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*To fly, fly and... to interpret: the problems and the perspectives  
of Polish aerial archaeology*

## **Summary**

In May 2003, a conference was held in Leszno dedicated to the use of aerial photography in Polish archaeology. Its aim was to collect and summarize the results which were the outcome of a rebirth in this area since the second half of the 1990s. Rather, the conference underlined the sorry state of aerial archaeology within the context of how Polish archaeology functions. This state referred to two fundamental aspects: 1) how effective the work carried out by conservation services at the end of the 1990s actually were, and 2) how interested academic centres were in the potential offered by aerial archaeology. So we acknowledged the publication of material from the conference as one way in which we could promote this method further. In preparing this material it appeared that it is possible to find quite a number of people who, to a greater or lesser extent, either professionally or as amateurs, have come across aerial archaeology. And their achievements, often totally unknown, offer huge potential for research and interpretation.

In this book we show a very wide range of interests and activities which use aerial photography in Poland and in a few other European countries. We may include them in the category of thought on the history of Polish aerial archaeology and the consequences of the conditions which shape reflections on its usefulness in Polish archaeology, certain contemporary technological aspects on offer which increase the effectiveness of the information in the photographs, the complex problems in the interpretation of the photographs and the closely related question of how to archive them and their availability, the universal uses of photographs in conservation work and in research practice. Undoubtedly, aerial photographs also allow us to look at

archaeology and the subject under research from a different perspective, thus they can make a good basis for the reconceptualization of many fundamental problems, such as the understanding and methods of cultural landscape studies.

The presented examples of the application of aerial photography show that the problem is not the possibility to use the method under different climatic-geomorphological-soil conditions (and this was an argument often presented against this method). The perspective of aerial photography use, at least in our opinion, is a positive one. But the problem occurs of where to get these photographs, which are to be a tool for conservators and researchers. The key question is how to convince those who make the decisions and the potential user that is worth investing in this method. We believe that archaeologists (and others) who have a professional (and an amateur) interest in various areas of research into the past will find inspiration in this book for fresh ideas, that they will be... "infected" (just as we are).