colleagues and students but also researchers from outside his home institution. A physical outcome of this cooperation was publication of several volumes within the monumental *Prähistorische Bronzefunde* source studies series published in Germany. In 2004 this achievement earned the Professor *Laur Jagielloński*, the prestigious award of the Jagiellonian University. The last, thirteenth volume in the series penned by the Professor, was published just a few months ago⁶.

His special talent of bringing the research offer to various communities and individuals would dominated the activities of the Commission of Bronze Age of the Committee of Pre- and Protohistoric Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences when Professor Marek Gedl was Director (1997–2006). The Commission would also offer a platform for the research activity and promotion of achievements for many archaeologists from outside the main research centres in Poland. During the 1970s and 80s the Professor was instrumental for organizing a number of important conferences which brought together specialists in Bronze Age and Early Iron Age archaeology from many countries of Central Europe. Analysing the Professor's imposing research and written legacy it easy to see that the focus of his research interests and activity was on the cultural development of Europe (notably, its central region) during the Bronze and the Early Iron Age, that is, between the final centuries of the 3rd and final centuries of the 1st millennium BC. Nevertheless, his scholarly output includes studies and publications in Stone Age, Celtic culture in Poland, cultural phenomena of the Roman Age, and even, medieval and early modern archaeology. Especially constructive and significant from the European perspective is the Professor's contribution to the identification and description of culture processes which swept across Europe approximately between the middle of the 2nd and the middle of the 1st millennium BC described in archaeology as the Urnfield culture complex, one of its units "Lusatian Culture". What the Professor found fascinating was the study of this culture phenomenon which, for a period of around thousand years, would express the identity of Barbarian communities of central Europe, ethnically anonymous to us, until the emergence of the Hallstatt proto-civilization and Professor; he addressed this subject in his MA dissertation, PhD and habilitation theses, numerous monographs, syntheses and source study analyses.

An central place in the Professor's academic activity was occupied by field-work, excavation in particular. He embarked on them with a great passion, determined to recover new sources of knowledge about the distant past, and at the same time, with a deep conviction about the role of field research in shaping the research methodology and research attitude in young adepts of archaeology. Truly proverbial are the twenty-five years of excavation (1956-1980) of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cemetery at Kietrz near Głubczyce. For discoveries made at

⁶ M. Gedl, *Die Pfeilspitzen in Polen*, *Prähistorische Bronzefunde* 5:6, Stuttgart 2014.

this site the Professor earned the renown and recognition in the academic community and also, the respect of the residents of Kietrz who in 1994 made him an Honorary Citizen of their town. Also the publication of successive volumes reporting on the archaeology at Kietrz established the Professor's reputation as a leading European archaeologist. Not less significant was the investigation and discoveries made by the Professor in cemeteries of the "Lusatian Culture" at Zbrojewsko on the Liswarta River, Bachórz-Chodorówka on the San River and the Early Bronze fortified settlement at Jędrychowice in Głubczyce Plateau.

For us, excavation and training under His supervision was not only a major source of knowledge and professional experience, it was also a place and time for the forming of our attitudes and characters (Fig. 4). There was no lack of heavy labour but thanks to the atmosphere created by the Professor, almost a ritual of life on the dig, many of us became "infected" by archaeology, such was the power of the dig at Kietrz. Thanks to its sheer scale and excellent organization of the work, attraction of the recovered archaeological objects, participation in the fieldwork of the Kietrz Expedition left an indelible mark on our professional experience and, in many cases, even had a bearing on our personal life paths. Some, next to the impact of research, found their future spouse, most of us discovered the world of archaeological adventure, and some "chosen" individuals learnt



Fig 4. Group photo – “with one foot in the grave”, No. 2500, Kietrz (season 1973);
Photo by J. Chochorowski.

to say goodbye to archaeology, to their and the Professor's satisfaction. For the Professor, ever intolerant of idleness and mediocrity, would "suggest" — as he liked to say — they choose a different, "better" life path; as to good performance, this he rewarded by assigning a new task. Not that there was no room or time for some happy students' fun; naturally, it was part of the rhythm of the life on the dig, in a controlled manner, naturally. The legendary "Ballad of Kietrz" was composed here, the hero of its refrain none other than "the Boss" (Professor Gedl, that is), who in this way — and not only way either — was made immortalised by the students. At Kietrz we learned how to popularise archaeology by holding archaeological exhibitions in the local cultural centre. Announced from the pulpit by the local parish priest, they met with great interest of hundreds and even thousands of the townspeople of Kietrz and its region. And as expected, next to the party authorities, the exhibition would be visited by the parish priest at the head of a flock of nuns following eagerly in his wake. After all, for the local community this was a major cultural event.

Another great passion of the Professor was hiking and looking for unrecorded archaeological sites. He always embarked on them excursion with a great commitment and interest, never mind if he was bound for his preferred territory in the Głubczyce Plateau in Upper Silesia, the Holy Cross mountains, the Carpathians, the Roztocze hills in east-central Poland, or the more exotic mountain ranges of Pirin in Bulgaria. It is during these excursions, made in small groups, that there were discussions and storytelling, and the Professor was a narrator without an equal. We talked about archaeology and its methods, learning about the past, but also, about the world and travels, or quite simply, people and family, but also — very earnestly — about values and attitudes. Time and again he would surprise us by expressing a clear, critical judgement, or by an uncompromising assessment, and also, by his unyielding principles, with diligence, reliability, integrity and loyalty setting the tone of His reflections. At that time we may have not understood that these principles had as their foundation the sum total of his life experience: at ten years old, a boy scout courier of the Grey Ranks resistance unit in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, his section — Lwowska, Poznańska and Noakowskiego streets; as a secondary school pupil and student — not giving in to pressure and the threats of the Ministry of Public Safety functionaries who demanded that he report to them on his schoolmates; being one of a generation whose lot was to enter adulthood in the post-war years, a time of scarcity, sometimes outright poverty; building the foundations of Polish post-war archaeology without yielding to the pressure of a hostile ideology; becoming a respected scholar, one who was constantly looking for new research areas and opportunities but never forgot to share them with his colleagues and students; being someone who felt equally strongly about our research successes and about our personal problems and family concerns. And still, life had still one more test in store for Him; a great affliction when, for ten years prior to his death he was disabled by a serious illness and endured it with extraordinary courage, surrounded by his Family's loving care and affection. Even then he never refused to be of use to us

on archaeological matters. And this was something that not all of us had had time to thank Him, taken by surprise by his sudden passing. The Professor's last book, the next volume on the archaeology of Kietrz⁷, would come off the presses two weeks after His death.

The Professor's service to learning and Jagiellonian University has ended. Overcome by grief we nevertheless find a grain of hope and optimism: the great Opus of His life and work, warm memories, thanks to which He will ever be with us.

Jan Chochorowski

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⁷ M. Gedl, *Wczesnołużyckie cmentarzysko w Kietrze (część IV)*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Archeologiczne 66, Kraków 2012.