

Settlements Pottery
of the pre-Roman Iron Age
in Central European *Barbaricum* –
new research perspectives

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CONTENTS

Introduction	7
GRZEGORZ DOMAŃSKI The history of research on the Jastorf culture in Poland	11
Between Jutland and Pontus	
JES MARTENS Continuity or Rupture? Some remarks on the transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age in Northern Central Europe. A comparison between Jutland and Central Poland	31
ZDENĚK BENEŠ, DANIEL BURSÁK, JAN JÍLEK Plaňany-group in Bohemia. Three case studies with an emphasis on ceramics	41
OCTAVIAN MUNTEANU, VASILE IARMULSCHI Pottery from the Poienești-Lukaševka culture settlement of Orheiul Vechi, Republic of Moldova	67
Interstop – Poland	
MARCIN BOHR Pottery from the younger pre-Roman period in the middle Odra River zone. A few observations	97
ARTUR BŁAŻEJEWSKI, JOANNA MARKIEWICZ Pottery from the Pre-Roman Period settlement on site 6 in Bytomin (Bytnik), Głogów district	109
MIROSŁAW CIESIELSKI Pottery from the earliest phases of the Przeworsk culture from site 3 in Gniewowo	117

MILENA TESKA, PATRYCJA KACZMARSKA, ANDRZEJ MICHAŁOWSKI Rediscovered... Pottery with Jastorf characteristics from the Borzejewo settlement, site 22, Środa Wielkopolska district, Wielkopolskie province	125
MAGDALENA PIOTROWSKA Jastorf elements in pottery from the site Łosino 15, Kobylnica commune	139
PIOTR ŁUCZKIEWICZ "Jastorf-like" pottery from Horodysko, Chełm county, Eastern Poland	151
History enclosed in clay	
ANDRZEJ MICHAŁOWSKI, PRZEMYSŁAW NIEDZIELSKI, MILENA TESKA Geochemoarchaeological indicators of pottery as a source for discovering the cultural diversity – the theoretical assumptions of the project	171
PRZEMYSŁAW NIEDZIELSKI, KAROL JAKUBOWSKI The archaeometrical training. Methodology of archaeometrical studies of pottery	185
MICHAŁ KRUEGER Handheld XRF spectrometer in ceramic studies – practical issues	189
Authors` address	195
Program of the Workshops	201

INTRODUCTION

The present volume is the outcome of the workshop meeting organized as a part of the project of the Polish National Science Centre titled *History enclosed in clay. Geochemoarcheological indicators of Wielkopolska's pottery from the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age as a source for discovering the cultural diversity* (UMO-2014/15/B/HS3/02279), held at the Faculty of History of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, organized in close cooperation with the Faculty of Chemistry of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The meeting was intended to be a continuation of the Berlin workshop titled **Eisenzeitliche Siedlungskeramik der Przeworsk-Kultur** and, consequently, it was performed together with the Institut für Prähistorische Archäologie Freie Universität Berlin and the EXC TOPOI Berlin.

The first edition of the workshop focused on problems related to pottery from the younger pre-Roman period, which was linked to the so-called *Przeworsk* stylistic trend. As a result, the workshop presented a much more complex image of the pottery-making tradition of that era. The research works, a large majority of which was related to large construction projects performed in the recent years both in Poland and in Germany, have resulted in a significant increase of the quantity of new source materials. The large collections of pottery obtained in their course have brought about a new quality which does not completely conform to our previous concepts related to pottery making in the pre-Roman period. This was certainly influenced by the fact that a majority of the discussed collections consisted of settlement materials that differed in both technology and form from those that con-

stituted the grounds for the previous development schemes of the categories of pottery recorded in grave assemblies. The Berlin workshop demonstrated the fact that the systems of definition of pottery phenomena that existed at that time independently in the Polish, German, Danish, and Czech archeology do not always match one another. This was the basis for the observation that the pottery-making trends present during the younger pre-Roman period in the territories of the Central-European *Barbaricum* elude classical definitions and, consequently, go beyond the common concepts. A very important statement made during the Berlin meeting was the conclusion that in the younger pre-Roman period in Central Europe a certain common trend appeared that was characteristic of all the local cultural zones. It was similar but not uniform and had some local variations. This may be due to the fairly significant activity and mobility of the societies of that period whose representatives travelled over distances of hundreds of kilometers and interacted with other cultures, thus contributing to the formation of a new, universal style. Did this result in a fairly massive recent occurrence of ceramic materials identified as belonging to the *Przeworsk culture* to the west of the dense settlement zone of communities belonging to this culture and, simultaneously, in a surge in the quantity of materials identified as belonging to the *Jastorf culture* found to the east of the territory occupied by the communities belonging to that culture? To what extent did the influence of the Celtic culture, i.e. the problem of the so-called *latenization*, affect their formation? These questions are very important as they constitute the

basis of studies of the problems of the end of the old era. The agenda of the meeting discussed in this publication was based on those questions.

In the edition of the workshop held in Poznań, successive groups of materials characteristic of the period between the 3rd and the 1st century BC from Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, and Moldova were analyzed. The key element was pottery that in the recent years, especially in the Polish archeology, has been described as *Jastorf culture pottery*. By comparing it, from both technological and stylistic point of view, with collections coming most of all from the native territories of that culture, an attempt was made to indicate the differences and similarities between them. The discussions conducted during the workshop focused on the following key research questions: Is it true that such pottery materials were influenced by communities that inhabited the western part of Central Europe? Is it true that the genetic zone of this pottery-making trend is the *Jastorf culture*? Can this stylistic pattern be the outcome of the indirect or direct influences occurring in the territories where it is present? The participants of the workshop also tried to determine the extent to which materials identified as belonging to the *Jastorf culture* overlapped/mutually excluded pottery identified as belonging to the *Przeworsk culture*. Based on the pottery collections brought to the workshop, discussion were held on the formation of a Central European pottery trend that was typical of the younger pre-Roman period.

The practical part of the workshop provided an opportunity to demonstrate new prospects for research on settlement pottery of the Central European *Barbaricum*. This part included a special presentation of the theoretical assumptions and the methods of the studies conducted in Poznań in which modern methods of handling mass pottery materials were used. The studies were interdisciplinary archeometric studies that combined the traditional approach of archeology with the modern chemical methods of analysis of historical artifacts. Their main objective was to develop modern research methods that would help determine independent markers of characteristics typical of pottery made by archeological cultural-chronological units of the younger pre-Roman period, especially including determination of hetero/homogeneity of the discovered ceramic sets. The attendees of the workshops had the practical opportunity to participate in all stages of those studies, from sampling to detailed special analyses performed at the laboratories of the Faculty of Chemistry of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The conclusion of this aspect of the workshop is presented in the third part of this publication, which also constitutes an important introduction to further discussions on the problems of studies and interpretation of settlement pottery from the pre-Roman period, which are to be held during the future editions of the workshop.

Michael Meyer
Andrzej Michałowski



Jes Martens

CONTINUITY OR RUPTURE?

Some remarks on the transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age in Northern Central Europe.

A comparison between Jutland and Central Poland

Introduction

While in Northwestern Europe the Pre-Roman Iron Age traditionally is considered to represent a continuous and unbroken development from the end of the Bronze Age to the beginning of the Roman Iron Age, this is not the case in the more eastern parts of Northern Central Europe. Here the time is usually seen as a period of rupture and formation of a number of “new cultures”, often seen as strangers to their environment. The aim of this paper is to explore why the period is perceived so differently in the two areas.

Background

It took a while before the Pre-Roman Iron Age was recognized and established as an “independent” period in the formative years of Northern European archaeology. And the reasons for this are obvious. It was early realized that the period presented two radically different styles – one influenced by Hallstatt style, the other by La Tène style. Furthermore, in many Scandinavian regions often only one of these styles was present. In spite of this, it was early recognized that the two styles represented two different chronological stages, an early and a late. So it may seem surprising that Oscar Montelius in his fundamental work on Iron Age chronology forwarded a tripartition of the period¹. By doing so, Montelius advocated a gradual, unbroken development from the early to the late Pre-Roman Iron Age.

This he did basing on a very slender material, mainly consisting of stray finds from a larger part of Scandinavia. In spite of this, his notion of a tripartite chronology has advocates even today. It is not the intention here to enter into this debate², but to stress that within Scandinavian archaeology an a priori assumption of an unbroken gradual development from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age has existed since the very start of research on the period. This assumption was not based on archaeological material but was the effect of the method used to establish the chronology: typology. Meanwhile, in Poland, the situation was completely different. Here focus was on the identification and definition of cultures and this led to the notion of a gap between the Early and the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age – this gap was accentuated by the research tradition, since those who researched the early part of the period usually also researched the Late Bronze Age, while those who dealt with the late part of the period usually saw it as the prelude to the Roman Iron Age. Only a few have ventured to argue for an unbroken continuity between the two phases, most important in this connection Konrad Jażdżewski (1939/1948). The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that although the cultural situation in the two areas is depicted and understood in two apparently incompatible ways, the material base has very much in common, and that this could be the key to understanding the transition from the Early to the late Pre-Roman Iron Age in the Northern Central European Zone as a whole.

¹ Montelius 1895.

² For that see Martens 1996.

The interpretation of the transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age

In her important monograph “Wczesne Fazy Kultury Przeworskiej”, Teresa Dąbrowska set out to explore the relation between the Central Polish Przeworsk culture and its predecessor the Pomeranian culture³. The description of the transition can be boiled down to the following points:

- Discontinuity of cemeteries/Foundation of new cemeteries
- Discontinuity of burial customs
- Discontinuity of settlements/Change of settlement patterns
- Discontinuity of dress style
- Discontinuity of pottery style
- Discontinuity of foreign relations/Change in attitude towards neighbours.

These phenomena have traditionally been seen as an indication of cultural discontinuity and have led to theories of population discontinuity and the search for a foreign origin of the emerging Late Pre-Roman culture. Before WWII German archaeologists even argued that the Late Pre-Roman culture stage was due to a replacement of the earlier local population by newcomers from Scandinavia and pointed to North Jutland as their place of origin. Ironically, the transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age was even less understood in North Jutland, due to a very slender archaeological material. This led to the opposite hypothesis formulated by Danish archaeologists: the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age of North Jutland had its origin in or was influenced by the Iron Age cultures of Central Poland. In fact, most of the points made by Dąbrowska about the situation in Central Poland could be applied to the situation in North Jutland and the rest of Jutland and the Scandinavian Peninsula. In spite of this, the focus in Danish archaeology has been on signs of continuity. But why were these apparently similar situations interpreted so differently?

Speaking of the situation in Denmark, the explanation may simply be that archaeology played an important part in the national self understanding. During the formative years of Danish archaeology it was influenced by the country’s struggle for survival

as an independent nation. Thus signs of continuity and unity became imperatives⁴.

On the other hand, until WWII, the territories of the Przeworsk culture were disputed and divided between several countries with changing boundaries. Furthermore, before WWII, the archaeology dealing with the Iron Age in the territory of Przeworsk culture was strongly influenced by the Kossinna-school and its conception of archaeological cultures, while Danish archaeology generally was opposed to this school of thoughts.

Finally, due to research traditions and preservation circumstances in Denmark, Pre-Roman Iron Age settlements and field systems were already well known by the end of the early half of the 20th century, and these materials were interpreted as evidence against a sudden rupture. This was and is still not the case with the Pre-Roman Przeworsk culture. On this background the difference in interpretations seems almost inevitable.

The influence of the Kossinna school is still strong within Polish Iron Age archaeology and is particularly visible when speaking of the Pre-Roman Iron Age, and perhaps it is its notion of cultures that makes it so difficult to understand and explain the transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age. If the term “culture” had been replaced by the term “phase”, things would probably been perceived differently.

Cemeteries and burial customs

The turn from the Early to the late Late Pre-Roman Iron Age marks a great change in the archaeological record in Denmark and most of Scandinavia⁵. In South Jutland it marks the end of the large cemeteries of Jastorf type. During the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age, small cemeteries with less than 30 graves or isolated graves are the rule. In Northern Jutland and on Fyn the situation is opposite, while isolated graves or small cemeteries were the rule during the early part of the period, cemeteries with more than 30 graves began to appear sporadically during the later part of the period. In Zealand and Scania

³ Dąbrowska 1988, 84-104.

⁴ Martens 2014, 247-251.

⁵ Martens 1998; 2014.

practically only a handful of graves are known from the period. At Bornholm the cemeteries usually end before or are founded after the transition from the Early to Late Pre-Roman Iron Age. In Central Sweden a number of larger Pre-Roman Iron Age cemeteries are known but they usually either end before or are founded after the transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age. Only on Gotland an unbroken continuity has been demonstrated with certainty⁶. In Norway the majority of the known graves from the Pre-Roman Iron Age are found as isolated graves or at small cemeteries⁷. However, with the help of 14C-dating some cemeteries appear to have unbroken continuity from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age. Thus the turn from the Early to Late Pre-Roman Iron Age is marked by a general disruption of burial grounds, although, as hinted by the Norwegian example, the picture may be distorted by the dating problems arising from a lack of datable grave goods. Another characteristic is that in many regions the cemeteries of the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age seem to have roots in the Late Bronze Age, while the cemeteries of the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age often continues into the Early Roman Iron Age.

As demonstrated elsewhere, the transition also meant a general change of internal burial custom⁸. Before the change, the furnishing of the graves was restricted to dress fittings and if pottery was included, it would be in shape of an urn or parts of it. After the change tools, weaponry, metal cauldrons, larger quantities of pottery vessels etc found their way to the graves. It seems to be a change from an egalitarian and collectivistic burial custom to an individualistic and competitive form⁹.

Settlements and settlement patterns

Though settlements from the Pre-Roman Iron Age were known already at an early stage of research in Denmark, the problem was that they usually were short-lived. An understanding of this phenomenon

was not reached until the unearthing of a complex of settlements at Grøntoft in West Jutland during the 1960'ies¹⁰. Here it was possible to follow what seemed to be one or two village communities moving around in the landscape from the end of the Bronze Age to the end of the early Pre-Roman Iron Age, when eventually the settlement seems to disappear.

While the settlements at Grøntoft thus on one hand explain why many settlements are short-lived during the Pre-Roman Iron Age, then the excavation on the other hand seems to underline the general picture of a rupture between the Early and the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age. There are, however, some sites elsewhere in Jutland at which an unbroken settlement may be demonstrated. The majority of these are found in North Jutland. The most well-known site is the fortified village in Borremose¹¹, but a number of settlement mounds especially in Thy and around Aalborg also show no sign of breaking of. The Norwegian settlement at Forsandmoen may be a similar example of a lasting settlement¹².

But what happened in the regions without long lasting settlement sites? Per Ole Rindel has made an interesting study on settlement patterns in South Jutland¹³. In this he demonstrated that there is a marked change in the settlement pattern in the transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age – the changes may be described both as a contraction and a displacement of the settlements. This might be what happened at Grøntoft and other sites which were disrupted at the end of the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age. The reason for these changes could be both economical and organizational changes, as well as a response to changes in the natural environment.

In addition to the settlements, field systems are well documented in Denmark, especially Jutland¹⁴. The typical field systems of this period are the so-called Celtic fields. The foundation of this type of field systems appears to have taken place during the Late Bronze Age, and the system seems to have been in use at least until the end of the Early Roman

⁶ Nylén 1962.

⁷ Nybruget and Martens 1997, 74-75.

⁸ Martens 1998; 2014.

⁹ Martens 1998, 178; 2009, 338-341.

¹⁰ Becker 1965; 1968; 1971.

¹¹ Martens 1994.

¹² Løken 1991.

¹³ Rindel 1997.

¹⁴ Hatt 1949; Nielsen 2000; 2010; Nielsen & Clemmensen 2015.

Iron Age. Though some of the systems seem to have been relatively permanent, others are short lived as seen at Grøntoft¹⁵. The reason why these field systems are so well known are that many of them are or were preserved as fossil landscapes at least until the early 20th century. It could indicate that they bear witness to major land abandonment, but though it is difficult to date each separate system, they do not seem to have been abandoned at the same time, since some systems seem to incorporate Late-Pre-Roman and other Early Roman Iron Age settlements. The field systems are often taken as a sign of a systematic parcelling of land and perhaps private ownership of land. However it may be, they are at least evidence of a more permanent and lasting division of land either at a personal or a community level, and what is most relevant for the present discussion, this structure of ownership at least to a large extent survives the transition from the early to the late Pre-Roman Iron Age.

Discontinuity in style and foreign relations

The change from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age represents a marked change in style. The populations in Northern Central Europe and Southern Scandinavia change from pins to brooches, and the pottery is changing shape from tripartite to bipartite. The changes are so profound that it may be difficult to find a transitional form¹⁶. This causes problems when trying to establish a chronology on typological basis and is the reason why the discussion on the Pre-Roman Iron Age chronology has been going on for so long.

From the very start it was noticed that the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age of Northern Central Europe showed affinities to the Hallstatt cultures, while the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age style was strongly influenced by the La Tène cultures. Something must have happened in the relation between the inhabitants of the two areas. Why do the populations of the Northern Central European lowlands all of a sudden accept and adopt some elements of the styles of their southern neighbours which they earlier had

rejected? This phenomenon is visible all over the Northern Central European Lowland zone and even in Southern Scandinavia. I have argued elsewhere, that this change of attitude does not lead to a complete taking over of the La Tène style, but represents a conscious choice of elements that are taken over and reworked into a local style¹⁷. This goes for elements in the dress as well as weaponry and burial custom.

This changing of style which by some authors has been termed the La Ténization is a phenomenon that can be seen all over the Northern European lowland zone and in Southern Scandinavia and is not just confined to Central Poland. In spite of differing source situations – settlements are little known and field systems practically unknown from the Pre-Roman Iron Age in Poland – it would be reasonable to see the change as a result of similar processes. It would be plausible to ask what role the La Tène Culture did play in the transition, but since much of the La Tène Culture was not adopted it seems inadequate to view the adaptors as the passive part in this process of cultural transfer. I would therefore suggest looking for internal reasons for the changed attitude.

The Brześć Kujawski style – the missing link?

When Jażdżewski published the pottery from Brześć Kujawski st. 3-5 it was with the firm conviction that it was the missing link between the cultures of the Early and Late Pre-Roman Iron Age so well known from the cemeteries of Pomeranian culture and Przeworsk culture (Jażdżewski 1939/48). His problem was that the material not only was unique but it also was of a different kind, since it originated from a settlement.

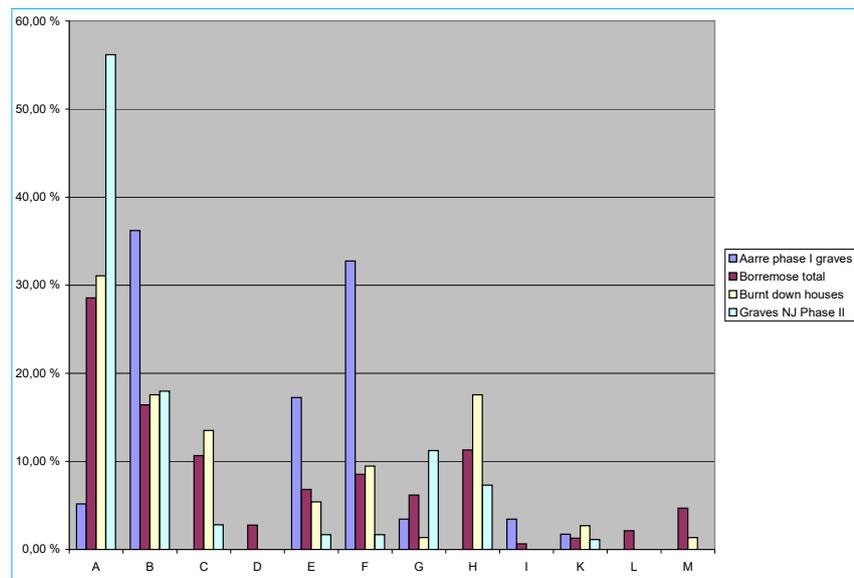
Many studies have shown how the type spectrum and even style may differ between pottery from settlements and cemeteries (Fig. 1). For obvious reasons settlement pottery would tend to be designed according to function, while the design of pottery for the funeral pyre may follow entirely different laws. A comparison between settlement pottery and pottery from graves of the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age in North Jutland demonstrated for instance

¹⁵ Becker 1971.

¹⁶ Jensen 1997, 97, fig. 10.

¹⁷ Martens 1998, 178.

Fig. 1. The relative occurrence of pottery types at the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age cemetery at Aarre compared to their occurrence at the fortified settlement of Borremose, the burnt down house sites at Borremose and the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age graves of North Jutland. Type A – cups and vessels with one handle; Type B – two lugged jars; Type C – large storage jars; Type D – simple bucket shaped storage jars; Type E – small and medium sized storage jars; Type F – finer jars and vases; Type G – jars with narrow cylindrical or conical neck; Type H – bowls; Type I – miniature vessels; Type K – lids and plates; Type L – shards with central hole; Type M – firedogs.



that certain types which are well represented at settlements never or nearly never occur in graves, while other types are over-represented (Martens in press). Furthermore the proportions of the vessels may differ. In some instances it even seems like the often quite large numbers of pots that each grave may be furnished with were made by the same potter and for this particular occasion. These observations make it difficult without reservations to compare settlement pottery to funeral pottery.

Anyhow, Jażdżewski demonstrated how the pottery of Brześć Kujawski had traits that could be compared with pottery from graves from both the Early and the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age in Central Poland, and his conclusion was that this find was the final evidence of unbroken continuity between the two parts of the period. The consequences of this conclusion can only be understood on the background of the interwar dispute of the origin of the Przeworsk culture and the implications of that. In spite of this, Jażdżewski's interpretation of the find did not win general approval within Polish archaeology. Neither did it spur an intensified focus on settlements of the period. Thus, when Dąbrowska wrote her monograph on the Pre-Roman phase of Przeworsk culture, she saw the Brześć Kujawski pottery as an isolated element, and interpreted the traits which Jażdżewski had seen as links as foreign, of Jastorf origin and since the settlement pottery is best known in Jutland she found the best paral-

els there¹⁸. Since not only pottery of the Brześć Kujawski style but also some finds of metal objects of Jastorf style have been found across Central Poland it led to a generally accepted thesis that these finds are traces of a migration of a group of people from the Jastorf culture across the territories of Poland and probably towards the Black Sea and the Jastorf-like Poienęști-Lukaševka culture.

Though such an interpretation might seem tempting, it leaves us with the problem of the transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age unsolved. Another approach to the problem would be to emphasize the similarities in the comparable parts of the archaeological records of Jutland and Central Poland. As demonstrated above, there are many similarities when describing the transition. So a good question would be, are there more? One place to look would be for similarities before the transition. This is difficult because of the different nature of the archaeological records, but one thing in common is pottery. While the Polish material mainly stems from cemeteries, then the Danish comes from cemeteries and settlements. As mentioned above, it is difficult to compare pottery from cemeteries with that from settlements, but it may be equally challenging to compare funeral pottery from different regions due to difference in funeral traditions.

¹⁸ Dąbrowska 1988; 1988b; 1994.

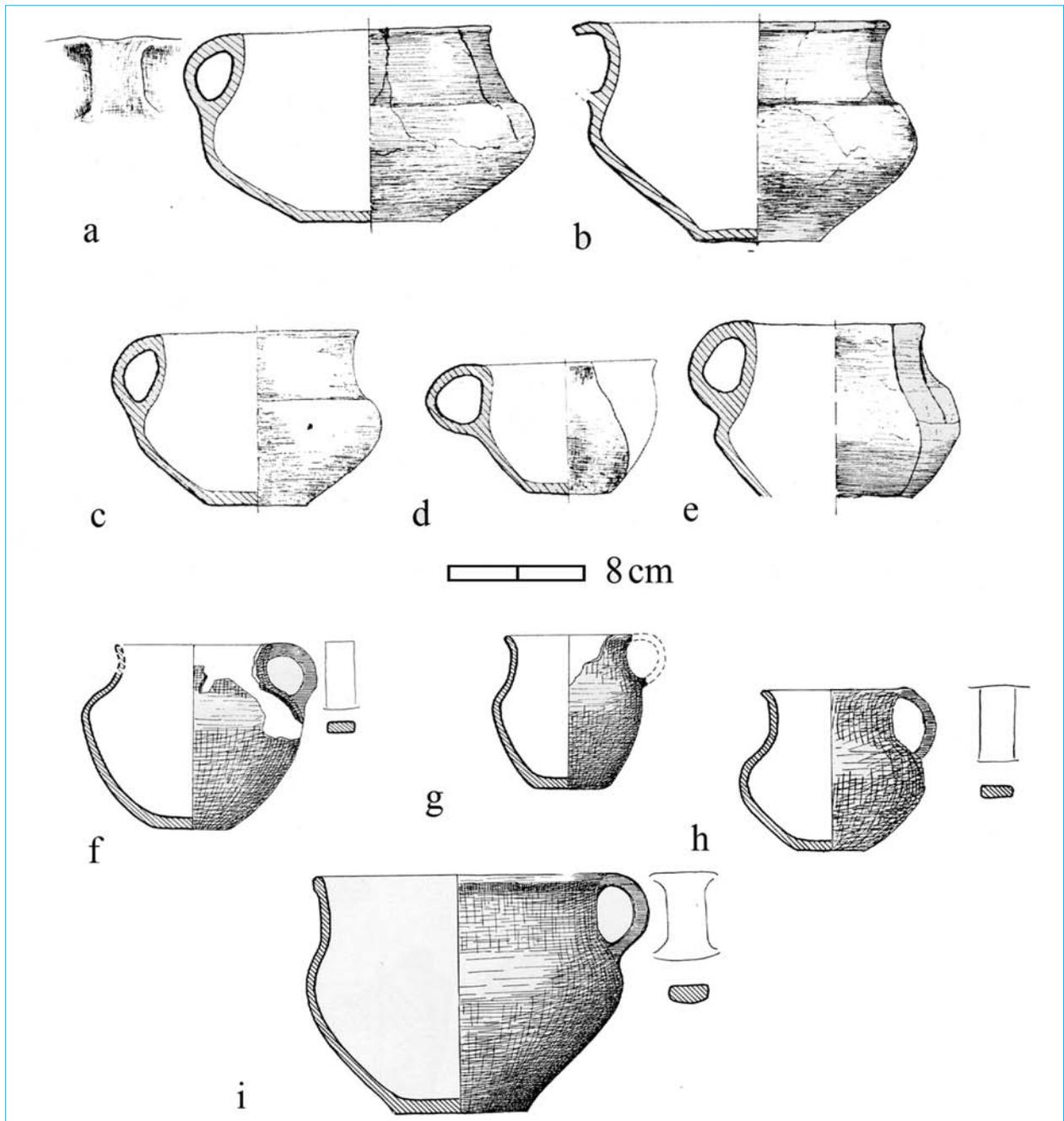


Fig. 2: Cups and vessels with one handle: a-e from Warszawa-Henryków: Zawadzka 1964 pl. XVI-5, XII-5, XIV-2, XVI-6, VIII-3; f-i from Jutland: Becker 1961, pl. 76-e, 76-h, 97-257a, 30-k.

The largest number of graves from the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age in Jutland stem from the southern part¹⁹ which is closely related to the Jastorf culture. In this area the graves are usual urn graves and are generally not furnished with more than this pot, or possibly a lid, usually a rather flat

open dish/bowl. In comparison to this, the graves of the Pomeranian culture, here exemplified by the cemetery at Warszawa-Henryków²⁰, often have additional pots including a so-called cloche, a large vessel turned upsidedown as a cover over the urn. The funeral pottery in both areas appears to consist

¹⁹ Becker 1961.

²⁰ Zawadzka 1964.

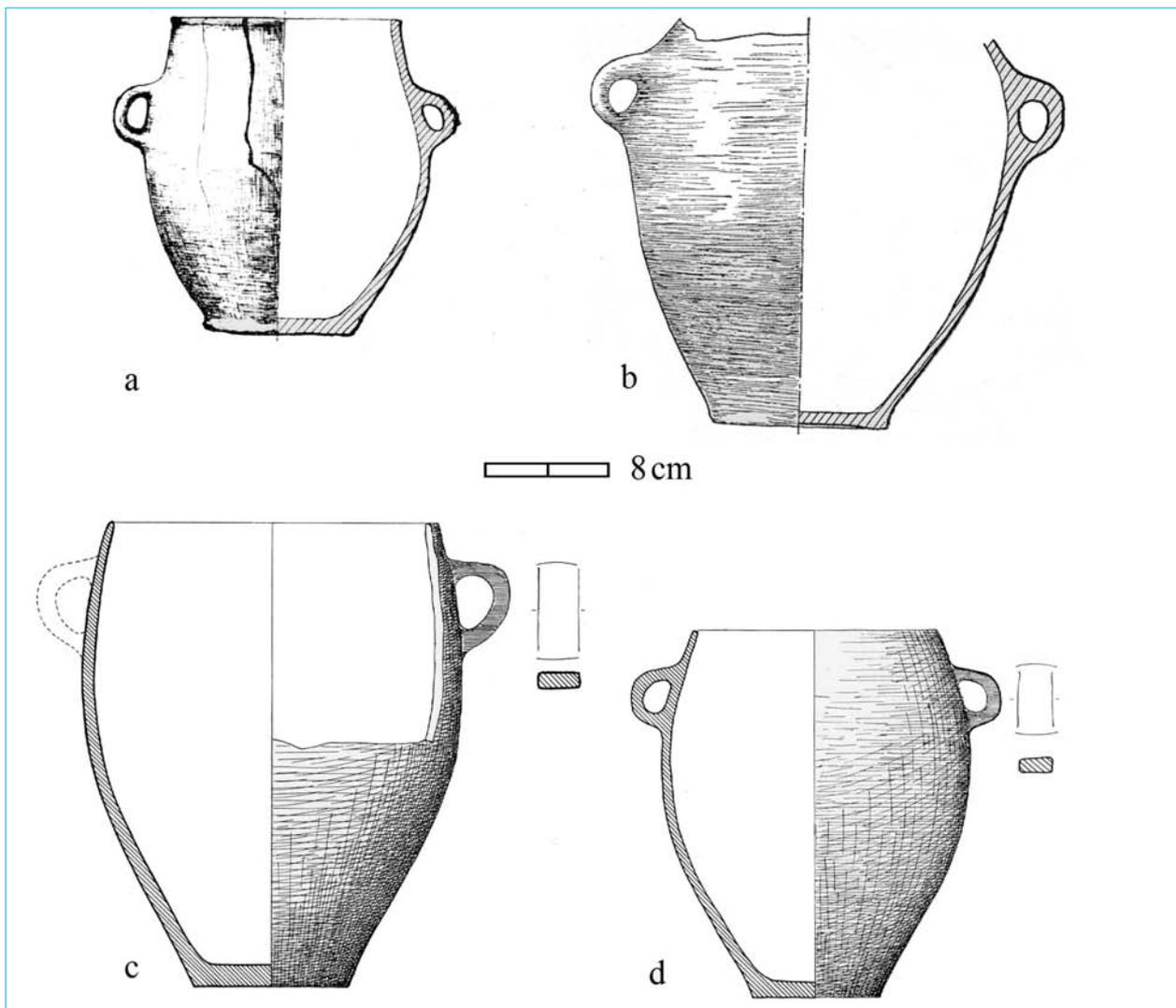


Fig. 3: Two-lugged jars: a-b from Warszawa-Henryków: Zawadzka 1964 pl. XIII-3, XV-14; c-d from Jutland: Becker 1961, pl. 40-b, 40-j.

of utilitarian types that one could expect to find at contemporary settlements. However, the choice is different. Thus the Jutland selection favour types like the two-lugged jar and small and medium sized storage jars and finer vessels, while large storage jars are absent and bowls almost so. At Warszawa-Henryków, on the other hand large storage jars and bowls are abundant while two-lugged jars are very few in numbers though present. A further category, single handled cups or vessels which are abundant in the Jutland settlement material are almost absent in the Jutish graves, while they appear in some numbers at Warszawa-Henryków. This demonstrates once again that funeral pottery does not mirror settlement pottery. Several attempts

have been made at working out a finer chronology of the pottery of the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age in Poland (including the material from Warszawa-Henryków), but for this purpose the material will be treated as an entity.

Though there is a difference in choice of types, it is still possible to compare style and shapes. It will suffice here to mention the handled cups (Fig. 2), the two-lugged jars (Fig. 3) and the large storage jars (Fig. 4). This comparison is not made in order to suggest that there already before the middle of the Pre-Roman Iron Age existed a link between the two areas, but rather to demonstrate that a common stylistic language existed already before the transition, implying that if the Ripdorf style (phase IIA) could

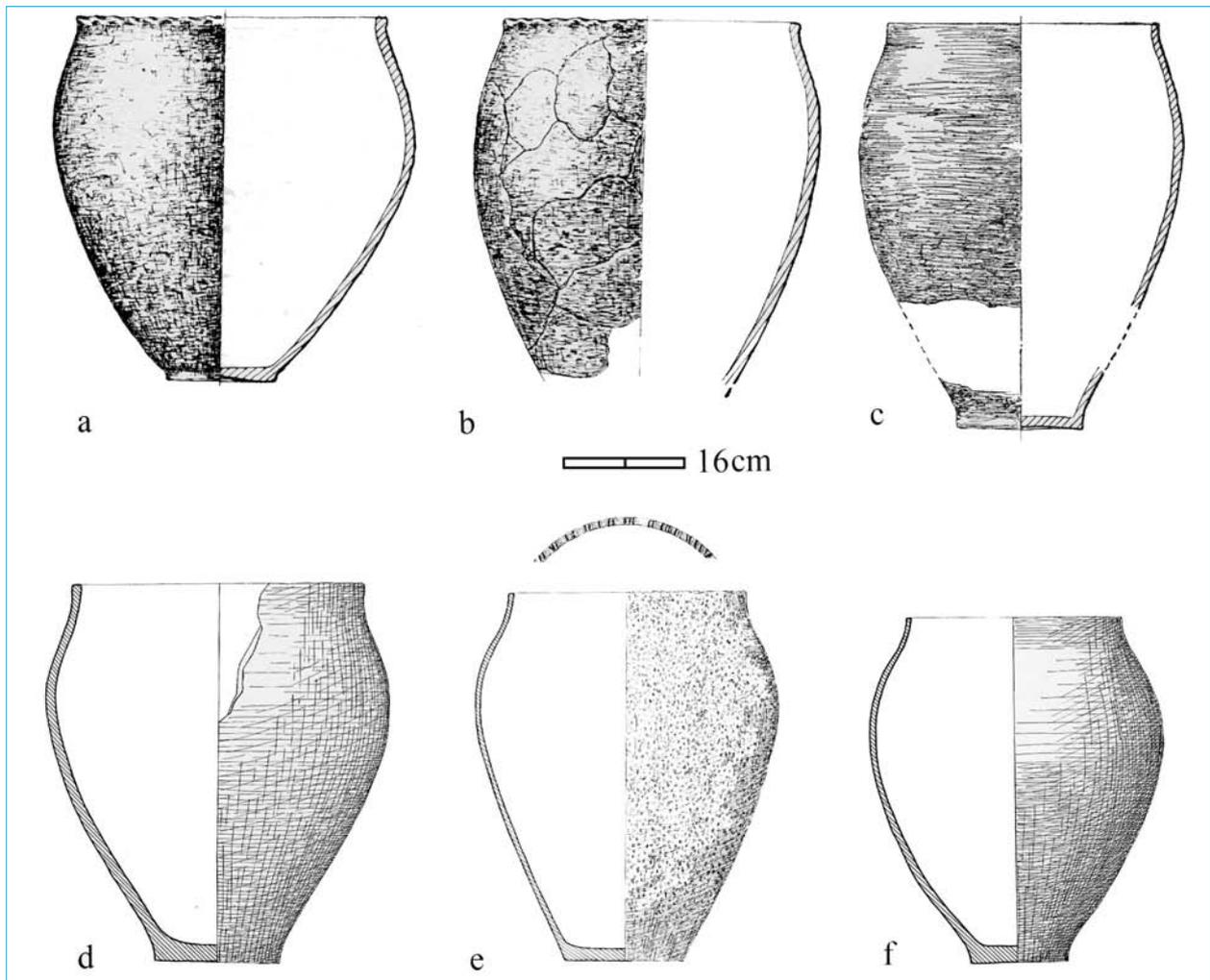


Fig. 4: Large storage jars: a-c from Warszawa-Henryków: Zawadzka 1964 pl. XIII-1, XIII-12, XV-4; c-d from Jutland: Becker 1961, pl. 48-g, 18-g, 41-h.

evolve from the preceding style in Jutland, then the same could have been possible in Poland. This would also explain why the Brześć Kujawski style differs in many respects from any particular Jastorf area, simply because it was developed locally.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper is to bring attention to the fact that many of the phenomena ascribed to the transition from the early to the late Pre-Roman Iron Age in Central Poland may as well be applied to describe the transition elsewhere in Northern Central Europe. The reasons why the problem has been dealt with in so different ways in the different regions are historical, political and due to dif-

ferences in the formation and composition of the archaeological records. If we are to understand the problem of the transition from Pomeranian culture to Przeworsk culture, we need to see the problem in its global context. This probably also means that we may have to abandon the traditional notion of “cultures” in favour of a more dynamic approach. The transition from the Early to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age appears to mark a major change in European prehistory which effects large areas, and therefore it is necessary to understand the local changes in a European framework. It may be that one element in this phenomenon could be one or more migrations, but before reaching such a radical conclusion it is important to bring the archaeological records of the different areas to a comparable standard.

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