

Description for the general public

The aim of this project is to recognise the significance of osseous (bone, antler, teeth) materials used in the manufacture of personal objects: adornments, dress accessories and small tools found in the Early Bronze Age graves of Mierzanowice culture in south-eastern Poland. Investigated will be: bone raw material, bone working techniques, function and use of objects – which will lead to interpretations about various aspects of life in the Early Bronze Age societies: technology and economy, and more elusive problems, such as identity, social roles, beliefs and symbolism.

Detailed examination of artefacts using selected methods that are non-destructive and low-invasive (or non-invasive) will be conducted. Imaging techniques (microscopic, microtomographic) will be combined with spectrometric techniques to investigate each artefact and scientific problem as thoroughly as possible.

Another goal of this project is development of a non-destructive and low invasive methodology that could be applied to material culture studies on bone artefacts. The results obtained using combined non-destructive analyses can also influence researchers to apply proposed methodology to various categories of artefacts and materials from other periods of prehistory (and historic times) and in this regard this project also contributes to the development of discipline.

This research topic was chosen because of the unique character of Mierzanowice culture expressed by an abundance of bone objects (especially beads, but also pointed objects, pendants, etc.), commonly occurring in association with male and female graves. Unfortunately, there is a distinct lack of publications regarding interdisciplinary studies of these materials, I am thus convinced, that there is a need for a comprehensive research project addressing this previously omitted category of artefacts – personal objects: adornments, dress accessories and small tools. I believe that it can provide insights into many aspects of the past in a moment of cultural transition in Central and Eastern European prehistory.