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w dawnej
obrzędowości
pogrzebowej

**W PRZESTRZENI,
PRZESTRZEŃ
W GROBIE**



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Marcin S. Przybyła

**SPOŁECZNE HIERARCHIE I ARCHEOLOGICZNE RANKINGI GROBÓW.
DYSKUSJA W OPARCIU O ANALIZY DWÓCH CMENTARZYSK
Z KOŃCA EPOKI BRĄZU W POLSCE POŁUDNIOWEJ**

Social hierarchies and archeological rankings.

Discussion based on the analysis of the two Late Bronze Age cemeteries of Southern Poland

Summary

Sources and methods. There are some different methods used by archaeologists in order to establish a ranking of grave assemblages, ordered by their more or less subjectively estimated “richness”. The scope of presented paper is an evaluation of these techniques. For this purpose more than 500 grave inventories were analysed, originating from two large cemeteries dated back to the Late Bronze Age – Early Iron Age transition and located in Southern Poland (Fig. 1). Four absolute methods of scoring (total number of objects made of stone, metal or bone, number of functional categories, “quantity index” – subjective scoring based on the criterion of production cost, approximate weight of metal objects) as well as two relative ones (“splendour index”, “scarcity index”) were subsequently implemented and compared one another.

Results. Results obtained by using all techniques are comparable. Correlation indexes counted separately for pairs of different rankings fluctuate usually from 0.8 to 0.9 (Fig. 4-6). It allows us to claim, that in the case of both cemeteries the largest and the most internally diverse grave assemblages, contain also the rarest, the heaviest and the most laborious and material consuming objects. It allows us also to distinguish four separate groups of “richness”, represented on both cemeteries (Fig. 4-5). The “poorest” one is represented by the majority of inventories (about 60%), which may be seen as a “norm” and were equipped with 3-4 vessels of different functional types and sometimes additionally small metal objects (e.g. earrings) as well as burials completely devoided of equipment (about 20-30%). Subsequent analyses showed that number of vessels occurring in grave inventories does not correlate in any way with indexes of their “richness”. However, other interesting correlation is possible to find. Namely, the number and quality of vessels seems to alter among

subsequent age categories of deceased (Fig. 9). Particularly, a tendency is observed, that children older than four years are supposed to be equipped often with the whole “adult” set of vessels (cup, bowl, pot and sometimes vase), whilst younger ones got no pottery or only one or two cups. Planigraphy of the sites (Fig. 11-12) showed that burials representing first three groups of “richness” tend to concentrate in small clusters, despite of the facts that they are not restricted to any individual part of the cemeteries.

Discussion and conclusions. The last part of the paper discusses the reliability of grave analyses as a source for studies on social hierarchies within past societies. In relation to cemeteries in question the following interpretation is proposed (with reference to the costly signaling model). All additional objects within grave inventories (i.e. those, which exceeded the “norm”) were not only the equipment of deceased, but can be linked to conspicuous behaviours in which the giver displayed to the audience (participants of the burial ceremony), that he or she posses an important, but normally hidden attribute. During this ceremonies the precious gift – the token was irreversibly exchanged for immaterial symbolic capital. Although the person of giver is hidden to us, we may speculate about his or her motivation by tracing what was given (the nature of objects which played the role of grave-gifts), to whom was it given (what kind of social relation was supposed to be emphasised by giver) and where, or better in front of whom the giving was performed? On the methodological level, obtained results allow to stress the advantages of both relative methods („splendour index” and “scarcity index”), which combined each other provide the most complementary picture of diversity patterns within collections of grave assemblages.

Jacek Woźny

**PRZESTRZEŃ CMENTARZYSK PRADZIEJOWYCH
W TEORII I PRAKTYCE ARCHEOLOGICZNEJ**

The space of prehistoric burial grounds in archaeological theory and practice

Summary

The ways of interpreting prehistoric burial grounds were modified several times within last decades. However, still dominant is the approach in which the most important is to document well, to systemize and to specify grave findings. The present paper considers the researches emphasizing the space relations in the burial ground area as well as the interrelations between ritual structures situated there. The grounds, in historical depiction, were analysed on the basis of the following methods: cultural evolutionism, positivism, structuralism, and also hermeneutics and phenomenology. Gradually, the attention was paid to the

new research problems: distances between graves, directions of the burial grounds' development, establishing their inner and outer boundaries, settlement of ritual structures (hearths, funeral pyres, concentration of pottery and stones) and the tradition of using the space of burial grounds in later historical periods. The conclusions presented in the paper show that the biography of archaeological structures, such as burial grounds, is initiated in primeval history but is completed by other generations of observers and researchers of those relics. Their space „text” is unceasingly read and interpreted.

Katarzyna Czarnecka

**W ŚRODKU PARADNEJ TARCZY. CIEKAWY GRÓB
Z CMENTARZYSKA KULTURY PRZEWORSKIEJ W CZERSKU, POW. PIASECZYŃSKI**

Inside a parade shield. An interesting grave from the Przeworsk culture cemetery in Czersk, distr. Piaseczno

Summary

An urn grave 93 from cemetery of the Przeworsk culture was furnished with opulent set of arms: a sword, two spearheads and shield fittings, all ritually destroyed according to burial custom of the Przeworsk culture. A shield-boss, of type Jahn 7, has broken spike. Bronze rivets, coated with silver sheet are flattened. Inside the boss were stored small objects, a not rare phenomenon in the Przeworsk culture. A shield grip, of type Jahn 8, has rectangular bronze plates covered with thin layer of silver, with small silver studs, and decorative rosettes. Crests separating rivet plates from a handle are covered with silver sheet, and decorated with filigree plait. A big number of iron U-shaped edge mountings, elaborately destroyed, allows a cautious reconstruction of

a shield-form – it should be rectangular/oval. An evidence, that shields of such shape were used in the Przeworsk culture, could be finds of miniature shields (e.g. Siemiechów, grave 46). Some analogies are also outside the Przeworsk culture, e.g. preserved in situ shield from grave 19 in Hunn, Norway. Grave 93 is dated to phase B2 of the Roman Period.

All finds have no traces of fire, so they weren't put on the pyre but were deposited directly in grave pit. A shield was disfigured. Edge mountings were irregularly dispersed in grave pit, some pieces were inside shield boss. They must be torn away from the shield planks. A shield boss was deposited more than 40 cm apart from the grip. The urn were placed in the middle.

Kalina Skóra

TRUP NIEOBECNY?... CZYLI O BRAKUJĄCYCH SZCZĄTKACH KOSTNYCH
W GROBACH KULTURY WIELBARKIEJ

The corpse missing?... Or, missing bone remains in graves of the Wielbark Culture

Summary

In cemeteries of the Wielbark Culture we notice inhumation or cremation graves, in which there are either no human bones, or merely a small part of them (cenotaphs, symbolic graves, partial burials). This paper discusses reasons behind this absence. First of all, we face the following problem: do we observe a custom of commemoration of the absent dead in the funeral rite, or is it rather our present-day cultural construct? At the moment, it seems rather impossible to correctly describe this phenomenon and to identify its scope.

It is first of all natural causes leading to a decomposition of the skeleton that can be made responsible for the absence of bones in the grave. On the other hand, a custom of commemorating of the absent dead must be considered. This custom is testified to in many societies, regardless of their level of civilisation. A death in circumstances which render a burial by relatives or in a home cemetery impossible is not an uncommon phenomenon, especially in turbulent times of military conflicts or in periods of migrations.

An empty grave can also be a result of exhumation, undertaken for many a reason: migration and a need for transposition of remains, annihilation of remains of the dead due to personal animosities, for the purpose of political or religious ostentation, post mortem penal activities or anti-vampire practices. A removal of the dead from the grave can be an element of actions which are included in the term of *damnatio memoriae*. Throwing away of the dead from their places of rest can be a result of new orders, be it political or social ones. Bodies may have also been removed during a robbery.

The paper also discusses the issue of a too small weight of burnt human bones which found their way

to cremation graves in cemeteries of the Wielbark Culture.

The average weight of bones calculated for all the cemeteries which were included in the analysis (from 8.7 g – Kutowa, to 1092 g – Grębocin) significantly differs from expected values (c. 1.5-3 kg, depending on the age and sex). An analogously low result was received for mass graves, where the presence of bones of two (usually) or more dead persons (sporadically) was identified.

A low weight of bones in cremation graves can also be due to circumstances and ways of cremation or to taphonomic processes. Another possibility implies that only part of ashes was put into the grave, while for the remaining part other possible ways of depositions are proposed, such as, among others, storing in houses or scattering in various places: in necropolises, throwing into watercourses (as a particular form of sacrifice), a burial of the dead in several graves, deposition in the border space of inhabited places, scattering in the landscape or division of remains between mourners as a physical trace of memory. One of possible reasons for scattering of burnt remains may be a need for a quicker physical destruction of the body. In some cultures this is a condition for a transformation of the dead and obtaining of the status of an ancestor.

An overview of discoveries from cemeteries of the Wielbark Culture demonstrated a complexity of interpretation problems. The eponymous issue calls for a development and precise research at the level of individual cemeteries, for, e.g., geochemical examinations of contents of grave pits and the help of anthropology in explanations of proposed hypotheses.

Joanna Zagórska-Telega, Jacek Pikulski

**UWAGI NA TEMAT ROZPLANOWANIA PRZESTRZENNEGO CMENTARZYSKA
W MICHAŁOWICACH. MOŻLIWOŚCI INTERPRETACJI FUNKCJI OBIEKTÓW ROWKOWYCH**

**Some remarks on the spatial arrangement of the Michalowice cemetery.
Interpretation of the function of groove-type feature**

Summary

Spatial arrangement and development of cemeteries have long attracted the interest of archaeologists. One of the questions asked was whether the cemeteries developed in a planned manner and within a fixed space or, on the contrary, did they expand successively when necessary. The excavations conducted on the Przeworsk culture cemetery at Michałowice can perhaps provide new data for this discussion.

The mentioned cemetery yielded 20 groove-type features characterised by a regular, rectangular shape. All these structures were oriented according to the four cardinal directions and arranged close to each other in rows along the north-south line. Along with groove-type features, an inhumation grave and cremation burials were discovered, both within the area encompassed

by the arms of the grooves and outside it, and forming no detectable clusters. Based on the hitherto studies it can be assumed that groove-type features themselves were not graves, nor were they enclosures around the burials of high-ranking individuals. Their function was rather to delimit the area where the deceased belonging to one family or clan were buried, being a kind of “family quarters”. The burials proper might have been very shallow or even put on the surface, thus being prone to damage. At the same time, the arrangement of groove-type features in Michałowice around an empty central area seems planned rather than coincidental. It is also very likely that all these features were used simultaneously and over a longer period of time.

Elżbieta Dąbrowska

**W KOŚCIELE CZY POZA KOŚCIOŁEM
– LOKALIZACJA POCHÓWKÓW W POLSCE PIASTOWSKIEJ**

Dans l'église au hors l'église – la localisation des sépultures en Pologne des Piast

Summary

Le propos de l'auteur concerne la situation des sépultures chrétiennes dans l'espace ecclésial et plus précisément leur localisation à l'intérieur ou à l'extérieur des murs du sanctuaire, dans les pays de l'Europe latine. L'usage s'était répandu, dans l'antiquité tardive, d'enterrer les morts à proximité de la tombe des saints martyrs dans l'espérance de bénéficier de leur intercession pour s'assurer le salut éternel, avec la conséquence de transformer les églises en cimetières. Dès le IV^e siècle, pour lutter contre ces pratiques, des interdictions furent énoncées par l'intermédiaire d'édits impériaux et de décisions conciliaires. Recommandations peu suivies d'effets si l'on en croit leurs répétitions ininterrompues dans les textes médiévaux. C'est pourquoi des règles s'établirent peu à peu au cours du Moyen Âge, relatives

à cette question. L'enterrement dans les murs du sanctuaire fut réservé aux catégories les plus hautes de la société: en premier lieu les rois et les évêques – personnages sacrés – puis les abbés et les abbesses, enfin les membres des familles royales et les fondateurs et bienfaiteurs d'édifices ecclésiastiques. Ces dispositions furent certainement connues et mises en pratique lors de la christianisation de la Pologne au Xe siècle. Étant donné les dimensions modestes des constructions, on peut déduire que les tombes découvertes dans les églises polonaises, correspondent à des sépultures de personnages importants, rois, évêques, abbés ou princes. Néanmoins, en dépit du nombre important de fouilles archéologiques réalisées, très peu de ces personnages enterrés „intra muros” ont été identifiés.

Michał Dzik

**UWAGI O FUNKCJI I SYMBOLICE KONSTRUKCJI
WCZESNOŚREDNIOWIECZNYCH GROBÓW W OBUDOWACH KAMIENNYCH**

Remarks on function and symbolic meaning of constructions of Early Medieval graves in stone-settings

Summary

This paper discusses the issues of the meaning and function of constructions characteristic for so called 'groby w obudowach kamiennych' – early medieval flat boulder-lined graves with cobblestones covering the burials (fig. 1, 4). Burial sites with these kind of cists are quite rare but were discovered in different parts of Europe; in Poland concentrations of them are known from the Mazovia and the basin of the eastern part of the lower Bug river (fig. 2). In the first of the above-mentioned regions, these constructions are dated to the period between the mid 11th century to the beginning of the 13th century. In the second region – from the last third of the 11th century to the mid 14th century.

In the literature of the subject, several explanations of the function of the discussed grave constructions were proposed. They were interpreted as structures buttressing the walls of pit-graves or maybe preventing the burials against animals. According to another hypothesis, the idea of building such cists arose in the

times of Christianization of funeral customs, when inhumation replaced cremation, and stone constructions were meant to stop the deceased from rising. An opposite proposal recognises in these cists the imitation of Jesus Christ's grave, peddled by the Church. In the most recent proposition, the discussed cists are depicted as marks of high social position, popular amongst the elites in emerging states.

In this article arguments defying the abovementioned hypotheses were presented. In light of comparative studies and new data on the genesis of the aforementioned graves in eastern Poland, it seems, that these cists are the emanations of ideas according to which graves are symbolic houses built for the dead. Another probable function (apotropaic, mark of status) might actually have had a secondary meaning, which could be given to these constructions in some regions during the evolution of funeral customs.

GROBY PODWÓJNE W POLSCE Wczesnośredniowiecznej. Próba rewaluacji

Double graves in early medieval Poland. A revaluation

Summary

This article seeks to reassess the notion of double graves in early medieval Poland. Burials of this kind are rarely found at inhumation cemeteries and their total number usually does not exceed 1% of all graves from a particular site.

The paper begins by presenting a brief overview of various textual sources, mostly Arabic, which describe funerary rituals of the pagan Slavs. Some of these accounts mention a peculiar practice during which the wives of the deceased committed suicide at the graveside in order to be buried or cremated with their husbands. While it is difficult to assess the authenticity of such descriptions, a number of previous scholars have suggested that double graves of men and women may represent burials of married couples.

The authors of the present article seek to expand these interpretations and argue for the necessity to acknowledge the multivalence and diversity of double graves in early medieval Poland. To demonstrate their arguments the different sections of the article focus on several variants of double graves that have been observed within the examined corpus of evidence. The cases discussed in detail include: 1. alleged burials of married couples (where the man and woman lay very close to one another, sometimes holding hands), 2. potential human sacrifices (where one of

the individuals seems to have suffered a violent death, as evidenced by traces of wounds, usually to the skull, inflicted with the use of a sharp instrument), 3. double and mass graves perhaps resulting from dramatic events (plagues, war etc.), 4. cases of reopened graves (where the second individual is added to a pre-existing single grave), 5. graves of two men (interpreted as burials of relatives, companions or perhaps homosexuals), and 6. double graves of adults and children.

Having reassessed a large body of data the authors argue that the previously proposed interpretations, which perceived practically every double grave of a man and woman as belonging to a married couple, should be seriously reconsidered. The diversity of double graves in early medieval Poland allows for a supposition that they may have resulted from various circumstances – not necessarily as peaceful and innocent as postulated in the works of previous scholars. However, in the context of textual sources, it is quite possible that some funerals may have also been understood as “posthumous weddings”. The ritual murder of one of the individuals could have been intended to wed him or her to the deceased, thereby ensuring they are remembered by their contemporaries not as spinsters or bachelors, but as fully accomplished members of the society.

Andrzej Janowski

PRZESTRZEŃ ROZŚWIETLONA. ZNALEZISKA ŚWIEC I WOSKU
W GROBACH KOMOROWYCH NA TERENIE EUROPY ŚRODKOWOSCHODNIEJ

Space illuminated. Finds of candles and wax in early medieval chamber graves in Eastern-Central Europe

Summary

Among many items which were found in early medieval chamber graves in Eastern-Central Europe are pieces of wax and candles (fig. 1). These artifacts were discovered in seven graves at four cemeteries in Gnezdovo (graves C-198, C-301 and C-306) (fig. 2-4; 7; 8.1-8), Pskov (graves 3 and 6) (fig. 5), Shestovitsa (mound 42) and Timerevo (mound 100) (fig. 6; 8.9). All of these graves were covered with mounds and contained inhumations with very rich grave-goods. The dead were buried with their heads to the west. Candles were found predominantly in female graves (Gnezdovo graves C-198, C-301 and C-306; Pskov grave 3) or in chamber graves containing two individuals (male and female) in association with the females (Timerevo grave 100). The chronology of the graves is very similar – all are dated to the second half of the 10th century. Candles were placed on the periphery in eastern (Gnezdovo graves C-301 and C-306, Pskov grave 6) or southern (Pskov grave 3, Shestovitsa mound 42) part of the chamber. The number of candles in particular graves ranged from one (Pskov grave 6, Shestovitsa grave 42, Timerevo grave 100) to as many as twelve examples (Gnezdovo grave C-306).

Apart from chamber graves, from Russia and Ukraine there are also other types of graves, dated to the second half of the 10th – 11th century, which contained wax and candles. They were found in Gnezdovo

(grave L-148) (fig. 8.11), Timerevo (mound 323) (fig. 8.10), Saki (mound 54(1)) (fig. 8.13), Starcy (fig. 8.14) Vahrushevo (mound CXVI), and Sednev (mound 2(1886) (fig. 8.12). Parallel finds are also known from Western and Northern Europe. The oldest discovery comes from the cemetery in Oberflacht dated to the 6th-7th century (fig. 9.3-5), and the youngest from Norway (graves in Grønhaug, Storhaug, Oseberg, Larvik and Lille Gullkronen (mound 7)) and Denmark (graves in Jelling, Mammen (fig. 10), Sølsted, Brandstrup (fig. 9.2; 11).

In the Early Middle Ages wax was a valued commodity and probably fairly expensive. Scholars point out that wax and candles in funerary contexts are connected with individuals of high material and social status. Candles can also have a very deep symbolic meaning in pagan and Christian beliefs. Chamber graves with candles are probably older than the official date of the Christianisation of Rus' (988/989), but the people in places like Gnezdovo, Pskov, Timerevo and Shestovitsa had contact with Christianity about 100 years earlier. Chamber graves with candles contain Christian symbols like silver crosses/pendants and other (fig. 12). In my opinion candles had an apotropaic meaning, and the graves with candles may be interpreted as a sign of an individual conversion of social elite to Christianity before official Christianisation.

Joanna Kalaga

GROBY Z PŁYTAMI NA CMENTARZYSKU PRZY KOŚCIELE POD WEZWANIEM ŚW. MIKOŁAJA W WIŚLICY. ASPEKT ARCHEOLOGICZNY I SPOŁECZNY

Graves with plates in the St. Nicholas' church cemetery in Wiślica. Archaeological and social aspect

Summary

Santa Nicholas church in Wiślica has been used as parish church, from the end of 11th or from the beginning of 12th to mid 13th century. It was in the center of *suburbium* (ryc. 2). It consisted of church, burial chapel and cemetery. In the chapel and the cemetery there were uncovered 91 graves, including 13 with tombstones. Tombstones were made of gypsum and limestone (ryc. 1). Their fronts were smooth and without decoration. They were deposited directly on a top of pit graves an average of 120 cm above the burials. They were determined the level of utility of cemetery and chapel. Anthropological analyses proved that in graves with tombstones were buried people in *infans II – maturus ages*. A further aspect of the social interpretation of the dead buried in this kind of graves is difficult. We can only hypothesize that they had to characterize something „special” in the community in Wiślica. This „uniqueness” we can consider in a multifaceted sense:

„alien” and „different”, but also in a material, social, cultural and intellectual sense. These attributes should be associated with „selected” dweller of Wiślica, belonging to the environment of Sandomierz's court princes, residing in the palace at *Regia* (ryc. 2). Among the graves with thombstones attention draws to a sarcophagus (39/59, ryc. 4). We can identify it with the burial of the founder of the church or priest performing a liturgy, but also with the person derived from the secular or ecclesiastical hierarchy. The location of this grave outside the temple is unusual. In funeral tradition sarcophags from 11th-13th century were deposited in center of temples. On the other hand, the burials with thombstones, as numerous as in Wiślica, are a rare phenomenon in the necropolises of churches of the early phase of the Christianization of the Polish lands. The cemetery in Wiślica is unique in this respect.

Andrzej Krzyszowski

NACZYNIA CERAMICZNE I WIADERKA KLEPKOWE
Z WCZESNOPIASTOWSKIEGO CMENTARZYSKA W SOWINKACH K. POZNANIA

Ceramic vessels and stave buckets from an early Piast cemetery in Sowinki near Poznań

Summary

Two clay vessels and eleven to twelve stave buckets with iron hoops were discovered in Sowinki, in a skeletal flat cemetery with two phases of use that dates back to the fourth quarter of the 10th to the first half of the 12th century.

They were found in burials of three people aged *iuvenis* of unspecified gender (objects no. 61, 148, 151), one person aged *iuvenis* /*adultus*, also of unknown gender (object no. 70), four people aged *adultus*, including two women (objects no. 7 and 138) and two men (objects no. 44 and 76), probably one man aged *maturus* (object no. 176). The age and gender of four of the remains (objects no. 10B, 23, 157 and 182) could not be determined due to poorly preserved bone fragments (objects No. 10B, 157 and 182), or their total absence (object No. 23). In all of the graves, the vessels were individually placed nearby the feet of the deceased, usually to his or her left. In most of the burials, they were found in the direct vicinity of the deceased, within the grave pit, or even directly inside the clear outlines of the coffin. Only in three cases, in the graves where traces of coffins were registered, did the buckets clearly lie beyond them.

Following the typological division proposed by G. Arwidsson and L. Holmquist (1986, p. 238), the stave buckets from Sowinki represent two morphological types among this kind of objects. The eleven buckets belong to the first type (group A according to the authors), were made with the use of cooperage techniques, with handles, iron rims and a movable iron bail handle. The majority of objects have a slight conical form, with a noticeable enlargement at the bottom, with a diameter in the range of 14-18 cm and the preserved height of 11-14 cm, the initial height ranging from 13 to 16 cm. A variant of this type is represented by a single object only, the bucket discovered in burial no. 138. Carrying similar features as the buckets of A1 variant, it is of a larger size with a diameter of about 22 cm, whereas the height of the bucket could have originally been about 18-20 cm.

The second type of buckets registered in Sowinki is also a case of a single object found only in burial No. 151, whose attributes place it in the buckets of group C by G. Arwidsson and L. Holmquist (1986, p. 238). It had both an iron and a silver-plated sheet (approx. 5 cm in width), below which and between another array of iron rims were iron and silver-plated plaques of a different kind, arranged in a garland pattern. The bucket's diameter was approximately 23-26,5 cm, and the initial height of about 20-22 cm. The corresponding findings from the graveyards of the same chronological period both in the Slavic and Scandinavian territories are sparse.

The analysis of the original content of the clay vessels and stave buckets from Sowinki proved that the objects most likely contained organic animal products such as boneless meat (in objects no. 148, 151), unspecified food (object no. 176), cereal or oil-seeds grains (object no. 70) or beverages (beer or wine dissolved in water). The function of this kind of „gifts” could therefore have an apotropaic character. The remaining buckets, however, were probably originally empty. Moreover, in seven buckets there were fabric residues, attached to the outer parts of the iron bails or rims. Unfortunately, neither the raw material nor warp and weft of the fabrics were identified. It remains an open question as to what the original function of these residues might have been. The research performed on these as well as other fabrics from the site suggests that we are probably dealing with both remnants of clothing and sheets in which the deceased were wrapped.

In terms of spatial range, the analyzed vessels were found in chronologically older sector of the cemetery, its central-western part dating back to the period between the 10th and the first half of the 11th century. They were located in no particular spatial order. In several cases (objects 70, 148, 151), however, it is noticeable that they were undoubtedly burials of people of considerable status in the then society.

Tomasz Kurasiński

**GROTEM W DÓŁ, GROTEM W GÓRĘ. DEPONOWANIE WŁÓCZNI
W GROBACH WCZESNOŚREDNIOWIECZNYCH NA ZIEMIACH POLSKICH**

Spearhead up, spearhead down. Deposition of spears in Early Medieval Graves in the Polish lands

Summary

The paper discusses the issue of deposition of shafted weapons in Early Medieval graves in the Polish lands, with particular stress on the location of spearheads near the feet of the deceased.

The analysis of distribution of spearheads in the space of the grave pit points to a diversified manner of burying the dead with the weapon in question. Three zones can be identified (cf Fig. 1): I – upper part of the torso with the head (61 graves); II – vicinity of the pelvis and the femora (6 graves); III – vicinity of the feet and the tibiae (25 graves; cf Figs. 2-5). Attempts at clarifying this diversity in the deposition of shafted weapons in the space of the grave pit have hardly been undertaken in scholarship. Furthermore, they do not offer a satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon.

This paper presents an interpretation which is somehow different than those hitherto proposed.

The deposition of spearheads in Zone III probably expresses a certain scheme of thinking which is founded on a mythical order of the world, especially on an archaic motif of the “divine duel”. It was an outline of numerous tales, images and beliefs. Its essence was the fight of a positive hero against a dragon or another monster which represents powers of chaos and destruction. Following this path, the dead for whom the weapon was deposited near his feet, may have been posthumously honoured due to his especially remarkable deeds (of war or other ones) done during his life. These deeds were considered significant for the maintenance or restoration of the social order.

Marian Rębkowski

CMENTARZ W CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKIEJ PRZESTRZENI ŚREDNIOWIECZA

Cemetery in the christian space of the Middle Ages

Summary

One of the main features of the Christian funeral rite in the Middle Ages is supposed to have been a specific location of the graveyards. The paper aims to analyse how the problem of a choice and a location of burial space was presented in *Rationale divinorum officiorum* written by bishop Wiliam Durand of Mende in the end of the 13th century. The work was the most famous and most complete medieval handbook of Christian liturgy, containing the explanation of all the rites related to the Christian worship.

According to *Rationale* the space was not homogeneous. By means of rite of consecration a Bishop was able to delimit holy places („loca sacra”) where the God's activity could be manifested in a special way. One of such places was also “locus religiosus” which was the space assigned for burying dead body of Christians and usually named cemetery. What is of special importance, there was expected a spatial unity of the cemetery with a church. As we know, the above norm has originated already in the 4th century. However, it can be supposed that the handbook allowed in the extraordinary situation a church and a cemetery were distant each other. To bury a body of dead Christian beyond the consecrated cemetery was allowed only in exceptional cases.

The author defined in some way also the space of the Christian grave itself. Dead body was to be laid with a head turned towards West and feet towards East which means the position following the orientation of a church. It is well known, that this habit has also originated in the 4th century.

Interesting conclusions may be drawn by a comparison of the contents of *Rationale* to the results of archaeological research on different peoples of the former *Barbaricum* Christianized in the early Middle Ages. Almost everywhere in the beginning there was visible two-way development in the location of inhumation cemeteries. Apart from the cemeteries situated just nearby churches there were also graveyards located without any spatial relation to a church. However, the latter have also some features typical for the Christian funeral requirements like for example the west-east orientation of bodies which resulted in row layout of the whole cemetery. The functioning of only one designated space for burying the dead, which means the final unification of burial customs, was taken over by churchyards c. 100-150 years after the Christianization.

KTO SIĘ NIE LENI, ZROBI ZŁOTO Z KAMIENI
– OSEŁKI W GROBACH WCZESNEGO ŚREDNIOWIECZA

***Kto się nie leni, robi złoto z kamieni*¹ – whetstones in early medieval graves**

Summary

Since the dawn of history humans have been interested in using stones for a variety of purposes. The use of rocks and stones as shelters, building material or resource for the production of tools or weapons is a cultural phenomenon. One of the categories of stone objects recorded in graves at early medieval cemeteries includes whetstones.

The present study is devoted to whetstones registered in graves at the cemetery at Dziekanowice, site 22 (gmina Łubowo, województwo wielkopolskie). This early medieval necropolis is located on the east shore of Lake Lednica in the direct vicinity of one of the major stronghold centres of the Piast dynasty. The stronghold itself is situated on Ostrów – an island on Lake Lednica.

Out of 1585 skeletal graves recorded *in situ* at the studied cemetery, 847 (53.4%) burials contained altogether 1868 objects considered as grave deposits. In the group of those artifacts were 28 whetstones found in 27 graves (one grave contained 2 whetstones), which account for 3.2 percent of the total number of burials with equipment. In addition, 7 whetstones were recorded loosely at the border between layer I and II (they were damaged by ploughing), and in settlement features; however, these objects are not included in the study.

The majority of graves with whetstones unearthed at the cemetery at Dziekanowice were male burials. As many as 21 graves belonged to men, 5 to women and only one to a child.

Previous research and publications on cemeteries do not facilitate an ambiguous interpretation of the function of whetstones recorded in graves, although utilitarian character of these objects is unquestionable. It can also be asserted that whetstones were buried more often in male graves, and most often in adult

graves. They occurred both in “richer” burials and in those characterized by modest equipment.

The new light on the function of some whetstones has been shed by the results of analyses carried out by Martin Ježek from the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. His recent spectral analysis of whetstone surfaces has allowed the hypothesis that whetstones (particularly phyllite ones) may have been used as touchstones. The analysis based on scanning electron microscopy (SEM-EDS method) revealed residues of metals on the surface of the examined objects. The microanalysis has proven the existence of microtraces of metals such as gold, silver, tin and copper. In sum, the hypothesis about a special function of the whetstones cannot be excluded. This may apply particularly to the objects with scant traces of polishing, in contrast to whetstones with strongly polished and characteristic concave surfaces resulting from frequent sharpening. The whetstones with scant traces of polishing may have been used not only as sharpening tools, but also (and maybe primarily) as items against which a precious metal was rubbed in order to check its value and the quality of alloy.

Identifying the function of whetstones as touchstones creates new possibilities for discussing the problems associated with social stratification and with distinguishing between “richer” and “poorer” graves. A whetstone-touchstone found in a grave gives its owner a different rank in the society than we previously assumed interpreting the object only as a sharpening tool. Undoubtedly, the analysis of social stratification should involve by far more elements than is widely regarded as vital. In addition, whetstones-touchstones may also become important objects for the analysis of trading places and exchange in the Early Middle Ages.

¹ This is a Polish proverb which translates literally as “one who is not lazy will make gold from stones”

Paweł Duma

**GROBY PRZESTĘPCÓW NA ŚLĄSKU
W ŚWIETLE NAJNOWSZYCH BADAŃ ARCHEOLOGICZNYCH**

The graves of criminals in Silesia in the light of recent archaeological research

Summary

The present text focuses on analysis of execution sites and graves of criminals explored in south-west Poland, mainly in the area of Lower Silesia. The author describes results of his own research during archaeological excavations, where remains of masonry gallows and graves of criminals have been found. The remains of gallows and executions sites have been discovered in Lubomierz, Jelenia Góra, Złoty Stok, Kamienna Góra and Modrzewie. All gallows were built on a circular plan with diameter up to 6 meters. Historical sources confirm numerous executions on the mentioned sites. With time they have been surrounded by extensive cemeteries for criminals split in two parts – gallows internal area (where many human bones in non-anatomical form were found) and the external area (where graves containing anatomical structure of bones dominated). Nevertheless most of human remains found during excavations were lying in atypical positions. In the

middle of gallows in Lubomierz, a double burial containing bodies of two men with arms crossed behind their back and laying with face to the ground has been discovered. Inside the gallows in Jelenia Góra, there was a 35-45 cm layer of human bones, while inside the gallows in Złoty Stok, there was a pit that contained bones of at least two men, litter and a complete skeleton of cat. Close to this gallows there were also two others, partially destroyed burials. One of them contained body laying on its side and another on its back (only a part of trunk without head and arms was saved). In Kamienna Góra, a smaller amount of human remains was discovered. They were clearly affected by later processes and mixed up with animal remains. The gallows in Modrzewie deserves more attention. In comparison to the other objects, this gallows was sporadically used. Only three human bones were found on this site. All described gallows were explored in the last 10 years.