Contacts between the Late Mesolithic Hunter-Gatherers and the Early Farming Communities from Northern Poland

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I. Introduction

In my paper I intend to outline the contacts between the late Mesolithic hunter-gatherers and the early Neolithic farming communities from the part of Polish Lowland called Kuiavia. This region seems to be an especially suitable area for such investigation on account of its very early colonization by farming communities (Czerniak, 1994). The beginning of this process is dated to about 4500 conv. bc or 5400 cal. BC. The first farmers in Northern Europe, which we call Linear Pottery culture (LBK), came from 'the south', more precisely from the Central European Plain. Wherever the Linear Pottery culture people arrived to Northern Poland, they were confronted with a native population whose economy was based on gathering, fishing and hunting.

In the late Mesolithic two different cultural tradition were developing on Polish territory: the Postmaglemose (Fig. 1 · 2) and Janiszlawice (Fig. 3 · 4) cultures (Kozlowski, 1989; Domanska, 1995). The first one continued the north European tradition in tool production while Janiszlawice flint industry must be genetically related to the south-eastern Europe (Domanska, 1998).

The late Mesolithic settlement of the Kuiavia was mainly located in pre-valley of the Vistula–Notec rivers (Fig. 5). This is territory of a very low agricultural usefulness, with the landscape marked by sandy soils and abundant marshy areas. In the parallel stretch of the pre-valley settlement of the Postmaglemose groups distinctly predominated, while in the meridian one settlement of the Janiszlawice culture.

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For our studies the concentrations of the Postmaglemose sites discovered in the pre-valley of the Notec river at the Kuiavian Plateau (Fig. 5 - this area is marked by black soils) border and the concentration found on the sandy island inside the area of the black soils are the most important. These two concentrations of the hunter-gatherer settlements were located in the close neighbourhood of the early farming settlements.

The first concentration includes the complex of the late Mesolithic sites near Kolankowo. They lay on a dune-covered terrace of the Notec ice-marginal valley. Traces of seven campsites were recorded and two of them were excavated.

The second concentration of sites is situated on the Kuiavian Plateau. The surface investigation conducted during last year provided with materials representing the Postmaglemose culture.

The early Neolithic age of some of these sites has been confirmed by radiocarbon dates: Stara Wies - 3870 bc, Glinki - 4330 bc (Prinke, Szmyt, 1990).

The Jęniskowice settlement is spread (Fig. 1) out the south-eastern part of Kuiavia and exemplified by sites in Wistka Szlachecka and Deby.

II. Evidences of the Contacts Between the Postmaglemose Hunter-Gatherers and Linear Pottery Culture Farmers

As the first group of people of the LBK appeared in the Kuiavia a process of information exchange between farmers and hunters was initiated. The traces of their contacts in the Kuiavian materials are confined to an exchange of raw flint materials, technology and tools.

1. Exchange of raw flint materials

Mesolithic hunter-gatherers and early farming communities of Kuiavia used both local and imported flint raw materials from Southern Poland (Domanska, 1996).

The Postmaglemose communities used only local flint resources obtainable on river beaches and processed on the terrain of camps. Though several artefacts of the non-local flint were registered at the site Kolankowo 5. The artefacts seem to correspond with Linear Pottery culture tradition and their presence at this site may confirm contacts of these two populations: farmers and hunters (Domanska, 1995).