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## MESOLITHIC ART IN STEFAN KAROL KOZŁOWSKI'S PAPERS

## ABSTRACT

In his publications on the Mesolithic in Poland and Europe, S. K. Kozłowski mostly focused on lithic artefacts in terms of their styling, cultural origin, and archaeological context. On the margins of the above pursuits, S. K. Kozłowski examined finds of Mesolithic art from Poland, his main interest here being their cultural classification. Additionally in his works, S. K. Kozłowski

mentioned the possibility of dating zoomorphic figurines and some amber pendants to the Mesolithic due to the similarity of their forms to those known from today's Denmark. In his opinion, Mesolithic art objects found in Poland were linked to the Northern Complex – either through its influence or due to the presence of Maglemose cultural communities in north-western Poland.

**Keywords:** Mesolithic, art, ornamentation, Maglemose Culture

## Introduction

From the very moment of their discovery in northern Poland, mostly before the Second World War, antler and bone artefacts with geometric ornamentation were associated with the Mesolithic art typical for north-western Europe. Foremost amongst them were the deer antler batons from Szczecin-Podjuchy,<sup>1</sup> Szczecin-Grabowo,<sup>2</sup> and Woźniki, Łosice commune,<sup>3</sup> as well as Ostrołęka<sup>4</sup> and Nitki, Pisz commune.<sup>5</sup> The north of Poland, namely the vicinity of Gdańsk,<sup>6</sup> Słupsk,<sup>7</sup> the area between Drezdenko and Dobiegniew,<sup>8</sup> and Połczyn-Zdrój,<sup>9</sup> also yielded finds of amber figurines depicting animals. Additionally, this part of Poland produced amber pendants with pit ornamentation. Whereas the chronology of antler items was reasonably clear, the dating of amber items was subject to debate, with the prevailing opinion assigning them to the milieu of the Pit-Comb Ware Culture.<sup>10</sup>

The spurt of interest in the Mesolithic in the 1960s produced many papers addressing this period plus two monographs comprehensively covering the Middle Stone Age in Poland.<sup>11</sup> Although these works focused on the cultural classification and chronology of lithic finds, they

could not leave unmentioned the loose finds of antler and bone hunting weapons and art objects. One of the papers by S. K. Kozłowski was even entirely dedicated to Mesolithic points and harpoons from Poland in the context of the European Mesolithic.<sup>12</sup>

## Antler, bone and amber objects

Early papers about the Mesolithic in Poland, written by S. K. Kozłowski in 1965–71, gave scant coverage to art. These articles, addressing the cultural differentiation and chronology of the Mesolithic in Poland, were based almost exclusively upon lithic finds, with little mention of ornamented artefacts – or simply items from antler and bone in general. Only in the paper on the Komornica Culture did Kozłowski mention that to the north of the Warsaw-Berlin ice-marginal valley, one may find items (e.g. bone points) of Maglemosian character (even if, for unknown reasons, he limited their extent to the Gdańsk Pomerania).<sup>13</sup> From this period we also have a paper, kept in a light tone, concerning an anthropomorphic depiction of a deer antler baton,<sup>14</sup> discovered before the Second

<sup>1</sup> Kunkel 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Kunkel 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Werner 1917.

<sup>4</sup> Sawicki 1921.

<sup>5</sup> Gaerte 1931.

<sup>6</sup> Virchow 1884.

<sup>7</sup> Virchow 1887.

<sup>8</sup> Virchow 1884.

<sup>9</sup> von Richthofen 1930.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Jażdżewski 1981.

<sup>11</sup> Kozłowski 1972; Więckowska 1975.

<sup>12</sup> Kozłowski 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Kozłowski 1967.



Fig. 1. Szczecin-Podjuchy. An ornamented red deer baton. Photo by Tomasz Gąsior.



Fig. 2. Szczecin-Podjuchy. The geometric ornamentation in the distal part of the baton. Photo by Tomasz Gąsior.

World War in Szczecin-Podjuchy (Figs 1, 2). There, Kozłowski described the geometric style of depiction and identified its connection to either the Maglemose or Duvensee Cultures or the Northern Complex in general. He also ventured into crafting a timeline, dating this engraving to around 7000–5500 BC (uncalibrated). Already in these papers, the Author was inclined to believe that at the close of Boreal north-western Poland hosted cultural developments possibly associated with finds from southern Scandinavia.

In S. K. Kozłowski's<sup>15</sup> monograph on the Mesolithic in Poland, art objects were one of the elements used for characterising the cultural units he had distinguished.<sup>16</sup> The problem with their cultural association stemmed from the character of discovery – all were loose finds, obtained accidentally in circumstances precluding identification of their original context of deposition. Kozłowski, whose attention had focused chiefly on batons, noted the similarity of their “engraved line ornamentation” with decorations found on similar artefacts from Northern and

<sup>14</sup> Kozłowski 1968.

<sup>15</sup> Kozłowski 1972, 152–153.

Central Europe (southern Scandinavia, Mecklenburg, and Brandenburg), both loose finds and excavated objects. Amongst the ornamentation patterns seen on artefacts from Poland S. K. Kozłowski pointed out “a-d” motifs (several variants of barbed lines), hatched geometric shapes (motifs “k” and “l”), and the zigzag lines (“h”), following J. G. D. Clark’s classification<sup>17</sup> (Fig. 2). There, S. K. Kozłowski mentioned the Maglemosian milieu and the Duvensee sites dated to the Boreal. Hence, the statement that Kozłowski probably assigned the finds from north-western Poland to the then-distinguished Chojnice-Pieńki Culture or Oldesloe comes across as rather odd. Both of these cultures, in his opinion, evolved chiefly during the Atlantic Period – a time when traditional Maglemosian art was no more. S. K. Kozłowski indeed suggested the existence of a Boreal phase of the Chojnice-Pieńki Culture, beginning from its final stage, yet evidence supporting this view is very weak.

The finds from Woźniki, Nitki, and Ostrołęka raise further issues, as the Author regards these as being located beyond the eastern reaches of both Chojnice-Pieńki and Komornica Cultures. These artefacts cannot be related to the Kunda Culture representing eastern traditions, hence their only possible association in this area is with the Janisławice Culture. Here we note the disconnection between the Maglemosian styling of the ornament and the later dating of the Janisławice Culture, the finds of “northern” art objects evidencing the inclusion of the Janisławice Culture in the Northern Complex of the Mesolithic.

In this work, S. K. Kozłowski also presented a novel – in the Polish literature – interpretation of the amber animal figurines discovered in the vicinity of Dobiegniew, Gdańsk, and Słupsk.<sup>18</sup> Previously, these had been considered as Neolithic and associated with the Pit-Comb Ware Culture or kindred groupings.<sup>19</sup> According to Kozłowski, they resemble Danish finds, due to the used material and technique of execution (polishing), size, the same manner of generalisation of details, the depicted species, as well as the ornamentation style on some of the artefacts. Moreover, S. K. Kozłowski added to this group the horse from the corpus of amber artefacts fished out at Juodkrantė on the Curonian Spit (today part of the Neringa municipality).<sup>20</sup> Hence, since the Danish finds – following J. G. D. Clark’s<sup>21</sup> and J. Brøndsted’s<sup>22</sup> suggestions – may be dated to the Mesolithic, the Polish examples must be of similar age and associated with the

Chojnice-Pieńki or Oldesloe cultures. S. K. Kozłowski also suggested that some of the finds of amber beads from northern Poland may be associated with the Chojnice Group, even though “a major part may belong to Neolithic cultures”. The truth is that at that point all those finds were treated as a group of uniform age, in spite of their likely belonging to different periods. The prevalent stance was that of Clark, who stated that ornament on the figurine from Resen on Zealand bears the features of Mesolithic geometric ornament, hence all figurines depicting animals must belong to this group. Yet no amber figurine had been discovered in an archaeological context dated to the Mesolithic.

S. K. Kozłowski modified the above findings and hypothesis in the monograph on the Stone Age in Poland, co-written with J. K. Kozłowski.<sup>23</sup> The Author associates the ornamented antler and bone artefacts as well as the zoomorphic amber figurines<sup>24</sup> and ornamented pendants with the Sværdborg Culture traditions – present in this area in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (uncalibrated), or with the early, Boreal phase of the Chojnice Group. The third possibility – Maglemosian traditions in the Chojnice-Pieńki Culture in the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (uncalibrated) – is rated by S. K. Kozłowski as not very likely. He continued to associate the ornamented antler batons discovered to the east of the Vistula with the Janisławice Culture. In a paper from two years earlier – “Pradzieje Europy” – he surmised that these represented the Maglemosian style inside that culture.<sup>25</sup> In that work, amber figurines were assigned to the Chojnice-Pieńki Culture, as the Authors did not mention ornamented items from Pomerania, apparently inclined to associate them with the Sværdborg Culture instead, in line with the map enclosed in the book.

In a newer look at the Mesolithic in Poland S. K. Kozłowski presented a different take on the chronology and cultural origin of art objects.<sup>26</sup> He deemed the batons from Szczecin-Podjuchy and Szczecin-Grabowo and the three aforementioned amber figurines from Pomerania to be typical examples of the Maglemosian styling, venturing that these may be connected to the Boreal Sværdborg group which occupied the land bridge between Pomerania and Scandinavia (later flooded by the Baltic) and West Pomerania. The decorated deer antler batons from lands to the east of the Vistula could be – in his opinion – linked to the very same temporal horizon, at

<sup>16</sup> Kozłowski 1972, 152–153.

<sup>17</sup> Clark 1936.

<sup>18</sup> Kozłowski 1972, 190, 192.

<sup>19</sup> See Gula 1977, with further literature.

<sup>20</sup> Klebs 1882; Gaerte 1929.

<sup>21</sup> Clark 1936.

<sup>22</sup> Brøndsted 1957.

<sup>23</sup> Kozłowski, Kozłowski 1977.

<sup>24</sup> However, at that time he did not know about the figurine from Połczyn-Zdrój (information from conversation with S. K. Kozłowski at the “First Polish Archaeological Congress” in Warsaw, 19–21.09.2013).

<sup>25</sup> Kozłowski, Kozłowski 1975.

<sup>26</sup> Kozłowski 1989, 149–153.





Fig. 3. Pultusk. An ornamented red deer baton. Photo by Tomasz Gąsior.



Fig. 4. Trudna. An ornamented bone mattock. Photo by Tomasz Gąsior.

that time and in that area represented by the Komornica Culture (Fig. 3). The mattock unearthed in the 1970s<sup>27</sup> in Trudna, Złotów commune, was also associated by S. K. Kozłowski with the northern traditions (Fig. 4). This view was based upon the ornament which, although original, bore certain features of the Maglemosian styling. There, he repeated the assertion of L. Domańska who regarded this find as a product of an earlier Boreal migration of Maglemosian bands to Pomerania.<sup>28</sup> This find could be associated with either the Komornica Culture or the Chojnice Group. S. K. Kozłowski also upheld the hypothesis about the Mesolithic dating of amber figurines from Pomerania, Kuyavia, and Lithuania, associating them with the Maglemosian traditions, which he described as the “Sværdborg-Chojnice tradition”. In the case of Kuyavia, he had in mind the figurine of an unidentified animal found in a Neolithic pit at the site

of Brześć Kujawski 4, Włocławek commune,<sup>29</sup> whereas regarding Lithuania he referred to the horse from Juodkrantė. He also associated amber pendants with pit ornamentation from Pomerania and the Masurian area with the Mesolithic traditions. These amber items, loose finds in S. K. Kozłowski’s opinion, could be dated only broadly to the Mesolithic (and even then, without full certainty). He regarded the amber figurine from Brześć Kujawski as possessing Mesolithic features and witnessing contacts between farmers on the one hand and hunters and gatherers on the other.

In the last book, “Thinking Mesolithic”, S. K. Kozłowski repeated views already presented in the 1989 monograph.<sup>30</sup> The Author associated the ornamented antler and bone artefacts as well as amber figurines and pendants from northern Poland with the Maglemosian art: in Pomerania, or parts thereof, this view stemmed

<sup>27</sup> Domańska 1973; 1976.

<sup>28</sup> Domańska 1977.

<sup>29</sup> Cyrek *et al.* 1983.

<sup>30</sup> Kozłowski 2009.

from the actual presence of Maglemosian communities, whereas the finds from eastern Poland were linked to the Komornica Culture, which had been a part of the Northern Complex. The Author unequivocally articulated a link between the western and central Pomeranian finds and the presence of “the Sværdborg Culture” communities,<sup>31</sup> doubtlessly grounded in the discoveries of this culture’s lithic inventories at Gudowo 3 and Wierzchowo 6.<sup>32</sup> The ornamented artefacts from Polish sites were described by the Author as representatives of the art of the north-western Baltic Basin, distinct in style from the north-eastern Baltic Basin.

### Mesolithic art in studies of ancient hunters and gatherers

The few preserved examples of Mesolithic art from Poland were examined on the margin of an analysis of lithic inventories, be it in papers or monographs dealing with this period. Such a state of affairs did not arise from the fact that these were stray finds from accidental contexts. In Denmark, publications concerning such classical sites as Sværdborg or Lundby, which yielded more numerous finds of art objects, also focused on lithic or bone artefacts.<sup>33</sup> This seems to have stemmed from the conviction that it is possible to arrive at proper differentiation of culture and social organisation through analyses of mass materials, such as tools or debris from their manufacture. From such a viewpoint, art objects would bring supplementary information on the “spiritual culture”, the term used at that time for symbolical aspects of culture. It is difficult to track down the roots of this attitude. It seems to reflect the mindset of many archaeologists from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, revealing a typological and (in a different measure) technological approach to the lithic finds, combining traditional perceptions of the role of tools in culture differentiation with a dose of views borrowed from the New Archaeology. Apprehension as to the possibility of reconstructing former *religious institutions and spiritual life* using archaeological discoveries was clearly expressed by the British archaeologist Christopher Hawkes in his work on the Ladder of Inference.<sup>34</sup> This paper was universally known and exerted enormous influence on European archaeologists.<sup>35</sup> Research into the role of symbols and symbolical culture in studies of ancient cultures was more readily accepted when these concerned early farmers,<sup>36</sup> among

which symbolical culture could assume much more elaborate forms than amongst hunter-gatherers.

Decorated Mesolithic items were thus used to substantiate the conclusions pertaining to the cultural diversity of Polish lands, ranging from the influence exerted by the Northern Complex to the physical presence of Maglemosian communities in north-western Poland. Such views often use the notion of “migration” and the metaphor of “periphery”.<sup>37</sup> Yet still very little is known about the cultural situation in Pomerania or the Pomeranian-Great Poland borderland in the early Mesolithic, as it has been investigated in a patchy manner and elucidated by few sites with organic artefacts.<sup>38</sup> It is difficult to affirm whether it participated in the peripheral Maglemosian settlement, or whether the remains of the settlement witnessed any migrations. Finds of Late Palaeolithic art seem to suggest the presence of traditions which may have given rise to the Maglemose Culture. This is strongly evidenced by the ornamented artefact from Rusinowo near Świdwin, dated to the end of the Palaeolithic and bearing many features of the Maglemosian art.<sup>39</sup> This means that at least part of Pomerania belonged to an area inhabited by communities which later developed the Maglemosian Culture. Also, there was no need for them to migrate north at the closing stages of the Glacial, given that these groups could have simply adapted to the warmer conditions at the onset of the Holocene.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

S. K. Kozłowski’s comments on the Mesolithic art from Poland may be included in the initial systematisation-focused phase of analysis of the Middle Stone Age material discovered in Poland. It is worth noting that such cultural classification was not a one-off exercise, but a process extending over time. New discoveries, mostly from Pomerania, forced a gradual modification of previous perspectives on the artefacts’ cultural interpretation and their chronology. It was the later research that provided a fuller picture of these finds, including their timelines and technology of manufacture and ornamentation, as well as the rate at which new patterns emerged. Nevertheless, the artefacts of Mesolithic art in the 1970s and 80s were inscribed into the tapestry of cultures found in Poland in the Mesolithic as perpetuated by S. K. Kozłowski, an image in large part still true today.

<sup>31</sup> Kozłowski 2009, fig. 4.5.6f (map).

<sup>32</sup> Bagniewski 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Bille Henriksen 1976; 1980.

<sup>34</sup> Hawkes 1954.

<sup>35</sup> Evans 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Hodder 1982; 1992.

<sup>37</sup> Domańska 1977.

<sup>38</sup> Kabaciński *et al.* 2008; Galiński 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Płonka, Kowalski 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Płonka *et al.* 2020.

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