

Description for the general public

1. Objective of the project.

The aim of the project will be to create characteristics of medieval populations from historical Lesser Poland on the grounds of rich archaeological funeral finds. The essential part of the elaboration will be devoted to the formation process of medieval society between the 10th and 15th century reconstructed on the basis of the multi-faceted funeral rite analysis. This will require detailed studies on breakthrough in the funerary practices associated with the beginnings of Christianization in Lesser Poland and analysis of the mechanisms of changes in funeral rites in the subsequent stages of the medieval period, which are partly associated with transformations of church organization as well as the economic and political changes. Another aspect of the project will be observation of changes in the biological condition of the inhabitants from Lesser Poland that are widely observed in skeletal material and which may be related to the visible social and economic changes. Reconstruction of dietary habits is also planned.

2. Research to be carried out.

Realization of research purposes that were presented in point 1 will be based on a comprehensive, multi-faceted analysis of archaeological finds, as well as results of specialised studies, above all molecular. Both published medieval funeral finds and unpublished materials stored in the collections of several research institutions will be taken into consideration. Promising results of the "Diamond grant" recently conducted by the author, during which the first numerous interdisciplinarily analyses of the early medieval human remains from Lesser Poland, with use of paleodiet reconstruction methods, or mtDNA research were carried out will be of essential significance for the project.

The project will be implemented with the merit support of the medieval history and medieval numismatics specialists. In addition to the classic methods of archaeological analysis in the project a series of interdisciplinary research including anthropological (with special emphasis on the study of paleopathological and odontologic research), radiocarbon dating, mtDNA studies and analysis of stable isotopes of carbon and nitrogen will be performed. The aim of this research will be, above all, to perform multi-faceted characteristic of biological condition of medieval population from Lesser Poland, which allows to reconstruct its biological diversity and dietary habits.

3. Reasons for choosing the research topic.

The main reason for choosing the research topic was a fact that so far funerary changes of medieval populations from Lesser Poland has never been studied interdisciplinary. Information that are given are often unedited and unpublished. Due to dynamically growing number of discoveries, most from commercial excavations in the cities, the issue of the Late Medieval funeral practices requires thorough elaboration. The results of the project should shed new light on the issue of ethnicity of inhabitants from Lesser Poland during the Medieval period. What is also expected is a revision of the chronology of cemeteries from Lesser Poland, which can primarily affect the perception of the origin of the inhumation phenomenon in this area, as well as the mechanisms of subsequent changes in the funeral rite associated with prevalence of cemeteries located within the church area. For the first time research will also help to characterize the populations of Lesser Poland in the late medieval period, taking into account its distinction between the villages' and towns' inhabitants. Finally, what is expected is new supply of relevant data concerning dietary habits of the Lesser Poland communities, which may indirectly indicate that social stratification was deeper than it was thought, as well as to find what was the direction of economic transformations in medieval period.