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Ethnicity in Archaeological Studies, based on a Case Study of East Pomerania during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (1100–400 BC)

The study of ethnicity is an exceptionally controversial subject in current archaeological investigations. This issue has also frequently appeared in Polish prehistoric literature from the very beginning of archaeology till the present. The problem is that archaeology in Poland is still under strong influence from a conservative, culture-historical paradigm. This methodological approach leads to the desire to make simple connections between material remains, discovered by archaeologists, with specific categories of ethnicity. If we add to this various efforts to use archaeology in the legitimation of modern ethnic and national claims, we can imagine how complicated these sorts of studies can become.

The main aim of this paper is to show the history of investigations set to define the ethnic character of the people who inhabited Polish lands in prehistory. The author will focus especially on the area of East Pomerania during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age due to the live discussions among scholars concerning the ethnic origin of societies from that area. At the end of this article a new perspective in research into ethnicity will be outlined with special attention to the need for an interdisciplinary approach to this topic.

Key words: ethnicity, archaeology, methodology, East Pomerania, prehistory

Discussions about race and ethnicity have been one of the most important aspects of archaeological research from the beginning of archaeology as an academic subject. Archaeologists working on prehistory, but also later eras with available written sources, have been trying to get to know the makers of material remnants discovered during excavations. The conception of race and ethnicity has been changing since the nineteenth century, along with the connected notions of culture, tribe and nation (Jones 1997: 1–14; 2012: 635). It was also nineteenth century archaeology that, alongside history, linguistics and ethnology, was considered

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the subject that would shape German, Slavic and Romanesque national identity (Kmieciński 2011: 39–40; Mamzer, Ostoja-Zagórski 2007: 136). In the twentieth century research concerning these matters became especially susceptible to political influence and even caused archaeology to be elevated to a branch of academic research also useful in the present. On the other hand this led to instrumental use of prehistoric research, or even conducting research in a manner having little in common with “bona fide” academic enquiry. These activities were used, for example, to prove the “affiliation” of a given territory with a specific nation, like in the case of German pro-Nazi scientists before and during The Second World War (Wiwjorra 1996, 173–179; Szczepański 2009: 56–59; Marciniak 2012: 35–36). It is unsurprising then that research concerning ethnicity and race is controversial and causes many disputes and arguments to the present day, both in the archaeological profession and other branches that share a common field.

The aim of this article is to feature comments to discussions about the question of the ethnic origin of prehistoric societies, with special attention to Eastern Pomerania at the end of the Bronze Age and beginning of the Early Iron Age. In accordance with a comparative chronology of Oscar Montelius for Northern Europe, the discussed period is located in the IVth and Vth Bronze Age period and Hallstatt C to D periods according to the chronology for the Hallstatt cultural zone (Czopek 1992: 86, tabl. 3; Dąbrowski 2009: 17, tabl. 1). In other words the strict dating for the discussed period is 1100–400 BC (Trachsel 2004: 145–152). The territorial range of the discussed matter is Eastern Pomerania with a well distinguished settlement macro region, enclosed from the north by the Baltic Sea, from west by the proglacial stream valley of the lower bank of Łeba, from the south by the northern range of Bory Tucholskie (local name for large coniferous forest) and from the east by the ridge of Elbląg Upland (Łuka 1983: 7–8).

From an archaeological perspective, a very intensive settlement and cultural transition period took place in the mentioned area mentioned above. At the end of the Bronze Age in Eastern Pomerania there was a local people of Lusatian Culture, also known as the Kashubian Group or East-Pomeranian Group (Dąbrowski 1979: 74; Gedl 1980: 132–133). During HaC new elements appeared, observed in the archeological material, namely a new manner of burials (flat burials instead of barrows) and new shapes of urns (house urns and vessels with face elements, Malinowski 1990a: 332–333). Further changes in the burial rite, seen in the material from HaD period, has caused archaeologists to single out a new cultural unit, variously named in previous literature as Pomeranian, East-Pomeranian, Wejherowsko-Krotoszyńska, Face Urn or Cist Grave (Culture), mainly on the basis of sepulchral materials (Łuka 1979: 147). A classic phase of this culture was in the HaD, when the main determinant appeared – a face urn. This shape of vessel is acknowledged to be one of the most original phenomena in Polish prehistory. The disappearance of Pomeranian Culture took place in the early La Tene Period and is an object of many disputes among archaeologists (Dąbrowska, Woźniak 2005: 94; Dziągiewlewski 2010: 173–196). To conclude this archaeological outline,

it is worth mentioning the Wielkowiejska Group (or phase), a transitional period between Lusatian and Pomeranian Culture that was considered by some to be a declining phase of Kashubian Group, for others the earliest phase of Pomeranian Culture (Fudziński, Fudziński, Krzysiak, Cymek, Różnowski 2007: 47–50). Without getting into further details, it is worth noting that the concept of the Wielkowiejska Group, as will be shown below, has been used in the discussion of the ethnic origin of East Pomeranian societies.

The history and question of the “culture-historical” approach to research on the ethnicity of Eastern Pomerania at the end of the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age

The discussion about the ethnic origins of the inhabitants of the eastern part of Pomerania began before the Second World War. A political divide in this discussion was visible and was a natural consequence of the times. Part of the studied region fell under the jurisdiction of the German Reich and Free City of Danzig following the First World War. The central area between the Reich and Gdańsk, that became a part of the modern Poland which was established after 123 years without sovereignty, was referred to by Germans as the Polish or Danzig “corridor”. This unfortunate, from the point of view of the Germans, geographic circumstance led to a situation where German academics tried to prove the “pregermanity” of the area, simultaneously contesting Poland’s right to hold it. The first German researcher that connected Pomeranian Culture with German tribes was Kurt Tackenberg, but the view was established by Ernst Petersen – author of the first monograph of Pomeranian Culture (Kostrzewski 1968: 7; Boom 1980: 231–232). The title alone leaves no doubt as to the attitude of the author towards the discussed problem (Petersen 1929). It was accurately summed up by Mirosława Andrzejowska: “singled out by Petersen, the Wielkowiejska group was to become a “cultural vanguard of the Germanic element” (after: Malinowski 2007: 13).

Worth noting here is that German archaeologists, including Petersen, were under strong influence from Gustaf Kossinna – a German linguist and archeologist who developed and used the method of settlement archaeology – *Siedlung-sarchäologie*, described by some of the Polish researchers as an ethnic method (Lech 2000: 160). Kossinna believed that it is possible to trace continuity between modern ethnic groups and prehistoric societies on the basis of material culture. According to his views it was possible not only to identify prehistoric races on the basis of objects, but also to describe relations that existed between them over the course of centuries (Jones 2012: 637–638). A special affirmation for Germanic tribes was characteristic for Kossinna, describing them as singular in the historic process. This view elevated archaeology to a “national” discipline in contemporary Germany (Wiwjorra 1996: 173–175). Taking into account the situation in

the country after the First World War, it was only to be expected that archaeology would become an instrument in the hands of German leaders, seeking a scientific basis for arguments questioning contemporary borders with Poland. Especially interesting for them was the area of Upper Silesia and East Pomerania that were, in the view of Kossinna, the cradle of Germanic culture (Wiwjorra 1996: 173–175). This idea was met with an answer from Polish archaeologists, with Józef Kostrzewski being the most influential among them. Kostrzewski, during his archaeological studies in Berlin, under the tutelage of Kossina, exhaustively got to know his teacher's concepts of settlement archaeology and ethnic interpretation of archaeological culture thus very quickly standing in opposition to the German archaeologist, based on the same premises as his opponent (Kurnatowska 1985: 7–11; Marciniak 2012: 34). The Polish archaeologist persistently resisted, on the academic field, ascribing Pomeranian Culture to early Germanic societies, or even specific tribes like the Bastarns (Kostrzewski 1968: 7). Nevertheless, in the times of Nazi domination in Germany, and generous funding for historians seeking to prove the “pragermanic” origin of Polish territories, it was difficult to count on any form of dialogue or academic debate.

It would be convenient to stop here for a while and look at the research paradigm commonly known as culture-historical archaeology, with both Kostrzewski and Kossinna as leading representatives of this strand. This paradigm is one of the most important approaches in archaeology and definitely one of the most vital ones, especially in continental Europe. As the name suggests, culture-historical archaeology took the history of culture as its main object of research. The notion of culture, more specifically archaeological culture, is fundamental to the described paradigm. Culture was understood as various organized categories of material objects, especially flint, pottery and metal artifacts, but also burial sites and settlements. Those objects were joined by archaeologists into coherent entities, characterized by determined borders, both in time and space. These units were referred to as archaeological cultures (Marciniak 2012: 33–34). It was envisioned that they were the material remains of specific societies, whose past was somewhat “enchanted” in those materials as a “national spirit”. This past however could be discovered by archaeological methods. All of this converged with the confidence of homogeneity of material culture, being considered a proof of the singular ethnic origin of societies identified with a given archaeological culture. This may be considered fundamental to the culture-historical approach (Mamzer, Ostoja-Zagórski 2007: 136–137; Mamzer 2012: 629–630). Archaeological cultures, in the intellection of culture-historical archaeologists, were permeated by diffusion – the spreading of elements of a given culture to the areas previously devoid of them, with high density of those elements meaning even physical migration of the “transmitter” to the new ground (Mamzer, Ostoja-Zagórski 2007: 137).

This was a way of establishing the opinion that the particular meaning of an archaeological source, it being a carrier of truth, whose objective value was an obvious and undisputed fact for culture-historical archaeologists. This approach

led to the beginning of “the myth of archaeological source” (Minta-Tworzowska 2012: 139–140). What is important and underlies A. Marciniak is that the assumptions of this paradigm are often unconscious to most of the researchers that practice it and that they treat it as the only and infallible form of archaeology (Marciniak 2012: 39). It is visible especially in present-day Polish archaeology of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, also in regard to research concerning Eastern Pomerania.

While still remaining focused on the problem of the culture-historical approach, it is worth noting that the Second World War influenced further studies in the study of ethnicity. In the first place, post war research moved away from connecting archaeological cultures directly with given ethnic groups, trying to free the concept from the ideological baggage gathered because of German archaeologists supporting Nazi ideology. It was only a cosmetic change though, because the paradigm and approach of acknowledging homogeneity of human groups identified with given archaeological cultures, remained the same (Olsen, Kobylński 1991: 9; Jones 2012: 641). Interestingly, in the case of Pomeranian studies, even after the war the dispute about ethnicity remained unchanged, though connecting Pomeranian Culture with Germanic tribes was more frequently questioned, even by German archaeologists (Kostrzewski 1968: 7, 13–14).

In the meantime, during the nineteen-sixties in the Anglo-Saxon world, the “New Archaeology” movement began to emerge, that became the most significant and characteristic symptom of Processual Archaeology. It was a paradigm born of disappointment with foregoing the achievements of “traditional” archaeology (Jones 2012: 642). Descriptive culture-historical archaeology was dependent on constantly gathering artifacts to discover a more complete picture of past eras. It is acting as an objective science, based on the assumption that basic dogmas were out of question, which led the disappointed to the beginning of a new approach. This new concept treated culture as a system, consisting of various subsystems, existing within it and taking adaptive functions. In accordance to the most basic premises of New Archaeology, material remains should be treated more as a product of various processes, which took place in the past, and not as a simple reflection of historical facts, as is the case with the culture-historical approach (Jones 2012: 642, Marciniak 2012: 39).

Such a radical turn yielded a drastic slippage of interest in the ethnic questions among those of the researchers that recognized the predominance of New Archaeology. Connecting archaeological cultures with ethnic units was perceived as a form of resistance against modern archaeology and in general – against modern science – that the new paradigm was to come to represent (Olsen, Kobylński 1991: 10). In the case of Eastern Pomerania, it is worth remembering the work of Janusz Ostoja-Zagórski, about demography, settlement and economy in the Hallstatt Period (Ostoj-Zagórski 1982). A very strong processual influence is seen here, with ethnic cases completely omitted. This work is an exception, because on the Polish archaeological ground, New Archaeology – or more widely, processual

archeology did not find broader acceptance, as was also characteristic of other countries in continental Europe (Mamzer, Ostoja-Zagórski 2007: 141). Polish archaeology was still under the influence of the culture-historical school, especially the branch dealing with the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. There is no need to concentrate on this matter, because it was not once discussed in the literature (Mierzwiński 2000: 209–216; Mamzer, Ostoja-Zagórski 2007: 143–146; Gediga 2010: 11–13). This state, of course, determined discussions about the ethnicity of prehistoric societies living in the area of Eastern Pomerania, and other Polish lands in the period focused on this article.

Regardless of the aforementioned attempts to bereave the concept of “archaeological culture”, of the ideological ballast, tied with directly connecting cultural units with ethnic components, an intensive study was conducted just after the Second World War with the aim of proving Praslavity of Polish lands and Slavic ethnic affiliation of the societies identified with Lusatian and Pomeranian Culture. The subject was directly connected with the question of Slavic ethnogenesis, beginning a perennial and fierce argument between proponents of autochthonic and allochthonic conceptions of Slavic origin in the Polish lands. The argument lasts to the present day, but deals with later eras, like the Roman Influence Period and the Early Middle Ages, the substance still remained the same (Gediga 2000: 181). Studies carried out just after the war, those focused on Lusatian and Pomeranian Culture, were a direct continuation of pre-war arguments with German academics. All of those discussions were still based on the culture-historical paradigm, and as Bogusław Gediga stated it, regarding post-war Polish research: “accepted by the researchers methodological assumptions put the taken direction to the wall and leave no wiggle room for further discussions” (after: Gediga 2000: 181). This statement may be completed by a quotation of Tadeusz Malinowski, from his declamation, opening the 1989 symposium *The Problems of the Lusatian Culture in Pomerania (Problemy kultury łużyckiej na Pomorzu)*:

The program of our symposium does not envision discussion about ethnicity of Lusatian Culture in the Pomerania. It is not an omission, but confidence that representatives of various ideas on this matter, ran out of argumentative ammunition and dug in on their positions (after: Malinowski 1990b: 18)

This quotation fully demonstrates the infertility of dispute over ethnicity in the Early Iron Age. The argument was mainly between supporters of the Praslavity and Pragermanity of the aforementioned archaeological cultures on the territory of modern Poland (Boom 1980: 269–270), but there were also views trying to establish the role of other tribes like Balts in the regions east from the Lower Vistula (Labuda 1979: 149–168). The probability of physical Etrurian presence in the Eastern Pomerania was also considered (Szafrński 1990: 253–272), because of relative similarities between Etrurian face and house urns to those from Pomeranian Culture. It is worth noting here that this type of vessels became present also

in the other parts of Middle and Northern Europe (Sabatini 2007: 22, 24, fig. 4, 6; Kneisel 2012: 142, Abb. 61).

The situation remains the same to this day. The latest stage of this argument was the publication of a monograph by Chłapowo (Puck county) regarding a burial site belonging to the Wielkowiejska Phase (Pietrzak, Podgórski 2005). It was suggested there that the “carriers” of the Wielkowiejska Group were ethnically foreign. The specific ethnic group was not indicated, but they were expressly identified by Tadeusz Malinowski with Germanic tribes, and quickly criticized by him for “inconsiderately bringing back old nationalistic German theories” (Malinowski 2007: 13). He also addressed other archaeologists, like Wojciech Nowakowski for example, who were also prone to equate those “carriers” of Pomeranian Culture with Germanic substrate (Nowakowski 1996: 191; Malinowski 1999: 5–25; 2007: 13). Malinowski is, on the other hand, one of the most well-known supporters of connecting Pomeranian Culture with Praslavs, that not once did he express in any of his publications, being in a way a continuator of concepts introduced by Józef Kostrzewski (Boom 2005: 19–20). This archaeologist devoted much of his work to trying to connect makers of artifacts, like face urns, with specific ancient tribes. In his view the makers were undoubtedly of Praslavian origin, but he referred only to the pottery found in Polish territory. In his view, this type of vessel was made in cultures with various ethnical substrates. Those urns were diffused in Europe due to long distance trade, diffusion of ideas or some sort of convergence, undetermined by the ethnic character of the maker (Malinowski 1999: 5–25; 2010: 25–49).

To sum up this part – the information presented above quite clearly shows that the culture-historical paradigm is still very strong in the context of discussing past societies of Eastern Pomerania from the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Especially unsettling is the enclosed character of the research that takes into consideration only archaeological evidence, and occasionally historical, which are in the context of such a distant time highly dubious. A “new opening” is necessary, as well as redefinition of certain concepts, to push research further.

New views on ethnicity and the question of interdisciplinary research

In the modern Polish literature, an increasing amount of archaeologists state that the question of the ethnic origin of ancient tribes, identified with archaeological cultures, or in a wider context, the subject of ethnogenetical origin in the range of disciplines dealing with the social past, is becoming a priority (Tabaczyński 2012: 657). The same postulates also come from foreign countries (Jones 1997: sx).

As it currently stands there is no dominant approach in Poland towards researching the ethnicity of past societies. Some archaeologists support the view that it is impossible to trace the relationship between modern nations and hypo-

thetical counterparts from prehistory. They even point to the malignancy of conducting such studies (Mamzer 1999: 169–201; 2012: 627–634). On the other side are archaeologists still paying homage to “traditional archaeology”, based mainly on material remains, like inter alia Tadeusz Malinowski. But, as was mentioned, the subject was moved toward the times of the Roman Influence Period and Early Middle Ages (Gediga 2000: 181). The outcome of this discussion on the later ages was, inter alia, the conference *Archaeology on the early days of Slavs (Archeologia o początkach Słowian)* (Kaczanowski, Parczewski 2005). Unfortunately, during this symposium the question of the ethnic character of archaeological cultures older than those of the Roman Period was omitted. The conference itself was controversial because it was quite clearly dominated by the allochthonical concepts of Slavic origin (Malinowski 2009: 283–294).

Still, there is a group of archaeologists representing a much more balanced stance, focused on an interdisciplinarity and more complete approach, at the same time dissenting from the culture-archaeological school (Tabaczyński 2012: 657–672). A Polish publication in English is worth noting here, namely *Archaeologia Polona*, dedicated to the question of ethnicity, with interdisciplinary publications from, for example, physical anthropologists (AP 1991). Releasing this publication was a very important step in conceptualizing an approach towards ethnicity in Polish archaeology. A summation of Helga van den Boom addresses the question directly of the ethnical character of Pomeranian Culture (Boom 2005: 19–25).

These are only a few examples of works from the last two decades that address prehistoric ethnicity. A strong dissent from the past scheme of the culture-historical school is clearly visible. Indeed, the necessity of interdisciplinary studies is widely recognized (Tabaczyński 2012: 667–669). One of the most useful areas, that is downright predestined to work with archaeology in researching the discussed problems, is linguistics. There are of course various problems in this collaboration, since in linguistics, just like in archaeology or history, there are disagreements. This was pointed out by a historian, Gerard Labuda, during the conference *Problems of Pomeranian Culture (Problemy kultury pomorskiej)* (Labuda 1979: 149). Even linguists themselves have some reservations when it comes to discovering ethnic origins by researching language (Cyngot 2012: 794). On the Polish academic field there are of course different approaches towards dealing with past languages, like that of Hanna Popowska-Tabor who, as she herself pointed out, was only able to refer to the period just before the great Slavic tribes movement during the first millennium AD. Zbigniew Gołąb on the other hand delved much deeper into past in his research (Popowska-Tabor 2005: 31–32). Popowska-Tabor stands firmly by the allochthonistic concept of Slavs appearing in Polish territory in the sixth century AD. There is also another linguistic view that locates the Praslavic language in the river basin of the Vistula (maybe also Odra) and adjacent territories to the east – Wołyń, Podole – and western Kiev territories (Babik 2012: 844–846). This view stands in direct opposition to allochthonistic concept.

It is worth mentioning the theory of so called communicative communities at this stage, that was to become a bridge between historians and linguists, yet in the view of many archaeologists, this bridge may as well lead to archaeology instead of history (Parczewski 2000: 207–213; Tabaczyński 2012: 661–664). The communities mentioned were to be the counterparts of archaeological cultures, but without being homogeneous units directly connected with ethnicity. This flexible approach was adopted to more realistically mimic the past and convey its dynamic nature. A departure from treating the term “ethnic identity” as linked with the aspects of “tribe”, “culture” and “race” led to a focus on the means of communication of the groups researched. A very important aspect needs to be underlined here, that both means of communication are considered here, linguistic and nonlinguistic; “Every linguistic community is a communicative community, but not every communicative community is a linguistic community” (after: Parczewski 2000: 208). It is very tempting to implement the theory of communicative communities in East Pomeranian prehistory research of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. In light of foregoing archaeological conservatism, the new approach would give a much needed fresh draught and a good counterbalance to present dogmas rooted in the culture-historical school. This would be a very welcome change, since there has been a lot of sepulchral material gathered. Indeed, some research following the communicative communities approach has already been carried out, like Serena Sabatini’s paper (Sabatini 2007) dealing with the spreading of house urns in Middle and Northern Europe. This spreading was identified by Sabatini as a sign of existing cultural koine common to a certain degree, for many groups scattered in the contemporary Europe.

Physical anthropology is another branch that may bring a substantial contribution to answering the questions about ethnicity of Eastern Pomerania in the discussed period. The most promising studies are those of Janusz Piontek and his associates, dealing with Slavic ethnogenesis and focusing on late antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Piontek was also referring to societies equated with Lusatian and Pomeranian Cultures (Piontek 2006: 161–189; Piontek, Iwanek, Segeda 2008; Piontek, Iwanek 2010: 59–72). Anthropological research carried out into the remains of both populations proved that they were similar in a biological sense (Piontek, Iwanek 2010: 64–65). Those studies ratify conclusions arrived at by archaeologists on the basis of materials from Eastern Pomerania; a cradle of Pomeranian Culture (Fudziński, Fudziński, Krzysiak, Cymek, Różnowski 2007: 47–59). This outcome leave no doubt, but many more controversies, at least for representatives of allochthonical theory, and may produce surprising results, proving a close biological relativity between Lusatian-Pomeranian, Wielbark and Chernyachov cultures as well as medieval Slavic populations (Piontek, Iwanek 2010: 66). These results directly contradict the theory of Slavic allochthonism in Poland. It is even more surprising that they were never widely answered in archaeological literature, a fact not once underlined by Janusz Piontek (Piontek 2006: 180; Piontek, Iwanek, Segeda 2008: 80; Piontek, Iwanek 2010: 66–70). Moreover the author condemns

the “positivistic” approach of Polish archaeologists that base their assumptions regarding the complicated process of ethnogenesis on the “variability in time and space of material cultural products” (Piontek 2006: 162). This statement is an example of differences in reception of a given subject between archaeologists and biologists.

In the case of physical anthropological research of Eastern Pomerania, there are two aspects that need to be underlined. The first is that unfortunately none of the osseous material that Janusz Piontek based his work on came from Eastern Pomerania. The second, also negative, is that even though physical anthropologists and archaeologists often work closely together, the first are often used in an instrumental way. Their contribution is often curbed to help in exploration of a grave, handling a bone inventory, assessing sex and age of discovered skeletal remains and making additional notes about pathological changes (Kozłowski, Sołtysiak 2012: 952). This curb becomes flagrant in the context of the usefulness of the research delivered by J. Piontek. The only logical solution is to focus on previous anthropological results and cooperate on a wider scale with physical anthropologists on equal terms.

While still remaining on the subject of the biology of the prehistoric population, research on the historical gene distribution should be at least briefly discussed (Witas 2009: 32–37; 2012: 1008–1017; Jones 2012: 648–649; Tabaczyński 2012: 658–659). On the one hand these studies caused reasonable enthusiasm among archaeologists. On the other, numerous controversies appeared, being the result of connecting given tribes “seen” during the studies on the diffusion of genes with specific archaeological cultures. It was nonetheless a return to the culture-historical paradigm with a basic perception of ethnicity (Mirza, Dungworth 1995: 345–354; Pluciennik 1996: 13–14). Nevertheless it seems like the potential of genetic studies is difficult to overestimate. What is more, foregoing results should be a stimulus to a “new opening” in research of ethnicity, especially because of surprising results such as those described above. Unfortunately, it seems like also in this case, most of the archaeological profession ignores new evidence coming from interdisciplinary sources (Piontek 2006: 162; Witas 2012: 1014–1015).

Leaving considering the validity of interpreting results of studies on the genes, it is a pity that there were no studies of this kind for Eastern Pomerania. The subject is especially difficult because of technical problems that may stem from the exclusive use of cremation in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in Eastern Pomerania (Leciejewicz 2005: 248; Witas 2012: 1010). Maybe refining the methods and technology available for geneticists will help in overcoming such obstacles.

Described the beginnings of New Archaeology in the previous section, and generally speaking of the appearance of processual archaeology, did not cause an absolute exclusion of ethnicity in the latter works, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. With the passing years a succession of new views, describing ethnicity, race and culture appeared, introducing them from an absolutely different perspective. The new approach was aided by sociology and cultural anthropology that under-

went redefinition of concepts of relations between culture and group identity, as well as a process of setting cultural borders, at the same time that archaeology did (Jones 2012: 644–645). According to the field research done by ethnographers on the modern primitive tribes it was proven that:

There is no connection between cultural, linguistic and political borders. What is more, ethnic borders, underlined in everyday life, were often not identified on the basis of impartial abruptions in language, culture, system or territory. Ethnic borders were instead a product of interaction between groups, underlining the differences between them (after: Jones 2012: 644–645)

The quotation above shows that ethnicity was, among the groups researched, a much more flexible idea. The lack of clear, direct borders of race, language and culture was especially underlined; those were defined instead as an effect of the quoted social interactions. The ethnic identity and related boundaries should be, in the view of some researchers, described as an effect of social processes, relying on opposition; “familiar” and “unfamiliar”. This was concluded on the basis of selective differences in language and culture (Jones 2012: 644–645). It is irrefutable that ethnic analogies prove how shallow, or even misguided, interpretations proposed by archaeologists that aim to explain the social processes of past societies may be, including those regarding self-identification (Tabaczyński 2012: 665–667). On the Polish ground, ethnographical analogies were used by, inter alia, Tadeusz Malinowski in his work about the burial rites of Pomeranian Culture (Malinowski 1969). Since it was published many years ago, it is difficult to treat it as an up to date work. There are no direct references to ethnicity because Malinowski was more interested in reconstructing particular rituals. Furthermore, one should be careful while directly connecting the behavior of modern primitive tribes and past ones, as was also noticed by the author mentioned above (Malinowski 1969: 91; Posern-Zieliński, Ostoja-Zagórski 1977: 39–71). Nevertheless, it seems like the comparative material gathered by Malinowski still has great academic value and is worth considering, so long as we retain awareness of all the potential mistakes stemming from imprudent use of this resource.

In the archaeology itself, new concepts of studying ethnicity have appeared during the last few decades. In the seventies and eighties, two main avenues of researching this question have come into sight, the first dealing with analyzing the relationship between material culture and ethnic symbolism. The second one dealt with researching the role of ethnicity in establishing economical and political relations, linked with questions of control over resources by a given group or attempts to enforce integrating ethnic stereotypes, strengthening the enforcing country or political faction like in case of the Aztecs (Jones 2012: 645).

To end the discussion of new approaches to researching ethnicity in archaeology and other academic fields, a group of archaeologists comes to mind that should be mentioned, namely Andrzej P. Kowalski, Jacek Woźny and Marian Kwapiński

(Kowalski 1998: 55–78; 2010: 125–134; Kwapiński 1990: 273–292; 1993: 1–28; 2000a: 137–147; 2000b: 167–176; Woźny 2000; 2011: 167–172). These researchers use a wide archaeological material base from Pomeranian burial sites, as well as a broad field of philosophy, with a particular compliance of philosophy of culture. Even though their paramount aim is not researching ethnic questions of prehistorical societies, it seems like their studies might be useful also in this context, especially if the need to “loosen” perception of the ethnic identity of past tribes is taken into account.

The examples cited here of new approaches towards ethnicity, race and culture prove that it is high time to move away from perceiving ethnic groups as curbed and monolithic territorial units. Instead a much more flexible approach is proposed to deal with constructing given ethnic identity as a dynamic process dependant on given situations and contexts existent in various social situations. Still the most important thing to remember is that research of those subjects is ongoing, giving hope that new fields to discuss the question of ethnicity will be revealed (Jones 2012: 642–650). It would be a great pleasure to see materials dated on the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age from Eastern Pomerania, used on a larger scale in future projects.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was not proposing specific conceptions addressing ethnic questions of societies living in the mentioned time in Eastern Pomerania. The goal was to introduce the history of research over this subject with a special focus on critique of foregoing practice of perceiving ethnicity through the culture-historical paradigm, still deeply rooted in Polish archaeologists. This state may be described as a “fossilization of knowledge” caused by the authority of a certain group of archaeologists, especially older ones (after: Boom van den 2005: 20–21). Due to an abundance of archaeological material from Eastern Pomerania, it seems like it is a high time to start perceiving research on the identification of ethnicity from a much wider perspective. Studies carried out in the fields of linguistics, physical anthropology, genetics and modern ethnology may deliver useful data. It is worth underlining here that this data should not be complementary to the archaeological evidence but all fields should bring an equivalent effort to the study (Jones 2012: 642–650; Tabaczyński 2012: 667–669).

First and foremost it should be remembered, that apart from the obvious dangers of interfering current factors like politics, there are also more fundamental threats. The most obvious one is the unthinking belief about the objectivity of archaeological cognition, deeply rooted in the learning environments still standing by the culture-historical approach. The problem relates also to processualists, with their ambition to build more precise methods based mostly on environmental studies, giving delusions of pursuit of an objective truth (Minta-Tworzowska

2000: 190–191). It was postmodernism that discarded this pursuit in favor of relativism – in the place of foregoing reconstructions of the prehistoric world, postmodernists pointed at constructions created by archaeologists, hence constructing new interpretations of past reality, with everyone entitled to interpret the past in their own way (Minta-Tworzowska 2000: 191). And so, foregoing interpretations of the past, culture historical ones, processual/modernistic or postprocessual were subjective constructions and not objective reconstructions as their makers wanted them to be. What is important to consider here is that these were and are visions seen through the prism of the present, especially elements like the culture that a researcher was educated in or that their academic profession taught them (Ostoja-Zagórski 2000: 203–204). While referring to the ethnic identity of prehistoric societies there is a possibility to point to the perception of present society, to understand this concept in a different way than it was understood two-thousand years ago in Pomerania. Ethnic identity nowadays seems to be clearly related to nationality, thought pattern strongly influenced by concepts stemming from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Kłoskowska 2005: 15–40). It seems natural then that people living in the past, as studied by archaeologists, also understood these questions in their own way. A basis to their identification might have been a family, sex, age, clan, origin, place of residence or position that a given group shared, of course these are not all of the possibilities (Boom 2005: 21). On the other hand today, the main aspects of ethnic or national identity are language, origin, common history or culture. It is clearly visible then, that the meaning of terms like nationality, ethnic group, race or culture is dependant on the reality that the perceivers lived in the past and live nowadays. This subject should be then approached with an appropriate distance and awareness, knowledge that the way we perceive the matter of ethnicity nowadays does not necessarily mean that it was like that in the past.

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