



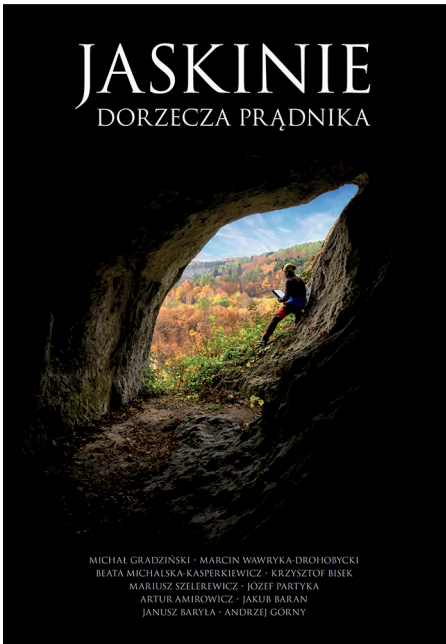
REVIEWS

Michał Gradziński, Marcin Wawryka-Drohobycki, Beata Michalska-Kasperkiewicz, Krzysztof Bisek, Mariusz Szelerewicz, Józef Partyka, Artur Amirowicz, Jakub Baran, Janusz Baryła, Andrzej Górny, *Jaskinie Dorzecza Prądnika* [English title: *The Caves of Prądnik Basin*], Ojców 2020 (Ojców National Park), 672 pages, 11 figures, 757 plans, 10 maps; ISBN 83-60377-39-1.

Caves and rockshelters are one of the most intriguing natural features inseparable from archaeology. It is not surprise, therefore, that the history of their archaeological exploration is almost as long as archaeology itself. In Poland the excavations in caves have started already in 1870s with research carried out on a couple of sites situated in the southern part of the limestone-built Cracow Upland (southern Poland). This earliest stage of scientific examination of caves, lasting until the early 1890s, resulted in spectacular finds which paved the way for further research and for the recognition of the whole area as of major importance for Polish cave archaeology (to date, this still holds true). It is important to note that soon it became clear that with respect to archaeology, the most promising piece of the Upland was its southern part, located within the valleys of river Prądnik and its tributary streams. Noticeably, a barely 193 km² large Prądnik catchment area is a region of highest density of caves in the whole Cracow Upland.

The development of field research in the aforementioned area soon have entailed a need for systematization of caves and for creating their comprehensive inventory. When it comes to Prądnik Basin, to date three different catalogues were available to us. The first register of caves, although yet very imperfect, was completed by Stanisław Jan Czarnowski in his *Jaskinie okolic Krakowa i Ojcowa* (Eng. *Caves of the Environs of Cracow and Ojców*), published in 1911. Although it is difficult to consider this work as systematized and extensive, the author collected some basic data on more than 200 caves and rockshelters (130 of them are localized within Prądnik Basin) focussing on their location, dimensions and archaeological records, if they were ever found.





Definitely much more elaborated was the next piece of cataloguing work upon caves made by Kazimierz Kowalski, which turned out to be a milestone in Polish cave bibliography. The three volumes of his *Jaskinie Polski* (Eng. *The Caves of Poland*), published in the early 1950s, were dedicated to caves of the Cracow Upland, Polish Tatra Mountains and Pieniny Mountains, respectively. As regards the first area, the catalogue demonstrated 513 caves and rockshelters, including around 130 of them within Prądnik Basin. All were described according to the same pattern, which – apart from general informations such as location, altitude and metric data, included plans of all the studied caves and remarks on their history of scientific research, with full bibliography of older or recent works. Importantly, in this

holistic approach where all the sciences involved in caves were engaged, archaeology played one of the most important roles, due to the much attention paid to stratigraphy and cultural content of caves. Needless to say, the level set by Kowalski turned out to be quite challenging. The another inventory of caves, published in 1986 by Mariusz Szelerewicz and Andrzej Górny (*Jaskinie Wyżyny Krakowsko-Wieluńskiej*, Eng. *Caves of the Cracow-Wieluń Upland*), did not come close to this level, although it must be stressed that it was done for different purposes.

However, Kowalski's *opus magnum* were recently given a worthy successor. Late in 2020 a large volume of the catalogue of caves from Prądnik Basin was released by the Ojców National Park. *The Caves of Prądnik Basin* – the book which is in the scope of this short review, is a result of multiauthor research team consisting mostly of geologists and natural scientists, but all well trained in practical speleology. And this is probably one of major advantages of the reviewed book: remaining as close to the underground spaces as possible, it is fully comprehensive, multifaceted and entirely reliable.

The volume in question is a result of a long-term project, lasting more than 30 years, which started in 1990 in the caves of Koziarnia Gorge in the Ojców National Park. The beginnings of the project were humble – the purpose for which it started was a need to improve cave mapping methods, and early in the 1990s its participants did not plan neither to publish the data collected, nor to expand to the further parts of the area. Over time, however, the concept of cataloguing and publishing evolved, and the Authors' cave surveys became far more institutionalised – they started to be arranged at the request of the Ojców National Park and soon extended to the

whole Prądnik Basin. The surveys resulted in publishing a number of 16 booklets in between 1992 and 2011, with field records from caves and rockshelters situated within the aforementioned basin. From the very beginning these low-circulation booklets, in practical sense non-accessible to a public, were conceived as preprints before final publication. The aim for such an order of long-term publishing was to avoid some possible mistakes and to develop a most comprehensive scheme for presentation of caves prior to a publication reviewed here. Looking from my own perspective, this plan have succeeded entirely.

The reviewed book provides data on 757 caves and rockshelters. This is a substantial increase compared to earlier catalogues, for the most part resulting from recognizing dozens of smaller rockshelters or cavities which were overlooked in previous research. It would also appear that due to the wide-range of field surveys done it is rather impossible to expect some new discoveries of caves there. Thus, holding the *Caves of Prądnik Basin* in hands one may be sure that it encompasses all the caves, rockshelters and cavities from the area in question.

The book is very clearly structured, with all data provided in unified way. When it comes to the catalogue itself, it is conveniently divided into six separate parts due to geographical location: south-western (pp. 27-84), western (pp. 85-214), north-western (pp. 215-362), north-eastern (pp. 363-412), eastern (pp. 413-536) and south-eastern (pp. 537-619). The numbering of each caves is very consistent and follows the guidelines of Mariusz Szelerewicz, Janusz Baryła and Michał Gradziński, published in 1999.

The questionnaire starts from basic informations concerning location (the entrances to all the caves have been precisely located with GPS) and morphometric data, including the altitude of cave entrances (both a.s.l. and relative), the exposure of entrances according to the corners of the world, as well as total length of a cave and its denivelation. Worth noting is that a very detailed plan of the site has been attached to each catalogue entry, with useful graphics illustrating natural features of caves. The next step is to describe a cave by three separate parts, including accessibility and cave's general features (1), characteristics of a cave made on the basis of data collected both during cataloguing and in the literature search (2) and the history of cave's research (3). The latter two parts include data of particular value for archaeologists, i.e. in case of excavated sites the Authors describe their stratigraphic sequence and provide a brief description of archaeological finds, occasionally with reference to particular stratigraphic units. Moreover, even in case of non-excavated caves they inform the reader about possible "stratigraphic potential" of the site by giving insights into the current view of the cave floor (humic, clayey etc.). More to the archaeological records, the description dedicated to finds is characterized by a generalised but meticulous approach.

Of particular value is the list of references attached to each from 757 cave sites. The way in which they were organized could be of great advantage to those who wished to get a general impression of the cited publication's content before reading it. This is because every single publication referring to particular cave has been briefly summarized by the Authors. Thus, for example, reading the questionnaire dedicated to Koziarnia Cave one may find not only a reference to the work of Bartoszewicz

published in 1916, but may be immediately informed that in this publication some people seeking refuge in the cave in 1914 are mentioned (p. 270). Finally, it is fair to note the scope of references ascribed to each cave. In many cases, like Łokietka or Zbójecka caves, they are counted in hundreds (766 and 316, respectively, see pp. 108-128 and 135-144) and this is where a great deal of Authors' work is best seen.

And again, an admirable general impression of the book may be obtained from literature review. There is no doubt that the Authors must have passed through a painstaking bibliographic search. It could hardly be otherwise, since they decided to follow the guidelines of Kowalski, whose intention was to gather and use all the published works in his catalogues edited in the 1950s, and this refers not only to books and scientific papers, but also to short press notes, and even the smallest mentions about particular caves as well. Thus, although most of the works released prior to the 1950s was collected by Kowalski (but not all, as evidenced in the reviewed book), given the enormous increase of cave literature in the last seven decades it was obvious that the full index of literature used by the Authors must be impressive. Indeed, in the index of references a number of 1720 publications were listed (pp. 621-652). It may be seen as interdisciplinary in widest sense of the word, comprising of fully scientific books and papers (geology, natural sciences and archaeology, to mention only a few), as well as popular-scientific publications, press releases or even postcards.

The final part of the book contains a full index of caves, with cross-references to each of the site provided, including not only the main but synonymic names (pp. 653-668), as well as the index of persons mentioned in the catalogue (pp. 669-671).

Last but not least, let me comment on the graphic design of the reviewed book. Although due to the scope of the project the number of figures almost exclusively came down to cave plans, the book holds four of the oldest-known drawings depicting caves of the Cracow Upland, made by Teodor Baltazar Stachowicz mostly in 1820-1830s, and this is worth mentioning that three of them are published only for the first time (Łokietka and Ciemna caves, pp. 26, 620, 652 and 672).

To conclude, it is hard to resist the impression that we are dealing with outstanding work. As far as I know it finds no good parallels at least among central-European literature. There is no doubt that *The Caves of Prądnik Basin* will be a very valuable book for archaeologists involved in cave studies, helpful both in selecting sites prospective for excavation, as well as in preparing papers concerned with speleoarchaeology of the area.

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