

PAWEŁ DUMA*

LARGE-SURFACE RUBBISH DUMPS OF THE MODERN PERIOD. GENESIS, POSSIBILITIES OF PROTECTION, AND RESEARCH BY THE USE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODS

Abstract: This article describes the origin of large-scale landfill in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. Policy related to waste management in selected European cities and methods of their utilisation and segregation are discussed. The author later presents the possibilities in the field of archaeology associated with the study of material culture located on surviving excavation sites and discusses the issue and legitimacy of their protection. The article mentions some examples of excavations carried out in recent years, which took place at historic rubbish depots located in France, Australia, and Great Britain. The result of this research was a wealth of information which significantly expanded knowledge not only about the material culture of that time, but also about the importance of local production, imports and the global exchange of goods.

Keywords: rubbish, dump, landfill, material culture, waste management

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Introduction

Better organisation of production, and above all technological improvement accelerated the development of industry and led to an increase in the availability of objects on an unprecedented scale. The massive presence of glass packaging associated with the invention of machines for their production at the end of the 19th century,¹ and also ceramics and packaging from other materials led not only to their universality, but also to the drop in value and frequent disposability of items – a phenomenon encountered in earlier periods in a very narrow range. It seems that the scale and significance of these changes is not always realised.² Further consequences of this development were the progressive integration of local and international markets.³ There was also the problem of the increasing amount of waste

correlated with the process of progressive urbanization and a sharp increase in the number of city dwellers. The pace of these changes was often surprising for the municipal authorities and not always dealt with according to the scale of the problem. Therefore, each of the centres used individual strategies of waste management developed by them, regulated in later periods by the authorities. It can be noticed, however, that waste storage sites were created spontaneously and the time of their usage was sometimes very long.

Thanks to archaeological research, we know many monumental compositions of garbage and waste from earlier periods from human history. A commonly-given example from antiquity is Monte Testaccio in Rome, having a height of up to 35 metres, formed of ceramic waste associated with the transport of wine, olives and seeds in amphorae.⁴ From the Middle Ages, dumps of post-production waste have been located in Siegburg, Germany – a well-known stoneware ceramics

* Institute of Archaeology, University of Wrocław;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7991-3133>; pawel.duma@uwr.edu.pl

¹ Orser 2002, 68.

² Krupa-Ławrynowicz and Ławrynowicz 2012, 142.

³ Gregory and Licence 2017, 161.

⁴ Weber 2012, 471.



Fig. 1. A contemporary view of the Gnojna Góra in Warsaw. For several centuries, until 1844, it was the main rubbish dump for the city's inhabitants. Photo M. Mackiewicz.

production centre. One of them, mainly containing unsuccessful products, measured 80 metres in length, about 40 metres in width and an average of 7 metres in height. It was examined by archaeologists in the 1960s and provided a lot of detailed information, which allowed reconstruction of the production process and the range of wares produced.⁵ A more recent example from Poland is Gnojna Góra in Warsaw (Fig. 1), where the deposition of waste began with the location of the city and the municipal authorities, and with great difficulty it only ceased by around 1844, reaching a height of up to 25 metres in places. The site is now surrounded by conservation care and operates as an important repository of monuments of the past. This centuries-old composition has long attracted the attention of archaeologists, causing at the same time unprecedented problems associated with its exploration.⁶ Similar types of places are something isolated in the past. What was the exception over a span of several hundred years became the norm in the second half of the 19th century in terms of scale, dynamics and the amount of man-made and stored waste.

The origins of large-scale rubbish dumps

It is widely believed that industrialisation, which originated in England in the 1760s, led to changes in the traditional order in almost all of Europe in the following decades. The consequence of the initiated

development was an increase in urbanisation and environmental changes on a previously unheard-of scale.⁷ The accelerated industrialisation process in Poland was observed in the second half of the 19th century, and led to a strong transformation of the landscape and the creation of unofficial places where waste was deposited. The scale of this phenomenon is most apparent, when considering Polish cities, in Łódź or in Upper Silesia, e.g. in Sosnowiec. They were dynamically developing industrial and production centres at that time. In Sosnowiec, the unplanned growth of factory buildings, the density of transport networks and the lack of investment led to spontaneous use of space for waste disposal. This was not only produced by consumption of goods by people, but also, and perhaps above all, it was created as a side effect of industrial production. Over time, waste heaps encroached on areas between chaotic factory and residential buildings. Waterholes were also flooded with rubbish.⁸ On a European or global scale, similar practices were not isolated and can be associated with the emerging awareness of the authorities and official attempts to regulate emerging situations. However, it is clearly visible that in most cases, structures used to traditional solutions struggled in dynamically changing conditions correlating mainly with the development of industry and changes in habits. These activities were not only related to the efficient removal of post-consumer and production waste from homes and

⁵ Beckmann 1975.

⁶ Gierlach and Gierlach 1969; Strupiechowski 1969.

⁷ Melosi 2005, 6.

⁸ Dumala 1988, 155-156.

plants, but also from waste water. Many cities did not have a sewage system at the end of the 19th century and the process of introducing such systems was laborious and time-consuming. However, this is a topic for separate studies. Despite the fact that sites or places of waste deposition are known since the Middle Ages, the organisation of planned landfill in a shape similar to those we know today only dates from the beginning of the 20th century. The oldest of those mentioned above were, among others, in Dayton (1904, USA), Ohio (1906, USA),⁹ or Bradford (Great Britain, 1915).¹⁰ The 1920s and 1930s was the era when controlled rubbish dumps were introduced, where waste was deposited in a planned manner and often interlaced with additional layers of soil or other material (debris) to enhance the decaying process. Regulations required that the total layer of rubbish should not exceed 1.8 m, and individual layers (0.25 m thick) should be sprinkled in no less than 24 hours.¹¹

As Józef Polak (1857-1928) – a doctor involved in matters of hygiene – recalled from his own observations and information from other sources, at the beginning of the 20th century in many Polish cities the manner of waste disposal was very primitive. Only some of it was transported abroad (as in part in Warsaw), but much of it was still pummelled within its borders.¹² For a long time human rubbish found in the streets and public squares originating from households was treated differently. In Warsaw, property owners had to deal with the disposal of household waste, the rest being taken by the city authorities. Often, the waste (sewage) was taken by local peasants who came to fairs and took it in the form of fertilizer on a vehicle now emptied after selling its goods.¹³ It was widely believed that while rubbish from streets and pavements was suitable for fertilizer, other waste was reluctantly used in a similar manner. Improving waste disposal generated costs associated not only with the employment of service, but also with transport. At the end of the 19th century the city of Berlin was forced to transport waste over 40 km beyond its borders. However, pits were still occasionally used for waste deposition. A similar case occurred in Vienna. In 19th century London, waste was transported to landfill sites around its borders.¹⁴ Most often, these were along the banks of the Thames and canals located in the suburbs.¹⁵ The previous system of peat collection

by peasants, collapsed after 1847, because of, among other things, the appearance of cheap guano imported from South America.¹⁶ However, in 1899 Warsaw's municipal authorities rejected the idea of transporting waste over longer distances due to costs. The idea of transporting waste using barges was also abandoned due to a lack of river access lasting 100 days a year. At the same time, it was calculated that waste disposal by carts, travelling a distance of only one mile from the city, would cost 457,500 roubles a year. In other major European cities, simple sorting of waste was introduced to eliminate more rubbish. Some of this was burnt, other parts composted and parts recovered as scrap metal and other recyclable materials. In Munich, treatment of household waste was given to a private company which transported it 16 km and processed it in its own sorting plant.¹⁷ Private initiatives established in many cities turned out to be economically ineffective over time and even subsidies from municipal authorities they only functioned on the verge of profitability. However, this process was modernised in the following decades, following the example of solutions introduced in the largest and most densely inhabited centres of the then world – mainly cities located in the USA. In Warsaw itself, during the inter-war period, organised rubbish dumps operated on urban land in five locations: on Mokotowska Str., Opaczewska Str., Podchorążych Str., Elekcyjna Str. and by the zoo.¹⁸ The waste was covered with additional layers of earth and debris, sometimes with lime. At least such information can be found in the official documents which reveal the practices used by the services at that time. Solutions to reduce the amount of waste exported to rubbish dumps continued to be sought.

In addition to private companies or the efforts of the authorities involved in waste segregation in all larger centres, one could observe individual initiatives related to the recovery of scrap metal, rags and waste paper in places for their disposal. At the same time, these people had in their centres specialities related either to the nature of the recovered items or to the type of waste they sought. In 19th-century London, rubbish dumps were sifted by hand. Bulk material used for brick production was also recovered. This occupation was often so lucrative that it was necessary to purchase a special licence for rubbish collection. However, as a result of a subsequent decline in prices in the second half of the 19th century,

⁹ Rathje and Murphy 1990, 85.

¹⁰ Weber 2012, 471.

¹¹ Weber 2012, 471.

¹² Polak 1908, 463.

¹³ Polak 1908, 466.

¹⁴ Licence 2015, 8.

¹⁵ Velis et al. 2009, 1283.

¹⁶ Jeffries 2006, 273.

¹⁷ Polak 1908, 471.

¹⁸ *Sprawozdania Komisji Rewizyjnej m. st. Warszawy. Zakład oczyszczania miasta*, 1936 [Reports of the Audit Committee of the Capital City of Warsaw. City cleaning plant, 1936], 7.

this activity disappeared in this form.¹⁹ The technique of sifting waste was also known in Paris, where an extensive rubbish dump had operated for a long time near the municipal gallows at Montfaucon,²⁰ even after the liquidation of the former site of executions.

A regional example that shows well the global changes in the field of waste disposal and changes in urban policy in this area may be Wrocław.²¹ Analysis of the city's policy, including archival, press, statistical and field prospection, indicated that the waste disposal process was elaborate and could change over time. In this city, as opposed to other European centres, in the second half of the 19th century the system of rubbish collection by peasants living in and around the city collapsed. They took waste less and less willingly due to its contamination with matter that was not biodegradable (e.g. glass, porcelain, metals), which in turn forced a change in the policy of the authorities. It was not always the case that official plans translated into practice, and besides many sites with a larger capacity, used for years, there were places used ad hoc, either in the form of closed pits (sand or clay) or ponds. Some of these places are well-preserved today, others were destroyed relatively recently as a result of land transformation and

construction investments. Wrocław at the beginning of the 20th century was divided into 106 regions, which were assigned specific dumps (from 10 to 27 regions per one landfill). It was estimated then that the annual production from such an area was about 2,000 m³ of rubbish. Thus, in the scale of the whole city, with the number of inhabitants reaching 500,000 at that time, it could have been even 212,000 m³. One may suspect that this number grew steadily in subsequent decades, because the city's area increased and further regions were added. An example of a preserved elevation composed of rubbish from 1880 is Wzgórze Gajowickie – which was converted into a viewing point in the 1930s (Fig. 2). Based on these chosen examples, one can observe that waste management issues were not regulated centrally from the outset, but rather developed based on the individual experiences of the authorities in individual centres. Some common features that arise in the case of equally-sized cities are the similar selection of places for rubbish dumps. While this issue seems to be well recognised, in its general framework, issues related to their possible protection or archaeological research have not been the subject of a wider debate in Polish literature.



Fig. 2. A view of Wzgórze Gajowickie in Wrocław. A rubbish dump formed at the end of the 19th century, which changed into a recreational place in the 1930s. Photo P. Herba (fotopolska.pl) used with permission.

¹⁹ Velis et al. 2009, 1283-1286.

²⁰ Reid 1991, 11-12.

²¹ Duma 2016.

Former dumps and archaeology

Large-area rubbish dumps created at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries are not treated in Poland as areas deserving of protection, and there are many reasons for this. The main one is the underestimation of the significance of modern material culture for the reconstruction of a relatively recent past, and the scope of information that can be obtained in this way. However, an important but rarely articulated argument which effectively discourages such studies is the amount of material obtained, the difficulties associated with its proper development and, above all, the problem of their proper maintenance and security. Apart from the most frequently appearing monuments made from commonly used raw materials in the past (leather, wood, glass), new ones appear that cause a big problem in conservation (e.g. plastic and rubber).

The difficulties associated with the development of a mass of historical material appear not only in relation to modern times, but also the Middle Ages. The only difference, albeit a significant one, is the scale of the problem. However, Leszek Kajzer discussed the problems related to the flood of historical material, the possibilities of its proper storage and the availability of further research many years ago.²² In contrast to medieval times, objects obtained from modern rubbish dumps are already the result of the global exchange of goods, and even though some of them were associated with local production plants, a large percentage came from very distant areas. This is the very attractive aspect of studies of such collections, but at the same time and paradoxically, more demanding than research on medieval ceramics due to the number of possibilities relating to the correct identification of the functions of the extracted objects and their origin. Everyone who during his work has had the opportunity to learn about modern historical material knows that the field of information search is extremely wide and includes not only archaeological publications (here to a negligible degree), but also catalogues, prospectuses, photographs, cartographic sources and a number of others. Many items contain in their shape, or information contained therein, specific points of reference which are not only geographical (places of production, souvenirs), but also referring to political events, politicians themselves or other people commonly regarded as important. In addition, this type of material heritage is not only concerned with archaeology, but also with ethnography or anthropology, including the anthropology of things.²³

A multitude of such possibilities meant that some researchers dealing with the most recent periods are

defined by representatives of contemporary archaeology, pointing to a significant contribution of the interdisciplinary nature of their activities.²⁴ They also refer to the importance of objects, or, more broadly, material culture for explaining contemporary processes and the presence of artefacts in the present day. It is also believed that the treatment of objects only in relation to their chronology and thus the grading of their validity is anachronistic. The presence of archaeology in the study of younger times is to give archaeology a social dimension. By tracking the available items generally referring to the topic discussed, we note the complexity and the whole set of new information obtained by archaeological methods.²⁵

The perception of the near-modern nature of material heritage by archaeologists themselves is a separate issue. The lack of this topic in Polish-language literature suggests that both the awareness of the usefulness of information from such sources and interest in the topic are quite weak. However, both in Poland and in many places around the world, former dumps and other waste disposal sites are successively examined by persons acquiring selected detritus that can be monetised on the antiques market. This applies not only to small household waste dumps, but also extensive refuse from the late 19th-early 20th century.²⁶ Amateur seekers, unlike archaeologists, selectively dig for undamaged objects or damaged to a small extent with a certain material value. Their motivation is different. Most often there are financial aspects, or the desire to enlarge one's own collection. Such searches are conducted without applicable permits and are often preceded by archival query or observation of the area covered by the construction investment. Even within this amateur movement, groups with narrow specialisations have developed, for example focusing on seeking late-modern period latrines or wells filled with historical material. One such association, for example, is the Manhattan Well-Diggers in the USA.²⁷ These activities are perceived by archaeologists as controversial and in many countries they trigger a discussion that is closely related to this problem. Due to the selective taking of detritus from the context and lack of attention to stratigraphy and more sensitive artefacts of low material value, professional researchers recognise that this is destroying data and information relating to the reconstruction of consumer behaviour and social life around such places. Thus, in archaeology, this type of behaviour is perceived as looting. Nevertheless, such archaeological foragers would

²² Kajzer 1991.

²³ Krupa-Ławrynowicz and Ławrynowicz 2012, 144.

²⁴ Kajda and Kobińska 2017, 33.

²⁵ Buchli and Lucas 2001; Harrison and Schofield 2010.

²⁶ Besky 2012, 195-196.

²⁷ Besky 2012, 195.



Fig. 3. A view of artefacts left by amateur foragers on the surface of a landfill site in the Las Rakowiecki in Wrocław. This place was one of the largest rubbish dumps in the city in the first half of the 20th century. Photo P. Duma.

argue that most of these types of sites were destroyed by modern buildings before archaeologists managed to carry out research there.²⁸ In Poland, as well as similar voices existing in other countries, there is still an anachronistic view that archaeology, when it comes to the most recent periods, is not in a position to bring anything new.²⁹ It has been shown many times that such reasoning is wrong.

Undoubtedly, extensive landfills and the high cost of possible research stand behind a convenient attitude of ignoring this part of heritage and selectively determining the hierarchy of importance of archaeological sites. This selection is often carried out in a subjective manner. The legal criteria applicable, at least in Poland, are not conclusive, because in the definition of an archaeological relic, its chronology has not been precisely defined, but only the criterion of its possible historical, artistic or scientific value is given.³⁰ Without the development of appropriate procedures, befitting study of these kinds of positions, it will never be possible to fully use the cognitive potential in them. Certain impressions of the scale of the surface of historical rubbish dumps yield such behaviour until today. The largest known to the author is the extensive, several-hectare landfill, located in Las Rakowiecki (Rakowiecki Forest) in Wrocław (Fig. 3). This place has never been recultivated since waste amassed during the first half of

the 20th century, lying directly on its surface. Following the world literature, we can find the results of many works conducted both on historical and modern rubbish dumps using archaeological methods.

One of the 'louder' archaeological projects was that implemented by William Rathje³¹ in Tucson (Arizona, USA). In contrast however to the issues thus described, this project referred directly to the often and partially distributed waste collected nowadays, however, it drew attention to the role of archaeology in the study of waste deposits that are temporarily nearby. The information collected from them was surprising and at the same time showed what cognitive wealth can be found in rubbish studied by archaeological methods, and how it relates to modern knowledge about ourselves originating from other sources (including consumer satisfaction surveys). However, when it comes to earlier decades (19th century until the mid-20th century), we do not have too many similar works, especially on European soil. Although their character differs from studies related to slightly older deposits, the adopted methodology may indicate the direction of the search for the development of methods related to studies in similar positions.

One of the oldest dumps researched by archaeologists in recent years was that located in Vénissieux (Rhône) in France. In 1885, a moat was dug around the city for defensive purposes, which was in turn

²⁸ Besky 2012, 196.

²⁹ Zalewska 2016, 24.

³⁰ Trzciński 2016, 189.

³¹ Rathje and Murphy 1992; Rathje 2001.

covered in the years 1927-1930. Examining only a fragment of about 400 m², French archaeologists acquired 12,000 m³ of artefacts.³² Among them glass and porcelain detritus dominated, including numerous examples of containers for liquids (mainly alcohol) as well as medicines and hygiene products, tin enamel dishes and numerous oyster shells. Their chronology closed in the time range from about 1850 to 1930. The containers came from both local and imported products. Thanks to analysis of these, information related to used medical devices and practices used at the end of the 19th and early 20th century was obtained. The dominant role in the field of containers used in medicine since the late 19th century was played by glass due to the best possible sterilisation. Many containers were connected with Lyons, because most of the waste came from this relatively nearby city. Many of the medical or pseudomedical products represented liqueurs, elixirs and alcohol intended to confer strengthening and healing properties. Some of them contained substances currently banned on the pharmaceutical market. Other alcoholic beverages were composed of substances produced from cocoa leaves, eventually banned in France in 1910. Many of the bottles had contained absinthe, attesting to its extraordinary popularity. Despite the growing medical awareness and professionalisation of drug production, there was still a large demand for substances advertised as medical, but which had little in common with medicine.

Another landfill site from the 19th century in Brisbane (Queensland, Australia) has been studied by archaeological methods. In the past, wetlands that are within the reach of Victoria Park were reclaimed using waste and rubbish exported outside the city centre. The research conducted there had the nature of rescue work, but the methodology used, interdisciplinary analysis of the acquired material and its results deserve attention. Performing the survey excavations, researchers found nine pits containing waste, from which a total of approx. 90,000 artefacts were obtained. The waste collection time was in the year 1880-1900. There were also later disturbances of stratigraphy caused by excavations made by bottle seekers. While analysing the artefacts, a system was developed according to which they were divided into appropriate categories and catalogued accordingly. A number of items were categorised into three main groups: related to households, hospitals and healthcare, hotels and entertainment venues. The data was computer-generated and related to a number of attributes describing the findings in terms of material, place of production, designs, etc. The analysis covered

organic materials, including botanical remains from samples taken in the excavations, animal remains and fragments of fabrics. Based on the information gathered, the researchers sought to reconstruct the way in which refuse was deposited (refuse disposal patterns). They used the methods used by Catherina Blee in a landfill dating from the late 19th century located in Skagway, Alaska. This was a place associated with the gold rush, which took place at the end of the 19th century.³³ By establishing the origin of selected artefacts (58 factories were identified), the availability of products on the goods market was reconstructed. Local products prevailed, but among the imported ones, products were found from nine countries (Australia, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, New Zealand, USA). Undoubtedly, a high proportion in many categories was represented by English products. Over the years, this share decreased, which correlated with the increase in production in Australia. The analysis was supplemented with a historical query. A range of information was obtained regarding the details of diet, economy, health and the changes in preferences in this area for Brisbane's residents in the late 19th century.³⁴

In addition to many large-scale municipal waste containers, we also need to remember about a number of smaller rubbish dumps located in rural areas, often arising by homesteads. Their area was definitely smaller than those discussed above, but the cognitive potential at it turns out is also high. This has been proven by researchers who have recognised similar types of deposits in recent years. For example, in the years 2015-2016, digs took place in four such landfills in eastern England.³⁵ Historic material acquired within came from about 1890-1920. The waste was found in a brick-lined earth closet in Hempstead, two ponds in Kirton and Falkenham and a depression near one of the residential buildings in Holme Hale Hall. The artefacts were subjected to archaeological analysis, supplemented with a historical query. The discovered artefacts are divided into three categories. They were related to items for consuming fluids, food and health. The products, in the case of those in which it was possible to determine the county of origin, came from five countries: Great Britain, Germany (including a bottle of mineral water from Karlovy Vary in modern-day Czech Republic), Hungary, France, and the USA. Drug bottles, fruit juices, sauces and marmalade jars prevailed. The authors used this information to reconstruct the details of the local market and its interregional connections. These

³² Brouillaud and Horry 2016.

³³ See Saleeby 2011, 118-126.

³⁴ Harris et al. 2004.

³⁵ Gregory and Licence 2017, 163-164.

are not the only rubbish bins of this kind recognised in Great Britain. Other examples have been discussed in detail in separate works.³⁶

The above and summarised examples, and that referring to research on modern rubbish containers (although treated initially very sceptically also by representatives of the archaeological environment), as well as examples from France, Australia and the United Kingdom, show what a wealth of information is discovered by studying similar positions. It seems, however, that the main problem is the lack of an appropriate research methodology and the development of such collections. All of the authors of the above studies proposed their own working system by showing a resource of information obtained by similar methods. Looking at geographical differences, studying material culture from the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries plays a significant role in reconstructing social history in cities (urban social history), especially in Australia and the USA. Lesser interest occurs in Great Britain or in Europe in general.³⁷ It is commonly believed, however, that the analysis of these kinds of artefacts serves to familiarise these pasts, which are usually poorly represented in official historical sources: migrants, various minorities, or poor people.

In the understanding of many people who are not involved in archaeology every day, artefacts which found themselves in landfills from the 19th and beginning of the 20th century have a historic value. It is often difficult to explain to the public why archaeologists themselves, carefully dealing with older epochs and artefacts, simultaneously ignore the mass material culture from the 19th-20th centuries. It seems that there is a large

social demand for the presentation and scientific elaboration of this topic. However, the lack of any activities in this direction results in this gap being filled by a large group of amateurs who do not have access to scientific workshops, but with energy and genuine commitment to implement and present this issue in an amateur manner. This often corresponds to carefully chosen selection of historical material for the needs of the antiques trade. It is not only a Polish problem, but also a global one. In the longer term, this results in the emergence of a growing gap between professionally carried out archaeological research and committed dialogue with the public. Under current conditions, it will be increasingly more difficult for historical archaeologists to pursue research topics of their choice, ignoring real needs. However, apart from these considerations, and summarising the presented topic, study of large-surface dumps by archaeological methods brings forth many benefits. In contrast to information derived only from historical sources, prospectations and old advertisements, we obtain a picture of real consumer choices, the local specifics of their circulation, differences in production and imports, and the possibility of completing our knowledge in a manner which is difficult to predict at this stage. Despite the large distances between the presented positions, it is clear that the impact of globalisation is already clearly observable in these places since the 19th century, and the changes that took place in the field of technology development and the proportion of local products compared with imported ones looked similar. Nevertheless, there are still a few examples of such studies if we look only at the whole vastness of material lying in the remaining bins.

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³⁶ Lucas 2002, 17; Licence 2015.

³⁷ Owens et al. 2010, 213.

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Streszczenie

Wielkopowierzchniowe wysypiska śmieci okresu nowożytnego. Geneza, możliwości ochrony i badań z użyciem metod archeologicznych

Artykuł opisuje genezę wielkopowierzchniowych śmietnisk w 2. poł. XIX i na pocz. XX wieku. Omówiona została polityka związana z gospodarowaniem śmieciami w wybranych miastach europejskich oraz sposoby ich utylizacji i segregacji, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem miast w granicach współczesnej Polski. Autor w dalszej części przedstawia możliwości w zakresie archeologii związane z badaniem kultury materialnej pozyskiwanej na zachowanych wysypiskach oraz omawia kwestię i zasadność ich ochrony. Dawne place śmietniskowe rzadko

są badane przez archeologów, lecz często ich penetracją zajmują się amatorzy, poszukujący artefaktów, które można sprzedać na rynku antykwarycznym lub włączyć do własnej kolekcji. W artykule przywołane zostały niektóre przykłady prowadzonych w ostatnich latach prac wykopaliskowych, które miały miejsce na historycznych śmietniskach zlokalizowanych we Francji, Australii czy w Wielkiej Brytanii. We Vénissieux (Rodan, Francja) wokół miasta w 1885 roku została wykopana fosa o przeznaczeniu obronnym, którą zasypano śmieciami w latach 1927-1930. Badając fragment jej powierzchni (ok. 400 m²), francuscy archeolodzy pozyskali ponad 12 000 m³ artefaktów. Inne wysypisko omawiane w artykule powstało w XIX wieku przy mieście Brisbane (Queensland, Australia). Wykonując wykopy sondażowe na tym stanowisku badacze natrafili na dziewięć dołów, zawierających odpady, z których pozyskano łącznie ok. 90 000 przedmiotów. Czas odkładania odpadów miał przypadać na lata 1880-1900. Badano również historyczne śmietniki zlokalizowane na wysypiskach wiejskich. Przykładowo – w latach 2015-2016 zostały przebadane cztery tego rodzaju wysypiska leżące we wschodniej Anglii. Rezultatem tych badań był zbiór informacji, które znacznie poszerzyły wiedzę nie tylko o ówczesnej kulturze materialnej, lecz także o znaczeniu produkcji lokalnej, importów i globalnej wymianie dóbr. Studiując śmietniska metodami archeologicznymi, w przeciwieństwie do informacji czerpanych jedynie ze źródeł historycznych, prospektów i dawnych reklam, uzyskujemy obraz rzeczywistych wyborów konsumenckich, lokalnej specyfiki ich cyrkulacji, jak również różnic w zakresie produkcji i importów. Wydaje się, że temat ten jest wciąż słabo wykorzystany przez archeologów.