

# A few remarks on my relationships with Polish archaeology

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The paper presents personal recollections of the author's contacts with Polish archaeology

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I have been watching Polish archaeology and, in a way, participating in it over the last fifty years. My memory can even be extended before the middle of the twentieth century on the basis of what I have learned from my father who also was an archaeologist.

I was never like a historian who, sitting in a library, assembles written data for his future books. Therefore it would be futile to expect me to provide a long list of quotes from the work of Polish archaeologists. What lingers in my consciousness, and what is still developing there, is just a few impressions.

If I don't count my short and unsuccessful experience in learning the Polish language just after the war, my first contact with Poland and Polish archaeology was connected with the problem of the slavinity of the Lusatian Culture. As a first year student at Charles' University in Prague (in 1952) I rejected the idea; most probably this was under the influence of my father, as at that time I could not have had much factual knowledge for developing my own views. However, this is how beliefs and convictions (including paradigmatic knowledge) sometimes come into being. I should mention that Professor Filip, my formal teacher at the university, was favourably inclined towards the idea of slavinity, accepting much from Polish literature, and also considering the fact that – among other things – the Lusatian Culture people used buttons for fastening their garments in a way similar to the ancient Slavs.

These early views remained with me and further developed. I became suspicious with regard to the ethnic interpretation of archaeological finds as well as with regard to considering the archaeological past as a playground for ethnic teams. In a way, such views became important pillars of my theory in the first decades of my archaeological career: they transformed into the search for possible local origins of archaeological cultures by means of their continuity; a critical attitude towards migrations was implied. When I look back at this period I discern rudiments of evolutionism.

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However, I never took up the origin of the Lausitz culture as an independent topic not feeling competent to do this. When I met Józef Kostrzewski (in 1956) and Konrad Jażdżewski (several times), I never tried to raise this question: I felt it would be improper considering the difference in age. In spite of the fact that I was very much impressed by the personality of Kostrzewski and his openness, I did not change my views. However, I could understand Kostrzewski's immense influence upon Polish archaeology.

My first seminar report at Charles' University was on the Złota Culture. Very little of the rich Złota finds was published at that time but, fortunately, the political system of the Soviet empire was just passing through its first crisis (the 20<sup>th</sup> congress of the Russian Communist party), which made the governments more lenient towards their subjects. Being allowed to travel to Poland I visited Zygmunt Krzak in Warsaw, inspecting some of the finds.

At that time I was already working on my diploma thesis, which dealt with the Eastern group of the Globular Amphora Culture. It was again a Polish theme. My main source of information was Polish literature, similarly as in the case of Złota. As I was allowed to visit the main Polish museums in 1956, I obtained a good overview of the field. While travelling through museums in Poland, I already possessed a detailed list of Globular Amphora finds with their descriptions, based on published literature, which seemed to make a good impression on many archaeologists.

I studied Polish archaeological literature intensively. I remember that I made my excerpts in Polish, which contributed to my fluency in the written language. I was acquiring the spoken language through conversation with colleagues. In spite of the fact that my spoken Polish is still unsatisfactory, I have never had difficulties in communicating with Polish archaeologists. In fact, I understand Polish better than any other foreign language.

During my visits to Poland I made many acquaintances and many friends. I am not going to present a list but let me say that to build friendly relations was easy because both I and the Polish colleagues were young. In this respect I especially remember the few weeks I spent at the excavations in Sądka. In Warsaw, Cracow, Łódź and Wrocław I met some of the older archaeologists who were still active around the middle of the century. I have already mentioned Józef Kostrzewski and Konrad Jażdżewski, but my list also contains Włodzimierz Antoniewicz, Włodzimierz Hołubowicz, Stefan Nosek and others. The encounters were short, but I profited much from them.

Upon completing my thesis on the Globular Amphora Culture I felt adept to express my views on some topics in Polish archaeology. I prepared a paper on the Eneolithic in Poland for an international conference organised by the Prague Institute of Archaeology at Liblice in 1958. Konrad Jażdżewski, who was present, reacted sharply. I am still not certain whether this was because I was so young and non-Polish, or

whether he so much disliked the contents. My paper was about the periodisation of culture groups and their chronological relations. In my view the Funnel Beaker Culture preceded the Globular Amphora and this, in turn, preceded the Corded Ware (including Złota). Such views, if accepted, would certainly not support the picture of the ethnic mosaic of Eneolithic cultures as painted by Kostrzewski and his pupils. Everything would be different. Only much later I realised that Jazdzewski's negative reaction was paradigmatically conditioned by his variety of the culture-historical paradigm while I was speaking within the incipient processual paradigm.

This Liblice presentation and its later reformulations and extensions remained an unfortunate episode in my communication with Polish archaeologists. This was in sharp contrast with my later research such as the periodization of the Linear Pottery and the Baden Culture or my demographical papers that met with positive reaction in Poland.

I still believe that the three blocs (Funnel Beaker, Globular Amphora and Corded Ware) follow each other not only in other parts of Europe but also in Poland, but I have not written about this problem recently. I only regret that Tadeusz Wiślański and I could not write a joint article on this topic, as he suggested. Unfortunately our first and last meeting was in Otzenhausen (Saarbrücken) in 1988, where I was most probably the last person to whom he ever spoke.

When visiting Poland these years and meeting Polish colleagues abroad these questions are not among those discussed. Polish archaeology has changed and the list of questions it approaches today differs from that of the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In my view, expressed earlier, it is moving in the direction of an archaeological mainstream. As a community it is one of the largest in the world (relative to the number of inhabitants) and is well structured. It is very important that it can be based on a very rich archaeological record that densely covers the country and on an immense volume of literature describing this record.

My view of Polish archaeology may be more positive than the view of many Polish archaeologists. I feel friendly with many of them, but not having much personal contact with them and almost no points of competition, I only observe the positive aspects of their work. At the same time I am aware that we are different. On the whole, the Poles do not accept a foreign paradigm in spite of the fact that something like a Polish paradigm can hardly be identified. What I discern in the writings of Polish archaeologists on the whole is their **close ties with the record**, not much theorizing on the basis of the discourse forwarded by foreign philosophers presently in fashion. However, Polish archaeology could not remain uninfluenced by local logicians, sociologists and historians of excellent standard, although some of them were Marxist.

A distinct idea of Polish archaeology is **the concept of archaeological culture** (culture group), developed in Central Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and sometimes erroneously described as German. This is a heritage of Kostrzewski and it

should not be dropped on the pretext that Kossinna partly shared the same views. The concept of archaeological culture can be fruitfully pursued outside the ethnic history of the past and, therefore, outside the culture historical paradigm.

The study of the **natural environment** has been developed in Polish archaeology in an excellent manner, including its quantitative aspects. It is unique by its extent and by the fact that it is mostly built on well considered facts: a characteristic that is sometimes lacking elsewhere.

What makes me believe in the great potential of Polish archaeology is the fact that it is well structured as to the **networks of specialisation**. Nearly all fields of importance are covered, though not all of them on the same level. The dense coverage, however, is a prerequisite for a fast take-off. At the same time I do not meet too many colleagues occupying themselves intensively with **formalised methods**. From my personal point of view such methods should deeply penetrate all empirical activities in archaeology. The same applies to **research on ecofacts**: it is present but not ubiquitous.

The Poles and the Czechs are admittedly two very close nations. Our languages are almost on the level of two dialects of the same language which makes it easy to understand each other without learning the other tongue. Still, we had a different history which made us to place stress differentially on matters such as religion and others. Also, the difference of size is not negligible: Poland is substantially larger both with regard to the number of inhabitants and to the extension of its territory.

Some archaeologists from outside the region apparently believe that the difference is not momentous. A well known European archaeologist once asked me in a letter to turn in a certain matter to his government's embassy in Warsaw. Several weeks later I received a letter from the same person: the address was **almost** entirely correct except that the last line was "Poland" instead of "Czechoslovakia".

There is nowadays a widespread tendency to ignore national differences. I am not quite sure whether this is not premature. Where there are differences, they cannot be removed on the basis of the European Union ideology; there is a number of examples that this can lead to unexpected problems. I believe that we, the Polish and the Czech archaeologists, should try to know each other better, and when we feel a reason for common standpoints, we should develop them. The reason for closer cooperation is not only the similarity of language, but mainly the solution of some problems connected with the division of archaeology into mainstreams and minorities. As I have mentioned earlier, much effort of non-mainstream archaeologists is wasted because their chance of contributing to the development of global archaeology is minimum. There is a need to experiment with a number of ways in which it might be feasible to overcome this situation. We may not fully succeed, but something should be done. I am cautious on this point as I believe, on the basis of decades of my personal experience, that people should not attempt to overcome objective social processes. But they may help speed up tendencies that are emerging.