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THE „LONG HOUSE“ OF THE LATE BAND POTTERY CULTURE FROM BUKOWIEC, CHELMNO LAND

A contribution to a study over the settlement specifics of early-agrarian communities

Works of a team of archaeologists related to a study over the Neolithic Age on Chełmno Land have been lasting for almost two decades (compare summarising papers: Wiślański ed. 1987; MałECKA-Kukawka 1992; Czerniak ed. 1994; Kukawka 1991; 1997; and former sporadic research events, see: Wawrzykowska 1987). During this period over 2000 sites linked to Neolithic cultures have been identified (Sosnowski 1994). Excavation surveys of various range (usually of a narrow scope) have been performed on over 70 sites (compare: Kukawka 1997). Samples of gained ancient material allowed working-out a local cultural-chronological scheme. The results of conducted research allowed to state, that the concentrations of the settlement of the Linear Band Pottery and the late Band Pottery Cultures, but also of the Funnel Beaker Culture are located in the furthest, north-eastern spot of the Central European early-agrarian world.

Outline of the subject

Such a context brings along a question of the character of the local settlement. This question can be specifically related to the Linear Band Pottery and the late Band Pottery Cultures. Discussions between Polish archaeologists (for example during various scientific conferences) have shown that opinions differ. Scholars from outside of Chełmno Land usually have suggested, that the local, early-agrarian settlement used to be of a penetrative, or even season character only. Their arguments sounded very suggestive. The facts called upon were, among others, relatively small size of archaeological sites, lack of burial discoveries, and most of all, lack of permanent dwellings — the basic determinant of settlement stability. These arguments relate especially to the late Band Pottery Culture. It is true, that Chełmno Land shows differences even from neigh-

bouring Kuyavia, where large sites in the type of Brześć Kujawski, with numerous graves and characteristic foundation ditches of long trapezoidal houses, preserving sometimes up to an impressive depth of about 2 m (see: e.g. Czerniak 1980; Grygiel 1986) exist.

During behind-the-scene talks archaeologists from Chełmno Land suggested, that a relatively smaller size of the late Band Pottery Culture sites relates to the terrain relief different from the Kuyavian one (numerous and small terrain forms on Chełmno Land). The reason of grave lack is the acidity of local soils on the one hand, and their destruction conditioned by the terrain shape and ages-old (and especially contemporary) agricultural activities on the other. This last argument should be linked to the lack of dwelling-traces. Such suppositions are confirmed by the lack of post-consumption animal bones at the archaeological sites (the same reason as in case of graves) and also by discoveries of usually bottom parts of household objects (argument related to graves and foundation ditches).

In the face of such an outline of the subject, the discovery of a „long house“ at the Bukowiec site (Jabłonowo Pomorskie county, Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship, site 15) gains a special meaning.

Description of the site and research

The Bukowiec site (Fig. 1) is located on a narrow belt (up to about 75 m wide) along the upper parts of a gentle slope (covering an area of about 250 m). Its foot is covered by vast, partially boggy, sunken areas, south from the site connecting with a valley of a small stream (Duża Bacha). Level difference between the top-most point of the site and the boggy areas and Duża Bacha valley reach 10 m, while differences within the site no more than 2,5 m.

Sub-soil ground consists of clayey sands (sometimes with an addition of gravels) in the upper layers and of heavy clays in the deeper ones.

In 1997 probing survey was done at the site. Probing excavations, with a surface of 69 m², revealed 11 m of one wall, together with a ditch of the shorter gable and a fragment (1 m²) of the second wall of a trapezoidal structure of the late Band Pottery Culture.

Since it was an intention not to destroy accidentally uncovered fragments, while determining the shape of the house a non-destructive method of excavation reconnaissance was employed. A series of small probing digs were made, with a total surface of 12,2 m². For the uncovered fragments of the ditch drawings of horizontal projections were made. They did not undergo an archaeological exploration (Fig. 2).

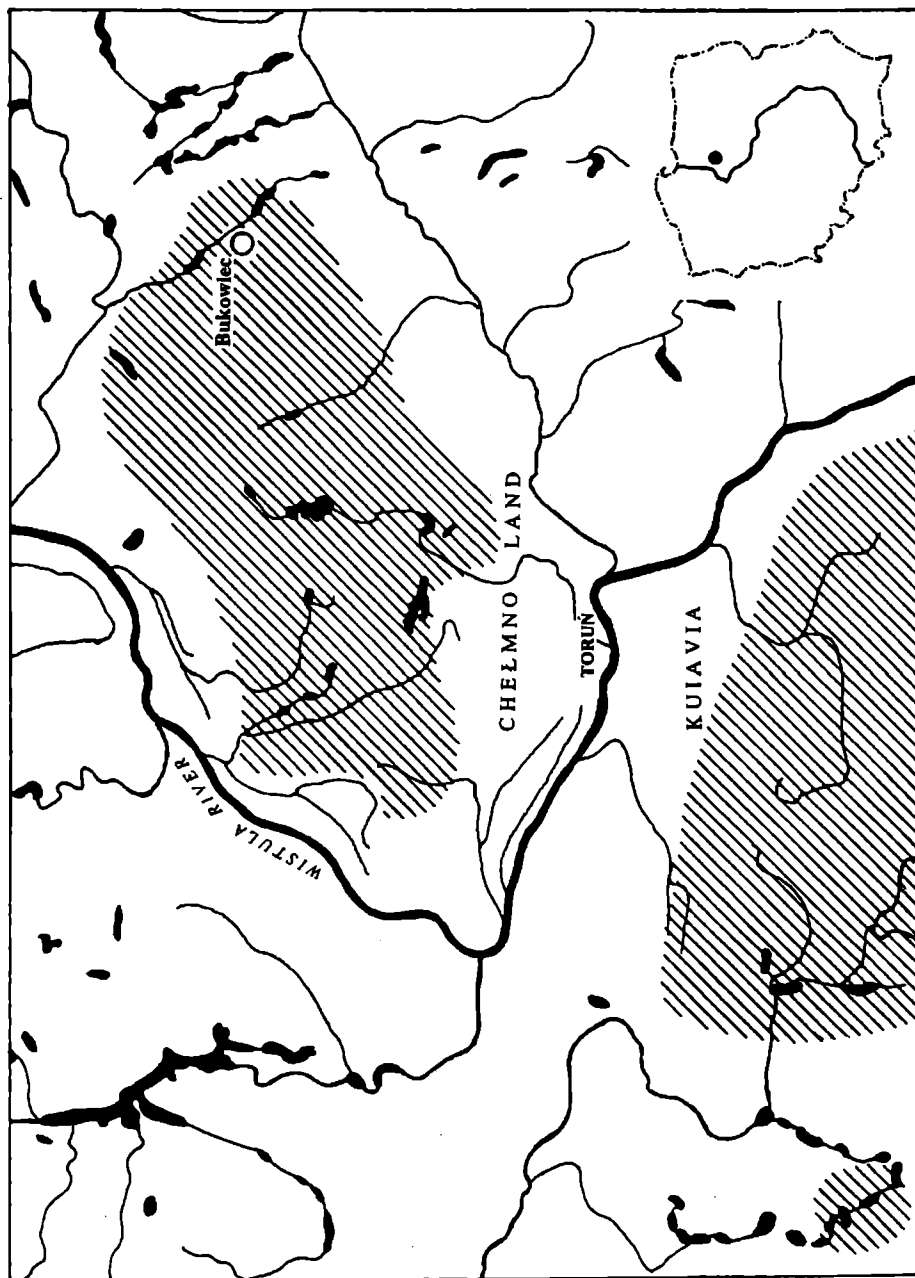


Fig. 1. Localisation of the Bukowiec site 15.

Description of the foundation ditch

The ditch forms an elongated, narrow trapezoid heading from south-east (the wider gable) towards north-west (the narrower gable), being almost parallel (the longer sides) to the slope. The side walls slightly (1,5–1,7 m) reach ahead the ditch of the wider gable, suggesting a small arcade with filled side walls on this side of the building. The ditch of the wider gable reaches (most probably from both sides) about 1 m out of the line of the side walls. The total length of the ditch of the side wall is 23,25 m, of the shorter gable- 3,7 m and the longer about 5 m (excluding the fragments reaching out of the line of the side walls). The internal dimensions, delimited by the ditch are about 20,75 m (length), 2,75 m (the narrower gable) and 4 m (the wider gable), what allows to estimate the internal usage surface for about 70 m² (plus 6–7 m² of the arcade surface).

In the basic probing excavation the ditch appeared below the sandy-clayey arable layer (with about 30 cm of thickness) and a several-centimetre stratum of yellow clayey sand below. Its remaining depth amounted from 10 to 40 cm (with the domination of the last value). The upper parts of the ditch were placed on the base of clayey sands, while the lower ones on the heavy boulder clay. The width of the ditch within the range of the side wall varied between 20 to 50 cm, reaching 55–80 cm at the narrower gable. Although the legibility within the ditch was not very good, it was possible to determine, that the side wall was of a palisade character (a row of posts attached to each other, with diameters of 25–30 cm; Fig 3). Structure of the north-western gable (especially of the northern corner) turned out to be more complicated. The fact observed was filling of the ditch with more than one row of poles (two or even three rows or also a less regular structure — non-row, within the whole ditch; Fig. 3). In numerous points also small boulders 10–25 cm in diameter were noticed in the spaces between the poles. The boulders must have had fixing functions. Few and rather small fragments of pugging were found in the ditch. They can suggest clay pasting of the walls, although the amount of pugging does not confirm it.

Heavy boulder clay with addition of gravel and small rocks with diameters from several to 20 cm make the uncovered fragments of the building's interior surface. Situation looks slightly different outside of the ditch. The level of clay bed lowers towards the west (dropping from about 40–50 cm below the ground surface down to even about 70 cm and more). Upper layers of clayey sands located between the arable layer and the heavy clay layer mentioned above contained artefacts. Since the upper parts of the ditch cut through the sandy layer so one could conclude, that this layer outside of the ditch could had been taking its shape before the construction of the house, during the late Band Pottery settlement process however. It means, that the settlement within the range of the site has older origins than the discovered remains of the dwelling. This conclusion is confirmed by catching in the horizontal projection an undefined closely object cutting through the foundation ditch in the south-eastern part of the dwelling. Appearance of individual pottery fragments of the Funnel Beaker Culture in the roof of the sandy layer (especially wet from the building) shows, that it had

gained its shape during the settlement of this culture. No stratigraphic division of this layer was observed. Even the division line between the bed sand (placed on the boulder clay) and the sand with artefacts was illegible. At the same time this layer contained grey-tinted spots, amorphous and of varying sizes. They confirm an undefined closely cultural activity. They probably constitute deeply washed-in traces of objects situated higher and now destroyed.

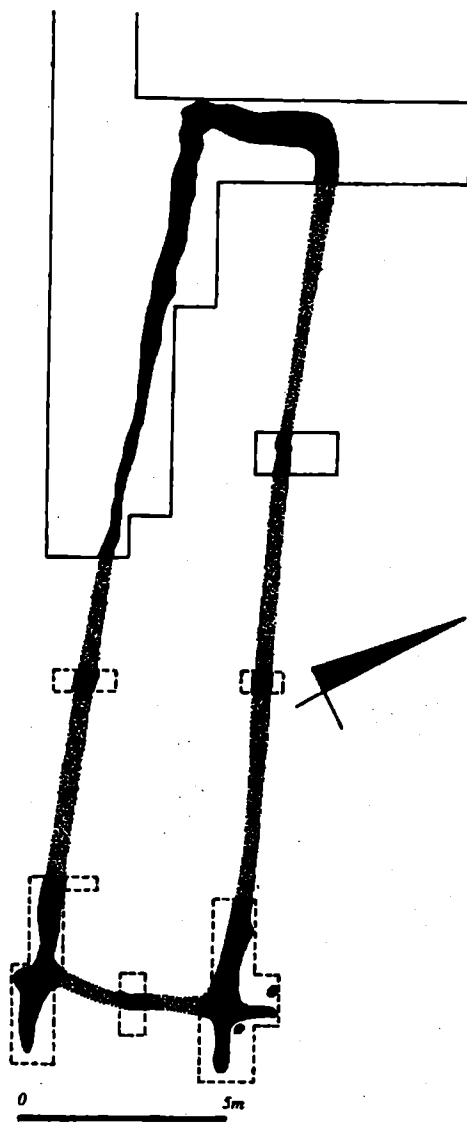


Fig. 2. Bukowiec, site 15. Foundation ditch of a dwelling of the late Band Pottery Culture. Continuous line — explored excavations, dashed line — not explored excavations, black colour — uncovered parts of the foundation ditch, dots — a hypothetical outline of the ditch.

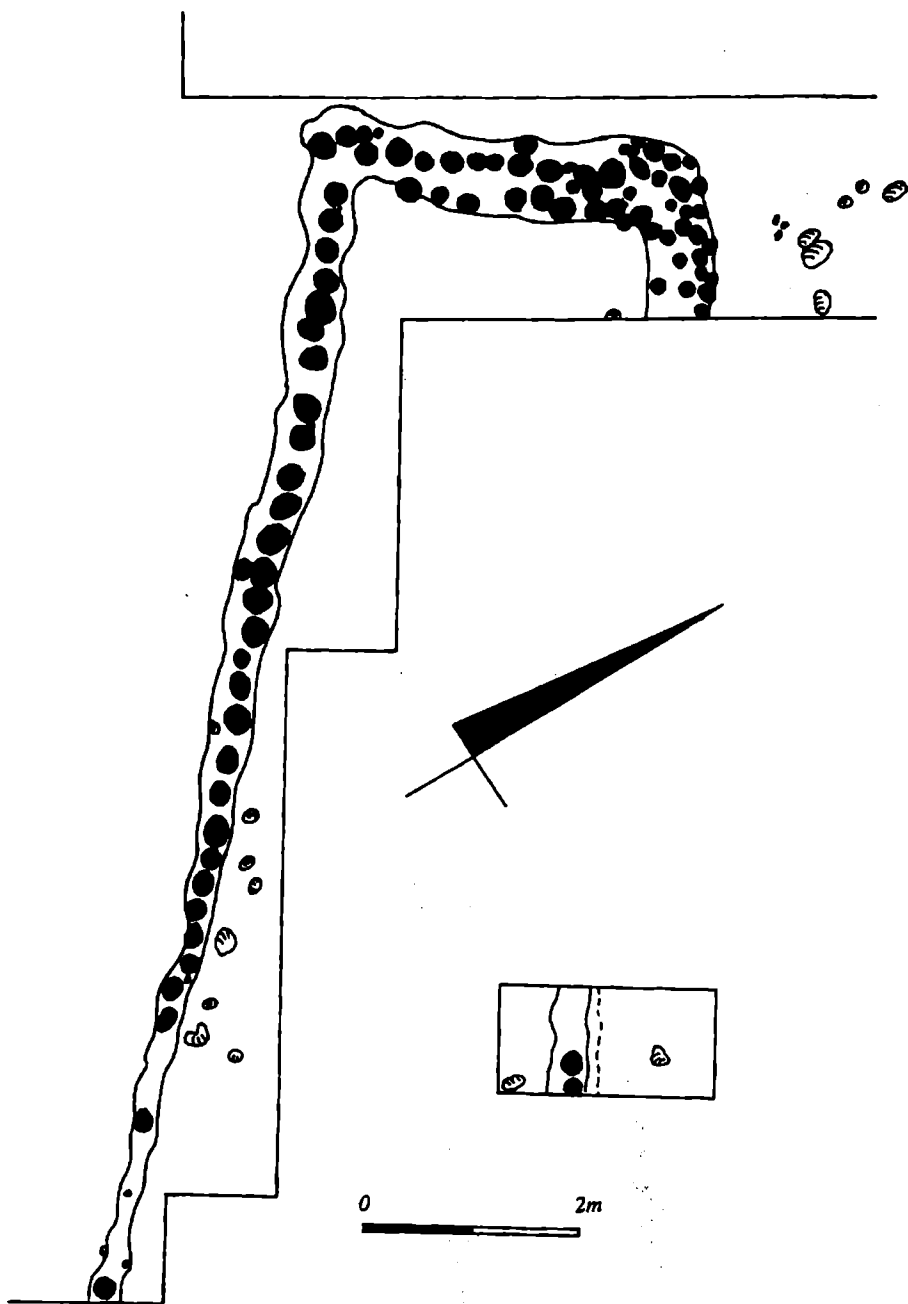


Fig. 3. Bukowiec, site 15. Posts identified within the explored parts of the foundation ditch.

Destruction of roof parts of the sandy layer seems to be confirmed by the small depth of the ditch. Even considering the contemporary arable layer, it seems, that the posts sunken into a sandy-clayey ground to the depth of 55–70 cm would not have been sufficiently stable. Also lack of traces of ploughed-out ditch in the arable layer and covering of the remaining ditch layers by the yellow clayey sand force a conclusion, that the relics of the dwelling had been strongly damaged already in the prehistoric times. Otherwise it should be stated, that the roof of the ditch marks the usage level from the period of the dwelling's functioning. It is contradicted by the occurrence of the clear bed stratum within the building, and especially by the shallowness of the ditch.

Technological and stylistic features of the pottery gained during the survey show that the settlement of the late Band Pottery Culture should be linked with its phase III (most likely III a, according to Czerniak 1980), and using more traditional nomenclature — with the classical period of the Brześć Kujawski Group of the Lengyel Culture.

Conclusions

The performed probing survey allowed to discover the first on Chełmno Land remains of a big, trapezoidal dwelling of the late Band Pottery Culture, so typical for the Kuyavia-Wielkopolska (Great Poland) area. This discovery was made at the north-east edge of this culture's and also the whole early-agrarian world's zone. The perimeter of so-far recognised early-agrarian settlement (late Band Pottery cultures) is placed no more than 8 km east from the examined site. It means — unlike some archaeologists claim — that the occupation of Chełmno Land was of a fully stabilised character, basically not differing from the one known from Kuyavia and Wielkopolska.

The size of the site and intensity of artefacts' occurrence on its surface (and also noticeable traces of undefined closely number of objects) can suggest, that there should be more similar traces of dwellings. It is likely, that the site could be compared with sites known from Kuyavia: Brześć Kujawski, Ostonki of Krusza Zamkowa.

Some architectonic details (the supposed arcade, the structure of the narrower gable wall, the elongation of the side walls of the wider gable) make a distinction between the foundation ditches from Bukowiec, and the published objects from Kuyavia. It cannot be out of question, that it is a regional property (next to some distinctive features of pottery and flint processing noticed earlier — Małecka-Kukawka 1992; Kirkowski — Sosnowski 1994).

The preservation of the ditch suggests advanced destruction processes, taking place probably since the time of abandonment of the building. It confirms a supposition, that during the period of settlement of the late Band Pottery Culture on Chełmno Land long trapezoidal houses were common. This thesis is supported by the fact of the discovery of partially preserved ditch at another site of this culture (Ryńsk, Wąbrzeźno county). This ditch was preserved only at 1–1,5

m, and its depth reached only 5–10 cm. It gives a good example of the level of destruction of traces of early-agrarian communities' settlement.

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