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WEALTH OF INHABITANTS OF SANDOMIERZ AND NEIGHBOURING SETTLEMENTS IN THE 11TH–12TH CENTURIES IN THE LIGHT OF CEMETERY MATERIALS

ABSTRACT

It is debatable to what extent so-called grave goods (items intentionally deposited in burials) reflect the actual level of prosperity of people inhumed in early mediæval graves. The same applies to the types of the burial features in which they were inhumed. Whether the deceased were supplied with particular items or not – and if so, what kind of goods they were – might have resulted, for example, from the extent to which Christianity (having a unifying influence on funerary rituals) was accepted, as well as from local customs or even family traditions, the actual wealth of the buried people and individual decisions as to whether their opulence should be manifested or not. In Sandomierz, between the end of the 10th and the middle of the 12th century, there were

at least three non-churchyard row cemeteries. We know 20 other burial sites of this type located in the radius of 20 km from the town. An analysis of materials found in them (grave goods) indicated that in the discussed time the wealth of Sandomierz residents was similar to that of people living in the neighbouring settlements dated to the same period. This assumption, however, is not necessarily correct, because the lack of considerable differences between grave inventories might have resulted from local burial customs followed at that time. Another question is whether such customs were a continuation of earlier local traditions or whether they were shaped by the embracing of elements of Christian funerary rituals. Finally, it is also possible that they resulted from both factors.

Keywords: Sandomierz, cemeteries, Early Middle Ages, wealth of residents

Introduction

Sandomierz was most probably established in the last quarter of the 10th century, after the annexation of new lands – extending between the Świętokrzyskie (Holy Cross) Mountains and the Rivers Pilica and Vistula – to the country of Mieszko I. At first probably destined to be a bridgehead for further expansion to the east and south,¹ at the turn of the 12th century it became – in the eyes of the contemporaries, or in any case according to the anonymous author of the ‘Polish Chronicle’ – one of the main centres of the state, or at least of its southern part. This is because the chronicler, when discussing events of 1098, referred to the town – along with Kraków and Wrocław – as *sedes regni principalis*, one of the main ‘capitals’ of the kingdom.²

It is striking that the considerable – at least according to the chronicler – importance of Sandomierz at that time has practically no bearing on what we know about it from other written sources. At the end of the 11th century, Sandomierz consisted of the stronghold, the adjacent borough and open settlements (accompanied by cemeteries) on the neighbouring hills.³ The hillfort itself, regardless of where it was placed – there are two different hypotheses as to its location during that time: on the Castle Hill⁴ or on the so-called Gostomianum Hill⁵ – was relatively small, having a surface slightly greater than 0.5 ha. Beside the so-called rectangular pit on the Gostomianum Hill – interpreted as the remains of a wooden residential tower⁶ – no traces of habitable buildings dated to earlier than the second half of the 12th century have been discovered

¹ Buko 1998, 83–84; 2005, 236–239.

² Knoll, Schaer 2003, 134–148; also Lalik 1993, 50; Wasilewski 1999, 57–58; Wyrzumski 1999, 19; 2019, 169.

³ Florek 2005, 23–30; 2014, 7.

⁴ Buko 1998, 56–60.

⁵ Florek 2005, 25–26.

⁶ Tabaczyńska 1996, 105–106; Rysiewski 2000, 567.

so far. What is more, all indications are that before the middle, or even the end of the 11th century, not a single church was erected in Sandomierz.⁷

Thus, we should consider if the particular importance of the town in the 11th and 12th centuries was reflected by the material status of its residents, higher than, for instance, that of people inhabiting the neighbouring settlements.

The state of research of the early mediaeval settlements located in the vicinity of Sandomierz is clearly insufficient. Only the settlements in Kaczyce (Lipnik Gmina/Commune),⁸ Głazów (Obrazów Commune),⁹ Zawichost-Podgórze (Zawichost Commune)¹⁰ and the one from so-called Żmigród in Opatów (Opatów Commune)¹¹ have been excavated – but to a limited extent. Thus, the practically sole method of comparing the wealth of Sandomierz residents with that of people inhabiting the neighbouring settlements relies on materials discovered in the cemeteries – on what is found in graves and was intentionally deposited together with the dead, and especially, what is referred to as grave goods.

Maria Miśkiewicz – in her paper from 50 years ago dedicated to burial rites followed in early mediaeval inhumation cemeteries – divided items discovered in graves into two categories: direct equipment (adornments and clothing elements in which dead people had been buried) and grave goods. The latter category includes ‘weaponry, knives, everyday use items, coins and magic artefacts’.¹² By and large, this division remains valid. Still, in the case of small knives and artefacts used to strike fire (flint strike-a-lights and firesteels or other iron items that could have substituted them) – when their locations in graves indicate that they were worn attached to the belt or on the neck, it appears that they were rather clothing elements, regardless of their practical functions. Thus they should be treated as direct goods, and not grave goods in the strict sense. Therefore, taking into account a certain arbitrariness of Miśkiewicz’s category, we will refer to all objects deliberately deposited in graves as grave goods.

In the light of the above, we will refer to objects, and sometimes even animals or people, purposely deposited in graves together with the inhumed people – irrespective of the reasons behind placing them there (which, in any case, are usually unclear) – as to grave goods. These may be items belonging to the buried people, associated with them, artefacts which according to the mourners should have been taken by them or could no longer be used by the living. Such offerings – including food, and some-

times people and animals – were supposed to be useful for the dead in the netherworld, or at least to help them in reaching it. This group includes devotional articles and amulets. The category of grave goods also includes artefacts deposited in graves during burial ceremonies – which were supposed to be signs informing the living about the identities and social ranks of the buried – as well as gifts deposited as tokens of respect or memory by the mourners.

There are many possible interpretations of depositing different items in graves together with the buried people. As mentioned before, they are most often unclear to us. We need to bear in mind that graves can include items that were not intentionally deposited. Usually, those got to burial pits by accident after the obsequies and can come from earlier or later times than the graves. There are also other cases which not always can be easily interpreted. Arrowheads discovered in graves can serve as an example here. They might have been lodged in the bodies of the buried people – most probably being the cause of their death – and not extracted afterwards. This is the case in two graves from the cemetery located on the Old Town Hill in Sandomierz, where arrowheads were embedded in the spines of the people buried in these funerary features.¹³ Here, their interpretation is obvious. A different situation is when we find an arrowhead among the bones of a buried individual. It is difficult to determine if it is a fragment of an arrow lodged in the soft tissue of the inhumed person – being the reason of his or her death – or if it was purposely deposited in the grave, for example, as a gift or symbol of the buried individual’s affiliation to the warrior class. Another possible explanation is that such an arrowhead got inside with the soil used to refill the grave. The same can be said about such items as knives, sickles, large nails etc. They might have been funerary offerings or equipment used by the buried people on their way to the netherworld, but we cannot rule out the possibility that they got to their graves as a result of performing so-called ‘anti-vampire’ measures, like those recorded in many early mediaeval cemeteries.¹⁴

The extent to which grave goods and forms of graves reflect the actual material standing of people inhumed in early mediaeval burials is debatable. During the discussed period – in the 11th and 12th centuries AD – whether graves were equipped or not (and if so, with what items) depended on many factors, such as local customs concerning the ways of burying the dead, the extent to which Christianity was accepted (as it played

⁷ Florek 2017.

⁸ Buko 2000; 2003.

⁹ Florek 2020.

¹⁰ Balcer 1966.

¹¹ Florek 2000; Wysocki 2013.

¹² Miśkiewicz 1969, 249.

¹³ Cf. Florek 2019a, 40; Florek, Stempin 2019, 88–89.

¹⁴ Cf. Żydok 2004; Gardęła 2012; Gardęła, Kajokowski 2013.

a unifying role in funerary rites) or the actual wealth of the buried people. A certain role might also have been played by family traditions and individual decisions to manifest, for example, the wealth of the buried individuals (or that of their families or mourners), as well as exceptional grief caused by the death of a close person. The latter situation appears to be especially pertinent in the case of certain child burials, equipped above standard with adornments and sometimes also with other artefacts, which appears to stand contrary to the position of a child in mediaeval society. On the other hand, when discussing inventories and forms of graves in the context of Christian funerary rituals, we need to bear in mind that Christianity encompasses two partly contradictory doctrines.¹⁵ The sources of the first can be traced in the ambivalent attitude of this religion toward the body or, in a broader context, to the material world. The body is treated as the prison of the spirit or soul. At the same time it is treated as 'the temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 6:19).¹⁶ Also the material world itself – including goods and wealth in general – were believed to distract people from God, and to make it difficult for them to connect with him or even to be an obstacle on their way to salvation. Here, we can quote the words of Christ that 'it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven' (Matt. 19:24). This sentiment was echoed by the lack of care paid to graves as well as to the ways of burying the dead and to what would happen to the body – typical not only of early Christianity – in keeping with the expression 'for dust you are and to dust you shall return' from the Book of Genesis (Gen. 3:19).

As a consequence, the forms of burial and funerary features of even very wealthy people can be ostentatiously modest. They can be simple earth graves containing bodies wrapped only in shrouds – in imitation of the Christ – or lacking any signs that would attest to the social standing of the buried people (except for the possible choice concerning the location of the grave), etc. On the other hand, Christian funerary customs – with the exception of their earliest stages – are still characterised by the desire to manifest the identities of the buried people (which was adopted from pagan traditions), including their social and material standing, as well as the feeling of loss and grief shared by the mourners. This manifestation might have consisted, for example, in inhuming the deceased in ceremonial robes reflecting their social functions, as well as with the insignia of power and other items indicating the posts held by them during their lives or their social positions (this group of artefacts includes

weaponry). Such feelings might also have been expressed by depositing in graves items that the buried people simply liked or were attached to. Although it is possible that they were sometimes the same types of items as those found in pagan graves, what counted was the intention (purpose) of such procedures. They were not supposed to serve the buried people in the afterlife – this motivation for furnishing graves was condemned by the Church – but to show who the dead individuals were and to manifest the feeling of loss after their death. Another factor is the Christian conviction that wealth, fortune and high social standing are the proof of God's grace, evidence of his protection, and as such, are good by definition. Thus, presenting the riches of deceased individuals during funerary ceremonies would be the confirmation of special favours bestowed on them by God during their lives.

Most often, it is very difficult to establish the intentions behind furnishing early mediaeval graves with different items. Consequently, there is a high risk of error in determining – based on discovered inventories – whether a given grave was created for a Christian or a pagan, as well as whether it was intended for someone rich or poor.

Bearing in mind all the above-presented stipulations, we can assume that in the case of the Early Middle Ages and relatively small, dense territories – where we can assume similar extents of accepting Christianity as well as relatively uniform traditions and customs of local populations – grave inventories from cemeteries should reflect the wealth of the buried people. At the same time, certain visible deviations from local standards of furnishing graves can indicate a foreign origin of certain individuals or of whole groups. They can also reflect their special standing in a given society.

Early mediaeval cemeteries from Sandomierz and its vicinity

On the territory of early mediaeval Sandomierz, between the end of the 10th and the middle of the 12th century, there were at least three non-churchyard row cemeteries. They are located on the Town Hill, Old Town Hill and so-called Reformackie Hill (Fig. 1).

The cemetery on the Town Hill was in use from the turn of the 11th century – at any rate, its earliest graves were dated to this period – to the end of the 11th century, or even somewhat longer. At its greatest extent, it covered the northern and middle part of the hill, reaching the site occupied today by the market square. In 1286, the location of the town in this place resulted in the destruction

¹⁵ Cf. Dzieduszyccy, Wrzesiński 2005, 311–312.

¹⁶ All Bible quotations are taken from the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB).

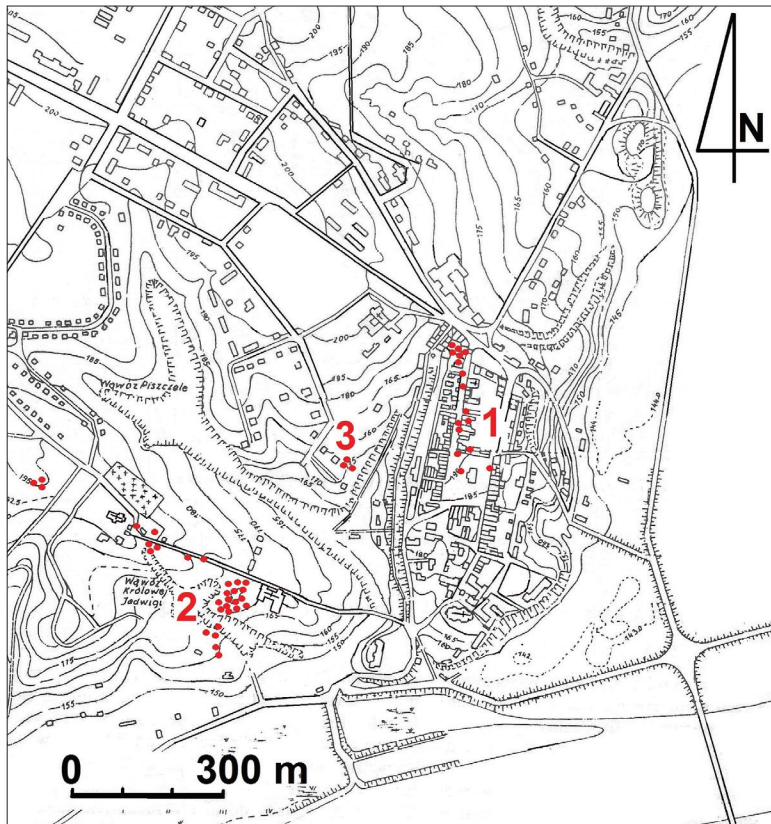


Fig. 1. Early mediaeval cemeteries in Sandomierz: 1 – cemetery on the Town Hill; 2 – cemetery on the Old Town Hill; 3 – cemetery on the Reformackie Hill (image by M. Florek).

of the greater part of the cemetery by later buildings. The site is known for many serendipitous discoveries – the first documented finds in the vicinity of the town hall were made as early as in mid-19th century – and rescue excavations conducted between 2013 and 2015.¹⁷ The latter led to the identifying of the cemetery's oldest part and several graves whose forms resemble so-called chamber tombs. Admittedly, no classical wooden chambers were found inside, but the burial pits dug into the loess were evidently larger than those of other graves from Sandomierz, and the people buried inside of them were laid in wooden coffins (boxes). What is more, at least in one case (grave no. 9, discovered in 2015), the walls of the structure were timbered and it was surrounded with a palisade.¹⁸ In total, we know of at least 17 graves from the cemetery on the Town Hill that were dated from the turn of the 11th century to the end of the 11th century. Ten of them (almost 60%) were equipped with grave goods.

The next cemetery, located on the Old Town Hill, comes from more or less the same period. Its earliest known grave was dated to the end of the 10th century.¹⁹

The cemetery ceased to be used in the 12th century, when the first churches – of St John and St James the Apostle – started functioning in the adjacent settlement (and first churchyards along with them). Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possibility that people were still sporadically buried there in the Late Middle Ages.²⁰ The cemetery encompassed a considerable part of the hill, from its top to the middle part of the slope that descends to the valley of the Vistula, more or less to the site where the Dominican Order monastery was erected in the first half of the 13th century.²¹ The cemetery is mainly known from excavations carried out in the years 1928–1929 by Józef Żurowski. Their results were published in 1969 by Jerzy Gąsowski.²² The actual number of early mediaeval graves discovered then is not certain. Different sources mention 173, 185 or even 228 excavated features.²³ In later years, ten other graves from the same cemetery were recorded – one in 1971, two in 2002, one in 2006, three in 2011 and three in 2016.²⁴ An unspecified, albeit considerable, number of graves were destroyed as a result of performing different field and construction works, including the

¹⁷ Florek 2012; Bajka, Florek 2015; Bajka *et al.* 2016.

¹⁸ Bajka, Florek 2015; Błaszczuk *et al.* 2018.

¹⁹ Florek 2019a, 49.

²⁰ Florek 2012, 48–52.

²¹ Florek 2019a, 48–50.

²² Gąsowski 1969, 399–434.

²³ Cf. Florek 2019a, 39–40.

²⁴ Florek 2019a, 42–44.

building of the Catholic Secondary School in the early 1930s. We have some precise information about slightly more than 180 graves from this cemetery, 80 of which (ca. 40%) were furnished with grave goods.

The third burial ground – known from only two serendipitously discovered graves without inventories – was located on the so-called Reformackie Hill.²⁵

As we can see, over 200 graves on which we have some additional information have been discovered in the three above-presented non-churchyard cemeteries. Ninety of them (45%) were equipped with inventories. Nevertheless, in only 31 funerary features (ca. 15%) these were not items of personal use.

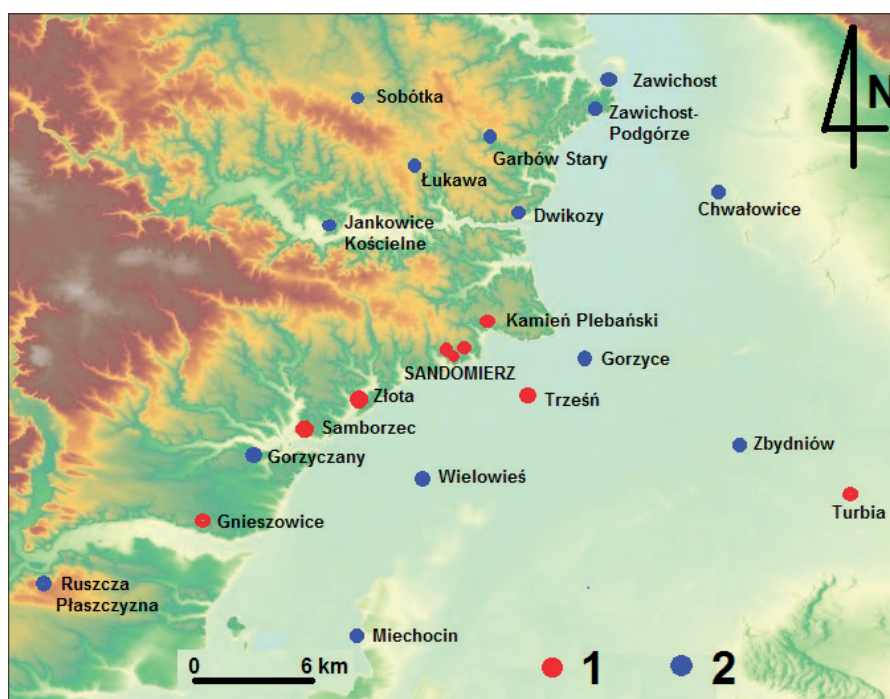
Twenty attested or supposed inhumation non-churchyard cemeteries, dating to the period from the end of the 10th to the beginning of the 12th century, are known from the nearest vicinity of Sandomierz – territories located no more than about 20 km from the town (Fig. 2). Six of them were excavated to different extents. These are the burial grounds in Gnieszowice, Samborzec, Kamień Plebański, Trześń, Turbia, Zawichost-Podgórze and Złota.²⁶

In Kamień Plebański – which is today part of Sandomierz – 12 graves were researched. Five of them

(46%) were equipped with personal goods.²⁷ In the serendipitously discovered cemetery from Gnieszowice, nine graves were analyzed. Five of them (55%) were equipped with inventories.²⁸ In Trześń, seven out of 14 discovered graves (50%) were furnished with personal goods.²⁹ In Turbia, no more than two graves were found – both with inventories.³⁰ Only one grave was discovered in Zawichost-Podgórze, but it contained a battle-axe.³¹ Part of the cemetery in Złota with 23 graves was researched as early as in the interwar period. Sixteen of the excavated funerary features (70%) contained inventories.³² The greatest number of graves (68) were excavated in Samborzec. Forty-one of them (60%) contained inventories.³³ As we can see, we have information concerning about 129 graves from six cemeteries located near Sandomierz. Seventy-seven of them (almost 60% of the total number) were equipped.

We know about items discovered in graves from five other cemeteries, located in Dwikozy, Garbów Stary, Ruszcza-Płaszczyna, Tarnobrzeg-Miechocin and Zawichost. Nevertheless, we do not know anything about the number of burials at these sites and it is impossible to attribute particular inventories to specific graves.

Fig. 2. Early mediaeval cemeteries located in the vicinity of Sandomierz: 1 – excavated cemeteries; 2 – cemeteries known only from serendipitous finds (image by M. Florek).



²⁵ Florek 2012, 48.

²⁶ Florek 2004, 326–328.

²⁷ Florek 2016.

²⁸ Gardawski, Miszkwicz 1956.

²⁹ Florek *et al.* 2000.

³⁰ Zoll-Adamikowa 1966, 116.

³¹ Balcer 1966, 370–373.

³² Gąsowski 1953.

³³ Bartys 1936; Sarama 1956.

Grave inventories from early mediaeval graves discovered in Sandomierz and in its vicinity

Both the cemeteries discovered in Sandomierz and those from the neighbouring areas contained the same categories of items – this statement concerns direct (personal) goods as well as funerary offerings.

The most common category of personal equipment – found in both male and female graves – are knives. In Sandomierz they occurred in 30 graves. In two cases knives – together with firesteels and strike-a-lights – were elements of sets used for striking fire. Of those, however, the set found in one of the oldest – dated to the turn of the 11th century – and most richly equipped graves from the cemetery on the Town Hill was deposited on the lid of the coffin (box) containing the body. The set should, therefore, be considered as a gift rather than an element of personal equipment. Knives were discovered in 51 excavated graves from the cemeteries located in the vicinity of Sandomierz. In one grave from Złota a knife was found together with a firesteel and a flint strike-a-light, and was most probably an element of a set used for striking fire. We also know that knives were found in graves from Ruszcza-Płaszczyna, Dwikozy and Garbów Stary.

The second most numerous artefact category are temple rings. They were made of silver, tin alloys or copper alloys.³⁴ Temple rings made of copper alloys were sometimes silver-plated. Most often, such artefacts are hollow, with smaller specimens also made of wire. Sporadically, they are woven of fine wire, or hollow with ornaments composed of fine pieces of wire soldered with the use of a technique resembling filigree. All in all, they represent different variants of type III, especially IIIB and IIIC, according to the classification by K. Musianowicz.³⁵ Temple rings were discovered in 28 graves from Sandomierz and 28 features from six cemeteries located in its vicinity. Most often, they occurred in pairs (two specimens). Less frequently archaeologists found one, three or four such artefacts. In single cases there were even more such adornments in a single grave, but their number did not exceed ten. We know that temple rings were discovered in an unspecified number of graves from Dwikozy, Garbów Stary and Tarnobrzeg-Miechocin.

Glass beads, beads made of semi-precious stones or (in extremely rare cases) of metals, discovered as elements of necklaces or other adornments, but sometimes occurring individually, were found in 17 graves from Sandomierz and in nine graves from cemeteries located in its vicinity (7% of all the analyzed funerary features). We know that

they occurred in at least one grave from Garbów Stary. The same applies to the burial ground in Zawichost.

Metal band rings (circles) – silver or copper alloys, made of wire, hollow or woven of fine wire pieces – as well as those made of glass were discovered in 17 graves from Sandomierz and in nine graves from the cemeteries located in its vicinity. Not all of them should be considered finger adornments, which is indicated by their locations in graves. Such artefacts occur in graves individually or in pairs (in the latter case each adornment is usually made of different material).

The remaining artefacts considered personal equipment (adornments and clothing elements) were discovered in single graves. A so-called lyre-shaped belt buckle occurred only in one grave from Sandomierz, in the burial ground on the Old Town Hill. What is interesting, at least four belt elements of this type were found on the territory of the neighbouring settlement dated to the same time as this cemetery. A single lyre-shaped belt buckle occurred in three graves from cemeteries located outside Sandomierz – in Samborzec, Kamień Plebański and Garbów Stary. Horseshoe-shaped fibulae (copper alloy, one with an iron needle) were discovered in only two graves dated to the earliest phase of the cemetery on the Town Hill in Sandomierz. At the same time, so-called ringed pins (brooches with a long needle) – which must have played a similar function – occurred in only two graves from the cemeteries in Złota and Ruszcza-Płaszczyna.

Artefacts representing other adornment categories are basically single specimens. For example, a necklace woven of copper alloy wire was discovered in a grave from the burial ground located on the Old Town Hill in Sandomierz. A necklace made of fine silver wires occurred in a grave from the cemetery in Złota. Pendants made of animal teeth and shells – possibly used as amulets rather than adornments – were found in two graves from Sandomierz and in two features from burial grounds located near the town (in Samborzec and Gnieszowice).

It should be stressed that there were generally no adornments of considerable value discovered in the Sandomierz cemeteries or in those from the vicinity of the town. They are represented only by a silver open bracelet with ends in the form of stylised animal heads and by a silver *kaptorga* ornamented with filigree – both discovered in graves from the cemetery on the Old Town Hill in Sandomierz – as well as by a silver-plated copper alloy medallion with a representation of an imaginary animal found in the cemetery in Ruszcza-Płaszczyna.

The other group of inventories – funerary offerings in a broad sense – is composed of items deposited in graves

³⁴ According to unpublished chemical analyses, the temple rings described as silver are made of an alloy containing mainly tin.

³⁵ Musianowicz 1949, 132–155.

together with the buried people. As mentioned before, the aims of these actions may be different and usually difficult if not impossible to interpret today. Items included in this category and discovered in the cemeteries located in Sandomierz and in its vicinity include coins, spindle whorls, vessels (both clay pots and wooden buckets), possibly also fragments of clay vessels, weaponry, animal bones (probably remains of meat foods) and – very rarely – other items.

Single coins (only in one case two specimens were found in a single grave) – mainly dated to the second half of the 11th century – were discovered in Sandomierz in ten graves. They also occurred in five graves from three burial grounds located in the vicinity of the town (nearly 4% of the total number) – in one grave from Turbia, one from Złota and three from Samborzec. We know that such artefacts were also elements of grave inventories from Ruzcza-Płaszczyzna. As ritual functions are often attributed to them,³⁶ coins do not appear to be good indicators of the wealth of the buried people.

The second most numerous category of grave goods is represented by clay vessels and wooden buckets. In the case of the latter, the preserved elements are metal bands, fittings and handles. They occur in both male and female graves. We do not know whether such artefacts constituted gifts in and of themselves or if they were mainly used as containers with food and drinks for the buried people to be used on their way to the afterworld. In this regard, we should bear in mind that in two funerary features (graves 6 and 8, discovered in 2013–2015 at the cemetery on the Town Hill), clay vessel were found in a kind of wooden boxes or compartments located in the corners of the discovered coffins, as if in order to additionally secure them.

Clay vessels occurred in seven graves from Sandomierz and in five funerary features from burial sites located outside the town – four in Złota and one in Samborzec. Three clay containers were found – as we assume – in three different graves come from the serendipitously discovered cemetery in Garbów Stary. At the same time, buckets with metal fittings occurred in two graves from Sandomierz (both were found on the Old Town Hill), three from Samborzec and one from Gnieszowice.

In the case of fragments of clay vessels – from the cemeteries in Sandomierz and those located in its vicinity – we cannot be certain whether they were intentionally deposited or if they got there by accident (usually some time later).

Another category of grave goods is represented by weaponry (battle-axes and arrowheads exclusively). It is worth noting that militaria occurring in the graves from Sandomierz and its vicinity – just as across the whole

Lesser Poland region – are much less common than in Central Poland, Greater Poland and Mazovia. Certainly, this lack of weaponry does not mean that none of the buried people were warriors.³⁷

Battle-axes occurred in only one grave in Sandomierz, one in Złota and one in Zawichost-Podgórze. The latter, serendipitously discovered funerary feature was probably part of an inhumation cemetery whose precise location is unfortunately impossible to determine with certainty. One or two iron arrowheads from one of the graves in Złota should probably be considered as intentionally deposited. On the other hand, the arrowheads lodged in the spines of two people buried in the burial ground on the Old Town Hill in Sandomierz were most probably the cause of their deaths and not elements of grave inventories.

Everyday use items – aside from spindle whorls – were exceptionally rare among grave goods. A hone occurred in a grave from Samborzec, an ornamented bone needle case was also found in Samborzec. An artefact referred to as a fishhook was discovered in the cemetery in Gnieszowice. Spindle whorls come from five graves located in Sandomierz – three from the cemetery on the Old Town Hill and two from the burial ground on the Town Hill. Spindle whorls are usually thought to have been deposited in female graves, but one of the artefacts found on the Town Hill occurred in a funerary feature in which a man had been buried (grave 9). Another item of this type was also found in one of the two graves from Turbia. The above-discussed artefacts conclude the list of the grave goods found in the early mediaeval cemeteries located in Sandomierz and its vicinity.

Conclusions: Wealth of the people residing in Sandomierz and the neighbouring settlements during the 11th and 12th centuries in the light of the materials yielded by the cemeteries

In comparison with similar cemeteries from Greater Poland, Pomerania, Central Poland or Mazovia dated to the same period, the burial grounds discovered in Sandomierz and its surroundings – just as those from other parts of Lesser Poland – appear to be remarkably modest in regard to the percentage of the furnished graves and, especially, the number and quality of items deposited as elements of grave inventories. This applies to both personal equipment – including adornments and clothing elements – and (perhaps especially) items

³⁶ Cf. Miechowicz 2011; Wachowski 1992.

³⁷ Cf. Sikora 2014.

offered to the buried people and deposited with them in their graves (e.g. weaponry). What is more, in the case of the graves located in the vicinity of Sandomierz and containing various artefacts – including vessels and weapons – we have reasons to suspect that they contain the remains of people who came there from elsewhere and followed funerary traditions that differed from the local customs.³⁸ This fact indicates that the regional funerary rituals prevalent during the 11th–12th centuries and limited to Sandomierz and its vicinity – or, more generally, to the whole region of Lesser Poland – did not involve equipping the dead with different items or burying them in ceremonial clothing or – in the case of women – inhuming them with their adornments (or these rites included such elements, but to a modest extent). If this was the case, we should attempt to decide what the reasons behind this fact might have been. There are several plausible answers. It appears that we can rule out the possibilities that people residing in Sandomierz and its surroundings were relatively poorer than their contemporaries inhabiting other parts of Poland or that the graves of people representing the local elites have simply not been discovered so far: it appears that grave 19 from the burial ground in Kraków-Zakrzówek³⁹ and grave 9 from the cemetery on the Town Hill in Sandomierz⁴⁰ can be considered elite burials, albeit rather because of their forms and not due to their inventories. It is more probable that the discussed fact results from the early spread of Christian funerary rites, which were adopted with the introduction of the skeletal rite (abandoning cremation and accepting inhumation). Nevertheless, we need to point out that the transition from cremation – which had been popular across this territory – to inhumation, accompanied by Christian-type burial rites, did not necessarily mean the conversion of the whole population to Christianity.⁴¹ In fact, there are indications that the actual acceptance of Christianity by the populations of Sandomierz and the neighbouring settlements took place relatively late, most probably not sooner than in the 12th century.⁴² We cannot exclude that the custom of furnishing graves with modest inventories or not equipping them at all is just the continuation of

earlier burial rites prevalent across this territory in pagan times. The great majority of the analyzed early mediaeval cremation graves from the vicinity of Sandomierz, as well as of those from other parts of Lesser Poland, were furnished neither with personal equipment (adornments, clothing elements) nor with grave offerings.⁴³ It is also possible that both factors had an influence on this state of affairs – the earlier pagan tradition of not equipping graves with inventories, or equipping them in a modest way, was amplified by Christian funerary customs during the time of transition from cremation to inhumation.

The comparison of the inventories of the 11th and 12th century graves from Sandomierz with those discovered in the vicinity of the town compels us to state that in both groups burials furnished with equipment make up about half of the discovered features, and that so-called direct goods – clothing elements, adornments and knives – are predominant. There are no major differences concerning the categories (types) or number of artefacts discovered in the graves. Items not being personal goods (artefacts that can be included in the broad category of funerary offerings) – vessels (both containers made of clay and wooden buckets) and sporadically weaponry or other artefacts – were found only in burials from the earliest phases of the cemeteries, dated to the turn of the 11th century, as well as in those from the 11th century. At the same time, there are many signs that at least some of them are graves of people who arrived to this region from other territories.

Therefore, grave inventories seem to indicate that the wealth levels of Sandomierz residents and of people from the neighbouring settlements buried in non-churchyard cemeteries were similar, but this assumption is not conclusive. The lack of differences in the grave inventories may be simply the result of the contemporary local customs prevalent in Sandomierz and in its neighbourhood. Another question is whether such customs were the continuation of earlier regional traditions, whether they resulted from adopting Christian funerary rites, or whether both factors influenced this state of affairs.

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³⁸ Cf. Florek 2004; 2019b; Błaszczuk *et al.* 2018.

³⁹ Cf. Błaszczuk *et al.* 2015, further literature therein.

⁴⁰ Bajka, Florek 2015.

⁴¹ Cf. Florek 2015.

⁴² Florek 2019b.

⁴³ Cf. Zoll-Adamikowa 1979; Florek 2011.

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