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WITH OR WITHOUT RESPECT? TREATMENT OF POST-MORTEM REMAINS OF THE DEAD IN THE COURSE OF POST-FUNERAL INTERFERENCES AT CZARNÓWKO IN POMERANIA

Abstract: Cemeteries of the Wielbark Culture are to a different degree affected by a practice of grave opening. The arrangement of bone remains in the grave is still a basic tool to assess the time interval between the burial and the interference. On the other hand, an assessment of the manner in which the dead body or the skeleton was treated is a premise for defining relationships between perpetrators of the disturbance and the dead. Thus, it can also inform us about intentions which motivated the perpetrators. In this paper it is attempted to discuss the necropolis in Czarnówko from this point of view. Research opportunities and limitations resulting from the state of preservation of archaeological sources were dealt with. Furthermore, findings were referred to other cemeteries of the Wielbark Culture.

Keywords: Wielbark Culture, Czarnówko, grave opening, inter- and post-funeral interferences, bone remains, burial rites

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What is desirable at the level of archaeological observation aiming at explaining reasons behind grave opening in Antiquity¹ is the legibility of trenches and the grave pit in a proper sense, including its internal constructions (timber or stone), and a good preservation of grave goods and skeletons. On the basis of these traits it is possible to assess the time interval between the moment of the interference and the burial. However, archaeology is able to successfully accomplish this task to a various degree, depending on the state of available sources. There are less chances to precisely date the time of grave opening. In case we do

not have historical sources (inscriptions), artefacts left by perpetrators (including, e.g. tools) or stratigraphic premises (a disturbance of the grave by well-dated features), all that remains is the first perspective, that is, the time interval.²

Cemeteries of the Wielbark Culture were affected by a practice of grave opening to a various degree. They also differ with regard to a possibility of recording of the mentioned traits. It rarely occurs that all these are present in the same time within one necropolis (Pruszcz Gdański, Site 10,³ Pruszcz Gdański, Site 5,⁴ Linowo).⁵ Quite often a good state of preservation of bones signifies the presence of invisible trenches which disturbed the grave pit (Kowalewko⁶). In contrast to that, relatively well-marked trenches in the structure of the grave pit

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¹ Among others, economic or non-economic reasons: part of counter-actions against dangerous dead, "ideological" interception or destruction of the place of rest, seizure of items with a symbolic significance or as part of necromantic or magical practices, or possibly a continuation of funeral rites – cult of the dead, multi-phase funeral rituals, a *translatio* of remains of socially significant people.

² Cf. Kümmel 2009.

³ Pietrzak 1997.

⁴ Pietrzak et al. 2015 – these were not marked in drawing documentation, but can be seen in photographs.

⁵ Kurzyńska 2015, Table XXXVI:131A.

⁶ Skorupka 2001.

means that skeletons survived in a very poor condition (Babi Dół-Borcz,⁷ Krosno).⁸

On the other hand, at Czarnówko in Pomerania we are dealing with a situation in which a very good visibility of grave pits and trenches which disturbed them becomes one of principal tools of concluding. However, cases of bone survivals are rare. This hampers the reconstruction of post-funeral actions which took place in inhumation graves and makes the identification of the manner of treatment of remains of the dead difficult. What is more, we have pieces of information concerning methods of treatment of grave goods and their assortment, which is a premise for identification of motivations of people who disturbed burials.⁹

Anyway, it is the arrangement of the skeleton in the grave pit that is the first premise to assess the degree of preservation of the dead body in the time of interference in the cemetery.¹⁰ Furthermore, the manner of grave opening can theoretically contribute to the identification of relationships between originators of the opening and the dead. Therefore, how much do we know on post-funeral interferences at Czarnówko while assessing the state of preservation and the location of bones of the dead in grave pits and in trenches which disturbed them?

State of preservation of the skeletons at Czarnówko and cognitive possibilities

Bone remains are almost absent in inhumation graves from the Roman Period. In a group of 1131 inhumation graves (from the years 2008-2017) which underwent anthropological assessment bones were not revealed in as many as 776 graves. This means that only in ca. 31% of the graves there were skeleton remains.¹¹ In general, what is revealed are only skulls. These were not entirely preserved and what survived were their individual bones, mandibles or teeth. Concerning the latter, in many cases only tooth enamel survived.¹² Their survival results from their greater resistance to unfavourable soil conditions, but also from the fact that although the trenches in most cases led to the upper part of the skeleton, they did not always encompass the skull (grave 214 – Fig. 1:2). What they encompassed

was the zone from clavicles to pelvis bones, or possibly to femora. In some cases, however, the latter remained outside the trench. A special interest of the “perpetrators” in the mentioned part of the body is testified to by examples of disturbed graves from Czarnówko and other Wielbark Culture cemeteries. This can be well seen in case two burials or graves were disturbed in the same time (Fig. 2).

Parts of post-cranial skeleton, with special reference to flat bones, are revealed much more rarely. In most cases cores of long bones are found and it rather concerns lower than upper limbs. Furthermore, there are finds of small fragments of these and other bones, whose “structure” was consolidated by copper salts migrating from adjoining artefacts. Such bones are often extracted from the grave in the form of a conglomerate of organic substances (bone, wood from the log, textile) and a copper alloy artefact (Fig. 3). Bones containing trabecular bone tissue (large flat bones, metaphyseal parts of long bones, pelvis, vertebra cores) are more prone to decomposition than compact tissue which is the component of, e.g. long bone cores. The most durable bones include teeth and tooth enamel.¹³

Another reason behind the poor state of preservation of the bones is the fact that graves were disturbed sometime after the burial. Exposition of post-mortem remains to atmospheric conditions (even a short-term one), oxygen access and penetration of bacterial flora and micro- and macrofauna could accelerate decomposition. It cannot be excluded that some parts of the body or skeleton were extracted to the outside of the grave pit together with artefacts which were obtained from the grave. Some of these found their way back to the trench when it was backfilled. As it was demonstrated for other cemeteries which were affected by similar practices, in case a few graves were opened in the same time it comes to interspersing of bone remains between burials.¹⁴ On the other hand, it rarely occurs that bones which were thrown out are recorded in the space between burials.¹⁵ This is caused by a faster bioerosion and bioturbation at the level of the usage layer of the necropolis. Yet another reason is the fact that the zone between the graves is very often left unexplored.

The state of preservation of bones in graves from the Early Middle Ages is much better. This results not only from their later chronology, but also from the fact that grave pits were not disturbed in this period.¹⁶

⁷ E.g. Tempelmann-Maczyńska 1989.

⁸ Okulicz and Bursche 1987; Jarzec 2018.

⁹ Concerning eight elite graves from Czarnówko, for other motivations than looting see Schuster 2018; it must be underlined, however, that bones were recorded in only one of the mentioned inhumation graves (R300) – Schuster 2018, 11.

¹⁰ Neugebauer 1991, 112-129; Neugebauer 1994; Aspöck 2005; Aspöck 2018.

¹¹ Author's own calculations after Rożnowski and Cymek 2015, Table 1.

¹² Rożnowski and Cymek 2015, Table 1.

¹³ Lyman 1994; Mays 1998.

¹⁴ Klevnäs 2013, 52.

¹⁵ E.g. Dobos 2014, 150.

¹⁶ Cf. Wadył 2015, Tables VI-VIII.

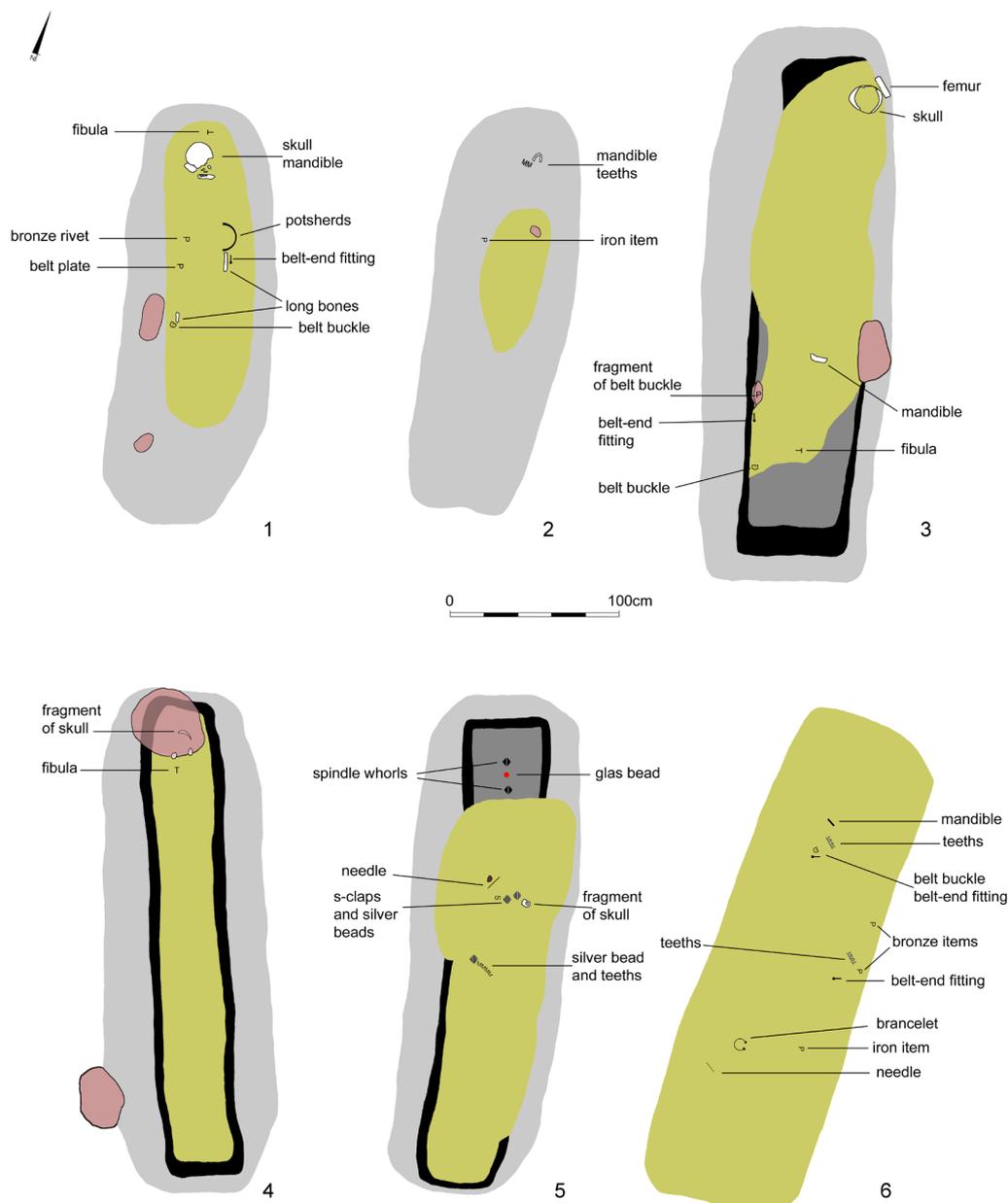


Fig. 1. Czarnówko. Examples of graves from the point of view of the state of preservation of bones and the degree of manipulation. 1 – grave 1175; 2 – grave 214; 3 – grave 1728; 4 – grave 1795; 5 – grave 1729; 6 – grave 1079. Elaborated by K. Skóra.

Paradoxically, burnt bones from cremation graves (both urn and pit graves) in features from the Roman Period are in a better condition.¹⁷ On the other hand, burnt human bones which are revealed in trenches disturbing inhumation graves are tiny and few. Therefore, it is impossible to discuss them in detail, while unburnt bones are usually absent in disturbed inhumation graves. It is difficult to determine whether we are dealing with bi-ritual burials or a result of disturbance of cremation graves which were placed in tops of inhumation graves,

¹⁷ Rożnowski and Cymek 2015; author's own observations from field examinations in 2017.

or possibly with burials of cremated bones which were previously extracted from the grave.

The state of preservation of the skeletons from Czarnówko renders a full osteological analysis impossible. The sex of the dead who are buried in the inhumation graves from the Roman Period in finds from examinations in the years 2008-2017 was identified for 45 persons only (28 women, 17 men). A relatively frequent survival of skull bones and teeth enables us to determine the age of the dead (19% of assessments for the skeletal series). The most numerous is the *maturus* age class, followed in descending order by the *adultus*, *senilis*, *infans II*, *infans I*, and *juvenis* classes. In view

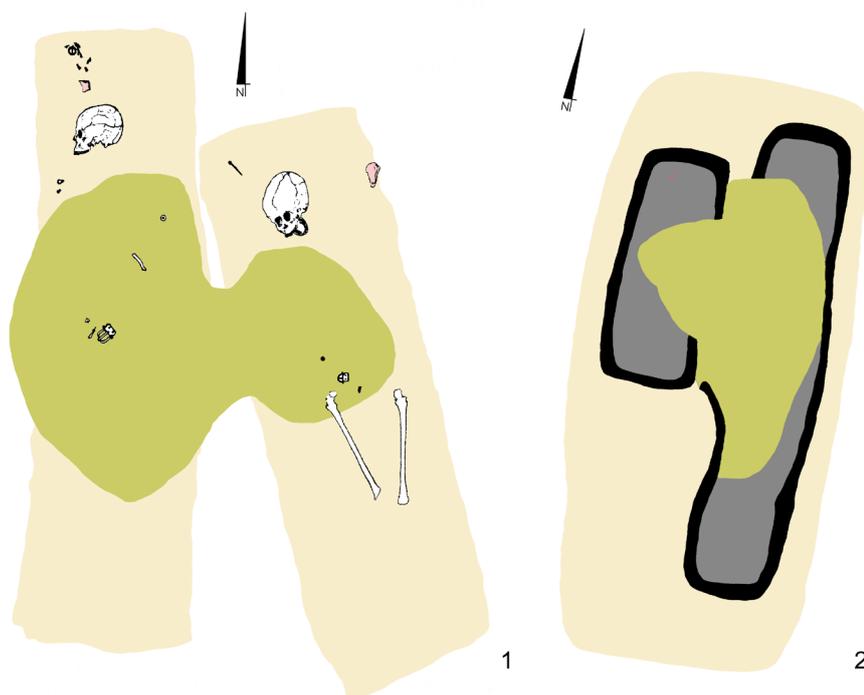


Fig. 2. Examples of simultaneous disturbance of two graves and burials. 1 – Weklice, graves 127 and 128. After Natuniewicz-Sekuła, Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011, Plate L; 2 – Czarnówko, grave 1579. Elaborated by K. Skóra.



Fig. 3. Czarnówko, grave 1862. Fragment of a preserved mandible with an adjoining fibula. Photo K. Skóra.

of such a low number of assessments, the lack of agreement with the order of mortality of the population in this time is not surprising.¹⁸

¹⁸ Cf. Skóra 2015a, 45-47; more than 90 persons whose age was generally assessed as adult and 13 person classified as children.

Only sporadically it is possible to acquire a sample for DNA examinations from bone materials. Research on social stratification which would take results of trace element analyses into consideration or opportunities of drawing conclusions on the population's diet and their biological condition are also strongly limited.

Arrangement of bone remains in inhumation graves which were disturbed by trenches – treatment of human remains in the course of interference

At Czarnówko there is no single Roman Period skeleton (which also concerns Migration Period graves) that would survive in a complete or almost complete state. Due to this, it is difficult to draw conclusions on how dead bodies or skeletons were treated in the course of post-funeral interferences. What is more, reconstruction of the original arrangement of the dead body during the burial is also problematic.

Unidentified arrangement of the skeleton

This situation is statistically the most frequent at Czarnówko. It chiefly concerns features where not only bones but also metal parts of grave furnishings are absent. The arrangement of the latter sometimes allows for a reconstruction of the dead body's arrangement. Due to this, it is not possible to characterise burial rules of the population who were using the necropolis. The same concerns deviations from such rules (e.g. prone position). In result, it is difficult to relate them to universal Wielbark Culture habits or to suggest rite analogies in other zones of the Barbaricum. The latter could stand for a physical presence of persons from other cultural spheres, e.g. from Danish islands.¹⁹

Anatomical arrangement

Sometimes, but in most cases only hypothetically, on the basis of the arrangement of bones in the grave pit it is possible to assume that the remains of the dead were in anatomical order. Cases of this kind include, among others, 1) anatomical arrangement of the skull when other parts of the skeleton are absent (Fig. 1:4); 2) anatomical arrangement of teeth; quite frequently beyond the extent of the trench or preserved under stones or stelae with which the trench was backfilled (Fig. 1:2); 3) anatomical arrangement of skull bones or of teeth only, as well of fragmented pelvis bones, or possibly of long bone cores of lower limbs; these are often outside the trench (Fig. 1:1). On the other hand, all these are individual remains which were a small part of the entire skeleton. Therefore, our conclusion is merely an unverifiable supposition. In this case, grave disturbance is most frequently evidenced by the presence of the trench. Dress parts which are found *in situ* are also a premise to suppose that the bone arrangement was undisturbed.

Partially anatomical arrangement

This generally includes the aforementioned cases. It is only sporadically that insignificant manifestations

of manipulations with remains are recorded, such as, e.g. reversing the mandible (Fig. 1:2). Regrettably, as the bones survived only selectively, this can mean that part or all the post-mortem remains were affected by manipulation.

Disturbed anatomical arrangement

A precise assessment of the degree of disturbance of anatomical order and the state of preservation of bones are of key importance for identification of the time interval between the burial and the post-funeral interference. It is possible to a small degree only to find a match between the burials from Czarnówko and a chronological scheme of relationships between the interference and the recorded arrangement of the burial, as proposed by Edeltraud Aspöck²⁰ (Fig. 4).

To sum up, in the bone material there are no premises which would unequivocally demonstrate that the entire dead body was moved within the grave pit. This would correspond to Variant A (interference directly after the burial). Anyway, such a situation is rather not recorded in Wielbark Culture cemeteries or it is suggested only hypothetically (Fig. 4:A). It can be assumed that it may be implied by burials in which dead bodies are reversed with their faces toward the ground or such ones which are classified as so-called burials in a sitting position. However, in the latter case the assessment of the skeleton's arrangement suggests that the interference took place when the body's decomposition was already in progress²¹ (Fig. 5). Invisibility of trenches disturbing burial pits and a poor state of preservation of bone remains render it difficult to assess whether we are dealing with an original or secondary arrangement of the dead body. There is no doubt that such cases cannot be compared to those recorded in Longobard or Merovingian cemeteries, where bodies were entirely moved to the trench or it can be assumed that they were entirely taken outside.²²

What is more, the bone materials from Czarnówko usually offer no unequivocal premises suggesting that only some parts of the bodies were moved, that is, in the time when the decomposition process already commenced (moving aside of entire upper and lower limbs, or the skull which still formed a whole with the mandible). Part of the skeleton should still remain in the anatomical arrangement (Variant B – Fig. 4:B). Part of the disturbed burials from Czarnówko could probably be classified into this group. However, it is difficult to point them out due to a vestigial state of preservation of the skeletons. Among those which are better preserved are remains from grave 1632. In this case, part of the

¹⁹ Placing the dead in a side position, with heads to the south – Selleveid et al. 1984, 239-240; Natuniewicz-Sekuła 2007a.

²⁰ Aspöck 2018.

²¹ Skóra 2017.

²² Adler 1970; Aspöck 2018, Fig. 1.

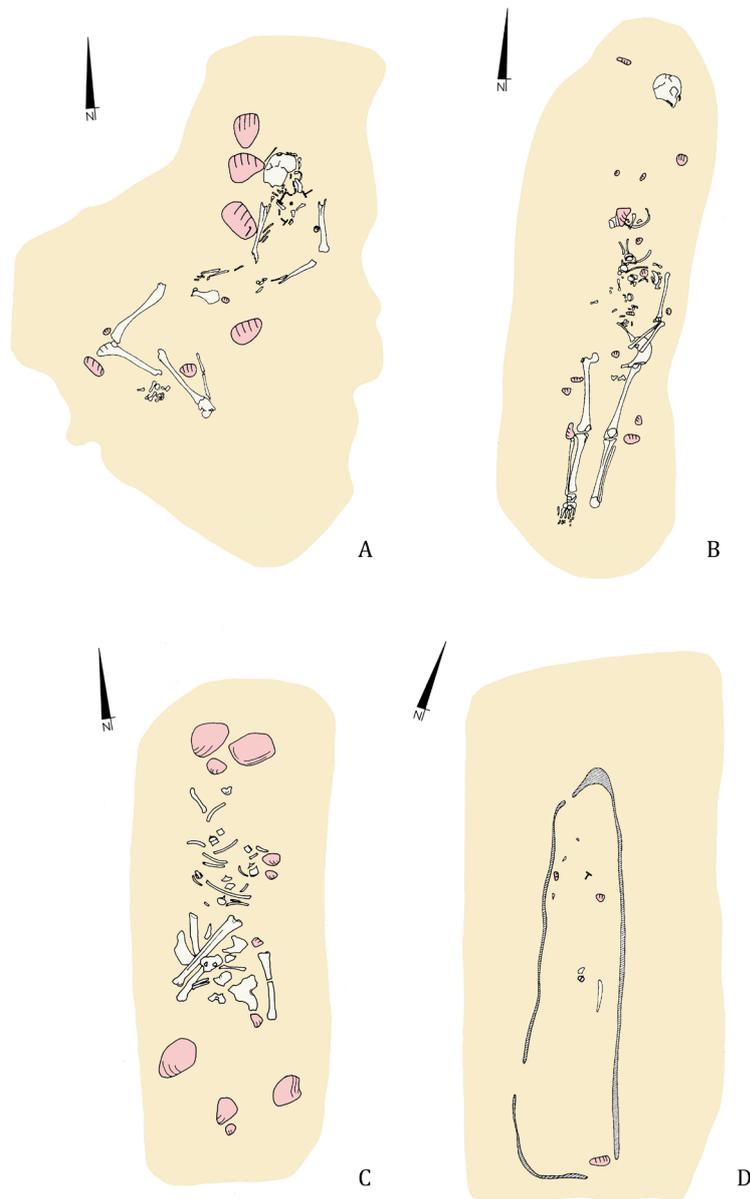


Fig. 4. Time interval between the burial and the interference. A – grave opening when the body is not decomposed, that is, it can be entirely moved without being fragmented (empty graves, graves with turned bodies); B – grave opening when the decomposition process commenced, that is, the body is partially integral (graves where a greater part of the skeleton is in situ, in spite of the fact that a large surface was disturbed); C – grave opening when the decomposition ended, but there was an empty space which was not backfilled in the coffin or log. Skeleton bones are in disorder, but they are complete; D – grave is open after the decomposition of the body and backfilling of the grave with soil. Individual surviving remains are in disorder and it is difficult to make sure whether there originally was an empty space of the coffin, log or grave chamber in the grave. A – Pruszcz Gdański, Site 10, grave 266; B – Pruszcz Gdański, Site 10, grave 346; C – Pruszcz Gdański, Site 5, grave 40; D – Pruszcz Gdański, Site 10, grave 239. After Pietrzak 1995 (A, B, D); Pietrzak et al. 2015 (C). Elaborated by K. Skóra.

skull and bones of the upper part of the chest were nearly in anatomical arrangement. However, it turned out that bones of the post-cranial skeleton, including the sacral bone, were moved behind the skull (Fig. 6).

It is also difficult to point out such graves which would match criteria of Variant C (Fig. 4:C) – well-preserved bones of the skeleton in a good condition but in a chaotic arrangement (Fig. 7), which demonstrates

that the interference took place after a complete decomposition of the body). This is due to the fact that there are no entirely preserved skeletons. Variant C also includes cases in which bones in cemeteries are scattered, moved or taken outside the grave. In result, such bones are also revealed in trenches which disturbed graves.

On the basis of the state of preservation of the bones it can be assumed that Variant D – Fig. 4:D (what

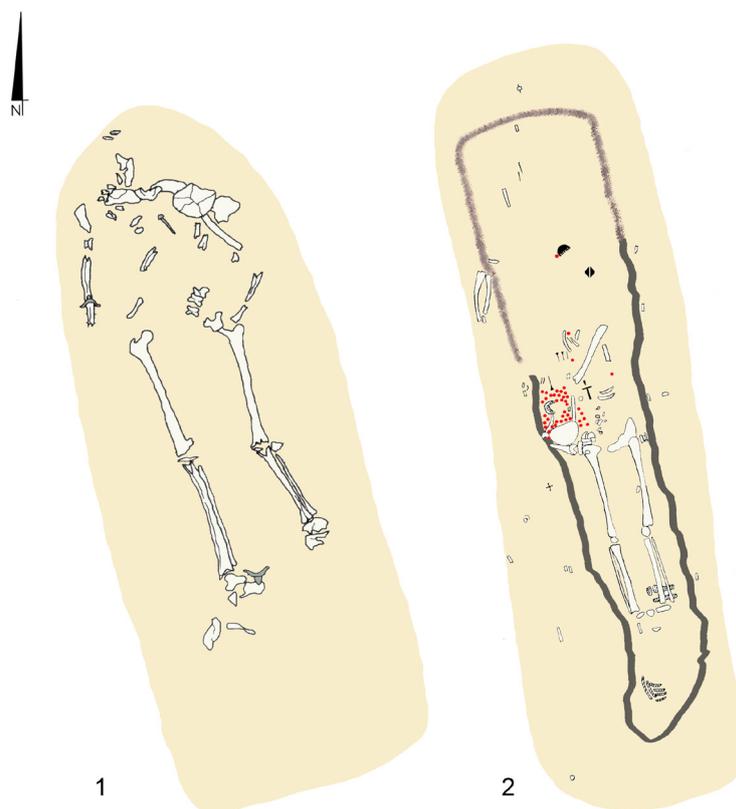


Fig. 5. Examples of graves in which the dead were probably moved to a sitting position in the trench – result of grave opening where the decomposition process was in its initial stage (?). 1 – Weklice, Elbląg District, grave 521; 2 – Żalęcino, Stargard District, grave 33A. After Kontny nad Natuniewicz-Sekuła 2013, Fig. 1; Kaczanowski et al. 1982, Fig. 5.11. Elaborated by K. Skóra.



Fig. 6. Czarnówko, grave 1632. Upper part of the skeleton in non-anatomical arrangement. Photo A. Krzysiak. Elaborated by K. Skóra.

survives are only individual bones from the skeleton and these are chaotically scattered within the pit) was quite certainly the case. This would mean that the time interval between the burial and grave opening was so

long that the decomposition process affected not only soft tissues but also bone tissues. In Variant D bones are more sporadically revealed in the trench than in Variant C. Therefore, all the burials from Czarnówko which



Fig. 7. Pruszcz Gdański, Site 5, grave 40 – result of grave disturbance after a complete skeletonisation of the dead body. After Pietrzak et al. 2015.

were disturbed with trenches and where no skeleton or tooth remains were found would belong to Variant D. While comparing the state of preservation of bones in disturbed graves with those sparse inhumation burials where it did not come to grave opening (what survives are skull bones, cores of long bones from the upper and lower limbs, and partially pelvis bones), it can be assumed that graves at Czarnówko were in most cases opened when the bone decomposition process was already advanced.

Concerning graves with non-anatomical bone arrangements (Variant C or D, with no opportunity of distinguishing between them), the most common occurrences are:

- translocation of teeth from their original position.

This is most often recorded as tooth enamel revealed in the centre and in the southern part of the trenches:

- a) in the bottom of the surface of the pit which was encompassed with the trench (e.g. grave 1079 – Fig. 1:6, graves 1545, 1729, 1882, 1887);
- b) in layers above the bottom (e.g. graves 1303, 1562, 1839).

- what is much less frequent are translocations of other parts of the skeleton (e.g. graves 1471, 1518, 1524, 1728 – Fig. 1:3; grave 1729 – Fig. 1:5).

Bone fragments, but statistically most often tooth enamel fragments, which are recorded at various depths in the trenches, demonstrate that remains of the dead were thrown out or extracted to the outside of the pit. Such remains returned to the trench in result of sliding of extracted gravel or sand, or intentional backfilling. However, there are instances in which the trenches were left open. In the light of a macroscopic assessment of strata, cases of leaving the trenches open are not frequent. It is worth adding that such instances also occur in cemeteries of the Chernyakov Culture. According to O. Petrauskas,²³ this is demonstrated not only by human remains which are interspersed between burials or by urns which slid into the trench from a neighbouring feature²⁴ but also by shells of turtles which penetrated into unfilled trenches in cemeteries located near water bodies – Gavrilovka (UA), graves 35 and 80,²⁵ or Zhovino-Bilenkov Butra (UA), grave 18.²⁶

The examples of the bone and teeth arrangement which were discussed above demonstrate that after the grave had been opened, remains of the dead were not treated either with respect or in a planned or “methodical” manner, such as, e.g. moving them into one part of the pit. Such a “planned” approach can be quite frequently seen in Merovingian or medieval cemeteries, where moving of the bones was aimed at making space for a new burial in the same place.²⁷

At Czarnówko, manifestations of practices which can be classified as atypical or peculiar²⁸ with regard to the remains of the dead, almost solely concern the skull. It was recorded that skulls could be reversed or pressed town. What was placed above them were stones, boulders or stelae which originally were markers of the grave on the surface (grave 1795 – Fig. 1:4). It is impossible to find out whether other parts of the dead body or skeleton than the skull underwent special practices, such as cutting off, intentional breaking or other kinds of manipulations. In the opinion of researchers of Wielbark Culture cemeteries, such practices sometimes occur. However, it is difficult to find out whether they took place pre-, peri- or post-mortem.²⁹

The state of preservation of the bones does not allow for a verification whether at Czarnówko skeleton parts were intentionally extracted in order to bury them

²³ Petrauskas 2014.

²⁴ Pachkova and Yakovenko 1983, 55.

²⁵ Symonovich 1960, 206, 214.

²⁶ Petrauskas and Tsyndrovskaya 2002.

²⁷ I.a. Gardela 2017, 205-218, Figs. 7.2-7.7.

²⁸ Tempelmann-Maczyńska 1992.

²⁹ E.g. Weklice, grave 59 – Natuniewicz-Sekuła and Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011, 37-38.

in another place, due to otherwise motivated ritual actions. Another possibility is that in the course of grave opening they may have found their way to the place of rest of another person, e.g. to a neighbouring grave. Such situations (e.g. supernumerary skulls or bones of post-cranial skeleton) are recorded in cemeteries with traces of opening from various epochs. They are interpreted as simultaneous opening of numerous graves and, e.g. chaotic “ordering” of the necropolis space,³⁰ or (as in the case of the Masłomęcz Group) they are explained, among others, with family reasons.³¹

In this stage of research on the cemetery in Czarnówko it is also hardly possible to point out a grave in which bi-ritual funeral practices – inhumation and cremation – were applied to one and the same dead.³² This is rendered impossible by the state of preservation of the skeletons. Burnt bones (individual ones to a dozen or so) are recorded in trenches and in the fills of inhumation grave pits. However, it is not possible to carry out a genetic or osteological assessment which would enable us to determine whether we are dealing with one person. Part of burnt bones may come from cremation graves which were originally located in tops of skeleton graves destroyed in the course of interferences (grave 480 – Fig. 8). Among customs of the Czarnówko community there was a tradition of bi-ritual graves, but so far there are no grounds to point out examples of using two rites for one dead person.

Significance of the manner of treating the remains for learning about motivations behind grave opening

Due to the poor state of preservation of the bone remains at Czarnówko, it is difficult to make authoritative statements on the ways in which the dead or their post-mortem remains were treated in the course of interferences. Sometimes it is only possible to generally assess what was done with the remains. These are cases, e.g. in which a careful exploration led to a discovery of fragments of tooth enamel as the only remains of the skeleton.

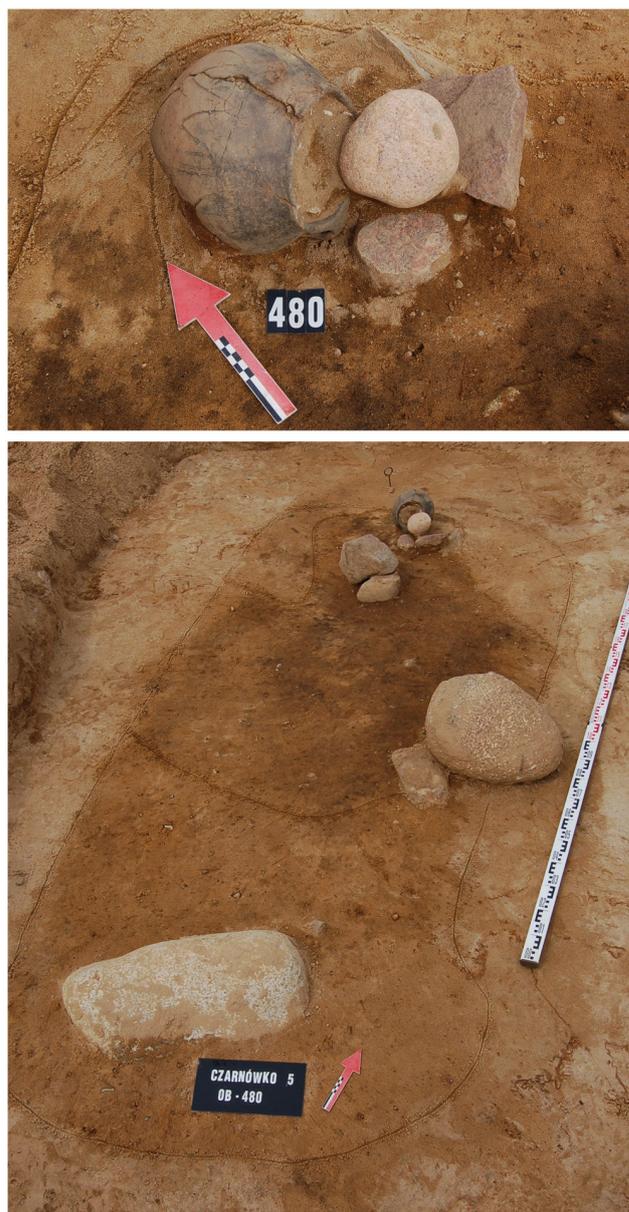


Fig. 8. Czarnówko, grave 480. Upset urn in a so-called secondary trench. Photo A. Krzysiak.

There is no doubt that events which took place in the cemetery cannot be unambiguously classified as being in opposition to each other and mutually exclusive motives belonging to the ritual or economic sphere. It can be assumed that grave opening at Czarnówko was a practice which may have taken place during the entire period of use of the necropolis (a symbolic duration of the dead in the culture of the living, rites taking place within burials, including mourning rites, as well as a continuation of funeral practices due to a special position of the dead in the social structure). Burial pits generally do not infringe one another and the space was freely managed. On the other hand, within the entire necropolis there are few examples of dovetailing with pits of earlier burials, including those

³⁰ Aspöck 2018, 9.

³¹ Kokowski 2007, 132-136.

³² An assumption that in the Wielbark Culture it came to cremation of parts of dead bodies or bones which were extracted from the grave and then such remains were deposited back into the pit (or the trench) requires an unequivocal confirmation with genetic analyses. On the other hand, for some few discoveries (e.g. Weklice, grave 496 – Natuniewicz-Sekuła 2007a) anthropological assessments demonstrated that burnt bones were missing part of the unburnt skeleton. This makes the aforementioned assumption plausible (Skóra 2015b, with an overview of discoveries and further reading). Other cases which were convincingly discussed are Jartypory, grave 122 – Andrzejowski et al. 2002.

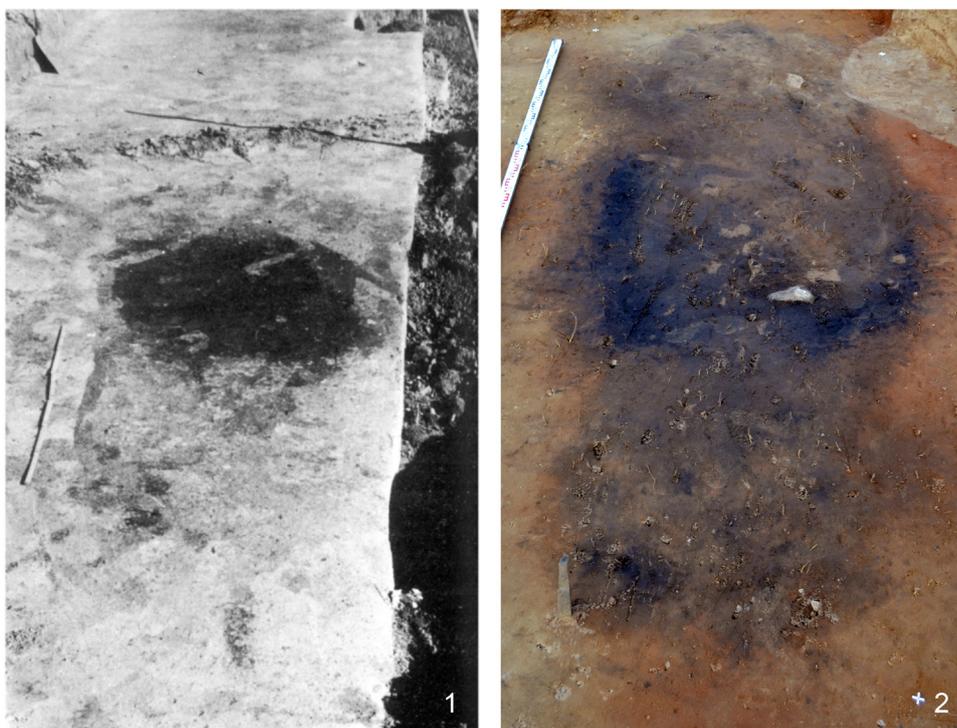


Fig. 9. Manifestation of analogous post-funeral customs: 1. Gródek nad Bugiem, grave 44. After Kokowski 1993.
2. Czarnówko, grave 1840. Photo K. Skóra.

which were disturbed with trenches. This means that grave opening took place in the period of use of the necropolis. However, some traces of interference seem to have been more likely related to actions belonging to post-funeral rites (Fig. 9) than to interest in the material aspect of grave furnishings. This finds its analogies in other cemeteries in the Barbaricum (Gródek nad Bugiem, grave 44;³³ Babi Dół-Borcz, grave 151).³⁴

Nevertheless, there are some premises which suggest that grave opening may have also been undertaken as a final act which terminated the use of the necropolis (trenches left open, backfilling with stones and throwing the dead body of a dog and covering up with stones).³⁵ It is also possible that another action may have taken place in the Migration Period, when in this place it came to new burials of incomers from Scandinavia. In the opinion of Jan Schuster,³⁶ the example of grave 903A which disturbed an earlier grave from the Roman Period demonstrates that overground markers were not visible any more in the necropolis in the second half of the 5th century. This opinion concerns a small part of the necropolis, that is, six Migration Period graves which were located to the south of a ditch. This ditch was circular in its plan and it may be a vestige

of a barrow. Although earth mounds over Roman Period graves become washed-out, stone markers of grave pits from the Roman Period may have been still visible in the subsequent centuries. This may have facilitated the identification of places of rest.

A disordered abandonment of bones of the dead which became disturbed after the skeletonisation is the most common way of dealing with such remains in the Roman Period, the Migration Period or in later centuries. What is additionally found are random bones which were thrown from the grave in a haphazard way, breaking of bones and situations in which it comes to interspersing of bones and sometimes also parts of grave goods between burials.³⁷

Well-considered and planned treatment of human bones, such as moving bones into a heap in one place, usually occurs when the grave was intended to be used again for another dead person.³⁸ Such actions did not occur at Czarnówko or we are unable to identify them. In the Roman Period, an “ordered” way of bone deposition in the course of grave opening is recorded in Chernyakov Culture cemeteries. O. Petrauskas isolates its several variants.³⁹ He considers moving bones into one place as a “compact” variant, assuming that such a position of the bones results from the fact that they were gathered into

³³ Kokowski 1993, Photos 53-54.

³⁴ Pawlikowski et al. 2018.

³⁵ Skóra, forthcoming.

³⁶ Schuster 2015, 29-30.

³⁷ E.g. Adler 1970, 143-145; Klevnäs 2013, 52; Dobos 2014, 151.

³⁸ Klevnäs 2013, 51-52, 77.

³⁹ Petrauskas 2014, 133-134, 137, Table 1.

an organic container which was then left in the grave. However, such a practice is in a vast minority among instances of grave disturbance where bone remains were left in disorder, with no anatomical arrangement. This author believes that all cases of grave disturbance were part of a rite, in which the most important component were remains of the dead and not grave furnishings.⁴⁰

In general, however, the lack of care for remains of the dead is interpreted as an effect of their incidental destruction in the course of acquisition of items with a material value.⁴¹ This is the first interpretation that comes to mind. Bone remains are an obstacle during grave plundering and are thus treated as an impediment that can be removed. Such a situation may occur, e.g. in the case of ethnically alien groups.

Disturbance of the dead body may be related to post-funeral actions connected with the role of the dead in the community: its prominent position in a positive or negative sense or a source of fear for the community. However, it may also rather concern the dead body than the skeleton. This means that it will be undertaken relatively soon after the burial, when the memory of the dead is still living.

The lack of respect for the dead body and the grave may also be related to actions of groups who intercept power and symbolically destroy the memory of their predecessors.⁴² On the other hand, such actions are chiefly aimed at persons from the elite. In such cases, in the course of rapid transformations it is not only the living but also the dead that fall victim to violence. It also occurs that an interception of power means planned actions of destruction of entire necropolises. An example is offered by Corinth which was destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC. Its rebuilding was preceded by a planned action of destruction of not only buildings, but also grave opening.⁴³ On the one hand, we are dealing here with looting intentions and on the other hand it is a symbolic founding act.⁴⁴ Sometimes, as evidenced by examples from European cemeteries, perpetrators of interference demonstrate considerable brutality. This is testified to, e.g. by upper limbs of the dead which must have still been in the state of decomposition and which were abandoned in trenches. Pits are searched through and remains of the dead are maimed or damaged.⁴⁵

The nature of some post-funeral practices may have been closely related to the degree of decomposition of the body. The dead body is relevant and thus may be a source of fear for as long as it remains *in concreto*, that means, until it comes to decomposition.⁴⁶ This, among others, was a source of a need for pressing heads down with stones, as heads were seen as a place of force.⁴⁷ A complete skeletonisation may have caused the lack of “species solidarity” and allowed for treating remains with no respect. This loss of corporeality is often correlated with a definite end of mourning, which enables one to deprive the dead of items which were entrusted to them for a definite time.⁴⁸ Such practices may have also been freely undertaken with regard to persons who already became anonymous for later people, that is, after two or three generations. It is assumed that memory of ancestors lasts that long among contemporary generations, but this time is usually much longer concerning prominent individuals.

As noted by Stephanie Zintl,⁴⁹ not-anatomical arrangement and disrespectful scattering of bones seems to be a disorder from our perspective. In the past, burials of socially significant persons were opened, the dead were translocated and their remains were interspersed or even fragmented (rulers, saints). This was not considered negligent treatment. On the other hand, it is known that bone remains, first of all skulls (or still in the form of heads) fell victim to violence and symbolic humiliation in Antiquity and later.

Damaging, fragmentation of bones and grave furnishings, as well other actions which can be classified as destruction may have been part of ritual practices in the past. We will not know their exact sense and their generally fit within, e.g. a category of sacrifices dedicated to supernatural forces. As known from written sources, post-battle rituals of the Germanics were not only aimed at offering of weaponry and men – prisoners of war.⁵⁰ A significant part of these rites was destruction of artefacts and the degree of brutality and destruction seems to be related to the rank of its owner and the quality of the artefacts.⁵¹ On the other hand, the sense of these actions concerns the military sphere and seems to fall between thanksgiving and maintaining a run of good luck which depends on the support from deities. This sense may have oscillated between a victory rite and desacralisation of the force of alien weapons and

⁴⁰ Petrauskas 2014, 146.

⁴¹ E.g. Wikborg 2017, 18.

⁴² For discoveries from Viking Age Scandinavia see Klevnäs 2013, 4; for the Roman Period see Crumlin-Pedersen 1995.

⁴³ Strabo, *Geography*, VIII, 6, 23. Similar practices in Capua – cf. Suetonius, *The lives of the Caesars*, I, 81.

⁴⁴ Mierzwiński 2012, 50.

⁴⁵ For the Masłomęcz Group see Kokowski 2007, 129-158; a detached forearm of the dead person in the cemetery in Żalęcino, see Kaczanowski et al. 1982, Fig. 5.11.

⁴⁶ See Domańska 2017, 65, 81; Aspöck 2018, 9.

⁴⁷ E.g. Armit 2012. See a volume on the head in past cultures – Gardęła and Kajkowski 2013.

⁴⁸ Hensel and Kalicz 1987.

⁴⁹ Zintl 2018, 160.

⁵⁰ Mollerup et al. 2016; Kontny 2019, 12-15.

⁵¹ E.g. Blankenfeldt 2015, 200; Reiersen 2018, 47.

depriving them of evil powers.⁵² It was aimed not only at parade weaponry, but also at girdle-like bullion ornaments related to high-status persons.⁵³

Ritual destruction and fragmentation of artefacts concerns not only bog deposits, but is also identified in cemeteries in various regions of Central and Northern Barbaricum,⁵⁴ including the Wielbark Culture.⁵⁵ It chiefly applies to bullion artefacts, including girdle-like ornaments. However, it is not always clear whether destruction was part of the funeral ceremony or rather post-funeral actions. There may have been several stages of destruction. Artefacts were not only cut into pieces, but they also underwent high temperature treatment on the funeral pyre. This was sometimes done near the place of the planned burial.⁵⁶ Therefore, some acts of destruction were directly related to the funeral ceremony and this was perhaps undertaken concerning ornaments having an insignia role.⁵⁷ This practice may have been a sort of protection of ornaments against getting into hands of unauthorised or unprivileged persons, that is, against improper use of such ornaments.⁵⁸ On the other hand, such artefacts were perceived as charismatic and luxurious and thus closely related to representatives of elites. Therefore, they may have been destroyed due to the fact that they were seen as emanation of authority. Analogously to parade weaponry from sacrificial sites, they embodied charisma and force which had to be neutralised via mechanical and thermal destruction.⁵⁹ Some actions of this kind may have also been undertaken after the burial. This is how one can understand disassembling of silver goblets from Czarnówko,⁶⁰ although it is not absolutely certain that they did not originally find their way to the grave as *pars pro toto* in such an incomplete state (grave R300 – two feet and three handles, a foot in R400 and a handle in R430).⁶¹ What must be explained is for what reason defragmented status symbols were left in the grave in the course of interference. It is not always possible to assume that they simply went unnoticed by the perpetrators. Concerning

recent discoveries, of special interest is the inhumation grave 19 from Ulów, Site 7, which was disturbed with a trench. It was located in a necropolis which was in use since Phase (C1a?) C1b to Phase D1.⁶² and it contained an aureus of Trajan Decius. This coin was fragmented into ten pieces, out of which nine survived and the one with the depiction of the emperor's head went missing.⁶³ What is more, 28 fragments of intentionally cut golden artefacts (fragments of wire and of a billet, apart from the aforementioned aureus) were found partially in the lower part of the trench (Fig. 10) and in a higher number in the grave pit itself. It is assumed that the cut golden artefacts “avoided looting” in result of migration in the sand below the bottom of the grave pit toward the undisturbed subsoil.⁶⁴ It must be remembered, however, that golden artefacts are discovered in similar contexts in other cemeteries.⁶⁵ One should therefore also take into consideration a possibility that it was an intentional action aimed at concealing artefacts.

An association of status and destruction of charismatic artefacts within the sepulchral context, which is sometimes related to the practice of grave disturbance, is an extremely interesting issue and it certainly requires a separate study. A question must be taken into consideration whether the same practices were applied to human remains and whether they should be perceived as a manifestation of the same customs. What must also be dealt with is an issue whether other less valuable artefacts belonging to grave furnishings which are found in trenches (among others, dress parts or vessels) are lost objects, “garbage”, or offerings?

In most cases, we know too little about the manner of treatment of the remains of the dead at Czarnówko. Due to the lack of knowledge on the ways of proceeding with post-mortem remains, it is not easy to assess motivations behind interferences. Grave disturbance cannot be simply defined as “looting”: this is a multi-aspect phenomenon which involves intra- and inter-group social relations, social structure transformations and political phenomena.

This cemetery, however, is neither processed nor examined in whole. Therefore, there is hope that new discoveries may shed light on the issue stated in the title of the paper. The way in which remains of the dead

⁵² Kontny 2019, 11.

⁵³ Thorsberg – Blankenfeldt 2015, 192-193, 412-416, Tables 43-45; Illerup A – Carnap-Bornheim and Ilkjær 1996, 182-184; Ejsbølgaard C – Andersen 2003, 250-251.

⁵⁴ Reiersen 2018; Schuster 2018.

⁵⁵ Beliavets et al. 2018.

⁵⁶ For discoveries from Norway cf. Reiersen 2018, 36, 38, 43.

⁵⁷ Bracelets from Pilipki – Beliavets et al. 2018; golden ornaments from Szpaki – Rusin 2008, 297, Fig. 4:2; golden necklace from Czarnówko, grave R433 – Andrzejewski 2014, 112-113, Fig. 12.

⁵⁸ Reiersen 2018, 35.

⁵⁹ A usual symbolic significance of such actions is also possible, analogously to destroying of signets and seals after the death of bishops in medieval Europe – Dąbrowska 1997.

⁶⁰ For possible interpretations see Schuster 2018, 43-44.

⁶¹ Schuster 2018, Tables IV:5-6, VI-VIII, XLVIII:1, LXII.

⁶² Bursche and Niezabitowska-Wiśniewska 2018, 251.

⁶³ Trajan Decius' aurei treated in this way come from a deposit in Stara Wieś (Radig 1942). On this subject – cf. Bursche 2013.

⁶⁴ Bursche and Niezabitowska-Wiśniewska 2018, 255.

⁶⁵ Golden rings at Babi Dół-Borcz – Prof. M. Mączyńska, personal communication and Mączyńska 1999; at Nes in Norway, see Reiersen 2018, 38.

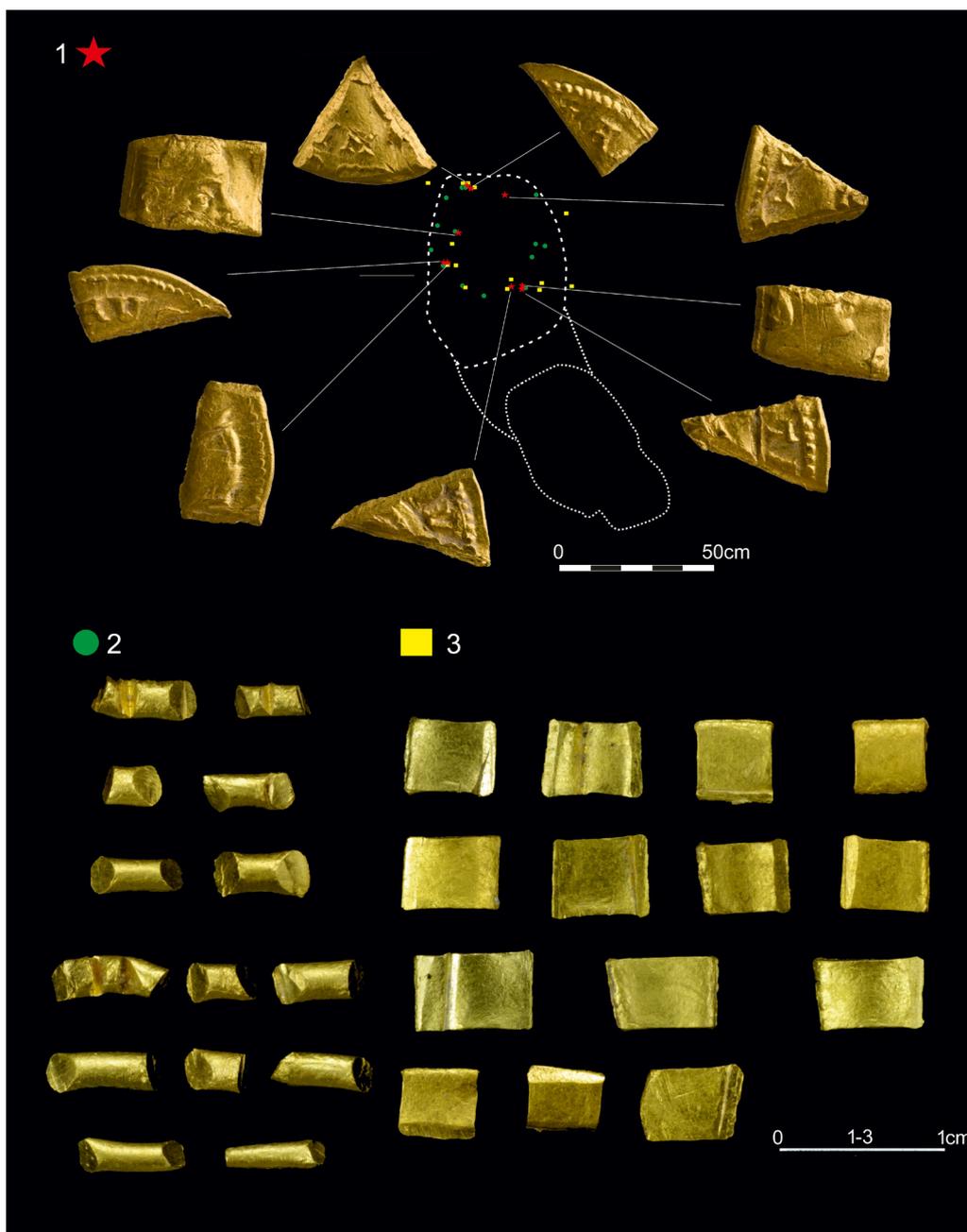


Fig. 10. Ulów, grave 19. Disturbed inhumation grave with cut golden artefacts. After Bursche and Niezabitowska-Wiśniewska 2018.

were treated is an important aspect of post-funeral manipulations, but it is only one of many aspects of these. What must be also assessed is the extent and manner of interference which left traces within the grave pit, the trench and on grave furnishings. Yet another issue is the method of backfilling the trenches or leaving them open. Such a multi-aspect assessment, combined with an identification of stages of development of the cemetery space and the time of interference, should produce a response for the question concerning the nature of interferences which may have taken place during the use of the necropolis, in its final stage or after the necropolis was abandoned.

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Streszczenie

Z atencją czy bez? Traktowanie szczątków pośmiertnych zmarłych w trakcie ingerencji postfuneralnych w Czarnówku na Pomorzu

Sytuacją pożądaną na poziomie obserwacji archeologicznej, mającej na celu wyjaśnienie powodów naruszenia grobów w starożytności, jest czytelność wkopów i właściwej jamy grobowej, łącznie z jej konstrukcjami wewnętrznymi (drewnianymi lub kamiennymi), przetrwanie elementów wyposażenia grobowego oraz przetrwanie szkieletów w dobrym stanie. Są to elementy, których ocena prowadzi do ustalenia dystansu, który dzieli moment ingerencji od pochówku. To zadanie udaje się archeologii, jednak z różnym skutkiem, zależnym od stanu dostępnych źródeł. Cmentarzyska kultury wielbarskiej, które w różnym stopniu objęte są procederem otwierania grobów, różnią się pod względem możliwości rejestracji wskazanych cech. Rzadko zdarza się jednoczesne wystąpienie ich wszystkich w obrębie jednej nekropolii (Pruszcz Gdański, st. 10 i st. 5). Dość często dobry stan zachowania kości oznacza niewidoczne wkopy naruszające jamę grobową (Kowalewko), a odwrotnie – w miarę dobrze wyodrębniające się w strukturze jamy grobowej wkopy oznaczają bardzo zły stan szkieletów (Babi Dół-Borcz; Krosno). Z kolei w Czarnówku na Pomorzu obserwujemy sytuację, w której bardzo dobra widoczność jam grobowych i naruszających je wkopów staje się jednym z wiodących narzędzi wnioskowania. Rzadkie są jednak przypadki zachowywania się kości w grobach inhumacyjnych. W grupie 1131 grobów inhumacyjnych (z lat 2008-2017) poddanych ocenie antropologicznej kości nie ujawniono aż w 776 grobach, co oznacza, że tylko w ok. 31% grobów znajdowały się pozostałości szkieletów.

W Czarnówku najczęściej mamy do czynienia z sytuacją, w której układem szkieletu w grobie jest nie możliwy do ustalenia. Niekiedy na podstawie położenia ułamków kości (czaszki, kości miednicznej, ewentualnie trzony kości długich kończyn) oraz zębów w jamie grobowej można, jednak głównie tylko hipotetycznie, założyć że szczątki osoby zmarłej w czasie ingerencji pozostały w układzie anatomicznym. Są jednak pojedyncze szczątki, stanowiące niewielki ułamek całości kośćca i wobec powyższego dysponujemy tylko nieweryfikowalnym przypuszczeniem. W niektórych obiektach rejestrowane są drobne przejawy naruszenia szczątków, jak np. odwrócenie żuchwy. Niestety to, przy wybiórczym przetrwaniu kości, może oznaczać, że manipulacją objęta była część szczątków pośmiertnych lub wszystkie. Najmniej wątpliwości w ewidencji stwarzają przypadki zaburzonego układu anatomicznego. Jednak przyporządkowanie pochówków z Czarnówka do schematu chronologicznego związku ingerencji z rejestrowanym układem szkieletu, zaproponowanego przez Edeltraud Aspöck (2018), możliwe jest tylko w małym stopniu. Nie znajdujemy w materiale kostnym przesłanek świadczących jednoznacznie o przesuwaniu wewnątrz jamy grobowej całości zwłok, co odpowiada wariantowi A (ingerencji mającej miejsce bezpośrednio po pochówku). W Czarnówku brak jest także na ogół jednoznacznych przesłanek świadczących o przesuwaniu tylko jakiejś partii zwłok, a więc w momencie, kiedy proces dekompozycji już się rozpoczął (odsuvanie na bok kończyn górnych lub dolnych w całości, czaszki stanowiącej jeszcze całość z żuchwą). Część szkieletu powinna znajdować się nadal w pozycji anatomicznej (wariant B). Trudno jest także, ze względu na brak szkieletów zachowanych w całości, wskazać te groby, które realizują kryteria wariantu C (dobrze zachowane kości szkieletu, ale w układzie chaotycznym, co dowodzi ingerencji, mającej miejsce po całkowitej dekompozycji zwłok). W wariacie C rejestruje się na cmentarzyskach rozrzucanie, przesuwanie i wydobywanie kości na zewnątrz, co powoduje, że są one ujawniane także we wkopach naruszających groby. Na podstawie stanu zachowania kości można uznać, że w Czarnówku dość pewnie można wskazać wariant określony jako D (zachowane tylko pojedyncze kości ze szkieletu, rozrzucone bez ładu w jamie), co oznaczałoby, że czas od pochówku do otwarcia grobu był na tyle długi, że proces rozpadu dotknął również tkanki kostne, a nie tylko części miękkie. W wariacie D kości rzadziej ujawniane we wkopie, niż w przypadku C. Wszystkie naruszone wkopami groby z Czarnówka, nie zawierające kości czy zębów, należało by automatycznie włączyć zatem do wariantu D. Porównując stan zachowania kości w grobach naruszonych z tymi nielicznymi pochówkami inhumacyjnymi, w których otwarcie grobu nie nastąpiło (zachowują się kości czaszki, trzony kości długich z kończyn górnych i dolnych, częściowo miednica), można założyć, że jednak w Czarnówku mamy do czynienia najczęściej z otwieraniem grobów w stanie, kiedy proces dekompozycji kości był już zaawansowany.

W artykule scharakteryzowano sposób traktowania szczątków zmarłych w trakcie ingerencji postfuneralnych, a także przejawy zabiegów, które można zaklasyfikować jako nietypowe czy specyficzne. Wstępnie opisano także komplikacje w wyróżnieniu w Czarnówku grobów, w którym w stosunku do tego samego zmarłego zastosowano birytualne zabiegi pogrzebowe, inhumację i kremację.

Pozostawienie w nieładzie kości zmarłych w grobach, naruszonych po zeszkietowaniu jest najczęściej spotykanym sposobem obchodzenia się ze szczątkami w okresie rzymskim, wędrowek ludów czy w stuleciach następnych. Przedstawiono proponowane w literaturze przedmiotu interpretacje traktowania szczątków kostnych (z atencją czy brak respektu) jako elementu rytuałów, akcji plądrowania cmentarzysk, celowego niszczenia pamięci po poprzednikach czy „reakcji” na rolę zmarłego w społeczności, zwrócono uwagę na kwestię asocjacji statusu zmarłego i destrukcji charyzmatycznych obiektów w kontekście sepulkralnym.