

HUMAN AND ANIMAL BURIALS IN A CEMETERY OF THE POMERANIAN CULTURE AT KUCHARY, DISTRICT OF PLESZEW

Summary

The report presents results of excavations carried out in 1971 in a strongly damaged flat cemetery of the Lusatian Culture at Kuchary, district of Pleszew*. Explorations led to the discovery of 19 graves including: 11 cremation burials, 1 pseudo-cremation burial, 6 pit-graves and 1 bell-grave. Two graves were provided with a stone lining, four were covered with a stone pavement, three others displayed both structural elements. A thorough anthropological analysis showed that 15 burials contained burnt human skeletons, whereas the 4 remaining graves (No 4, 7, 13 and 18) were animal burials. Examinations determined the approximate age of 12 human individuals and in five cases also their sex¹¹. 17 graves were single burials; grave No 8 contained the double burial of an *Adultus* and *Infans* I; in grave No 7 appeared numerous remains of a horse and of a sheep or goat. Systematic stratigraphic explorations of the burial content in graves No 3, 9, 12 and 19 allowed to recognize the anatomic order of osteologic remains in cinerary vases only in a statistic sense¹⁸. Each one of the four animal burials contained horse remains. This interesting discovery qualifies the cemetery at Kuchary as the first archaeological site in which evidence is given that the population of the Pomeranian Culture used to honour their animals with a ritual burial. A stri-

king evidence thereto is given by the fact that these burials resemble exactly human graves as to their shape and structural details, as well as to their endowment, their localization in the cemetery and as to some other archaeologically deducible details.

The nearest and as yet unique parallel can be drawn between the necropolis at Kuchary and a contemporary cemetery of the Culture of bell-graves recently discovered at Zarzenie, a suburb of Warsaw. But animal (sheep and goat) burials differ here by their grave furnishings (iron hooks and eyes), by their situation in the cemetery (visibly concentrated on the edge of the site) and by the grave type (exclusively pit graves). At Kuchary, instead, three burials belonged to the pit-grave type and the fourth one to the urn-grave type. We may not be far wrong in supposing that a future interpretation of the animal burials of Kuchary will recognize them as a variety of symbolic tombs²³ or as a manifestation of some kind of animal worship.

The particular tombs differ also in respect to their structural details and sepulchral endowment. In graves No 3, 7, 9 and 15 cinerary vases were covered with bowls. The only two pot-lids were found in pit-grave No 16 (Fig. 29, 1, 2), what seems to prove that lids of the kind had already lost their

well defined function fulfilled during the Hallstatt Period. In graves 9 and 11 cinerary vases stood on a flat stone, whereas in grave 7 the carefully chipped and smoothed bottom of a big clay vessel acted as support (Fig. 18:2). In graves No 8, 12 and 19 the urn was covered with stake remains. As to their sepulchral furniting, the burials of Kuchar are considered as one of the richest in the Pomeranian Culture (average number of funeral gifts per grave: 2,31 by taking into account small pottery sherds; 1,3 when rejecting sherds). Tiny metal and organic objects accompanied the dead on the funeral pile, as testified by fire traces still visible on their surface. Three human burials (No 6, 16 and 19) contained small quantities of animal bones what points to the usage of providing the dead with meat-food.

The ceramic record displays characteristic features which link it with numerous pottery deposits of the Pomeranian Culture from the Early and Middle Latène Period. But it bears also certain elements which are typical for the Lusatian Culture (tureen with its rim bent inside — Fig. 32:6; small globular amphora adorned with suspended triangles — Fig. 6:1). That is why explorers decided to

assign the cemetery at Kuchar to the above mentioned early and middle stage of the Latène Period. Such a chronological framework seems also justified in the light of following facts:

- 1) lack of determinants for the older stage of the Pomeranian Culture (cist graves, face-urns and akin forms);
- 2) lack of Late Latène elements (the only exception is the fragment of a pot found in grave No 4, provided with a faceted rim strongly bent outwards — Fig. 10:1);
- 3) differentiated forms of the funeral rite:
- 4) bowls used to cover cinerary vases, instead of clay lids commonly utilized during the Hallstatt Period⁴⁸;
- 5) burials in bell graves⁴⁹.

Chronological facts of the kind are sufficiently reliable and can not be denied by the presence of relatively numerous pots with a polished black surface (9 items) because, contrary to older assumptions, they do not vanish with the Hallstatt but survive into the next period.

* The footnotes according to the Polish text.