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## THE GRAVE FROM ROMAN PERIOD AT THE GARBIEC HILL NEAR MYŚLIBÓRZ, LOWER SILESIA

**Abstract** The Garbiec Hill in Kaczawskie Foothills, near Myślubórz, Jawor county, was excavated in spring 2001 by the mixt expedition of the Department of Archaeology, University of Wrocław, and Archaeological Museum in Wrocław. On the top of the hill an urn grave has been found, unfortunately illegally explored earlier.

The grave from the vicinity of Myślubórz belongs to the group of sites from the Roman Period, probably from the stage B2/C1 – C1, with cultural features typical for the area in the upper reaches of the Elbe, that is, in general, for the Marcomannic and Quadic environment. They can be sometimes mixed with features of the Przeworsk culture. A distinct concentration of such sites is located in the vicinity of Jawor.

Besides, the discussed site, along with other sites belonging to that concentration, causes a change in perspective on colonization of the Sudetes in the Roman Period.

**Key words:** Barbaricum, Roman Period, funeral customs, Sudety Mountains

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The micro-region of Myslibórz, Jawor county, Lower Silesia, has been penetrated in the years 1995–1997 by the archaeological expedition directed by Radosław Jarysz, co-author of this paper (Jarysz 1997; Jarysz, Limisiewicz 1998). In the course of co-operation between the Museum of the City of Wrocław and the Department of Archaeology, University of Wrocław, he continued his field-works at several archaeological sites around city of Jawor. In the April 2001, just after the information about the illegal penetration of the hills in the vicinity of Myślubórz, the rescue excavations were conducted on the Garbiec Hill, partially already interrupted by non-professional explorers.

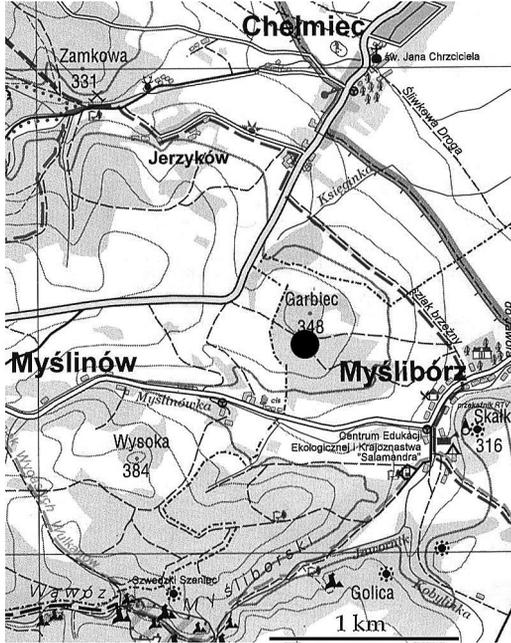
The Garbiec Hill is situated 875 m North-West of the town Myślubórz, Lower Silesia, and is a part of the Kaczawskie Foothills (Fig. 1), 347.9 m above sea level, visible

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from very far as characteristic element of the landscape (Fig. 2). The discovered grave was located on the south-western slope of the hill, in the area of the culmination. It was sunk into a mound with oval horizontal projection and with a size of  $40 \times 27$  m, oriented along the N-S line. The mound was about 5 m high from the south and about 1.5 m from the north. The mound was initially assumed to be a tumulus, but in fact is a natural rock covered with a layer of debris (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 1.** Localisation of the Garbiec Hill, near Myślubórz, Jawor county. Drawn by A. Błażejowski



**Fig. 2** Garbiec Hill in the Kaczawskie Foothills. View from the north. Photo by R. Jarysz



Fig. 3. Garbiec Hill – the top. View from the south. Photo by R. Jarysz

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The area of the oval-shaped illegal excavation with a size of  $0.9 \times 0.7$  m was included in a trial excavation with a size of  $4 \times 4$  m and oriented to the four cardinal points of the compass (Fig. 4). There were numerous fragments of pottery and burnt bones in the vicinity of the excavation. According to information given by an employee of the “Chełmy” Landscape Park, who came on the site just after the thieves’ digging,



Fig. 4. Garbiec Hill. Excavations on the top. Photo by R. Jarysz

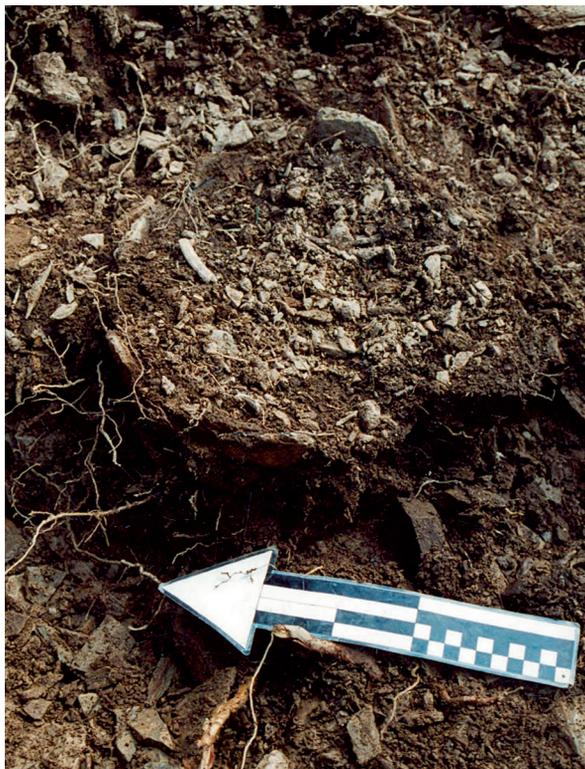
a fibula had been probably stolen from the urn. Near the eastern edge of the excavation, in place of the illegal searching, a hole sunk in the solid rock has been discovered (Fig. 5, 6). It contained further fragments of pottery and human bones. At a depth of 25 cm, fragments of a destroyed urn with burnt bones have been found. Only a lower part of the urn has preserved. Its bottom was placed on the solid rock. There were also fragments of several other vessels around the urn (Fig. 7, 8).



Fig. 5. Garbiec Hill. The urn grave – view from the north. Photo by R. Jarysz

#### Pottery inventory:

1. The vessel No. 1, the urn (Fig. 7c; 79 fragments of bodies, 6 fragments of rims, 3 fragments of bases). The vase with a bulbous base, a tapered neck and a thickened rim, slightly bent toward the exterior of the vessel. Two-coloured core: dark grey from the interior and creamy-grey from the exterior. The vessel has the coarse surface. On average, the walls are 0.8 cm thick. The clay was tempered by the admixture of middle-grained granite rubble. The vessel is 29 cm high, the diameter of the rim is 32 cm, and the diameter of the base is 14 cm.
2. The vessel No. 2 (Fig. 8g), the thin-walled vase, without a neck. Bar handles are distinctly noticeable on 2 fragments of the body. The walls are ca. 0.6 cm thick. The colour of all fragments is light, creamy and brick-red. Both the internal and the external surfaces are coarse. The base is well-preserved, with a noticeable and palpable sandy bed.
3. The vessel No. 3 (Fig. 8a), the vase with an articulated, slightly thickened rim bent toward the exterior of the vessel. The walls are ca 0.6 cm thick. The colour of the vessel is light grey-brownish.
4. The vessel No. 4 (Fig. 7a), the hemispherical small bowl ca 5 cm high, preserved in fragments.



**Fig. 6.** Garbiec Hill. The urn grave, lower level of the exploration – view from the West. Photo by R. Jarysz

5. The vessel No. 5, the miniature thin-walled vessel (Fig. 8f). The smooth walls are ca 0.4 cm thick. The vessel is ca 5 cm high. The colour of the surface is grey. There are traces of firing on the preserved fragments.

6. The vessel No. 6 (Fig. 7b), fragments of a pot. The height of the pot is undetermined, the walls are ca 0.7 cm thick.

7. In case of numerous fragments of bodies, it is difficult to determine from which vessel they come from (Fig. 8b-e). The pottery from the grave is technologically rather consistent.

There were strongly burnt human bones inside the urn. It was not possible to determine the sex and the age of the dead because the extent of burning and grinding was too large. The osteological material has been analysed by Halina Kołodziej Ph.D. from Institute of Anthropology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Wrocław.

There is no doubt that a cremation grave has been discovered on the excavated site. In the light of the set of artefacts, it is not clear, however, whether the grave contained only one or more than one person. Because the vessel no. 2, considering its size, could also served as an urn.

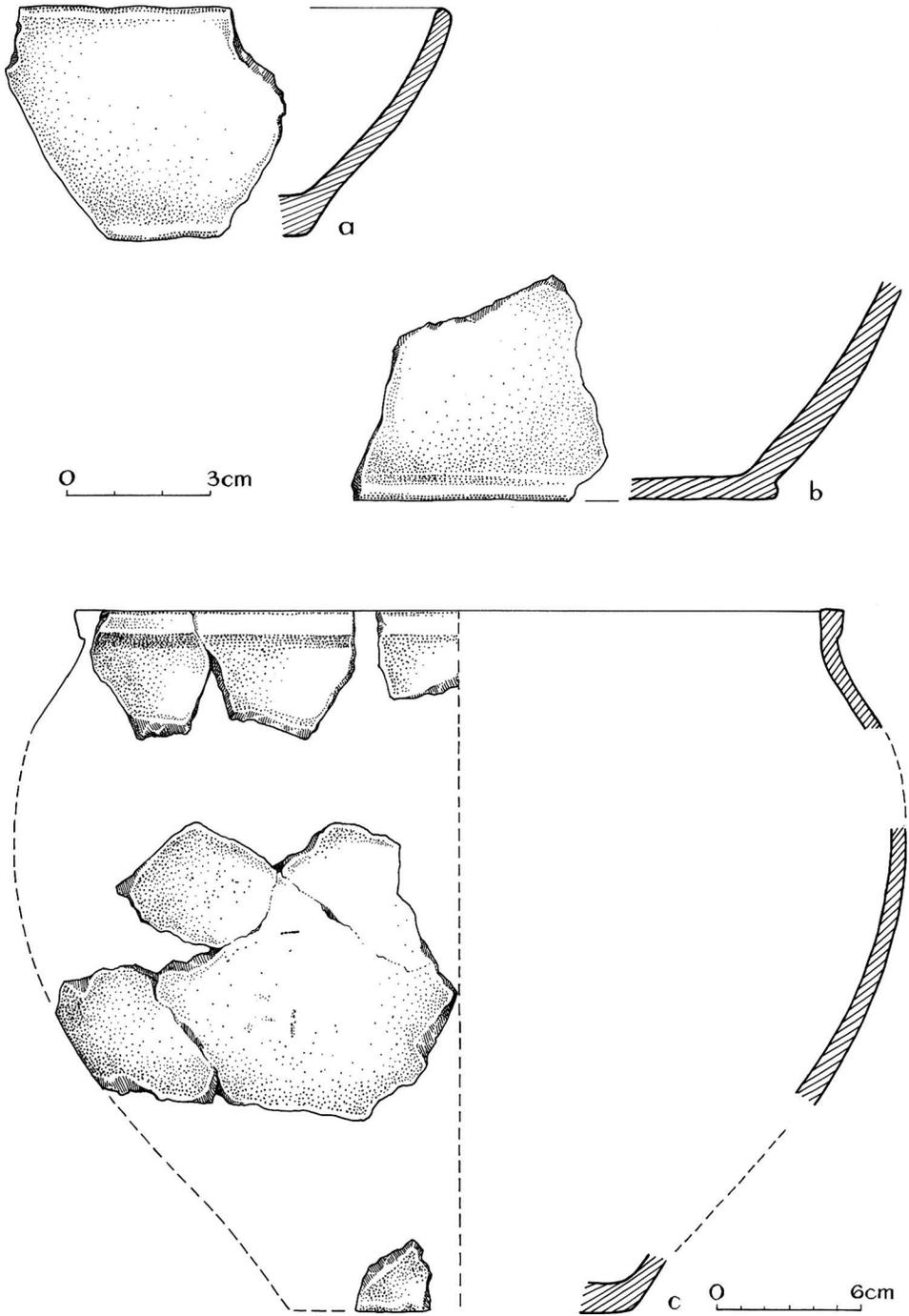


Fig. 7. Garbiec Hill. Pottery from the urn grave. Drawn by T. Demidziuk

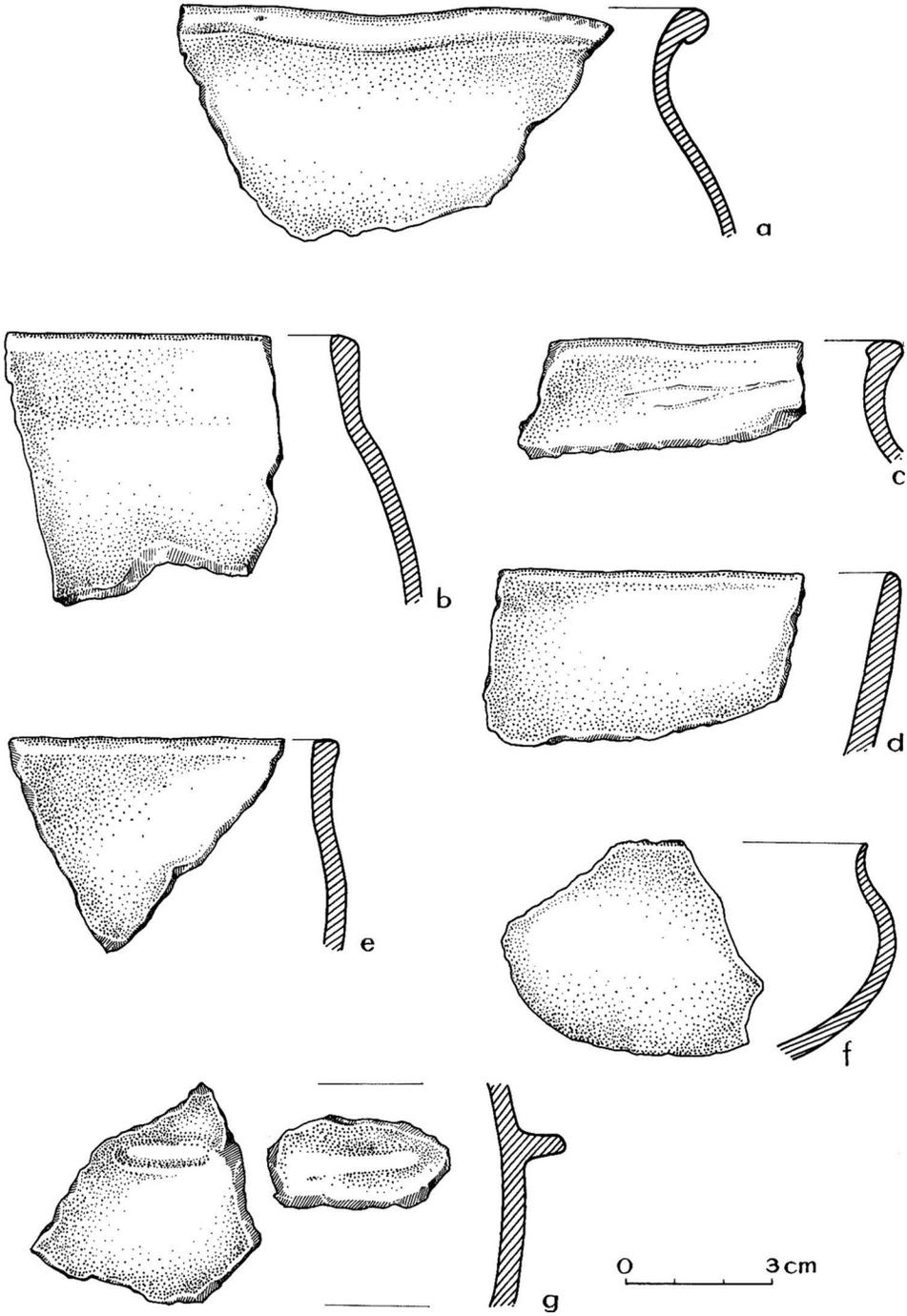


Fig. 8. Garbiec Hill. Pottery from the urn grave. Drawn by T. Demidziuk

As mentioned above, the set of pottery excavated from the discovered grave does not make up the complete inventory of the objects from the grave. The pottery was probably accompanied by metal objects. The assumption is that the fibula, described as “a safety pin”, could belong to the A.VI group (?). So, we are compelled to make attempts to establish the chronology and the cultural affiliation of the grave only on the basis of the pottery. Fortunately, the pottery has got clear distinctive features.

As concerns the urn (Fig. 7c), its coarse surface and, in the first place, its characteristic profile are noteworthy. The rim of the vessel was distinctly articulated. It was slightly thickened and it has got slightly angular section, a bit similar to bevelled rims. Such form of the vessel, as well as the characteristic shape of the rim has not got any analogies in the area of the Przeworsk culture. The review of pottery from Lower Silesia from all phases of the Przeworsk culture shows the lack of analogies with the analysed set of pottery (cf. Pazda 1980).

Quite close analogies, however, can be found to the south of the Sudetes, i.e. in the area of Bohemia. For example, very similar vessels, both in terms of the whole form of the vessel and the rim itself, were discovered inter alia on the burial ground in Opočno, to the north-west of Prague (Pleinerová 1995). What is more, there were numerous pieces characterized by a relatively light colour and coarse walls among urns from that necropolis, e.g. from the grave no. 36 (Pleinerová 1995, Table 14:11), the grave no. 56 (Pleinerová 1995, Table 17:15) and the grave no. 72 (Pleinerová 1995, Table 18:4). An urn from the grave no. 55, however, seems to be most similar to the discussed one, both in terms of the form (the profile and the rim stance) and pottery technique (*ibidem*, Table 17:4). It was not possible to determine the sex of the deceased from the grave no. 55. However, on the basis of meagre grave goods, in comparison with other, anthropologically well recognized graves from the same necropolis, it can be assumed that a woman was buried in that grave (cf. Pleinerová 1995, 62–78).

Similar vessels have been also known from settlements, for example from a settlement from Turnov-Maškovy in the Czech Republic (Droberjar, Prostředník 2000). Rims of some vessels from that site, like particularly the type 430 (Droberjar, Prostředník 2000, Table 23), were formed similarly to the urn from Myšlibórz. There are also similarities in forms of the vessels from that settlement (Droberjar, Prostředník 2000, Table 22, the type 3200). The chronology of such vessels has been fixed by the authors of the study of the settlement from Turnov to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD (Droberjar, Prostředník 2000, 88).

An urn from the grave no. 52 from a burial ground in Dobřichov-Piřhóra can be also described as a vessel similar in form (Droberjar 1999, 38, 47–48, Fig. 12:17, Table 47, 52/1). According to the author of a monograph of that site, the urn belongs to the type 17, which was, however, represented by only one vessel. That grave contained remains of a woman and has been generally dated to the B1 and the B2a phases.

There is also a distinct similarity between the discussed vessel from Myšlibórz and some vase-like vessels from the area of the Middle Elbe region. Yet, there the similarity is limited only to a bulbous form of the base, while the rim is formed differently. This

concerns vessels from a burial ground in Großromstedt, where they appeared during the whole C phase (cf. Schmidt 1976, 345, Fig. 1:21). Vases from that necropolis have been also mentioned by R. von Uslar, together with artefacts from other Thuringian sites, like for example Eisenach and Streyda, as well as from the area around Duisburg (von Uslar 1938, 69, Table 49:41).

The miniature vessel is an interesting part of the set (Fig. 8f). It is similar to vessels of that category, described by E. Droberjar (1997, 63), particularly to little cups (e.g. the type 7207) and to little bowls (the type 7601). Such artefacts have been found in graves from the Roman Period in many regions of Barbaricum (fig. 2f). Their occurrence in graves is sometimes associated with children's graves (Godłowski 1977, 146), what, in the case of the grave from Myślíbórz, would support the thesis that two individuals: an adult and a child, were buried there.

### 3. RESULTS

In view of lack of metal artefacts, an attempt to determine the chronology of the grave can be made only on the basis of the preserved fragments of the vessels. Of course that causes considerable difficulty in precise chronology. It seems, however, that the aforementioned analogies with the vessels from other sites create some chance.

The vessels from Dobřichov-Piřchora dates rather from the early Roman Period, like for example the vessel from the grave no. 52, dated from the B1 phase up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Droberjar 1999, 48). The vessel from the grave no. 55 from Opočno, which is closest, as it was mentioned, to the examined urn in terms of the form, is dated to the B2 phase (Pleinerová 1995, 106), because it belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> group of graves from that necropolis. Graves from that group were placed in the oldest, western part of the burial ground, which was used precisely in this phase.

The other examples of similar finds, for example the analogy from Turnov, date rather from a slightly later period, namely, from the B2/C1 and C1 phases. It seems that the chronology of the discussed group of artefacts should be determined similarly. Both the urn and the other vessels have got coarse surfaces, which is definitely a feature of pottery from the later Roman Period, similarly to the lack of ornamentation. Burial pottery from the early Roman Period was usually smoothed or even burnished. Such situation can be observed both in the area of the drainage basin of the Oder River and of the Elbe (cf. Pazda 1980, 114).

On account of the above-mentioned ascertainments, it seems that the grave from Myślíbórz can be dated to the turn of the early and the late Roman Period, most probably to the B2/C1 or the C1 phase.

### 4. DISCUSSION

Because the area in the vicinity of the discussed grave was explored quite thoroughly, there is no doubt that this is an isolated grave. However, it is unclear whether the

grave was intentionally placed in isolation, far from other graves and settlements, or it was connected with a planned necropolis which ultimately had never developed, e.g. because of the population's migration. It is also possible that other graves are situated at a greater distance from the Garbiec Hill. Anyway, the place of the burial was intentionally chosen – it is located clearly in a prominent place and in special surroundings.

Burials with similar features are not known both from the Sudetes and from the Sudetes Foreland. A burial ground in Chorula is the only place in the area of Silesia, where urns were placed on solid limestone rock (Szydłowski 1964). That site, however, was not located in such prominent place in the landscape. It seems that this prominent location was of crucial significance in the choice of the burial place. The place was chosen despite evident difficulties in sinking the urn into the ground. In general, criteria of location of burial grounds remain vague (cf. Błażejowski 1998, 143–144).

It turns out, however, that on the aforementioned burial ground in Opočno, in the Czech Republic, graves were sunk into the solid rock, particularly in case of the 2<sup>nd</sup> group of graves (Pleinerová 1995, 39, fig. 6). It is difficult to state whether it was of any significance in funeral rites.

To sink a grave into a natural mould, prominently marked in the landscape, is a different matter. Such practices have been observed in many areas of Barbaricum.

The verification of settlement background of the discussed grave seems to be very important. It was undoubtedly connected with a concentration of sites from the Roman Period, discovered in the vicinity of the town of Jawor. In general, the area was assigned to the Legnica region of the Przeworsk culture settlement, distinguished by S. Pazda (1980, 16). Yet, he stressed the extremely low research level of that part of Silesia. The situation has changed a little in the last few years. Some new settlement points have been identified and thoroughly explored, although a large part of them still remains unpublished.

Same finds approximately chronologically corresponding to the described burial site should be examined. A double urn and pit grave from Jawor, with typical characteristics of the Przeworsk culture, is one of the earliest discoveries, dated to the B2/C1 phase. It contained inter alia a fibula of the A.41 type (Hoffmann 1940). A pit grave from Sokola, which once became a pretext for discussion on ethnic question (Kramarkowa 1966), has been also a very well-known find. The fact that some objects belonging to the grave goods (like e.g. an axe), which consisted only of metal artefacts (?), were obviously Elbian in character, was the core of the problem.

A small burial ground and a settlement near Mściwojów near Jawor, excavated by R. Piwko, ought to be also mentioned. Unfortunately both of the sites remains unpublished. It is known, however, that the necropolis dates back to the B2b-C1 phases, while the settlement was most likely in use from the B2/C1 phase up to the Migration Period. In case of both of the sites, influences of the Elbian circle, manifested in forms and ornamentation of pottery, can be evidently observed (Błażejowski 2008, 141–143).

Findings of Roman coins have been located in the immediate vicinity of the aforementioned sites. Three denarii: by Hadrian (117–138), by Marcus Aurelius (140–161–180)

and by Commodus (171–177–192) are known from Jawor, an antoninianus by Tetricus (271–274) from Bolków, an aureus by Probus (276–282) and another, undefined coin from nearby Paszowice (Ciołek 2008, 32, 89, 136, 190). A coin by Diocletian mentioned sometimes in the context of Jawor was actually found in a small village of the same name near Milicz, that is in the borderland between Silesia and Great Poland (Konik 1959, 63, 42; Bohr 2008, 57, 67). It is worth mentioning that both the coins and other sites are situated in the middle and the upper reaches of the Nysa Szalona River and form a readily distinguishable concentration. Both the coins and other artefacts date back to the B2b-C2 phases of the Roman Period.

Another concentration of coins is located to the north of the discussed area, at the junction of the Kaczawa and the Nysa Szalona Rivers (that is the area of the present-day town of Legnica). There are some emissions from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century among the coins, yet later coins predominate, mainly from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Ciołek 2008, 131–133).

The chronology of the finds, together with the lack of sites from the earlier period in that area, implies that distinct settlement intensification took place approximately in the B2/C1 phase.

Features of the excavated artefacts, particularly the pottery stylistics, indicate very distinct influences of the Elbian cultural circle, most probably of the Marcomanni and the Quadi. On that basis, it could be assumed that the development of settlement in the Jawor concentration was connected with the inflow of a population from the southern part of the Sudetes, not from the area of the Przeworsk culture. That process was contemporary with the distinct changes of settlement, which took place in other parts of Silesia. At that time, the intensity of settlement distinctly diminished in the Głogów Region, as well as in the previously most densely populated region, i.e. the Bystrzyca-Oława Interfluve (Pazda 1980, 109–141). Probably, a part of the population from Lower Silesia moved to Upper Silesia. However, both an increase in population density precisely in the Legnica Region and the beginning of the Przeworsk culture settlement in the Sudetes Foreland have been previously pointed out (Godłowski 1985, 86). While the first statement can be accepted, in the case of the second one, reservations should be expressed that the colonization could have been initiated from the south. So the new discoveries imply the change of views on directions of migration in the area of Silesia at the time when the discussed grave was built (cf. Błażejowski 1997, 10, Fig. 2).

Until recently, it could be assumed that the finds from that period, the Roman coins in particular, indicated only the existence of trade routes along major rivers (Domański 1967, 86). At present, however, the concentration of mountain settlement, located exactly on the Nysa Szalona River, has been appearing quite distinctly.

However, the range of the occurrence of the Elbian influences in Silesia in the Roman Period was wider than the mountain or foreland zone only. The influences have been noticed on many sites in a diverse context. That phenomenon cannot be explained only by the fact that the discussed region is situated in the borderland be-

tween the Przeworsk culture and the Elbian culture. In consideration of the increase of the the Elbian elements occurrence in the upper drainage basin of the Oder River, the real possibility of settlement of the population from the area of the Elbe drainage basin in the northern part of the Sudetes should be considered (cf. Domański 1984, 2008, 151; Pazda 1984, 189–193).

It should be emphasized that it is not about the influences that have been observed for a long time in the Luboszyce culture (Domański 1979, 214) or earlier in the Lubusz Land group (Domański 2000). Traces of Elbian settlement in the area which was traditionally attributed to the “pure” Przeworsk culture are at issue here, although they have been repeatedly correctly identified. The sites of such features were pointed out already by German researchers (cf. Petersen 1936), then by S. Pazda (1984).

Findings from the B1 phase and the beginning of the B2 phase are of special significance here, for the beginning of the Roman Period was, in general, a period of population decline in Lower Silesia. The settlement system was rebuilt in the B2 phase. The occurrence of quite numerous artefacts with Elbian features in the relatively small set of sites from that period is of great significance, for the artefacts indicate the significant role of elements from the Marcomannic cultural circle in the colonization of the upper drainage basin of the Oder.

Not only sites located on fertile soils between the Bystrzyca and the Oława Rivers, where population decline in the A3/B1 phases was relatively smallest, has been concerned here, but also those situated right on the Oder River, in the vicinity of present-day Głogów. In particular, it concerns a burial ground in Nosocice, where the distinct occurrence of the Elbian cultural elements was noticed. A trumpet-shaped fibula, dating the whole set to the B2 phase (Tackenberg 1925, 42), was found in the grave no. 47 from that necropolis, apart from a vessel in “Marcomannic” style, decorated with the cogwheel.

It should be reminded here that in the Głogów region, sites dated to the pre-Roman Period were discovered. Their features distinctly prove connections *inter alia* with the Jastorf culture. It especially concerns a burial ground in Domaniowice, which unfortunately is known only from one report (Kołodziejwski 1973), and an unpublished necropolis in Żukowice (artefacts are in the Historical and Archaeological Museum in Głogów). A settlement complex in Bytomin (not published), which has been excavated recently, can be also listed here. We know the artefacts from the site from personal observation (excavations were being led by the Institute of Archaeology of the Wrocław University in 2009 and 2010). So it can be seen that contacts with the area of the Elbe drainage basin had long-lived tradition there. The finds from Bytomin, connected with the Migration Period, as well as the sites that were discovered earlier, prove that the tradition survived up to the end of antiquity.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Some general remarks can be formulated on the basis of observations about the chronology and features of the find from the Garbiec Hill. Firstly, there is no doubt that the find consisted of the cremation burial, most probably comprising remains of two deceased individuals. It is suggested by the set of vessels from the grave pit, which resembles the sets from double graves (of a woman and a child) from the burial ground in Opočno (cf. Pleinerová 1995, Diagram 1). On the basis of the pottery features, through lack of metal artefacts and Roman imports, the grave should be widely dated to the B2/C1-C1 phases of the Roman Period. The analysis of the artefacts, regarding the forms and technique, indicates that they are not similar to finds from the area of the Przeworsk culture. There are, however, some analogies with the area in the southern part of the Sudetes, first of all with the north-western part of the Czech Republic, as e.g. with the frequently cited burial ground in Opočno.

The grave from the vicinity of Myślubórz belongs to the group of sites from the Roman Period with cultural features typical for the area in the upper reaches of the Elbe, that is, in general, for the Marcomannic and Quadic environment. They can be sometimes mixed with features of the Przeworsk culture. A distinct concentration of such sites is located in the vicinity of Jawor.

Secondly, the discussed site, along with other sites belonging to that concentration, causes a change in perspective on colonization of the Sudetes in the Roman Period.

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