

Archaeology of Conflicts II

Pavel Drnovský – Petr Hejhal – Ladislav Rytíř (eds.)



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Published by Pavel Mervart Publishing,
P. O. Box 5, 549 41 Červený Kostelec,
2023
Translation Jana Kličová, Urszula Baron and authors
Printed H.R.G., spol. s r. o.
www.pavelmervart.cz

Reviewed:
PhDr. Jan John, Ph.D.
doc. Mgr. Petr Květina, Ph.D.

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Magdalena Žurek, 2023

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ISBN 978-80-7465-596-8

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The Napoleonic Battle of Rogoźnica – geophysical and archaeological research

Katarzyna Zdeb – Jacek Adamiec – Judyta Bąk

Abstract: *The Battle of Rogoźnica, between the French army and the Russian–Prussian coalition, is one of the numerous clashes fought during Napoleon Bonaparte’s military campaign. The events that took place on 31 May 1813 became an important part of the history of the contemporary inhabitants of the village of Rogoźnica. In the quest for answers and in order to find out about the fate of the soldiers who fought at that time, a two-stage study was planned, consisting of non-invasive GRP as well as invasive research in the form of boreholes and archaeological excavations. Fieldwork followed by an interpretation of the obtained geophysical and archaeological data made it possible to confront the historical sources related to the battle fought by Napoleon’s troops in this area. Moreover, material in the form of human and animal bones was also obtained. Anthropological expertise helped identify 3 incomplete skeletons, along with indications of their sex and age. However, due to the state of preservation of the osteological material, which was fragmentary, with moderate bone fossilisation, the performance of in-depth bioarchaeological analyses was significantly limited.*

Despite the fact that the range of work undertaken failed to verify the previously selected area in the former manor park in Rogoźnica as the location where the fallen soldiers of the Battle of Rogoźnica were laid to rest, it does not mean that the research possibilities, nor the history of Napoleon’s soldiers, ends here. Further work is planned to extend the survey to the rest of the park with the hope of finding the burial place of the soldiers of the Battle of Rogoźnica, thus enriching and supplementing the pages of history.

Keywords: GPR research – conflict archeology – battlefield archeology – Napoleonic wars

Introduction

Armed conflicts – including the Great War with the Teutonic Order (1409–1411), the Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815), the First World War (1914–1918) and the Second World War (1939–1945) – led to the creation and spacial separation of places strictly as a result of particular parts of military campaigns, and these included not only battlefields, but also places where troops were stationed along with so-called field hospitals, i.e. areas surrounding battlefields and cemeteries, i.e. graves of fallen soldiers. Research interest in this subject grew in popularity during the 21st century, including among archaeologists, leading to the distinction of sub-disciplines, such as battlefield archeology and conflict archeology. The main goal of such research is to locate a battle site, and then recreate its course through various sources and research methods. The scope of the work conducted is not merely limited to areas where skirmishes took place directly, but also the aforementioned field hospitals or the area surrounding the battlefields and the final resting places (war graves) of those who fell in battle. At the same time, the subject does not focus exclusively upon the fate of soldiers who took part in a specific fight, but also touches upon the issues and fate of the accompanying civilian population.

Conflict archeology is a sub-discipline of archeology that was defined in the mid-1980s, focusing on ‘material traces of conflicts between people in the past’ (Wrzosek 2019, 33). Interest in sites of old

wars dates back to the times of Tacitus, who was one of the first to describe the inspection of the battlefield site in the Teutoburg Forest (Tacyt, translation by Hammer 1957, 104; Wrzosek 2019, 33). Military conflicts during the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte (born 1769, died 1821) and in particular, the numerous battles at the beginning of the 19th century, known as the Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815), became the basis for the creation of freedom movements in some European countries. Battles were fought on various fronts, but the eastern one posed the greatest challenge to the allied forces of Bonaparte. After the unsuccessful invasion of the Russian Empire in 1812, the soldiers of the Grand Army retreated west, where they fought further minor battles with the united forces of Prussia and Austria. One of the greatest defeats was suffered by Napoleon Bonaparte's army during the so-called Battle of Nations, which took place on 16–19 October 1813. Then the anti-French coalition gained a significant advantage.

The events related to the campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte also influenced the history of the village of Rogoźnica, in the Lower Silesia voivodeship in Poland. In order to recreate the events related to the so-called Battle of Rogoźnica (1813), a varied series of field work – archaeological and geophysical – was performed to find the graves of soldiers who died in battle. One example of this work is an archaeological and geophysical project conducted around the village of Rogoźnica (Lower Silesia voivodeship). The research was carried out in two stages – first, geophysical works were performed using the GPR method, and then archaeological research was carried out. This article presents the course of the research and the results obtained.

History of Rogoźnica

Rogoźnica is located in the Lower Silesia voivodeship, in the Świdnica powiat, in the municipality of Strzegom, in the so-called Strzegom Hills (fig. 1). The village was founded in the mid-12th century. The first historical information comes from medieval documents from 1291, appearing under the name of *Rogozen* (Jastrzębski 1973, 139). Then, in 1295, it featured as *Rogosnitz*, in the Book of endowments of the Bishopric of Wrocław (Latin: *Liber foundationis episcopatus Vratislaviensis*) (Markgraf and Schulte 1889). In the years from 1318 to 1342, Rogoźnica was part of the Jawor deanery, while in the 17th century it was included in the property of the Richthofen family. At that time, a farm was built near the village and the mining of granite began. With the influx of German population and their progressive assimilation with the local population, foreign names appeared alongside some of the place names, including *Rosen-Rogoźnica* (Przytulecki 2004, 8).

The village developed in the mid-19th century, when a classicist palace was designed and erected there, together with the surrounding palace park that featured an alley of oaks and artificial lakes. Probably during the Napoleonic Wars, another similar building once stood in the place of the present palace built between 1860–1870, as indicated by historical sources. The classicist palace was destroyed at the end of the Second World War, and only the manor park remained from the entire complex (reg.No. A/4557/857 / WŁ 18 September 1981).

The Napoleonic battle at Rogoźnica

The Napoleonic campaigns were also important for the area of Lower Silesia, where numerous battles took place, including at the aforementioned village of Rogoźnica, Targoszyn and the surrounding towns of the contemporary Świdnica powiat. The events of 31 May 1813 went down in history as the *Battle of Rogoźnica*, i.e. an armed clash between the Russian-Prussian armies and the French (Chylińska 2014, 9; Szalkiewicz 2014).

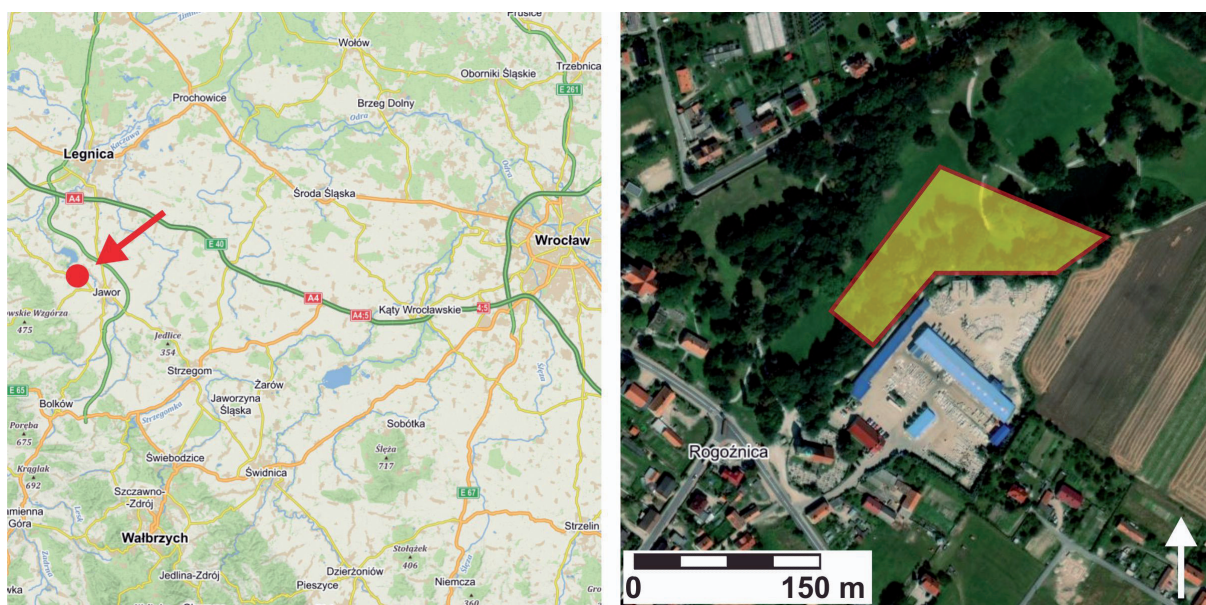


Fig. 1 Rogoźnica – area of GPR and archaeological research

The Russian army was moving from Legnica towards Strzegom and Świdnica. The inhabitants of nearby villages fled, as mentioned in parish records. Only a few remained, including a descendant of Adam Otto from Targoszyn, a blacksmith who, during the skirmish in question, repaired military equipment and shod the soldiers participating in the *Battle of Rogoźnica* (Przytulecki 2004: 17). Minor clashes with French troops reached the boundaries of the village of Rogoźnica.

Historical sources describe the battle around Rogoźnica as a clash between French troops under the command of Marshal Macdonald, who commanded about 20,000 soldiers, with the troops of the Russo-Prussian coalition under the command of Gen. Priest and Gen. Blücher. The latter army is estimated to have comprised around 90,000 soldiers. Despite the initial advantage enjoyed by the French army, the Prussian-Russian army won the clash. After the fray was over and the Russian-Prussian army had withdrawn, the inhabitants of Rogoźnica returned to the village.

The *History of Targoszyn* describes this moment as follows:

‘The inhabitants of the previously evacuated places began to return to their homeland a day after the end of the battle. The aforementioned Mönnig, Opitz and Rudolph, who headed over to the battlefield in Rogoźnica the day after the battle, saw piles of corpses, especially in the areas from Targoszyn and the present park. Most of the dead soldiers lay under the great oaks...’ (Przytulecki 2004, 29).

Residents who returned to their village began burying the bodies of the fallen soldiers. The aforementioned monograph presents this as follows:

‘Huge pits were dug that could hold up to 50 bodies. The largest graves were arranged under the oaks in the park – i.e., where the largest number of soldiers had died. Here was the so-called “Russian grave” that bore witness to the battle of yesteryear. However, not all the fallen were found and buried immediately. Some bodies, partly decayed, were discovered in remote and hidden places even after two or three weeks. These were then transported with the help of special hooks to the previously created graves. One of the people working on burying the bodies was Grüttner, whom we already know about ... Also, many years after the battle in Niedaszów and Rogoźnica,

military memorabilia in the form of elements of military equipment, weapons or even the remains of fallen soldiers were found' (Przytulecki 2004, 30).

In memory of the events in 1814, a plaque with the following inscription was hung in the building of the newly erected inn:

'When on 31 May 1813 the French soldiers came to this place, and a large part of the village burned in the bloody battle with them, our Lord took pity and said:

*Only as far as this place and not a step further!
Against war, fire and drought
May our merciful Lord protect us.
+ Made by G. T. P.
1814.'*

In 1913, on the 100th anniversary of the battle, a stone commemorating this event was unveiled (Komorowski 2003; Chylińska 2014, 13). However, regarding the record of the battle itself, not many historical sources survive, but among the ones that do exist one might mention *Das Gefecht bei Großrosen am 31. Mai 1813: Ein Bild in engem Rahmen aus d. Zeit d. Leiden u. der Erhebung* (Roth 1913). However, the memory of this battle is still alive and is still alive for the inhabitants of Rogoźnica, as a source of pride for them and an element of their common history and cultural heritage.

GPR research in search of Napoleon's soldiers

As a result of the cooperation established between the Rogoźnica Village Historical Association and GPR24.com, a project was run to collect historical information and select the potential location of the graves of soldiers killed during the Battle of Rogoźnica, and then to verify the information received in the field. Subsequent phases involved the planning of field work. At this stage, the site for geophysical research was selected, which, due to its non-invasive nature, helped to collect data on the location of the objects or layers sought (by selecting areas of GPR anomalies in 2D imaging). During the final stage of the work, archaeological research was performed – surface prospection and excavations of sites indicated through analysis of the results of GPR surveys.

GPR is categorised as a geophysical radiofrequency method. The measuring equipment consisting of a central unit and a shielded (transmitting and receiving) antenna is suitable for a highly urbanised area. The basic principle of the GPR method is the emission of an electromagnetic pulse through the transmitting antenna into a geological or anthropogenic medium. This impulse is refracted, reflected and dampened. After being reflected, the transformed wave is recorded by the receiving antenna. The obtained results are presented in a form that reflects the geological structure of the studied area or the studied engineering structure.

In order to record a useful signal (information), there must be a contrast of the relative dielectric constant (dielectric constant ϵ – a dimensionless value representing the capacity of the material for storing a charge) between the medium and the object sought. In the case of the location of anthropogenic objects such as walls, tunnels, retention tanks, etc., assuming a difference in the dielectric constant as mentioned above, a sought object (e.g. a retention tank or tunnel) filled with air (with a relative dielectric constant close to 1) should clearly and significantly differ from the background performed echogram of a given research profile in relation to deposits constituting the tested substrate (a medium whose dielectric constant may range from several to several dozen). Using an antenna with a frequency of

700MHz, objects over 2cm in size may be located, but the minimum size of the detected object depends, apart from the antenna frequency, on a number of factors: the type of soil, the material from which the object is made, its dielectric constant, etc. A situation may occur where materially different items (various materials from which subsequent structural layers were made, for instance) create a very similar image on the echograms – this is due to their properties, i.e. a similar dielectric constant (low ϵ contrast) of individual construction materials (cf. Karczewski 2007; Pasternak 2015).

The tests were performed using a standard measurement technique, i.e. in the form of short-offset reflective profiling whereby the antenna system moves along the profile, and the transmitting antenna emits electromagnetic pulses at a specified distance interval. Electromagnetic pulses propagate in the form of an electromagnetic (EM) wave in the rock mass. The receiving antenna is moved along the measurement profile simultaneously with the transmitting antenna, registering the reflected signals – reflections, which are recorded on a laptop. These results are presented in the form of echograms. The vertical axis is recorded on a timescale measured in nanoseconds [ns], while the horizontal axis is recorded on a distance scale (in meters). While processing the measurement data, the time scale is converted to the depth scale (cf. Karczewski 2007; Pasternak 2015).

Based on historical information and spoken communication of the members of the ‘Our village of Rogoźnica’ Association, it was determined that the manor park is the probable resting place of the soldiers who took part in the battle in May 1814. Based on the consent of the Provincial Conservator of Monuments (dec. No. W/Arch 5163.5.2019.MK) GPR research was carried out in order to verify the historical information about the alleged grave of Napoleonic soldiers, and then to interpret the results of field work carried out. The former palace park is listed in the register of historical buildings, and so it was extremely important to obtain data using non-destructive methods

During the project in question, three army bases were marked out in the vicinity of the park lake (fig. 2). Then GPR profiles were marked out every 0.5 cm and runs were made in two directions using a 300MHz Transient Technologies Antenna. After the field work was completed and GPR data was collected, the results were analysed. The data recorded from the field work were processed using specialised software for these GPRs – i.e., Synchro3 and Planner. The first step was to remove the noise. Next a rectifier wavelet filter was used, the mean calculated, followed by the application of linear gain, a bandpass filter and a three-point correlator. Finally, the signal was transformed from a time domain to a depth domain. The time-depth conversion was performed by matching the synthetic hyperbola.

For each of the army camps numbered 1–3, an analysis of the structures was carried out by checking the anomalies occurring at successive depths of the 3D model of the studied area (fig. 3). This made it possible to detect discrepancies at a depth of 1.5–3 m in various camps. First of all, anomalies were observed in camps nos 2 and 3 at a depth of 1.5 m. The observed anomalies are similar in nature to those corresponding to the burials. One of them is located between the northern and southern



Fig. 2 GPR research conducted in Rogoźnica



Fig. 3 Testing grounds in the area of the historic park in Rogoźnica

boundaries of camp no. 2, while at camp no. 3 it is visible in the north-west corner. The obtained results, and in particular the anomalies observed on the echograms from one of the army camps, made it possible to plan further archaeological work.

Archaeological research in the palace park grounds in the village of Rogoźnica

The second stage of field work was initiated, based on the non-destructive tests performed. In 2020, project work focused on archaeological research that started with the performance of surveys using a hand drill. In agreement with the Provincial Conservator of Monuments, pursuant to previously issued consent for research, the sites indicated by the GPR surveys were verified. However, this process produced results that clashed with expectations. Namely, the GPR anomalies were verified and they turned out to be geological layers, distinctly cut off from the studied area below the park ground level.

Further field work was conducted in the park in accordance with the decision of the Wałbrzych branch of the Lower Silesian Monuments Conservator (dec. no. W/Arch. 5161.150.2020.MK), and a field survey was initiated in the western part of the selected park area.

The conducted surface study yielded the discovery of bones and fragments within the drainage ditch that ran through the park from south-west to north-west. In the walls and at the bottom of the ditch, some single, loose bones with no preserved anatomical structure were found. It was a similar story in the area above the ditch – on either side, in the ivy growing along both sides of the drainage ditch, in the vicinity of a clump of trees. Surface prospecting made it possible to pick out three bone clusters – i.e., inside and in the profiles of the drainage ditch – on the surface of the grey silt layer, and two clusters on the sides of the ditch, in the humus, under the ivy. The discovered bones were not arranged anatomically but scattered loosely. Some long bones were uncovered – femoral and fibula – as well as shorter bones, including fragments of lower jaw and heels.

Two small trench surveys were carried out on the banks of the drainage ditch in order to identify whether there were single bones or complete skeletons just below the humus. However, neither bone debris nor disturbance of the layering structure were observed.

Due to the unusual location of the bones, the Provincial Conservator of Monuments was notified, who in turned ordered the prosecutor's office to be informed. As a result of the action taken, the prosecutor and a forensic physician arrived at the archaeological site. The bone material was examined

by a forensic physician who confirmed the human origin of the osteological material obtained, which was determined to date from around the 18th/19th century. The District Prosecutor elected not to investigate having been informed of the decision of the Provincial Conservator of Monuments permitting archaeological research to search for the remains of Napoleonic soldiers. Due to the history of this place, it could be presumed that these are the remains of soldiers who once fought in one of the Napoleonic skirmishes, and then buried by local residents. The District Prosecutor recommended consultations with the Provincial Conservator of Monuments, who then suggested that the work be completed at this stage and that the human bones be submitted for a full anthropological analysis.

Anthropological studies of human remains found in the palace park in the village of Rogoźnica

During archaeological surveys and field prospecting, fragmented bone material was discovered with traces of damage caused by, inter alia, erosion and post-deposit processes – e.g., the bones found in the profile of a drainage ditch. These bones were sent for anthropological analysis conducted by Dr. Łukasz Maurycy Stanaszek from the Anthropology Laboratory of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw. The main goal of the anthropological research conducted was to determine the number of individuals as well as the age and sex of the human remains.

During the course of the analysis, it was confirmed that the average fossilisation of the bone material, fragmentation and damage caused by erosion and soil acidity, as well as the general state of preservation, probably indicate that it dates from the 17th–19th century. The anthropological study managed to identify the remains of three adults (Table 1) – a man aged 35–45, a woman aged 30–40 and a person aged 60 or more. Doctor Stanaszek wrote in his expert opinion: ‘The principle of repeatability of selected anatomical regions taking into account the division into right and left sides and an estimation of their greatest frequency of occurrence (e.g. right shoulder blades or left femoral bones) was adopted as the basis for determining the number of deceased. Making such a division also helped determine the age and sex of the deceased, which were identified by selected bones belonging to individual individuals. The morphological features of the bones indicate the presence of both male (e.g. based on the lower jaws) and female features (e.g. right pelvic bone). Based on the degree of abrasion of the chewing surfaces, the reduction of alveolar processes, changes in the surface of the pubic symphysis and the general degree of ossification, it was possible to estimate the probable age, while the measurements of long bones can be used to determine the height of individual persons’ (Stanaszek 2021).

	Sex	Anthropological age	Height
Individual 1	Male	<i>maturus</i> (35–45)	177 cm
Individual 2	Female	<i>adultus/maturus</i> (30–40)	160–164 cm
Individual 3	Undetermined	<i>senilis</i> (60+)	155–161 cm

Table 1. Results of anthropological analysis of human bones discovered

Further anthropological analyses showed the presence of small degenerative changes in the form of osteophytes on the lumbar vertebrae. Apart from that, the material does not manifest any other pathological or pathological changes. Moreover, most of the obtained material did not reveal any characteristic, visible injuries that might suggest participation in the battle discussed above (Stanaszek 2021).

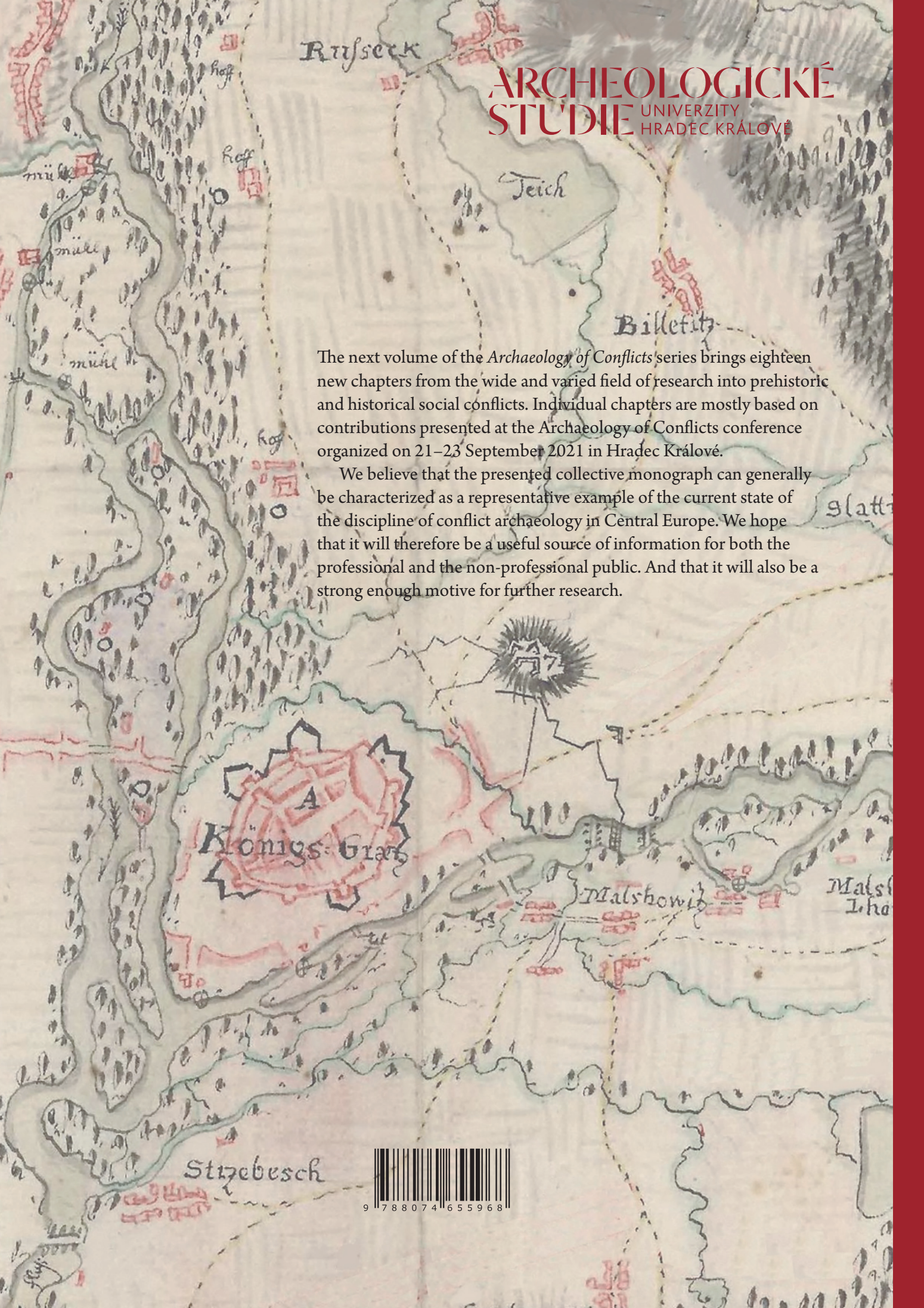
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ARCHEOLOGICKÉ STUDIE

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The next volume of the *Archaeology of Conflicts* series brings eighteen new chapters from the wide and varied field of research into prehistoric and historical social conflicts. Individual chapters are mostly based on contributions presented at the Archaeology of Conflicts conference organized on 21–23 September 2021 in Hradec Králové.

We believe that the presented collective monograph can generally be characterized as a representative example of the current state of the discipline of conflict archaeology in Central Europe. We hope that it will therefore be a useful source of information for both the professional and the non-professional public. And that it will also be a strong enough motive for further research.



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