

The Oksywie Culture on the Right-Bank Lower Vistula¹

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The late 3rd and early 2nd centuries BC saw major cultural changes and transformations which brought about a change in the appearance of not only the lands of modern Poland but also of the whole of central Europe. The changes were precipitated by the impact coming from the societies of the La Tène culture that grew in strength, both economically and politically no doubt, at that time (Godłowski, 1977, s. 111–120; Woźniak, 1970; 1986, s. 12–13). The arrival of goods of a Celtic character marks thus the inception of an intensive La Tène influence process – a far-reaching impact of Celt civilization – going far beyond the area of their compact settlement. The impact, in combination with the strong traditions of the local sub-stratum, caused new cultural patterns, typical of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age, to develop.

On the lower Vistula River, the transformations are associated with a new unit, i.e. the Oksywie Culture. The questions related to the presence of its populations on the right-bank lower Vistula form the bulk of this thesis. The area, covering the districts of Nowy Dwór Gdański, Elbląg, Malbork, Kwidzyn, Sztum and the western fringes of the Iława district (Fig.), is the least explored enclave of the Oksywie Culture settlement, while its spread over this area is an ‘uncharted territory’ as far as the literature on the period in question is concerned.

Thus, this thesis is an attempt to outline the settlement changes, taking place in the area in question from the 2nd century BC to the early 1st century AD. The research follows the model set by Teresa Dąbrowska (2008) for the Przeworsk Culture in Mazovia and west Podlissia, and Ewa Bokinić (2008) for the Oksywie Culture in the Land of Chełmno. The

research procedure adopted by the present author is best reflected in the arrangement of the monograph. Volume I comprises the textual body of the thesis, i.e. introductory remarks and the history and state of archaeological research on the right-bank lower Vistula prior to 1945.

Next, investigations carried out there after 1945 are discussed. The study includes a detailed catalogue of 44 sites (Fig.), forming the source basis of the thesis. The catalogue presents artefacts from the 23 cemeteries (18 archival) and 21 settlements (8 archival) of the Oksywie Culture. It also presents the sites that have been explored under the programme of the Archaeological Record of Poland (AZP) (7 in all) and the finds the context of which could not be determined. The catalogue includes materials published prior to 2011 and identifies them in accordance with the current and widely accepted findings concerning typology and chronology.

Subsequent chapters are devoted to the study of the sources and an attempt to see through them into the cultural situation of ‘Oksywie’ societies on the right-bank lower Vistula and their relationships with other formations of the central European *Barbaricum*. The summary attempts to present the image of the Oksywie Culture in the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age as it appears based on the materials from this region of the lower Vistula area. Moreover, it points to other, than only archaeological, cognitive potential of the culture and the most important research suggestions. Volume II, in turn, comprises illustrative material supplementing the information in the catalogue.

The work on the thesis followed a comprehensive research of sources, which included both archival materials, i.e. diverse collections accumulated prior to 1945, and materials gathered in the course of excavations carried out after 1945. Despite a huge loss of information due to World War II and its consequent

¹ Submitted paper is a summary of the main theses author’s Ph.D. dissertation „Kultura oksywiska na prawobrzeżnym dolnym Powiślu“ (Teska, 2012).

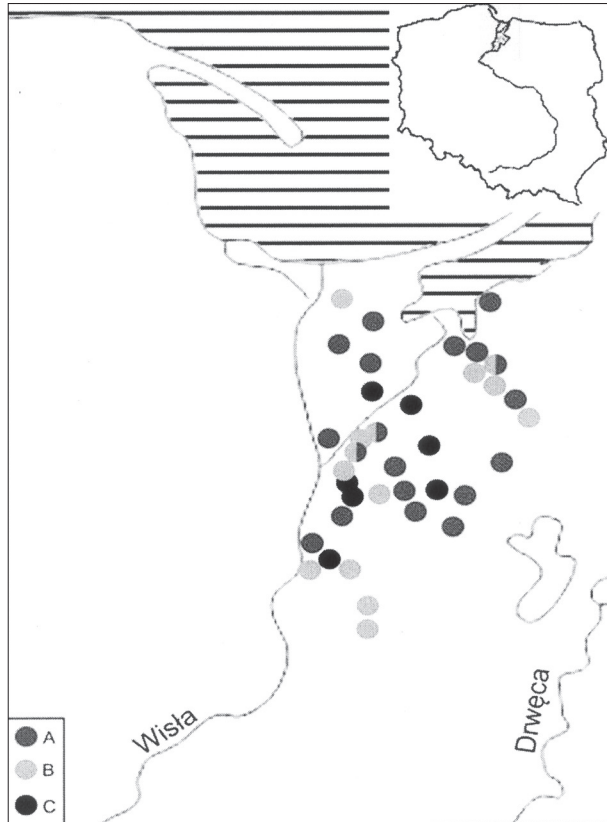


Fig. **Right-Bank of the Lower Vistula** (After Haftka, 1976) **and Sites of the Oksywie Culture in this Region** (After Teska, 2012).

Legend: A – cemeteries; B – settlements; C – sites that have been explored only under the programme of the Archaeological Record of Poland (AZP).

Pav. Dešinysis žemutinės Vyslos krantas (pagal Haftka, 1976) ir Oksyvos kultūros paminklai šiame regione (pagal Teska, 2012)

A – kapinynai, B – gyvenvietės, C – paminklai, tirti pagal programą „Lenkijos archeologinė nuotrauka (AZP)“

fragmentariness, experienced at almost every stage of investigations, the pre-1945 archaeological research continues to be crucial for the study of the area in question. This is seen in the fact that after 1945, on the right-bank lower Vistula, no large-scale archaeological investigations were undertaken, while scholarly monographs still refer to the work of German researchers (e.g. Hoffmann, 2000; Łuczkiwicz, 2006; Strobin, 2011; Teska, 2011).

Hence, the sources included in this thesis are cross-sectional in character. Their basic category is archaeological material, not infrequently preserved only in fragments, found in the storage facilities of ‘lower

Vistula’ museums or other institutions. This starting source base is supplemented by data obtained by scrutinizing documents stored in museum archives. This study has also taken advantage of publications of materials and natural-science analyses known from the professional literature (i.a. Zachowicz, 1985; Zachowicz, Kępińska, 1982; 1987). There are, however, very few in respect to the region under discussion.

For the purpose of this monograph, an attempt was made to bring together all the archival collections that are now stored in the Warmia and Mazury Museum in Olsztyn, Archaeological Museum in Gdańsk, Archaeological-Historical Museum in Elbląg, Castle Museum in Malbork and Castle Museum in Kwidzyn. Research found that these materials had not been separated in any way from the rest of the collections, obtained in the course of excavations on individual sites, with respect to their chronology or cultural attribution. For in the publications released so far, which relied on local collections to a different degree, little space was given to the Oksywie Culture (e.g. Łuka, 1956; 1966; Andrzejowski, Bursche, 1987; Żrówska, 2002–2003; 2004–2005; Hoffmann, 2006). The questions raised in this study were of little interest to scholars in the past; therefore, the little information that is available to researchers is highly incomplete or out of date.

The Oksywie culture materials from the right-bank lower Vistula fit into the whole younger Pre-Roman Iron Age. Hence, they are covered by the chronological framework developed for this section of prehistory by Ryszard Wołagiewicz (1979, Fig. 1) and Teresa Dąbrowska (1988, s. 62). They are synchronous with La Tène periods C and D and cover the last 250/225 years of the pre-Christian era. Owing to the fact that the Oksywie Culture subsisted for a long time on the territory mentioned earlier, the remains of its settlements can be observed there as late as horizon B1 of the early Roman period. According to Ryszard Wołagiewicz (1981, s. 146), this horizon covers approximately the first 80 years of the Christian era.

The problem of the origins of the Oksywie Culture is closely related to the question of settlement continuation/discontinuation in the time interval straddling the older and younger Pre-Roman Iron Age. Hence, it is related to the relationships holding between the Oksywie Culture and the Pomerania-Cloche horizon. Unfortunately, we lack any elements that would

testify to the long chronology of the structures typical of the older Pre-Roman Iron Age. The absence from graves of any artefacts, being good chronological markers, makes it difficult to date the decline of the Pomerania-Cloche Culture (Podgórski, 1992, s. 211; Czopek, 1992; Andrzejowska, 1995; Woźniak, 1995; Dąbrowska, Woźniak, 2005). According to the current state of our knowledge and contrary to the suggestions made in the literature, on the right-bank lower Vistula, no artefact complexes were found that would have chronological characteristics, suggesting the late Pomerania-Cloche horizon and that were associated with stage C of the La Tène period. Observed on the right-bank lower Vistula, a rather unclear cultural situation in the time interval straddling the older and younger Pre-Roman Iron Age seems to be the result of not so much the current state of field investigations but rather of unsatisfactory processing and publishing of lower Vistula materials. This, in turn, greatly limits their cognitive potential and hampers any attempts for a more precise estimation of findings based on studying local material culture, which serves as a chronological marker.

Consequently, the study of the connections between the Oksywie Culture and its Late Hallstatt-Early La Tène sub-stratum could be based exclusively on the earlier assumptions made by Ryszard Wołagiewicz (1979; 1981, s. 142). However, they were referred to the latest findings on the material culture. Taking into account certain specific similarities above all in the range and ceramic assortment of both cultures, as well as the sub-cloche burials, a hypothesis about the possible survival of the Late Hallstatt-Early La Tène tradition in the area under discussion can be adopted. On the right-bank lower Vistula, this is best evidenced by the burial site at Bystrzec. This type of tradition was supposedly best noticeable where the Przeworsk-type acculturation was marked the least (Bokiniec, 2008, s. 231). Whereas it is supposedly best reflected in the ceramic material, the stylistic similarity of which, following from the common Early Iron denominator, is clearly visible also in the case of Jutland (Hvass, 1985), Bornholm, Czerniczyn and Zarubintsy structures (Bokiniec, 2008, s. 231). However, it must be remembered that regardless of the degree of any affinity between the Late Hallstatt-Early La Tène structures and the Oksywie Culture, as well as other

archaeological units named above, their appearance is above all the result of general cultural processes that took place in the Europe of that period (Woźny 2011, s. 171).

The rise of the Oksywie Culture is in itself a very important and complex research problem going far beyond the region under discussion. The Oksywie culture, as a separate entity, rose in the Land of Chełmno and on the lower Vistula in phase A1, roughly at the same time as the Przeworsk Culture. This took place on the same Pomerania-Cloche substratum (Wiśniewska, 2004, s. 179; Bokiniec, 2008, s. 245). It must be remembered, however, that the appearance of the formation in question, especially in the initial phase of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age, is not that homogeneous. The cultural disparity that is observed in the archaeological material, dating to the moment when the style typical of the period was taking shape, is true for both the societies of the cultural unit under discussion, living on the lower Vistula, and those of the Przeworsk Culture. The regional differences or sometimes even local ones, which were arising then, observable in respect of the Oksywie Culture, are a result of multi-directional and complex influences that reached its home area at different times and with varied intensity (Dąbrowska, Woźniak, 2005, s. 93–94; Strobin, 2011, s. 84).

It has to be made absolutely clear that it did not have then, strongly suggested in the older literature, a clear Przeworsk character (cf. e.g. Wołagiewicz, 1981, s. 142). For the similarity between the two formations follows from the process of acquiring La Tène traits (Woźniak, 1970, s. 177) in which an important role was also played by the Jastorf Culture. It is under its influence that important changes took place on the threshold of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age. These affected mostly dress and the supplantation of pins with fibulae (i.a. Müller, 2000, S. 47). There is no doubt whatsoever that the Oksywie Culture developed under the influence of both units – the Przeworsk and Jastorf Cultures – but the impact of the latter seems to have been stronger.

The appropriate moment of a complete crystallization of the Oksywie cultural complex and its unification across the region, reaching from the lower Vistula area and the Land of Chełmno in the east as far as the Drawa Lakeland in the west, took place in the middle

horizon of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age, i.e. in stage A2. It is also at that time that weapons and tools came into use. Another simultaneous development was the emergence of a new ceramics style in the Oksywie Culture. A successive differentiation of the area settled by this group, albeit not as strong as the one observed in phase A1, took place in the late stage of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age. This was a harbinger of the deeper cultural changes that were to take place there in the early Christian era.

Against the background of the changes outlined above, the Oksywie Culture appears on the right-bank lower Vistula as a peculiar ‘organism’ that came into being by the ‘blending’ of the marked zones that were subject to diverse influences. These caused an internal differentiation of the area under discussion into three settlement clusters: Kwidzyn, Malbork, and Elbląg. This division is not purely geographical but, in the first place, reflects actual differences in the material culture and chronology. In the Kwidzyn cluster, which clearly gravitates towards the Land of Chełmno (Bokiniec, 2008, s. 245–246), we find the earliest elements, typical of the initial phase of the Oksywie Culture. Outside of this cluster, it is not readily visible in the context of lower Vistula materials. For it is evidenced by only few finds; these are chiefly fibulae and belt buckles associated with the Jastorf tradition. The materials from the Kwidzyn cluster indicate, however, to a slightly later time of site use than that in the Land of Chełmno. The earliest sites are those investigated by Waldemar Heym (1935; 1959–1961), head of the former *Heimatmuseum* in Kwidzyn. They are located mainly in Bystrzec and Nowa Wieś.

Hence, it can be claimed that the Land of Chełmno and the right-bank lower Vistula area were settled in the same phase of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age, but not at the same moment. In this aspect, the Oksywie Culture in the Land of Chełmno has a much greater share of common traits with the Przeworsk Culture. A logical question arises here about the significance of the Land of Chełmno for the settlement processes east of the lower Vistula. On the one hand, it can be assumed, of course, that it did not play any role there and the varied cultural situation observed in stage A1 is a result only of the uneven assimilation of ‘foreign’ influences by local societies, seen in the varied speed of La Tène trait acquisition. This phenomenon

is explained by the absence with respect to the Oksywie Culture of a superior unifying factor of the kind of direct Celtic stimuli, in the case of the Przeworsk Culture, and Gothic ones in the case of the Wielbark Culture (Bokiniec, 2008, s. 249).

On the other hand, it cannot be entirely ruled out that at least some impact could have reached the right-bank lower Vistula area from the Land of Chełmno. Such a situation could have been a result of the proximity of the two enclaves and interactions between them. Finally, it cannot be entirely excluded that a population group migrated from the Land of Chełmno to adjacent areas, i.e. located in the vicinity of Kwidzyn. All these hypotheses, however, are equally plausible in the light of available evidence. Here, however, the present author concurs with Henryk Machajewski (2012, p. 5) who believes that it is necessary to move the moment of the full development of the appropriate Oksywie Culture style deeper into stage A1 or, possibly, to its decline. This is borne out by the observations of the right-bank lower Vistula area, but may not be readily visible from the perspective of the Land of Chełmno.

The rest of the right-bank lower Vistula area could have been settled only in the horizon of phase A2. Elements unifying the phase included then in the first place weapons and tools which were found in all the settlement clusters distinguished there. This is also the strongest manifestation of the impact affecting the local sub-stratum and coming from the area settled by the Przeworsk Culture. Another ‘unifying’ element appears to have been a relative domination of urn graves, commonly associated with the Jastorf Culture tradition and continuing almost throughout the whole period when this culture subsisted on the lower Vistula. However, in phase A2, despite a quite unified cultural appearance of the right-bank lower Vistula area, mentioned earlier, its territorial differentiation if only partial, continues to be observed.

Again in this context, the Kwidzyn cluster stands out. Its distinguishing characteristic is seen in the presence of graves with sub-cloche burials (Bystrzec). This tradition, observable in the Kwidzyn cluster, is not recorded in the other lower Vistula settlement clusters of the Oksywie Culture. Yet again, however, it is very well evidenced in the Land of Chełmno. It is also in the Kwidzyn cluster that connections to Przeworsk pottery are relatively the most readily observed, unlike in the

other settlement clusters distinguished in this study. However, the connections are not as strong as might follow from the older literature (cf. Wołagiewicz, 1979, s. 48). Another distinguishing characteristic setting this cluster apart from others is the occurrence of Gotland-provenance artefacts (e.g. Staporek, 2007), which testify to the contacts maintained by the local populations with the northern shores of the Baltic Sea.

The decline stage of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age is best evidenced in the case of the Malbork and Elbląg clusters, which at that time began to differ from the hitherto dominant Kwidzyn cluster. Above all, these two clusters featured inhumation graves and the goods deposited in them are characteristic of the horizon under discussion. They dominate in the Malbork cluster, although single burials of this type have been recorded in the Kwidzyn and Elbląg clusters too. Interestingly enough, a single inhumation grave recorded in the Kwidzyn cluster should be placed still in the middle stage of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age!

Additionally, in the Malbork and Elbląg clusters, the share of pit graves is higher than in the Kwidzyn cluster. This might be caused by the fact that cremation urn burials were on the decline in the late stage of the period in question. In both Malbork and Elbląg clusters, the horizon of *geschweifite*-type fibulae is more strongly marked, which, next to similar funerary rites, is what the two clusters have in common. This situation is primarily brought about by the share of assemblages associated with phase A3. In the case of the Kwidzyn cluster, they are less readily observable than in the other two clusters. Nevertheless, despite these similarities, the two clusters also have traits appropriate only to them. In the Malbork cluster, for instance, the only late varieties of weapons and weaponry elements have been recorded so far, which are rare in the Oksywie Culture settlements on the right-bank lower Vistula. In the Elbląg cluster, in turn, one may notice a concentration of ornaments in the type of bracelets ending in small globes which are missing from the other local clusters of the Oksywie Culture.

Curiously enough, these forms are recorded in both the Land of Chełmno and on the left-bank lower Vistula (Dąbrowska, 2004, s. 86). In the Elbląg cluster too, a single specimen of a Jezerin-type fibula was discovered, pointing to a relative late chronology, reaching already the beginnings of the early horizon of Roman

influences. Another find of this type of fibula was discovered in the Kwidzyn cluster, which belongs to a group of artefacts rarely encountered here and providing evidence for the interim stage leading to the Roman period. The late chronology of the lower Vistula materials of the Oksywie Culture, concentrated especially in the north of the right-bank lower Vistula area, is good reason for an argument to revise the findings on the beginnings of the Wielbark Culture settlement in the area. Until now, they have been dated to as early as phase B1a.

The ties between the Oksywie and Wielbark Cultures are chiefly those of continuation, clearly observable in the continuity of settlement. For the Wielbark Culture, in stage B1 of the period of Roman influence, encompassed the same territory as its predecessor (Wołagiewicz, 1981, s. 163–164; 1986, s. 311; 1993, s. 29–30). For this reason, the question of the decline of the Oksywie Culture and its practically automatic replacement by the new civilization model has been accepted as an axiom. From the perspective of the lower Vistula materials, however, certain reservations present themselves as to defining the moment the cultural change occurred. It is widely believed that the change is marked by inhumation and a specific type of grave goods. The latter features a style typical of the central and north European early Roman stylistic trend that developed under the influence from Noricum-Pannonia bronze workshops (Wołagiewicz, 1981, s. 165–166).

In the territory covered by the Oksywie Culture settlement, including also the right-bank lower Vistula area, inhumations are recorded, as mentioned earlier, as early as the middle stage of the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age. These are single cases, however. Problems arise only in the context of inhumation burials containing late varieties of the forms believed to be Pre-Roman, including mainly *geschweifite*-type fibulae. In the light of such materials, opinions can be heard, claiming them to be Wielbark in character and thus moving the culture to an earlier position (e.g. Żórawska, 2001, s. 65). An analogous situation is observed with respect to assemblages containing Jazerine fibulae and bracelets ending in globes. In their context, even the form of burial ceases to have any significance, when they are ascribed a presumed Wielbark provenance. Contrary to the suggestions made in the literature (Żórawska,

2001; Nowakowski, 1995, s. 60; 1996, s. 222), the present author sees no indications to locate burials containing fibulae of the varieties named above in the context of the early horizon of the Wielbark Culture. The same is true for bracelets ending in globes. Such bracelets, however, are most often encountered in Pomerania, in the Oksywie Culture, and as such they will have to be considered a peculiar trait of local workshops (Dąbrowska, 2004, s. 85).

The decline of the Oksywie Culture on the right-bank lower Vistula, against the background of its local origins, appears to be relatively clear. The only problem is posed by the time of the cultural changes that took place then in the area under discussion. For it does not seem justified to move the decline of the Oksywie Culture deeper into the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age. The present author is in favour of moving the bottom chronological limit of the Oksywie Culture deeper into the early period of Roman influence as much as to include stage B1a in it. This approach is justified by the sepulchral materials of the Oksywie Culture, having a rather late chronology – going beyond the first two decades of the Christian Era – while little evidence is available here of the early horizon of the Lubowidz phase of the Wielbark Culture. This problem has already been raised with emphasis in Henryk Machajewski (2006, s. 37) and Joergen Kleemann (2007, S. 60).

Finally, a mention must be made of some questions, referred to already in this monograph, which for reasons beyond our control, could not be fully explained and have not been solved. They have been formulated as research suggestions, indicating the directions of further research into the settlement in the area under discussion. What seems to be the first priority is the processing of Pomerania-Cloche Culture

materials, representing the decline of the older Pre-Roman Iron Age. Another question deserving attention is the sparseness of settlement in the northeast of the right-bank lower Vistula area, i.e. the Oksywie-Baltic zone. In the opinion of the present author, the existing state of documentation may be aggravated by the poor state of research. What could be of help would be to bring up to date the AZP maps for the area in question. Another crucial matter is the publication of excavated materials. Such publications should take the form of full monographs of sites. Brief communiqués on investigations, showing only selected aspects of sites, will not suffice in this context.

To recapitulate, any future review of the cultural changes taking place in the right-bank lower Vistula area in the younger Pre-Roman Iron Age should rely on the effects of systematic investigations and stay in proportion to the growth in resultant archaeological sources. Growth, however, has been witnessed only recently and is a consequence of rescue excavations, accompanying various construction projects. The unavailability of full site publications is no doubt a matter of discomfort while writing research monographs. The problem of ‘incompleteness’ of the source base, including alas, even the most recent one, has affected the writing of this study as well. Out of major recently explored sites of the Oksywie Culture, only few, excavated in the course of rescue investigations, have preliminary descriptions. Unfortunately, none of these has been published. Moreover, site descriptions should include the results of a wide range of biological and physico-chemical analyses. With respect to funerary sites, comprehensive anthropological expert reports are necessary, which are lacking in the majority of sites discussed here.

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OKSYVOS KULTŪRA DEŠINIAJAME ŽEMUTINĖS VYSLOS KRANTE

Milena Teska

Santrauka

Oksyvoso kultūra, kaip nauja vėlyvojo ikiromėniškojo geležies amžiaus archeologinė kultūra, susidarė dėl keltų pasaulio įtakos bei Pševorsko ir Jastorfo kultūrų impulsų III a. prieš Kr. (A1 periode). Kultūros vardas kilo nuo vietovės Oksywie (Oxhöft), šiuo dieninio Gdynės miesto dalies, apie 10 km į šiaurę nuo Gdansko, kur buvo atidengtas šios kultūros kapinynas. Pradžioje ši kultūra užėmė visą dešiniąją žemutinės Vyslos pusę ir sritį prie Chełmno (Kulmo). Klasikiniam periode A2 kultūra užėmė ir sritį Pomeranijoje. Archeologinių šaltinių duomenimis, čia buvo įsikūrusios vietinių gyventojų grupės – Pomeranijos kultūros tęsėjos. Dėl materialinės kultūros pokyčių ir galbūt gotų diktuojamų laidojimo papročių iš Oksyvoso kultūros ikiromėniškojo laikotarpio A3 periodo pabaigoje ir romėniškojo laikotarpio B1 periodo pradžioje išsivystė Wielbarko kultūra.

Archeologinę medžiagą, reprezentuojančią Oksyvoso kultūrą šioje Vyslos srities dalyje, sudaro archyvinė medžiaga (apie radinius, aptiktus iki Antrojo pasaulinio karo) ir archeologijos paminklai. Svarbiausią grupę tarp prieškarinio kolektyvų sudaro archyvinė medžiaga, kurią surinko Waldemaras Heymas (Heym). Šis žmogus į archeologijos istoriją pirmiausia pateko kaip *Heimattmuseum Marienwerder* vadovas.

Dėl Antrojo pasaulinio karo maišaties didžioji W. Heymo rinkinio dalis yra negrįžtamai dingusi arba išbarstyta.

Likusi tik informacija apie pavienius artefaktus. Naujausi archeologiniai rinkiniai yra tik prieškarinio medžiagos papildymas. Jie nėra svarbiausia šio Vyslos srities regiono Oksyvoso kultūros kolekcijos dalis.

Turimas medžiagos rinkinys reprezentuoja Oksyvoso kultūrą visu ikiromėniškuoju laikotarpiu, t. y. nuo periodo A1 iki periodo A3. Dalis rinkinio yra iš to laikotarpio kapinynų, kaip antai Bystrzec (buv. Weissshof, Kreis Marienwerder) arba Stary Targ (buv. Altmark, Kreis Stuhm). Kapai, kuriuose rasta ginklų (ietigalių, kalavijų, antskydžių), yra ypač svarbūs, tačiau jie žinomi tik iš A2 periodo ir A3 periodo baigiamosios stadijos. Iš minėto laikotarpio ankstyviausio horizonto galima kalbėti apie Pomeranijos varpinius kapus ir Jastorfo kultūros įtaką. Geriau pažįstama Pševorsko kultūros įtaka, ypač Oksyvoso kultūros puodininkystei. Sumanymas nustatyti Oksyvoso kultūros gyvenviečių chronologiją pagal išlikusią medžiagą ir kaupiamą informaciją, kuri daugiausia fragmentiška, yra sunkiai įvykdomas. Kitu atveju tai klausimas, į kurį turėtume atsakyti.

Oksyvoso kultūros archeologinė medžiaga iš šitos Vakarų Prūsijos srities yra svarbi bendram Oksyvoso kultūros paveldui identifikuoti, ji reikšminga ne tik šiam Vyslos regionui.

Iš vokiečių kalbos vertė *Mykolas Michelbertas*

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