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A new find from the northern border of the Tatra Mountains

ABSTRACT

Despite over a hundred years of various archaeological works, including the latest in Hučiva Cave, considering the presence of Stone age peoples, Tatra Mountains remain an archaeological *terra incognita*. Therefore it is very important to communicate any new finds. The purpose of this article is to present the discovery from the mouth of the Lejowa valley, found in 2009 in close proximity to the formerly known site no. 1 in Witów, com. Kościelisko. The analyzes of raw material and technological aspect of specimen are presented in this article and can indicate that it was made by Stone Age people.

KEYWORDS

Lejowa Valley, quartzite sandstone blade, stray find, Stone Age

I. INTRODUCTION

For over a hundred years researchers have been interested in the Tatra Mountains archaeological research (Jura 1955; Żaki 1967; Rydlewski, 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Buławka, Kerneder-Gubała 2020). Yet, even considering a recent discovery of a Magdalenian archaeological site in a cave in the Belianske Tatras (Valde-Nowak *et al*. 2022), evidence of Stone Age people staying in these mountains is still exceptional (Tunia 1987). Meanwhile, at the foot of the Polish Tatra Mountains the number of human traces from the Stone Age is growing, and each of the finds merits a great interest. This text will discuss an accidental find of a stone piece that may be a Stone Age artefact. It was found at probably a secondary deposit. The specimen was delivered to the Department of Stone Age Archeology of the Jagiellonian University by its discoverer, Tomasz Ślusarczyk. It has not been published before. The alleged artefact was found on August 19, 2009, at the mouth of the Lejowa Valley at the base of Tatra Mountains.

II. LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ITEM

The described specimen was found in the bed of Lejowy Potok stream, about 50 meters north to the Lejowa Valley mouth, formed by opposite forested rock spurs called Międzyściany (Fig. 1). The alleged artefact is a quartzite sandstone blade (dimensions 88×28×11 mm). The tip is broken off, and the butt is natural. The bulb of percussion is rather diffuse, which indicates the direct percussion with a soft hammer. On the dorsal face, there is one negative in line with axis of the blade, mostly the surface is natural. The core was a pebble in a relatively early phase of surface preparation. Small number of mechanical damage traces are visible on the edges (Fig. 2).

III. INTERPRETATION

Location in which the specimen was found together with its features do not allow to indisputably recognize it as an artefact representing the technology used in the Stone Age. It is not improbable that the blade could have been formed during water transport in the bed of Lejowy Potok. Despite the fact that the intentional nature of the described object may raise doubts, there are

reasons for suggesting its anthropogenic character. The first is the raw material, which does not occur near the mouth of the Lejowa Valley. Its nearest deposits are located near Ornak Mountain – in Tatras, but outside of the Lejowy Potok stream catchment basin (Fig. 3). The second reason is the presence of the Late Palaeolithic site Witów 1 nearby to the finding spot of the blade (about 100 m to the west). Witów 1 site is located on an elevated protrusion – a small plateau which separates the mouths of the Chochołowska and Lejowa Valleys (Fig. 1). A broken blade and a fragment of a core – both made on Jurassic patinated flint – have been discovered (Rydlewski 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Considering the close proximity, the blade described in this communiqué cannot be considered separately form the inventory of the Witów 1 site, as it is even possible that it slipped into the river bed as a result of the bank erosion.

In Carpathian conditions, the use of non-flint rocks to create tools and weapons in the Stone Age has been repeatedly documented. This is a general feature of the so-called Carpathian raw materials province. Examples of late Neolithic sites in the Bieszczady Mountains can be cited here (Pelisiak 2018). Recently, a blade of quartzite sandstone was discovered on the Brona Pass in the Babia Góra mountain massif (Mika 2022 - in this volume). The same raw material is represented by the stone described in this report.

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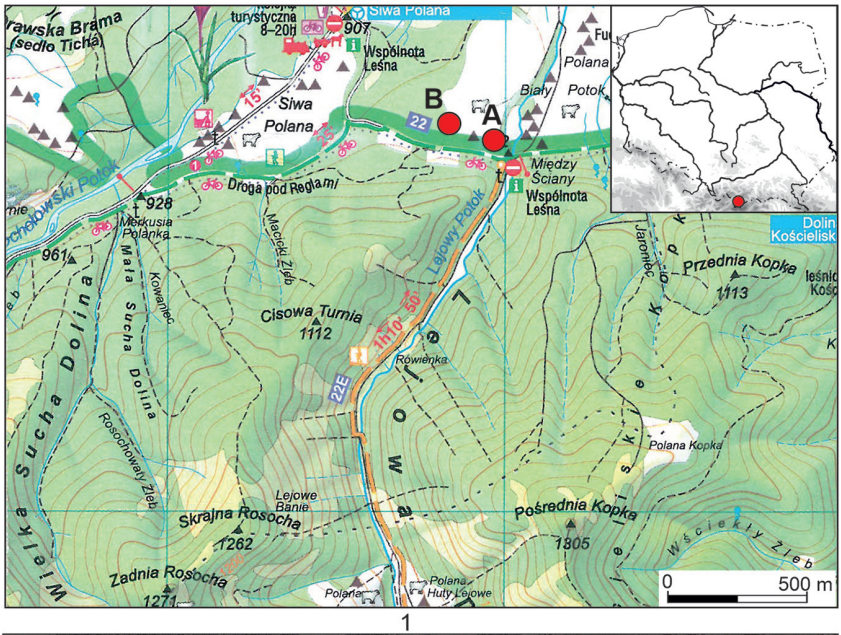

FIG. 1. Topography of the outlet of Lejowa Valley with the location of blade finding (A) and the area of site 1 in Witów, com. Kościelisko (B)

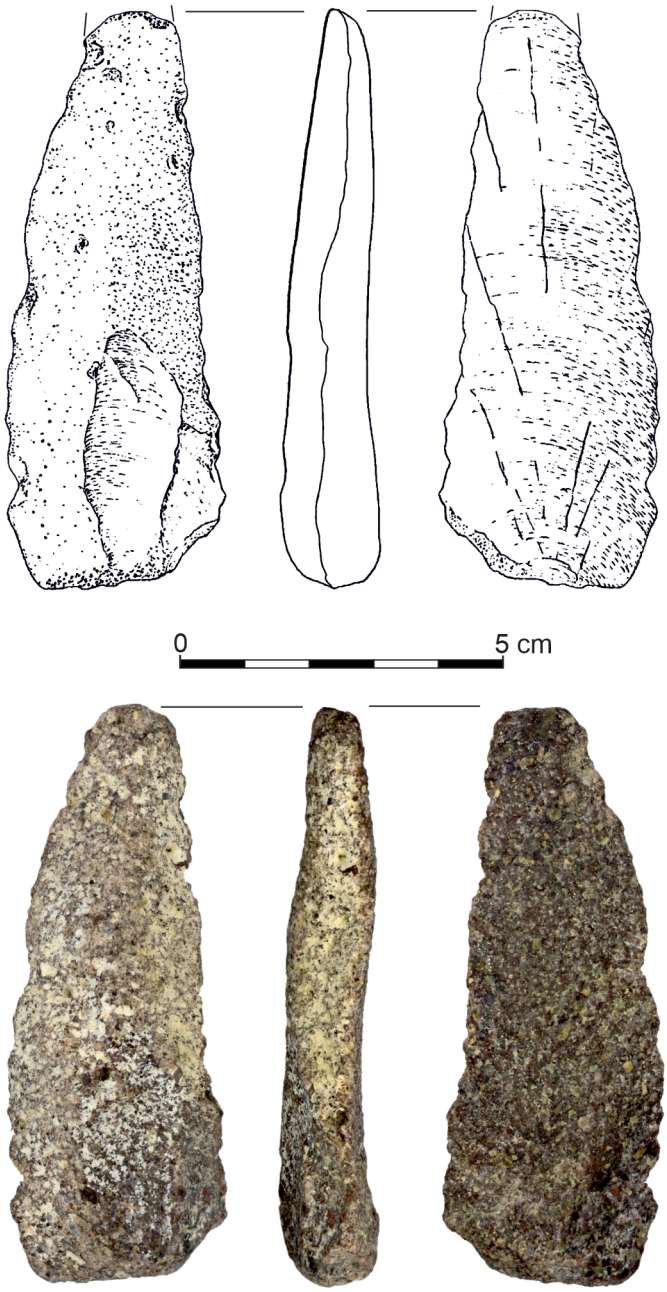

FIG. 2. Witów, com. Koscielisko. Stone blade found in the bed of Lejowy Potok. Drawing M. Kowal; Photo J. Skłucki

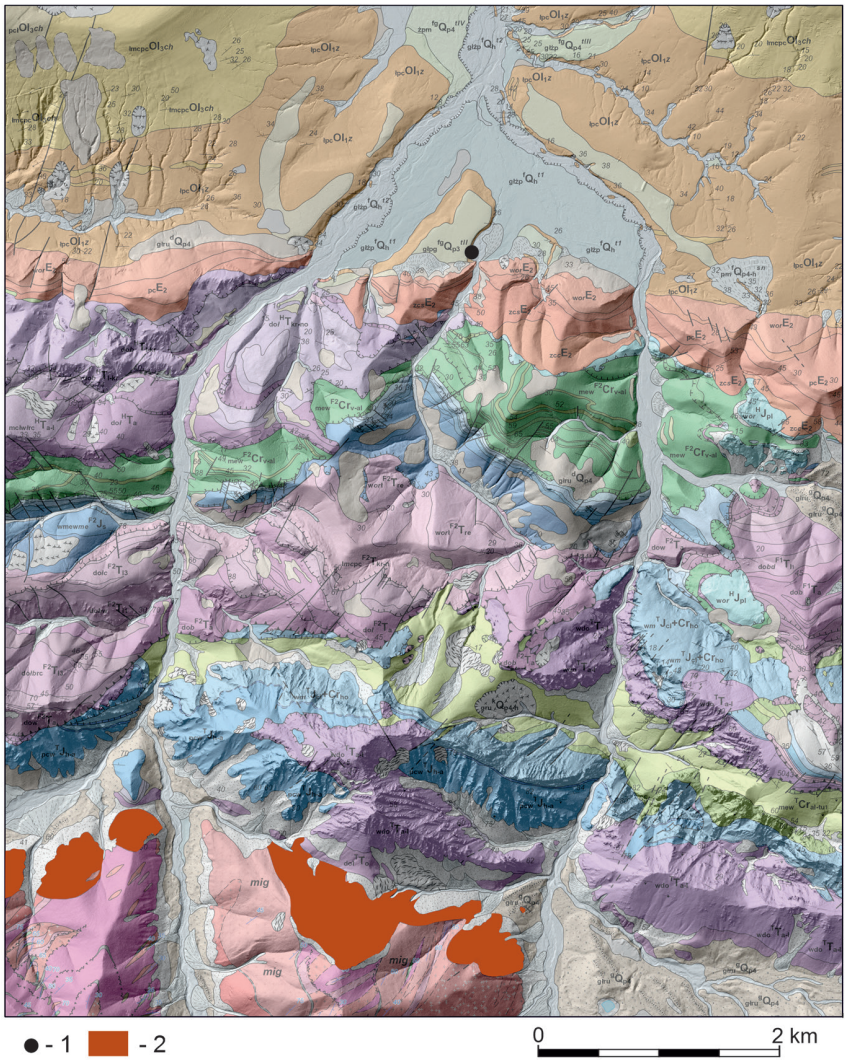

FIG. 3. Geological map of central part of the Western Tatras. 1 – location of stone blade, 2 – quartz sandstone beds (acc. to Państwowy Instytut Geologiczny and Państwowy Instytut Badawczy with alternation)