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CEMETERY AT OBRAŻEJOWICE, RADZIEMICE COMMUNE. NEW SOURCES FOR RESEARCH ON THE PRZEWORSK CULTURE IN THE YOUNGER PRE-ROMAN AND EARLY ROMAN PERIODS IN WESTERN MAŁOPOLSKA

ABSTRACT

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In 2019, test excavations and surface surveys were carried out on an accidentally discovered Przeworsk culture cemetery at Obrażejowice, Radziemice commune. The materials recovered during the research should be dated to the Younger Pre-Roman period (phases A2, A3, and A3/B1) as well as Early, and probably Younger, Roman period (phases B1, B2, B2/C1). It is worth noting that the finds represent “pure” Przeworsk culture, since fragments of Celtic vessels have not as yet been identified.

Keywords: cemetery, Przeworsk culture, Younger Pre-Roman period, Roman period

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, The Małopolska Province Heritage Protection office in Kraków received information that amateur detectorists had recovered a series of metal artefacts from several places in the village of Obrażejowice, Radziemice commune. Among other objects, the artefacts included a spearhead, allegedly discovered together with cremated bones. It was

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possible to precisely pinpoint the place of this discovery, which turned out to be close to archaeological site 13 (AZP 98-58/127). Site 13 was recorded by J. Górski and M. Zając in 1997, when a fragment of a ceramic vessel of undetermined chronology was found.

In May 2019, a geomagnetic survey was performed on the site (by PRYNCYPAT company, Marcin Przybyła), encompassing an area of 2,5 ha. The research revealed multiple dipole anomalies, possibly indicative of cremation burials (more in: A. Lasota-Kuś, M. M. Przybyła, in preparation). Test excavations, carried out by Piotr Włodarczak from



Fig. 1. Obrażewice, Radziemice commune. Location of the site. Drawn by A. Lasota-Kuś

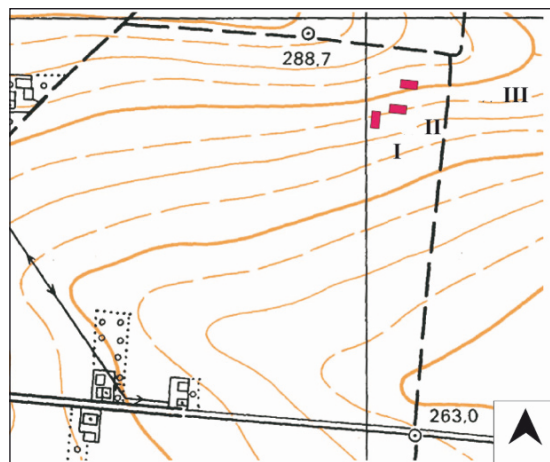


Fig. 2. Obrażewice, Radziemice commune, site. 13. Location of excavations. Drawn by A. Lasota-Kuś

the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Science, were launched the same month, with trenches opened in places where the anomalies were recorded.

The locality of Obrażejowice, is situated on the Miechów Upland, in the upper course of the Ścieklec River, a small left-bank tributary of the middle Szreniawa River (Fig. 1). Site 13 occupies the south-eastern slope of a prominent promontory. As suggested by the surface surveys, the site probably does not encompass the top of the promontory, since no archaeological material has been found in this area.

As demonstrated by the excavations (which encompassed 650 sq.m. – Fig. 2) and the accompanying metal-detector surveys, the site was occupied in two phases, both linked with the Przeworsk culture. The first phase dates to the Younger Pre-Roman period, while the other one with the Early Roman period.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF EXCAVATIONS

The excavations resulted in the discovery and exploration of 31 archaeological features, of which 26 produced archaeological material (Fig. 3, 4). Except for feature 27 linked with the Early Roman period, these were cremation burials of the Przeworsk culture from the Younger Pre-Roman period. They contained relatively small amounts of strongly cremated, milk-white bone, and usually also remains of funeral pyres in the form of charcoal. Therefore, they represent the most typical form of Przeworsk culture burial of that period. The pits were oval or roughly circular in plan, with diameters ranging from approx. 25 to 70 cm, and a maximum size of 150 x 100 cm. The relatively small thickness of the fills (30 cm on average) suggests that the ceiling parts have been disturbed. The burials were furnished with intentionally broken ceramic vessels and occasionally metal artefacts (an iron brooch, knives, an iron ribbon-like fitting, an iron pin, and a melted-down bronze object). Some of the artefacts bear traces of having been secondarily burnt in a funeral pyre.

As mentioned, grave cuts were usually small in size. Grave 10 stands out in this respect, with dimensions of 150 x 100 cm. Its fill produced an iron wire brooch with an upper cord (Fig. 5: 1), representing Kostrzewski type M (Kostrzewski 1919). Brooches of this type were local rather than Celtic products, and were widespread in Central Europe (Dąbrowska 2008, 30). They were incidentally found in Tynieć group sites, which gave rise to their interpretation as a reflection of differences in costume preferences among Przeworsk culture and Celtic populations (Poleska 2006, 150). However, new research at Pełczyska, which revealed a series of such brooches, suggests the picture stemmed only from the state of research (Rudnicki 2009, 308). Brooches of the M type appear in transitional phase A2/A3 and are characteristic of phase A3 in the system of relative chronology applied to the Przeworsk culture (Dąbrowska 1988, 31, plate IV).

All the vessels found in graves were hand-made. Most of them reveal traces of exposure to high temperatures in a pyre, which negatively affects the possibility of determining their

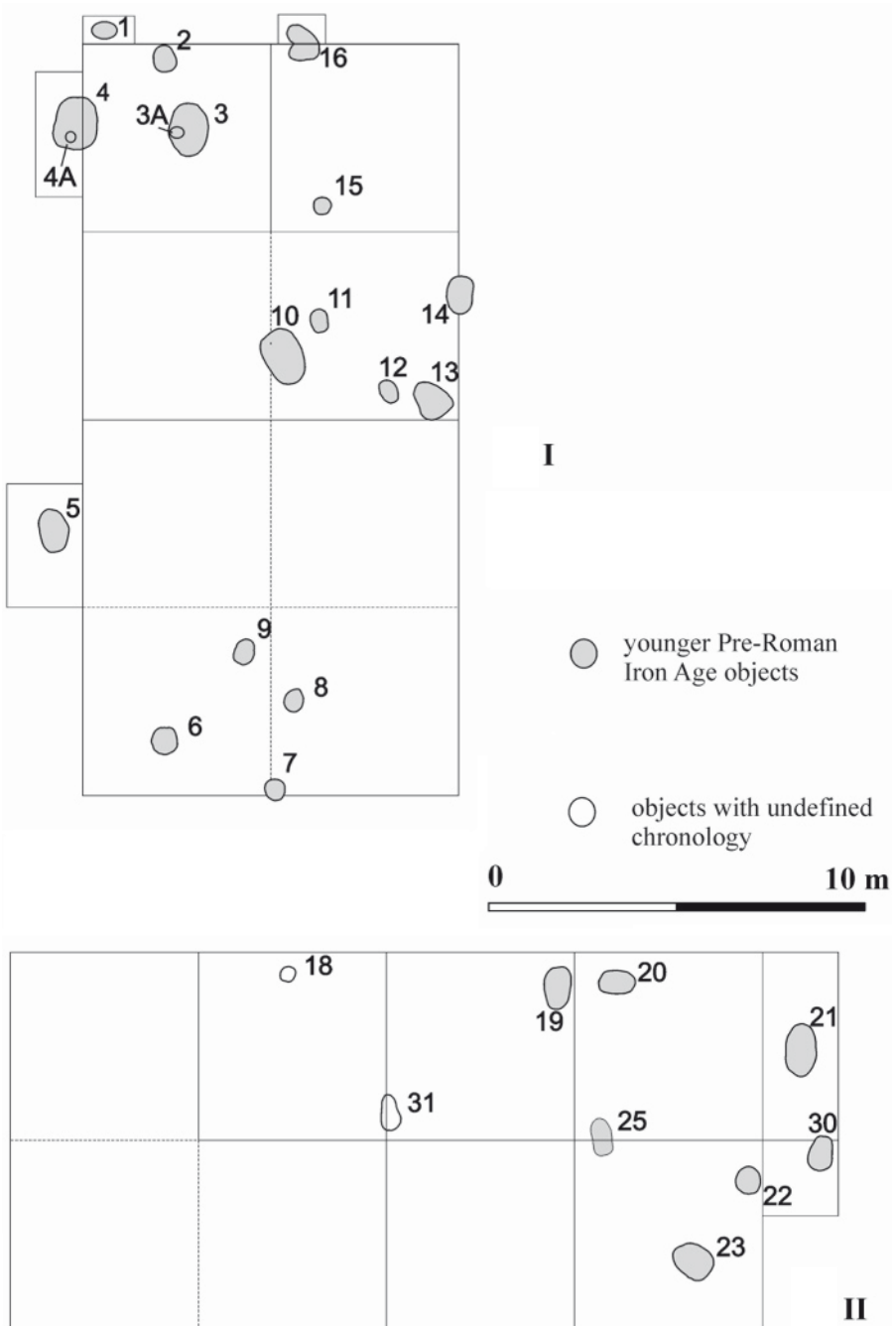


Fig. 3. Obrażejowice, Radziemice commune, site. 13. Plan of the cemetery (trench I-II).

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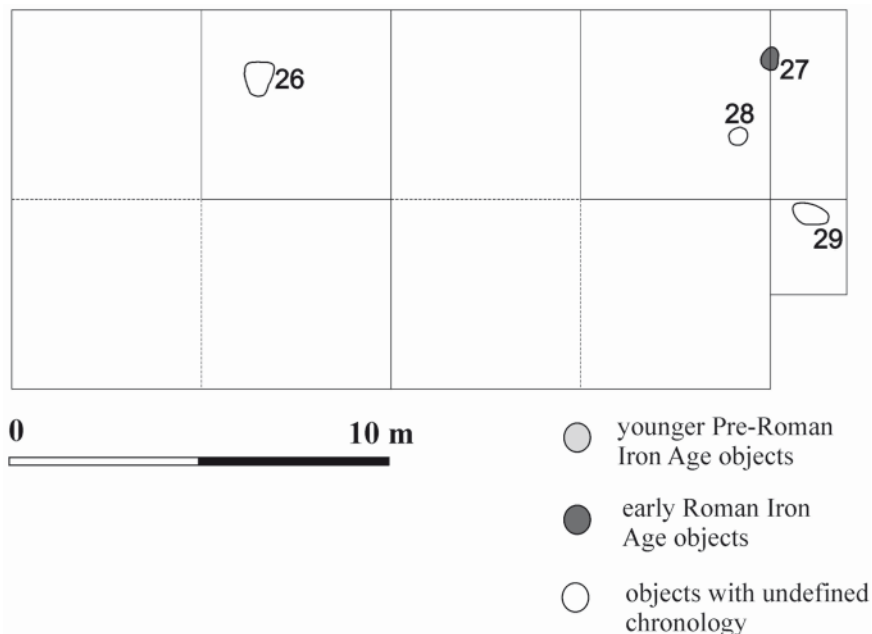


Fig. 4. Obrażejowice, Radziemice commune, site. 13. Plan of the cemetery (trench III).

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technological attributes. Grave 10 mentioned above yielded sherds originating from no less than five different vessels (Fig. 5: 2-5). Their fragmentary preservation makes precise reconstruction of the vessel shapes very difficult. The rims are slightly faceted, typically in two planes. A partly reconstructed bowl with thickened rim and rounded body (Fig. 5: 2) finds analogies, among other places, in vessels known from the cemetery at Olbin site 5, Maciejowice commune (Czarnecka 2007). Vessels having slightly faceted or thickened rims occurred there in assemblages precisely dated to phase A3 (e.g. graves 20, 26a, 35a – Czarnecka 2007, pl. XVII: 10; XXIII: 9; XXXV: 16). Both the iron brooch and the sparse potsherds found in grave 10 at Obrażejowice indicate its chronology should be placed within phase A3.

Among ceramic materials from other graves in the site in question, it is worth noting vessels representing the so-called older ceramic style of the Przeworsk culture, characteristic of phases A1-A2 of the Younger Pre-Roman period (Dąbrowska 1988, 15, 24, 28-31). With phase A2 one should probably link, among others, feature 6. A cup discovered in this grave has blackened, smooth surfaces, and its rim is evidently bevelled in three different planes (Fig. 6: 1). In the lower part of the body the walls are strongly arching, while the fragmentarily preserved handle has a slightly marked constriction. In the upper part the cup is covered with a narrow band of incised decoration consisting of two horizontal bands filled with short horizontal strokes. The bands are separated by another band of incised decora-

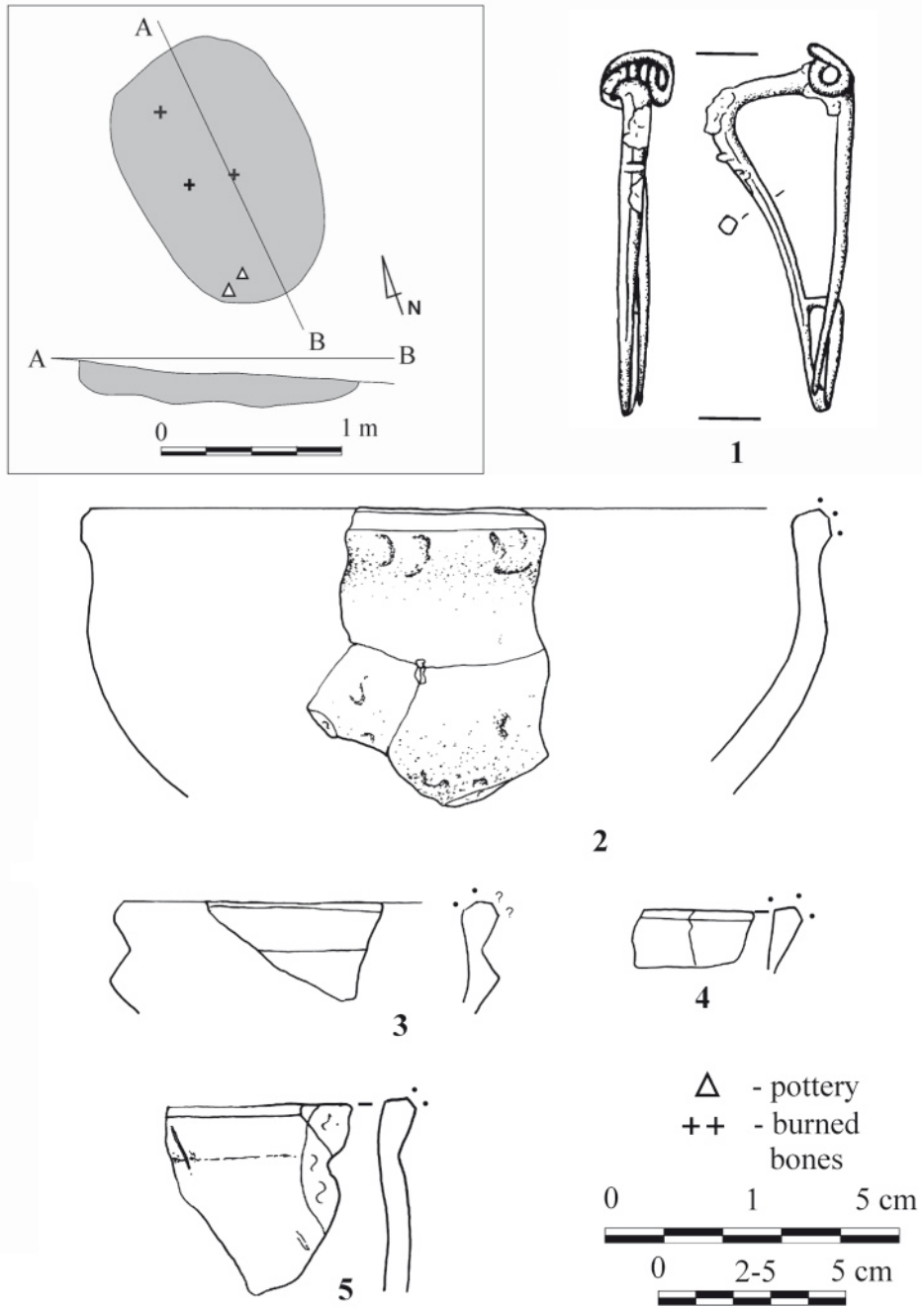


Fig. 5. Inventory of grave 10: 1 – iron fibula; 2-5 – clay vessels. Drawn by A. Lasota-Kuś

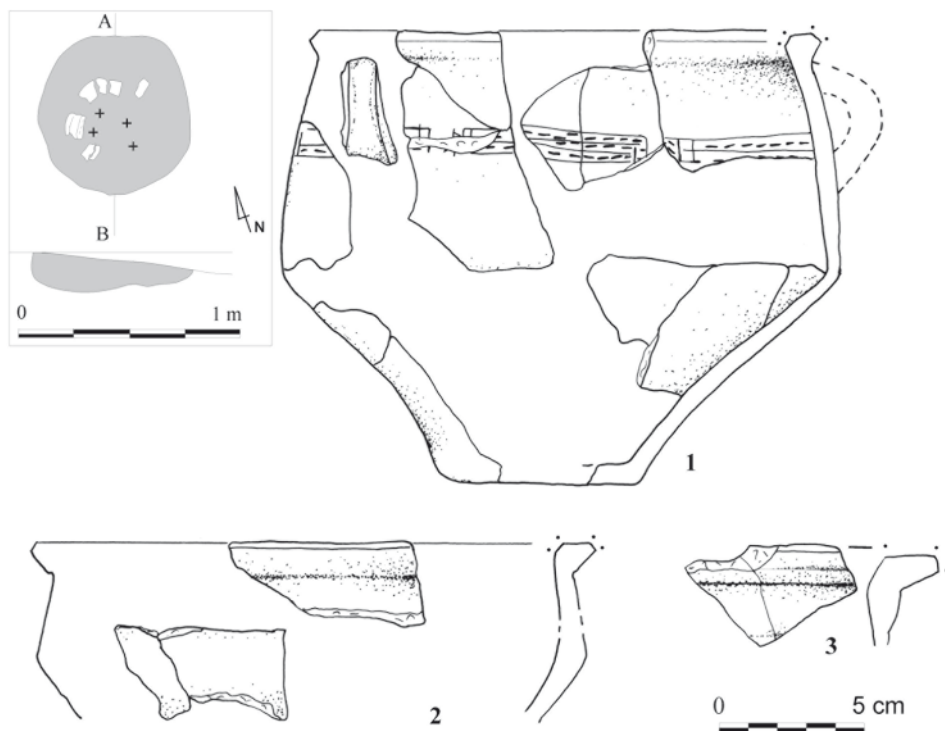


Fig. 6. Inventory of grave 6: 1-3 – clay vessels. Drawn by A. Lasota-Kuś

tion, poorly legible. Simple geometric motifs composed of lines, strokes, and dots belong to the most widespread ornamental patterns in Przeworsk culture pottery in the Younger Pre-Roman period (Dąbrowska 1988, 29, 30). The cup's morphology suggests analogies should be sought among vessels typical of late phase A2 (cf. Dąbrowska 1988, trait 51). To the same period of time (phase A2) also date two graves (119 and 365) from the cemetery at Kamieńczyk site 1, Wyszaków commune, where analogical cups with a clearly undercut lower body were found (Dąbrowska 1997, pl. LXIV: 8; CLXXI: 13). The remaining, fragmentarily preserved vessels from grave 6 at Obrażejowice (Fig. 6: 2-3), including rims bevelled in three planes, confirm the proposed dating of the burial.

MATERIALS FROM SURFACE SURVEYS

Parallel with the excavations, surface surveys using a metal detector were carried out in the immediate vicinity of the trenches, encompassing an area of approx. 100 ares. They brought about the discovery of 42 metal artefacts, all of them retrieved from shallow

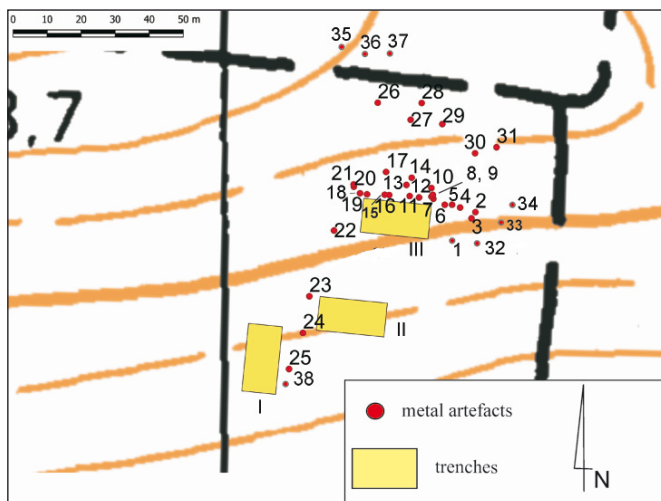


Fig. 7. Obrazejewice, Radziemice commune, site. 13. Planigraphy of the finds from surface surveys.
 Drawn by A. Lasota-Kuś

depths, from the contemporary topsoil layer. When two artefacts were found in the same spot, they were given numbers, e.g. 8 and 8a, 10 and 10a, 11 and 11a, 20 and 20a. The finds had their locations recorded with GPS and marked on the map (Fig. 7). Some of the artefacts could not be identified and typologically determined. However, it should be stressed that some objects are badly corroded and only future preservation works can possibly allow for their proper identification. The designations of the artefacts follow the numbers on the attached map (Fig. 7).

1. Fragmentarily preserved triangular piece of sheet bronze, one edge undulating, one side ornamented with incised lines; height 1.4 cm, width 0.9 cm;

2. Iron brooch with a flaring head flat from underside; the spring covered with a cylindrical spring case; with a grooved ring on the bow; the foot bears incisions and traces of inlay with silver wire, in the form of tiny lumps of melted silver; the knob terminating the foot is decorated with a single groove; it is a strongly profiled brooch of group IV with a spring case, akin to type Almgren 93 (1923); length 4.4 cm, height 2.1 cm (Fig. 8: 4);

3. Sheet bronze fragment with traces of melting (possibly fragment of a vessel); length 3.2 cm, width 2.5 cm, thickness 0.6 cm;

4. Fragmentarily preserved bronze brooch (the head and the bow with a ring survived), with a flaring head touching a ring on the triangle-sectioned bow; length 2.4 cm (Fig. 8: 1);

5. Iron knife, fragmentarily preserved (the tip of the blade survived), length 3.1 cm;

6. Iron shaft (possibly from a rivet), with the end bent at a right angle, quadrangular in section, width 0.2 cm, length 4.5 cm;

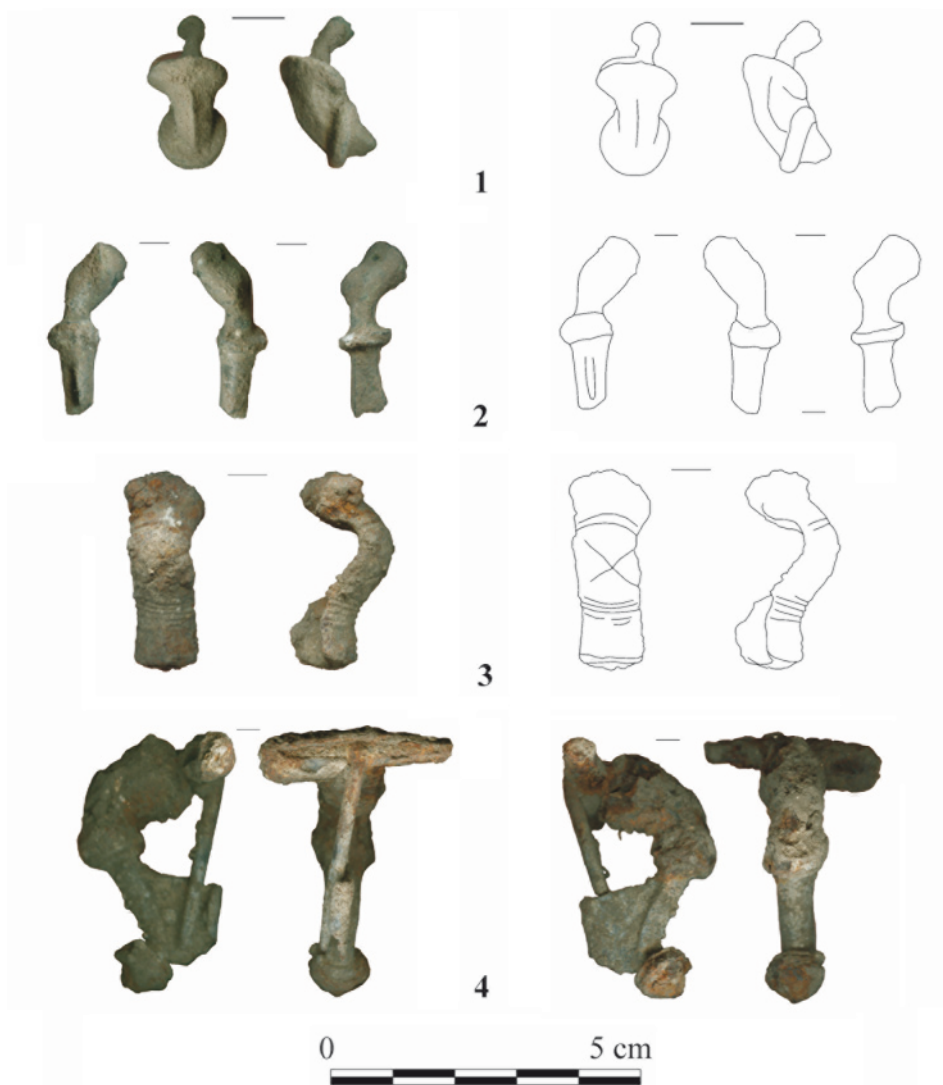


Fig. 8. Fibulae from surface surveys: 1-2 – bronze; 3-4: iron. Drawn by A. Lasota-Kuś, K. Rosińska-Balik

7. Bronze rivet with hemispherical head, the round-sectioned shaft is bent, head diameter 1.2 cm, shaft length 1.5 cm;

8. Iron sheet with two rivets: one completely, the other fragmentarily preserved (the head with a shaft fragment), the head is rounded, the shaft is round in section; fragment length 3.2 cm, width 0.7 cm, rivet length 2 cm;

8a. Bronze object, melted, survived in the form of a ball 0.9 cm in diameter;

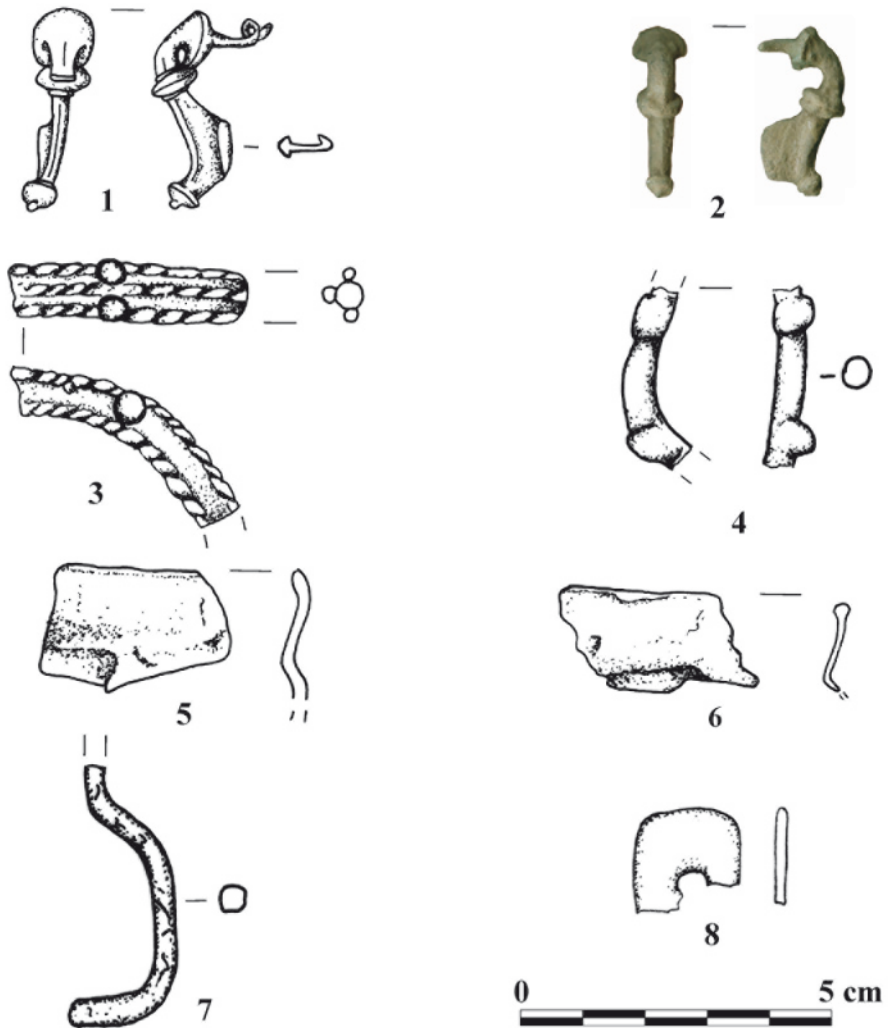


Fig. 9. Finds from surface surveys: 1-2 – bronze fibulae; 3-4: bronze bracelets; 5-6 – bronze sheets; 7 – iron key; 8 – iron fitting of a casket lock. Drawn by A. Lasota-Kuś

9. Bronze brooch, fragmentarily preserved, the head is melted and distorted, the bow is triangle-sectioned and has a ring on it, length 3 cm (Fig. 8: 2);

10. Spring with axle from an iron brooch, spring length 2.5 cm;

10a. Bronze sheet, slightly bent, length 1.3 cm, width 1.1 cm;

11. Golden pear-shaped pendant, the lower part has not survived; richly decorated with twisted filigree wire and plated wires, the loop and its base is decorated with filigree wire; length with the loop 2.4 cm, maximum width 1.4 cm (Fig. 10);



Fig. 10. Find from surface surveys. 1 – golden pear-shaped pendant. Photo by K. Rosińska-Balik

11a. Lump of bronze from a melt-down artefact (possibly a vessel), length 3.1 cm, width 1.4 cm;

12. Iron rivet with flat, spherical head, the shaft is polygonal in section and terminates in a rectangular sheet; head diameter 2 cm, shaft length 5.3 cm;

13. Bronze brooch, with a flaring head flat from underside; the bow is triangular in section; pin and spring are missing; the head and ridge are decorated with a circumferential groove; it represents variant 2 of trumpet brooches; length 2.7 cm, height 1.4 cm (Fig. 9: 2);

14. Fragment of a conical bronze object (possibly a spur shaft), round in section, height 2 cm, diameter at the base 1.4 cm;

15. Fragment of an iron object, width 1.3 cm, height 1.5 cm;

16. Bronze sheet (possibly a fragmentarily preserved coin), with one edge rounded; diameter 1.4-1.7 cm;

17. Bronze sheet with traces of melting (possibly a vessel fragment), length 3.1 cm, height 2.1 cm, thickness 0.3 cm (Fig. 9: 5);

18. Fragment of an unidentified iron object, length 2.4 cm, width 1.6 cm;

19. Iron chisel (?), rectangular in section, length 13.5 cm, width 1.1-1.2 cm;

20. Bronze object, slightly melted, with a bent, conical spike and a ring at the spike's base; the spike is set on an elongated, slightly concave body with four protrusions, body length 2 cm, width 0.9 cm, spike length 1 cm;

20a. Melted lump of bronze, diameter 0.9 cm;

21. Iron fitting in the form of a sheet with a hole for a rivet; length 2.2 cm, width 2.1 cm, thickness 0.4 cm (Fig. 9: 8);

22. Fragmentarily preserved iron knife, with slightly arching edge, triangular in section; length 5.8 cm, width 1.5 cm, thickness 0.4 cm;
23. Sub-triangular iron sheet, length 4.7 cm, width 3 cm, thickness 0.1 cm;
24. Melted bronze object in the form of an irregular lump, length 1.2 cm, width 2.1 cm;
25. Sub-rectangular iron sheet, length 4.5 cm, width 3.7 cm, thickness 0.2 cm;
26. Ribbon-like iron fitting, length 5 cm, width 0.5 cm;
27. Fragment of a bronze object (ring ornament) with two knobs preserved on the circumference; round in section; length of the surviving fragment 3.5 cm, width 0.5 cm (Fig. 9: 4);
28. Fragment of a slightly melted bronze object, D-sectioned, length of the surviving fragment 1.9 cm, width 0.5 cm;
29. Bronze sheet (possibly vessel fragment), length 1.7 cm, width 1.4 cm;
30. Bronze sheet (possibly vessel fragment), length 2.6 cm, width 0.7 cm (Fig. 9: 6);
31. Iron brooch with S-shaped bow, with the bow and foot decorated with parallel incised lines, and with two crossing lines in the middle of the bow; the bow is triangular in section; length 4.7 cm, width 1.4 cm, group V series 8 (type A.123) (Fig. 8: 3);
32. Bronze rivet with doming head and fragmentarily preserved shaft, round in section, head diameter 1.4 cm, preserved length of shaft 0.9 cm;
33. Iron rivet with hemispherical head and the shaft of quadrangular section, head diameter 1.5 cm, preserved shaft length 1.8 cm;
34. Head of a bronze brooch, slightly melted; the head is trumpet shaped, the bow is triangular in section; the brooch adheres to a melted bronze object, probably the head of another trumpet fibula;
35. Fragment of an iron knife, with the shaft differentiated from both sides; preserved blade length 1.3 cm, width 1.4 cm, shaft length 2.8 cm;
36. Iron key, fragmentarily preserved, rectangular in section; preserved length 6.2 cm, type A acc. to A. Kokowski (1997) (Fig. 9: 7);
37. Bronze brooch with flaring head touching a ring on the bowl; the bow is triangle-sectioned and the foot terminates with a knob; length 3.5 cm, bow width 0.5 cm, variant 1 of trumpet brooches acc. to T. Liana (1970) (Fig. 9: 1);
38. Fragment of a bronze ring ornament, made from a round-sectioned bar, with three symmetrically arranged twisted wires, and two ferrules on the sides of the central twisted wire; length of the surviving fragment 4.9 cm, type *Șimleul Silvaniei* (type 3 acc. to A. Rustoiu) (Fig. 9: 3).

Brooches

The surface surveys revealed eight brooches, preserved completely or in fragments. Strongly profiled pieces belonging to Almgren's group IV prevail. Two bronze pieces, one complete and one fragmentarily preserved, should be considered as variant 1 of trumpet

brooches in T. Liana's classification (Fig. 8: 1; 9: 1; nos 4 and 37). Trumpet brooches of variant 1 are typical local products of Przeworsk culture people and are the basic indicators of phase B1 (Liana 1970, 443; Godłowski 1985, 21).

Variant 2 of trumpet brooches is represented by another two bronze artefacts (Fig. 8: 2; 9: 2; nos 9 and 13). One of them (no 9) has the head melted and deformed. The other is decorated with a circumferential groove, originally probably with a silver wire, on the head and on the ridge placed at the transition from the bow to the foot. The brooches in question date to phase B2, with the majority originating from stadium B2a (Liana 1970, 444). Most likely, artefact no 34 is in fact two adhering heads of trumpet brooches, one of them badly melted.

The only iron example of group IV is a brooch provided with a spring cover and decorated with silver inlay on the foot, resembling type A.93 (Fig. 8: 4; no 2). An analogical brooch, also made of iron, was discovered in grave 121 at Nadkole site 2, Łochów commune (Andrzejowski 1998, pl. LXXV: 3). This burial is linked with the youngest, third phase of the cemetery development, correlated with the close of the Early Roman period, i.e. phases B2c – B2/C1 (Andrzejowski 1998, 109).

An iron brooch belonging to group V series 8, with traces of silver inlay (Fig. 8: 3; no 31) represents type A.123, form 2 acc. to H. Machajewski (1998, fig. 2). Such artefacts occur in the Przeworsk culture range primarily in phases B2b – B2/C1 (Machajewski 1998, 192). The typological attribution of another brooch, from which only an iron spring survived (no 10), cannot be established due to the state of its preservation.

Golden pear-shaped pendant

Of note among the surface finds from Obrażejowice is a golden pear-shaped pendant, richly adorned with beaded wire, twisted wire, and wires plaited together (Fig. 10). It represents type III acc. to A. Müller (1956).

Pendants of that type incidentally occur in Przeworsk culture materials. Isolated specimens are known from sites situated to the west of the middle Vistula River, and on the upper Oder River. The only example in the upper San River basin comes from the cemetery at Prusiek site 25, Sanok commune (Madyda-Legutko et al. 2010, with the full list of finds from the Przeworsk culture area). In Przeworsk culture sites the mentioned pendants occur primarily in assemblages dated to phase B2/C1 of the Roman Period. The find from grave 6 at Stary Zamek, Sobótka commune, stands out in this respect, as it is dated to phase B1a of the Early Roman period (Domański 1992, plate 3).

On the other hand, golden pear-shaped pendants are quite common in the north of the Elbe River basin and in Scandinavia, and are also characteristic elements of strings of beads known from the Wielbark culture (Müller 1956; Andersson 1990; Patalan 2017).

Bracelets

A fragment of a ring ornament of the *Șimleul Silvaniei* type, i.e. type 3 (probably 3b) in A. Rustoiu's classification (1996, 95-96, plate 44, 45) (Fig. 9: 3) may be possible evidence of connections linking the Przeworsk culture population from the Obrażejowice cemetery with a foreign cultural milieu. Such artefacts originating from Poland have already been many times comprehensively discussed in literature (e.g. Margos, Stąporek 2001, 258-262; Rudnicki, Milek 2011; Kordowska, Kowalska 2018, 45-46). It is worth recalling here that in light of current research, in sites of Przeworsk, Oksywie, and Wielbark cultures they are dated from phase A3 of the Younger Pre-Roman period until phase B1b of the Early Roman period (Rudnicki 2012).

It has been assumed thus far that they are a local, Dacian version of older ornaments originating from the Celtic world, and finds from beyond the range of the Dacian occupation have been seen as evidence for contact with Dacian populations (Rudnicki 2012, 474-476). However, new discoveries made over recent years urge a more cautious approach to this interpretation (Andrzejowski, Maciałowicz 2017, 205-214; with the full list of finds). This is because, unlike other finds linked with the Dacian milieu, these bracelets do not concentrate in south-eastern Poland.

A fragmentarily preserved, round-sectioned bronze artefact with two protrusions on the perimeter (Fig. 9: 4) may perhaps also be considered as a ring ornament of a kind. However, its shape differs from *Knotenringe* characteristic of the Celtic world (cf. Bochnak 2014, 55-62).

Bronze sheets and lumps of bronze

It is worth noting a significant number of melted lumps of bronze and fragments of sheet bronze, most of which also bear traces of melting (Fig. 9: 5, 6; objects nos 1, 3, 8a, 10a, 11a, 16, 17, 20a, 24, 28, 29, and 30). Some of them probably originate from bronze vessels, and one may even be a fragmentarily preserved coin (object no 16). These artefacts may point to the existence of a bronze-smith workshop in the Obrażejowice site, and would then be raw material for casting other objects. It is worth recalling that such a workshop was discovered in the Mysławczyce settlement, Proszowice commune, situated on the Szreniawa River and dated to the Younger Roman period (Bodzek, Dobrzańska 2014, 305, 310, 311). The same chronology applies to a slightly more remote settlement at Jakuszowice site 2, Kazimierza Wielka commune, where metallurgical production was confirmed (Bursche *et al.* 2000, 102, with older literature).

Other bronze and iron artefacts

Among the objects discovered by the surface surveys were 2 bronze and 2 iron rivets, which may be remains of a wooden box. Bronze rivets with hemispherical heads and an iron rivet with rectangular head, which means artefacts analogical to those from Obrażejowice, have been discovered, among other places, in rich grave 39 at Chmielów Piaskowy, Bodzechów commune (Godłowski, Wichman 1998, plate LX: 37). On the other hand, the sheet iron fragment with a hole, also found at Obrażejowice, should probably be interpreted as a fitting of a casket lock (Fig. 9: 8; no 21). The discovered fragment of a key (Fig. 9: 7) allows it to be assigned to Kokowski type A, the most widespread form in the Przeworsk culture and typical of assemblages dated from phase A3 of the Younger Pre-Roman period until phase C2 of the Roman period (Kokowski 1997, 36, 40). Keys and metal fittings of caskets are considered markers of female graves, typical in particular of graves of higher ranking older women aged *adultus* and *maturus* (Czarnecka 1990, 49, 63; Kokowski 1997, 41).

In addition, the collection from Obrażejowice includes fragments of three knives (nos 5, 22, 35). These artefacts are not precise chronological indicators and occur throughout the whole of the Roman period. As for the remaining iron and bronze artefacts, i.e. ribbon-like fittings (no 26), sheets, and other objects (objects nos 6, 8, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 23, and 25), their fragmentary survival and poor preservation precludes any precise identification.

SUMMARY

The preliminary analysis of the furnishings of graves discovered during the excavations at Obrażejowice cemetery allows for a conclusion that the burial ground probably remained in use from phase A2 of the Younger Pre-Roman period until the beginnings of the Early Roman period. Additional information on the site's chronology can be derived from the results of the surface surveys, which suggest that the area was used in successive phases of the Early Roman period until the beginnings of the Younger Roman period (phase B2/C1). However, at this stage of research it is difficult to conclude whether the materials of such chronology are sepulchral or settlement finds. It is worth mentioning that in the only Early Roman period feature explored in the site (feature 27) no cremated bones were found, and the artefacts discovered there included, among other objects, four iron brooches and a considerable number of bronze sheets with traces of melting.

The ceramic materials uncovered in the course of the excavations are of "purely" Przeworsk culture nature, and no sherds attributable to the Celtic culture have been found. This fact deserves particular attention given that Celtic wheel-made painted pottery has been confirmed at Przemęczany site 1, Radziemice commune, a settlement situated in the

immediate vicinity of Obrażejowice. What is more, this pottery was found in a settlement pit together with Przeworsk culture pottery from the close of the Younger Pre-Roman period (Poleska 1986).

It should be emphasised that the Obrażejowice cemetery is thus far the only Przeworsk culture necropolis from the Younger Pre-Roman period excavated in this region. The closest sepulchral site is the large, badly damaged cemetery at Pelczyska site 6, Złota commune, which produced materials spanning from phase A2 of the Younger Pre-Roman period until phases B2-C1a of the Roman period (Rudnicki 2006, 97-98). To the south of Obrażejowice, a Przeworsk culture settlement was discovered during surface surveys carried out in recent years in the Szreniawa River basin. This is site 17 at Czechy, Słomniki commune, where, as it was the case in the necropolis discussed here, Przeworsk culture ceramic materials of a Younger Pre-Roman period date were not accompanied by Celtic pottery (Du-łęba, Wysocki 2016).

Future excavations at Obrażejowice can be expected to produce further sources for precisely determining the chronology of the cemetery. They should also explain the nature of the finds dated to the Early Roman period.

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