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## Blade from the Brona Pass

### ABSTRACT

Due to its landscape, dominated by hills reaching above 1000 m a.s.l., the southern part of the Western Beskids was long considered an area beyond the reach of prehistoric migrations. The small number of artefacts known from the area makes every new find significant. The article presents a stone artefact found on the Brona Pass in Beskid Żywiecki. It was made of a local raw material, quartzite sandstone. The discovery provides new evidence of the penetration of mountain landscapes by prehistoric communities.

### KEYWORDS

Beskid Mountains, lithic artefact, Stone Age



This paper presents a hitherto unknown, accidentally found stone artefact. On 11 September 2021, during a trip to the Beskid Żywiecki, a fragmentarily preserved blade blank was discovered on the Brona Pass (Fig. 1). The finder, who is the author of this paper, immediately informed the Heritage Protection services, the Institute of Archaeology of Jagiellonian University in Kraków, the Municipal Museum of Sucha Beskidzka, and the authorities of Babia Góra National Park and Zawoja Commune. The artefact was found on the ground surface, which was probably due to erosion or increased tourist traffic. The Brona Pass (1408 m a.s.l.) is located in the Babia Góra massif and separates its two main summits: Babia Góra (1725 m) in the east and Mała Babia Góra (1515 m) in the west. Located at the border between Poland and Slovakia, the Babia Góra massif is the highest part of the Outer West Carpathians. Its isolated main ridge, 11 km long, is part of Babia Góra Range in the macroregion of the Western Beskids (Kondracki 2000). The Babia Góra massif is built of sandstone-shale flysch. These deposits belong to the Rača facial subzone of the Magura nappe (Książkiewicz 1983), which is built of approx. 2 km thick series of massive sandstone and shale intercalated with marls and variegated shales (Radwanek-Bąk *et al.* 2004). The mountain slopes, especially on the norther side, are steep (20°–34°) with the slope angle locally up to 70° (Kłapyta 2020). Most of the area is wooded, with forests forming a dense cover on the slopes. At higher elevations (above 1400 m a.s.l.), vegetation showing subalpine and even alpine characteristics can be observed (Holeszka, Szwagrzyk 2018).

The artefact itself (Fig. 2) can be described as a blade fragment with the tip (distal) part snapped. It was made of quartzitic sandstone. The raw material was identified by Dr Michał Wasilewski of the JU Institute of Archaeology. The blade has a triangular cross-section in the proximal part, passing into trapezium-shaped in the middle part. It is straight in side-view. The longer edges are regular. A few removal scars are evident by the edges on the ventral side, although it is not fully certain whether these are traces of deliberate retouch. The dorsal surface is partly cortical. Due to the nature of the raw material, unidirectional ripple marks can only be observed on some of the removal scars. The small butt bears traces of initial processing. The dimensions of the artefact are length = 6.3 cm; width = 2.5 cm; thickness = 1.2 cm. Its technological-typological features link the blade with the lithic industry of Late Neolithic populations (Balcer 1983).

Quartzite sandstone is a local raw material. Its deposits occur in the broadly defined Beskid zone (Radwanek-Bąk *et al.* 2004; Alexandrowicz 1963). This raw material is characterised by its dark grey colour and compact and



FIG. 1. Babia Góra Mountain. The red point shows the location the Brona Pass



**FIG. 2.** The blade discovered on the Brona Pass (drawing and photo. by Joanna Chowaniak)

parallel texture (Jaroszewski 1966), and it is mainly composed of quartz (approx. 80%). Other artefacts made from this raw material are known in the literature, including an axe found in Jasienica (Foltyn, Waga 1995), a blade blank from the vicinity of the Komoniecki cave (Foltyn, Foltyn *et al.* 1998), a side scraper from Brenna (Foltyn *et al.* 1998), and grinders discovered during research at the Grabowiec 1 site (Wójcik 2020).

Despite occasional surface surveys, including the research carried out as part of the Polish Archaeological Record project, the area in question has provided very limited archaeological material (Valde-Nowak 2017). The only finds from the immediate vicinity are a stone battle axe from Zawoja (Tunia 1978, fig. 2: a) and a flint axe from Kojaszówka (Tunia 1978, fig. 2: b). More archaeological material comes from neighbouring areas. In Beskid Mały a number of surprising discoveries were made in connection with the construction of the Świnna Poręba reservoir (Foltyn, Foltyn 2001; Valde-Nowak *et al.* 2015). Finds related to Stone Age communities include the Komoniecki cave, where a Palaeolithic blade blank was found (Foltyn *et al.* 1998) and an Early Neolithic stone axe from the vicinity of Jaroszewicka Góra (Valde-Nowak 2014). Also not to be forgotten are important discoveries from the western zone of the Western Beskid and from the Cieszyn Beskid (Choraży, Choraży 2003).

On the other side of the Carpathians, archaeological sites in Slovakia provide abundant evidence of Eneolithic occupation. In the Orava region, artefacts linked with the late cultures of the Lengyel-Polgar cultural cycle have been found. In the Late Eneolithic, communities of the Baden culture developed there. Archaeological research in Orava uncovered artefacts made from raw materials imported from what today is Poland, including banded flint axes and tools made of Jurassic flints (Mester *et al.* 2012). Jurassic flint of type G was most frequently used for this purpose (Soják 1997-1998; Kopacz, Pelisiak 1992). It is also worth noting Funnel Beaker culture pottery found during the exploration of the Veľka Lomnica-Burchbich site (Novotná, Soják 2013).

The discovery of a blade blank in this part of the Polish Carpathians marks another important significant point on the map of prehistoric occupation. While the scarce finds known from this part of the mountain ecumene come from inaccessible areas, they are an additional clue to the penetration of the Carpathians by prehistoric man.

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*Translated by Piotr Godlewski*

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