

Within the territory of Poland, megalithic constructions appeared in the Neolithic period, in the Funnel Beaker culture. Stone tombs of this type were noticed in northern Poland as early as the 19th century. For many years, the situation in southern Poland was different. The loess areas of the upper Odra and Vistula river basins, without easily accessible large erratic boulders serving as the building material for tombs, seemed to be areas devoid of this form of sepulchral objects. The breakthrough was the research started in 1979 and continued with short breaks until 2020 in Słonowice. They led to the discovery there of a huge sepulchral complex of the Funnel Beaker culture. The tomb structures discovered in Słonowice, although referring to the idea of "Kuyavian" megalithic tombs, have specific features. The local material - wood - was used to build their walls instead of traditional but inaccessible boulders. The walls were in the form of "palisades" made of wooden beams. The interior of the tombs - between the walls - was filled with an earth embankment. In their centre, there was a tomb or tombs with rich furnishings. These structures had a trapezoidal shape in the horizontal projection. The largest of them was over 100 meters long. Although the general principle of building tombs was common, no two were alike. The sepulchral complex in Słonowice was situated on a hill and its slopes descending towards the Małoszówka River. The complex included a solitary tomb at the top of the hill, 10 tombs situated parallel to each other in the lower part of the slope, and a clearly marked square situated in the middle of the slope. It can be assumed to be related to funeral ceremonies. The megalithic tombs were accompanied by a graveyard of "flat" graves. The group of discovered structures can be described as temenos - a separate sacred space (square) connected with a cemetery.

Słonowice sepulchral complex, although already mentioned in the literature, has not been elaborated and published so far. The aim of the project is therefore a multi-faceted analysis of the materials obtained in Słonowice. Its results will allow us to characterize an important, sepulchral aspect of the life of the Funnel Beaker culture community of the 4th millennium BC. They will also help to learn about the organization and technical level of the community at that time. The tomb builders were able to concentrate and manipulate considerable human resources to carry out complex engineering works using the technique at the level of the Stone Age. The project includes several analyzes, including comprehensive analyzes of tomb furnishings - ceramics, flints and copper products, radiocarbon analyzes of osteological materials and analyzes of architectural details of tombs. Their results will allow us to verify field observations on the temporal diversification of individual types of structures. This will have a major impact on the chronology of the Funnel Beaker culture as well as the dating of individual tombs discovered elsewhere. The results of the analytical work will also contribute to the interregional contacts between the tomb builders. Materials from the excavation studies of three Funnel Beaker culture settlements located near the tomb complex will also be analyzed, especially in terms of the relationship between these settlements and tomb builders. As part of the project, it is also planned to conduct geomorphological studies in the area of Słonowice. The aim is to obtain data for the environmental characteristics of this region in prehistory, especially at the time of the existence of a megalithic cemetery there.

The result of the multi-faceted archaeological analysis of the materials obtained in Słonowice will be the preparation and publication of a monograph. It will present a Neolithic sepulchral complex from the 4th millennium BC, located in the basin of the upper Vistula River - the south-eastern flank of the European range of the megalithic idea.