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THE NEOLITHIC CERAMIC FROM SOUTHWESTERN LITHUANIA (UŽNEMUNĖ)

Vygandas Juodagalvis

SUMMARY

Until the 1980s there was not one excavated Neolithic settlement in the southwestern Lithuania (Užnemunė). A few sherds of Neolithic ceramics were found by chance at Nendriniai (district Marijampolė) and Laumėnai (district

Kaunas). After 1984 there were found three Neolithic settlements with the ceramics material in the basin River Šešupė: Kubilėliai, Gluobiai I and Gedupis (district Šakiai).

More than 6000 sherds were recovered from plow zone and humic layer at Kubilėliai. The ceramics from humic layer were divided into two basic types. Temper of first type ceramics usually consists of rock and quartz. The thickness of sherds varies from 0,4 to 1,2 centimetres, most frequently from 0,6 to 0,8 centimetres. The vessels were decorated with horizontal cord impressions and with small pits lines. Temper of second type ceramics consists of sand. Rock were less frequently utilized for temper. The sherds of second type ceramics were hard, decorated with cord impressions or with incised lines. The surface of sherds was smooth or deep stroked. The color of both types pottery varies from different shades of grey to brownish, reddish and yellowish. The vessels had C, I and S - shaped necks and pointed bases. There were recovered some sherds with the numerous holes. This type of pottery was used for keeping up the fire.

The pottery from Kubilėliai has the features both of the culture of Corded ware and both of the Neolithic Nemunas culture. The settlements Gluobiai I and Gedupis are on initial stage of excavation and the ceramics material is still less numerous.

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A chapter in the research on the South-Baltic cultural context in the development of the great Poland-Kuiavia communities from the time of the horizon of the „classical” cord ware culture

Aleksander Koško

The eastern part the great valley zone of the Central European Lowland (fig. 1:6) is found in the regionalization of the circle of cultures with cord ware (CWC) as a transitional territory; a settlement area of not very legible characteristic of cultural separateness. This „group” distinguished here - western-Polish (J. Kostrzewski, T. Sulimirski) ¹ or the Great Poland - Kuiavia or Kuiavia - Great Poland (J. Machnik) ² CWC (fig. 1:10) - is hence characterized in a taxonomically not very distinct manner as „synthesis” of genetically different „corded ware” communities. However, due the scarcity of available sources there have not been made an analysis of the origin of development of this phenomena. That is why it was not possible to characterize the course of the mentioned „synthesis”, i.e. establish the stages in the development of „the group” pointing to the changes in the generators of its transformations.

The stimulus for writing this essay were the results of the most recent studies on the late neolithic culture of Kuiavia. One of their effects is the possibility of undertaking studies on the concretization of the above outlined picture of the eastern great valley CWC. In this work we shall focus mainly on the selected southern-Baltic context of conditions of its development.

A. The influence of „cordedization” of the late neolithic culture of Kujawy - the Dnieper-Vistula and the Elbe-Oder „waves”

The area of Kuiavia and in a wider perspective the eastern-great valley was, in light of the most recent studies, in the „classical” period of CWC submitted twice to the process of „cordedization” influence. The role of the late neolithic substrate in both cases was played by the Funnel Beaker Culture (FBC) ³.

The older period - identified with the Dnieper-Vistula „wave” falls to the A horizon of CWC. In the area of Kuiavia it is documented by the grave assemblages at Krusza Zamkowa, Bydgoszcz Voivodeship, site 3 (Bln-1812:2445±70 B.C.) and possibly those at Zarębowo, Włocławek Voivodeship, site 1 and observations of the alleged assemblages of the settlement pottery of the FBC from IIIC-IVA phases (i.e. from the years 2600-2450 B.C.) with a sporadic share of „old-corded” features (mainly fragments of beakers of A type). Separation of pottery from horizon A among the FBC materials was made by K. Jażdżewski in 1936, the so called vessels with the horizontal groove ornamentation ⁴. However, only the 70s and 80s as an effect of observation of recurrence of the discoveries of cooccurrence of the above mentioned „type” of materials within a number of settlements from Kujawy the hypothesis of the parallel character of the development of great valley communities: the oldest CWC (phase Ia) and FBC from phase IIIC-IVA could be outlined with more validity. The foundation for the topogenetic identification of this „oldest CWC” is provided by the analysis of the grave in Krusza Zamkowa. As its result it could be said that „the community which is represented by the studied burial had a very extremely complex origin combining many cultural traditions of the area between the Dnieper and the Vistula rivers”. This conclusion is authenticated in the analysis of chronologically, and probably gene-

rally culturally as well, close to the burials in Modliborzyce, Bydgoszcz Voivodeship, site I or those in Bozejewice, Bydgoszcz Voivodeship, site 8⁵. In the area of Great Poland the symptom of existence of a chronologically adequate, and maybe genetically as well, „corded ware” horizon may be considered some „loose” finds of axes of A type (fig. 1:3,5).

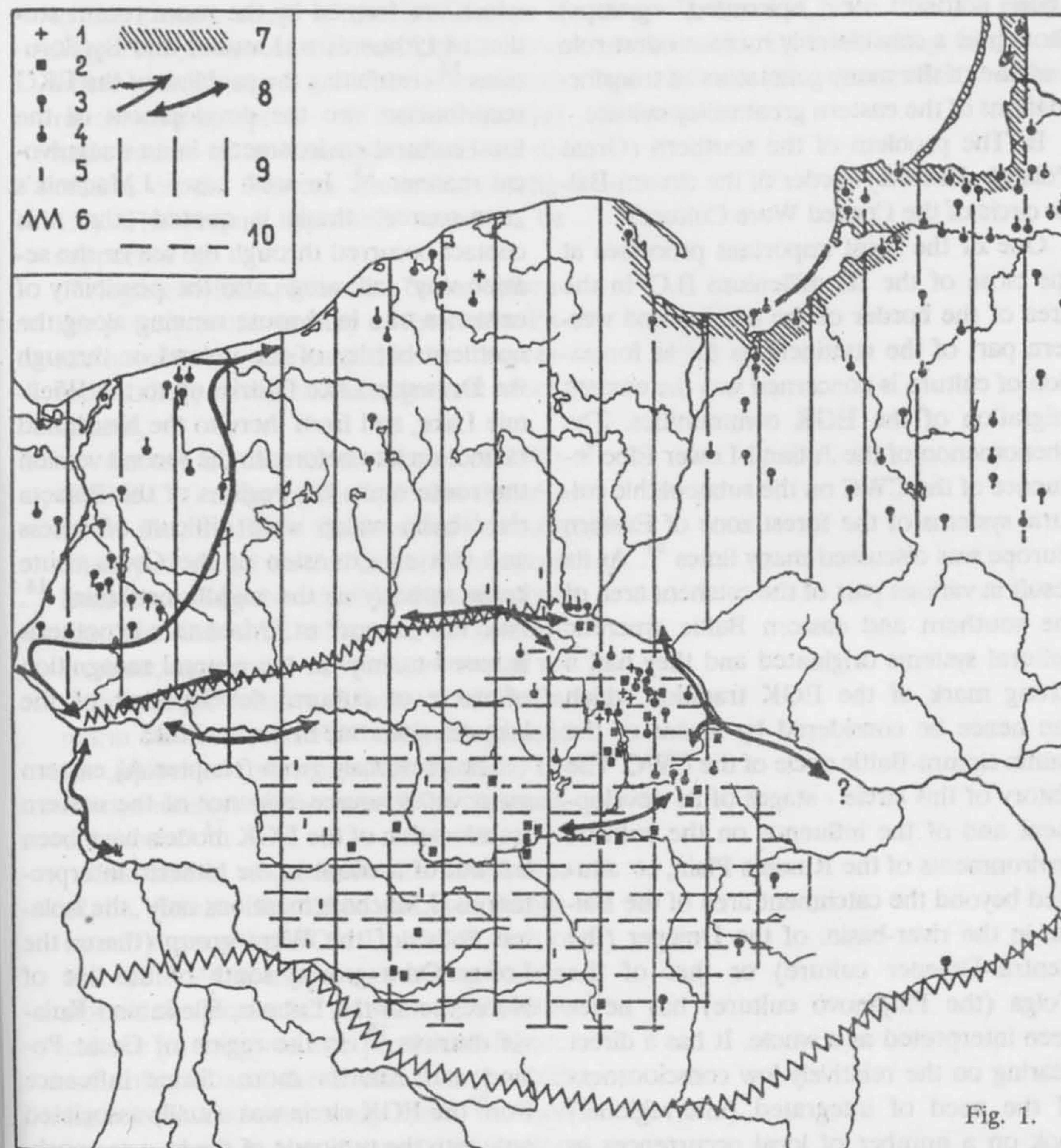
Within the area of Kuiavia the above mentioned influence did not directly bring the transformation of FBC with the „classic” CWC (e.g. in contradistinction to the Old Upland - Little Poland zone of the Vistula River valley)⁶. The „old-corded ware” features fall into disuse here, in a not very modified version, in two different environments of the FBC communities: the Radziejów group and the so called epibeaker groups (Ib phase of the CWC). We have two radiocarbon determinations of this phenomenon: Gd-1983: 2300±70 B.C. /Krusza Podlotowa, Bydgoszcz Voivodeship, site 2) and Bln 2187: 1970±60 B.C. (Krusza Zamkowa, Bydgoszcz Voivodeship, site 13).

The younger period - identified with the Elbe-Odra „ware” falling to the „classical” horizon of the CWC. And so in the area of Kuiavia and Great Poland it is mainly documented by the settlement materials, recently qualified within the so called epibeaker horizon (sporadically to the decline of late beaker horizon).

The epibeaker horizon was distinguished in 1981 (A.Kosko⁷) encompassing within it the sources which documented the „decline phase” of FBC. This concept was to mean the states of a very strong transformation of the system until the lose of the dominant position in the structure of genetically recognized features by the „beaker” component. In such cases in decisions on classification the guiding principle was the assumption on the existence in the western great valley zone of the Lowland of two basic endogenous lineages of the late neolithic cultural transformation: „the beaker” and „the amphora” ones.

The hitherto best developed version of reconstruction of the origin of the development of the „beaker” lineage may be summed up in the following way⁸. „Along with disintegration in the eastern part of the great valley zone of the Lowland of the FBC system (ca. 2200 B.C.) this area experienced a new influx of colonizers from the Elbe zone - to be more precise from the circle of the early (Untergrabzeit) and classical (Bodengrabzeit) culture of unitary graves (Einzelgrabkultur - EKG), representing „the Jutland-Low Elbe,” CWC centre”. In the area of Great Poland and Kuiavia the EKG features are registered only against the FBC pottery treating them as one of the distinguishing discriminants of the above mentioned epibeaker horizon. They cooccur, within the indicated taxonomie, with a typically decline neolithic complex, set of traditions varying genetically, within it mainly from the „forset” - eastern European subneolithic cultures. The route through which the „Jutland-Lower Elbe” population arrived led along the Odra, and then the Warta and the Notec rivers (fig. 1:8). In the proglacial stream valley of the second of these rivers and in its immediate hinterland there was created, between Śrem and Kolo a zone of the extremely their „eastern great valley” adaptation (fig. 1:2). From there or along the Notec the population from the EKG circle reached also Kuiavia (e.g. materials from Sornowo, Włocławek voivodeship, site 1)⁹. However, one should emphasize that this mesoregion, despite the fact that it has been recognized better that Great Poland, did not manifest a more extensive share of EKG in the local cultural transformations. The „epibeaker” settlement delimits the process of formation of the regional subsystem of CWC which in the light of the „Jutland” datings of the above mentioned EKG phases may be situated in the years 2250/2200-2000 B.C. with an admissible shift above the upper caesura.

An open problem remains to what a degree this process crossed the threshold of sta-



bilization-synthesis of a separate cultural unit. Among its source evidence three „autogenetic” types of complexes of sources may be distinguished which document:

- an insignificant share of the EKG tradition in the „late Lubon” environments of the FBC (e.g. Czolpin, Włocławek Voivodeship, site II, fig. 2:A);

- forms of distinct coexistence of the „decline” tradition of FBC, EKG and the „forest” - east European cultures (e.g. Pakszyn, Poznań Voivodeship, fig. 3). Their mutual relations - in the situation of the extremely limited recognition of

cultural taxonomy of the decline period of the neolithic, however, they cannot be more exactly outlined.

The Elbe-Odra cultural influences in the eastern part of the great valley zone of the Lowland were continued at the beginning of the bronze epoch. The distinguishing factor of this decline horizon of the influence of the EKG circle (mainly of the Wkra group) are the features of the bell beaker culture¹⁰. The increase in the genetic complexity of the culture-forming factors which is characteristic of this period (proto-bronze-AB1) situates CWC (the

„late corded” or „epicorded” groups) though in a considerably more modest role - of one of the many generators of transformations of the eastern great valley culture.

B. The problem of the southern (Great Poland - Kuiavia) border of the circum-Baltic circle of the Corded Ware Culture.

One of the most important processes at the close of the III millennium B.C. in the area of the border of the eastern and western part of the continent as far as formation of culture is concerned was the eastern migration of the EGK communities. The phenomenon of the Jutland-Lower Elbe influence of the CWC on the subneolithic cultural systems of the forest zone of Eastern Europe was discussed many times¹¹. As its result in various part of the catchment area of the southern and eastern Baltic syncretic cultural systems originated and they had a strong mark of the EGK tradition which can hence be considered by means of the name: circum-Baltic circle of the CWC. The history of this circle - stages of its development and of the influence on the cultural environments of the Russian Plain, i.e. situated beyond the catchment area of the Baltic; in the river-basin: of the Dnieper (the Central-Dnieper culture) or that of the Volga (the Fatjanovo culture) has never been interpreted as a whole. It has a direct bearing on the relatively low consciousness of the need of integrated (interregional) look on a number of local occurrences in the history of the Baltic CWC. This also applied to the milieu of Polish scholars who study the neolithic.

In the evaluation of the Baltic CWC settlement between the Odra and the Niemen still dominates a habit for the EGK circle and the Rzućewo culture (fig. 1:7,8). „The question of the ways of influx of the northern and western elements to the area of the Rzućewo culture, thus the question of existence of the Pomeranian of latitude communication route” is treated to marginally, in a manner which is incommensurable to the „favourable cognitive circumstances”

which are formed by the more recent studies of Lithuanians, Latvians and Byellorussians¹² - exhibiting the problem of the EGK contribution into the development of the local cultural environments in an unequivocal manner¹³. In such cases J.Machnik's „non-source” thesis is quoted „that this contact occurred through the sea or the seaside way”, allowing „also the possibility of existence of a land route running along the northern border of the upland or through the Drawskie Lake District up to the Wielimie Lake, and from there to the North and further on like before. In the second version the route omits the regions of the Parsęta river basin which were difficult of access and was an extension of the Gwda route known as early as the middle neolithic”¹⁴. Also this „annex” to J.Machnik's hypothesis is based mainly on the general recognition of norm of cultural development of the lake-sea side zone in the neolithic.

The previously given (chapter A) eastern great valley source evidence of the eastern translocation of the EGK models have been left out of account in the hitherto interpretations. J.Machnik mentions only „the isolated finds” of the Wkra group (there: the Lower Odra group) south of the line of Notec, i.e. in the Lubusz, Silesia and Kuiavia districts¹⁵. In the region of Great Poland and Kuiavia more distinct influence from the EGK circle was usually associated only with the prologue of the bronze epoch, i.e. with the above mentioned „decline horizon” of its influence¹⁶.

The sources signaled in this work that confirm the Elbe-Odra „wave” of „cordedization” of the cultural environments of the eastern great valley zone show a new chance of integrated interpretation of the „southern segment” (between the Odra and the Niemen - fig. 1:9 of the circum-Baltic circle of the CWC. To begin with a question should be asked whether the „epibeaker” materials from Great Poland and Kuiavia which document its southern border should be identified as an effect of the „side trend”

in the eastern route of the EGK or as a fragment of one of the two (in situation where justifications of the Pomeranian route were accepted - cf. earlier remarks) main routes of its translocations in the direction of the Eastern Baltic Shore (fig. 1:8). The second hypothesis seems to be supported by:

- legible stylistic references of the epibeaker pottery to the pottery of the Narva-Pamariu cultures („the carprd-incised impressed motifs”) as well as more general observations,

- distinct increase in the period of 2300-1900 B.C. (i.e. during the arrival in the area of the Eastern Baltic Shore of EGK among others) of the „forest” - Eastern European features among the whole of Kuiavia communities. One should also add a significant increase, as a result of the most recent research, in the number of features of the Pamariu culture in the FBC assemblages and the „epibeaker” sites from the Chelmno District; therefore in the area of the commented „route”¹⁷.

One should not exclude that in the area of the Vistula valley there was also „demarcated” the southern-Old Upland branch of this route. As its manifestation may be considered the „contacts” between the Pamariu culture (in the given interpretations: Rzućewo culture) and the Złota culture which have been discussed many times¹⁸. Another symptom is the discovery of pottery with distinctly „epibeaker” features on the upper Bug¹⁹. One should remark here that both these Old Upland enclaves of reception of the features of the circum-Baltic circle of the CWC are recognized as areas of the stable, long-term contacts with the Kujawy settlement-cultural mesoregion.

x x x

As can be seen from the above remarks in the studies of the southern-Baltic cultural context, which we begin to perceive in studies on the great Poland Kuiavia communities of the „classical” area of CWC, we are at present in the stage of initial establishing

the programme. I hope that this essay will be conducive in establishing forms of co-operation on „the circum-Baltic scope” in its realization.

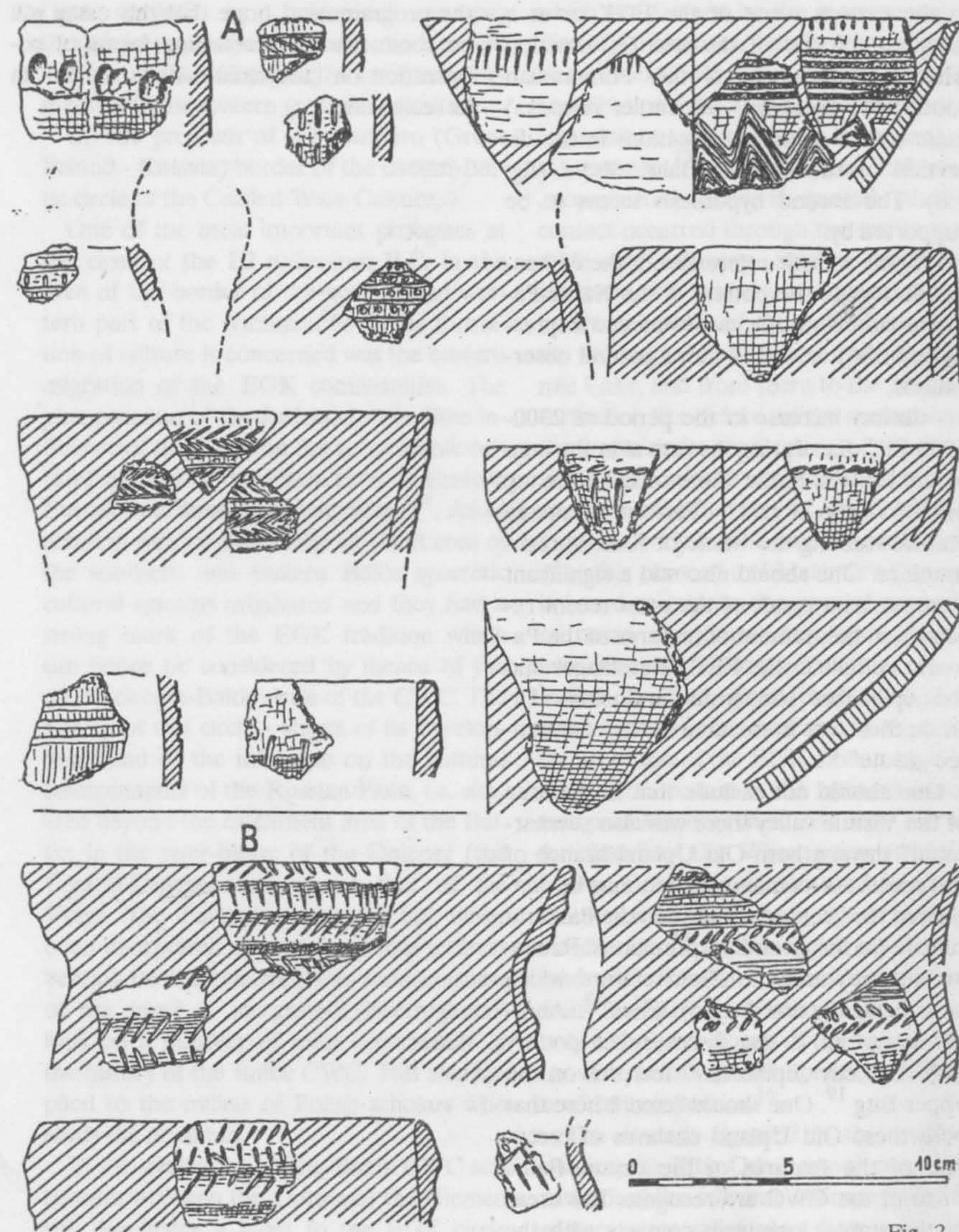


Fig. 2.

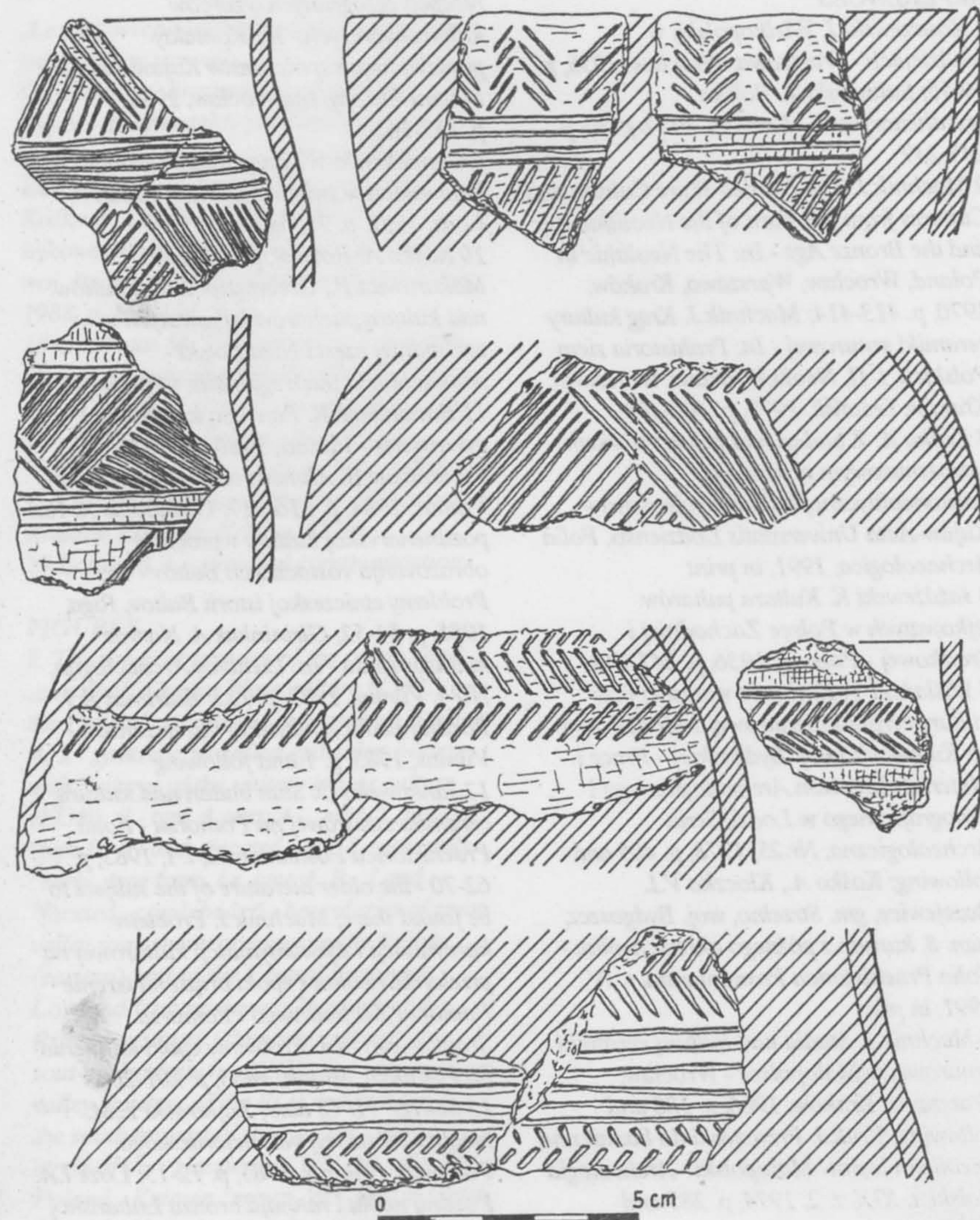


Fig. 3.

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FIGURES

1. The range of features of the „early” and „classical” Corded Ware culture (CWC) on the Polish Lowland: 1 - graves from horizon A; 2 - syncretic so called epibaker horizon with features of the unitary graves culture (EGK); 3 - type A axes; 4 - „early” „Jutland” (type B - J) and „faceted axes; 5 - generally „early”, type form, i.e. type A, B - J and „faceted”, combined; 6 - boundaries of great valley zone (makroregion) in the Polish (eastern) part of the Central European Lowland (subprovince); 7 - range of the Rzućwo culture (Pamariu culture); 8 - south-eastern reach of EGK and eastern great valley „routes”, of the EGK infiltration; 9 - the southern part of the circum - Baltic circle of the „classical”, CWC; 10 - the Great Poland - Kuiavia „group”, of CWC = Great Poland - Kuiavia area of reception of the EGK models. After Koško 1988.
2. „Epibaker” ceramics (with features of the EGK). A - Czolpin, Włocławek voivodeship, site II; B - Orkovo, Poznań voivodeship, site 1. After Koško 1988.
3. „Epibaker” ceramics (with features of the EGK). Pakszyn, Poznań voivodeship. Collection of the Museum in Gniezno.

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