

MU: With reference to our conversation at the beginning of the year regarding the determination of the PMA's [PMA = Polish Archaeological Museum] position on issues related to unauthorized analyzes and publications of archaeological materials from the Stajnia Cave by employees of the Max Planck Institute, I would like to implement our arrangements at that time and kindly request answers on the following issues:

1. MU QUESTION: Did the PMA - at any time and in any form - give Mr. Andrea Picin consent to publish photos and studies of unpublished flint materials from Stajnia Cave, stored at the PMA, with which A. Picin, then representing the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, became briefly acquainted with in 2018 during a several-day visit to the Museum?

PMA ANSWER: The State Archaeological Museum never gave Mr. Andrea Picin permission to publish materials from the Stajnia cave.

2. MU QUESTION: If the answer to the above is "no", does the PMA consider the publication of the study and photographs of these materials in the Scientific Report periodical in 2021 and 2022 by the author's team including A. Picin and Sahra Talamo as a violation of the intellectual rights of the PMA and the researcher of the site - M. Urbanowski, who, by agreement with PMA, studies the above-mentioned materials?

PMA ANSWER: Intellectual rights to the studies of the materials are vested in the author of the study or persons with whom the author has concluded appropriate agreements. Mikołaj Urbanowski, as the author of the study, is entitled to these rights, but we do not know whether other persons are also entitled to them under contracts concluded with the above-mentioned author in the period before the archaeological finds were transferred to the PMA. Formal decisions on the transfer of materials by WKZ were made in this matter in 2022. The institution that, in our opinion, was authorized to conclude contracts was previously the University of Szczecin, represented by the head of excavations, M. Urbanowski PhD.

3. MU QUESTION: If the answer to the above is "yes", does the PMA consider this case closed in the current situation, or it doesn't rule out taking any further steps in the future?

PMA ANSWER: No answer

4. MU QUESTION: In the light of the controversy related to the excessive, destructive 14C dating of the ornamented plaque from Stajnia Cave by S. Talamo's team, which - according to the above-mentioned team - was supposed to consist of only 2 fragments and therefore did not have any other datings - PMA confirms that the research documentation submitted with archaeological materials shows that the artifact originally consisted of 3 fragments with no. inv. field: S22222, S23100, S23101, the latter composed of 2 matching parts "a" and "b", of which part "a" was issued in 2011 at the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit?

PMA ANSWER: The PMA received a scientific catalog card prepared by the author of the research, which shows that there were originally more fragments of the plaque. However, only two fragments were donated to the Museum, one of which shows traces of having been sampled. The Museum was aware that the finds were not in their original state of preservation before submitting the application to the WKZ for their transfer to the PMA. The mission of our Museum is to protect, care, research and provide access to archaeological heritage.

5. MU QUESTION: Based on the assessment of the state of preservation of the fragments of the plaque currently stored in the PMA - e.g. as part of the Conservation Opinion - can it be assumed that the largest ornamented fragment of the plaque (S22222) was returned by the Max Planck Institute with significant and permanent damage that affects the exhibition value of the artefact and being the result of 14C dating not ordered by the PMA?

PMA ANSWER: PMA did not commission any invasive tests in relation to materials from the Stajnia cave. However, the inspection shows that the plaque has traces after the sample was taken. We would like to point out that since the artefacts were transferred to the PMA, the Museum has not undertaken any invasive actions, but has carried out conservation works on the mentioned plaque and the bone awl. In 2018, by agreement of the parties, a significant part of the archaeological finds was transferred to the PMA in order to systematize knowledge regarding the numerical and qualitative status of the collection that was to be accepted into the PMA. Samples were collected before the finds were transferred to the PMA. Responsibility for the condition of the finds therefore rested with other institutions. The museum, knowing the state of preservation of the specimens, decided to accept the collections due to their scientific and exhibition value.

6. MU QUESTION: In connection with the above-mentioned damage to the plaque from Stajnia Cave, has the PMA taken or plans to take further steps and, if so, what ones (e.g. appointment of the Conservation Commission)?

PMA ANSWER: Due to the fact that the analysis took place before the finds entered the PMA deposit, we do not plan to appoint a Conservation Commission. WKZ is the enforcement body of the law on the protection of archaeological monuments, which are formally owned by the State Treasury. From the correspondence with you, we conclude that ethical and legal doubts regarding copyright and the choice of a destructive method of scientific analysis are a consequence of actions taken, as we understand, without consulting the institutions responsible for the condition of the monument (WKZ, University of Szczecin, on whose behalf you managed the work). Due to the above, we cannot analyse ethical and legal problems without recognising the full historical context of what happened. In particular, this concerns establishing the relationship between the situation and Polish law, especially the transfer of valuable monuments outside the borders of our country, which requires the consent of the WKZ.

7. MU QUESTION: In addition to the return of archaeological materials from research in the Stajnia Cave, temporarily stored at the Max Planck Institute, of which in 2019 i.a. the teeth of H. neanderthalensis, above mentioned 2 fragments of a pendant and a bone awl were returned - all showing signs of damage related to analysis performed by employees of the Max Planck Institute – did PMA also received 3D documentation of the mentioned artefacts made before their destruction, as agreed in the agreement between representatives of PMA, WKZ and the Max Planck Institute?

PMA ANSWER: PMA did not receive any 3D documentation from the research conducted at the Max Planck Institute.