Cemetery in Ostrów, site 21 as the example of multidirectional contacts of the Przeworsk culture – people living in the central part of the San River basin in the Early and Younger Roman Period

Abstract: The cemetery in Ostrów, commune of Przemyśl, site 21 was discovered in 2013 during the construction works. The results of the study of this necropolis revealed more complex cultural and ethnic situation in the San River basin during the Roman Period. At least some part of the people using the mentioned cemetery originated from the eastern zone of the Przeworsk culture. Moreover, it is very likely that the cultural contacts with Sarmatian culture took place as well. The necropolis in Ostrów is also another site that confirms the growing amount of sites situated along the San River course in the period between the decline of the Early Roman Period and the beginning of the Younger Roman Period (i.e. phases B2-C1). It was the time of the expansion of the Przeworsk culture people into the Upper Tisa River basin.

Keywords: Przeworsk culture, cemeteries, Early and Younger Roman Period, multidirectional contacts

Studies on the Przeworsk culture settlement in the Upper and Middle San River basin are important from the perspective of research on the regional differentiation of this cultural unit. Until recently, the source basis for such studies have been relatively modest, with Trójczyce (Poradyło 2001; 2004) and Prusiek (Madyda-Legutko et al. 2007, 61-69; 2008, 47-52; 2009, 295-309) being the only larger cemeteries excavated in the region. In the context, the knowledge of the Roman Period settlement in discussed area (see Lasota 2005) will be supplied with a growing amount of newly recognized settlement sites, what has been observed since the beginning of rescue excavations carried out in advance of construction projects.

In 2013 archaeological supervision carried out by S. Stempniak and J. Motak during the construction of a house revealed a new, previously unknown necropolis.
of the Przeworsk culture. The site produced valuable information concerning settlement transformations in the Upper and Middle San basin. The mentioned site is the cemetery at Ostrów near Przemyśl (Fig. 1). The research was next continued in 2013 and 2014 by a team of archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University, led by A. Lasota-Kuś. The village of Ostrów borders with Przemyśl from the west, and the cemetery occupies a slope of the left-bank of San River terrace. Moreover, there is situated the settlement site in the nearest neighbourhood of the cemetery (about 400 m towards NW). During the rescue survey there were noticed i.a. some relicts of the Przeworsk culture settlement from Early and Younger Roman Period (Okoński, Łojowska 2007, 104), which correspond to the chronological framework of the cemetery.

The sepulchral features, which were found in Ostrów necropolis, were concentrated in the area of about 4 ares (Fig. 2). There were examined a total of 74 cremation burials (in pits and urns) and two more, destroyed during construction works. It is worth noticing the very good state of preservation of the graves. Their upper parts have not been damaged intact, and most of the urns have survived intact. Vessels used as the urns included S-shaped pots with coarse surfaces, which are quite rare among the artefacts known from the Przeworsk culture cemeteries dated to this period (Fig. 3: 1), as well as black vases with smooth surfaces (Fig. 3: 2). Among atypical forms, rarely discovered within the Przeworsk culture range, one can mention a vessel set on a high foot, which was found in one of the female burials. Additionally, it is decorated with motifs having obviously symbolic meaning. Such forms, although known from few examples, are clearly connected with the eastern area of the Przeworsk culture, as evidenced by their geographical distribution (Lasota-Kuś 2018).

At the cemetery in Ostrów there are well testified women’s graves, which inventories include two or more fibulae, as well as other artefacts e.g. the casket fittings such as some parts of the locks and the numerous keys.
Fig. 2. Ostrów site no 21. Excavation plan (edited by M. Kasiński); a – the Przeworsk culture graves, b – contemporary objects, c – limits of survey, DG – destroyed graves.
In female graves there were also other items like needles, awls, bone combs, numerous melted glass beads and spindle whorls. Worth mentioning is a female burial, number 95, with an urn more than 50 cm high and rim diameter of almost 50 cm. It is no doubt the largest of such vessels discovered to date. The presence of as many as three iron keys also deserves particular attention (Fig. 4: 1-3). They represent type A according to A. Kokowski, which is the most popular in Przeworsk culture inventory and occurs from phase A3 of the pre-Roman period to C2 of Roman Period (Kokowski 1997, 36, 40). The keys, along with the metal elements of the casket fittings are considered to be one of the determinants of female graves, mostly the burials of adultus and maturus women of higher social status (Czarnecka 1990, 49, 63; Kokowski 1997, 41). Occasionally there was more than one key laid down in a burial (cf. e.g. Strobin, Wieluń District, grave 78 – Abramek 1986, fig: XII: 8-12). It is suggested that such kind of ritual could have had a symbolic or magical meaning (Czarnecka 2010, 24). However, based on the skeletal cemeteries surveys, it is believed that the wooden caskets served for storing i.a. jewellery, beads and spinning accessories (Czarnecka 2010, 19-20). It is worth noticing, that all of those artefacts were found in the analised burial from Ostrów. Among others objects, two iron fibulae were also found in grave 95 (Fig. 4: 4-5). They represent fibulae derivatives from strongly profiled, probably type ‘Brzeźce’ according to A. Kokowski, which is typical for phase B2 (Kokowski 1991, 109, 110). It should be mentioned that a significant amount of this type fibulae was discovered in the cemetery situated on the right bank of the Middle San River in Radawa, Jaroslaw District (graves 8, 18, 22, 23, 24 and at least three loose finds – Kieferling 2000, fig. 2: 4; 6: 2-4; 2001, fig. 2:1, 4, 7; 4:5, 8, 10), whereas only two come from the eponymous site in Brzeźce (Balke 1976, 178, fig. 40: a, c). The single fibula of ‘Brzeźce’ type is also known from the cemetery in Gać, Przeworsk Dis-

![Fig. 3. Ostrów site no 21. Examples of vessels: 1 – S-shaped pot; 2 – sharply profiled vase (drawn by A. Lasota-Kuş)](image-url)
Fig. 4. Inventory of grave 95 from the cemetery in Ostrów, site no 21: 1-3 – iron keys; 4-5 – iron fibulae (drawn by U. Socha)

strict (Dąbrowska 1973, 155; Kieferling 2005, fig. 9: a), and the only one this type find of settlement provenance comes from site 22 in Grodzisko Dolne, Leżajsk District (Podgórska-Czopek 2009, 86, fig. XXIX: 12). When it comes to other sites, which can be connected with the eastern area of the Przeworsk culture, the men-
tioned fibulae were discovered in the cemetery in Gościeradów, Kraśnik District (Niewęgłowski 1982, fig. 12: 1, m; 14: j; 15: e) and three more such artefacts were found in the cemetery in Opoka (Stasiak 1994, tabl. 10). Summing up, all of the mentioned finds are strongly connected with the eastern area of the Przeworsk culture settlement. Only exceptionally such finds were discovered in the different territories, i.e. in Central Poland (two fibulae from grave 78 in Strobin, Wieluń District – Abramek 1986, fig. XII: 1, 2; one fibula from the cemetery in Konopnica, Wieluń District – Abramek 1988, fig. XXV: 7) and in Silesia (one fibula from grave 88 from the cemetery in Chorula – Szydłowski 1964, fig. 74: 21). In the context, the single fibula of ‘Brzeźce’ type discovered in the cemetery in Bešeňov, western Slovakia, is a unique find (Kolník 1961, tabl. Xb)\(^1\). The inventory of grave 95 included also many glass beads, whose melted fragments have been discovered while water-sieving the soil from the urn and pit. Some of the glass fragments originate from a typologically unidentified glass vessel.

Among female graves in pits, it is worth noticing burial number 101 richly furnished with elements of costume and jewellery (Figs. 5, 6). Among them three pendants were found: capsule pendant and two basket-shaped pendants (Fig. 5: 1-3). Such artefacts have not been known from the south-east of Poland thus far (c.f. Schuster 2013, fig. 15), even though most of them came from the area of the Przeworsk and Wielbark culture, as well as Elbe Land and Scandinavia (Carnap-Bornheim 2002, 191). The pendants of analogous shape were discovered in grave 1/25 in Tarnów, Opole District (Godłowski, Szadkowska 1972, pl. II: 3-6). The inventory also included a characteristic, wire buckle, having some Sarmatian analogies (Tejral 2003, 273). It is worth mentioning that in a rich woman’s grave from Čáčov, western Slovakia (Ondrouch 1957, 53-63), there were similar iron and bronze pendants found as well as other artefacts with the same cultural analogies (c.f. Tejral 2003, 271, fig. 19:1-6). The mentioned inventories from Tarnów and Čáčov are dated to phase B2/C1 or C1a. Moreover, a bronze ring coming from grave 101 from Ostrów (Fig. 5: 4) is a unique find, which should be probably counted as 20th type of IVth group according to Ch. Beckmann (Beckmann 1969, pl. 1: 50). It is possible to specify the chronology of analysed inventory due to three strong profiled, bronze fibulae (Fig. 6: 1-3). Each of them possesses a characteristic enlarged head, rounded from the underside, with a distinct crest decorated with some grooves. The grooves are also situated at the base of the coniform node on a foot. The crests were probably decorated with a silver wire what is testified by a clump of molten silver clearly visible on one artefact (Fig. 6: 2). These fibulae should be probably considered as 5th type of

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\(^1\) According to A. Kokowski, a fibula from grave no. 23 from Godzisk Mazowiecki (Barankiewicz 1959, fig. VII: 12; Kokowski 1991, 109) belongs to ‘Brzeźce’ type, but its trumpet-shaped head let us recognize it as a 3rd type of trumpet fibulae, in accordance with T. Liana’s research (Liana 1970, 444).
trumpet fibulae according to T. Dąbrowska (Dąbrowska 1995), which distribution were limited to B2b phase (Dąbrowska 1995, 20, tabl. 1). The most important is that the distribution of the analysed artefacts is limited to the eastern area of the Przeworsk culture. In comparison to the items coming from Ostrów, they are made of bronze.
Moreover, one should mention a relatively high proportion of male burials with weapons in Ostrów necropolis. Some of them were furnished with full sets of weapons, comprised of a sword, one or two spearheads and a shield. Among the metal shield fittings there were found some shield-bosses with a blunt spike, J.7a type, as well as, what is more rare for the Przeworsk culture inventories – the shield-bosses with a sharp spike, J.7b type. On the other hand, the shield-grips are represented by forms with clearly separated rivet plates as well as some bar-forms with rectangular-shaped plates. One of such rich burials contained, among other objects, two pairs of scissors, spearheads, and a large anchor-shaped key approx. 25 cm long. The grave also yielded a spearhead representing a variant known from phases B2-C1a similar to VIII type according to P. Kaczanowski (Kaczanowski 1995, 18-20), richly decorated with inlaid symbolic motifs, described in the literature as tamgas, which also occur in Sarmatian cultures (Kaczanowski 1988, 53; Shchukin 1994, 486, fig. 1; Voroniatov 2012, 186-193).

Summing up, in light of the research carried up to date the excavated part of cemetery at Ostrów was used for only a very short period. Its chronology spans the developed stage of phase B2 and the beginnings of the Younger Roman Period. There are only single objects, for example a boss of the J.7b type, which may possibly suggest its functioning already in phase B2a. Thus, the chronological frameworks of the discussed graves from Ostrów necropolis strictly correspond with the dating of the cemetery at Prusiek and the one at Pakoszówka (see in this volume).
It is worth emphasizing, however, that it is the largest Przeworsk culture cemetery investigated in the discussed settlement area.

Another aspect worth emphasizing is the presence at Ostrów of elements characteristic of the eastern area of the Przeworsk culture. They can be seen in the three-handled vessels mentioned above (Fig. 3: 2) and in the significant proportion of objects made from non-ferrous metals. The latter were mainly made of bronze, although one should not forget about the melted gold and silver artefacts, and silver-inlaid iron brooches. Moreover, the percentage of male burials with weapons, including full sets of weapons, is considerably higher in Ostrów than in other Przeworsk culture cemeteries from that period. Furthermore, some artefacts can indicate the distinctive connections with Sarmatian culture. Contacts between these two groups, which undoubtedly took place on the Upper Dniester River, have been widely addressed in the literature (e.g. Shchukin 1994, 489-490; Kokowski 1999; Dobrzańska 2001, 102).

In conclusion, it should be said that both the structure and chronology of burial inventories from the Ostrów cemetery clearly suggest that they are traces of expansion of the Przeworsk culture population to the south, to the Upper Tisa River basin, what was already said in the literature (c.f. Godłowski 1985, 81-84; Madyda-Legutko, Rodzińska-Nowak 2013, 136). One can expect that the further analysis of the materials retrieved from the cemetery will support the findings presented above concerning the chronology and nature of the Ostrów cemetery.

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Addresses of the Authors

**Anna Lasota-Kuś**
Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii
Polskiej Akademii Nauk
ul. Sławkowska 17
31-016 Kraków, Poland
anialasota80@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0603-846X

**Sabina Stempniak-Kusy**
Usługi Archeologiczne i Projekty Budowlane
“Arkona”
ul. M. Bielskiego 56/3
37-700 Przemyśl, Poland
sabinastempniak@wp.pl
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7184-816X
