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**Barczewko – a cemetery of the first settlers in Southern Warmia
against the background of medieval inhumation necropolises
in Teutonic Prussia**

Abstract. Barczewko is located near Olsztyn, in the Warmian-Masurian province (north-eastern Poland). The site on Lake Wadąg was the place of the first location of today's Barczewo (Ger. Wartenburg). Urban settlement with the castle/watchtower was erected on the initiative of the bishop of Warmia at the end of the 1320s. The development of the young urban colony was interrupted in 1354 when it was invaded by Lithuanian troops, burned down and abandoned. The village that was later established nearby was called Alt Wartenberg. The hill behind the village, referred to as the Old Town, has never been built on. The place is a specific time capsule, preserving the remains of buildings and the basic elements of the town's spatial arrangement. In the years 2013–2019, a Polish-German research project was carried out here. After a series of non-invasive tests, the cellars of dwelling buildings with artefacts abandoned on the day of the raid, fortifications, market square buildings, central place of craft and trade nature (the so-called *mercatorio*) and the settlers' cemetery, as well as the remains of the victims of the raid, were uncovered by excavation. It is a unique complex which provides a lot of information about the pioneering phases of town formation in the state of the Teutonic Order, and about the everyday life of settlers coexisting most likely with the Old Prussian population. The excavations reveal details of the dramatic events related to the fall of the town, thus confirming written sources. This text presents for the first time the preliminary results of the research on the cemetery of the first settlers in southern Warmia. The necropolis provides evidence for the presence of the Old Prussian indigenous population who played a significant role in this process.

Keywords: archaeology, Warmia, Barczewko/Alt Wartenburg, Middle Ages, cemetery.

Warmia is a specific area on the map of the Teutonic conquest in Old Prussia. Its historical territory as a bishop's dominium was shaped for over a century since the papal legate issued a document dividing Prussia into four dioceses in 1243. Of the Warmia diocese, a third part was reserved as the bishop's territory within the structures of the State of the Teutonic Order. It was a land stretching from

a narrow belt over the Vistula Lagoon with Frombork and Braniewo beyond the line of Olsztyn – Barczewo – Reszel in the south-east, reaching the so-called Galindian Forest¹. The area of Barczewko was in the tribal territory of the Old Prussian Galindia. The Bishop of Warmia organised a campaign competing with the Order to expand his domain. As a result of the division of Galindia, the bishopric obtained the Prussian lands of Berting and Gunelauke (Toeppen 1995, pp. 58–59). The Gunelauke land is the area in which the archaeological site in question is located.

Barczewo and Olsztyn are the youngest centres of the last phase of settlement of the southern areas of Warmia in the first decades of the 14th century (Fig. 1). The archaeological site in Barczewko is a kind of time capsule documenting this process, perfectly complementing scarce written sources (Koperkiewicz 2019a). It can be an important element of research on the phenomenon of forming towns under the Magdeburg Law in Central Europe². The story of Barczewko begins with a note in the Chronicle of Peter of Dusburg about the construction of *castrum Wartnbergk* in 1325 in the Galindia land on the bank of the Pisa River (Piotr z Dusburga 2004, p. 104). The text concerns mainly the physical remains of the pioneers forming the young urban colony, ethnic issues related to it, forms of burials and funeral rituals during the times of the Teutonic conquest.

The issues of early Christian cemeteries

In Warmia or in the neighbouring Upper Prussia, pre-Christian Old Prussian cemeteries are very poorly recognised. Near Barczewko only a few early medieval necropolises were excavated and preliminarily recognised (Kobylińska 2000, pp. 12–76; Wyczółkowski 2002, pp. 489–494; Szczepański 2019, p. 47)³.

The first Old Prussians uprising ended in a defeat leading to signing of the Treaty of Christburg in 1249. The phenomenon of the document consists in information which allows us to penetrate the times before the Teutonic Knights, where a lot of attention was paid to the new religion and burying the dead⁴.

¹ The south-eastern border of the Warmians' tribal territories was located much to the north, in the vicinity of Lidzbark Warmiński.

² In 2019 the results of the research in Barczewko were presented in Magdeburg at the international exhibition devoted to this issue (Biermann *et al.* 2018a; 1018b2019), as well as at the exhibition on the origins of the Teutonic Order in Malbork, entitled 'Mądrość zbudowała sobie dom w Prusach' (Koperkiewicz 2019b, pp. 80–85). The selection of valuables from the site, illustrating a fascinating episode in the history of the Warmian town, was presented during the exhibition to the current abbot and Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Frank Bayard.

³ To date the location of another potentially important necropolis in Kreki near Morań, where C. Engel signalled the presence of cremation and inhumation burials dated to the 'late pagan and early-Teutonic period', has not been confirmed (Szczepański 2018a, pp. 175–184).

⁴ 'They understood this and promised to abandon the incineration of corpses and pagan burials



Fig. 1. Barczewko, Barczewo commune, Warmian-Masurian province, site II (Old Town). Location of the site in the context of the tribal division of Prussia and the *terra Gunelauke* area as well as the historical borders of the Warmian bishopric's dominion (edited by A. Koperkiewicz, M. Ramsier, M.J. Sobiech)

The words of the Treaty of Christburg sound similar to those from the times of the Christianisation of the Slavic territory, ordering burying the dead in the consecrated ground around the cemetery (Labuda 1999, p. 210). It is not known how the provisions of the Treaty of Christburg were implemented in practice. Archaeology does not help much in this matter. The specificity of the Sambia Peninsula necropolises and those associated with the Scandinavian impulse along the south-eastern Baltic zone, the separation of the Szestno-Czarny Las type burials, the identification of the *Aschenplätz* type cemeteries and the discovery of new Yotvingian cemeteries (Wróblewski 2013, p. 76) do not change the general lack of knowledge about the sepulchral sites preceding the crusades in a large part of the Old Prussian territories. Many key questions regarding the Old Prussian 'late-pagan' burial rites remain unanswered (Wadyl 2011, pp. 117–121).

Recent works, in which the reading of historical sources is supplemented with studies of linguistic archaisms, provide the prospect of improving the state of field research. It seems that the memory of many today forgotten necropolises lived on in the minds of the Old Prussians long after their territories were taken over by

forbidden by the Church: burying along with the dead in armour a horse or a man (alive), or even valuable objects. They promised to bury their dead in a Christian way and only in designated cemeteries' (Szorc 1999, pp. 19–23; Wyzlic 2012).

the Teutonic Order. At the present stage, comparative studies in the field of history, language, folklore and religion of the Baltic peoples provide a greater basis for the reconstruction of the Old Prussian funeral customs than archaeology (Kawiński, Szczepański 2016, pp. 164–176; Kawiński 2018, pp. 318–342; Szczepański 2018b, pp. 176–177).

In medieval Prussia, managed by the military corporation of the Order, church construction progressed incomparably faster than in the Slavic territory of the early second millennium. Cemeteries, founded at churches that usually still exist today, were used for almost as long. Due to this fact the oldest layers in their stratification were lost. Only a unique sequence of events determined the survival of the necropolises from the first centuries of Christianisation. The main determinant of the changes was the abandonment of cremation⁵. There are a few permanent elements, such as the fact that bodies were placed in coffins, usually extended, along the east-west line, with head in the west side as the typical Christian idea of waiting for the day of resurrection was facing east. The hands of the deceased were crossed in various configurations, which also seems to be an integral part of funeral practices and the language of gestures also present in intra-church necropolises (Łapo 2006, pp. 134–135).

It is an interesting observation that the elite burials with military equipment and horse remains, so important for the Old Prussian cultural identity, are found in Christian cemeteries dated to the mid-13th century. Later, some noblemen started to serve within the structure of the monastic state (Shiroukhov 2012, pp. 250–251, Fig. 15)⁶. However, they retained the possibility of manifesting their social position, and in the name of reconciling the Old Prussian elite, it was tolerated by the religious theocracy. Material manifestations of status in the form of elements of horse-riding gear, weapons, native forms of jewellery, or even amulets referring to Old Prussian beliefs coexisted with coins marked with cross, Christian devotional items or Ave Maria brooches (Gabor *et al.* 2017, pp. 306–309).

'Family' cemetery in Równina Dolna

Apart from the Sambia Peninsula and the territory of Nadruvia, the best-known cemetery of this type was located in Równina Dolna (Ger. *Unterplehnen*) near Kętrzyn, with cultural continuity and burial traditions dating back to the Mesolithic. There occurred classic Balts horse burials dated to the Roman period the Migration period. Close by, a medieval cemetery used in the second half of the 13th century on

⁵ Perhaps in reference to the words 'He protects all his bones: not one of them will be broken' (*Biblia* 2003, Ps. 34: 21).

⁶ The remark again concerns, above all, the relatively large number of cemeteries identified in the Sambia Peninsula.

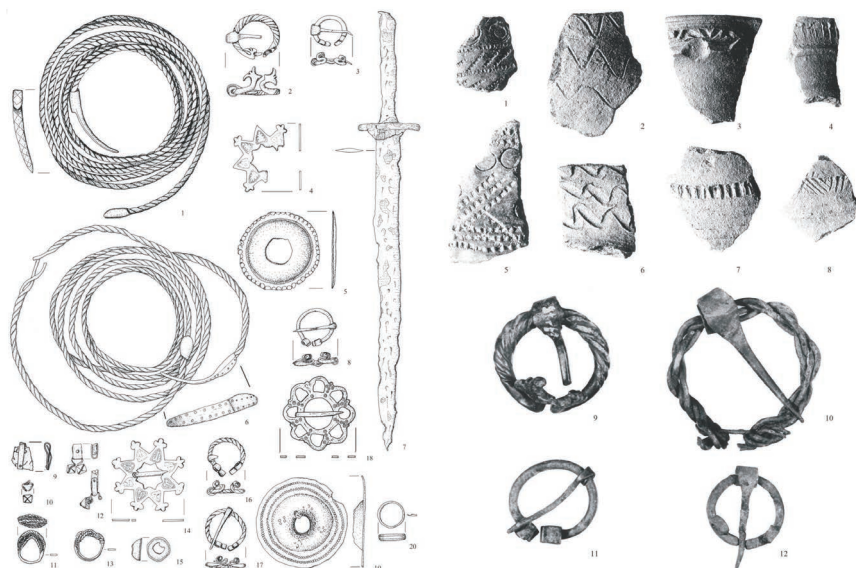


Fig. 2. Examples of grave furnishing in Równina Dolna from the research by C. Engel in 1931 (after Gossler, Jahn 2013)

to about the 14th/15th century was found. It became a testing ground for the analysis of burial practices in the times of conversion, presenting little-known evidence of the medieval material culture of Old Prussia. The burials contained abundant furnishings, which included, among other things, militaria as well as rich and varied jewellery suits (Fig. 2). In the second half of the 14th century, perhaps due to the distance from the church and the clergy's pressure, burials were stopped there. The necropolis and a small stronghold with a regular foundation functioned in the shadow of the prosecutor's castle of Kętrzyn, located 15 km to the north-east. Before World War II, rescue excavations were carried out in the cemetery by several German archaeologists (Engel 1931, pp. 313–336; Wyczółkowski 1999; Gossler, Jahn 2012, p. 196; 2013a, pp. 54–55). In the 1950s systematic excavations were conducted by Romuald Odoj from the Museum of Warmia and Masuria in Olsztyn. In total 240 graves were discovered there (Odoj 1958, pp. 117–156; 1960, pp. 177–196). The weakness was the insufficient anthropological examination resulting from the poor condition of skeletons (Gossler, Jahn 2012; 2013b, pp. 217–278). The finds in Równina Dolna could only be related to archive materials associated with the Stangenwalde cemetery on the Curonian Spit or Gierdawy on Pregola, discovered in the 19th century (Hennig 1879, pp. 303–323; Biermann 2011 *et al.*). In the 1990s Russian archaeologists continued work on the cemetery in Alt Wehlau, also on the Pregola River. It was described as the last 'pagan cemetery in the Christian Nadruvia'. It was supposed to be specific for indigenous people

who retained the echoes of old traditions even in the 17th century (Kulakov, Vaulev 1996, pp. 493–499; Valuev 1999, pp. 397–400; 2003, pp. 104–116). The burial rites of the Old Prussians and the Curonians differed, but common features, mainly in terms of the unification of items, appeared in the period between the 13th and 15th centuries. It was already the result of a comprehensive communication covering military activities, trade, service of postal routes and the development of a parishes during the laying of the foundations of the state of the Teutonic Order on the Baltic Sea.

The village cemetery in Bezlawki

In 2010, about 10 km south-west of Kętrzyn, the cemetery in Bezlawki was discovered (Koperkiewicz 2011; 2013)⁷. It was located on the Dajna River in a place perceived as the Bartia-Galindia border. The research of the alleged Old Prussian stronghold located nearby did not clearly confirm the deep tradition of the Old Prussian settlement (Nowakiewicz 2013, pp. 235–249). It seems that the cemetery was established when the Teutonic Knights settled on the border of the Great Forest in the second half of the 14th century. A series of about 230 burials, comparable to the Równina Dolna, was examined, but the difference was the excellent state of preservation of skeletons. In this case, the osteological material has become the only base to date for thorough anthropological research of the medieval population of Old Prussia (Iwanek *et al.* 2013; Ramsier *et al.* 2016)⁸. The furnishing of the graves is much more modest than in Równina Dolna and there occurs the signalled unification both in terms of burial rites and material remains. But there are also common points referring to the Old Prussian tradition and those that are hypothetically attributed to neophytes. Perhaps they were associated with the phenomenon of a large number of children's and multi-individual burials (Koperkiewicz 2019c; 2020a). The beginnings of using the church cemetery probably preceded the formal incorporation of the village in 1371 (Szczepański 2013). After the wooden church was burnt down in the 15th century, the cemetery was moved to a hill around the masonry watchtower adopted for sacred purposes (Koperkiewicz 2011). As a result, the oldest phase of the rural necropolis from the mid-14th century

⁷ Research conducted by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of Gdańsk on the occasion of the implementation of a grant financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland – Bezlawki – save from destruction (*Bezlawki* 2013).

⁸ Since 2014, the Polish-American team has been working in Bezlawki as part of the project Bezlawki – medievalbioarchaeology in Poland as part of the cooperation of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of Gdańsk, the Slavia Foundation from Lednogóra and the Department of Anthropology from Humboldt State University Arcata in California. The anthropological work is led by a team directed by Professor Marissa Ramsier and Doctor Ariel Gruenthal-Rankin of HSU Arcata, USA.

has been preserved in its original place, which in turn perfectly corresponds to the upper limit of the functioning of the cemetery in Barczewko.

The 'old-town' cemetery behind the village of Barczewko

The cemetery in Barczewko, belonging to the same period and the 'family of early Christian necropolises', presents even more unique features due to the circumstances of its creation, the possibility of determining the range and total number of burials in a short, precisely dated time period. The place for the cemetery was integrated into the spatial layout of the newly formed town of Wartenberg. It was the southern border of the episcopal colonisation in the Galindian Gunelauke land occupied by Old Prussian settlement already in the tribal era. Then this area coincided with the reach of the Wartenberg bailiff. Historians such as Jan Powierski, following earlier researchers, point out that in the central and southern parts of the bishop's dominium, the Old Prussian population played an important role in this settlement process (Röhrich 1926, pp. 256–279; Pollakówna 1953, p. 89 *ff*; Powierski 2004, p. 222). Contrary to the still existing opinions about the depopulation of this area, the Old Prussians were still present, constituting the economic base and supporting military activities. Around the mid-14th century, numerous grants to the Old Prussian free men are documented. Around 16 Old Prussian *lauks* were identified in the vicinity of Olsztyn, also recorded in the existing toponyms and belonging to lower order territorial units, such as the land of Berting, Gudikus and Gunelauke. Some of the Old Prussians living in this land could have been the descendants of the Galindians, while the rest were newcomers adapted to the new reality, endowed with grants for cavalry service in Lithuanian expeditions (Szczepański 2015; Białuński 2015, pp. 15–31; Biermann *et al.* 2018a, pp. 123–134). The bishops encouraged German settlers to settle in an area abundant in rivers, lakes, meadows and forests using a specific promotional campaign perceptible in the names of places such as Dobre Miasto (*Git Stadt*) or Piękna Łąka (*Schönewiese*) (Hermann 2014).

The would-be town and the cemetery functioned for less than three decades. The end came as a result of the invasion of Lithuanian troops led by Kęstutis and Algirdas in 1354, as mentioned in the Chronicle of Wigand of Marburg (Raczyński 1842, pp. 97–99; Biermann *et al.* 2019). Perhaps in this case some special tragedy of the inhabitants caused the the destruction of the settlement was echoed in chronicles and the place itself was never reinhabited⁹. The nearest towns (Lidzbark Warmiński, Ostróda) were located at a distance of over 40 km, hence in the event of an emergency the inhabitants of Wartenberg could have counted only on themselves. In the cartography and tradition the hill on the Orzechówka River behind

⁹ The new town of Wartenburg (currently Barczewo) was incorporated in 1364, a few kilometres away, on the Pisa River (Białuński 2014).

Barczewko was invariably referred to as the 'Old Town'. The site has long been associated with information known from the Chronicle of Peter of Dusburg about the construction of the Wartberg watchtower in the Old Prussian land of Gune-lauke¹⁰ in 1325, as well as the mention of Wigand of Marburg about the destruction of the town by the Lithuanians in 1354¹¹. A careful analysis of the sources does not allow for an unequivocal statement that these were the same places, but that in 1325 a castle/watchtower was built, and that in 1354 the Lithuanians burnt the town down (Białyński 2014; Herrmann 2014, pp. 38–41; Koperkiewicz 2020b, p. 289)¹².

The archaeological excavations which started in 2013 confirmed that the 'Old Town' site is the place of the first, unsuccessful incorporation of the Warmian Barczewo along with numerous traces of the devastating attack (Herrmann 2014; Biermann *et al.* 2016a; 2016b)¹³. Removal of the humus revealed a huge area of debris caused by fire covering the remains of burnt wooden buildings¹⁴. A series

¹⁰ It is therefore uncertain whether the location of the watchtower (*castrum Wartberg*) on the Pisa River should be identified with the hill above the Orzechówka River, where the town of the same name was erected. It is possible that indeed initially, in the bend of the Pisa River, a defensive form was created (named by the chronicler *castrum*) to guard access to the town and located about 1.5 km away from it. There is an archaeological site recorded there (Barczewko, site I) constituting a motte and called in the Warmian tradition *Wachthügel*, 'castle' or 'Romowa Góra'. In the course of rescue excavations carried out in the 1920s, the presence of cultural layers from the Roman period to the Middle Ages was recorded, with the most representative artefacts related to the early Middle Ages. Unfortunately, a large transformation of the complex (although its regular form is still visible today especially in lidar imaging), rather makes impossible the verification (Antoniewicz 1955, pp. 235–237; Klimek 2013, pp. 214–219).

¹¹ *Anno 1354 Kynstute, Algard cum bayoribus etc. fesinant in Wartenberg in terram Gunelauken, quamhosilimore, igne etc. devastant, et nemoevasitmanuscorum* (Raczyński 1842, pp. 98–99).

¹² It is known that the urban settlement certainly existed in 1337, when the property record mentions parish priest Henryk and mayor Jan. In the same year municipal head Henryk Luter issued a number of privileges for the benefit of Wartberg's mayors, brothers Jan and Piotr, as economic support. Particularly important is the information about the sawmill with mill wheel on the Wadąg, which was to be later transformed into a grain mill. It can be concluded from this that in the pioneering period of construction there was an increased demand for wood (Herrmann 2014, p. 42).

¹³ In 2013 the implementation of interdisciplinary works under the Polish-German project *Alt Wartenburg/Barczewko – the Warmian Pompeii* began. The project in two editions (2013–2016 and 2017–2019) was financed by the Federal Government Plenipotentiary for Culture and Media (Bundesbeauftragte für Kultur und Medien, BKM, Bonn) with the participation of the University of Gdańsk and the logistics assistance of the Town and Commune of Barczewo and the REM company – the owner of the complex. The research was conducted by the team: Professor Felix Biermann from the University of Göttingen (later of Greifswald), Doctor Arkadiusz Koperkiewicz from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of Gdańsk and Professor Christofer Herrmann from the Institute of Art History at the University of Gdańsk.

¹⁴ At the end of the 19th century, the author of the first publication about Barczewko, having no doubts that the hill was a relic of the first Barczewo destroyed by the Lithuanians, questioned the truthfulness of the record concerning the complete fire destruction of the centre. He argued that there was no physical trace of scorch on the surface of the field, which in his opinion would have to be ubiquitous. He stated, while analysing the strategic location of the centre, that if there are remains underground, they will constitute a unique collection of sources (von Bönigk 1883, pp. 152–156).

of non-invasive tests performed in the early stages of the project was crucial. In 1993 aerial photographs showed for the first time an anomaly of grain growth (crop marks), delineating a regular pattern of anthropogenic relics. Even before the excavations began, it was certain that written sources would be verified positively. The results of geomagnetic profiling left no illusions that it was a picture of a methodically planned, measured and arranged space having nothing to do with Old Prussian settlement (Fig. 3). Due to the relocation and reconstruction of the town in the place of today's Barczewo, the site of the fire on the hill behind the village remained intact, preserving the structural remains of the cellars of the burnt buildings and their contents in excellent condition (Fig. 4). Everywhere on the surface crossbow bolts were found, although at the same time deposits were discovered which were the equipment of the settlers, such as a series of approximately 160 crossbow bolts in one of the cellars (Bierrmann *et al.* 2019).

It cannot be ruled out that the attackers looted the town in a hurry and did not manage to get to many places within it. In the cellars there were many valuable items still there, as well as animal skeletons and skeletons of human victims¹⁵. Buildings were erected in the so-called *cruda radice*, according to a similar scheme based on the main line along the NW–SE axis. In the central part of the hill, the area free from buildings was rectangular in shape, measuring 30×20 m with a longer axis along the NE–SW line. It was probably intended as a market square. In its southern part, there was a dense complex of buildings, which during the exploration was identified as a craft and trade centre (with a metallurgy workshop?), a hypothetical *mercatorio*. On the surface occurred numerous lumps of iron slag and small pieces of non-ferrous metals. During the excavations, there were discovered shelters and buildings with a yard open to the south, where traces of three furnaces were located. At the same time, many small luxury items were discovered (including gilded appliqués) and the most numerous on the site collection of coins (Bierrmann *et al.* 2016a; 2016b; 2018a; 2018b).

In the western part of the area there were two rows of buildings, with cellars measuring about 5×5 m/4×4 m. The market square was enclosed on this side with a line of 6 plots located probably along the E–W axis. The communication tracks leading to the market square probably ran from the north and south (Fig. 3). The remains of three buildings enclosed the north-eastern corner of the market square, while two buildings (with the remains of the victims) were located in the east. In their backyard, the following were discovered: a semi sunken-featured building with a furnace, a copper cauldron, and accessories indicating that it could have been a relic of the brewery (Koperkiewicz, Strobin, in print). At the edge of the hill, an

¹⁵ In the cellar of building no. 9, under the collapsed part of the burnt structure, a human skeleton was unearthed in an unusual posture and partially burnt. The remains most likely belonged to one of the raid's victims, who was a woman around 18–20 years of age (Kozłowski 2019).



Fig. 4. Barczewko, Barczewo commune, Warmian-Masurian province, site II (Old Town). Picture presenting the excavation works during unearthing one of the cellars of the market square plot (photo by A. Koperkiewicz)

object with a kiln and a large number of vessels identified as a bath were examined (Bierrmann *et al.* 2016a).

It seemed natural that the church plot could be recognised, especially that documents mention the parish priest by name (Herrmann 2014, p. 42). Determining the approximate location of the church (and implicitly the cemetery associated with it), however, turned out to be problematic. The little built-up north-eastern part of the site attracted attention. The masonry parish church is located in the re-incorporated current Barczewo exactly in this part of the market space. However, there are no grounds to believe that such a solution was repeated on purpose following the previous example. In the case of a wooden structure, probably without a cellar, the chances of finding its remains were slim. The only items which could be associated with the Christian religion were located shallowly in the humus layer, out of context and at some distance from each other¹⁶. The first is a fragment of a tin-lead cross with a schematically marked representation of crucified Christ. The second one is more mysterious and yet surprising, because a rather close analogy was found in the cemetery in Bezląwki: it was a miniature figurine of a dolphin's head, precisely cast in bronze and covered with a homogeneous layer of malachite patina. As in Bezląwki, the detail showed a trace of a fracture. The appearance of a similar object, in similar contexts, on distant sites with a similar settlement history, raises questions about its origin and function (figs. 3, 5). It seems that

¹⁶ I would like to thank numerous guests and people associated with the region for their help in the systematic search of the area and mapping the finds, but above all, for the hard 'detector service', Grzegorz Chojnowski and Artur Troncik.

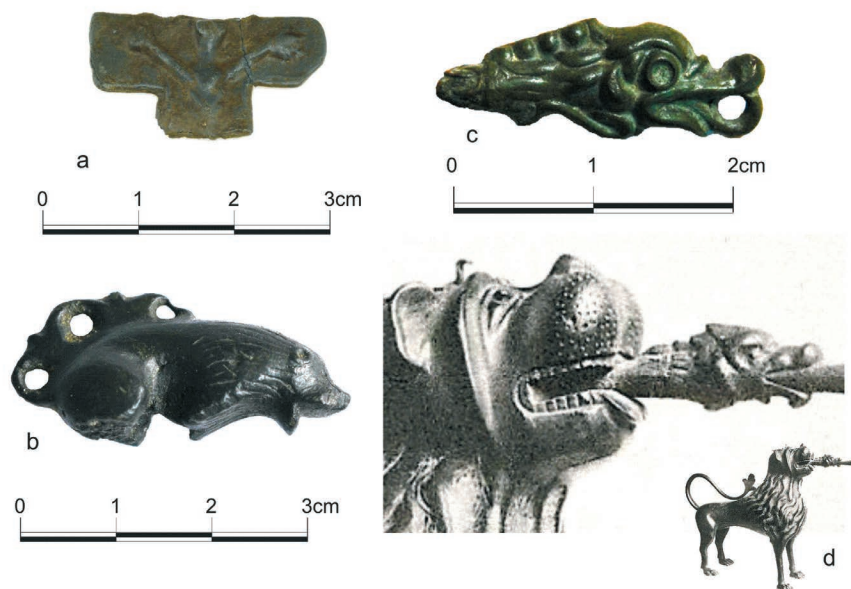


Fig. 5 Small items directly related to the Christian religion, such as a fragment of a cross with a schematic representation of crucified Christ (a) and others, perhaps details of liturgical equipment, such as the head of a dolphin from Barczewko (b) and a stylistically close analogy from Bezlawki (c). Beside, as an example of the Gothic style, the rim of the aquamanile from Bonn (after Falke, Meyer 1935)

these are fragments of objects from highly specialised casting workshops from Western Europe and hence the supposition that they may have something to do with the location of the church. It is difficult to find a strict analogy, but the stylistics resembles Western European forms of details of liturgical equipment, ranging from candlesticks to chain pendants by thuribles or aquamaniles details (Falke, Mayer 1935, p. 189, Fig. 457)¹⁷.

Unlike the dwelling buildings, the church could have lacked a cellar. The surface relics, like the rest of the site, were destroyed and dispersed by the forces of nature. The only chance to indicate the approximate location of the church was to find, using traditional methods, the cemetery. This happened in 2015, when the first burials were discovered in a series of test trenches crossing the eastern part of the site. The works were continued in the 2017 and 2018 seasons, finally confirming the location of the cemetery (Fig. 3).

¹⁷ The specimen from Bezlawki was discussed earlier in another publication (Koperkiewicz 2019c, pp. 32, 42, fig. 14). I would like to thank Jarosław Strobin for his valuable comments in this regard.

The settlers' cemetery in Barczewko

The necropolis is located on the central axis of the site, reaching the edge of the eastern slope of the hill. The burial pits were not perceptible in the form of echograms, and the area was overgrown with shrubs. In contrast to the sandy central part, the subsoil in this place consists of clay and clayey sands, against which background the grave pits' cuts were poorly perceptible. Only the open-area excavations with appropriate lighting allowed to capture regular and rectangular negatives of the pits. Due to unfavourable soil conditions, the state of preservation of skeletons was generally poor. It was only possible to identify the burial place by observing the nuances of the stratigraphy and diligent exploration¹⁸. The existence of a burial was confirmed by finds of teeth fragments or metal elements of equipment (Fig. 6). The burial pits were about 90–100 cm below the present surface.

In a few cases, both in plan and in section, dark streaks of organic discoloration marking the outlines of coffins were recorded. The graves were situated according to the general rule along the east-west line. Despite the small surface of the excavated area of the cemetery and the unearthed burials, it is clearly visible that in its northern part, the burial pits are located along the NE–SW line in relation to the main axis of Wartenberg's spatial arrangement (Fig. 3). In the southern part, below the coordinate line×952, the graves are arranged centrally along the E–W line (Fig. 7). The chronology of burials related to the point of reference for their location may be of importance, but it requires further recognition of the cemetery and locating the relics of the church.

With one exception and where the determination was possible, the dead were placed with the head in the west¹⁹. The dead were placed supine in extended posture. In one case the arms were evidently bent at the elbows and the hands of the deceased were placed on the symphysis pubis, while in four cases arms were extended along the body. A single burial was noted where the left arm was extended with palm on the pelvis, while the right arm was strongly bent at the elbow with the palm probably near the right shoulder. The skeletons were poorly preserved, the basic analysis was successfully performed for about 50% of the recorded burials. In several cases lesions in the spine and peripheral joints as well as healed wounds and dental diseases were found (Drozd-Lipińska 2018).

Knives, buckles, coins and pottery fragments were a recurring category of grave goods. In two cases (one designated as a women's grave) bronze rings of a simple

¹⁸ At this point I would like to thank Grzegorz Peplowski for his commitment, substantive help and tireless exploration of the clayey soil using methods between conservation and art.

¹⁹ In several cases, it was possible to determine the burial orientation only based on fragmentarily preserved teeth.



Fig. 6. Section of one of the graves in the Barczewko cemetery, where the burial pit, which is hardly perceptible in plan, is only visible in section, truncating the geological layers vertically. The only traces of burial are iron buckles at the bottom of the pit (photo by A. Koperkiewicz)

form without gems on finger phalanges occurred²⁰. Occasional specimens of fire-steel and bronze tweezers were found. In total 35 burial pits were unearthed and examined, of which 33 were explored (Table 1).

When analysing the topography of the occurrence of individual categories of artefacts, several regularities can be signalled (Fig. 8). It can be seen that the knives are more often found on the left side, and the buckles near the hip area. It is therefore not so much a grave good but rather an integral part of the garment. This also applies to rings found on phalanges in women's graves²¹. Iron buckles were more common in men's graves while knives tended to be found in women's graves, but as mentioned the sample seems too small to prove anything more at this stage. As in Bezlawki, fragments of vessel sherds are, in most cases, an evident grave good which occurs more frequently in male burials. In three cases, the sherds occurred in fills of burial pits.

The most interesting due to its furnishing was grave no. 28/18 with the remains of a child aged about 6 years, placed on its left side with slightly flexed legs (Fig. 9,

²⁰ Rings were a decoration and an element of clothing used on a daily basis and perhaps a sign of the status of a married woman. Apart from the rings in the graves, a bronze ring was also found on the phalanx of the right hand of a female skeleton found under a collapsed structure in the cellar of house no. 9.

²¹ At the victim's skeleton found in one of the buildings and identified as belonging to a woman aged approximately 18 years, a bronze ring was also found on the phalanx of the right hand (Kozłowski 2019). This proves that the jewellery was deposited in the graves according to its attribution and that it is a part of the attire.

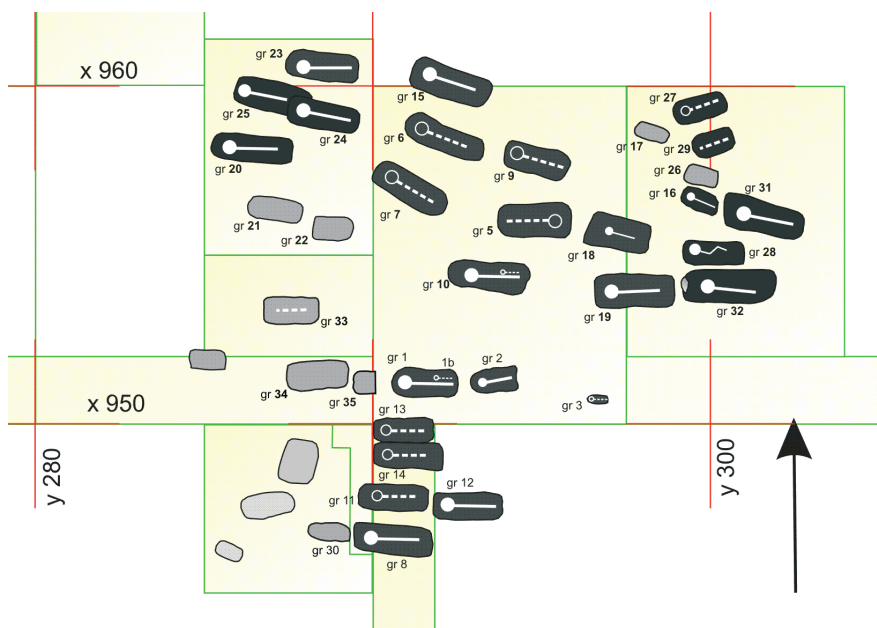


Fig. 7. Barczewko, Barczewo commune, Warmian-Masurian province, site II (Old Town), trench 15 (cemetery). Simplified plan with marking of location of burial pits and orientation of burials. Clear difference in orientation between the northern and southern parts of the cemetery is perceptible (edited by A. Koperkiewicz)

Table 1). Below the feet in the eastern part of the burial pit, a miniature glazed jug was found (Fig. 9: d). In the central part of the grave, at the height of the hip area a bronze star-shaped brooch occurred (Fig. 9: a). In addition, five bronze appliqué in the shape of a cornflower-like flower were discovered around the skull (Fig. 9: e). Two bracteates (Fig. 9: b) and a fragment of Greyware (Fig. 9: c) were discovered near the place where the mandible was originally located (which was displaced). These coins are bracteate pfennigs of the Gate II type (circa 1327/1328–1337/1338) and the Crown II type (circa 1337/1338–1340/1343). The younger of the coins seems to define the *terminus ante quem* for the burial²². The coins appeared in five more graves as modest deposits of 2 or exceptionally 3 specimens (Table 1).

Each find in grave no. 28/12 is peculiar in its own way and requires a separate, brief commentary. The flower-shaped appliqué found around the skull are poorly

²² The entire numismatic collection from this site, i.e. over 150 specimens, does not go beyond the narrow chronological framework of the colony's functioning in the years 1330–1354. We are dealing here with a precisely dated set of all types of the 14th-century Teutonic bracteates preceding the reform of Winrich von Kniprode in 1374. Based on this, among other things, the chronology of the Teutonic bracteates in Prussia proposed in 2009 was revised (Paszkiwicz 2009, pp. 337–402; 2019; 2020, pp. 98–102).

Table 1. Barzewko, Barzewo commune, site II (Old Town) – cemetery. List of sex, age, burial orientation, grave goods and corpse posture (edited by A. Koperkiewicz)

No of grave (feature)	sex age*	grave orientation	position of skull	knife	buckle	coin	pottery	other	other	corpse posture comments
1a/15 (258)	Woman/maturus (35–45)	E-W	W	1	-	-	-	x	-	extended, supine, right hand along the body, left hand bent at the elbow
1b/15 (258)	infans I (0–0.5 year)	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
2/15 (260)	infans I (4 years)	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	extended, supine
3/15 (279)	infans I (0–3 months)	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
4/15 (281)	infans I (0.5 year)	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
5/17 (404)	infans I?	E-W	E	-	2	-	-	-	-	coffin outline
6/17 (410)	infans II/juvenis	SE-NW	NW	1	2	-	-	x	-	extended, supine
7/17 (412)	adultus	E-W	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	?
8/17 (422)	Woman/adultus (22–25 years)	E-W	W	1	3	-	-	x	-	coffin outline extended, supine, left hand along the body with palm on the pelvis, right hand strongly flexed at the elbow with palm at the right shoulder
9/17 (406)	maturus?	E-W	W	1	1	-	-	x	-	extended, supine
10a/17 (402)	Woman/maturus (35–40 years)	E-W	W	1	-	1	-	x	-	extended, supine, hands along the body
10b/17 (402)	infans I (0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	remains of a newborn, retracted in the course of anthropological research
11/17 (400)	Man?/adultus/mat.	E-W	W	-	1	-	-	-	-	extended, supine
12/17 (432)	Woman/adultus (20–25 years)	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	x	-	extended, supine, right hand bent at the elbow with palm on the pelvis
13/17 (518)	Man/maturus	E-W	W	1	-	1	-	-	-	extended, supine
14/17 (418)	adultus?	E-W	W?	1	-	2	-	x	-	?
15/18 (408)	Woman/maturus (35–40 years)	SE-NW	NW	-	1	-	-	-	-	extended, supine
16/18 (551)	infans I (2 years)	SE-NW	NW	-	-	-	-	-	-	extended, supine
17/18 (549)	infans?	?	?	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
18/18 (543)	infans I (5 years)	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
19/18 (547)	Woman/adultus (25–30 years)	E-W	W	1	1	1	-	-	-	extended, supine

No of grave (feature)	sex age*	grave orientation	position of skull	knife	buckle	coin	pottery	other	corpse posture comments
20/18 (556)	Man/adultus/mat. (30–40 years)	E-W	W	-	2	-	1	x - bronze tweezers	extended, supine
21/18 (554)	adultus ?	E-W	?	-	-	-	-	-	?
22/18 (562)	?	SE-	?	-	-	-	-	-	?
23/18 (570)	Man ? (30+)	NW	W	-	-	-	1	-	extended, supine, right hand bent at the elbow with palm on the pelvis
24/18 (560)	adultus	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	-	extended, supine, hands along the body
25/18 (558)	Woman/maturus (35–45 years)	SE-	NW	-	-	-	-	-	extended, supine, hands along the body
26/18 (597)	?	NW	NW	-	-	-	-	-	extended, supine, hands along the body
27/18 (541)	infans I/II	E-W	?	-	-	-	-	-	?
28/18 (599)	Woman ? /infans II (6 years)	E-W	W	1	-	2	1	x - miniature jug with brown glaze - bronze star-shaped brooch - 5 bronze appliques (decoration of a veil or a hairband?)	extended, supine, on left side, legs slightly flexed
29/18 (545)	infans I (5 years)	E-W	?	-	-	-	-	-	?
30/18 (588)	infans	E-W	?	-	-	-	-	-	?
31/18 (602)	Man/maturus (35–45 years)	SE-	NW	1	2	2	1	x - iron item, not explored	extended, supine, hands along the body
32/18 (600)	Man/maturus (40–45 years)	NW	NW	-	2	-	-	x - iron frame firesteel	extended, supine, hands bent at the elbows, palms together on the hips
33/18 (636)	Woman ?/adultus	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	x - iron item, not explored - bronze finger ring	?
34/18 (646)	?	E-W	W	-	-	-	-	not explored, items during fill	?
35/18 (659)	?	E-W	W	2	-	-	-	cleaning not explored	?
				9	15	11	9		

Anthropological analysis was carried out by Dr Alicia Drozd-Lipinska from the Department of Anthropology of the Faculty of Biology and Environmental Protection of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

33 examined, 8 women, 6 men, 19 adults, 11 children to 7 years and 2 juvenile to 14 years.

Corpse posture

Flexed – IIII

Extended – III

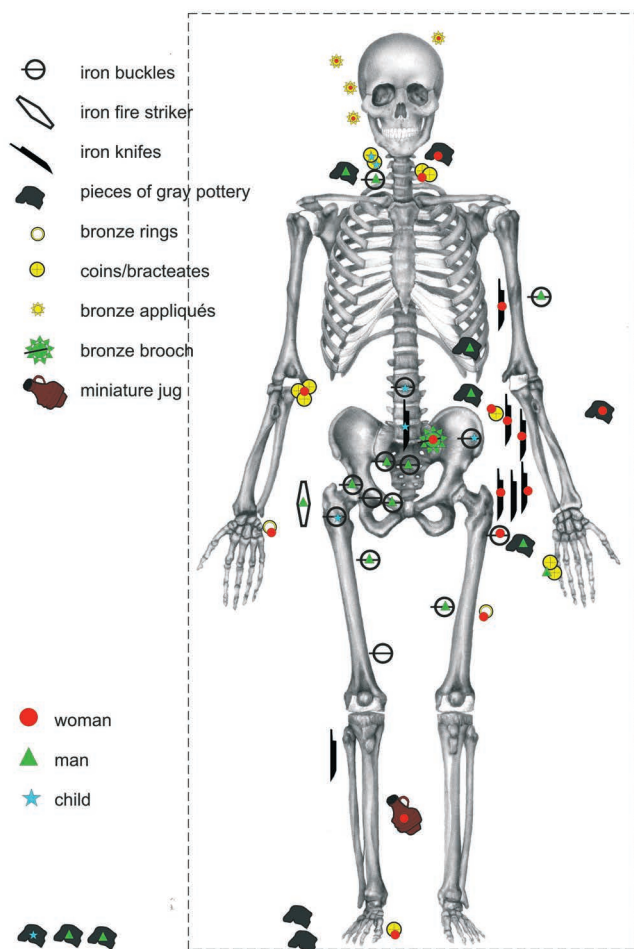


Fig. 8. Barczewko, Barczewo commune, Warmian-Masurian province, site II (Old Town), cemetery. Topography of artefacts found next to the dead (edited by A. Koperkiewicz)

preserved, but identical ones in a much better condition were found in the complex of remains interpreted as building of the *mercatorio*. On several specimens gilding survived (Fig. 10). Among more numerous, mainly in fragments, appliqué with a star motif (Fig. 10: c), there are also completely original ones with a motif of a lily, a pair of cranes (Fig. 10: b, e) and identical to those from the grave no. 28/18 (Fig. 10: d). The funerary context suggests that the appliqué in the form of a stylised flower were attached to the bonnet or veil of deceased child (girl?). Clothes or headdress decorated with metal appliqué appear in medieval Western European iconography, usually as a detail on brass effigies of the nobles. The method of pinning up the hair

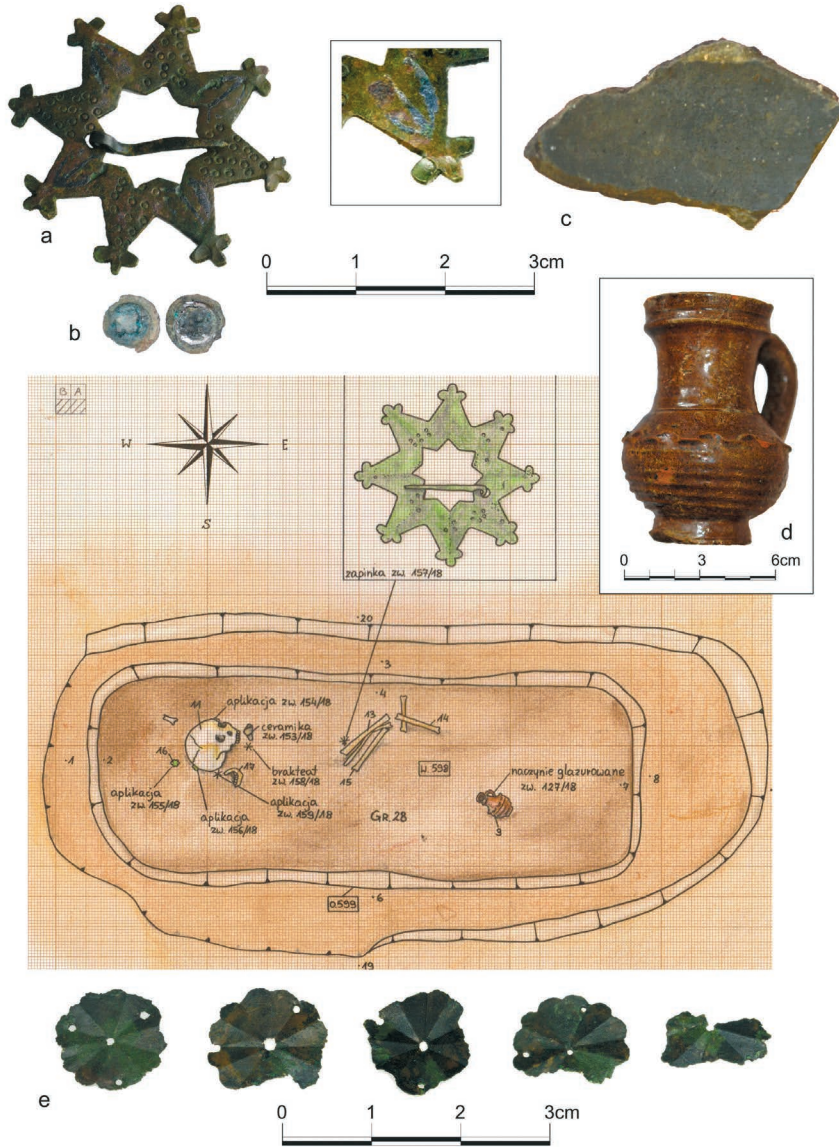


Fig. 9. Barczewko, Barczewo commune, Warmian-Masurian province, site II (Old Town), cemetery. Plan of the children's grave no. 28/17 with elements of furnishings: a – star-shaped brooch, b – two bracteates from the first half of the 14th century, c – fragment of Greyware, d – miniature jug with brown glaze, e – five bronze appliques in the form of a stylised flower decorating a veil or a hairband (drawing by A. Napierała, edited by A. Koperkiewicz)

with a decorative headband or a kind of diadem is presented on Margaret Brocas effigy from around 1390 in St Andrew's Church (Sherborne St. John, Hampshire) or on Lady Cromwell effigy (around 1479) in the Holy Trinity Church in Tattershall (Lincolnshire) in England (Fig. 10: a).

The star-shaped brooch (Fig. 9: a), with a form very characteristic of medieval Old Prussian culture, meets its close analogy in the rich grave goods of the cemetery in Równina Dolna (Fig. 2). Brooches of this type were found in the medieval necropolises of the Curonian Spit (e.g. Stangenwalde) as well as on settlement sites dated to the second half or the end of the 14th century (e.g. Beżławki, Jemiołowo). While the brooch and appliqués were parts of the attire, the remaining finds can be an example of grave good. These are coins, a pottery fragment and a vessel – a jug. Presence of coins as grave goods in late Old Prussian cemeteries is a well-known phenomenon, although the closest analogies are the finds from Równina Dolna and Beżławki (Paszkiwicz 2013, p. 192). There is no indication of any preference as to their location, as considering the remaining graves, the coins are found near the lower jaw, elbows, hips and feet (Fig. 8). There was a custom of placing the Charon's obol, the cultivation of which is usually attributed to the indigenous Old Prussian population. Coins were more often found in the graves of women and children. The set is too small to draw far-reaching conclusions, but a similar trend was observed in the larger set in Beżławki (Koperkiewicz 2019c, pp. 28, 33–35).

Another interesting, although inconspicuous artefact from the grave in question, is a fragment of pottery, the so-called Greyware (Fig. 9: c). A sherd of a common vessel contrasts with the luxurious miniature jug. Out of dozens of completely reconstructed vessel forms, this type of jug, large in size, appeared only once. It seems that we are dealing with a constant element of burial rite in the Old Prussian lands in the form of intentionally placing a fragment of a broken vessel in the grave. The pottery appeared in the cemetery in Alt Wehlau in Nadruvia, but only in fills of burial pits. Pottery was abundant in Równina Dolna, but these were finds not related to any particular element of burial rites. Such a relationship was proved in Beżławki, where the site was not disturbed by either earlier or later settlement, usually single (exceptionally more) fragments of pottery in a specific location next to the deceased were found. The pottery in Barczewko appeared mainly on the left side, near the sternum, at the hips and near the feet. These were added elements and evidently correlated with children's and women's burials, or with common ones (Koperkiewicz 2019c, pp. 26, 33–35; 2020a, p. 47).

In the child's grave 28/18 from Barczewko, on the one hand, we have elements which seem to be a determinant of the Old Prussian identity (a characteristic brooch) and those that appeared with the arrival of foreign people (coins, a vessel, perhaps imported). The appearance of a certain amount of traditional pottery during the subsequent seasons of excavations provoked bolder questions about



Fig. 10. a – Margaret Brocas effigy in St Andrew’s Church (Sherborne St. John, Hampshire, England) from around 1390 (after Monumental Brass Society 2002, <http://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk/page399.html>); b, c, d, e – examples of silver and gilded appliqués found in the context of the exploration of the mercatorio buildings in the southern part of the market square, including one unique specimen with representation of dancing pair of cranes (photo by A. Koperkiewicz)

the participation of the local Old Prussian population in the town formation²³. While in Równina Dolna, the large variety of grave goods was explained by attributing the use of the necropolis to free Old Prussians and its distance from church centres, in the case of Beżławki and Barczewko we are dealing with new cemeteries, established on consecrated land and, most likely, around churches. In bishop’s Barczewko and with the presence of the parish priest from the very beginning, it is difficult to assume that the people being buried there did not belong to the Christian community. Assuming that based on the presence and specificity of several pieces of furnishing, we can identify the burial as belonging to the Old Prussian indigenous population, two variants of explaining this fact can be adopted:

²³ Tracing ethnic issues in archaeology is complex and highly likely to be overinterpreted. Apart from the premises resulting from written sources, the only points of reference are specific elements of material culture and funeral sources conservative in their meaning. Already at the beginning of the research, it became clear that Barczewko was founded in *cruda radice*, as no traces of previous settlement were found. The archaeological material was homogeneous and characteristic of medieval centres established under German law. There was mass production of very uniform so-called Greyware. In such contexts were found occasional specimens of vessels made in the traditional technology, i.e. slow wheel-thrown below the largest curve of belly, thick-walled, fired in oxidising atmosphere, with typical engraved decoration of wavy line. They were mainly bulbous pots with characteristically formed and obliquely flared rim. Profiles of vessels and their decoration seemed to correspond to pottery partially slow wheel-thrown from the so-called third or fourth technological group of early medieval vessels production (Wadył 2019, pp. 67, 122, 189).

– free Old Prussians were fellow inhabitants of the settlement and participants of the settlement process;

– the cemetery was a burial place not only for the inhabitants of the ‘town’, but also for the local population, belonging to this parish and church, the only one in the area.

Because most of the finds in the settlement were linked to the Silesian settlers and not Old Prussian, the second option is perhaps more likely, so the child was a Christianised Old Prussian living in the locality but not in the settlement.

It remains to accept certain categories of grave goods in eschatological context, present for some special reason (the death of children, families) or related to religious neophytes, which was discussed more extensively in case of Beżławki (Koperkiewicz 2020a). The grave of a child from Barczewko can be treated similarly, especially in the context of the symbolic potential of band or headdress (Forstner 2001, pp. 422, 452–453). Based on many examples from Beżławki, it has been proven that the fragment of Greyware appeared as an obvious grave good placed next to the body or (as well as coins) thrown into the grave. Hence, it seems that not the location, but the mere fact of its presence was significant. The pottery vessel was commonly associated with the fragility of human life. The potter can shape the pot as he wishes, but when fired, it is finally fixed. Death is a liberation from this fragile form, according to the words of the Apocalypse ‘As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken...’ (Forstner 2001, p. 418; *Biblia* 2003, Rev 2: 27). After all, in the grave of the ‘girl’ from Barczewko there is also a complete vessel – a high-quality miniature jug. Again, there is a temptation to ask about the content, but following the Christian tradition, it is not difficult to combine the symbolism of the form with the ideal of female purity embodied by the Virgin Mary as a ‘spring of living water’, with the attributes of these qualities in the form of a jug and a bowl (Panofsky 1971, p. 128). Assuming that it is a child’s and girl’s grave, it can be deduced that there was nothing in the jug. The eschatological value of such a grave good will be more fully understood when we refer to the scene of the Annunciation described in the apocryphal gospels²⁴. It would therefore be an example of a child’s burial, assumed to be a girl, with status items in the eschatological interpretation, *interpretatio christiana*, as pure, innocent and prematurely deceased.

²⁴ On the day of the Annunciation, Mary took the jug and went to the well to get water (in the Old Testament tradition, the well is also a place of lovers’ trysts). After the angel’s words, she was scared, leaving the jug by the well and not filling it with water, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women’, and Mary looked around to the right and the left to see where this voice came from. And trembling she went into her house. Setting down the jug, she took the purple thread and sat down on the chair and spun it.’ (*Protoewangelia Jakuba*, 2003, p. 277). The jug left by the well symbolised a virgin womb that was not filled with water, ready to receive ‘living water’. Pregnant Mary was figuratively the noblest vessel among the common, clay ones, and at the same time empty because of the virginity (Gołębiowski 2017).

It is known that still in the 15th century and later, efforts were made to eliminate Old Prussian burial customs, but at the same time the Order was accused of a kind of tolerance expressed in the words ‘Let the Prussians be Prussians...’²⁵.

In further research of Barczewko, apart from the attempt to locate the church as the missing element of this early urban complex, anthropological research on human remains will be of key importance. The cemetery in Beżławki makes it possible for the first time to carry out a large series of physical analyses of the remains of the medieval population of the Old Prussian autochthons. In Barczewko, it was assumed that it would be mainly a cemetery for newcomers (from Silesia?), pioneers of the settlement. In the context of the discussed example and the settlement analysis of the Old Prussian land of Gunelauke (Szczeptański 2015), this may be a false assumption, because representatives of both groups were probably buried in churchyards. It seems, therefore, that only the possibilities of genetic or isotopic research can help in the future to solve ethnic issues, also in the context of the occurrence of specific objects.

Conclusions

The discovery of the cemetery in Barczewko resulted from the search for the church building. It was important because, for the first time in the history of the region, physical remains of the pioneers of settlement in Warmia were found, identifiable and embedded in the reality of a historical event. It is important, also, that the presence of indigenous people participating in this process can probably be archaeologically confirmed. The necropolis differs from the others by the fact that it is not a village cemetery, and its beginning and end are integrated with the fate of the proto-urban Wartenberg settlement. This can be expressed as follows:

1. Równina Dolna, the cemetery of the Old Prussian elite (free men), located in a place with ancient settlement traditions and associated with the identity of the indigenous people, operating away from the centre of the Teutonic administration and the parish church, the cemetery was used from the second half of the 13th to the 15th century.

2. Barczewko, the cemetery of colonists who came at the initiative of Bishop Eberhard von Neisse, integrated into the spatial layout of the planned town, built in *cruda radice*, probably established in the vicinity of the church, used mainly by

²⁵ The case of the burial mound in Stabławki, which, in the interpretation of Stefan Chmielewski, was an Old Prussian cremation grave from the 15th century, hidden in a prehistoric burial mound, still remains mysterious. If one were to accept his well-founded argumentation, especially when it comes to the chronology of the deposit, it is impossible not to notice that the grave goods around the urn were: clay vessels, one of them with coins, and a glass bottle – flask (Chmielewski 1965). However, it is still an isolated find.

settlers, but possibly also by Old Prussian people, whether directly contributing to the settlement or belonging to the parish in the Gunelauke land, the cemetery used only in the first half of the 14th century, during the years circa 1330–1354.

3. Bezlawki, the cemetery of local or foreign Old Prussian people, no confirmation of the continuation of the burial site from before the crusade period, probably established in the vicinity of the church, in the centre of the village associated with the seat of the Order official, it is possible that also a free Prussian, the cemetery was used from the second half of the 14th century–15th century.

Comparing the grave furnishings from these localities, we notice that all the items found (d attire decorations, rings, coins and pottery fragments). However, there are no items which are signs of social status, such as, for example, impressive jewellery (including specific ones such as horseshoe brooches and Totenkroner necklaces), militaria and horse riding gear, as well as items conventionally called amulets, such as animal fangs and fragments of animal bones, eggs, belemnites, cowrie shells, needles, awls etc.).

Coins and pottery sherds are repetitive elements. Their belonging to the legacy of the Old Prussian religious fossils is not to be excluded, but it may also be debatable. In Barczewko it is confirmed the inconspicuous, though perhaps important in the context of eschatology, custom of giving some of the dead a fragment of a broken vessel. This evokes the Old Testament association ‘*you are dust, and to dust you shall return...*’ or the reference of the fragility of the vessel to human mortality (*Biblia* 2003, Genesis 3: 19, Rev 2: 27). Perhaps the word ‘some’ explains the custom reserved for neophytes, thus communicating the death of an old man, sealing the fact of departing from old habits and the readiness to be reborn.

The cemetery in Barczewko seems to provide historians with archaeological data confirming the important role of the indigenous, free Old Prussian population in the process of settling the bishop’s dominium. Recognising a Probable Old Prussian burial amongst those of the colonists may mean that there are more such burials and in the future, archaeologists will provide further evidence of the Christianisation of the Prussian population.

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