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**PLANS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS IN HIMALAYAS  
AND TIBET – THE LAST OF ANDRZEJ ŻAKI’S  
BIG RESEARCH PROJECTS**

Abstract: Andrzej Żaki’s excavations in the Carpathian mountains, the Alps and the Andes are relatively well-known, however not many heard about his planned excavations in the Himalayas and in the Tibetan Plateau area.

This paper is devoted to Andrzej Żaki’s preparations of the expedition, which was Professor’s another project regarding mountain archaeology.

The expedition to the Himalayas and to the Tibetan Plateau planned for the end of the ’80s and the beginning of ’90s had been preceded by careful research on the history of human settlement in this area. The research was focused not only on written sources but it also included close contacts with the Office of Dalai Lama XIV living in Dharamsala. Polish Himalayan climber, Wanda Rutkiewicz also played a significant role in the project. The aim of the planned archaeological excavations near the chosen Buddhist monasteries was focused on the creation of a more precise chronology of antiques found during precedent excavations.

Key words: Andrzej Żaki, Himalaya, Tibet, Pei Wei Chung,

The research led by Andrzej Żaki in the Carpathian mountains, Alps and Andes has been relatively well known (Woźniak 2003), nevertheless, plans of excavations in Himalayas and Tibet have not been known to a broader circle of archaeologists. However, it seems important to present them on the occasion of the second death anniversary of the AAC’s founder, since these show his characteristic *modus operandi* during excavation preparations in Europe, South America and Asia.

Andrzej Żaki has always highlighted in the conversations with the author of this article, to be first exposed to archaeology of Himalayas and the Plateau of Tibet during an expedition to China in 1957, where he met Chinese anthropologist and archaeologist, Pei Wei Chung (Pei Wenzhong, Fig.1), the famous discoverer of an almost entire skull of *homo erectus pekinensis* (Peking Man) in Zhoukoudian.



Fig. 1. Andrzej Żaki and Pei Wei Chung (in the middle) in Zhoukoudian, 1957

Before the Second World War, Pei Wei Chung was connected with abbé Henri Breuil, under whose supervision he wrote his PhD thesis, defended in 1937 in Paris, as well as with the researcher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who was leading excavations in Tibet during the Interwar Years.

Andrzej Żaki started to prepare his excavations in Himalayas and Tibet in the 80s' after he finished the research in the Andes. His archives included a folder with notes, sketches and maps, which were the effects of studies on the archaeology of Tibet. The trace of those studies can be found in the literature. An article was published in the publication of The Polish University Abroad in London, dedicated to the Second Historical-Archaeological Symposium, organized by Andrzej Żaki in Hamburg on the 7-the-8<sup>th</sup> of October 1989 (Żaki 1991, 119-122).

The concrete plans of excavations in Himalayas and Tibet were described by Andrzej Żaki in the letters dating to the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1988, addressed to the Office of Tibet, situated during the 80s' in Zürich, also in the ones dating back to the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1988, addressed to the Dalai Lama's Office in Dharamsala in India, where the centre of Tibetan emigration has been located. Besides these, there was also preserved a letter signed by the Dalai Lama Office in Dharamsala, dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1988.

In the first letter of Andrzej Żaki to Dalai Lama, dating to June 1988, he asks Dalai Lama for recommendation, explaining his willingness to start works around 1989/90, that would take place in Himalayas and Tibet, most probably in the monasteries located in Ladakh, Zanskar or Nepal, working on the behalf of the Polish University Abroad in London.

Small-surface excavations were supposed to explore sequences of occupation layers in those objects, their results were also useful to verify the observations made during previous research of, for example, Peter Aufschnaiter.

In the second letter dating back to November 1988, Andrzej Żaki states precisely that *“...in the forthcoming season May – September 1989 only a few days long limited morphological and stratigraphical research is intended. The latter would include archaeological sonds (1 x 3-5 m) outside the walls of selected oldest monasteries to determine typological sequences of the objects dating back to the Middle Ages or, possibly even earlier times. Subsequently, the objects would be put under close laboratory examination, radiocarbon analysis in particular (University of Bern), to establish the precise chronology of the archaeological strata and help to provide datation”*. He also indicates the place in which he would like to lead excavations *„Relatively easily accessible and providing lodgings for the team of the two or three researchers, the famous Lamayuru monastery in Ladakh seems to be the most convenient site for excavations”*.

However, works were planned to be executed in various sites, not only limited to the outside of Lamayuru monastery, as stated in the second part of the letter: *„I would be extremely grateful for your advice as to which monasteries in the neighbourhood could be included in the project (Hemis, Shey, Tikse?)...”*.

According to Andrzej Żaki's statement, the project engaged a couple of people, including polish Himalayan climber Wanda Rutkiewicz, with who he stayed in touch until her tragic death.

In the second half of the 80s, while preparing the trip to Himalaya and Tibet, he does not miss a chance to get familiar with the subject of history and culture of Tibetan nation, as stated by the notes in his archives<sup>1</sup>. In his life, it is a period of numerous trips, to the Pacific islands. Only in 1989, he visits Hawaii in spring, the Cook Islands as well as New Zealand. Additionally, in autumn he organises the Symposium in Hamburg, mentioned before.

Nevertheless, the expedition to Himalayas and Tibet does not take place because of Andrzej Żaki's health problems, which were the result of a heart attack, from which the Professor suffered in the 80s'. Nevertheless, thanks to the above

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<sup>1</sup> During the preparations of the expedition, Andrzej Żaki made several phone calls with Heinrich Harrer, teacher of Dalai Lama and the companion of Peter Aufschnaiter during their stay in Lhasa. Harrer had described their stay in Tibet in the book titled 'Seven Years in Tibet', which has become a plot of the famous Hollywood film from 1997, 'Seven Years in Tibet. My Life Before, During and After'. Andrzej Żaki was interested in the excavations of P.Aufschnaiter in Lhasa (Aufschnaiter 1956).

memoir of expedition preparations, one can appreciate the characteristics of Andrzej Żaki's work - working with a flourish and setting up challenged in order to reach the highest goals.



Fig. 2 . Andrzej Żaki with Jan Nowak Jezioranski, near A. Żaki's house in Gersau, by Vierwaldstättersee (Switzerland). Late 80s'/early 90s'

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