

Lake islands – holms – were very attractive and often special places for prehistoric societies. Depending on their size, such holms served as sites for inhumation (particularly the smaller ones), or – if local resources allowed – they were sometimes permanently settled. To that second kind belongs Dąbki Island, a relatively large island (ca. 40 hectares) situated on Dąbki Lake, today entirely filled with biogenic and mineral deposits.

Archaeological investigations, up to now concentrated exclusively on the well-known peat bog site Dąbki 9/10, have delivered rich evidence of intensive occupation of that part of the island by hunter-gatherers in the Late and Final Mesolithic (as evidenced by the pointed-bottom pottery and the earliest Funnel Beaker Culture) and by farmers in the younger Funnel Beaker Culture, Sphere Amphorae Culture, Corded Ware, and Lusatian Culture. Therefore, one of our project's goals is to reconstruct the settlement processes of Dąbki Island during the Atlantic and Sub-Boreal periods (ca. 5300-800 cal BC).

During research at the Dąbki 9/10 site it was observed that different societies had exploited the island in completely different ways. This is most clearly visible along Dąbki Island's shoreline. That area was used extremely intensively by Late Mesolithic groups, while during the late Bronze Age (Lusatian Culture) only pits on dry land have been recorded, without there being a single artefact of that time in the adjacent peat bog. To this day we don't know to what extent these differences relate to the various economic strategies then performed and to the functional diversity of the settlements studied, nor to what degree they are the consequences of environmental changes then taking place on the island (for instance, advanced degradation). The answer to these questions is another important goal of our project.

It is highly probable that there is a cemetery located on Dąbki Island, as well. Indeed, there may perhaps be several from different periods. Thus, research efforts will also be directed to discovering the location of such cemeteries and excavating them. This is an important issue, as it would allow us to combine settlement research with studies on the populations inhabiting the island.

To fulfill our project's goals, a multidisciplinary and international research team was created, one that includes: numerous specialists in archaeological research and different aspects of palaeoenvironmental reconstructions; anthropologists; palaeogeneticists; as well as experts on biochemical-physical research. Owing to their contribution, an intensive, multistage research project will be conducted, one encompassing i.a., archaeological and geomagnetic surveys, excavations of several sites, geological and geomorphological research of the Island and Dąbki Lake, GIS analysis, as well as palaeobotanical and archaeozoological research aimed at reconstructing the palaeoenvironment and its changes in time. In parallel to this field work, a whole set of specialized analyses will be carried out, e.g., multiaspectual archaeological analyses, anthropological and isotopic studies, ¹⁴C datings, petrographic and mineralogical analyses of pottery, traceological studies of flint inventories to detect the function of flint tools, and biochemical analysis of pigments, tars, and food remains on pottery in order to discover what kind of food was processed in clay vessels.

We hope that, thanks to this project, we'll be able to recognize the way of life of different hunter-gatherer and farming groups that inhabited Dąbki Island over several thousand years. We also plan to study the impact of those populations on the local environment. Furthermore, in uncovering the factors and mechanisms that led to degradation of the natural environment in the past, we hope we may help protect it better today and in the future.