



ADAM MICKIEWICZ
UNIVERSITY
POZNAŃ



Treasures of Time

Research of the Faculty of Archaeology
of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań





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Mirosław, Greater Poland Voivodeship, site 37. Part of the burial equipment.
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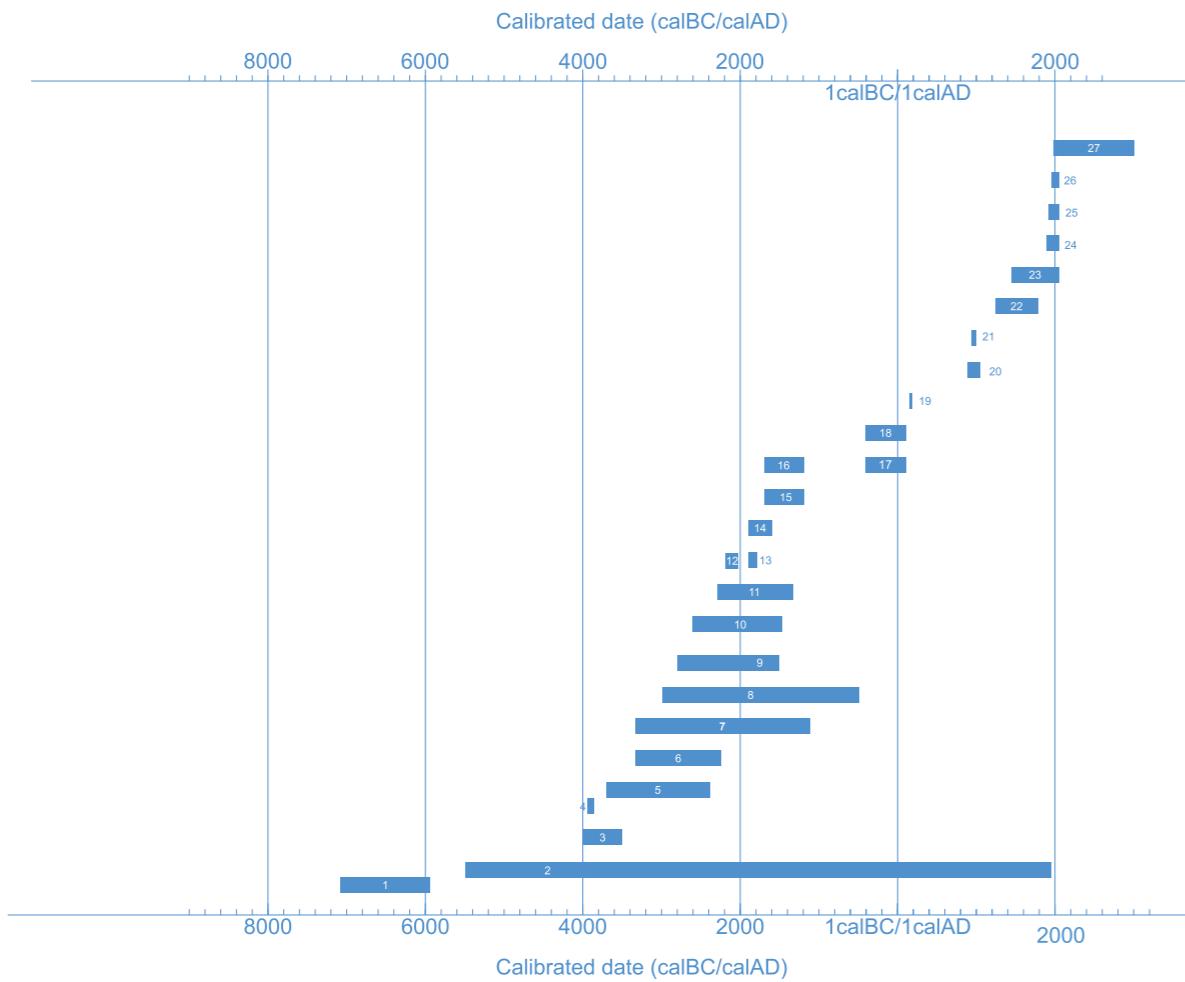
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Introduction

In 2019, archaeology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań celebrated its honourable 100th anniversary! The establishment of archaeology at this university was associated with the strong influence of the authority of Prof. Józef Kostrzewski and a succession of eminent scholars, many of whom we today call Masters.

The year 2019 was a real breakthrough. We started the second century of existence within the Alma Mater Posnaniensis with a new structural independence and quality that the academic archaeology of Poznań had not yet known for its one hundred years of existence. This change, the formation of the first Polish Faculty of Archaeology, has opened new chances and possibilities of which we are now taking advantage.



Calibrated date
(calBC/calAD)



Prof. Józef Kostrzewski
(1885-1969)

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Currently, the Faculty of Archaeology of Adam Mickiewicz University is formed by a number of teams, each with their own leaders. In the majority of cases, these teams are united by interdisciplinarity, which integrates within selected projects the experience of many so-called 'auxiliary' sciences of archaeology. This trend is paralleled by the development of specialised laboratories armed with the latest equipment in the Faculty of Archaeology.

This publication presents the current scientific interests creatively developed by such teams at the Faculty of Archaeology of Adam Mickiewicz University. The research of these teams covers vast areas in time and space, summing up at least the last 9,000 years of prehistory. The following articles, arranged in chronological order, allow us to explore the prehistory of various areas.

The adventure begins around 7100 BC, in the Neolithic settlement of Çatalhöyük located in Turkey. Then, we move on to the loess uplands near Krakow, where the first farmers from the south of Europe had just arrived (5500 BC). A little later (4000-3500 BC), and a little farther north, in the area of Greater Poland, some of the first megalithic constructions in this part of the world were built. Around the same time, about 800 km to the southeast, a settlement

of the Trypillia culture remains in the phase of development (3950 BC). The end of the Stone Age in Poland was described in the history of Late Neolithic communities on a hill in the center of Kujawy region (3700-2400 BC). Farther east, in the forest-steppe area of Ukraine, significant cultural and social changes resulted in the formation of the Yamnaya culture (3350-2250 BC), beginning the Bronze Age.

Intense elements of this era can be traced in the area of southern Europe in the Greek Anthemous Valley (3350-1150 BC), in Attica (3000-500 BC) on the plains of the Hungarian Lowlands (2600-1450 BC) and to the Upper Dniester Valley, where numerous burial mounds were formed (2800-1500 BC). A similar chronological range is presented in the articles devoted to a unique site in Brusczewo, Greater Poland (2300-1350 BC), which not only accumulates valuable metal artefacts, but is also the subject of interest of an interdisciplinary team focused on reconstructing its environmental context.

The next text take us far to the east, to the area of Iraqi Kurdistan, where we can appreciate the importance of Mesopotamian influences in shaping the picture of the Early Bronze Age (2200-2150 BC).

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Subsequent texts describe the discoveries of Poznań scientists in Syria (1906-1787 BC) and in Greater Poland (1900-1600 BC). These two distant points describe various aspects of life in contemporary communities in the Middle and Early Bronze Age.

The characteristic archaeological materials of the later centuries of the Bronze Age (1800-1200 BC) reveal an intensification of military conflicts and migration processes (1700-1200 BC). The turn of the eras is illustrated in this volume by texts on the interpretation of representations on ancient Greek and Roman sculpture (400 BC-100 AD), as well as the cultural situation in the Polish lands (400 BC-100 AD).

We are introduced to the new era by an article on the funerary customs of communities from the Polish lowlands describing discoveries at the site of Mirosław (160-175 AD). Moments of the formation of elements of Polish statehood are referred to in texts describing towns at Grzybowo (919-1050 AD) and Poznań in the early Middle Ages (950-1000 AD).

Later parts of the Middle Ages are described by sacral monuments located also in the area of the contemporary city of Poznań: the Collegiate Church of St Mary Magdalene (1263-1802 AD) and the still extant Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Ostrów Tumski, founded around 1431 AD in the immediate vicinity of the previously described early medieval site of the 'origin' of the city of Poznań.

The final texts of the volume do not refer directly to a particular period of prehistory, but present the history of Polish archaeological research on the Iberian Peninsula, the contemporary perception of prehistoric art by the inhabitants of present-day Canada and Siberia, and the development of methodological thought among Poznań archaeologists.

The volume closes with a text describing one of the many perspectives currently faced by the staff of the Faculty of Archaeology of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań: the new ArchaeoMicroLab.

We look to the future with great hope that the Staff of the Faculty will provide ideas for many more volumes of Treasures of Time. We trust that this set of articles will present archaeology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in its new structure as a Faculty and show its potential. We would thus like to encourage you to get acquainted with our Poznań perspective on archaeological studies, and to reflect on ways of exploring the past.

Andrzej Michałowski

Danuta Żurkiewicz



Location of the main research areas.
Numbering, compare the table of Contents.



3000-500 BC

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Some Remarks on the Problems of Researching Art in Archaeology using the Examples of Prehistoric Figurines and Attic Geometric Pottery

Ewa Bugaj

Abstract

This article briefly presents some of the author's research on art in archaeology. Drawing on previously published works, the text reviews the general problems of art research in archaeology before focusing on investigations of prehistoric and ancient figurines, anthropomorphisation in ancient Greece, and figural motifs in Attic Geometric pottery.

Keywords: archaeology and art, prehistoric and ancient figurines, figural motifs in pottery,
Attic Geometric pottery

My research combines archaeological methods with those developed in art history to highlight common areas of interest covered by both fields. Drawing on examples from already published works focused on prehistoric figurines, anthropomorphisation in Antiquity, and Attic Geometric pottery, this article highlights the possibilities afforded by this interdisciplinary approach.

At the broadest scale, over the last years I have concentrated on general considerations regarding the understanding and interpretation of art in archaeology, as well as links between approaches applied by archaeology with those employed by history of art (Bugaj, 2001, 2003, 2010a, 2012). In understanding art I have taken the stance that the conceptualisation of and the setting of limits between what is art and what is not, remain ambiguous issues left to be decided by each researcher for themselves. However, this choice should be justified by the presentation of the theoretical assumptions on which it is based. Clarity in this issue is of primary importance as it influences both the methods applied by archaeologists in interpretation of art and, as a result, also the status assigned to this knowledge.

Referring to the findings of aestheticians who have sought an element of art *a priori* in all periods (Morawski, 1985), I have argued that the performance of set rules during the creative act results in clear expressive-formal systems often defined for the art of prehistory which can be understood as the manifestation of fundamental artistic values. The recognition of the early presence of these values provides the impetus for interpretations suggesting historical sequence and the continuity of artistic activities through time. However, despite numerous synthesising efforts, the history of art has shown art to have a heterogeneous character and be an unobvious and variable phenomenon, not only in terms of its appearance but also in its nature and function, making the particular visual messages from the past doomed to partial intelligibility.

From among possible approaches towards art in archaeological studies I have been interested in the ones that provide opportunity for its interpretation in terms of its meaning in culture and society. I consider these aspects very important, as archaeologists often refrain from attempts to find cultural meanings of prehistoric or ancient art and, in contrast to cultural anthropologists and art historians, focus on reconstruction and explanation of how a particular object was manufactured, what its chronological and spatial distribution were, and how motifs and styles, understood as sets of formal features, varied.

A large part of my research has also been devoted to more specific issues, such as considerations of possibilities in the interpretation of prehistoric figurines (Bugaj, 2007, 2008) and especially anthropomorphisation in the context of Greek culture (Bugaj, 2010b). I have shown that the “attractiveness” of figurines as “speaking” evidence in contrast to the other, “mute” prehistoric finds, as sometimes declared by archaeologists, is deceptive because what the figurines depict, what they mean, how they were meant to be used, and what the influence of their presence was always remain a question of an interpretation. Referring to Richard G. Lescure’s considerations (2002), but also those of many other researchers (e.g. Hamilton, 1996), in a paper dealing with various methods of studying figurines (Bugaj, 2008) I presented how only integrated studies – i.e. an analysis of the iconography of figurines, their function, and a discussion of their probable impact on society, as well as their symbolism – may allow satisfactory interpretations approximating their original meanings. I concluded that the contextual approach would be the most useful in archaeology. In later papers devoted to images on Greek Geometric pottery I followed this way of thinking and emphasised that fruitful studies in archaeology are those which ask about the social operations of prehistoric and ancient art, considering the objects themselves and their material features as well as the contexts of their occurrence.

An example of this is provided by my analysis of the so-called Cycladic idols (Bugaj, 2007). Critiquing a range of existing interpretations (e.g. Fitton, 1984; Broodbank, 2000; Hoffman, 2002; Hendrix, 2003), I turned to a discussion of their possible social life by recognizing the idols as the material culture of social groups inhabiting the Cyclades in the third millennium BC and drawing on the specific contexts in which the idols have been found. Furthermore, I paid attention to the figurines themselves (Figure 1), both in terms of their forms and also their (sometimes multiple) decoration. This approach allowed not only their interpretation as objects participating in funeral rites, after which they were left behind in tombs as grave goods, but



Figure 1. Cycladic female figurine in the canonical type from the collection of the Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe (Photo: E. Bugaj).

also as objects taking part in key moments during the life of members, most likely female, of these communities (initiation, delivering children, death). Other authors have gone even further than this, suggesting that the idols might have also served other adaptive functions for these groups by participating in the transfer of knowledge or reporting of history (Hoffman, 2002; Hendrix, 2003).

A project important to me and closely related to the problems of interpretation of ancient plastic art has been a contribution to discussions on the broader issues of figuration and anthropomorphic representation in prehistory and antiquity. In the introductory chapter of a monograph concerning the subject of which I was a co-editor (Bugaj, 2010a), I characterised research perspectives applied to these issues. On the one hand, they are focused on specific artistic creations taking human physical form (figurations) produced at different times in many cultures. On the other hand, they are considered reflections of anthropomorphisation as a wider phenomenon, consisting of the attribution of human features to the inanimate world and the projection of human qualities onto the surrounding reality; this broader perspective even points to the inability of going beyond anthropomorphic “I” in recognition of reality.

To contribute to the foregoing considerations, I attempted to characterise the phenomenon of anthropomorphisation of gods in Greece (Bugaj, 2010b). I pointed out that there were various ways used to portray and envisage divinity in Greece and that recognising only one of them, the anthropomorphic image, would be a simplification. I referred to the long tradition of studies on cult images, especially the works by Jean-Pierre Vernant (Vernant, 1991; Neer, 2010; Kowalski, 2013) and his ontology of cult statue, as well as Alain Schnapp’s thoughts (Schnapp, 1988) derived from a similar tradition of historical anthropology. I took the stance that cult imag-



Figure 2. Mantiklos "Apollo", c. 700-675 BC, bronze votive statuette from Thebes, Boiotia. Boston, Museum of Fine Art (Drawing by M. Święzkowska).



Figure 3. A statue of a kore from Miletus, c. 550 BC, marble. Berlin, Altes Museum (Drawing by M. Święzkowska).

es were not intended as reflections of some external model, as this is a typical feature only of modern understandings of depicting images. While referring to numerous fragments of ancient texts, I showed that in Greece the cult, which was the basic principle of religious life, would have been impossible without images. I believe that the Greeks producing artistic images, especially the anthropomorphic (Figure 2), tried to connect the universe of imagination with physical reality. By using a variety of anthropomorphic images they evoked a variety of phenomena, but this was art that expressed experiencing of the world rather than the visible world itself. I suggested that many researchers attributed particular effectiveness to Greek art in getting through to its beneficiaries, to its ability to speak by illusionistic human figures, and I emphasised that portraying humans and their bodies (Figure 3) was a primary form of visual expression of a Greek city-state.

This type of reflection on art, attempting to clarify the role of images in Greek culture and taking into account changes in the mentality of the Greeks, their ways of seeing, understanding and categorising the world, are quite a challenge, but also the right line of research. I think that archaeologists and historians of ancient art, despite many positive achievements, still lack much in comparison to scholars undertaking such research through writing and texts.

In focusing on interpretations of art in archaeology, the figurative images on Greek Geometric pottery, and Attic pottery in particular, were well suited for my research. In terms of chronology, like the examples cited above, this material can be treated as part of prehistoric visual imagery. However, its importance extended into protohistoric periods. Attic pottery remained a model for the Greek world in the Early Iron Age because of its diversity and well-developed production. Furthermore, it was mainly Attic pottery on which figurative and narrative art occurred in Greece after almost three centuries of absence (Figure 4). Since this re-occurrence, these artistic conventions have developed uninterrupted, although different in form, function, and effect.

I devoted one text (Bugaj, 2010c) to differences observed between the Greek Geometric Style and the ornamentation of Hallstatt vessels. After a brief characterisation of evidence from both areas in question (Coldstream, 1991; Snodgrass, 1998; Reichenberger, 2000; Huth, 2003), and after a presentation of an outline of the cultural situation in the Early Iron Age, I showed that the impact of the Greek Geometric Style on barbaric Europe was very limited, contra the previously dominant perspective (Gediga, 1970; Dobiat, 1982). I noted that a style based on simple geometric ornamentation had been present in vast areas of Europe already before, and should be regarded as a method of visual expression of basic shapes having universal characteristics. During the Hallstatt period, in some regions of Europe, this form of artistic expression was subject to intensification involving, *inter alia*, covering whole surfaces of vessels in a very regular way with geometric patterns. While figurative images did begin to appear, I pointed out that the style of these images in the Hallstatt area differed from that



Figure 4. Attic Geometric skyphos with a scene of battle around a warship, c. 850-800 BC. Eleusis, Eleusis Archaeological Museum, 741 (Drawing by M. Święzkowska).



Figure 5. Monumental Attic Geometric funerary amphora of the Dipylon group depicting a scene of *prothesis*, c. 750 BC. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, NM 804 (Drawing by M. Święzakowska).

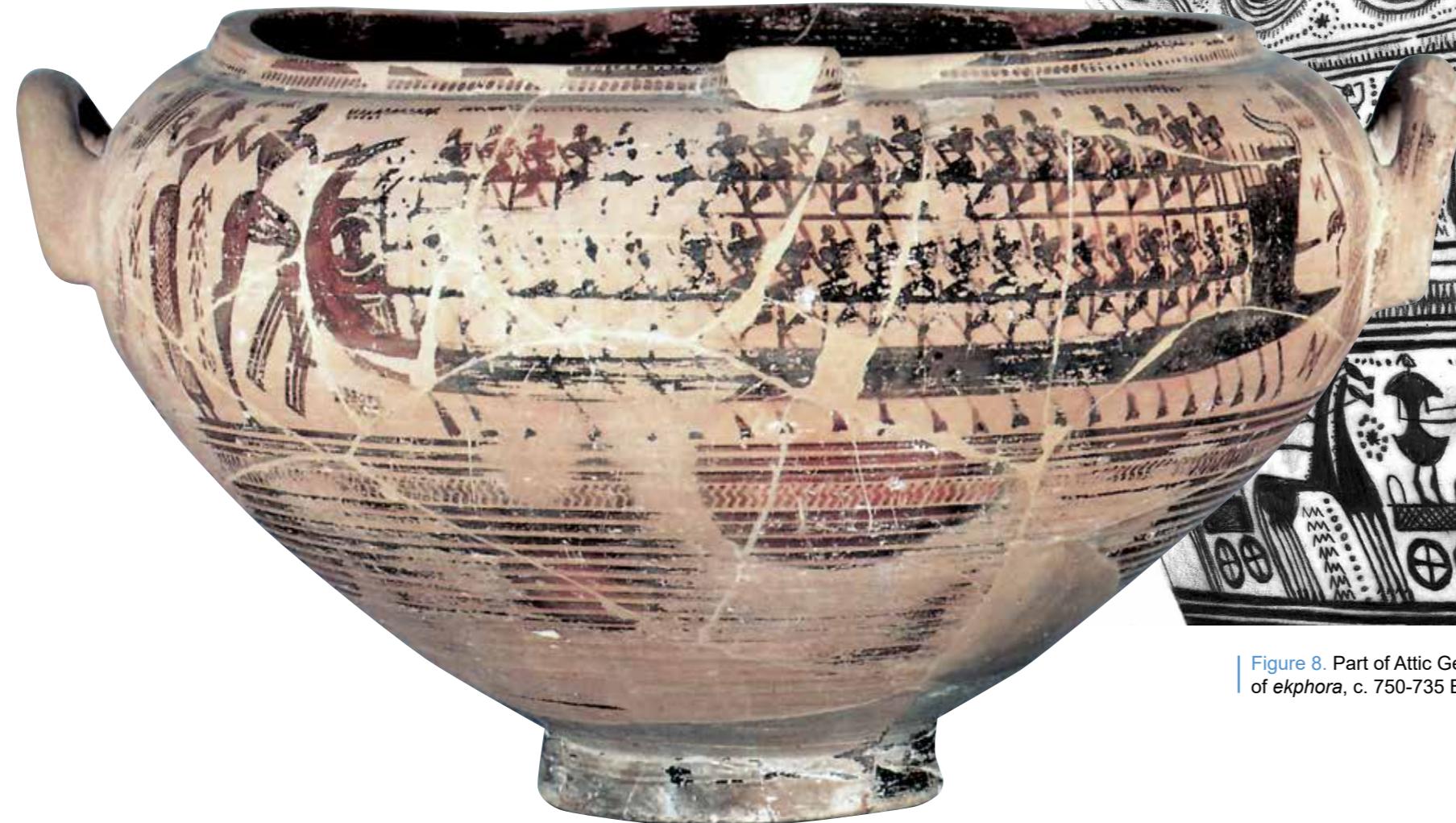
Figure 6. Attic Geometric oinochae from the Kerameikos with a scene of sea battle and taming horses, c. 750-720 BC. Copenhagen, National Museum, 1628 (Drawing by L. Żuk).

known in the Greek world, though it used a similar method to construct larger figures by compiling individual geometric elements. Moreover, a plastic language of figurative Hallstatt images did not develop, nor did it begin to change towards idealised forms of realistic and complex mythological narratives as happened in Greece. The art in vast areas of prehistoric Europe for centuries to come would not use such a language, since it remained at a level of primary transmission more suitable for those communities “totemic” in character. Therefore, besides formal borrowings, the essence of Hallstatt art, as compared to Greek, in my opinion, remained different.

I dealt with issues of recognising the principles governing the decoration found on Attic Geometric pottery in another text (Bugaj, 2015). This article did not directly concern the problem of interpretation of Greek Geometric art, but raised the question of the possible ability of creators of Geometric Style ornamentation to project experienced reality visually and to attempt generalisations of these experiences. Previous studies had already carried out metric analyses of ornamentation on the vessels (Benson, 1982, 1987) and, in the case of the monumental amphorae from Athens (inv. NM 804; [Figure 5](#)), even indicated a module applied in decoration (Andreae, 1979). Referring in part to these findings, in my analysis I mainly focused on showing how two clearly distinct trends – the horizontal arranging of decorative motifs and the presence of vertical panels – developed along with Attic Geometric pottery into a harmonised unity. Nevertheless, I emphasised that these measures aiming at standardisation of decorations did not yet have much to do with mathematical thinking; they should be considered evidence of attempts to move towards generalisation of knowledge concerning physical characteristics of the surrounding reality.

In an article concerning methods of pictorial narrative I presented the most detailed results of my considerations of the interpretation of Greek Geometric pottery based on selected examples of figurative paintings (Bugaj, 2013). This discussion was contextualized in the transformation of Greek society in the early Iron Age, from dispersed settlements with rulers to the polis with its civil structures and the accompanying social, political and cultural changes. While characterising the Geometric Style, I indicated its important features and I also pointed to an appearance, among dominating abstract motifs, of figurative ones, which transformed the style into narrative art ([Figure 6](#)). The recognition of this process has been discussed by researchers for over a hundred years. I concentrated on the most important stages of this discussion (e.g. Fittschen, 1969; Carter, 1972; Snodgrass 1982, 1998; Langdon, 2008), arguing that images were mostly generic, but over time some also started to speak the language of legends and myths, like eposes, although many may have mainly visualised contemporary rituals ([Figure 7](#)). In my further considerations I turned to the long-lasting tradition of research concerning pictorial narrative and communicative aspects of pieces of art and in particular to the most recent studies of practices of telling stories with pictures in Antiquity (Stansbury-O'Donnell, 1999; Giuliani, 2003). I presented the opinion that particular solutions concerning presentation of history in figurative depictions come mainly from the way the craftsmen looked at the subject or the receivers reacted to it, and not from the development of the style itself or an ability to present various forms in a sophisticated manner.

Figure 7. Attic Geometric bowl depicting an oared vessel and a couple, perhaps in a scene of departure, c. 735-700 BC. London, British Museum, 1899,2019.1. (© The Trustees of the British Museum).



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Figure 8. Part of Attic Geometric monumental krater ("Hirschfeld Krater") from the Dipylon depicting a scene of *ekphora*, c. 750-735 BC. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, NM 990 (Drawing by L. Žuk).

Thereafter, I refer to Vincent Farenga (1998), who argues that some recognition of cognitive and communicative skills of communities inhabiting the Greek world in the Early Iron Age might be achieved by tracing the different ways in which time and space were imagined and also how contemporary people viewed themselves within that frame. Literary evidence from Antiquity combined with anthropological research clearly indicate that the understanding of time and space as well as people's actions within them focused on ancestors who combine the presence and the past to solve primary material and existential social dilemmas. Therefore, funeral rituals must have represented one of the most important events experienced by a whole community (Figure 8), and during them there must have existed commonly understood narratives. The narrative practices connected with this funeral realm extended the importance of burials and buried people also to the living members of the society, particularly to those with high social status. Equally important elements of social rituals at the time were various material "props", numerous remains of which are subject to archaeological excavations. One of the most important areas of exploration in this field is, again, funeral realm (Morris, 1987; Whitley,

1991), with the most numerous material relics of ritual activities, including pottery decorated with figurative motifs. I discuss, in the article, numerous examples of the latter and unique features of their decoration which are similar to pictograms or ideograms.

While summarising the results of my considerations, I assumed that majority of the friezes with figurative motifs on Geometric Pottery must have presented some action or activity, thus reflecting a story, though it might be hard to read in detail. In most cases we are able to determine the general character of such an action and recognise what it might have been preceded and followed by. The scenes presented on Geometric Pottery refer mainly to funeral rites (Figures 5, 8), land and sea battles (Figures 4, 6), hunting for and taming of animals (Figure 9), and subordinating nature as well as agon, dance, music (Figure 10), and various forms of feasting (Ahlberg, 1971a, 1971b; Rombos, 1988). All of these themes, important in contemporary social life, were illustrated and communicated via art which took part in their sanctioning, and glorification, thus locating them within a mythic past which helped to create understanding and meaning in the present.

In conclusion, the implementation of a research project related to the Attic Geometric pottery let me present a variety of techniques of research on early images and to opt for those which illustrate the social dimensions of visual communication. As a result of these studies, the images on Attic Geometric pottery might be seen as an explanation of funeral rituals. Death, a grave, and the deceased were integral elements in the process of solidifying forms of social bonds and a new organisation of the Early Iron Age communities within the Greek world, including Attica. They occurred within specific conditions of a period of transition in which, although elites emphasised their position, everything tended towards the emergence of a collegial governance culminating in the creation of the Greek city-states. The rituals associated with death, burials, and treatment of the deceased became one of the necessary elements to solidify emergent forms of relationships with the dead and negotiate the position of living members of the communities. Acting in conjunction with other factors, the use of figurative art, enabled working out of "memory regimes", over time leading to their formalisation.

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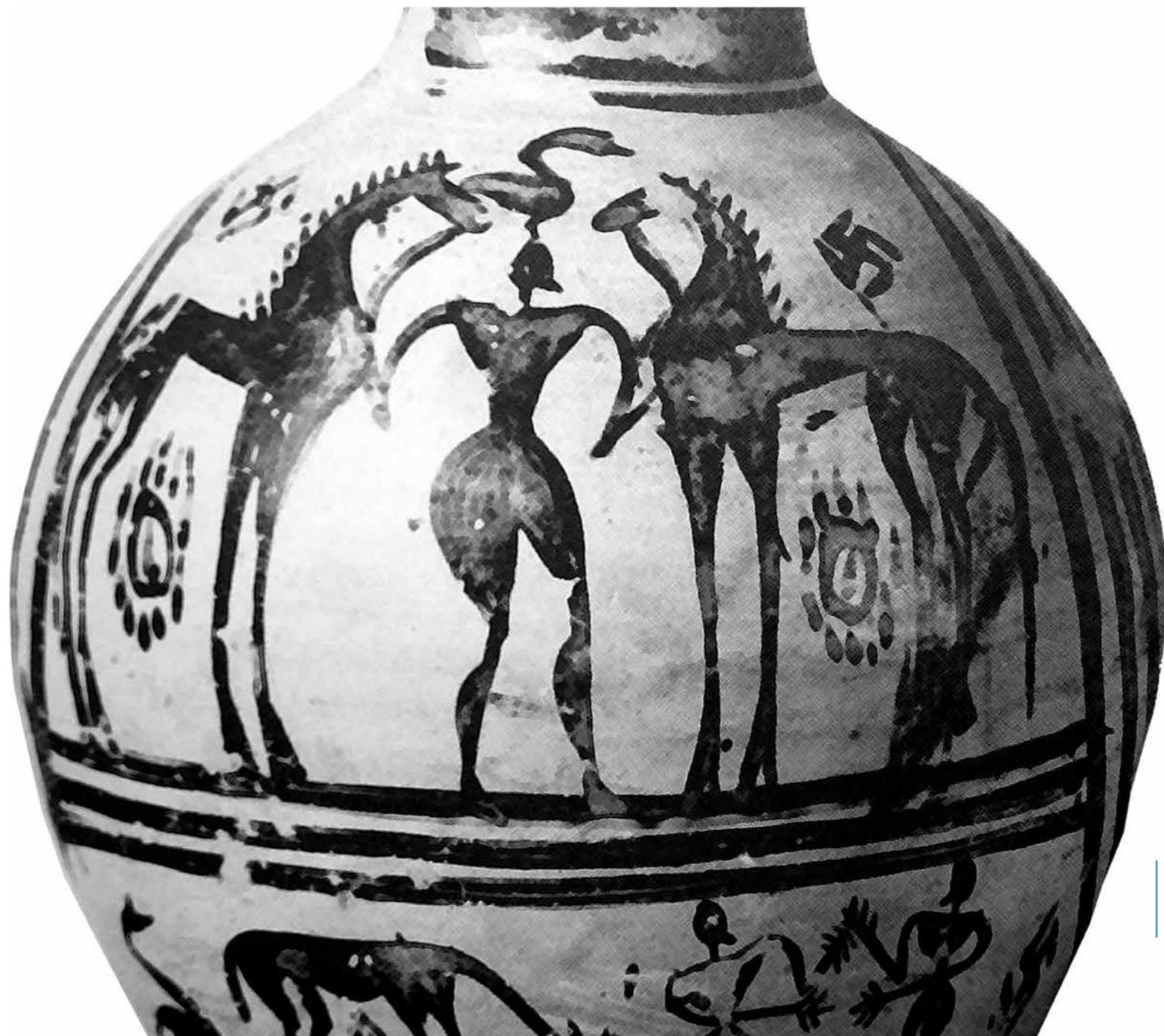


Figure 9. Attic Geometric oinochoe from Egina depicting a man with a bird on his head leading horses, c. 730 BC. Berlin, Altes Museum, SM VI. 3374. (Drawing by L. Žuk).



Figure 10. Attic Geometric hydria depicting dancing women, c. 735-700 BC. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, NM 17470. (Drawing by L. Žuk).

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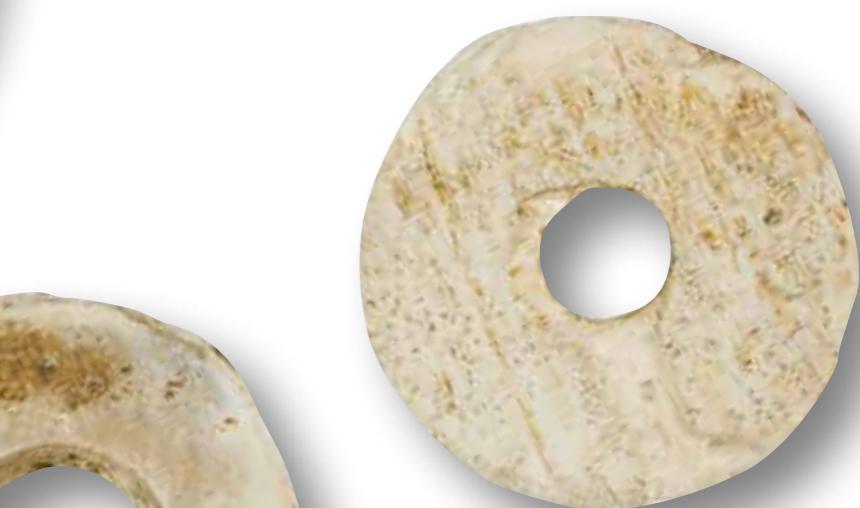
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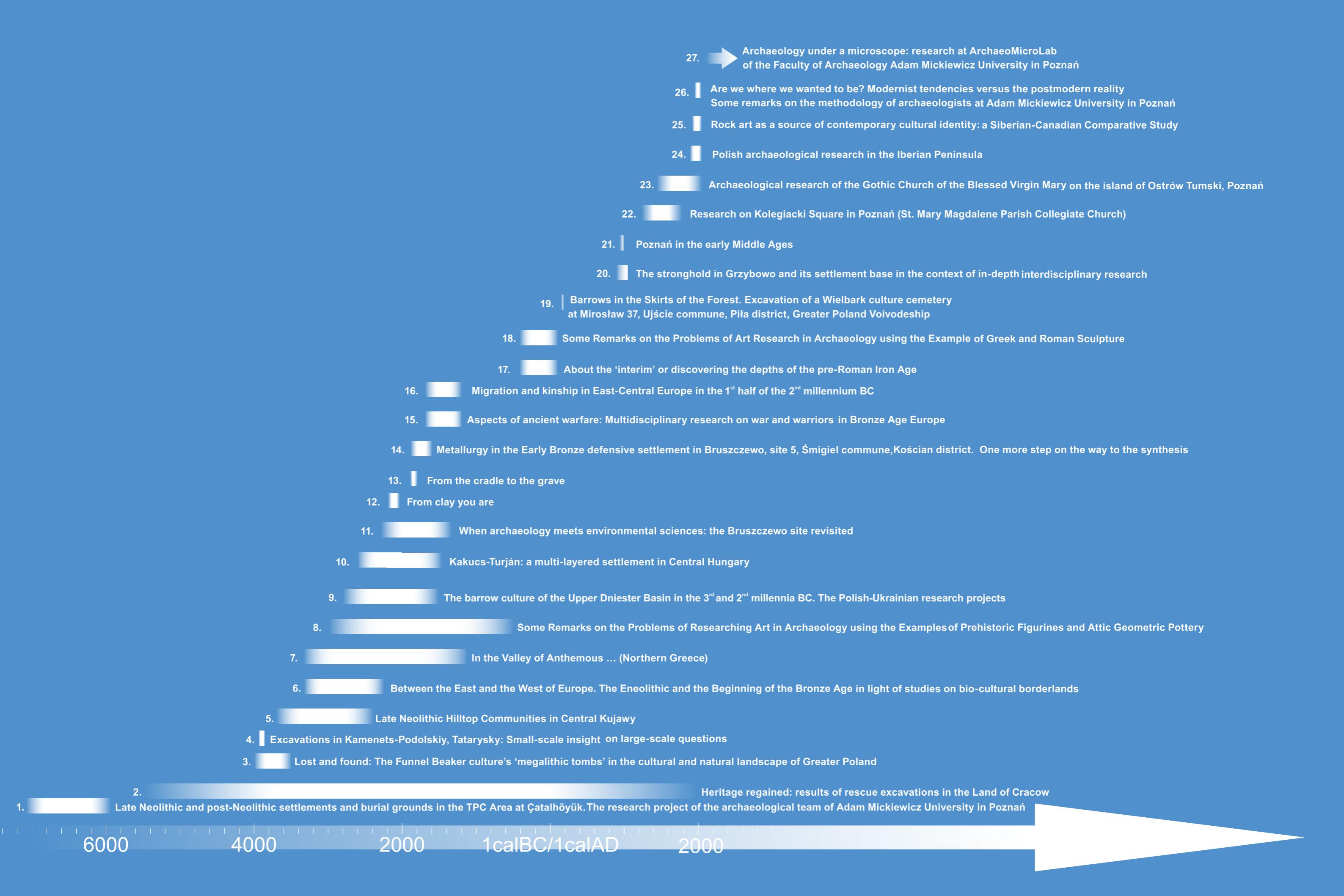
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