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Treasures of Time

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

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

Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań

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

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FACULTY OF ARCHAEOLOGY AMU

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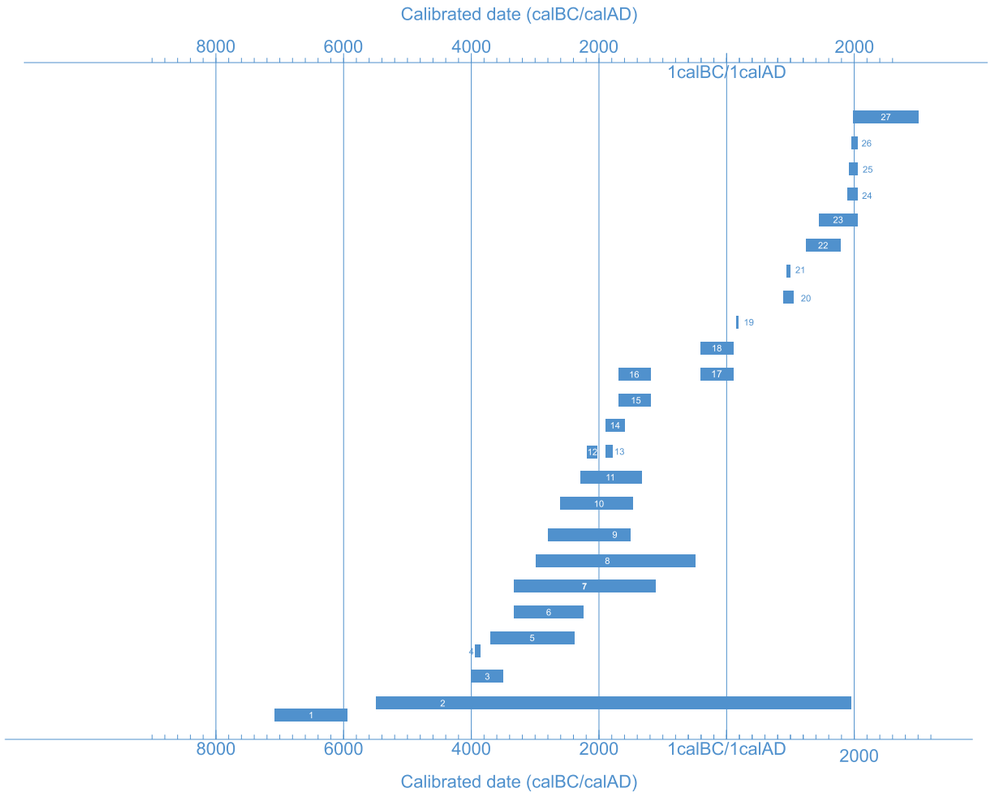
FACULTY OF ARCHAEOLOGY AMU

Treasures of Time: Research of the Faculty of Archaeology of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Introduction

In 2019, archaeology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan 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
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Prof. Józef Kostrzewski
(1885-1969)

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 Bruszczewo, 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).

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

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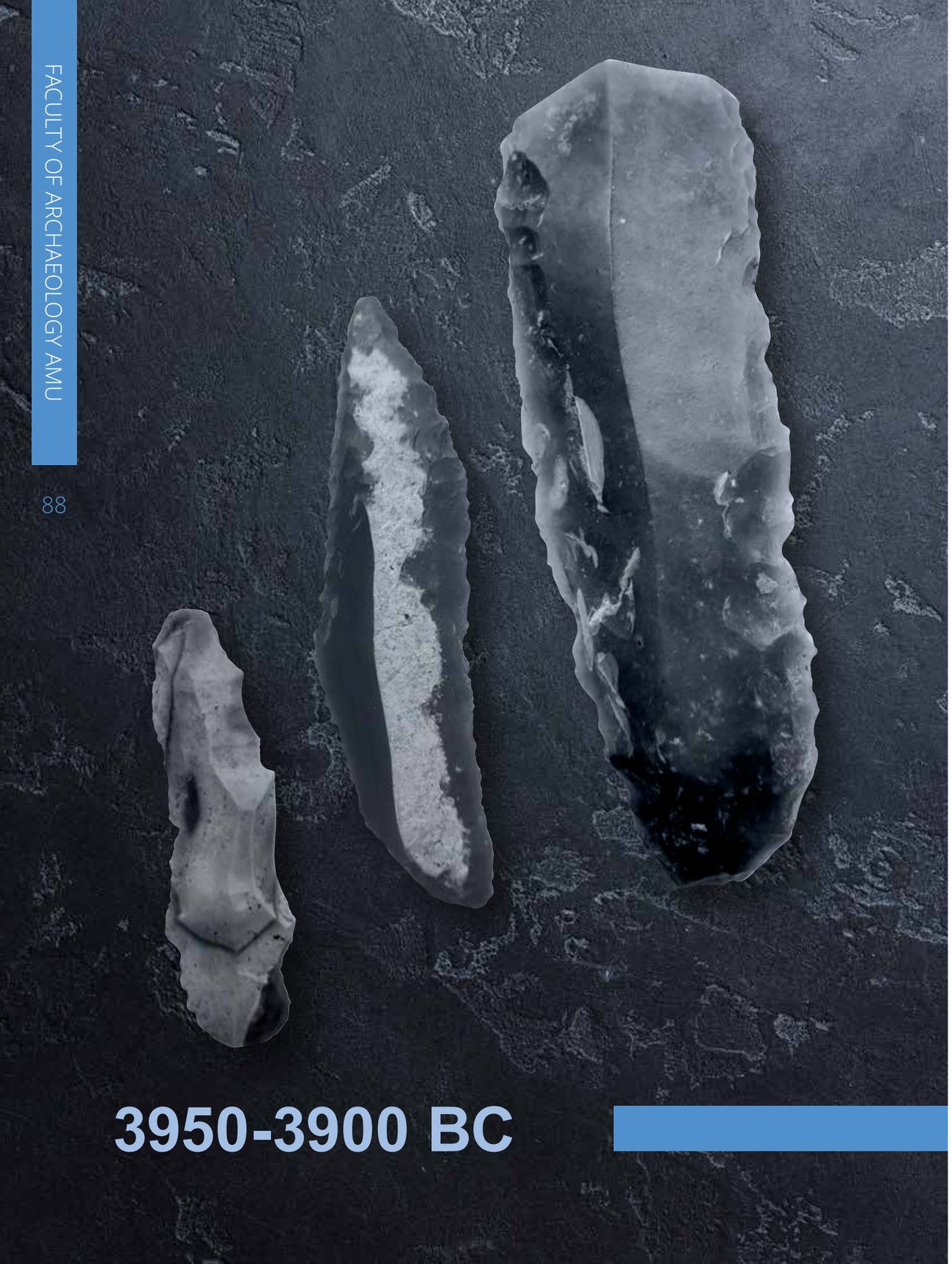

Treasures of Time:

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Excavations in Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky: Small-scale insight on large-scale questions

Aleksandr Diachenko, Iwona Sobkowiak-Tabaka

Abstract

This paper presents the results of field work carried out in terms of a collaborative Polish-Ukrainian project. The main aim of this project is to investigate the transformations and modifications of culture in prehistory as reflected in the archaeological record, focusing on the issues of cultural expansion, unification, and internal diversity. The excavations of Western Tripolye culture settlement of Kamenets-Podolskiy (Tatarysky) were conducted to provide an empirical base for this work. During first season of excavations remains of a burnt house (ploschadka) and pottery kilns were excavated.

Keywords: Middle Dniester, Tripolye culture, *ploshchadka*, pottery kilns, daub

Since 2019 the collaborative Polish-Ukrainian project *The dynamic prehistoric culture. Comprehensive analysis of archaeological data from Central and Southeastern Europe*, financed by the National Science Centre (Poland) has been carried out. This project aims to investigate the transformations and modifications of culture in prehistory as reflected in the archaeological record, focusing on the issues of cultural expansion, unification and internal diversity. These issues shape the formation, development and decline of archaeological cultures and lay at the core of the way of thinking in the archaeology of continental Europe, framing the interpretations of ethnic processes, subsistence strategies, social organization of ancient populations and their culture in its wider sense.

The outcome of this project will significantly complement archaeological method and theory, reframing one of its basic concepts, ‘archaeological culture’, and, therefore, understandings of culture in its wider sense within the interdisciplinary framework of the complex dynamic systems. Newly developed methods will contribute to the analytical tools of prehistoric archaeology.

Figure 1. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky.
View of the site (Photo: I. Pustynnikova).

The aims of the project frame its three main components: 1) the development of method and theory; 2) investigation of the process of archaeologisation (transformation of material remains of the remote past into archaeological records – Schiffer, 1987); and 3) the analysis of empirical data. To provide an empirical base for these research objectives, a study of key museal collections and excavations was conducted. Excavations were carried out at the Middle Tripolye site in Kamenets-Podolskiy (Tatarysky), located in the Middle Dniester region and dated to 3950-3900 BC (Figure 1). To consider the issue of an 'archaeological culture' as a complex dynamic system, which includes the study of archaeologisation (i.e., the behaviours leading to the specific deposition of archaeological data in objects of different types and post-depositional processes (Schiffer, 1987, 2010), we arranged to excavate features of different types.

The site has been known since 1926. Collections from surface surveys are kept by the State Historical Museum-Preservation of Kamenets-Podolskiy and the Archaeological Laboratory of the Ivan Ohienko National University of Kamenets-Podolskiy (Levinzon, 2018, 2019). Excavations were preceded by geophysical surveys, which identified the settlement structure composed of elliptical circuits of dwellings (Niebieszczański et al., unpublished data).

During our first field season, we excavated house remains (Diachenko et al., 2021) and pottery kilns (Diachenko & Sobkowiak-Tabaka, 2020).

The remains of wattle-and-daub dwellings at Middle Tripolye sites are described using the term "ploshchadki". Its original meaning in Russian reflects the 'ordinary' form of such building remains – rectangular-shaped layers of burnt daub, ceramics, animal bones, and tools made of flint, stone, bone, and antler; the thickness of the Middle Tripolye ploshchadka reach 30 cm or more (Kruts, 2003). Such objects perfectly fit the related research objective of the proposed project because the abandonment of a house followed a ritual conducted in several stages. In numerous cases the hearth – or 'heart' – of a house was broken, vessels were placed in a specific manner, and then a dwelling was burnt in a ritual fire (Kruts, 2003). Therefore, these remains reflect cultural behaviour, specific initial deposition of artefacts, archaeologisation of an object resulting from its collapse during the fire, and post-depositional processes due to natural factors and human activities at this place in later times.

Ploshchadka 1 belongs to a cluster composed of four houses located in the outer construction circuit of the settlement. This feature was nearly rectangular in shape reaching a size of c. 11.6 x 4 m and was oriented along a east-west axis with a small northwest-southeast deviation. The cultural layer within its perimeter was intensively filled with pottery shreds and bones (Figure 2A and 2B). As usually, postholes were not identified below the ploshchadka. Three stones, including a used grinding stone, were likely used to strength the

Figure 2A. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky, Ploshchadka 1 (Photo: I. Pustynnikova).

construction, probably marking the northeastern, northwestern, and southwestern corners of the dwelling (Figure 2A and 2B). A layer of burnt daub represents the floor of the upper story of the house. Imprints on the bottom of the daub fragments make it possible to identify the construction techniques used to create the wooden body of the floor. The latter was composed of relatively thick beams (exceeding 8-10 cm in thickness and width) with a nearly square or semi-rounded profiles, which were placed at a distance of c. 1 m one from one another (Figure 3A). These beams supported a floor with a thickness exceeding 2-3 cm, the edges of which were placed one on top of the other in the form of a tortoise shell (Figure 3B).

The wooden construction was covered by two layers of daub. The first layer was 10-11 cm thick (from bottom to top) and was made of clay with organic admixture. The upper storey of the house was subdivided into two rooms: a residential area with a length of c. 7.4 m and an entrance room with a length of c. 4.2 m. Interior details were detected only in residential area (Figure 2A and 2B). These were the oven and interior element, the shape and size of which is impossible to reconstruct. The oven was c. 1.6 x 1.4 m in size and was located to the right of the entrance to residential area (Figure 4). Its base was shaped as a thick layer (exceeding 15 cm) of daub without organic admixture placed on the wooden construction of the floor of the upper storey. The lower storey was not subdivided into rooms. Its interior details are represented by a shallow pit and two installations. The first installation was relatively thin, up to 2-3 cm. It was placed next to a shallow pit located near the short wall of the house. Fragments of two bowls were excavated from this installation (Figure 2A, north-western part of the house). Considering the shape of Ploshchadka 1, we may assume that different sections of the floor

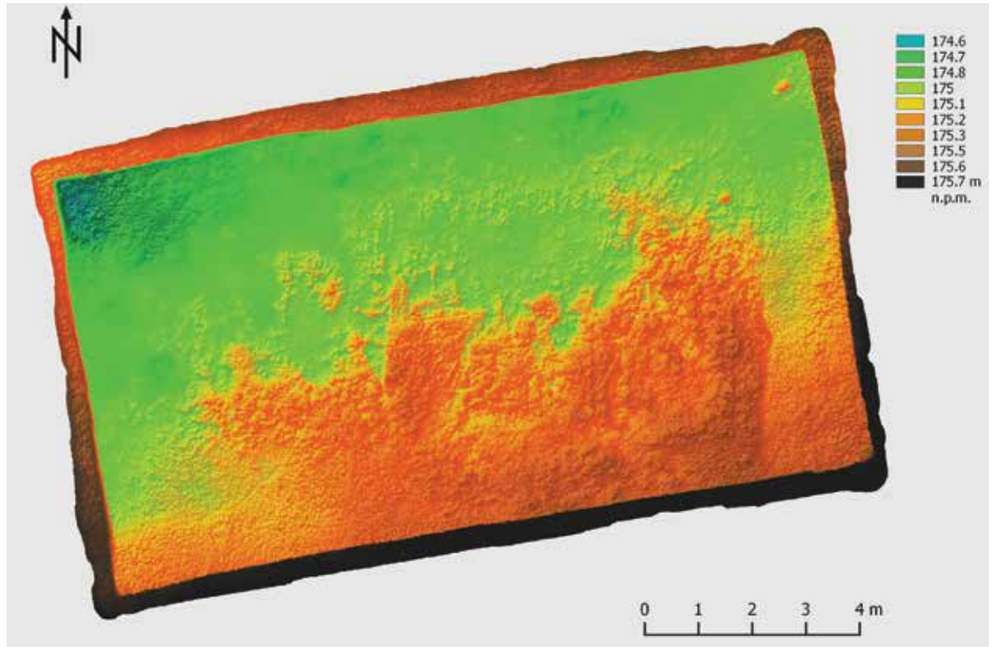

Figure 2B. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky. Elevation model (by M. Stróżyk).

Figure 3A. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky, Ploshchadka 1. Wooden construction of the floor of the upper storey: Excavated imprints of wood on the underside of daub fragment (Photo: A. Diachenko).

of the upper store collapsed when the walls of this house were still standing. The lack of daub in the central part of the residential area may suggest that this part of the floor, measuring c. 3 x 1 m, collapsed first (see the Nebelivka experiment for an analogy: Johnston et al., 2018).

It is important to admit that similar construction techniques and interior details are notable in synchronous houses far to the east of the Dniester region, in the Southern Bug and Dnieper interfluve (studies of D. Chernovol). Demographic estimations suggest the migration of some population groups from Dniester to the east (e.g., Diachenko, 2016). In this respect it is very important to admit similarities between the ceramics and construction and organization of space in the houses of these two regions. These similarities represent how migrants brought their traditions to new lands.

The next features unearthed during our excavations were two pottery kilns. These features were sunken into the sterile earth, represented by limestone, which preserved them from later destruction by intensive erosion processes. The kilns were placed 2 m apart from each other on the edge of the plateau, away from the houses (Figure 5). Such placement decreased the risk of fire and supported additional circulation of air in the kilns (Sîrbu, 2015).

Figure 3B. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky, Ploshchadka 1. Wooden construction of the floor of the upper storey: Excavated imprints of daub in the ground (Photo: A. Diachenko).

Figure 4. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky, Ploshchadka 1. View of the oven from the north (Photo: A. Diachenko).

Investigation of pottery kilns in Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky significantly improved our understanding of the evolution of ceramic production in Neolithic and Eneolithic Southeastern Europe. Kilns from Kamenets-Podolskiy represent a kind of a “missing link” (or “one of the missing links” considering multilinear evolution) between earlier and simpler features known at sites in the Balkans and more complex kilns known from Late Tripolye settlements.

Our contribution to a “search for missing links” was preceded by investigations in the Tripolye settlement of Trostyanchyk in the Southern Bug region, where a number of clay units of unknown function were found in a pit (Rud et al., 2019). Vitalii Rud, who conducted the excavations in Trostyanchyk, assumed that these might have been used as structural units for heating structures (Rud, 2016). “Archaeological luck” smiled to our team when we found identical units in the context of an abandoned pottery kiln.

Pottery Kiln 1 was nearly square with rounded corners. The size reached c. 2.2 m along the east-west axis and 2.1 m along the north-south axis. The entrance to the kiln was turned to the east. A shallow pit 8-15 cm deep was ‘dug out’ in front of the entrance by removing small blocks of limestone. The surface, initially prepared by removing the sterile soil (the difference in elevation reaches 0.4 m along the east-west axis), was covered by a thin, 2-2.5 cm layer

Figure 5. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky. Excavation of Pottery Kiln 1 (Photo: I. Sobkowiak-Tabaka).

of clay. It was only partly preserved – probably in the places where the most hot air passed through the channels formed by supports (also known as 'козлы' in Russian or 'goats' in articles on Tripolye pottery kilns – e.g. Korvin-Piotrovskiy et al., 2016). The kiln contained six supports, which were covered by round discs made of clay with an admixture of sand and relatively rare inclusions of organics (Figure 6). Vessels were placed on the platform composed of discs. During excavation of this feature, a fragment of a clay female figurine was found (Figure 7).

The function of Pottery Kiln 2, which was smaller in size compared to Kiln 1, became a real conundrum. This feature also had a rectangular shape with rounded corners, and was placed into a surface preliminary prepared by removal of the sterile earth (difference in elevations reaches 0.17 m along the east-west axis; Figure 8). The size of this feature is estimated to be 1.4 m along the north-south axis and c. 0.7 m along the east-west axis. Two channels of c. 0.7 m long were 'dug out' by removing small limestone blocks in the northern part of the structure. A small firing chamber of c. 0.7 by 0.65 m in Kiln 2 was somewhat sunken into the sterile soil. Vertical fragments of burnt daub (up to 6 cm thick) with substantial organic admixture were recovered near the southern and western walls of the chamber. This may suggest a relatively high temperature inside the kiln. Fragments of a clay disc were found in the fill of the firing chamber of Kiln 2. The fragments are analogous to the ones found in Kiln 1.

Figure 6. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky. Clay discs from Pottery Kiln 1 (Photo: I. Sobkowiak-Tabaka).

Figure 7: Fragments of female figurine found within Pottery Kiln 1
(Photo: A. Diachenko).

Figure 8. Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky. Excavation of Pottery Kiln 2
(Photo: I. Sobkowiak-Tabaka).

Why did the inhabitants of Kamenets-Podolskiy, Tatarysky need to construct such a small pottery kiln near the larger one? An elegant solution to this issue was suggested to us by the well-known Tripolye expert Sergej Ryzhov. According to him, usage of this structure could be related to the firing of pottery with bichromic painting (i.e., black and white or red and white), which is seen in Western Tripolye Culture sites of this time period at low frequencies. Black and red paint was made of ochre and required a higher temperature of firing, as compared to white paint made of chalk (the composition of paint and the temperature of firing are discussed in Ryzhov, 2001). Therefore, the larger kiln was used for firing vessels, and smaller one decreased the efforts needed to fire pottery with different coloured slips.

We are waiting for next archaeological seasons and new data which we will use to test the models of socio-economic and cultural evolution…

Acknowledgements

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