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A Few Remarks on the Presence of Wood in Funeral Rites of the Lusatian Cultural in the Lublin Region

ABSTRACT

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In the Early Iron Age, there were burial cemeteries (Bliskowice, Krupy, Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane) in the Lublin region where wooden chests/sarcophagi were built, probably as family graves. These cemeteries were arranged in order: rows of graves were running along the E-W axis, and each chest was located along the S-N axis. The dead, equipped with vessels and animal food, were burnt together with the chest. This custom refers to the burial rite performed by the population of the Western-Podolian Scythian culture. Previously, in the Bronze Age, population of the Lusatian culture used wood during funerary rites, but to a lesser extent (palisades and fences).

Key words: Lusatian culture, wood, funeral rite, Lublin region

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Discoveries made at Biskupin-type settlements force us to perceive inhabitants of the Lusatian culture as using a large amount of wood in daily living. In the course of development of this culture, this raw material was severely damaged due to demographic growth, which was associated with widening the range of settlement and intensification of agricultural exploitation of the land. Deforestation led to irreversible changes in natural environment in Polish territories (see Ralska-Jasiewiczowa 1999, 124; Latałowa 2003, 289). It is obvious that wooden material was not only used in the Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age and it determined the basis of production. It was being used for centuries wherever it was available. Owing to its unstable nature, some items made of wood, bark or phloem did not manage to preserve and they could be attributed to missing objects in the Lusatian culture as it was noticed by Jan Dąbrowski (1996). In addition to the wooden relics of daily life (Dąbrowski 1996, 179–180; 2009, 202), which have disappeared in the course of postdepositional processes, we do not notice traces of wood in funeral practices, such as chests, figurines, jewellery etc.

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Cemeteries of the Lusatian culture revealed not frequently but relatively varied examples of timber exploitation (see Malinowski 1962, *passim*).

It was used to build chests/burial sarcophagi with planks, beams and stakes, adopted hollow logs, as well as to board the walls of burial pits, to create bone and ash containers and urn lids, to erect post-grave constructions and other buildings for worship practices, to build palisades and fences, and to mark individual graves and cemeteries on the ground by means of stelae and wooden poles.

What is more, grave goods, which furnished graves of the deceased, might have included items made of wood, bark or phloem such as figurines, tools and weapons, as well as jewellery and parts of clothing (beads, buttons, headwear, footwear). Additionally, wood also played an important role as fuel for piles and bonfires.

One of the most interesting examples of timber utilisation in funeral practices comes from Silesia. It was recorded, first of all, at a large cemetery in Kietrz, Głubczyce district. Considering the graves created at the beginning of the Lusatian culture at this site, it is necessary to mention the so-called Kietrz-type graves, characterized by the presence of wooden coffins and roofs located above them in some cases, supported by four posts (Gedl 1984). There are also other similar and contemporary in their use wooden structures known from other sites of south-western Poland, *e.g.* burial mounds in Mikowice, Namysłów district (Kłosińska 1991; 1994). Genesis of these graves and their functioning in the early Lusatian milieu corresponds to earlier influences of the Tumulus culture in Silesia (Gedl 1984, 68, Kłosińska 1991, 660, 1994, *passim*). A few centuries later, other structures appear in the same places – chambered burials on the square, containing an urn cremation burial and a number of accompanying artefacts (Hoffmann 1937; Gedl 1973, *passim*). The outlines of wooden beams were visible, which were joined together in a log construction, or they were placed in grooves of vertical corner posts (Gedl 1973, 21). Chambered burials were the result of adaptation of patterns flowing from the Eastern Hallstatt culture. It is likely that cemeteries discovered in Kietrz, Mikowice and recently recognized in Domasław, Wrocław district, were the places of burying local elites, local “princes”, representing the Silesian province of Hallstatt culture (see Gediga 2010).

Considering the Lublin region, the most spectacular examples of wood utilization in funeral practices are from Bliskowice, Kraśnik district (Gurba 1965), Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane (Kurzątkowska 1987; 1988; 1989, Kurzątkowska, Rozwałka 1990) and Krupy, Lubartów district (Misiewicz 1999; 2000; 2003a; 2003b; 2005). Rectangular chests/sarcophagi, used there in the younger part of the Early Iron Age, do not have their counterparts in the Lusatian culture. It is regrettable that these fascinating discoveries have not been the subject of detailed studies so far or even described as a source publication at the appropriate level. In spite of this, they were mentioned in the literature and became the subject of preliminary interpretations (Czopek 1997, 218; Misiewicz 2003b; Kłosińska, Klisz 2003, 67; Kłosińska 2007a; *passim*; 2007b, *passim*; 2009, *passim*).

Apart from a single grave in Bliskowice, we are dealing with sites containing a certain, but not very numerous amount of graves (Krupy, Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane). It is noteworthy that, speaking of these cemeteries we should mention a phenomenon of ordering and differentiating the space, which is a continuation of customs prevailing in the Bronze Age in the Lublin region within urn cremation necropolises. Wooden chest burials (sarcophagi), usually containing the relics of collective graves (half-burned and cremation burials), create clear linear structures. Less complicated situation is noted in the cemetery in Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane, composed of two almost perfectly equal rows of graves (Kurzątkowska, Rozwałka 1990, fig. 1). Some of them had large relics of wood, which were probably the elements of wooden chests. Both rows¹, as evidenced by the available plan of the cemetery, stretched along the east-west axis with a very slight deviation to the northeast-southwest, and the distance between them was about 7m. It is also worth mentioning that the distance between individual graves was proportionately equal. A spatial arrangement of the cemetery in Krupy was slightly different (Fig. 1), and the forms of cremation burials were more varied. According to the research carried out at the site, the necropolis (or at least its uncovered part) occupied a flat territory when it was created and used (Misiewicz 2003a, 85;

¹ Recently, a new single grave (Bochyński, Olszewski, 2015) was found, in some distance to the south of the uncovered part of the cemetery. This object could belong to another row of graves at this site or be a separate (but contemporary) element of the necropolis. A small range of rescue work at this site does not provide verification of these assumptions.

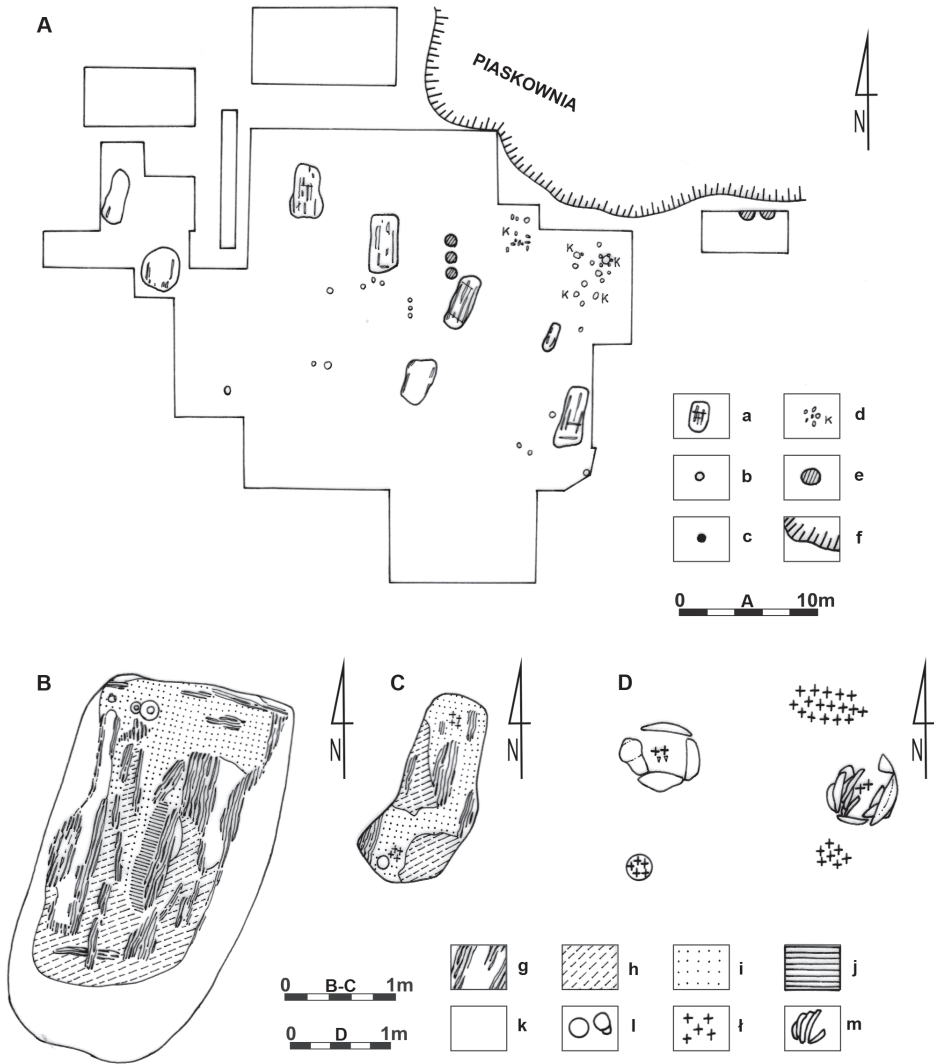


Fig. 1. Krupy, Michów commune, Lubartów district, site 1: layout of the cemetery – A; plan view of grave 10 – B; plan view of grave 15 – C; plan view of graves 4 and 5 and others (not marked) – D. Legend: chest burials – a; urn grave – b; pit grave – c; stones – d; features – e; destroyed area – f; burnt wood – g; gray sand with a large proportion of charcoal and ash – h; dark yellow sand with fine charcoal – i; sand of intense orange tint – j; yellow-orange sand – k; vessels – l; burnt human bones – m (according to Misiewicz 1999; 2000)

Ryc. 1. Krupy, gm. Michów, pow. lubartowski, stan. 1: plan sytuacyjny cmentarzyska – A; rzut poziomy grobu 10 – B; rzut poziomy grobu 15 – C; rzut poziomy grobów 4 i 5 oraz innych (nieoznaczonych) – D. Legenda: groby skrzyniowe – a; grób popielnicowy – b; grób jamowy – c; kamienie – d; obiekty – e; teren zniszczony – f; spalone drewno – g; szary piasek z dużą domieszką węgla drzewnych i popiołu – h; piasek ciemnożółty z drobnymi węgielkami – i; piasek o intensywnie pomarańczowym zabarwieniu – j; piasek żółto-pomarańczowy – k; naczynia – l; przepalane kości ludzkie – m; kamienie – m (wg Misiewicz 1999; 2000)

2003b, 68). Studies have shown that there were as though three rows of constructions. In the first row (near the sand mine) there were features made of stone and both stone and wood, and the latter of which (in particular) represented a very original four-post construction, reinforced at the base of the posts with large stones (probably roofed). It could be a “higher order” structure, a kind of temple or a central place for practicing religious rites. This structure was accompanied by several urn and pit cremation burials. At a distance of about 2 m south of the described structure, there was a row of chest burials. Another row of the same features was at a similar distance. All three rows of graves were located along the east-west axis, with a quite significant deviation to the northeast-southwest. The distance between graves in individual rows ranged from 3 to 10m. There were also urn and pit cremation burials within the cemetery area.

Considering each of these sites, it is necessary to mention that these structures were slightly different in size and construction details. However, the latter were not visible in all cases, which largely depended not only on the postdepositional damages caused by long-term processes, but also on the scope of observations taken during the research. But the main obstacle to recognize completely these spectacular constructions was the habit of burning them *in situ* by their designers and users. The remains of such an object were uncovered in Bliskowice, which survived in the form of a pit filled with burnt wood, large, randomly arranged logs. Within the pit, it was possible to differentiate an urnless cremation burial in the form of a pile, as well as several unburnt human bones (Gurba 1965, 274). Chest graves in Krupy were also characterized by a considerable extent of burning, but in a few cases we can recreate their appearance (Fig. 1 and 2). These were rectangular chests, with the bottom probably lined with thin branches, supported with thin stakes of the wall, as well as the lid, made of river planks and beams of different thickness (Misiewicz 2003b, 68–69). Wood was laid along and across. Planks forming sarcophagus were usually thick but varied in length and width. As for the graves themselves, where the organic material has been preserved better, we are able to notice pieces of wood (planks, beams) more than a meter in length and a width of up to 15cm. Due to undertaken research, it is clear that all the chests were dug to a depth of 50cm and their total height was up to 1m. This means that, in the presence of a thin layer above the bottom

soil (see Misiewicz 2003b, 68), these chests could be visible on the surface of the cemetery. The size of these sepulchral buildings ranged from 4.5–1m long, and 1.8–0.5m wide. Their interior parts contained burnt human bones in small piles, without any cover or in organic containers, or in pottery urns. Only regarding grave 33, burnt human remains were arranged in anatomical order on the plank defined by the researcher as a bier (Misiewicz 2005, 75). Pits that had been hollowed in the bottom soil in order to build a wooden sarcophagus were, as the research documentation shows, sometimes slightly wider than the chest itself. This space hid additional burials and grave goods outside the chest. An integral part of this cemetery was also a selection of urn and pit cremation burials usually located near major constructions, less often away from them. It is possible to find urns set in pure sand, vertically or laterally, with additional elements (pile remains, stones) or without them. Moreover, the cremation burials were also placed in organic containers, sometimes in clearly visible pits with remnants of the pile. Urn and pit burials were sometimes arranged in small clusters in the cemetery space, forming a semicircle, or a line along the north-south axis.

The cemetery in Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane contained the relics of charred wooden beams (Kurzątkowska 1987, 22; 1989, 23) in some rectangular burial pits, which might indicate that sarcophagi were also constructed here and then burnt *in situ*. Observations made during the research also allow us to suppose that the walls of burial pits were covered with wood at the site, as well as partitions (?) and post structures were used (see Kurzątkowska 1987, 22; 1989, 23). However, the shape of these constructions is not as easy to define as in the case described above in Krupy. Although wood relics have not been discovered everywhere, its presence (in many cases quite numerous) is proved in the form of wood charcoal in many graves. Available descriptions indicate that burial inventories were set on beams (Kurzątkowska 1989, 23), which (as in grave 9) were probably the remains of the floor. The relatively best-preserved burial structure was observed in the so-called feature I, which was different from other sepulchral constructions at this site. It was set up on a square layout (3.30 x 3.80 m), probably with an internal division, because "... there was a charred beam between the double skeletons..."; as well as relics of posts were also noticed (Kurzątkowska 1987, 22). Therefore, it can be said that wooden structures were erected in Lublin-



Fig. 2. Visualisation of a wooden chest/sarcophagus at the cemetery in Krupy (according to the concept by E. M. Kłosińska, artwork by T. Demidziuk)

Ryc. 2. Wizualizacja użytkowania skrzyni/sarkofagu drewnianego na cmentarzysku w Krupach (wg koncepcji E. M. Kłosińskiej opracowała plastycznie T. Demidziuk)

Jakubowice Murowane, which consisted of floors, side and internal walls, and probably lids or covers supported by posts. They were destroyed during high temperature burning. It seems that clay was also used for construction, as large lumps were observed in graves, similar to well-burnt daub. The original height of chests, or even total dimensions of burial pits, is difficult to establish, however, due to the fact a burial in the sitting position was observed at the northwest corner of the grave 6 (Kurzątkowska 1988, 21), the ceiling of this feature must have been about 1 m above the level of bone discovery. Furthermore, there were more relics of burnt bodies (compared to Krupy), arranged in anatomical order within the burial pits, and in the case of a few examples in one grave the corpses were arranged on the opposite side (Kurzątkowska 1987, 20, 22; 1988, 19; 1989, 22). There were also recorded clusters of burnt bones (e.g. feature I), together with spectacular finds – large

bark fragments (Kurzątkowska 1987, 22). It can be assumed that it was a relic of container for children's burial, or for other sepulchral purposes. Only a round bottom of a cylindrical container – basket, probably made of birch bark². In the past, containers of organic materials (wood, bark, skin) were undoubtedly in common use, but only in exceptional circumstances (in a humid, cool environment) their relics have survived until now. In central and northern Europe such unique finds were recorded at the sites of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages (see Slaski 1950, 160–162, Vlček, Hájek 1963; passim, Gardawski 1979, 263; Barth 1980, fig. 32, Furmánek *et al.* 1991, 421, photo 25)³.

Apart from the probable presence of birch bark, information on the tree species used at the sites is very poor. In Bliskowice, the usage of oak, pine and unrecognized species was confirmed (Gurba 1965, 274). However, considering the location of the discussed sites, there was a possibility of using different types of wood. We do not know whether the builders of particular constructions were guided by the preferences of particular timber. However, it is worth noting, that oak and beech wood are not only characterized by high strength but these species have also good combustion conditions (see Lityńska-Zajac 2007, 214–215). It should not be excluded that these timber values were known, but the availability of raw material in the surrounding was probably also considered. The common species in these days was the Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*).

Summing up the data regarding the cemetery with wooden burial constructions, coming from the Early Iron Age in the Lublin region, it is necessary to mention the following:

- the cemeteries have an ordered structure, along the directions of the world;
- linear grave arrangement refers to the layout of earlier urn necropolises;
- graves are large in size;
- burial pits in some cases are lined with riven planks or they covered chests/sarcophagi inside;
- building materials included riven planks, beams, stakes and brushwood/branches;

² I would like to thank Ms. Urszula Kurzątkowska for for the opportunity to see this find and her unpublished drawing documentation.

³ It is worth mentioning the discovery of an analogous object at the cemetery of the Andronovo culture, located at the foot of the Altai Mountains in Central Asia (Komarova 1961, 42, 52, table XV: 26). There were far better conditions for preserving such organic objects.

- the way the corners are joined together is unknown; perhaps the planks were only placed next to each other;
- walls, reaching up to 1 m high, were stabilized vertically with stakes;
- floors of burials were lined with a thin layer of branches or a plank floor was constructed;
- chests/sarcophagi were covered with an lid, supported by the side walls or – in the case of larger structures – posts piled in the bottom of the grave;
- it is likely that the structures were reinforced with clay;
- after a while, the objects were burnt from above (probably to receive a better effect a layer of brushwood was placed on a cover).

It is also worth mentioning burials deposited in these constructions. Only here the dead were burnt *in situ* in the grave. In the case, when there was no need to move older burials to make younger ones the place, the arrangement of the corpse was quite well preserved. In Krupy, bodies of individual dead from the graves 33 and 38 were preserved well enough to be able to identify the anatomy and the position of the corpses with the head towards the south (Misiewicz 2005, 66, fig. 2A, B). More complicated systems of half-burnt bodies can be seen in the graves of the necropolis in Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane. According to the researcher of that site, an anatomical order of the dead was seen in the grave, on the back, along the north-south axis. Moreover, the opposite arrangement of bodies is also quite common (reversible as in the standard 52-card deck – Kurzątkowska 1987, 20, 22), and sometimes skeletal fragments remind corpse decomposition in the course of funeral proceedings. Completely burnt remains were also found in relatively dense clusters, and they were probably relics of cremation burials, deposited in organic containers. A unique character of the burial was noticed in the case of the body in a sitting position (grave 6 – Kurzątkowska 1988, 21), where the deceased rested against the wall of the grave (?).

Not very common in the Lublin region and difficult to interpret were the burials called cenotaphs. Actually, only one object in this area can be considered as a symbolic grave. There was no evidence of bones in a wooden sarcophagus, named grave 10 in Krupy (Misiewicz 2000, 63, 70, Il. 3A). This large, well-preserved structure (4.10 x 1.5m) with walls made of riven planks, supported by stakes, covered with beams and planks, was burnt without the deceased inside, not accidentally,

since the non-existent burial was earlier equipped with a few vessels (three of them were upside down).

We may assume that these large chests/sarcophagi kept the dead connected by blood ties (Fig. 2). In the course of their usage, these graves were probably accessible for periodic rites taking place in their vicinity, and the remains of the deceased were protected by wooden covers or roofs built above. These monumental buildings (at that time and place) were the expression of concern for the dead and efforts to provide similar conditions they had in life. This observation refers to an idea of the “house of the dead”, widespread in many prehistoric cultures, not only in the Early Iron Age (Szumiło 2011). Individual furnishing of the deceased was poor and limited to small bronze jewellery and fragments of a carcass. Pottery vessels were deposited in separate places and probably as offerings.

After filling up the objects, they were closed and set fire, but between the foundation of the grave and its closing, many magical acts were performed to protect the needs of the deceased and the claims of deities. In order to arrange the cemeteries, the canon of the Sun worshipers in the Lusatian culture was preserved, ordering the graves along the east-west axis. Moreover, some efforts were taken to maintain the long axis of these large graves set the north-south direction (Kłosińska, Klisz 2003, *passim*). More than in the Bronze Age, apotropaic magic was used to neutralize negative power of deities of the underworld. In many cases the contents of the sacrificial vessels were directed towards the ground, setting them upside down (see, Misiewicz 2003b, fig. 9, see the third unnumbered figure in the article).

The burials, which were discovered in Bliskowice, Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane and Krupy, could be inspired by people from the East, from the area of Western Podolia, duplicating certain features of the funeral rites such as – building large quadrangular wood and stone chambered burials, burning the dead *in situ*, setting ritual vessels upside down, stone stabilization of post structures, rised above the graves, or equipping the dead with meat (see Sulimirski 1936, 6–9; Petrenko 1989, 73; Bandrivksy 1994, 143; Smirnova 1997, 419, fig. 2; Eberst 2012, *passim*). Perhaps setting up cemeteries on exposed culminating terrains were the substitute for barrows for these people. However, it is worth emphasizing that in terms of feature arrangement from Krupy and Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane, they duplicate the linear model,

distinctive for the earlier Lusatian cemeteries in the Lublin region, and they also included individual urn burial sites within them (Krupy – Misiewicz 2000, 70). This undoubtedly combined new funeral rites with the old ones, and perhaps it might even proved the adoption of some “Lusatian” dead in new necropolises. Apart from unique forms of graves, these objects provided remarkable finds: Krupy – a nail-type earring (Misiewicz 2003b, see the eleventh unnumbered figure in the article), and Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane – organic material (Kurzątkowska 1987, 22) – a round base made of birch bark with holes along the edge⁴.

Previously, in the Bronze Age, population of the Lusatian culture also used wood in funeral practices. However, this is confirmed only by very limited evidence in a few cremation cemeteries created during this period, in some cases also used in the Early Iron Age.

It is believed that in the cemetery in Świeciechów Duży, Kraśnik district graves were marked in the area by means of stones or stone mounds, and a wooden pole (in stone circle) informed about a presence of the cemetery (Wichrowski 2006, 2). An analogous function was probably played by poles, whose two relics were identified in Wojciechów, Chełm district (Gołub 1994).

In Wieprzec, Zamość district, lack of damages within densely arranged urns, was supposed to prove the existence of earth mounds and other non-permanent constructions that marked these places (Dziedziak 2003, 240). The latter might have been built with some visible wooden fences. The relics of such “fences”, or palisades, occurred not only at the cemetery in Bielsko, Opole district, where a central cluster of graves was surrounded⁵, but also in Wieprzec, but its chronological connection with the Lusatian cemetery remains uncertain in this case (see Gajewski, Urbański 1981, 9). However, we cannot exclude that owing to the lack of natural barrier, the wooden palisade separated the cemetery from the site 1 from the other existing sepulchral fields. It is believed that, by the use of a palisade or a moat (the objects visible in the past), a settlement and a burial ground were separated from each other at the sites 5a and 5b in Wronowice, Hrubieszów district (Wichrowski 1989, 132).

⁴ See footnote 2.

⁵ Assumption based on unpublished documentation from field research carried out by Ms. Waleria Misiewicz.

Speaking of any other organic structures as grave components containing urns – we are able to say very little about this. Researchers spotted a semicircular, darker outline that is believed to be a relic of organic items, or a wooden structure that has decayed on the northern side of the urn in grave 32 in the cemetery in Gródek, Hrubieszów district, site 1B (Niedźwiedź 1999, 107). According to the preserved layout of the necropolis in Bielsko, similar darkness occurred in 15 urns. This darkness surrounded vessels from the east, north-east, north and south.

As for the urns of the Lublin region, there is a small number of vessels covering the mouth of the urns. However, we cannot exclude a suggestion that organic covers were used for this purpose, *e.g.* made of wood, bark, leaves, leather and textiles (see Miśkiewicz, Wegrzynowicz 1974, 183) or finally stones. This assumption is based on the fact that there were clean burials (washed bones), without relics of a pile inside the urns, which was probably used to protect against impurity when filling the grave.

In Perespa, Tomaszów Lub. District, pit burial No. 16 had a characteristic rectangular shape after packing it into a wooden box (Kłosińska 2006, 65). What is more, the presence of a wooden structure in this grave is also evidenced by darker smudges, which were relatively distinct in the profile and adjoining the dense stack of bones.

Furthermore, in order to create every cemetery, it was necessary to consider not only practical criteria of place choice, but certain symbolic conditions must also have been fulfilled. It seems that proximity of the forest was important, which provided timber for burial constructions and fuel for fires and piles. A cemetery also became a part of space where taming and overcoming death took place, and these important acts took place according to strictly defined cultural rules. Therefore, if we look at the necropolises in Krupy and Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane, as well as other sepulchral places in the Lublin region, we will notice selected and ordered parts of space. This space was distinguished not only by means of wooden elements of sarcophagus (Bliskowice, Krupy, Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane), presumed fences and palisades (Bielsko, Wronowice), posts (Świeciechów Duży, Wojciechów), hearths (Bielsko, Kosin, Kraśnik district, site 2 and 3, Serniawy, Chełm district, Wojciechów, Wolkana, Chełm district) but also by other elements originally visible in the area (stones, mounds, “covered with sod”).

Distinction of the space was probably also influenced by relations existing within the community which used a particular cemetery. The emergence of several rows of chests/sarcophagi within the repeatedly aforementioned necropolises of the Early Iron Age, and the existence of an interior layout, according to which the individual graves were located, probably reflected the orderly structure of a local community.

We do not know where the “history” of a given cemetery started. We can assume that the first graves were located on the edge or in the centre of the cemetery space. It seems that in the location of the first “offering” graves at any of the aforementioned sites, not only a sunrise point was observed at particular time, but also it was supported by simple technical objects such as a post driven in the ground, casting a shadow – a model line to begin the cemetery. It was also a way of reading time of the day⁶, and the mythical time was also created. It is worth mentioning here that relics of posts (stabilized with stones) were recorded in Krupy, Świeciechów Duży and Wojciechów, where they could be elements of some buildings, mark the place of necropolis in the field, or (as vertical accents) indicate the opening points of the sacral space upwards. Unfortunately, when reporting archaeological findings considering these objects, a close location of these posts was presented, therefore we are not allowed to determine whether these vertical constructions were built: in the centre or on the edge of the necropolis. Only in the case of four posts, surrounded by stones, probably established as a temple construction in Krupy, we are able to indicate a special location – in the most exposed place of this burial ground, outside the rows where the sarcophagi were located. This stone-wooden construction resembles similar structures noted in barrows of Western-Podolian group of Scythian culture from the Middle Dniester, thus in this context, it becomes an archetypal structure, referring to the funeral habits of the dead ancestors. It could be a sacred centre of the cemetery space.

Valorisation of space concerned not only the place of the burial place, but also individual graves and buried bodies. At their creations, some efforts were used to refer to directions that were positive, and therefore east and south. Clear astronomical bases had the orientation of wooden sarcophagi in the cemeteries in Krupy and Lublin-Jakubowice

⁶ In some traditional societies, until recently, time of the day was determined by measuring the length of the shadow (Kowalski 2007, 461).

Murowane. Long axes of these constructions ran from the south to the north, and the bodies of the deceased (where the anatomical corpses were preserved) were laid with the head placed to the south. Such situation was noted, *e.g.*, in grave 38 in Krupy. This direction, universal for inhuman and half-burnt burials, not only on the territory of the Lusatian culture, but also the Vysocko culture, indicates a clear valorisation of the human form. There is no doubt that in the time of development of these cultures, a human body was linked with space, and the head played the most important role. In traditional communities, the head was perceived positively as the most exposed part of the body, essential to his vital functions, and reflecting the individual characteristics of the person through the face (see Kowalski 2007, 132–136). Therefore, we can see the relationship of the head with the positive principle, with the upward orientation, for the future. Arrangement of the body with the head to the south probably strengthened its connection with the dominant sun and resurrection in the indefinite future.

A significant value of positively oriented directions, corresponding to the symbolism of “*fulgur*”, is also reflected by constructions of some graves coming from cemeteries from the Lublin region. In some wooden sarcophagi in Krupy – as can be seen in photographic documentation (see Misiewicz 2003b, 70) – gates might have been left from the south.

Wooden structures of sarcophagi from the younger sections of the Early Iron Age and other wooden elements recognized in the aforementioned sites can also be considered in the category of grave goods for the deceased, important for their further status. In traditional mythologies, a tree combines symbolism of the centre and clips three levels together – the underground, the earth and the heaven, reflecting the vertical order of the world. Due to the fact that a tree crosses boundaries of these levels, it has a mediatorial nature. A tree is also a symbol of time, permanence, vitality, and cyclical regeneration (Eliade 1994, 486; Molyneaux 1997, 86, 90; Kowalski 2007, 94, 98). A substitute for a tree (the axis of the world) could have been a post in the cemetery. As for the species recognized in the Lusatian cemeteries from the Lublin region, – birch(?) (Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane – feature I) was a symbol of a renewed life connected with fertility and female principle. Pine (Bliskowice) as an evergreen tree identified immortality (Tresidder, Dalewski 2000, 77). Oak (Bliskowice) was a symbol of holiness and permanence. It also contained the symbolism

of the central place, where the road was opened up to two opposing levels – the underworld and the heaven (Kowalski 2007, 33, 76–78).

Wooden structures in chests/sarcophagi shapes, which were discovered in the cemeteries in Bliskowice, Krupy and Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane, refer not only to the regeneration symbolism of the tree, but they also bear other rich symbolic content. As mentioned earlier, they should be seen in the category of houses for the dead, although they do not have typical structures (a gable roof supported by posts or in a tent form). It is possible that these structures were the graves intended for whole families. The analysis of bone fragments from Lublin-Jakubowice Murowane showed that particular burials kept bodies of adults – both women and men and usually a few children, and this structure usually manifests a full family (Dąbrowski, Gronkiewicz 2006). Houses of the deceased were probably destined for members of family microstructure, for those relatives, who had gone through all the rituals and obtained the status of ancestors. The idea of the House of the Dead was the notion that the dead “were living” in the underworld, and their law was the conditions they had in life. In the course of their utilization, these graves were probably accessible for periodic rites, and the remains of the deceased were protected by wooden covers. It cannot be ruled out that there was access to the interior not only “from the top”, but also from the side wall, since the long,rm used grave should be designed so that it can be opened and closed several times. (Szczepanek 2009, 208). After the objects were filled, they were closed and set on fire, but between the setting of the grave and its closure, probably many activities were carried out in a way consistent with the requirements of the ritual, covering the needs of the deceased and deities claims.

Considering settlements of the Lublin region, no sacred wooden buildings have been found so far which could have served the inhabitants. However, it is worth considering whether the entire settlement space and some of the activities performed by the people inhabiting it were not to some extent sacred. The early belief structures were born as a result of long,rm observations of nature processes, and certain actions (such as pottery firing, bronze melting, bread baking, hunting, animal slaughter, etc.) may require special behaviours (*e.g.*, magic, spells, rites) and they designated places to ensure the success of these procedures. Apart from settlements and cemeteries, there were places where the spiritual needs of the Lusatian population were fulfilled, in the zones

of nature suitable for such actions: near standing and flowing waters, at the tops of the hills, or near the distinctive trees and stones (Dąbrowski 2009, 224). We should not exclude that preconditions for the emergence and exploitation of a given necropolis could be the presence of such elements of nature as, e.g., trees or forests with specific properties.

Furthermore, the subject matter considering piles and bonfires is another wide issue in the context of timber utilization in the area of the cemetery. “Free-standing” cremation sites have not been recorded yet, while bonfires have been listed at most of widely excavated necropolises in the Lublin region. Even though this theme is definitely beyond the scope of this research, but it is worth noting that its discussion may be difficult due to the lack of specialized analyses of charcoal coming from these features as well as an extremely wide range of the problem regarding fire symbolism in funeral practices (see Kłosińska 2007).

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