

New Evidence of Middle Palaeolithic in South Poland

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Introduction

Recent years were a period of renewed energetic investigation of Middle Palaeolithic sites in South Poland. It is interesting that new discoveries were made in areas which have a long tradition of research (the Krakow-Częstochowa Upland region) as well as in those previously having a poor archaeological record (fig. 1; Lower Silesia). The present article is an attempt at reviewing the latest research results of Middle Palaeolithic sites in Poland.

Results obtained have contributed significantly to our understanding of functional differentiation of open sites. A particularly insightful development was the discovery of sites associated with hunting practices, and the recovery of evidence in a state of preservation which has made it possible to subject them to multifaceted analyses of technology combined with spatial analysis (before now this aspect of Middle Palaeolithic studies in Poland could not be developed more extensively). The present excavations covered sites dated to the time period between Odranian Glaciation (correlated with OIS₈) until the Weichselian interpleniglacial (Grudziądz interstadial—OIS₃). Sites discussed in the present paper were dated with the help of conventional as well as by physical and chemical methods (fig. 2.).

The Middle Polish Complex (OIS₈₋₆)

Recent excavations at Biśnik Cave, lying in the region of an eroded limestone outcrop at Strzegowa in the Krakow-Częstochowa Upland region, included excavation of the cave chamber and entrance. Next to the Ciemna cave Biśnik is the only cave site to have produced artefacts dated to the period from before the Eemian. Investigator K. Cyrek distinguished twelve Middle Palaeolithic assemblages (fig. 3.). The oldest finds (assemblages A₅ and A₆) occurred inside layers 16 and 17 of clay. The lower barren layer 18 was dated by U/Th to 280 ka. Combined with the ecological evidence this suggests that the earliest artefacts at Biśnik may date from the cooler period of the Odranian glaciation. According to K. Cyrek, they represent Mousterian assemblages with a participation of Levallois elements and presence of bifacial knives (fig. 4.). The same researcher is inclined to classify the assemblage to the so-called Piekary industry, named after one of the culture horizons at the known site Piekary II.¹ The next assemblage A₄—with elements of Levallois technique—was discovered in a layer of

¹ KRUKOWSKI 1939–1948.