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MYTH MAKING BY JAN MACHNIK: THE AMERICAN AND POLISH COOPERATIVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT 1966–1978

ABSTRACT

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This article is my history of the archaeological project conducted by the University of Michigan and State University of New York at Buffalo and the Institute of the History of Material Culture, Polish Academy of Sciences from 1966 to 1978. Recently my colleague Jan Machnik (2014) published his recollections about this project in his memoirs *Między pokoleniami (Between Generations)*. Since I play a significant role in his memoirs, I think that the future generations of archeologists should treat some sections of Machnik's memoirs as storytelling, since they contain a mixed bag of facts and fiction. I present my recollections of events related to the archaeological project. As long as I worked at Olszanica and Machnik at Iwanowice 1967–1973, we had minor disagreements. In 1974 we started the cooperative American and Polish excavations at Bronocice. The attempt by Machnik to control the Bronocice excavations and marginalize my role in the project led to our conflict. My fight with Machnik was not about archaeological ideas and interpretations of archaeological data, but about the organization and control of the cooperative excavations and the personnel of the project.

Key words: Archaeological history, memory, American and Polish excavations, Machnik, Bronocice

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Since the days of Herodotus in the fifth century BC, scholars have tried to separate fact from fiction. This problem also applies to histories of archaeology. Memoirs, biographies, obituaries and archival documents present diverse views about archaeologists and how they affected the discipline in their time. In these post-modern days, the fiction of 40 or 50 years ago may be accepted as history. For example, John Bintliff's (1995) "Whither archaeology? Revisited," cites the supposed hindrance of field research by a traditionalist scholar when he quotes Lewis Binford's complaint that James Griffin frustrated his progressive excavation methods at the Andrews site in Michigan. In 1976 Griffin stated that "Binford's discussion ... is creative writing and not factual" (p. 117). Binford did not work at the Andrews site "According to our business records the only time that Binford was there was on April 8 when he was there on the Museum expense account for lunch on April 8 and also for dinner" (Griffin 1976, 117). Griffin gives other examples of Binford's fictional stories. Few of us, it seems, can resist the temptation to improve the stories of our lives.

My history of the archaeological project conducted by the University of Michigan, the State University of New York at Buffalo and the Institute of History of Material Culture (IHKM), Polish Academy of Sciences from 1966 to 1978, is motivated by Jan Machnik's (2014) recollections about this project as published in his memoirs *Między pokoleniami* (*Between Generations*) of some 468 pages. These are unusual memoirs, since it is in a format of an interview. A budding archaeological historian Marzena Woźny asks questions of Machnik and he then tells her about his life and his work as an archaeologist. I play a significant role in these recollections and I wish to state here that some of them must be taken with a grain of salt, since they contain a mixed bag of facts and fiction. I want to modify some of Machnik's version of events related to the archaeological project especially since I became a fictional character. I still think about that project of a half century ago. Together with my colleague Janusz Kruk, I continue to analyze data and publish the results. Probably this work will continue until we die. Many happy events are recalled by notes, thousands of pictures, drawings, photos and slides. I have never shared any negative memories with any western European or American archaeologist. Since Machnik has made our differences public, I want to present recollections that are sometimes very different from his. I do not know where Machnik got his stories, nor why he wished to put them into circulation, nor do I wish to speculate on that matter.

International archaeological projects usually have some problems. Many archaeologists have strong personalities and strong views about various archaeological issues. They compete for power, positions, funds, sites and publications. An old joke describes the creation of archaeologists by God. God created many dualities, man and woman, angels and devils, etc., but he needed to create only two archaeologists.

My interest in an international cooperative archaeological project in Poland originated in 1965, when I received a Fulbright Fellowship for archaeological studies as a doctoral student at the University of Michigan. Originally, Professor James B. Griffin of the University of Michigan, had arranged for me to conduct research with Professor Konrad Jażdżewski

of Łódź. This did not work out. Jażdżewski was a vocal opponent of the ruling establishment, and consequently could not get a permit to work together with a Western institution. Waldemar Chmielewski, a Palaeolithic specialist, suggested that I contact Witold Hensel, the Director of the Institute of History of Material Culture (IHKM), about this project, which I did. Fortunately for me, Hensel was willing get a permit for cooperative archaeological project between IHKM and the University of Michigan, and later the State University of New York at Buffalo. Until 1970 Griffin was the Principal American Investigator; I became Principal American Investigator after receiving my PhD in 1970. Hensel was the Principal Polish Investigator and the Director of the Project. Machnik was the Polish Field Director and I the American Field Director. It took Hensel fifteen months, but he succeeded getting the permit for a cooperative archaeological project. Hensel gave us complete freedom to do our research as we wished. He was also instrumental in protecting the project from those few archaeologists who were either critical of the project, or who wanted to stake a claim in it. In a few critical moments of this project his actions were invaluable.

Large-scale excavations were conducted at Bronocice, Iwanowice, Niedźwiedz and Olszanica. Small scale and test excavations were carried out Dziekanowice, Giebułtów, Kobylniki, Marcinów, Michałowice and Szarbia.

An initial grant to James Griffin and several subsequent grants to me funded most of the field work and data analyses. Much of the research was funded by the Smithsonian Institution's Foreign Currency Program Grants from 1967 through 1980. Two grants from the National Science Foundation in 1972 to 1973 and 1980 to 1984 helped with data analyses. American Council of Learned Societies Fellowships in 1976 and 1983 made it possible for me to analyze the material from Olszanica. The Polish Academy of Sciences supported Janusz Kruk's survey of the region.

The cooperative agreement stipulated that American funds for the fieldwork would be evenly divided between American and Polish archaeologists. The project's objectives were to study the chronology and the economic and social organization of Neolithic and Bronze Age communities in southeastern Poland (Hensel and Milisauskas 1985, Milisauskas and Kruk 1993). These objectives were deliberately made very broad because of the varied research interests of participating archaeologists.

During the first seven years American and Polish archaeologists excavated the individual Neolithic and Bronze Age sites of Michałowice, Dziekanowice, Olszanica, Iwanowice, and Niedźwiedz (Fig.2) (Kruk 1969a, Kruk 1969b, Burchard 1977, Kadrow 1991, Kadrow and Machnikowie 1992, Machnikowie and Kaczanowski 1987, Milisauskas 1986, Hensel and Milisauskas 1985). For the American excavations, I selected the Linear Pottery culture site of Olszanica (Fig. 1) and the multi-cultural Neolithic site of Michałowice. Later, American and Polish archaeologists jointly conducted a regional archaeological project in the Bronocice region (Figs. 3, 4) (Kruk and Milisauskas 1981; 1983; 1985; Milisauskas and Kruk 1984; 1989; Milisauskas *et al.* 2012). The Polish archaeologists used their funding for

excavation of two sites; Machnik of IHKM directed excavations at Iwanowice (Figs. 5, 6) (Machnikowie and Kaczanowski 1987, Kadrow 1991, Kadrow and Machnikowie 1992), and Barbara Burchard (1977), also of IHKM, conducted field work at Niedźwiedź. The American and Polish cooperative project gave great impetus to research into the Neolithic period in Poland. Large sums of money were spent on non-medieval excavations.

During the first few years of the project I had some disagreements with Machnik, but they were not of great importance. I have some pleasant memories of Machnik from this period. For example, after looking at Neolithic sites in the Działoszyce region in the fall of 1966, we were waiting at the Miechów railroad station around ten o'clock at night for the train to Kraków. We had not eaten much all day, and were therefore very happy for the rye bread which was all the station could provide. Several times we met during the last 25 years as friends. On a couple of occasions he proudly described to me his archaeological excavations in Ukraine. I also wrote an article for his *Festschrift* in 2010. Thus I was surprised that he is digging into our distant past, creating some fictitious stories in his memoirs.

Machnik was ambitious, energetic and knew well how to work the bureaucratic system to obtain what was needed for the project. For example, even if we had money to buy a field vehicle "Nysa", it was not simple obtain a voucher for the purchase and Machnik was good at it. As scholars we both benefited from these excavations which were on a very large scale. In the 2000 publication of archaeology in Poland surveying 50 years of achievements, Machnik (2000), Kruk (2000) and Kulczycka-Leciejewiczowa (2000) evaluated our work very positively.

Machnik has made major contributions to Polish archaeology, especially in the study of Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age cultures. Even in his old age he is conducting fieldwork. Our differences were not about archaeological ideas or the interpretations of archaeological data, but about the organization and personnel of the cooperative excavations, particularly those at Bronocice. Hensel, as the Principal Polish Investigator and the Director of the cooperative American and Polish archaeological project, played a major role in determining the outcome of our conflict. The other person that was critical for me in this cooperative project was Janusz Kruk. Part of the disagreement with Machnik was the role Kruk should play in the Bronocice project. Hensel and Kruk always supported me and gave an opportunity for me to conduct archaeological work in Poland that produced very fruitful results. I am eternally grateful to them.

As long as I worked at Olszanica and Machnik at Iwanowice (Figs. 5, 6), our differences were minor, but as the project continued, he wanted more control. By 1973 excavations at Bronocice were being considered very seriously. Kruk had found the site during his surveys and had conducted test excavations there in 1967 (Kruk 1969). He suggested to me that Bronocice was a promising site for excavations scheduled to start in 1974. Since we were planning a combined American and Polish excavations at Bronocice, a problem arose about Polish archaeologists participating in this fieldwork. I had discussed this with Hensel and he agreed that Kruk would be the ideal person. However, he suggested an alternative

solution: move the American and Polish cooperative archaeological project to Poznań and thus avoid the politics in Kraków. I told him that I was very happy with Kruk and preferred to work in the Kraków region. Machnik also proposed his plan for future excavations. He organized a meeting in Igołomia with me, Zygmunt Krzak and Barbara Burchard in 1973. Kruk was not included. After the meeting it seemed to me that Machnik, Krzak, and Burchard would be the main Polish archaeologists working at Bronocice. I had my doubts that Krzak could supervise the work of a crew of 70 or 80 workers. Krzak had worked for two weeks for Machnik at Iwanowice and did not complete the excavation of one pit that he was excavating for two weeks (Machnik 2014). Having many senior archaeologists at the excavations might lead to a chaotic situation with self-appointed multiple field directors. I informed Machnik that Kruk was an excellent archaeologist and that I had no doubts of the project's success if I worked with him, since we agreed about the objectives of the project and the composition of the field crew. But I was not sure what I would get from a project totally controlled by Machnik. I knew that Machnik wanted to isolate me in the Institute in Kraków. Kruk, for supporting me, received the silent treatment for an entire year; Machnik had instructed the people there not to talk to him.

The 1974 field season yielded data beyond our expectations. An incised wagon motif was found on a Funnel Beaker vessel in a pit. An animal bone associated with the pot in the pit was dated by radiocarbon method, around 3400 BC (Bakker *et al.* 1999). The vessel represents one of the earliest pieces of evidence for the presence of wheeled wagons in Europe. Thus before the start of the 1975 field season, Machnik again attempted to remove Kruk and other young archaeologists from the Bronocice project. There was a meeting in Igołomia of myself, Hensel and Machnik before the start of the field season. It lasted for over one hour. Machnik was arguing that Kruk and the young archaeologists had made many mistakes in their fieldwork at Bronocice, therefore had to be replaced by more established Polish archaeologists such as Krzak. I defended Kruk and denied that there had been any field mistakes. Hensel mostly just listened to our debate and ended by confirming, much to Machnik's displeasure, Kruk's role as the Polish field director for the 1975 field season at Bronocice.

The attempt by Machnik to control the Bronocice project and to marginalize my role continued in 1976. Soon after my arrival in Poland, Machnik told me that Hensel will be "finished" as the Director of the Institute. The Government Inspectorate (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli) was at the Institute and Hensel will be removed, as probably some problems will be found. Supposedly this inspection is affecting Hensel so much, that he cannot function properly as the Institute's Director. In any case Machnik said that he and some other archaeologists had enough of Hensel. I inquired who would replace him and he said there were several candidates, including himself and Janusz Kozłowski. How all this would affect me depended upon who became the new Director. These developments looked very bad for me, and for the Bronocice excavations. After considering Machnik's scenario for three or four weeks, I decided to see Hensel in Warsaw. After I met Hensel, I asked him what

is happening at the Institute. I also told him that my relationship with Machnik deteriorated. At the end of the meeting it was clear to me that Hensel would continue as the Director of the Institute. On returning to Kraków I did not discuss my trip to Warsaw with Machnik. In his memoirs Machnik claims that I explained my conversation with Hensel by analogy with political debates in America during elections. This is simply not true, though I knew that my visit to Hensel will lead to open conflict. The Government Inspectorate found only minor problems at the Institute and was very positive about the American and Polish cooperative archaeological project. Hensel continued to be the Director of the Institute for another fourteen years.

Already in 1973 Machnik felt very important during the visit to Washington D.C. At that time Hensel and I met with the Smithsonian Institution's officials to discuss the future excavations in Poland. Hensel did not include Machnik in these discussions. Machnik was in a very bad mood and spent the day making negative comments about Hensel.

In the late summer of 1976, I attended a Congress of archaeologists in Nice, France. Several Polish archaeologists were present, and one of them (who was, and still is, a distinguished Polish archaeologist and Machnik's friend, but who did not work at IHKM) told lies about me to his Polish colleagues in an attempt to undermine my work. Supposedly I had criticized Polish archaeology to some prehistorians in Nice. Such behavior surprised me, since this scholar had always been kind and professional towards me. Machnik took the opportunity to circulate this falsehood at the Institute in Warsaw and other places. A few other Polish archaeologists believed that these tales would compromise the cooperative project for which we had worked so hard. His memoirs attribute another sin to me, that I criticized him in Nice. This I did not, not wishing to air dirty laundry in public. When I arrived in Poland for the 1977 field season, Hensel gave the 1976 intrigues and their propagators the attention they deserved; that is to say, none. He knew Machnik very well. If nothing else, this ridiculous affair revealed to me who my real friends were.

When I arrived in Poland in 1977, I was not surprised that Machnik used every opportunity to attack me. Machnik instructed all the workers at the Institute in Kraków not to talk to me. Some went along with this, some did not. Zofia Słomiana Miryńska, who handled administrative and financial matters at the Institute, kept me informed as to what was happening at the Institute, including the archaeological politics.

Machnik told his people not to cite anything published by Kruk and me in their bibliographies. He tried to prevent us from publishing the Bronocice results in Polish journals such as *Archeologia Polski* or *Archeologia Polona*. Young archaeologists talked about these developments at Bronocice and it was not a big secret. Machnik's maneuvers did not affect performance in the field and the 1977 field season was a success. During the visit by American Ambassador Richard Davies to Bronocice that summer, Machnik and I kept our differences to ourselves.

Machnik's attempt to limit our possibilities for publishing articles did not affect us. Our articles appeared in Polish, German, American, Czechoslovak and English journals.



Fig. 1. Sarunas Milisauskas at Olszanica in 1969



Fig. 2. Remains of a Funnel Beaker burial mound at Niedzwiedz (S. Milisauskas photo)



Fig. 3. Janusz Kruk at Bronocice, standing in the center (S. Milisaukas photo)



Fig. 4. Excavation unit B1 at Bronocice (S. Milisaukas photo 1974)



Fig. 5. (Right) Jan Machnik at Iwanowice



Fig. 6. From right Aida Milisauskas, Vita Milisauskas, Anna Dzieduszycka-Machnikowa, Jan Machnik, Janusz Kruk, Zofia Liguzińska-Krukowa, unidentified person at Iwanowice in 1971 (S. Milisauskas photo)



Fig. 7. From left Jan Machnik, Richard Davies, Tadeusz Rostanowski, Janusz Kruk, top right Ambassador's wife talking with Vita Milisauskas (S. Milisauskas photo)



Fig. 8. Bronocice village in 1975 (S. Milisauskas photo)



Fig. 9. Sarunas Milisauskas (left) and Janusz Kruk (right) at the stone monument erected by local people to commemorate the oldest evidence of wheeled vehicles in Europe found at Bronocice (V. Milisauskas photo 2006)

As of 2015 the cooperative American and Polish excavations at various sites have been described in over 60 publications. There are 35 publications on Bronocice (Bakker *et al.* 1999, Haduch 2004, Hensel and Milisauskas 1985, Kruk 1969a, Kruk and Milisauskas 1977; 1979; 1981a; 1981b; 1981c; 1982; 1983; 1985; 1989; 1990; Kruk *et al.* 1996, Milisauskas and Kruk 1977; 1978; 1982; 1984a; 1984b; 1989; 1990; 1991; 2007; Milisauskas *et al.* 1993; 2004; 2006; 2011; 2012; Pipes 2014, Pipes *et al.* 2009; 2010; 2014; 2015), 10 on Iwanowice (Dzieduszycka-Machnik and Machnik 1973, Dzieduszycka-Machnik and Machnik 1974, Kadrow 1991a; 1991b; 1991c; Kadrow and Machnikowie A. and J. 1992, Kadrow and Machnik 1993, Kadrow *et al.* 1995, Kadrow and Makowicz-Poliszot 2000, Machnikowie A. and J. and Kaczanowski 1987), 10 on Olszanica (Milisauskas 1969; 1970; 1972; 1973; 1976a; 1976b; 1982; 1986; 1989; 2000), 4 on Niedźwiedź (Burchard 1969; 1973; 1977; Burchard and Lityńska-Zajac 2002), 2 on Dziekanowice (Kruk 1969a, Jaškowiak and Milisauskas 2001), and 3 on Michałowice (Kruk 1969b, Czekał-Zastawny and Milisauskas 1997; 1998). Our approach in publishing the Bronocice data has been thematic, focusing on different aspects of the site and material culture, rather than attempting a single comprehensive site report.

As it became clear to some Polish archaeologists that there was a conflict between myself and Machnik, some were giving advice how I should fight, few of which were comical. One woman archaeologist advised me to buy boxes of candy and distribute them among the women working at the Institute in Warsaw to gain their support. She did not suggest what I should give to the men.

Some of Machnik's creative writing can be amusing, such as his story of Ambassador Richard Davies' lunch at Bronocice in 1977. The US embassy had already indicated that the Ambassador wanted to meet me. When we met it turned out he was very enthusiastic about archaeology, especially Celtic studies. I then invited the Ambassador to visit Bronocice. After Polish security people learned that the American Ambassador will visit the site, they immediately started to look for the site. For the first several days they focused on the wrong place. They believed that the Ambassador will visit Bronowice around Kraków; Bronowice and Bronocice are very similar place names even for Poles. That summer, there were numerous "tourists" at Bronocice; the Polish security people were masquerading themselves as tourists. For two weeks, prior to the Ambassador's visit, the police trailed me, openly following me.

Machnik describes the lunch with the Ambassador in a very entertaining manner in his memoirs. He calls the lunch a picnic (translation of the Polish texts by the author of this article). "The Ambassador's wife spread a tablecloth — at that time in Poland any type of sausages, hams or salami were not available; only yellow cheese, hard boiled eggs and salt were available for lunch. Nearby was a patch of carrots, thus I pulled two carrots from the ground and peeled them for dessert." (Machnik 2014, 313).

The lunch and the ambassador's visit as described by me:

The Ambassador and his wife and son, I and my wife Vita and Tadeusz Roslanowski arrived from the Kraków airport at Bronocice around 10 o'clock in the morning. Tadeusz

Roslanowski, the Polish archaeologist from Warsaw accompanied the Ambassador on his trip. They spent the entire day at the site. Roslanowski was surprised at how traditional Bronocice appeared. He said *"Is this Poland?"* Machnik was selected to describe our excavations at the site to the Ambassador, since he was very good for explaining archaeology to general public and he did a good job (Fig. 7). The lunch was served at the site. For lunch, Milisauskas' wife Vita made sandwiches and dessert. At that time you could buy good Polish sausages, cheeses and wonderful breads that were baked in small private bakeries in Kraków. In addition, Vita brought tomatoes, cucumbers and other vegetables. I brought along Bulgarian wines. In Peoples Poland, Hungarian, Romanian and Bulgarian wines were available. When I realized that the Ambassador has brought California wines to the site, a problem developed for me, to open both wines or just one. This dilemma was surprisingly easily solved. When I inquired which wine they preferred, California or Bulgarian, the Polish archaeologists were unanimous. They all preferred the California wines, especially Roslanowski. The lunch was a success. The Ambassador's wife suggested to the son that he could arrange such a lunch for his friends at the Poznań University where he was a student.

The Bronocice village at that time was very traditional; most people were not trying to replace their old houses with brick buildings (Fig. 8). Many farmers in other villages were building new brick houses that symbolized progress and higher prestige. Thus the Ambassador had a chance to see a more traditional Polish village. Machnik (2014, 313) describes Bronocice village as a "terrible hole" (*straszliwa dziura*). In the 1990s I received an email from an American woman working in international finance asking me to recommend a hotel in Bronocice. Her grandfather came from Bronocice and she wanted to visit Poland including his birthplace. I do not know if she ever visited Poland, perhaps she was shocked that there were no hotels in Bronocice.

One reason for our quarrel was that Machnik did not realize how my knowledge of Polish archaeology and archaeologists increased over time. When I arrived in Poland in 1965 I knew a little about Polish archaeology, but by 1970 I knew a lot and formed my own opinions about archaeologists and the strategy for the cooperative archaeological project. In 1970 I became the Principal American Investigator and did not always agree with Machnik about strategy of the project, especially about personnel. Probably he still felt that his knowledge of Polish archaeology was still much greater than mine. I will not debate the point. However, I was confident in my evaluation of archaeologists, and especially of their competence in the field.

I presented here my recollections of the events mentioned in Machnik's memoirs. I did not point out every case where my recollections were different from his. I assume that he will not change his published recollections. Perhaps when some archaeologist thirty or forty years from now will show an interest in our cooperative project, he/she will have two versions to read, Machnik's and mine. I agree with him when he gave to me his published book about Iwanowice (1987) with a note "in memory of long and fruitful cooperative work" (August 12, 1987). It was memorable times as we excavated great sites (Fig. 9).

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