

In the mid-11th century in the area of Lake Ostrowite group of new settlers appeared, taking place which hundreds of years earlier was first used by the representatives of the so-called Pomeranian culture of the early Iron Age and later by population of so-called Wielbark culture, sometimes equated with the Goths. The place was attracted to following groups of settlers due to its specific qualities: the availability of a lake with possibility of fishing, the choice of soils, allowing both to grain production and horticulture, and considerable resource of clay, which could be used both for building purposes, as well as ceramic production.

The newcomers over the next century built a vast settlement complex consisting of an insular settlement joined with timber bridge with settlements on the east and the south shore of the Lake, and a defense construction that protected the bridgehead. Not far from this stronghold a cemetery was organised. On this cemetery special attention should be paid due to fairly early use of the inhumation rite - typical for medieval Christianity. This phenomenon is quite rare in Pomerania, which until the conquest by Boleslaw the Wrymouth, formally remained pagan. A typical pagan burial custom was usually cremation and burials with barrows.

Archaeological research in Ostrowite started in 1993 and are still ongoing. They were conducted by archaeologists both from Lodz and Torun. The current stage of research, conducted since 2008, is focused on identifying inhumation burial place, when 54 burials were discovered, including two so called chambered graves in which bodies laid in large burial pits originally probably with wooden constructions resembling small buildings - chambers. These types of graves are usually interpreted as a place of burial of important persons - members of elite. The majority of graves strictly respected position on the east-west axis, with timber coffin, or directly in earthen pits, sometimes erecting stone structures resembling sarcophagi and even, in one case, using the dugout boat as a coffin. The dead were dressed in festive costume, which is preserved mostly with remains of ornaments made of cooper alloys and even silver, sometimes also items as coins, bronze bowls or small tools of everyday use: knives, flint and whetstone were deposited in the grave pits.

Modern research methods allow significant increase of knowledge about various aspects of cemeteries. It is particularly important to obtain exact data on the chronology of them. The radiocarbon analysis, made by the AMS method on the remains of human bones should made it possible. It will allow to verify the chronology, which until now was based on the analysis of artifacts deposited in graves, which sometimes can be unreliable method. It may be possible to determine, for example, whether burials in wooden coffins are younger than those deposited directly in the ground pits.

Subsequent analyses will gain further information about the population living in Ostrowite. Analysis of stable isotopes contained in the teeth enamel, allows to specify the diet of the deceased. It also allows, thanks to the absorbing of isotopic characteristics of the geological structure in the enamel, to define the place where the deceased spent his childhood. This means the ability to track migrations. Migrations can also be revealed through ancient DNA analysis. It should also allow to establish kinship among examined population. Detailed anthropological analysis should widen state of knowledge on the structure of the population: the age of death, sex or health status. All this information will help us find out who one of the first Christians in Pomerania were.

While the cemetery was part of a larger settlement structure, the study will focus on the fuller recognition of it. For this purpose, it is planned to use both of non-invasive archeology and excavation methods. Field studies will begin with a non-invasive geophysical survey, using the methods of electric resistivity, geomagnetic as well as geochemical survey, using phosphate method. While the first two methods allow you to "see beneath the soil" without the need for digging to determine the location of the relics of dwellings, furnaces, or different kinds of pit, the third method is based on searching for traces of phosphorus in the soil. Phosphorus was deposited in the soil as a result of human activity or, for example animal husbandry. It is a clear testimony of former human activity. The research should allow to ascertain the exact area of the cemetery and the discovery of hitherto unknown settlement points around the lake. It may be even possible to find the site of older church, which was mentioned in one of 15th-century documents.

During the excavation, oriented on verifying the data obtained through non-invasive survey and fuller recognition of the cemetery, modern methods of digital documentation will be applied. All measurements in the field will be executed using electronic devices that provide accurate and precise data. Excavated structures will be documented using photogrammetric techniques, allowing even three-dimensional reconstruction of them in virtual environment. The entire data acquired will be entered into the database GIS - Geographic Information System.

With all these activities we would like to learn more about the process of Christianization in Eastern Pomerania, as well as get to know and understand people, who more than 800 years ago settled in Lake Ostrowite vicinity.