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THE STORY OF ONE BURIAL...

ABSTRACT:

In brief, the article tells the story of the research on the famous Mesolithic grave in Janisławice – from its discovery in 1937 and the monographic publication of Maria Chmielewska in 1954; through the repeated analyses and verifying field studies of K. Cyrek in the years 1978–1995, and several expert analyses that involved modern technologies; lastly, to the exposition organised in the State Archaeological Museum (PMA) presenting,

among others, the most recent findings about the assemblage from Janisławice. Many years of studies conducted by over ten researchers of various specialities verified the previous findings, confirming them for the most part. Janisławice can be interpreted as an isolated burial of a man about 30 years of age who most likely, hunting aside, was also obtaining chocolate flint in the older stage of the Atlantic period.

Keywords: Mesolithic grave, chocolate flint, grave goods

The Mesolithic grave in Janisławice is one of those archaeological sites that have been drawing the attention of many researchers for decades... It was a relay race where every scientist referred to his or her predecessor's findings while inspiring a subsequent study. Since the discovery of the grave in 1937, nearly twenty researchers of various specialities have tackled this subject.

The first one was Konrad Jażdżewski; as a representative of the State Archaeological Museum (PMA), he carried out archaeological rescue excavations in the location of the accidental discovery of the grave and immediately informed of this fact in a popular science periodical.¹

In 1977, the author of that article had the opportunity to talk about this discovery with Professor Jażdżewski, who mentioned 40 years later that when he arrived in Janisławice, the upper part of the grave pit was destroyed. This meant that some of the finds were in a secondary deposit and some others were probably missing... This is evidenced by, for instance, several flint products, including a chocolate flint pre-core² discovered in the 1980s by Zofia Sulgostowska in the PMA collection; according to the identification tags made by Stefan Krukowski's hand, they came from nowhere else but the grave in Janisławice. Besides, both the raw

material (chocolate flint), the form, the manufacturing technique, and the state of preservation showed huge similarities with the products from Janisławice. It was no one else but Krukowski who was supposed to become the main author of a monography concerning Janisławice that was planned, but this was interrupted by the outbreak of the war. The profound meaning of this burial, the oldest one in Poland, was addressed by Jażdżewski in the Polish and German language versions of the synthesis *Pradzieje Europy Środkowej*³ published in 1981 and 1984. In this single-author synthesis (the last one in the history of Polish archaeology, which covered the entire prehistory – from the Lower Palaeolithic to the Early Middle Ages in Central Europe), he found a surprising analogy for the grave in Janisławice in the form of a burial in Bad Dürrenberg (Thuringen). Back then, this grave was interpreted as being related to the corded ware culture,⁴ characterised by Mesolithic goods very similar to those from Janisławice.

After Professor Jażdżewski, the next archaeologist who undertook to explore this exceptional find was Maria Chmielewska, PhD (back then, an employee at MaiE, Łódź), to whom the professor entrusted further research on Janisławice in 1951.

¹ Jażdżewski 1937.

² Sulgostowska 1985.

³ Jażdżewski 1981, 1984.

⁴ Bicker 1936.

At that time, a source monograph⁵ was created, where the author used notes produced and the information obtained by the man who discovered the site, as well as zoological expert reports (specifications on identification tags made by Professor Lubicz-Niezabitowski, verified many years later by Alicja Lasota-Moskalewska⁶) and an anthropological study by Stęślicka-Mydlarska.⁷ It is a highly reliable study that contains a detailed description of the preserved grave inventory along with its analysis and interpretation. Back then, the author formulated several significant interpretative conclusions, which were mostly confirmed by subsequent researchers. The exception here was the chronology of the find dated back to the pre-Atlantic period, which back then was plausibly justified by the lack of trapezes among insets. Such a chronology was contradicted by radio-carbon dating results obtained many years later during the studies performed owing to Sulgostowska.⁸ They showed that the grave was related to the Atlantic period (6580 ± 80 ¹⁴C BP (Gd-2432). This is a good example of the unreliability of typological criteria on the one hand, and the verification of older interpretations owing to modern technology on the other.

Another researcher who tried to complement and verify Chmielewska's findings was the man who was writing these words. As in Chmielewska's case, this time, too, the motivation to do so came from Professor Jazdzewski, my first master. For a novice scientist, it was a wonderful adventure that spanned several years, involving field-work, office analyses, and a couple of publications, in which the role of the source work that presents the entire inventory available at that time was served by discontinued issues of *Inventaria Archaeologica*.⁹ Verifying excavations conducted in the years 1979–1981 in the presence of living witnesses of the 1936 discovery¹⁰ confirmed the individual nature of the site in Janisławice and, at the same time, provided finds that could be interpreted as evidence of chocolate flint processing near the grave. Here, it is important to mention the surface penetration carried out in the area by Maria Chmielewska and Waldemar Chmielewski, Maria Cyrek and Krzysztof Cyrek, Tadeusz Horbach, Andrzej Kosiorek, Zbigniew Lechowicz and Andrzej Szymczak, which brought no positive results.

What sparked my highest interest was the peculiar composition of the grave inventory, which stands out

among other European finds of this kind. Most of all, the refitting of a core and flakes knapped off it, along with the interpretation suggested by Chmielewska on this matter, according to which they were obtained shortly before being deposited in the grave, inspired me to check if there were possibly similar technical relations between the insets. As a result of a meticulous analysis, three pairs of insets were successfully matched. The obtained refitting provided grounds for a reconstruction of a formerly unknown way of inset manufacturing, in which one flake served for making two typologically different insets.¹¹ This suggested that the insets were produced shortly before being put in the gravel pit, too, which was confirmed many years later by a traceological analysis.¹² This new way of forming Mesolithic insets cast some doubts and was disputed in the literature.¹³ At that time, having been granted access to the entire inventory from Janisławice, including antler artefacts solely mentioned by Chmielewska in her study, I had the opportunity to subject it to a detailed analysis, also a microscopic one. Owing to this, a conclusion was formulated that the bone products could have been personal belongings of the deceased used for a long time during his hunting and mining activities. In turn, the flint products were made shortly before being put inside the grave, perhaps during the funeral ceremony.¹⁴ This interpretation was partly questioned by Andrzej Jacek Tomaszewski,¹⁵ who suggested an alternative interpretation for the burial in Janisławice. The chocolate flint tools might have been manufactured since the buried man had a part in obtaining and transporting the chocolate flint. Given the state of knowledge on the location of chocolate flint deposits at that time, this interpretation prompted me to reconstruct the scheme of the hypothetical distribution of that raw material.¹⁶ The analysis of the flint inventory from Janisławice became an important element of the synthetic monograph dedicated to the extraction and use of flint raw materials in the Mesolithic in the basin of the Vistula and upper Warta.¹⁷ The works carried out back then on the distribution of flint, chocolate flint included, were a significant element in several studies initiated by Krukowski,¹⁸ which have been continued to this day. A good example of this is the research on chocolate flint deposits and striped flint deposits discovered in the Middle Jurassic, that is, outside the traditional area in which these flints occur.¹⁹ In this context, an important

⁵ Chmielewska, 1954.

⁶ Lasota-Moskalewska *et al.* 1985.

⁷ Stęślicka-Mydlarska 1954.

⁸ Sulgostowska 1990.

⁹ Cyrek M., Cyrek K., 1980.

¹⁰ Cyrek 1984.

¹¹ Cyrek 1978, Cyrek M., Cyrek K., 1980.

¹² Pyżewicz 2013.

¹³ Więckowska 1998, Cyrek 1999.

¹⁴ Cyrek 1978, 1980, 1983.

¹⁵ Tomaszewski, Willis 2014.

¹⁶ Cyrek 1995.

¹⁷ Cyrek 1983.

¹⁸ Krukowski 1920.

research postulate would be to try to identify the region that the chocolate flint present in the grave in Janisławice comes from, which would allow us to verify the previous identifications concerning its acquisition and distribution.

A new stage in the work on the Janisławice find that involved modern technology started in 2011 with a geophysical prospection at the site carried out by Furmanek and Masojc in 2012.²⁰ The non-invasive studies conducted using the geomagnetic method showed no presence of other Mesolithic objects in the immediate vicinity, which seems to confirm the belief that the grave is isolated and, consequently, played an exceptional role in the chocolate flint distribution process.

The research verifying the previous findings should be considered to include a number of radiocarbon dating studies using AMS, which pertained to Mesolithic human remains from Poland, including those from Janisławice.²¹ Several bone samples were dated and the analysis of the results showed that the most reliable dating of the Janisławice skeleton is that of the femur, namely, 6885 ± 30 BP, i.e., 5840–5715 cal BC. This chronology is close to that of ^{14}C dating using the traditional method conducted years ago (cf. above) and verified it positively, at the same time confirming the Atlantic age of the find.

Some interesting results concerning the condition and the lifestyle of the Janisławice Man were brought by an anthropological re-examination using modern clinical technology.²² The findings confirmed, among others, his continuous, strenuous physical effort that could be linked to activities related to chocolate flint excavation, as I suggested years ago.²³

The many years of studies on the grave in Janisławice culminated in a temporary exhibition titled, *Prehistoryczny łowca. Wystawa o człowieku z Janisławic* [Prehistoric Hunter. An Exposition about the Janisławice Man] organised in PMA – the place where the famous find is stored along with a number of expert studies that were published in the exposition catalogue.²⁴ This publication included, among others, a highly scrupulous catalogue of all the excavated artefacts that make up the grave goods in Janisławice.²⁵

To conclude, it should be stressed that there is a scientific relation between my master Professor Stefan Karol Kozłowski and Janisławice, as he distinguished a separate Mesolithic taxonomic unit that he termed the Janisławice culture.²⁶ When investigating Janisławice and exploring other matters in my research work, I could always count on Stefan's friendly support and professional advice.

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¹⁹ Krajcarz *et al.* 2012.

²⁰ Furmanek, Masojc 2012.

²¹ Piotrowska *et al.* 2019.

²² Stanaszek, Mańkowska-Pliszka 2013.

²³ Cyrek 1978, 1983, 1995.

²⁴ Brzeziński 2013, ed.

²⁵ Ciepielewska, Tomaszewski 2013.

²⁶ Kozłowski 1965.

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