

**THE JÓZEF KOSTRZEWSKI POZNAŃ SCHOOL
OF ARCHAEOLOGY**

**Several reflections
on the illuminations and shadows of prehistory studies
in respect to the Bronze and Early Iron Ages**

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ABSTRACT. In the paper, the authors wish to reflect on Józef Kostrzewski's research postulates in the context of passing time, in particular on the influence of his work on the further development of research on the Bronze and Early Iron Ages in the interfluvial region of the Odra and Vistula. Bearing in mind the vastness of issues, only two major research questions shall be addressed: cultural taxonomy (mainly in respect to the Lusatian culture) as well as and the chronology and periodisation of the above-mentioned prehistory period in the general historical and methodological contexts.

The space of over 40 years since the passing of Professor Józef Kostrzewski (1885–1969), the father figure of the Polish prehistoric archaeology, leads one to ponder over the question which of his achievements were continued by subsequent generations of scholars. It is not easy to complete such a task in relation to the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, which apart from issues to do with the Pre-Roman and Roman influence periods as well as the Pre-Polish (Early Middle Ages) culture in Poland constituted the main pillar of Józef Kostrzewski's research interests. In spatial terms, the distinguished Poznań archaeologist investigated the western regions of Poland (the so-called 'western notion' of the Poznań University Circle),¹ with the primary focus on his native Wielkopolska.

¹ Kurnatowska 1985, 9.

It is not our intention, however, to attempt in this place a complete description of Józef Kostrzewski's life work of such fundamental significance. So far no archaeologist specialising in the above-mentioned period of prehistory has accepted the challenge. The few commentaries in this field have usually stopped at an introductory summary² of his huge scholarly legacy or have treated this as an entry point for discussion on the necessity of changing research paradigms that have dominated since Kostrzewski's times.³

In the paper, the authors wish to reflect on Józef Kostrzewski's research postulates in the context of passing time, in particular on the influence of his work on the further development of research on the Bronze and Early Iron Ages in the interfluvial region of the Odra and Vistula. Bearing in mind the vastness of issues, only two major research questions shall be addressed: cultural taxonomy (mainly in respect to the Lusatian culture) as well as and the chronology and periodisation of the above-mentioned prehistory period in the general historical and methodological contexts.

HISTORICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF KOSTRZEWSKI'S RESEARCH

Of vital importance for the view of the prehistory of modern-day Poland presented in Kostrzewski's works is the historical context of its formation, as well as the methodological aspect of practising archaeology in the first half of the 20th century. On account of the fact that the former both in respect to his early years, academic career and the first significant archaeological work is fairly well-recognised, this shall not be discussed further here.⁴ For the commentary to follow, the patriotic education of Józef Kostrzewski is most vital, as well as his youthful and adult age at a time of rampant German nationalism in the Prussian form of Kaiser Wilhelm II and later, Nationalist Socialism and Hitler.

The concept of prehistory in the work of Józef Kostrzewski was thus far the subject of methodological analysis mainly on the part of Poznań archaeologists.⁵ It should be underscored that Kostrzewski himself did not show any particular interest in defining the nature of his theoretical work, instead focusing most of all on empirical investigation. According to Jan Żak,⁶ the methodology of prehistory employed by Józef Kostrzewski can be said to lie in the rather broad school of positivism, characterised by phenomenalism, inductionism, psychologism and natural-

² Gediga 1990.

³ Ostojka-Zagórski 1995.

⁴ Kostrzewski 1970, 11–83.

⁵ Minta-Tworzowska 1988; Żak 1990.

⁶ Żak 1990.

ism – at times appearing as intuitive anti-naturalism. The conceptual model of general accounts of prehistory in the work of Kostrzewski can be broadly described as a type of empirical and to some extent common sense historicism. In central European prehistoriography at the turn of the 20th century, such historicism entailed three types that did not differ in terms of methodology, yet at times were in opposition to one another: cultural evolutionism, diffusionism and one that derives from the first two – Kossinnism. While explicitly not accounted for, all of them can be seen in the scholarship of Józef Kostrzewski. These are treated as certain general aspects of a particular period of the history of methodology of prehistory, while individual elements in the work of a given researcher of this methodological school are also acknowledged, especially since it changed through time.

Cultural evolutionism, commonly practised as a cognitive theory within the positivistic approach to prehistory, is characterised by viewing the ancient world through the perspective of single perceptual phenomena (phenomenalism), while its development as a continual ‘independent’ progress in technological thinking. The effects of such archaeological aims is the formal periodisation of source materials, raw materials and technology, identified with the evolution of society and culture and constructed in the process of building a typology and classification of artefacts, cultural elements and sets of assemblages, using the criterion of the cumulative accretion of phenomena. The criterion of complexity is the determinant of the chronological sequence of a given phenomenon (artefact) and in summary, marks out the development phase (epoch). Importantly, the picture of prehistory depicted in this way is one of sequential chronological periods (phases, periods, epochs) that are made up of increasingly complex cultural assemblages, remaining in relation of a particular diachronic sequence.⁷

Diffusionism, relating to the assumptions of the anthropo-geography of Friedrich Ratzel, a source of inspiration for various positivist schools, in the context of prehistory was mainly represented by the German and Austrian so-called school of cultural circles (cultural-historical). Into investigations of culture, considered as an assemblage of elements of the same developmental tendencies on a given territory, a spatial dimension was introduced. Space was to form the basis for determining a culture’s identity and its changeability. In this context, the natural environment earned the status of a factor that affected the human psyche and to some extent, determined the social development, manifested by the emergence of different cultures and their artefacts. The main role in explaining the development of prehistoric populations, however, was ascribed to inter-social and intercultural diffusion, one that was multi-directional and multi-sided. In accordance with these assumptions, the history of mankind was presented as a particular sequence, from migration conditioned by the geographic environment and the urge for migration, through differ-

⁷ Żak 1990, 74–75; Żak, Minta-Tworzowska 1991, 13–14.

entiation and to diffusion that occurred primarily as a consequence of exchange. Therefore, migrations and forms of diffusion attained the status of elements that evoked the process of crossing and stratification of cultural circles (suggestively pictured as transverse waves), which in consequence brought about the emergence of subsequent, younger cultural circles.⁸

Archaeology of this period, referring to evolutionism, or rather to trans-cultural diffusion, focused on artefacts and hence its identification of the so-called *traces*, through which we come to learn facts from the past, i.e. vehicles of objective truths (e.g. O. Montelius and Kostrzewski represented this concept). In time these *traces* began to be described as archaeological sources, which in this view were treated objectivistically. This reconstructed past is expressed in the language of things. Artefacts are perceived as things – bodies. Things change, exist in relationships, are sequenced in time and prevail, while processes and events do not exist in parallel with them. Out of this line of thinking arose the view on sources represented by Józef Kostrzewski,⁹ who wrote:

Prehistoric sources include not only portable objects made by prehistoric man such as tools, ornaments, vessels, implements, works of art or objects of religious ritual but also non-portable remains of human activity such as remains of particular constructions or entire settlements, graves and cemeteries, fortified settlements, bridges, roads, mines and furnaces...

And further:

also caves and rock shelters exploited by prehistoric man, raw materials processed by him (lumps of flint or amber, cakes of copper (bronze or iron), remains of feasts (animal bones), harvested wheat, vegetables or fruit, remains of plants or gathered wild fruits and even charcoals from campfires.

Józef Kostrzewski described also the spatial arrangements of ‘artefacts’ as clusters, individual artefacts or hoards, for the determination of the chronology of artefacts based on their typology. He undertook this work so as to *reconstruct the past... of prehistoric peoples* in respect to the ethnic relations in prehistory and the Early Middle Ages, since he believed that *the material culture is the field in which it is definitely possible to trace ethnic relations.*

⁸ Żak 1990, 76–78; Żak, Minta-Tworzowska 1991, 15–16; Minta-Tworzowska 1994, 36–37; 1998.

⁹ Kostrzewski 1961, 3.

The main issue here was setting particular artefacts, facts in time and space and indicating, in ethnic terms, their producers. Therefore the question was raised as to the culture and a key for an identification of a specific taxon understood as representative of an actual social group was sought among artefacts.¹⁰ Such a perspective is a commonsense form of naive realism. Thus for a long period archaeology saw its sources as a firm base of knowledge, as it was believed that what the archaeologist had at their disposal was a real ‘source,’ out of which so called truth would flow. Even if it was realised that finding truth is never a simple matter and that certain research procedures are necessary for this purpose, the conviction that the source has a special status, as a vehicle of truth, prevailed. The source, therefore, was considered truer, more authentic than any historical narration. It is thus that the myth arose of the archaeological, historical source, which at the same time was connected to the myth of objective science.

In this context the methodological construct of the German prehistorian and linguist Gustaf Kossinna came to be created as a syncretism of a modernised evolutionism of Oscar Montelius, elements of anthropo-geographism of Friedrich Ratzel and elements of pseudo scientific anthropo-racism (Nordism). All of these served as a background for the concept of an ethnic community (race) whose emanation was supposedly the cultural province (‘archaeological culture’) of particular phenomenological traits. ‘Kossinnism’ whose main means of interpretation was ‘the archaeological settlement method’, held that a distinct range of archaeological culture allows for an entirely valid identification with an area occupied by a particular ethnic community (territories of archaeological cultures = territories of tribes and peoples). This argument was based on a two-stage analysis: a) formal classification of archaeological material in respect to chronological and chorological observation and b) interpretation of ethnicity using the retrogressive method based on antique written sources. In research practice, however, even single archaeological sources were identified in terms of ethnicity. Hence, Kossinna connected the process of cultural change in prehistory, observed in a holistic sense or only in respect to some of its elements, to the change of ethnic subject arising as a result of migration. The emerging new cultural model was therefore the resultant of the culture of the sub- and superstratum, usually with the dominance of an allochthonic element.¹¹

The methodology of J. Kostrzewski, who – as mentioned earlier – in the construction of comprehensive accounts of the prehistory of Polish territories drew upon a conceptual model of pseudo-theoretical historicism, is similar to the modernised evolutionism of Montelius and complemented by elements of ‘Kossinnism’.¹²

¹⁰ Minta-Tworzowska 2000, 54.

¹¹ Żak 1985, 92–94; 1990, 78–82; Żak, Minta-Tworzowska 1991, 16–17.

¹² Żak 1990, 84–89.

The impact of the intellectual work of the Swedish prehistorian, founder of the fundamental method of historical typology, can be quite clearly seen in the concepts of Józef Kostrzewski, the doyen of Polish archaeology. Modelling his research on the work of Montelius, Kostrzewski created typological sequences of artefacts and identified their synchronic sets, ascribing to them the status of designates of archaeological cultures and chronological periods. Finally, he systematised the periodisation of prehistory of the Odra and Vistula basin, e.g. by adapting schemes of division for the Neolithic and Bronze Age, previously created for Scandinavia (see discussion below). As a consequence, Kostrzewski created a framework of scholarly discourse in which identified and re-occurring types of artefacts and cultural phenomena became the basis of the observation of changes in prehistory.¹³

The concepts of his German teacher, Gustaf Kossinna, played an important role in shaping the methodological precepts of Kostrzewski. Some he accepted, others he attempted to disprove or rejected as entirely devoid of scientific basis (anthropocentrism, Pan-Germanism). Thus the socio-cultural evolution, related to external factors, was to be main impetus for historical processes. Kostrzewski accepted first and foremost the concept of the identification of the range of archaeological cultures with the range of ethnic communities, though with the possibility of exceptions to this principle, which resulted in an attempt, to present the relations of archaeological cultures in diachronic relationships differently than Kossinna. Without rejecting the concept of migration, Józef Kostrzewski advanced the thesis that cultural changes could take place without changing their bearers (ethnic subject), provided that common traits observed in overlapping spatial distributions were preserved. Thus in his concept of the continuity of the habitation of the Polish lands from the middle of the second millennium BC up to the Early Middle Ages, Kostrzewski perceived the archaeological cultures that followed one after the other as subsequent stages of development of the same ethnic community (Proto-Slavs, Slavs).¹⁴

In conclusion to this section of the discussion it ought to be stated that the above methodological concepts contained in the work of Józef Kostrzewski reflect the research paradigm commonly practised in prehistoric archaeology in the period of his active scholarship. Its significant part was devoted to the transposition and verification of the theoretical assumptions of Kossinna, for the purposes of supporting the Polish national interest which Żak well identified as 'defensive nationalism.' The awareness of a conceptual function of prehistory, its role in solving national and political problems, particularly in times of a rampant German chauvinism, can be very clearly seen in the scholarly and general education work of Kostrzewski in the interwar period. The quintessence of all of this was the formation of the so-called Poznań School of Archaeology (prehistory).

¹³ Minta-Tworzowska 1994, 39–42.

¹⁴ Żak 1985, 93–94; 1990, 84–85; Żak, Minta-Tworzowska 1991, 17–18.

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This concept defines the scholarly activities of the Poznań archaeological circle in the 20-year period between the WWI and WWII, as well as – somewhat less formally – its successors and continuators of its investigations in the post-war period, in the age of so-called millennium research. The formation of this School was the coincidence of several independent factors that emerged almost at the same time, the most important being institutional, ideological and political as well as pure chance. The first should be related to the fact that Józef Kostrzewski, as head of the Institute of Prehistory at the University of Poznań and the Prehistory Department, Wielkopolskie Museum, managed to enlist the most able of apprentices of archaeology, as well as initiate close collaboration with scholars from complementary fields, who by using his research methodologies, pursued defined research aims.¹⁵

The philosophical groundwork of this particular scholarly community formed by the associates of Józef Kostrzewski, expressed itself in the neo-autochthonic theory of Slavonic ethnogenesis, as well as to a considerable extent, the emotional and entirely mistrustful approach towards the politics of Germany of the time and the German school of archaeology with its marked anti-Polish accent. At the same time, the discovery of the fortified settlement in Biskupin in 1933 can be treated as a fortuitous event. Indisciplinary ground-breaking exploration of the site came to represent undoubtedly one of the most important stages in the so-called formation of the Poznań School of Archaeology. The scholarly success of research conducted there, the international recognition and subsequent renown were skilfully taken advantage of for propaganda purposes so as to further clarify the views of Kostrzewski in respect to the origins of the Slavs and eternal rights of Poland to inhabit the territories of the Odra and Vistula basin.

In summary the Poznań School of Archaeology was characterised by:

- an enormous scholarly impetus, directed at the fullest discovery of prehistory and the Early Middle Ages in Poland, in particular in its western parts (western notion), realised through considerable field research, both surface survey and excavations, with the use of modern exploration methods and collaboration of scholars from other fields
- dynamic editorial scholarly activity and general public education, the latter helping society understand the prehistoric past of Polish lands and kindle ties with the native land
- particular focus on the problem of ethnogenesis of Slavs and the beginnings of Polish statehood (Neo-Autochthonous School)

¹⁵ Szczepaniak 1986.

- scholarly and journalistic engagement in the battle with German nationalism
- the use of positivist methodological orientation, including the Montelius' historical typology and the amended so-called Archaeological Settlement Method (ethno-archaeological) of Gustaf Kossinna
- domination in the arena of the Polish archaeology of the interwar period
- international scholarly success based on the research and excavations in Biskupin, as well as the general scholarship of Józef Kostrzewski

All of the above-mentioned traits of the Poznań School of Archaeology to an equal extent, perhaps even above all, were related to the investigations conducted by its members, albeit mainly the work of Professor Kostrzewski, on the Bronze and Early Iron Ages and in particular on the general question of ethnogenesis of the Slavs treated as a priority..

In the period of the greatest professional activity of Kostrzewski and thanks to his unceasing work, Polish archaeology developed the basic categories for research procedures in respect to the prehistoric archaeology, related terminology and in particular, the methods of field research. As hypotheses were formulated in the course of excavations consequently the relevant methodology had to comply with relevant standards that were gradually established. The Biskupin site discovered in 1933 and investigated from 1934, was ideal in that it lent itself to the social discourse of that period in relation to **Tradition and the Construction of Identity**, through material representation and significance of, in modern discourse, artefacts and eco-facts – the discovery of fortifications, the regular arrangement of houses and the regular layout of the settlement site.¹⁶

In addition, the very figure of Professor Kostrzewski, highly competent, ahead of his time and endowed with great social authority, was of immense importance. Kostrzewski led the archaeological expedition works up to the outbreak of World War II. His assistant, Zdzisław Adam Rajewski, M.A. at the time, often took his place in Biskupin. The archaeological work of Kostrzewski had an enormous influence also on public opinion. The excavations that were initially small, quickly rose to unheard-of dimensions in the annals of Polish archaeology.

IN THE LIMELIGHT OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND DUSK OF TRADITION

Both the 20-year period between the wars and the first two decades after WWII were unusually favourable for research on the Bronze (especially Later) and Early Iron Ages. In terms of popularity, scholarly engagement and media reportage, only the subject of the Early Middle Ages could compete – though later, mainly thanks

¹⁶ Grossman, Piotrowski 2005; Gediga 2005, 39–52.

to the oncoming millennium anniversary. The extent of the then both desk and field research, their progress, reflected first and foremost in subsequent monographs of the prehistory of Wielkopolska and Polish territories by Kostrzewski,¹⁷ were clearly impressive. It is not our intention here to discuss these in detail, for the breadth of these issues deserves much greater commentary than only a modest outline. Neither is it our desire to discuss excavations conducted at the Lusatian culture settlement in Biskupin, of fundamental importance for the Polish prehistoric archaeology, which in themselves constitute a subject deserving a separate study. Moreover, this has already been the subject of vast interest on the part of many distinguished researchers, also due to anniversary celebrations.¹⁸

Rather, in this place we shall focus on two issues, in our view key ones among the broad spectrum of related questions. The picture of the late Bronze and Early Iron Ages that Józef Kostrzewski presented was once a truly considerable achievement, though in the context of subsequent studies continued already after his passing, it has become clearly less relevant. Despite the almost common awareness of this fact among archaeologists engaged in this particular aspect of prehistory, the revisiting of Professor Kostrzewski's findings has, it has transpired, been a barrier impossible to hurdle. A few, after all highly promising attempts in this direction, have finished their course back in the earlier propositions of Kostrzewski. In this regard, the strength of tradition has always won over the need for innovation. In what follows, we shall examine the issues of periodisation and chronology of the Bronze Age, as well as taxonomy in respect to the Lusatian culture.

Chronology and periodisation of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages on Polish lands. The prevailing, or it could be said still practiced system of periodisation of the Bronze Age for Polish territories was already proposed by Józef Kostrzewski in 1914, in the first edition of *Wielkopolska w czasach przedhistorycznych* [Wielkopolska in Prehistory]. This study, as indeed subsequent syntheses, merely contains laconic information on the division of this period in prehistory into five periods, modelled on the scheme of Montelius, although the name of the Swedish archaeologist is not always given.¹⁹

It is only in the last edition of *Pradzieje Polski* [The Prehistory of Poland], (together with W. Chmielewski and J. Jażdżewski) that a more comprehensive commentary on the application of this system of periodisation can in fact be found.²⁰ In

¹⁷ Kostrzewski 1914, 24–111; 1923, 41–147; 1939–1948, 195–300; 1949, 67–168; 1955, 63–186; 1965, 119–241.

¹⁸ Piotrowska 2004; Grossman, Piotrowski (eds) 2005. See also earlier publications such as Piotrowski 1991.

¹⁹ Kostrzewski 1914, 24; 1923, 41; 1939–1948, 195; 1949, 68; 1955, 64.

²⁰ Kostrzewski, Chmielewski, Jażdżewski 1965, 120–122.

turn, the early Iron Age, whose chronological division of indigenous cultural processes was correlated with the southern centres of the Hallstatt and La Tène proto-civilisation, was initially viewed as one indivisible whole.²¹ In subsequent accounts the Hallstatt sequence was divided according to the model established by Reinecke into HaC and HaD,²² while the La Tène period (in fact-Pre-Roman Iron Age) on the basis of commonly agreed absolute dating was divided into early, middle and late. While the justification of a two-stage division of the Hallstatt Period (C and D) did not usually cause much controversy – though it is actually valid only and yet not always, in the western zone – the later sequence of the Pre-Roman period was thoroughly reassessed in the 1970s.²³ Alas, a similar attempt has not been undertaken in the context of its older part, leaving the so-called older Pre-Roman period as an undivided section.

It is appropriate at this point to examine the division of the Bronze Age according to Montelius, who in Kostrzewski's view represented the best model for unifying the scheme of periodisation in Polish territories.²⁴ The postulates pointing to its inadequacy in respect to materials discovered in the Oder and Vistula basin appeared just after Kostrzewski's passing, which ought to be seen as rather symptomatic. The criticism formulated at the time that the Montelius system was constructed on the basis of a typological analysis of bronze goods from the Nordic circle, which apart from the Pomeranian area is hardly encountered in Poland. It ought to be noted, however, that Józef Kostrzewski in the course of numerous surveys of sources from Polish lands in fact redefined the above mentioned five periods of the Bronze Age.

The possible lack of usefulness of this periodisation, especially in respect to the later Bronze Age, can be seen in an entirely different matter. The schematic, almost mechanical division of periods into equal 200-year sections, packed with pottery from vast urnfield cemeteries, often boasting even several thousand graves, and bronze goods, mainly from deposits and thus difficult to synchronise with pottery, resulted in the widely known 'ineffectiveness of chronology', symbolised by such static descriptions as period III–IV (also III/IV) or most often periods IV–V (also IV/V) of the Bronze Age.

Such lengthy, no doubt apparently so, chronological sequences together with a richness of finds, particularly ceramic, created a somewhat distorted image of the late Bronze Age as a period of great unchanging stabilisation or perhaps stagnation, thus making it a period of little attraction for research. Few constructive attempts at overcoming this state of affairs in the form of local periodisations, produced for

²¹ Kostrzewski 1914, 71; 1923, 91–92.

²² Kostrzewski 1939–1948, 254; 1949, 123; 1955, 128; Kostrzewski, Chmielewski, Jazdzewski 1965, 192.

²³ Wołagiewicz 1979, 34–39, Fig. 1.

²⁴ Kostrzewski, Chmielewski, Jazdzewski 1965, 120.

middle Silesia and the cemetery complex in Kietrz, became lost in the sea of Monteliusian periods, in the course of continual references and attempts at concordance. A similar fate befell attempts at dating materials from the western lands of Poland according to the southern system of P. Reinecke (Pre-Lusatian culture according to Marek Gedl).

The question arises therefore whether there is a way out of this impasse? Decidedly yes is the answer, though there is no need today to create a new scheme of periodisation. Of far greater importance would appear to be making up for lost time as it were, of work yet to be done in exploiting dating with the use of physico-chemical (C^{14}) and dendro-chronological methods. It is with embarrassment that we note how little in this matter has changed since the time of Kostrzewski's passing, especially when compared with the research achievements of fellow scholars in other periods of prehistory. The creation therefore of an absolute dating framework would make easier and facilitate the construction of new, local schemes of periodisation.

Taxonomy of The Lusatian Culture. It is difficult to overestimate the contribution of Professor Józef Kostrzewski when it comes to the construction of the fundamentals of contemporary Polish archaeology, liberated from the straitjacket of the 19th-century collectionism. Kostrzewski completed the first full framework of prehistory, introduced to methodology the historical typology of Montelius and finally, identified many cultural units, recognised in archaeology up to this very day. To take but as an example the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, Józef Kostrzewski identified and characterised the Grobia-Śmiardowo culture²⁵ (initially defined as the Grobia II group/culture²⁶ and Grobia I group/culture,²⁷ which he subsequently re-named to the so-called Lubusz group of the Únětice culture),²⁸ Iwno culture,²⁹ Trzciniec culture,³⁰ or finally Pre-Lusatian culture,³¹ presently known increasingly as the Silesia-Wielkopolska Tumulus culture. Among these only the status of the Grobia-Śmiardowo culture would appear to be threatened, mainly because of the delayed publication of materials from the cemetery complexes in Śmiardowo Krajeńskie (Złotowo County, Wielkopolska Province) and Skrzatusz (Piła County, Wielkopolska Province), which has shed new light on the issue of the classifications of cultures in the early Bronze Age of north-west Poland.³²

²⁵ Kostrzewski, Chmielewski, Jażdżewski 1965, 129–133.

²⁶ Kostrzewski 1939–1948, 201; 1949, 75.

²⁷ Kostrzewski 1949, 74.

²⁸ Kostrzewski, Chmielewski, Jażdżewski 1965, 127.

²⁹ Kostrzewski 1935.

³⁰ Kostrzewski 1930, 26.

³¹ Kostrzewski 1925, 176.

³² Schäfer 1987; 1991; Bokinić, Czebreszuk 1993.

Yet, in the scholarly work of Józef Kostrzewski it was the issue of the Lusatian culture that occupied a special place and even took priority, particularly since the onset of excavation at the Biskupin settlement. The taxonomic and historical dimension of the Lusatian culture was subordinate and today it could be said emphatically – obscured by the concept of connecting its bearers with Proto-Slav communities. The idea of such an ethnic interpretation of materials from the Late Bronze and Early Iron urnfield cemetery complexes of the Odra and Vistula basin arose most likely between 1914 and 1923, between the first and the second edition of Kostrzewski's study, *Wielkopolska w czasach przedhistorycznych* [Wielkopolska in prehistory].

The neo-autochthonous theory of identification of the creators of the Lusatian culture with Proto-Slavs was not, however, an original concept on the part of the Poznań scholar. Before him, at the beginning of the 20th-century, such a thesis was already advanced by Czech scholars (J.V. Pič, L. Niederle, I.L. Červinka).³³ An obvious role in its formation was played by the general political situation after the First World War, instability of borders of the reborn Polish state, as well as the personal experience of Józef Kostrzewski brought out of Kossinna's lectures and contact with the nationalistic school of German prehistory. The crystallisation of the idea of the Proto-Slav nature of the Lusatian culture falls on the period of his stormy polemics with Bolko von Richthofen, which began the second edition of his monograph on the prehistory of Wielkopolska.³⁴

The discovery and beginning of excavations at the Biskupin fortified settlement was a breakthrough, giving Kostrzewski the means for making material the myth of the Proto-Slavs, enclosed in a millennium framework of the existence of the Lusatian culture on a very vast area, strongly differentiated in terms of cultures. Subsequent syntheses established the picture of this cultural group, packed into the artificial framework of Montelius periodisation, cast out from the widespread Urnfield culture, contemporary to it, to whom it no doubt belonged.³⁵

Notwithstanding clearly visible stylistic differences of archaeological record, a different rhythm of change in culture and economy, as well as differentiated orientations of local and long-distance exchange contacts, Kostrzewski endeavoured to preserve the appearances of a monolithic character of the Lusatian culture, by way of identifying a number of regional groups, whose criteria of determination were never explicitly defined, as aptly put by Bogusław Gediga.³⁶ It is worth noting also that the vision of the genesis of this group was strictly subordinated to the concept of Proto-Slavs, albeit the idea was finally modified by Józef Kostrzewski (participation of the Trzciniec culture).

³³ Piotrowska 1997–1998, 259; 2004, 101.

³⁴ Rohrer 2004.

³⁵ Kostrzewski 1961, 96.

³⁶ Gediga 2005, 44.

Kostrzewski bequeathed the above model of the Lusatian culture, with all its positive and negative implications, for subsequent generations of scholars. It is with satisfaction that we note the issue of Late Bronze Age groups' ethnic identification, which was beyond the research possibilities of prehistoric archaeology, has become almost entirely abandoned.³⁷ The taxonomic construct, however, a legacy of thinking in ethnic categories, has remained, and so far scholars have been unable to dispose of it. In this regard, attempts at change were undertaken during the conference organised in Kraków in 1980 – *Zróżnicowanie wewnętrzne kultury łużyckiej* [Internal Differentiation of the Lusatian culture]. Unfortunately, the highly interesting considerations of Bogusław Gediga and Jan Dąbrowski's proposition of a new taxonomy have not been seen a continuation in scholarly debate.

At present, archaeologists appear to have come to terms with the perspective of continuing the vision of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age that Józef Kostrzewski advanced. On the odd occasion there appear attempts at introducing cosmetic changes. In this context, Gediga not without reason uses the term 'the Lusatian urnfields', accentuating in this way the connection of the Lusatian culture to a widespread cultural circle, one hitherto strongly negated by Józef Kostrzewski. Further, Sylwester Czopek uses the term 'the Tarnobrzeg culture,' which – despite being absolutely justified – is perhaps the most radical move, for even in the proposition of Jan Dąbrowski 30 years ago, there was no argument for removing the adjective 'Lusatian'.

CONCLUSIONS

The achievements of the Poznań School of Archaeology cannot be overestimated. They are the permanent part of the achievements of the Polish, and first and foremost of the Poznań and Wielkopolska archaeology. Yet, time that has passed since Józef Kostrzewski's death as well as advances in archaeological research, make us reflect particularly on the findings regarding the issue of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, which are still valid in the subject literature, despite having originated almost a century ago. The most urgent issue, is the change of periodisation and dating of the Bronze Age, most of all a departure from the fossilised Montelius scheme, making widespread the natural sciences methods of determining absolute chronology, which hitherto has rarely been used. Further, there is a strong need for a change in research approach in respect to the taxonomic issues related to the identification of the so called Lusatian culture which should be seen rather as a complex of autonomous cultural zones such as the Odra region, interrelated by means of similar funerary rites, similarities in certain traits of pottery style, as well as the use of a similar range of bronze items.

³⁷ Dąbrowski 2000, 161; Gediga 2000, 181.

A reflection on the general balance of research on the Bronze and Early Iron Ages should be accompanied by an examination of the research results of archaeologists studying neighbouring chronological periods across the 40 years that have passed since Professor Kostrzewski's death. Alas, the above-mentioned studies are less imposing when compared to fellow scholars engaged in the general issue of the Neolithic period, who during this time have undergone the so-called 'processual' revolution, exploited the riches of radiocarbon dating, were able to construct – despite a significantly more humble source base – a climate of a singular research ferment. All of the preceding, despite real and incontestable achievements, proved to be missing in research on the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. It was clearly, though, a time that was not lost,³⁸ for, unlike in case of investigations of the younger period of prehistory, the general problem of the ethnogenesis of Slavs has been dropped as well as Kossinna's archaic concepts of identifying cultures and even single archaeological sources with ethnic groups known from obscure writings of ancient chroniclers. In this particular case important changes have taken place – the dusk of tradition has been illuminated by the limelight of modern thinking.

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³⁸ Gediga 2000.

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