

At the turn of the Neolithic and the Bronze Age, the western part of the Volhynian Upland becomes the setting for the lives and experiences of several different cultural groups. Pastoral population associated with the circle of Corded Ware cultures occupies a vast area of Europe. It leaves thousands of barrows which, apart from their basic sepulchral function, may have served as landmarks. The close of the 3rd millennium BC is the time when new, foreign cultural patterns reach the area through the Carpathian Basin. About 2000 BC, on the basis of post-Corded Ware traditions, and under the influence of eastern groups, the Strzy ów culture comes into existence. It develops side by side with the Mierzanowice culture until approx. 1600 BC, then gives way to the Trzciniec culture.

In the light of the results of current research, it has been the most poorly examined cultural phenomenon of the Early Bronze Age. At the same time, the Strzy ów culture is a particularly interesting and significant group when it comes to the understanding of basic cultural, social and economic processes taking place on the periphery of the Pontic and Mediterranean world. Information on this subject comes from only several examined cemeteries and a dozen accidental discoveries, which have never been subject to interdisciplinary analysis. Thus, there is the need to conduct preliminary research of the source materials, and to return to forgotten places of great scientific potential. The aim is to conduct larger scale exploratory works and excavations. It will be important to make an attempt at the precise dating of the Strzy ów culture, using radiocarbon dating. The current state of research does not make it possible to settle the question of the origin or the decline of this community. There is a need to determine the absolute chronology for familiar grave complexes, for all Strzy ów materials are conventionally and broadly dated between 1900 BC and 1650 BC, without the possibility of indicating the earliest and latest artefacts. It will also be important to determine the connections between the Strzy ów culture and the Mierzanowice culture, which was developing at the same time but differed in material culture and funeral rites. Attention has to be paid to the declining years of the Strzy ów culture, which is followed by the Trzciniec culture, differing in terms of economic model and craftwork.

The Strzy ów culture is distinguished by ceramics of unique technology and ornamentation, which bears no resemblance to ceramics produced by other cultures. Although, without doubt, it is part of post-Corded Ware Carpathian culture circle, its uniqueness and the dense territory that it occupied is noticeable. In the last century, attempts were made at the analysis of funeral rites with reference to grave furnishings, sex and the arrangement of a skeleton, but now they require verification. This will be possible thanks to the use of traditional typological and comparative methods, and employing interdisciplinary methods of anthropological research. The innovative idea is to use genetic tests for the understanding of what conditioned the choice of the place of burial within the cemetery. The results of the examination of the cemetery in Rogalin, near Hrubieszów, are pioneering for the Strzy ów culture. Using an example of one site, it was possible to determine, with high probability, the kinship between individual people. Observed blood ties provided arguments suggesting the intentional arrangement and family character of cemeteries, and implying that smaller family sections may have been part of them. The use of the same methods and possibilities for other sites may bring exceptionally valuable results determining the rules in place at that time governing interment. An additional advantage of genetic tests is the possibility of reconstruction of migration routes of the ancient population. Additional rituals, consisting of burning bodies before placing them into graves, is another interesting issue. Equally intriguing are the unresolved issues of social structure and barrow graves. The collation of the results of interdisciplinary research may provide answers to basic questions about the scope of origin, chronology and funeral rites of the Strzy ów culture.

Relatively common in grave furnishings of the Strzy ów culture are copper objects, the undoubted value of which may indicate higher social status. These include, above all, head ornaments, found both in graves of women and men. Analysing metal artefacts in terms of raw materials may be an important argument in the debate on the origin of this material. There is still new information on trade routes in the Early Bronze Age. Comparative studies may provide an answer to the question about the range of contacts with metallurgical centres, for example in the Carpathian Basin, Volhynia or the Caucasus. Archaeomalacological analyses of shell ornaments and their radiocarbon dating will make it possible to answer one of the most basic questions about the scale of trade contacts with the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Among grave furnishings of the Strzy ów culture, apart from characteristic pottery, flint tools and copper ornaments, artefacts made of animal bones deserve attention. Archaeozoological analyses will make it possible to determine the animals that they were derived from.

The project will help to determine the relative and absolute chronology within the Strzy ów culture, the least examined element of the Circum-Carpathian, post-Corded Ware culture circle.