

## The Lords of the Amber Road. Studies on the Craftsmanship, Trade and Long-distance Contacts of the LaTène Culture Societies from Southern Poland.

The La Tène Culture societies, long identified by science as the representatives of Celtic tribes known from antique written sources, arrived on modern-day Poland's territory at the turn of 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. They gradually settled four significant enclaves in the area of modern Lower and Upper Silesia, as well as Western and Eastern Lesser Poland. The arrival of Celts was undoubtedly a turning point for the whole territory Vistula River and Odra River basins. Thanks to them, a clear technological development, which earlier encompassed various fields of craftsmanship and social organisation, occurred. Since then, in the area of modern-day Poland we can distinguish a series of finds, that confirms a very broad network, likely being an effect of developed trade exchange and contacts between various Barbaric societies from Central Europe with Mediterranean civilisations' terrains.

The question of The Amber Road and its connection with La Tène Culture appeared in literature a long time ago. Never before it was tried to analyse a large number of archaeological materials in the broad context of research concerning the entire phenomenon of Celtic settlement in Poland. Scientific purpose of the project is to present hard evidence backing the hypothesis, that the main factor, decisive for development of the local Celtic settlement and its influence on neighbouring societies inhabiting an area of central and northern Poland, was to control the so-called Amber Road. Studies on local craftsmanship will allow to gain certain knowledge, which will allow to explain, to which degree the technologically-advanced local La Tène societies enabled the development of long-distance trade and economical prosperity.

In the framework of this project, a comprehensive study of large series of finds discovered on the most important La Tène culture site discovered so far in Nowa Cerekwia, Głubczyce district, in Upper Silesia, is planned. A large settlement, functioning between the beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> and the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, was discovered there. Modern amateur discoveries and complementary surface surveys provided a huge number of artefacts (metal adornments and garments, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, gold and silver coins, glassware, tools, etc.) confirming that this place was the central settlement of craft and trading agglomeration character, similar to central settlements discovered recently in Nemčice nad Hanou (Moravia) and in Roseldorf (Lower Austria). These archaeological sites are great settlement centres, where were discovered the relics of well-organized and functionally diversified buildings, traces of intensive productive activity and a great number of artefacts, including relatively high number of imports from the Mediterranean area. The aforementioned imports are tangible evidence, confirming very intense contacts between local La Tène culture societies and a Hellenistic world.

In order to trace the development of craftsmanship, trade and long-distance contacts in La Tène period, a detailed analysis of a few, important categories of items and raw materials, which from the viewpoint of societies from those times might have been an important exchange equivalent, will be carried out. We should especially include in this category the graphite pottery and graphite in form of a raw material, the Painted Pottery, adornments made of glass and sapropelite, raw amber and amber items, stone items, coins and selected adornments and garments, mostly made of bronze. Thanks to processing of further sites from the researches carried out so far and thanks to supplementary field surveys planned in Silesia and Lesser Poland, we will also gain the possibility to present the character and intensity of contacts between local La Tène culture societies and people from a Germanic culture circle, inhabiting the areas of central and northern Poland at that time, in a more convincing manner.