

Do you remember?...

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Abstract: This is a personal narrative of an acquaintanceship between Professor Jacek Lech and the author, since 1973. While not of strictly documentary value, it may recall some aspects of archaeological activities – surveys, excavations, conferences and symposia organisation, and publishing, for over forty years. Although never formally related as teacher-student, and of relatively distant specialisations (Neolithic flints vs. historical archaeology of Mesopotamia), we could cooperate for this long time quite effectively. As I may sum up today, the profit was, on my side, enormous – the discipline and style ‘doing archaeology’ was taught to me not less substantially by this relation than by the university course, and the plethora of practices, both in the field and in later study, added to a special ‘personal’ corpus of experience, of irreplaceable and simply priceless value for, e.g., my later teaching of archaeology at the university.

Keywords: field survey, flint mines, history of archaeology, Krzemionki, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski district, Ojców, Cracow district, Wierzbica, Radom district

Introductory

Do you remember?... It is not a question to the Celebrator, literally, but it seems a convenient introductory formula for us both (the Celebrator and the author), to begin a short review of an acquaintanceship of more than forty years. When first contacted by the Editors and commissioned ‘to present some memories’, I thought: what an easy and gratefully acceptable task! Just have a look at the past and make some notes, plus a few refreshing anecdotes, and that’s it. Most stress, of course, being put on ‘when we were young’... Safely far from any attempt to contribute to a more ambitious goal, e.g., as characterized by Douglas R. Givens (2008: 193) – ‘Overall, the task of an archaeological biography is to explain archaeology’s past from the most personal and focused side of the individual contributor and to assess this person’s place within the archaeological community as fairly as possible’.¹ But when ‘exploring’ this past, it appeared to be so rich and intense, that a long process of sieving out what should remain had to be undertaken several times. Thus I propose quite a sketchy presentation, with some fairly ‘personally biased’ highlights, which may add slightly to a narrative about You-Know-Who, or He-Who-Should-Be-Named; considering me – with friendship and gratitude.

First encounter

In the school year 1972/73, still before finishing high school exams, and then matriculation exams at the University (which took place in May–July 1973), and already a long time after having decided to study Mediterranean archaeology, I started to attend popular lectures organised by the Polish Archaeological

and Numismatic Society (Polskie Towarzystwo Archeologiczne i Numizmatyczne – PTAIN): a nice location in the Old Town of Warsaw, a very scientific atmosphere, competent lecturers, some fairly exotic themes – sheer pleasure for a candidate in the craft. A list of themes of the following presentations was there on the table (or was distributed?), and on one occasion it appeared that the next speaker was to be ‘Jacek Lech’ (henceforward, when obvious – J. L.). This prompted some comments: in the first rows of chairs a group of, obviously, advanced students or fresh graduates were sitting and discussing, and one of them, a girl with long blonde hair, said in a whisper: ‘Gosh, LECH will be speaking next time, ALL THE PEOPLE from the Department will come, for sure’ (the Department of Prehistoric and Early Medieval Archaeology, University of Warsaw, was meant then). ‘Wow’ – thought I – ‘this must be someone special’. And there he was; on the announced evening one mgr (MA) Jacek Lech presented a lecture on the investigations of the Combined Prehistoric Expedition in Egypt - 1972 (cf., e.g., Schild and Wendorf 2002). Of this I keep only some blurred reminiscences – a lot of yellow sand, flecked with grey and brown flints, plus some close-ups of the latter. Still, for ‘dessert’ pyramids had also been shown, to ensure the audience that the activities had really taken place in Egypt. To finish with colours – the hair of the Lecturer was surprisingly advanced in going grey, in relation to his (presumed) age.²

In the field – and for an absolute beginner

Our next meeting came far faster than – if ever – expected, in June or July 1973. It was shortly before,

¹ Cf. Also Murray and Evans 2008: 9–11, ‘Individuals and Institutions In the History of Archaeology’.

² Some time later I was informed also that my presence went not entirely unnoticed. Quote: ‘...you know, we were quite curious who this child might be, attending there so regularly’, one of the group revealed.

or shortly after matriculation exams, and it took place at the very same Department just referred to above (Warsaw, Widok 10), as a preparatory event for the members of an excavation, scheduled for August. I could attend (the meeting), contacted through a chain of acquaintances, because in spring that year I had already started to participate in archaeological surveys in Western Mazovia (somebody knew somebody who... etc.) – and was once asked if I would be interested in excavations. YES, YES, YES, what an opportunity! Dark, shaded library/lecture room, with that intense smell of old books, and a few young people – those already seen at the Society? – to form a ‘Warsaw team’ of the excavations at Iwanowice, Cracow district (the Małopolskie Voivodeship), carried out by the Lesser Poland Department of the Institute of the History of Material Culture, Polish Academy of Sciences (Zakład Archeologii Małopolski, Instytut Historii Kultury Materialnej PAN), directed by (then) assoc. professor Jan Machnik. There were: the chief of the team – J. L., Elżbieta Jastrzębowska (classical archaeologist, now professor emeritus), Hanna Młynarczyk (later Hanna Lech), Maria Kulisiewicz, Andrzej Leligdowicz and Zdzisław Skrok, plus some others who, however, finally did not come to the field. There were many jokes told, and lots of laughing – quite an inviting perspective.

And ‘it worked’. Although a (sometimes irritatingly naive) greenhorn, I felt like a real member of the group, both at the site of ‘Babia Góra III’ (Iwanowice) itself and in our living quarters in a farmer’s house in the village, where later afternoons and evenings were spent. The site was not – as I may evaluate it now – extremely important (remember my planned and later angle of view – Ancient Civilisations of the Mediterranean), but every single activity was a discovery – exploring dark-brown/dark-grey refuse/storage pits in intensively yellow loess, preparing and drawing sections, labelling findspots (what is a ‘truncated blade’? – really, no different than so many other pieces of this ugly grey flint!), etc. The site, or sector/area, was then investigated in several long narrow trenches, and I was delegated to the one supervised by Hanna Młynarczyk. Some activities involving the whole site were undertaken only by J. L. – i.e. photographing singular features (during the working day) or taking general views of the trenches, and their parts, in the afternoon. With planes laboriously cleaned, and the above-mentioned yellows and browns/greys, they were an almost artistic subject for photography (add the green of the grass and blue of the sky) – taken slowly, after much thought (on the ladder used to gain a ‘view from above’), with many attempts to get the best composition; and me jumping about (slowly, slowly – not to disturb the planes), moving the scales and the North-arrow accordingly. There were also small wooden plates, with are – or quadrant-numbers – to be rotated appropriately in

the direction of the camera. Archaeology as a dramatic adventure? – forget it!

At Iwanowice, as later, J. L. used to stay in a ‘private’ room in the farmer’s house. As I recall on many other occasions, he insisted on having such a retreat (in Czajowice, Cracow district, in Ojców, Cracow district), and this may also add to the sensorial remembrances (other than the colours already mentioned): as he was a keen pipe-smoker the intensive smell of ‘Red Amphora’ (‘full aromatic’, an absolute classic, by Douve Egberts) filled his room, no less than it did Room 203 (see below) of the Institute. Needless to say – I followed, but with some delay, having started in 1979, and continuing until 2013 (J. L. gave it up sometime in the 90s?).

Then the academic year began, and quite different duties started. While unable now to recall how, when and where precisely it happened, I still remember some recommendations given by J. L., as to reading matter that would possibly be helpful for a freshman in archaeological studies. These included about a dozen titles, and two remain in the memory: Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *Anthropologie structurale* (first Polish edition in 1970 – *Antropologia strukturalna*) and Stanisław Piekarczyk’s *Historia, kultura, poznanie: książka propozycji* [History, Culture, Cognition. A Book of Propositions], published in 1972 (with an English summary: 386–394). The former needs no comment, the latter – just a brief one. I wanted somehow to relive my first encounter with it – and what luck! Checking in the antiquarian bookshop near the University, there it was, and for precisely the same price as in 1972 – 42 PLN! (Well, the original and present prices were identical – although the money is not). By no means an easy read – now as then – with numerous equations of sentential calculus and formal logic, diagrams and graphs, and lots of specific terminology, but, still, it gave a dramatic alternative for the ‘traditional’ historical discourse, and created some sort of cognitive tension or stress, or dynamics, suggesting alternative ways of historical explanation. To be honest – I prefer my first, 1973, reading of the book...

Room 203³

The title notwithstanding – the next occasion was still an excavation, in 1974, with some important differences: a small dig, not a settlement site but rather a flint mine/flint mines, and with a group of old acquaintances,

³ An explanation for those unfamiliar with the topography of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences (former Institute of the History of Material Culture), Al. Solidarności (former Świerczewskiego) 105 – Room 203, 2nd floor, was, and is, the office, workshop and storeroom of J. L. It was our ‘contact place’ in the 1970s and 80s, and there, e.g., the Prądnik Survey results were studied and prepared for publication. Room 202 is the conference room of the Institute – it dominated our contacts and cooperation in later years.



Fig. 1. Czajowice, Cracow district, 1974-team, from left to right: Andrzej Leligdowicz (Arabist and archaeologist, participated in numerous surveys and excavations in Poland and abroad – recently in Kurdistan), author, Jacek Lech, Zdzisław Skrok (archaeologist, a renown popularizer of archaeology), Robert Buczak (archaeologist and numismatist, at present co-owner and co-Director of the Warsaw Numismatic Centre). Self-timer photo: F. Stępniewski.

some of them freshmen no more, but experienced students (i.e. Robert Buczak and the author; Fig. 1). The site was on a farmer's field, in the vicinity of the village – Czajowice, Cracow district – and in the direct vicinity of a forest, belonging to the Ojców National Park. We had the fabulous landscape of the Polish Jura (visited already during the Iwanowice excavation) and not very heavy work – exploring a small trench. There were no local workers to be recruited, hence the limited scale of the investigation, later on extended to yet another site, deep in the forest – 'Jerzmanowice-Dąbrówka'. While the Czajowice research stopped in a shallow trench, with some flints and a few minute pieces of pottery, the other one, in a narrow (3 x 1m) dig, caught the remains of two shafts – drawing their sections, in colour, was my task. Much later, taking part in excavations in the Near East, I developed a deep hatred of drawing (uncountable) fragments of pottery. But, even so, there was one yet deeper hatred – that of drawing shaft sections (sorry, J. L.).

By 1975, I was taking part in excavations mainly at early medieval sites, and we started another form of cooperation – I was hired to proof-read a substantial, 'basic source' archaeological publication: *The Neolithic Workshop Assemblages from the Flint Mine of Sęspów* (i.e. Dzieduszycka-Machnikowa and Lech 1976). Looking for spelling mistakes was not very exhausting, but there was also another job to be done. At the end of the book there is a set of 'Tables of attributes of cores from Pit 1/1960 and Pit 3', with 417 and 268 specimens respectively, thus with 417+268 verses in the tables, and with several columns for marking both qualitative and quantitative attributes. Dear Reader, if you ever

have this book in your hands, please, have a look at the Tables and appreciate my contribution there – all the marked crosses (or 'X-s') had been meticulously drawn/written(?) by my hand, on pre-printed sheets, to be copied. It was done with a technical pen ('rapidograf'): that 0.35mm, first-class German Rotring™ product, using black China ink (same provenance). To have such a tool (even better – a whole set) was the wish of every archaeologist doing some drawing or the like. (For the Younger Reader – DTP: 'InDesign', 'QuarkXpress' or 'Pagemaker', etc., had not been developed, at least for common use, at that time.)

Some years after this Benedictine-like effort, I could re-use the Tables. When starting to teach 'Methodology of Archaeology' in 2006, I included a fragment of the content into a .ppt-presentation, illustrating various approaches to documenting/describing/presenting artefacts of 'mass' assemblages. However, I do not inform students about my humble contribution to the final printed form of the tables...

Survey, survey, survey!

In 1976 we started yet another enterprise: a really long-term investigation programme, namely 'The Prądnik Basin Survey'. Quite a work – starting in the field, with extensive elaboration of the materials, and closed with a publication (Lech, Rook and Stępniewski 1984). Some 190km² 'walked over', and almost 300 sites discovered or verified. It took four years to be realised, because the team (see Fig. 2 and 3), mainly the students, couldn't spend more than a week, in spring and autumn, 'out of' the University during the academic year. We (i.e. the students) knew this type of landscape already: my knowledge coming from the Iwanowice experience, that of my colleagues from their participation in the Bronocice, Pińczów district (Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship) excavations lead by Janusz Kruk. A fine team, then with an 'inicial' experience in the field, but certainly reliable. And the Polish Jura – one of the most attractive regions in Poland. And flint, flint, flint (pottery – almost exceptional), a really nice proposal for guys intending to specialise in the Mediterranean... And, of course, as before and after, with J. L., an irreplaceable experience both in scientific and social terms. As noted in the captions for Fig. 2 and 3, the team was to spread in different directions, but the sites, the flints and the (exceptional) pottery remained.

The sky's the limit

All this down-to-earth walking gained a spectacular finale: in the spring of 1979 (or was it already 1980?)⁴

⁴ It is to be stressed that no effort was undertaken to compare 'pure memories' with the documentation certainly available in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences –



Fig. 2. The Prądnik-Survey team, c. 1978; from left to right: Jacek Lech, Tomasz Mikocki (professor of classical archaeology, former Director of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, † 2007), author, George Yacoub (Syrian-born archaeologist and Arabist, lecturer in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw). Photo: P. Miglus.



Fig. 3. Same occasion, second from the left: Piotr Miglus (professor of Near Eastern archaeology at the Institute of Prehistory, Heidelberg University). Photo: T. Mikocki.

I had the opportunity to participate in a low-altitude/ceiling flight over the surveyed area (it took just an hour and a half!), as negotiated by J. L. with Janusz Kruk (who supervised a sort of programme for aerial photography in Lesser Poland). I still smile when remembering this event: the pilot, and Janusz Kruk with his camera (in the back seat – me in the front), the door removed to enable leaning out of the side or back (don't panic! – safety belts on), to catch perfect frames. And my (private) SLR 35mm Practica LTL3 (GDR-made, a sort of a high-

this would add precision, but perhaps also create some problems (e.g. things remembered that never happened). For obvious reasons, the Celebrator should not be treated as a verifier of the data.

tech instrument for that time and place), standard lens (50mm), with sharpness/distance ring blocked – as advised by Janusz Kruk – in the 'infinity' position with scotch-tape, and shutter speed set at 1/125 sec. I have forgotten the aperture... but as the day was intensively sunny and absolutely cloudless, it should have been f8 or 16. Add the (then) famous ORWO-Chrom (GDR, too) colour-slide film, 18 DIN/50 ASA, and make up there in the air three or four rolls of it. Alas, no 'frequent flyer' privileges – it happened only once.

Some additional comment as to the technical (boring? redundant?) details. As mentioned above (Iwanowice), J. L. was also a keen field photographer, and we discussed the cameras and lens and films intensively; and it was also a technical problem when preparing either survey or excavations – the 'optimal' available equipment and materials were to be found and bought in only a dozen shops in the whole of Warsaw (those that were allowed to sell to institutional purchasers). J. L. is a 'Neolithic Man', I tend toward 'Civilisation', but this business made us both cute hunters-gatherers, carefully locating the prey and trying to arrive at the shop before other amateurs got the scent.

1979

When recalling this particular year, I even hesitate in believing that it was all real – so rich it was, so much happened. It was the last year, in so many aspects – last year of studies, last year of (my) bachelorship, last year before military (obligatory) service. But this is about archaeology – so let's name the most important events.

There is a small palace in Igołomia, near Cracow, with workshops, laboratories and storerooms, belonging to the Lesser Poland Department of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences. Materials from J. L.'s excavations in Sąsław, Cracow district, were stored there (all these awful cores, already mentioned), in a small cellar in the garden. Some ecological disaster once took place there (in the cellar), and some malicious mould attacked the collection, eating up all the wood of the boxes, covering the cores with a thick layer of something sheepskin-like, and forming picturesque festoons above it. It was some job! – to remove it, re-collect the cores, and clean them up; about a week or more, in spring. I do not guarantee that we cleaned it all up, but an attempt was done.

There were also late afternoons and evenings in the palace, after the mildew job – J. L. worked on his cores or other lithics, I was free to perform something different – finishing the editing and typing my MA thesis... in Assyriology. 'Organisation of the Army in the State of Shamshi-Adad I'; for formal reasons, it had to be – and finally was – presented later in autumn that year.

While I couldn't add much to considerations on flint material (always lacking the special intuition necessary to perceive the character of half-products, tools, etc.), I was supported by the above-mentioned flint-man in my – fairly exotic for him – cuneiform-sources-based study. Already nervous, with deadline approaching, I could, however, pass some critical formulation obstacles, thanks to J. L.'s calm, quiet prompts. It was the first time when cuneiform and flint met so directly – to be continued.

In August that year the Combined Archaeological Expedition to Krzemionki started. With our (Piotr Miglus makes the plural) one-year-old MA, we were somehow knighted in the craft of archaeology, becoming supervisors of (two separate) trenches. Almost no surprises this time, standard (although fairly intensive and exhausting) field-work. And this pleasant mood of being trusted so far (or was it already some risk?). There were also some special events, breaking the (relative) monotony of excavation – the site was visited first by a group of archaeology students from Holland, and by the very Director of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw (former 'owner' of the site). Assisting in guided tours of the mine was of some (humble) grandeur – and for the Dutch students an opportunity to exercise 'archaeological' English (marl, chalk, limestone, striped flint, truncated blade (!), axe or adze, miner's pick, made of antler, etc.). Although the living conditions – with accommodation in a birch-wood shack – were not luxurious, and I can't recall at all how we dealt with food, that August was perhaps the most satisfactory August for many years.

Later, in early autumn (September presumably – it was still so sunny and warm), a less exhausting, almost relaxing job was undertaken. Directed by J. L., supervised by Hanna Młynarczyk, with Andrzej Leligdowicz and Piotr Miglus, we participated in a sort of 'intensive surface collection', to prepare the site of Wierzbica – 'Zełe' (Radom district) for excavations. Slowly walking in a narrow extended line, combing the furrows for flints and reporting the finds (formal pieces were collected; Hanna walked slightly behind, doing the paperwork) – thus, a fine map was created (see Lech and Lech 1984: Fig. 1), dotted densely with markings of different kinds of finds. If your guess is that I use this experience and this map when teaching archaeology, you are right.

Well, time to finish up with the field, as for the year – the other activity would be to work on publishing, which took place both in-between the above-mentioned, and later on. Since the mid 1970s, Erich von Däniken was quite popular in Poland, with his books and films, and there were some efforts to present a scientifically founded, professional counter-work. While too young

and too 'fresh' in the craft to participate, I could still offer a helping hand to J. L., in terms of the ancient Near East problems, and trustfully accepted in his chapter (Lech 1980). A warm, friendly dedication – hand-written on the title page – in the copy of the 2000 revised edition of the book, popularly called 'our anti-Däniken', makes a nice souvenir.

Next year – 1980 – seems fairly blurred in my memory. In July I had to report to the army, for the obligatory graduates' service. Let's omit the details... Having accomplished the mission (as second lieutenant, reserve, signal corps), I could get back to archaeology, both at the University (continuing the PhD studies and the scholarship), and in the field. Summer 1981 meant a campaign in Wierzbica, the last so intensive contact with flints, flints, flints... and a sort of farewell to common field-work with Jacek, and Hanna, and Andrzej. In September that year I started to participate in Polish excavations in Iraq, in international rescue projects – a very absorbing job, which meant, e.g., in 1983, spending half a year, in spring and autumn, somewhere on the Euphrates. So it went, and it took about ten years to revive our contacts – this time concentrating in Room 202.

Room 202

We entered this quite different path in 1992, in a new – since 1989 – political, then social, reality. The Institute of the History of Material Culture was to be renamed soon (1993) as the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology (both of the Polish Academy of Sciences). On 22 April 1992, on the 100th anniversary of Vere Gordon Childe's birth, a conference was organized (one of many to follow). While not deeply interested in the history of archaeology, when invited by J. L. to have a look from the 'Ancient Near Eastern' perspective, I prepared a short presentation on the Childean 'Urban Revolution'. It took then several years, but finally we succeeded in publishing – seriously substantial in size, hopefully also in content – a post-conference volume, with quite many 'external' papers added (cf. Lech 1999: 10–11; Stępniewski 1999). So a quite unexpected adventure – in the very history of archaeology – started for me, lasting almost twenty years. And of course it was of great, practical use. As in our (University) Institute, the history of archaeology started to be intensively lectured on, and when proposed to participate, I was prepared, with a basic, or better, acquaintance with the literature and latest trends in the sphere. It goes on, expanded to methodology, and became somehow my 'second best' subject of interest (Near East stays the first).

In 1992 the Commission of History and Methodology of Archaeological Research (by the Pre- and Protohistorical Sciences Committee, Polish Academy of Sciences), was

created, and presided over by Professor Jacek Lech (in this case *plenus titulus* seems obligatory), with Danuta Piotrowska and me serving as secretaries. As noted, there were many meetings, symposia, and conferences on the subject (or close to it; cf., e.g., Lech 2007: 10–18) – I shall mention two only, best remembered and of special value.

Remember the flint-cuneiform junction? So it goes – in 1994 a symposium on ‘late flint usage’ was organized, and on the kind request of J. L. I collected some – unexpectedly vivid – references to, e.g., the medical employment of siliceous materials in historical Mesopotamia (Stępniewski 1997). The subject was continued – there were ‘secondary’ sessions on it in 2005 and 2006 (see Fig. 4 and 5), and there I dared to present a comparison of the composite Neolithic flint/obsidian sickles with... the ritual sickle of the Assyrian king Assurnasirpal II (883–859 BC; and no, I did not propose a genetic relation between the two – so far does the flint-cuneiform junction not work).

Ojców revisited

Time for a sentimental journey – in 1996. More than 20 years after the Czajowice excavations, and precisely 20 years after the initiation of the ‘Prądnik Survey’, a symposium, also on the occasion of 125 years of archaeological investigations in the Ojców Jura, took place (cf. Lech and Partyka (eds) 2006, esp. Piotrowska 2006). With colleagues-participants (of the former), Robert Buczak and Piotr Miglus (cf. Fig. 1 and 2), we participated, already as ‘veterans’ in the field activities there, but as a rather ‘dilettante’ audience. We could also use the opportunity – alas! absents the sessions – to make a few trips to the neighbourhood: the house we dwelt in during the 1974 campaign, the fields with the site excavated then, and the granite boulder in the forest where we exercised, amateurishly, flint knapping. However, the most significant meeting appeared in the official programme of the symposium. The whole group was transported to a chosen site, at Pieskowa Skała, referred to in a presentation on Medieval Ojców Jura. The excavator of the site, Stanisław Kołodziejewski, briefly indicating its still visible terrain features, pointed out that the first indicator and suggestion to consider ‘Kocica’ hill as a possible place for the location a medieval stronghold came from the Prądnik-Survey report, and he thanked us, the assiduous surveyors, for a job well done (Kołodziejewski 2006: 552–558 and Fig. 3; also Piotrowska 2006: Fig. 8; the site is number 52 in the report – Lech, Rook and Stępniewski 1984: 223). A small thing – but we could really draw satisfaction from it! And in the introductory lectures on methodology, when discussing different approaches and directions in archaeology, I have thus some ‘personal’ material for the dispute on ‘inductive versus deductive



Fig. 4. Some explanation. In conversation with Witalij Konopljia (archaeologist, I. Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Lvov), ‘Late Flint Usage’ Symposium, October 2005. Photo: F. Stępniewski.



Fig. 5. As a cup-bearer, in an Old Town restaurant, with Bogdan Balcer (archaeologist, Institut of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw). After the Symposium... Photo: F. Stępniewski.

archaeology’, stressing forcefully the ‘idiographic duties’ of archaeology and archaeologists.

What more? A lot – but this should be described (or at least mentioned) at some other, possibly much later, jubilee.

To sum up, I may most sincerely declare that the variety of problems and methods – a plethora far richer than available in formal *curricula* – arising on the above-mentioned occasions, was deeply instructive, inspiring and encouraging. And they were not, of course, fortuitous, accidental occurrences – they were competently authorized, by You-Know-Whom.

Well – these are the memories, and not an evidence-based documentary. One final stroke, sort of a summary, short but hopefully meaningful – Jacku, dziękuję/thank you.

Translated by the author

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