

MARCIN MAJEWSKI*

THE BONES HAVE BEEN CAST. AWAY. THE ATTITUDE OF INHABITANTS OF CHARTERED STARGARD TO THE REMAINS OF THEIR PREDECESSORS FROM THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Abstract: The article pertains to the problem of human bone remains from an early medieval cemetery which were re-deposited, mainly in the late Middle Ages. The reason for such practices was the change of a location's purpose through inhabitation and inclusion in a newly founded chartered town. Despite the damage, several dozen burials have been preserved in their anatomical shape. A part of the necropolis was discovered in 2008 during archaeological research in the area of one of the quarters of Stargard's Old Town (Western Pomerania).

Keywords: Western Pomerania, Stargard, chartered town, early medieval cemetery, re-deposition of human bones

Received: 3.09.2019 **Revised:** 3.10.2019 **Accepted:** 7.10.2019

Citation: Majewski M. 2019. *The Bones Have Been Cast. Away. The Attitude of Inhabitants of Chartered Stargard to the Remains of Their Predecessors from the Early Middle Ages*. "Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae" 32, 25-31, DOI 10.23858/FAH32.2019.002

The presence of human remains found in late-medieval residential areas has been discussed in specialist literature more than once.¹ Individual bones found in refuse layers or waste facilities have been associated with nearby cemeteries, medical procedures or systems of punishment. Another group consists of intentional infant burials.² Latrines were one of the spaces selected to deposit human bones. Such types of behaviour are known in the towns of Lübeck, Brunswick or Schaffhausen, and elsewhere.³ A preserved skeleton, discovered in a cesspit in Lübeck belonged to a murdered man who had been tied up.⁴ The discovery made in the Old Town of Stargard is of yet another nature.

Most of the historical buildings in Stargard's Old Town were destroyed in 1945. In 2007-2008, full archaeological and architectural research was conducted in the area of historical quarter IX which used

to consist of 33 plots (Fig. 1). The research covered over 11 thousand square metres.⁵ Surveys conducted in 2000 and 2006 showed a significant degree of destruction of the original layering within the quarter which came about in the 1960s. When preparing the area for a planned multi-family residential development, a part of the layers in the central part of the quarter was dug out. Despite great losses in the structure of the site, it was possible to discover the remains of prehistoric settlement, of an early medieval cemetery as well as numerous late medieval relics and more recent ones.⁶

One of the most important achievements was the recording of 32 burials preserved in anatomical order and related to a necropolis from the 10th-11th centuries.⁷

* University of Szczecin, Institute of Historical Sciences, Department of Archaeology;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8404-3347>; marcin.majewski@usz.edu.pl

¹ Translator's note: In Polish the words 'dice' and 'bones' are homonymous ('kości').

² Duma 2018.

³ Herrmann and Rötting 1986, 485; Duma 2018, 1082.

⁴ Berndt and Neugebauer 1968, 73.

⁵ Kwiatkowski 2012, 1. The numbering of the quarters and plots according to the 1724 cadastral map by M.F. Schwadtken and the map from 1923 used as the cartographic base for the architectural and archaeological research of the Old Town in Stargard. Archaeological site: Stargard 11a (AZP: 32-10/167), chartered town listed as a monument no. 40, according to decision KL.-V-0/19/55 of 22 April 1955.

⁶ Majewski and Kwiatkowski 2009.

⁷ Majewski 2016a, 247-248; Majewski 2016b, 102. The materials from the early Medieval cemetery are currently being processed by Andrzej Janowski, to be published in the "Archeologia Stargardu", vol. V (1).



Fig. 1. Stargard, Old Town. Historical quarter IX. Drawn by C. Rysz.

The graves were found at the back of historical plots at 27, 28 and 29 Radestr. (now ul. Grodzka) as well as 30 and 32 Große Mühlenstr. (now ul. Kazimierza Wielkiego). Moreover, loose human bones were found within the late-medieval and early-modern layers as well as in objects documented in 14 (nearly half of all) of the researched plots.

The distribution of the bone material was not even. The plots in 24 and 26 Holzmarktstr. (now ul. Targ Drzewny), 34 Große Mühlenstr. and 14, 15 and 17 Johannisstr. (ul. Bolesława Chrobrego) contained 1-8 bone fragments each. It was similar with plots in 30 and 31 Große Mühlenstr. As well as 28 Radestr.: 1-15 bones each. Here, however, the recorded preserved graves contained bones in anatomical order. The most prevailing presence of loose bone material was noted in the plots in 27, 29, 30 and 31 Radestr., where 117 to 171 bones have been identified. The first two plots contained the biggest number of graves. In total, 675 human bones were catalogued (Table 1). No bone material was found in the plots in the northwest and the southeast corners of the researched area (Fig. 2).

The loose human bones undoubtedly come from an early medieval cemetery, the preserved part of which was discovered during the excavation work. The necropolis had been destroyed already at the time of the town's incorporation, when the area of the cemetery

NO	HISTORICAL NAME AND PLOT NUMBER	NUMBER OF LOOSE HUMAN BONES
1	HOLZMARKTSTR. 24	1
2	HOLZMARKTSTR. 26	4
3	GROßE MÜHLENSTR. 27	89
4	GROßE MÜHLENSTR. 30	2
5	GROßE MÜHLENSTR. 32	1
6	GROßE MÜHLENSTR. 34	1
7	RADESTR. 27	125
8	RADESTR. 28	15
9	RADESTR. 29	171
10	RADESTR. 30	134
11	RADESTR. 31	117
12	JOHANNISSTR. 14	1
13	JOHANNISSTR. 15	8
14	JOHANNISSTR. 17	6
TOTAL		675

Table 1. Stargard, quarter IX. Sites of discovery and numbers of loose human bones.

was included into the body of the new town.⁸ It was then that Stargard was divided in quarters and plots and

⁸ Stargard was granted the Magdeburg Law charter on 24 June 1243 by Barnim I, Duke of Pomerania – Rymar 2013, 102.

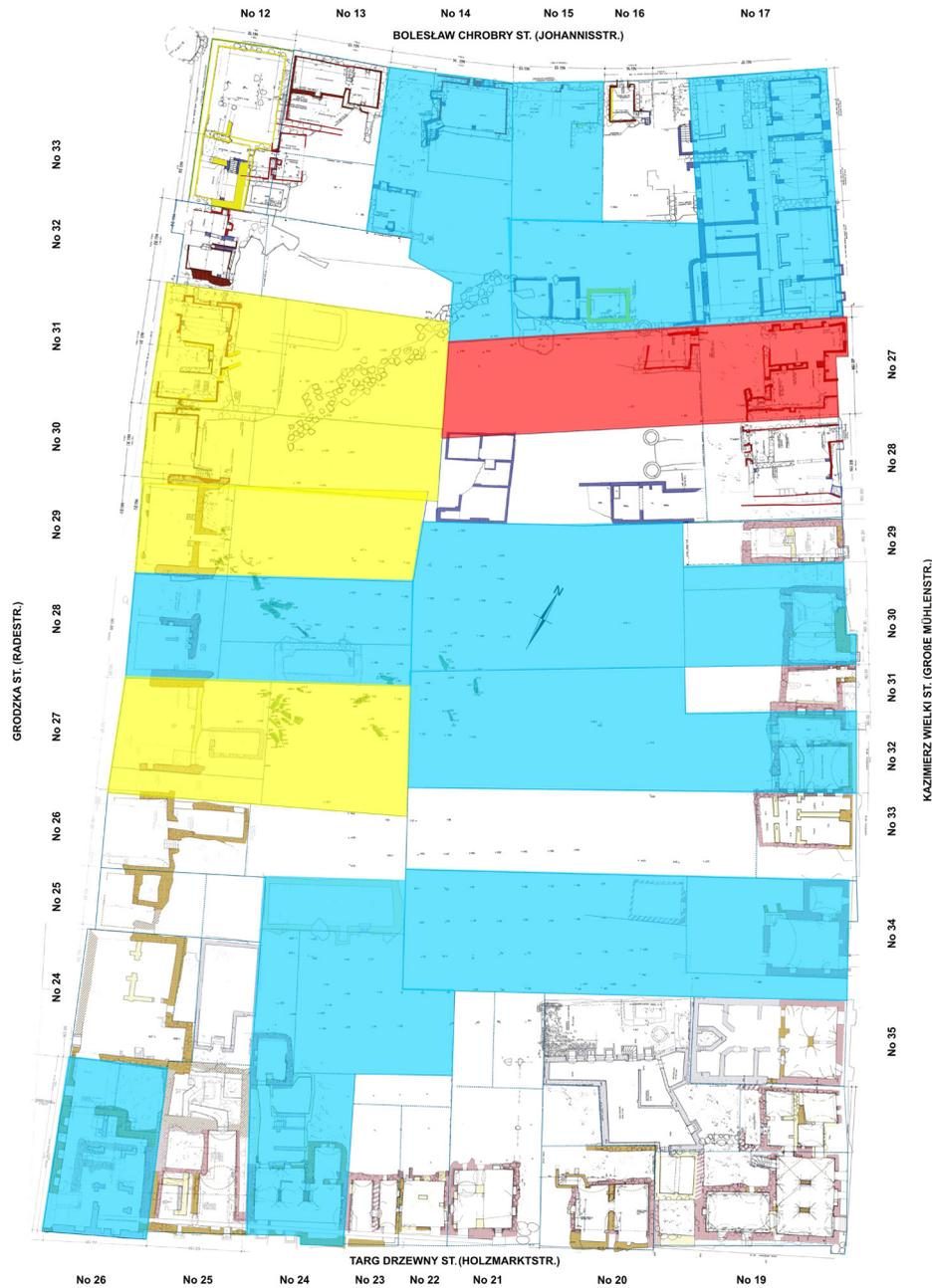


Fig. 2. Stargard, quarter IX. Plots where human bones were discovered (see summary in Table 1; colours represent the number of bones discovered in the plots). Drawn by T. Balcerzak and C. Rysz.

the main streets were laid out. When building up the plots, the new inhabitants dug up the bone remains of the inhabitants of pre-chartered Stargard which were considered waste and ended up in the levelling layers or as fill in features.⁹ Such features included latrines and wooden residential and utility buildings, disused since the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries that had been erected into mid 13th century, as shown by pottery obtained

from the context and the results of dendrochronological analysis.¹⁰ Moreover, human bones ended up as back-fill in excavations for foundations, wells and latrines as well as rubbish pits (Fig. 3). On one occasion, the bones were dumped into a deep, cylindrical feature with walls reinforced with wooden basketwork. Originally, it might have served as a tanning vat (Fig. 4).

As the preserved material shows, when discovering skeletons during ground works in late Middle Ages and

⁹ A similar hypothesis was presented in relation with the individual human bones discovered in the Nowy Targ Square in Wrocław, cf. Duma 2018, 1082.

¹⁰ Zyśko 2011; Zyśko 2014; Dendrochronological analyses performed by prof. Marek Krąpiec.



Fig. 3. Stargard, quarter IX, former plot at 27 Große Mühlenstr., feature 13, profile S. Visible layer with human bones.
Photo K. Kwiatkowski.



Fig. 4. Stargard, quarter IX, former plot at 27 Große Mühlenstr., feature 13. A skull in the fill of a feature.
Photo K. Kwiatkowski.



Fig. 5. Stargard, quarter IX, former plot at 30 Radestr., feature 7. Human bones visible in the fill and the feature profile.
Photo K. Kwiatkowski.

early Modern period, the quarter's inhabitants collected only large bones and then re-buried them with more or less care. These were mainly skull, femur, tibia, pelvis, fibula, humerus, elbow and radial bones, ribs, scapulae and collarbones.

The analysis of the arrangement of bone materials in the context of layers and features shows two types of deposition. The first was loosely cast individual bones. The second consisted of a collection of several or 10+ bones that had belonged to several people deposited in one spot (Fig. 5). This might mean that the townspeople found not just partial and complete graves on their plots, but also clusters of graves. Based on the lack of preserved graves or deposited bones from damaged graves in the east, northeast and southeast parts of the area, one can hypothesize that the graveyard did not extend into these parts. The recorded materials marked its eastern edge. One of late medieval features, discovered in 2004 on one of the plots of quarter VIII located west of the studied area, proves that the necropolis stretched at least 100 metres to the west. A fragment of a human tibia was found in its fill.¹¹ In turn, the cemetery's northern border was today's Bolesław Chrobry Street which partly overlaps with the early medieval road serving as

a main traffic route to the borough and the stronghold, and later as a thoroughfare through the town from the Świętojańska (St. John's) gate to the Wałowa (Wall) gate on the Szczecin-Gdańsk trade route.

In the early Middle Ages, cemeteries were usually located outside settlements, while in the late Middle Ages, we can observe the penetration of the dead into towns and villages. It was at the hearts of the settlements, that cemeteries were founded near churches, inside which, the representatives of local elites were buried. The dead stopped frightening the living as Philip Ariès wrote.¹² The inhabitants of Stargard's quarters who discovered the remains of their predecessors and treated them as unnecessary 'objects' have to be considered in this context. Even if the remains surfaced from the soil during groundwork. It is unknown, whether the townspeople from Stargard reflected on the non-Christian provenance of the deceased. However, there was no continuity of commemorating the dead who could be treated as members of a religious community who remembered their dead.

Indifference to human bones is barely surprising, considering the large amount of remains that tumbled around the late-medieval and early-modern cemeteries

¹¹ Majewski 2004, 2.

¹² Ariès 2011, 49.

that were not too large in relation to the mortality of society of that time. These remains were the most actively participating in the life of the community and embodying the phrase *memento mori* and the allegory of death.¹³

The thickness of Stargard's main cemetery, located at St. Mary's Church and surrounded by a wall, exceeds 3.5 metres. When we compare the height of the northern side, used more intensively than the others, and most of all the level of the church floor (which got

raised by over half a metre at the beginning of 20th century!), it turns out we have to mount nearly 10 steps to enter the building. And yet, there used to be a cemetery inside the church. And a very busy one.

Huge amounts of skeletal remains forced the erection of chapels and ossuaries for storage of the excess of excavated bones.¹⁴ Maybe part of the bone material found within this quarter ended up in the cemetery at St. Mary's Church which is only approximately 150 metres away.

Bibliography

- Ariès P. 2011. *Człowiek i śmierć*. Warszawa.
- Berndt H., Neugebauer W. 1968. *Lübeck – eine medizinhistorische Studie*. In: A. W. Mårtensson (ed.), *Res Medicae aevales. Ragnar Blomqvist Kal. Mai. MCMLXVIII oblata*. Archaeologia Lundensia 3. Karlshamn, 53-90.
- Derwein H. 1931. *Geschichte des Christlichen Friedhofs in Deutschland*. Frankfurt am Main.
- Duma P. 2018. *Pochówek dziecka w przestrzeni mieszkalnej. Problem obecności szczątków ludzkich w obiektach osadniczych*. In: J. Piekalski, K. Wachowski (eds.), *Rytm rozwoju miasta na kulturowym pograniczu. Studium strefy placu Nowy Targ we Wrocławiu 2*. Wratislavia Antiqua 23. Wrocław, 1075-1082.
- Herrmann B., Rötting H. 1986. *Menschliche Skeletteile aus mittelalterlichen Kloaken*. "Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt" 16 (4), 485-487.
- Kizik E. 1998. *Śmierć w mieście hanzeatyckim w XVI-XVIII wieku. Studium z nowożytnej kultury funeralnej*. Gdańsk.
- Kwiatkowski K. 2012. *Odkryte stulecia. Stargardzki kwartał IX w świetle badań archeologicznych*. Stargard.
- Majewski M. 2004. *Interwencyjne badania archeologiczne przy budowie budynku mieszkalnego, działka nr 107 ul. Płatnerzy na Starym Mieście w Stargardzie*. Stargard. Typescript in the Collection of the Department for Archaeology at the Museum for Archaeology and History in Stargard, and at the Archive of the Voivodship Conservator of Monuments in Szczecin.
- Majewski M. 2016a. *Ecclesia sub ecclesia – czyli o świątyni odkrytej pod kościołem augustiańskim w Stargardzie*. In: M. Rębkowski (ed.), *Kościoły w dobie chrystianizacji*. Wolińskie Spotkania Mediewistyczne 3. Szczecin, 247-253.
- Majewski M. 2016b. *Osada podgrodowa*. In: M. Majewski (ed.), *Badania na obszarze dawnego kościoła augustiańskiego*. Archeologia Stargardu 2 (1). Stargard, 101-105.
- Majewski M., Kwiatkowski K. 2009. *Sprawozdanie wstępne z archeologicznych badań ratunkowych przeprowadzonych na terenie przeznaczonym pod inwestycję „Budowa obiektu mieszkalno-usługowego w Stargardzie”, w kwartale ograniczonym ulicami: Bolesława Chrobrego, Kazimierza Wielkiego, Grodzką i Władysława Łokietka w Stargardzie, obr. II, działki nr 61/1, 120/1, 121/1, 122/1, 122/2 i 211/1*. Stargard. Typescript in the Collection of the Department for Archaeology at the Museum for Archaeology and History in Stargard, and at the Archive of the Voivodship Conservator of Monuments in Szczecin.
- Rymar E. 2013. *Fragmety dziejów Stargardu nad Iną do 1253 roku*. "Stargardia" 7 (2011-2012), 97-111.
- Wańczowski M., Lenart M. 2009. *Księga żałoby i śmierci*. Second Edition. Warszawa.
- Zyśko A. 2011. *Ceramika siwa z badań parcel przy przedłużeniu ulicy Władysława Łokietka (Targ Drzewny) w obrębie kwartału IX w Stargardzie*. "Stargardia" 6, 89-109.
- Zyśko A. 2014. *Ceramika siwa z badań parcel przy ulicy Kazimierza Wielkiego (Wielkomłyńska) w obrębie kwartału IX w Stargardzie*. "Stargardia" 8, 11-39.

¹³ Wańczowski and Lenart 2009, 206, 476.

¹⁴ Derwein 1931, 43; Kizik 1998, 199-202; Ariès 2011, 73-74.

Streszczenie

Kości zostały wyrzucone. Stosunek mieszkańców lokacyjnego Stargardu do szczątków ich wczesnośredniowiecznych poprzedników

Podczas badań archeologicznych prowadzonych w 2008 r. na obszarze jednego z kwartałów Starego Miasta w Stargardzie odkryto fragment cmentarzyska z X-XI wieku. Zarejestrowano 32 pochówki zachowane w porządku anatomicznym. Ponadto w późnośredniowiecznych i wczesnonowożytnych nawarstwieniach i obiektach zadokumentowanych na czternastu działkach – czyli prawie połowie badanych – natrafiono na luźne kości ludzkie, które pochodziły ze wspomnianego cmentarzyska. Nekropolia uległa zniszczeniu już w okresie lokacyjnym, kiedy jej obszar włączono do organizmu powstającego miasta. Zabudowując działki, nowi mieszkańcy przypadkowo wykopywali szczątki kostne, które następnie trafiały jako zbędne do warstw niwelacyjnych, latryn oraz obiektów, pozostałych po rozbieranych na przełomie XIV i XV stulecia drewnianych budynkach mieszkalnych i gospodarczych, wzniesionych jeszcze w połowie XIII wieku. Kości ludzkie wrzucano ponadto do zasypisk wykopów pod fundamenty budynków, wkopów pod studnie oraz do jam śmietnikowych. W jednym przypadku znaleziono je we wnętrzu głębokiego, cylindrycznego obiektu, którego ściany zostały wzmocnione drewnianą plecionką. Pierwotnie pełnił on być może funkcję kadzi garbarskiej. Jak wskazuje zachowany materiał, mieszkańcy tego kwartału w okresie późnego średniowiecza i wczesnej nowożytności, odkrywając w trakcie prac ziemnych szkielety, zbierali jedynie większe kości. Zarejestrowane materiały wyznaczały wschodni skraj wczesnośredniowiecznego cmentarzyska. Nie wiadomo, czy stargardzkim mieszczanom towarzyszyła refleksja, odnosząca się do niechrześcijańskiego pochodzenia zmarłych. Brak jednak było ciągłości pamięci o pochowanych, których można było traktować jako członków wspólnoty religijnej, której jedną z cech była pamięć o umarłych.

