

SPRAWOZDANIA ARCHEOLOGICZNE

INSTYTUT ARCHEOLOGII I ETNOLOGII POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK



Archaeological Reports
72
2
Archäologische Berichte

KRAKÓW 2020

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ARCHEOLOGICZNE**

INSTYTUT ARCHEOLOGII I ETNOLOGII
POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK

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KRAKÓW 2020

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So-called Światowit from Wolin. Photo by PAWEŁ SZCZEPANIK

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Ministry of Science
and Higher Education
Republic of Poland

Volume financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education from the funds for science popularization activities, Contract Nr 651/P-DUN/2019

PL ISSN 0081-3834

DOI: 10.23858/SA/72.2020.2

Printed by

PARTNER POLIGRAFIA Andrzej Kardasz, Grabówka, ul. Szosa Baranowicka 77, 15-523 Białystok

Edition: 300 pcs.

Sprawozdania Archeologiczne is regularly listed in the: SCOPUS, CEJSH, ERIH Plus

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Sprawozdania Archeologiczne is regularly listed in the International Current Awareness Service: Anthropology. Selected material is indexed in the International Bibliography of social and Cultural Anthropology.

Indexed in:

IBZ – International Bibliography of Periodical Literature

IBZ – CD-ROM



Dedicated to Professor Jan Machnik for His 90th Birthday

Halina Taras¹

(Review) Katarzyna Trybała-Zawiślak, *Wczesna epoka żelaza na terenie Polski południowo-wschodniej – dynamika zmian i relacje kulturowe* (*The Early Iron Age in south-eastern Poland – dynamics of changes and cultural relations*). Rzeszów 2019: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego. ISBN 978-83-7996-726-1. 402 pp.

The intensification of archaeological fieldwork over the last two decades, especially of broad-scale rescue excavations due to large roadway and industrial construction projects, has resulted in the appearance of a huge number of new archaeological sources, even spectacular ones. They often challenge the previous perception of various prehistoric cultural phenomena, forcing the verification of older materials and the redevelopment of summaries. The monograph presented here, entitled *The Early Iron Age in south-eastern Poland – dynamics of changes and cultural relations*, was announced in 2019, and is an example of a fresh look at the picture of settlement and cultural conditions in southeastern Poland, inspired by recent discoveries and research. It organizes and summarizes previously unknown or only briefly mentioned (*e.g.* Czopek *et al.* 2013; 2015; 2017; Czopek and Trybała-Zawiślak 2015; Trybała-Zawiślak 2016) results from rescue research, as well as from single or group research projects, conducted in Poland and in the borderland areas of Ukraine.

The author was guided by the idea of re-evaluating the practice, in older literature, of unambiguously attributing all source materials from southeastern Poland, dated back to the younger stages of the Bronze Age, exclusively to the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture. More recent studies reveal that the situation in the Early Iron Age, as well as in the Late Bronze Age, was more complex (Czopek 2008). One of the key factors constituting the basis for a re-evaluation of the nature of the changes at the beginning of the Iron Age in southeastern Poland was the identification of an enclave of Scythian settlement around the site in Chotyńiec, excavated for several years by the Rzeszów archaeological centre (Czopek *et al.* 2017; *cf.* Czopek 2019).

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The layout of the lengthy book (over 400 pages) is logical, though slightly unconventional. The proposed order accurately reflects the cultural diversity – in both the chronological and territorial aspects – implied by the internal changes of the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture, as well as (mainly) the influences of neighbourly relations, including cultural and ethnic diffusion.

The presented reconstruction of the settlement and cultural situations is based on a representative collection of sources from southeastern Poland, including recently discovered sources, as well as older, verified ones. Some of these materials, previously unpublished, are documented by catalogues included in the recently published, comprehensive monograph, entitled: *Przemiany kulturowo-osadnicze w dorzeczu rzeki Wiszni w epoce brązu i we wczesnej epoce żelaza w kontekście zmian prahistorycznej i wczesnośredniowiecznej ekumeny* [Cultural and settlement changes in the Wisznia river basin in the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age in the context of the prehistoric and Early Medieval ecumene transformation] (Czopek et al. 2018).

The monograph consists of nine chapters, the first of which covers introductory issues (range of the study, the state of research), while subsequent chapters present sequences of changes in the local cultural environment in chronological order. The second chapter highlights the end of the Bronze Age, i.e. the starting point for further studies. The author refers to the issue of the persistence of settlement – continuity or the lack thereof – at the turn of the Bronze and Iron Ages, using the example of settlements and cemeteries of the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture, which is attributed to the chronological stage covering the end of phase II and the beginning of phase III. At the same time, she draws attention to the difficulties in differentiation of the materials, and sometimes also in determining their cultural affiliation. Recalling the findings on the relationship between the local “Lusatian” community and the Upper Silesian-Małopolska group, she also cites new data to support them. The nature and chronological aspects of these cross-border contacts are considered, including the possibility that the migration of individuals or small groups may have been a natural means for the spread of “alien” (though, in this case, not so culturally distant) features.

Influences from the so-called “Thracian Hallstatt” environment on the southeastern edge of the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture were similarly studied. New evidence of the relationship of this unit with the Holihrady culture was provided by the aforementioned research in the Wisznia river basin.

The last line of considerations in the second chapter refers to the Carpathian zone, the distinctiveness of which was already noted almost a quarter of a century ago (Gedl 1998), and where the presence of stylistic elements analogous to those from south of the mountain range has been documented. More recent analyses resulted in the differentiation of particular local communities, ranging from the Warzyce type, through the “Late Bronze/Early Iron” Siedliska type communities to the Niepla type dated back to Late Hallstatt Period (Czopek and Poradyło 2008). The latter are presented and discussed in a more detailed

manner further in the book. The nature of the sources, internally quite heterogeneous, and originating mainly from settlements, did not allow the author to formulate satisfactory conclusions – she maintained moderation in the interpretative sphere, and the final conclusions are appropriately balanced. For instance, due to the absence of noteworthy distinctive features, it is difficult to precisely date the materials originating from the East Carpathian zone. K. Trybała-Zawiślak suggests a change in the methodological approach to working on the sources from this area, *i.e.* abandoning the synthetic approach in favour of regional studies.

Studies on the chronology of the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture proved to be fundamental to understanding the range and nature of the changes at the beginning of the Iron Age. Other cultural phenomena and zones defined in southeastern Poland are referred in the book to this most meaningful formation. The key chronological issue is the dating of the second phase of the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture, as well as the indication of its features (Chapter 3). Difficulties in this area have already been pointed out in the Polish archaeological literature, and the deliberations were largely related to the dating of the San stylistics (*cf.* Moskwa 1976; Czopek 2001; Ormian 2005; Gawlik and Przybyła 2005). K. Trybała-Zawiślak revisited older views and verified them in relation to the current source base. By comparing the burial complexes from the most distinct cemeteries, as well as contrasting them with the settlement ceramics, she was able to correct the chronology of the San stylistics (especially the classic version), emphasizing the leading role of this complex as a “regional and chronological identifier”, which is indirectly helpful in the dating of foreign cultural elements. The lack of coherence of the local “urnfield” cultural foundation, which becomes more and more visible at this stage of knowledge, is the starting point for the considerations in the following chapters, which are more closely related to the beginnings of the Iron Age, as mentioned in the title. They refer successively to the third, late phase of the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture (Chapter 4), foreign cultural influences from the South-East (Chapter 5), the distinctiveness of the Carpathian zone (Chapter 6), the local Scythian settlement (Chapter 7) and the Pomeranian culture (Chapter 8).

The fourth chapter: *Zmiany związane z III fazą tarnobrzezkiej kultury lużyckiej* [*Changes related to the third phase of the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture*] is extremely important for understanding the cultural processes in this part of Poland in the Early Iron Age. Using a solid foundation of data, in the form of well-studied cemeteries and settlements (either fully excavated or at an advanced stage of recognition), the author used standard analytical and statistical techniques to outline a coherent and logical picture of the changes observed on many levels – in production and the ritual sphere, spatial organization within settlements and cemeteries, demographics, *etc.* – pointing to plausible causes. The narration is conducted with the chronological discipline. At the same time, the issue of the compatibility of dates obtained using various physical and chemical methods, as well as the comparison of the obtained results with conventional “archaeological” relative dating was raised.

Undoubtedly, the concepts contained in Chapter Seven, which concern the initial reconstruction of the size of the Scythian settlement enclave and range of its influences, as well as its chronology and connections, are of pioneering nature. Searching for an answer to the question about the cultural affiliation of the settlement in Chotyniec, Jarosław district, various possibilities were outlined, including the proposition that the Chotyniec agglomeration could be identified with the Neuri people, given the fact that it is an independent structure located to the far northwest within the forest-steppe variant of the Scythian culture (the historical role of the Scythians in Central Europe was recently thoroughly investigated by Jan Chochorowski – *e.g.* Chochorowski 2014). This interesting concept, however, must be verified in the course of further research, including field excavations of the settlement and other sites, which will be continued in the coming years. The author does not avoid difficult questions, although the suggested “answers”, at the present stage of knowledge, necessarily fulfil the role of research hypotheses or postulates. This also applies to the remaining chapters in which, by dealing with the archaeological data, she proposes a different perspective on, for example, the possible penetration of the “Tarnobrzeg” environment by small groups of stamped pottery cultural circle, Chernyj Les or Thracian cultures – much like the case of the Scythian culture – as well as the range and role of the Pomeranian culture settlement in southeastern Poland. Sources reveal that it played an important role in the context of the late stage of the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture settlement (artefacts of a mixed nature and, consequently, acculturation processes – *cf.* Czopek 2014). What is new it is the identification of the relationship between the Pomeranian and Jastorf cultures in this area, manifested by the presence of heterogeneous materials.

The last, summarizing chapter clearly reveals the entire palette of settlement and cultural diversity, as well as the functional principles of the Early Iron Age community at the southeastern edge of modern Poland. The dynamics and causes of change in the functioning of particular cultural units in environmental and historical terms were described here. This summary effectively impresses upon the reader the strength of the work, synthesizing a variety of issues that had previously been revealed only in fragments – whether in the field of material production, ritual structure, and especially the organization of contemporary societies and their mutual relations. The monograph, describing various cause-and-effect relations, presents a multicoloured and constantly-changing fragment of the prehistoric reality on the borderland – in both the geographical and cultural sense – of Central and Eastern Europe.

The book has been properly illustrated; colour maps, tables, charts, photographs and excellent-quality drawings of artefacts correspond well with the text. However, one could have reservations about the formal side of the narrative – the style of expression is uneven, it is occasionally repetitive, and descriptions are sometimes overly-complicated. These shortcomings do not obscure the final value of the monograph, which is a completely original work, and in many respects innovative. In an interesting and coherent manner,

it presents the complexity of the processes that took place between the eighth and fourth/third centuries BC, at the fringes of the “urnfield” world and its interactions with neighbours.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to Tomasz Myśliwiec for translation of the text.

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