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The Unetice Culture Group in palaeosociological perspective

Based on the current state of knowledge in research on the Unetice culture in Poland, the article discusses several key issues for the reconstruction of palaeosocial prehistoric societies. Departing from the classical definition of archaeological culture, and basing on the results of e.g. bioarchaeological analyzes, the authors discuss the problems of individual and collective identity in the Early Bronze Age (the so-called opera model), and related issues of territoriality, linguistic community and customs. The article presents, among others, the Unetice funeral rites as well as the typology and evolution of mounds (the so-called prince burials).

KEY WORDS: Early Bronze Age, Central Europe, Unetice culture, prehistoric society, burial rites, palaeodemography

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Early Bronze Age in Europe has undergone a multitude of transformations through archaeologist's eyes over the past decades. The Unetice Culture Group is considered to be part of a wider pan-European cultural phenomenon, arising gradually between the second half of the third and at the beginning of second millennium. Regardless the simplification of that statement, it is also considered the first Bronze Age culture in Central Europe able to produce, use and reuse, modify and distribute bronzes on large, nearly industrial scale. The introduction of bronze metallurgy in this part of Europe was however a complex and multidimensional process, and the Unetice culture was definitely not the only one that possessed the knowledge of metalmaking. In south-eastern Poland another prehistoric population was specialized in metal production: the Mierzanowice culture (Machnik 1987; 1991). The Mierzanowice culture is also classified as

an Early Bronze Age culture *per se*, but a significant number of copper/copper-to-bronze objects found in Poland associated with this culture indicates a different type of metallurgy, as well as different model of social stratification with stronger division between males and females (Kadrow 1995; Howcroft 2013, 1–27, 56).

Although neighbouring with the Unetice culture, the Mierzanowice culture did not adapt to the more efficient, foreign technologies in metal making, and preserved certain specific social structure for few hundreds of years (Reinecke phases BA1-A2). In this paper we would like to summarize the current stage of research and focus on various aspects of the societal organization of the Unetice culture. From theoretical perspective, we will rely on archaeological evidence mainly from Poland (Fig. 1), however certain observations are linked to Czechia and Germany as well.

2. SOCIAL CHANGE AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: THE OPERA HOUSE MODEL

In European science, studies of social change have a long history. Aristotle was fascinated by change and its relation to organic growth, and he was among the first to make a scientific study of it (Nisbet 1969). Although the study of social change has formed a key mission for sociological research (Bourdieu 1999; Coleman 1990; 1991), defining social change has been far from easy. Indeed, social change has become rather a catchall term referring to just about anything in a state of flux. Lauer

defines social change as *alterations in social phenomena at various levels of human life from the individual to the global* (Lauer 1977.6; cf. Berry 1980), adding that these levels range from individual, personal attitudes and interactions to organizational, institutional changes affecting communities and society, leading finally to global transitions.

When considering Central European Early Bronze Age (EBA), some scholars focus on introduction of bronze metal-

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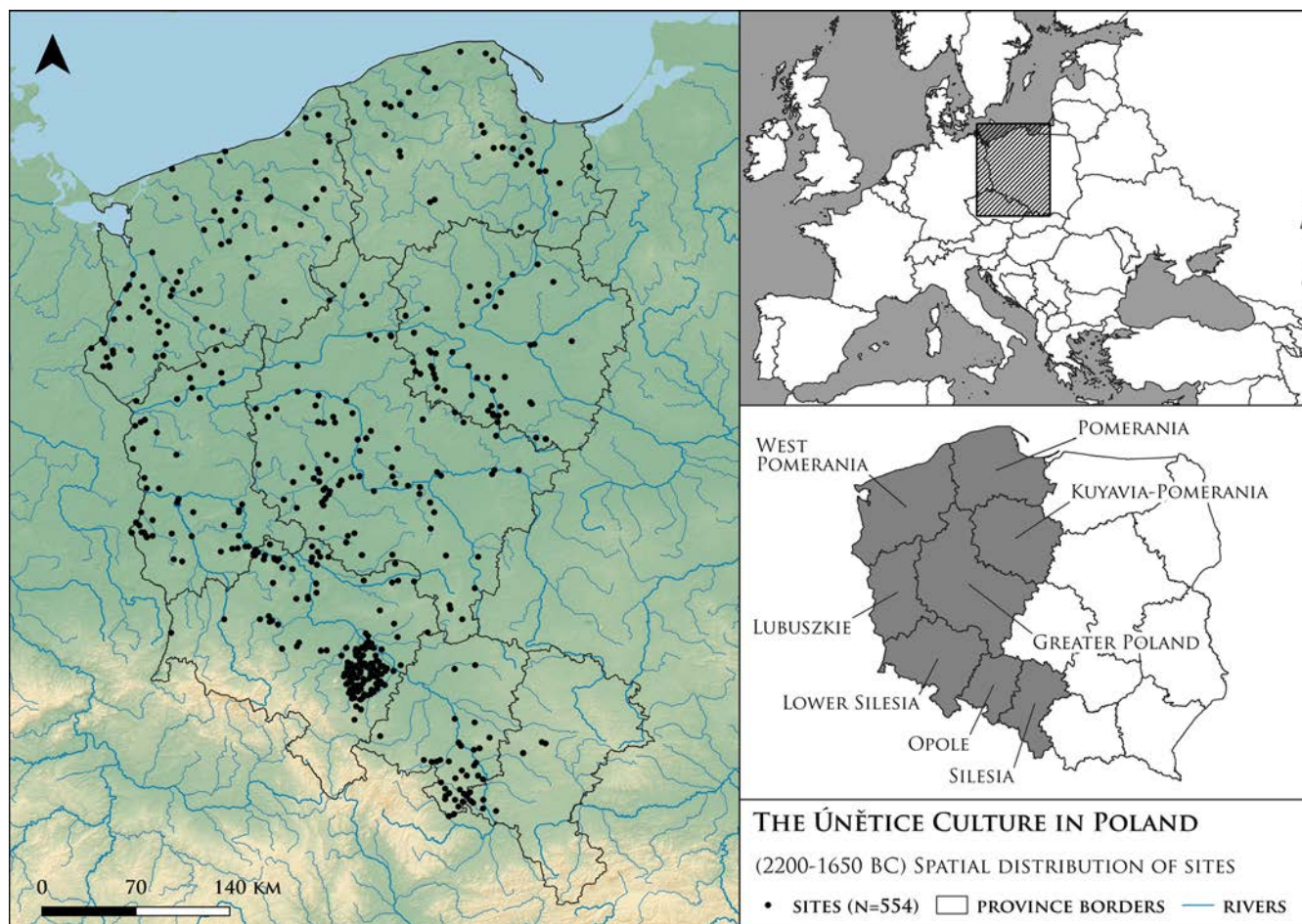


Fig. 1. The Únětice culture in Poland an overview. Based on: Pokutta 2013. Graphics by P. Toth

Ryc. 1. Kultura unietycka w Polsce – dystrybucja przestrzenna wszystkich typów znalezisk. Źródło: Pokutta 2013. Grafika P. Tóth

lurgy as the major factor leading to creation of a new type of society (Vandkilde 2007, 14–18). The notion that new technology directly influenced social changes can be related to ideas of social evolution, but when it comes to the formation of the Úněticean society this new metallurgical *know-how* is probably often overstated. We can argue throughout this paper, that the exact effects of any technological change are often hard to assess without deeper insight into demographic and cultural foundations of society. Bronze Age Europe lasted and developed through millennia, however this does not change the fact that at the very beginning in the EBA period, technological changes were frequently short-lived and may have affected only some parts of the social systems and some populations (La Pierre 1965). While technology may be important in influencing the global economy of Bronze Age Europe, this has to be viewed alongside other regional processes that may take evolutionarily different or, figuratively speaking, maladaptive course (Kadrow 1995, 10).

The general idea of a collective identity of the Únětice population is fundamental to all social interactions and the construction of a society manifested in material culture. Many forms of identity existed in the Bronze Age world, reflecting the many ways people connected to other groups and social categories. It may seem a paradox, but when it comes to defining what *identity* really means, archaeology is vulnerable and uncertain. We have encountered at least 8 different definitions, depending of the author's viewpoint and interests

(cf. Kristiansen 2014). Some authors profusely and sophistically presented internally contradictory definitions (*pars pro toto* e.g. mixing semantic meanings of *identity* with *ethnicity*), while others used correspondence analyses to *calculate* ethnic boundaries of envisioned populations (Sofaer Derevenski 1997, 2007, 2013). Lack of clear definitions is also to be found in anthropological research, which was humorously commented by Emberling, who concluded that 'There is a variety of possible ways to approach a term as ambiguous and susceptible to such varied uses as "ethnicity". One is to avoid discussing the term. After all, everyone uses the term, so we must all know generally what we mean by it.' (Emberling 1997, 300).

What constitutes the prehistoric identity then, and why is it so important? Thinking about group formation paradigms, the classical school of archaeology focuses on ethnicity and offers a certain solution, which was specified in Hutchinson and Smith's (1996, 6–7) definition of an ethnic group, consisting of six main features that include:

1. A common proper name, to identify and express the essence of the community;
2. A myth of common ancestry that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and which gives the *ethnicum* a sense of fictive kinship;
3. Shared historical memories, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration;

4. One or more elements of common culture, which need not be specified but normally include religion, customs, and language;
5. A link with a homeland, not necessarily its physical occupation (e.g. Jewish community and Israel) only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land; and
6. A sense of solidarity on the part of at least some segments of the population.

Kristiansen (1998, 2005) sees ethnic identity as a *shared symbolic world of cosmological order*, which additionally extends the definitional sense of the term, introducing cosmology as a variable, which in a number of cases is impossible to know in archaeology. From a theoretical perspective, problems appear in defining a social identity of the members of prehistoric communities as well due to the multidimensionality of the term. Every man and female living in the Bronze Age played at least several social roles (e.g. farmer/father/bronze maker or consumer, etc.), and all those labels acted simultaneously, being a part of the identity of that person. Moreover, all those social roles were constantly renegotiated within society during the lifespan as his/her age, economic and family statuses changed.

The study of social diversification of the Uneticean communities in Central Europe is in fact the foundation of what can be understood by population dynamics. Some artifacts found in burials, but more often the evidence from settlements indicate the presence of several distinct vocational groups, for example, archers and associated with this profession flint makers (e.g. in Chociwel), masons (production of grinding stones; Batora 2006, 105), carpenters and wheelers (e.g. coffins, boats, wheels). A separate category constituted metallurgists both bronze smiths and casters, known from number of burials (e.g. Erfurt-Gispersleben or Matúškovo; Batora 2006, 77–94; Müller 1999).

These professions were accompanied by the social segment of craftsmen, such as jewellery/beads/bones objects makers (e.g. in Tomice), goldsmiths and potters, wicker workers, weavers and textile makers (Przeclawice), tanners (Mýtna Nová Ves/Slovakia; Batora 2006, 117), amber collectors and faience merchants (Batora 2006, 195–202, Blajer 2001). The newest discoveries from Moravia indicate the presence of musicians and entertainers, buried with musical instruments e.g. flutes (Slovakia, Jelšovce cemetery, pers. comm. J. Batora). Stunning consistency in burial customs implies the existence of certain individuals familiar with the basics of astronomy supervising the ritual and funerary rites (cf. Meller 2002).

The instant flow of people and objects and a wide range of commercial contacts through centuries have shaped and formed a rich, strongly stratified society, actively expanding and organized around tribal centers, marked on the map of Europe by the presence of barrows. Looking from a general perspective, the self-identification of the whole community was a sum of personal identities sharing a common denominator, but for each member of this Uneticean world, personal identity comprised of unique characteristics like personality, skills, physical appearance etc., the structure of which resembles an *opera house* in the following example.

If we compare the mind of a given individual to a great opera house with hundreds of seats and a few stages, many identities (biological, social, ethnic) of the same person can be seen as spectators. Spectators occupy a specific seat and departments of the opera house, the first row belongs to label name, accompanied by label nickname. Next to these we find categories of gender, body building and height and body built, blood group, age, skin, hair and other elements of physical appearance of a given individual. Second and third rows are occupied by labels addressing family relations (the father of z, the son of x, the sister of y), relatives, neighbours, friends and kin-group. Just behind them we encounter ethnic and language categorizations, while the whole middle of the opera belongs to occupational labels, general wealth and economic positions, skills (e.g. bronze consumer, warrior/archer, farmer, bankrupt, traveller, etc.). The upper boxes, above the stage are taken by religious beliefs, spirituality, intelligence and knowledge, self-esteem, artistic abilities, aesthetics and political opinions, etc.

The very back of the opera congregates the *hidden labels*, social categories which are not presented and displayed publicly. Here we can find labels of private sexual preferences (socially accepted or not), victimization (parental violence, sexual assaults, rape etc.), unhealed mental traumas (e.g. witnessing a murder, or battle stress for Roman soldiers-veterans), infertility and impotence, and so on. Some of the spectators behave loudly, clapping their hands (*active labels*), while the presence of others is almost unnoticeable (*passive categories*), but all of them periodically move and exchange the seats with others, bestirring along departments, so the composition of audience fluctuates along time. The *identity is a process* in fact, and the quest for personal identity takes place on stage during life, in confrontation with the surrounding society. The remodelling or restyling is an essence of this mechanism, and due to aging, accumulation of personal experiences and learning, almost every category may be reshaped from religious beliefs to colour preferences, and from family relations to tribal affiliation.

All members of a population are engaged in this permanent and *never-ending* dialogue between the individual 'I' (spectators=individual) and the collective 'we' (society). Many people in a society share the same labels, and in fact the labels do not change as such (e.g. mother-females, farmer-males, or neighbour for almost all), but what is changing is the arrangement, a configuration of these categories in the opera audience, which is unique for each person.

The *opera house* multidimensional model of prehistoric identity presented above is flexible and can be used to combine and transfer a number of dynamic factors and information from the field of bioarchaeology to palaeosociology. We will rely on the presented example in our further investigation, also because multidimensional models are resistant to cognitive paradoxes (e.g. fundamental attribution error, the so-called *Actor-Observer bias*; Capozza 2000), which often lead to incorrect deductions/conclusions about motives of human behaviours in the remote past, due to the application of partially correct variables, leading to cognitive asymmetry between *the observer* (archaeologist) and *the observed* (prehistoric population).

3. GROUP FORMATION PROCESSES AND CORPORATE BEHAVIOUR

The opera house model makes it possible to sketch the basis of social interaction, this common denominator that linked the Uneticean populations. There are actually only three leading factors, and they are presented in the order of importance:

a) *The language*. The archaeolinguistic evidence is not present in this case, but a common spoken language was undoubtedly the strongest among any bonds for members of Unetice community, and the current of migrations indicates that at least a few groups of the Unetice culture (esp. Silesia and Germany; Pokutta 2013) might have spoken the same, or very similar dialects. The Unetice culture represented a large population with highly expansive mobility involved in international trade of bronze and amber, which includes knowledge of metrology with extensive use of water transportation. Such trade network demands certain methods of communication among populations, who probably do not share the same dialects, yet Uneticean bronzes are found also beyond Central Europe, so the question would be: how was the trade organized and what was the key to success?

b) *The territoriality*. We should be very careful when it comes to characteristics of prehistoric territoriality, and modern archaeology suffers from what we can call *horror vacui*, when it comes to drawing the maps of spatial distribution of archaeological cultures. How did the EBA population identify their land? We should keep in mind that vast territories of prehistoric Europe were inhabited by only a few millions of people, and in the Bronze Age this number might have oscillated around 3–6 million for the whole continent. There was not only enough space for a population of any size, but in fact human populations probably more often had to look for each other, instead of avoiding given territories. The boundaries between groups were unclear and not quite defined, full of gaps or no-man lands only occasionally crossed by humans, to which no particular tribe had any claim whatsoever. In this sense, it was rather rivers or natural landmarks (mountains, swamps) that might have been recognized as the end of our land, than any other physical boundary or delimitation. The Unetice population probably identified themselves more with their property, settlements and exceptionally with the livestock ('our cows', 'our horses', 'our houses'); the movables they consider to belong to them (Fig. 2; Fig. 3). The direct attribution to the land as a territory was probably a secondary issue, if it existed at all.

c) *Shared common values, habits and customs*. Smith (1993) suggested that the evolution of tribal behaviour in terms of what was seen as appropriate or not, had a specific tendency to apply a distinct sets of rules to people depending on their membership of an *in-group* (accepted) or an *out-group* (people not entitled to be treated according to the same rules).

The discussed common values also included aesthetics, artistic expression and everyday habits. The Unetice culture definitely has *the style* understood as combination of distinctive features of an aesthetic nature, original and unique forms, which in fact are even today difficult to forget or confuse with something else (e.g. Uneticean mugs or bowls on four legs, in metalmaking daggers and necklaces, but above all, the Uneticean halberds). This can be illustrated by the most commonly known ceramic form – the Uneticean mug (Fig. 4).

What made Uneticean lifestyle unique perhaps was not the quality or formula of alcoholic beverages, but institutionalization of drinking embedded in variety of ceramic forms designed for this purpose. The toast, a ritual of rising glasses during collective consumption is probably one of the oldest and most common European traditions associated with expression of good will and hospitality. Regardless, it is difficult to say when the custom of rising vessels during feasts appeared exactly, but indirect evidence points out Late Bronze Age. A specific shape of Uneticean mugs in classic phase with small handles, asymmetrically and vertically located in lower parts of the body required unusual skills to grab it or hold it, which this is shown in Fig. 4. In this case we can track the way vessels had to be held by users: with their index fingers securing the handle and thumbs most likely upwards to keep stability. From biomechanical perspective, the '*Uneticean grip*' in fact physically prevented drinkers from rising vessel to high especially with liquid content inside, it is therefore possible that people of the Unetice culture were not familiar with such form of drinking salutations (Pokutta 2014).

The forms of these objects result somehow from *modus operandi* of cultural values in a whole society, and were manufactured by the groups of people sharing guiding principles in matters of artistic taste and artistic sensibility. Collective opinions, customs, morals and taboos therefore formed the core of the *tribal identity*, and this should be seen as a necessary background for social institutions such as *princely graves*, forms of power and the presence of tribal upper classes discussed below.

4. MORTUARY DATA AS EVIDENCE OF RANKING 1: THE COMMONERS AND FLAT GRAVES

From a technical and constructional point of view, Uneticean graves can be divided in two categories: flat graves and barrows. Typologically they can be divided into four leading categories: a) single inhumations; b) multiple burials and mass graves; c) partial inhumations, and d) non-standardized interments, such as cremations, *pithos*-graves, etc. Taking under consideration location, burial can be additionally divided into 3 sub-categories: a) cemeteries; b) settlement burials, and c) single graves, usually found outside of burial grounds in random locations.

The size and shape of the burial pit varied depending on local soil conditions, body size of the deceased or the presence

of a coffin. We observe a large variation in this respect (Fig. 2). On average a typical grave was a rectangular or oval pit. Almost all Uneticean graves are oriented north-south. Dead bodies were positioned head south facing east. Exceptions from this rule can be found but are rather sporadic (Butent-Stefaniak 1997:180; Steffen 2010, 19–21). The graves of commoners may seem very alike, however they provide basic evidence of social differentiation within that group. Inside of the grave, the body might have been protected with cheap organic mats or (more expensive) coffin (Fig. 5). In majority of cases there was no additional coverage of the corpse (Fig. 6; 7C).

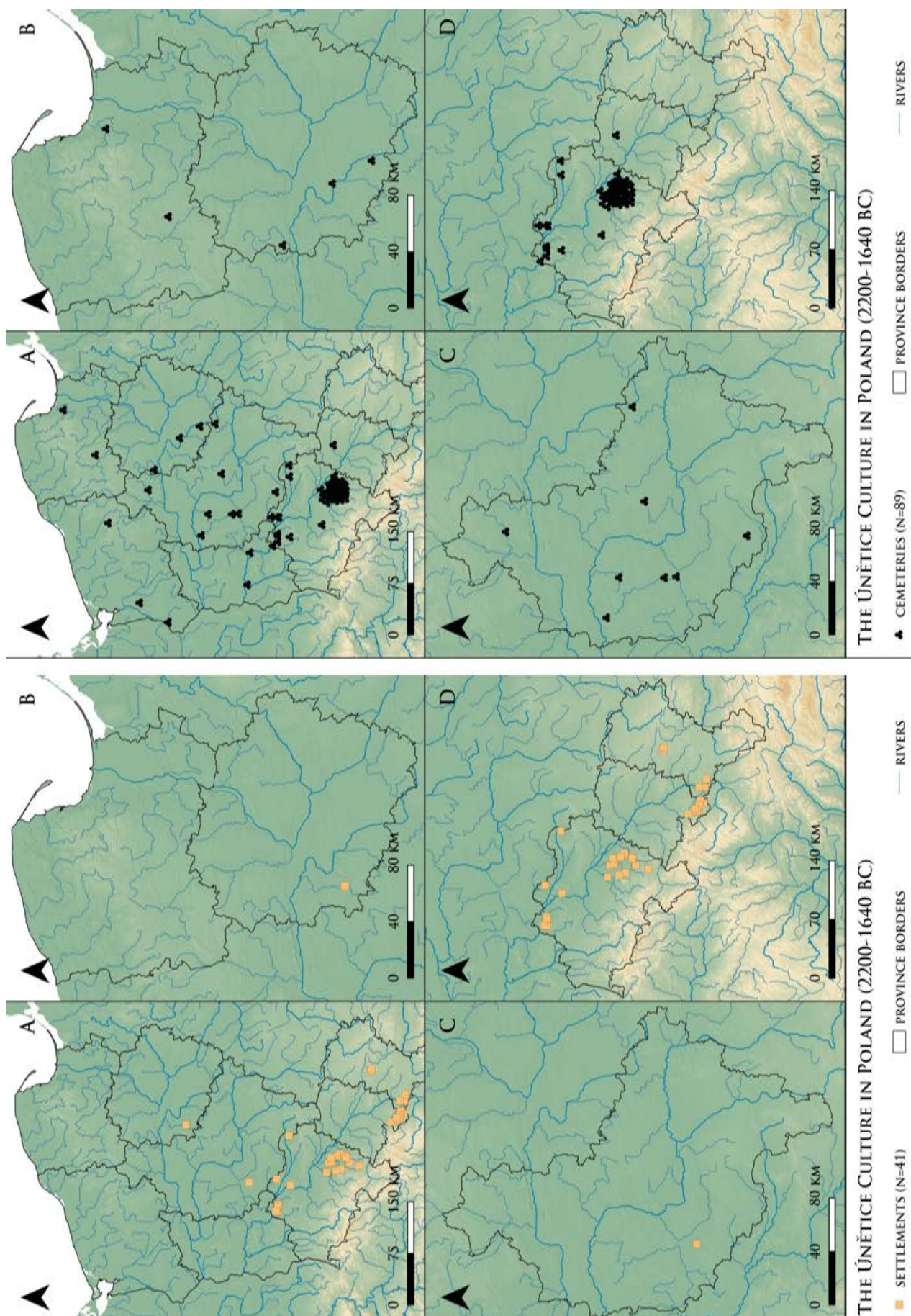


Fig. 2. The Unetice culture in Poland – spatial distribution of settlements and cemeteries. Graphics by P. Toth
 Ryc. 2. Kultura unietycka w Polsce – dystrybucja przestrzenna osad i cmentarzysk. Źródło: Pokutta 2013. Grafika P. Tóth

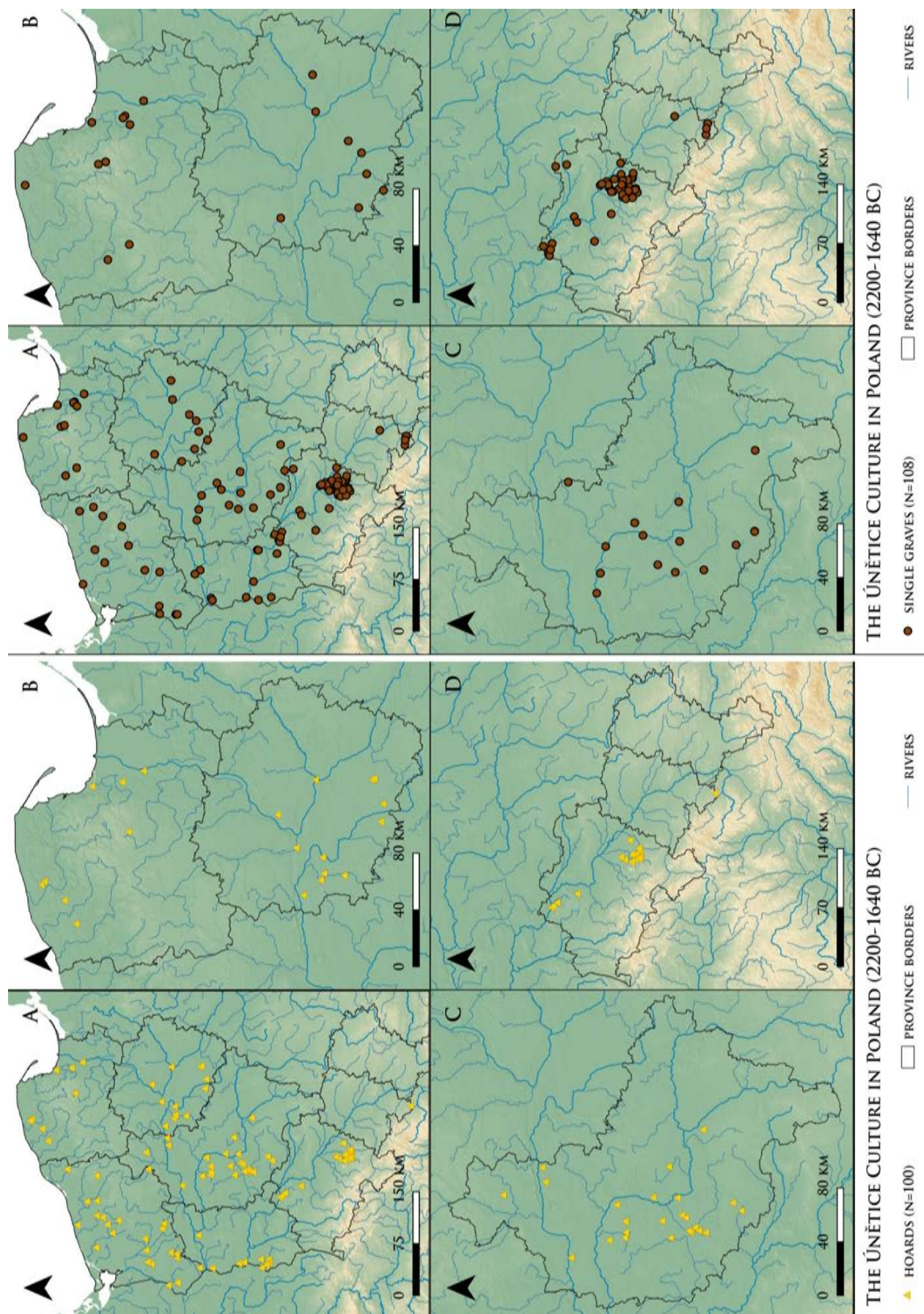


Fig. 3. The Únětice culture in Poland – spatial distribution of single inhumations and hoards. Graphics by P. Toth
 Ryc. 3. Kultura unietycka w Polsce – dystrybucja przestrzenna skarbów, znalezisk luźnych i pojedynczych pochówków. Źródło: Pokutta 2013. Grafika P. Tóth

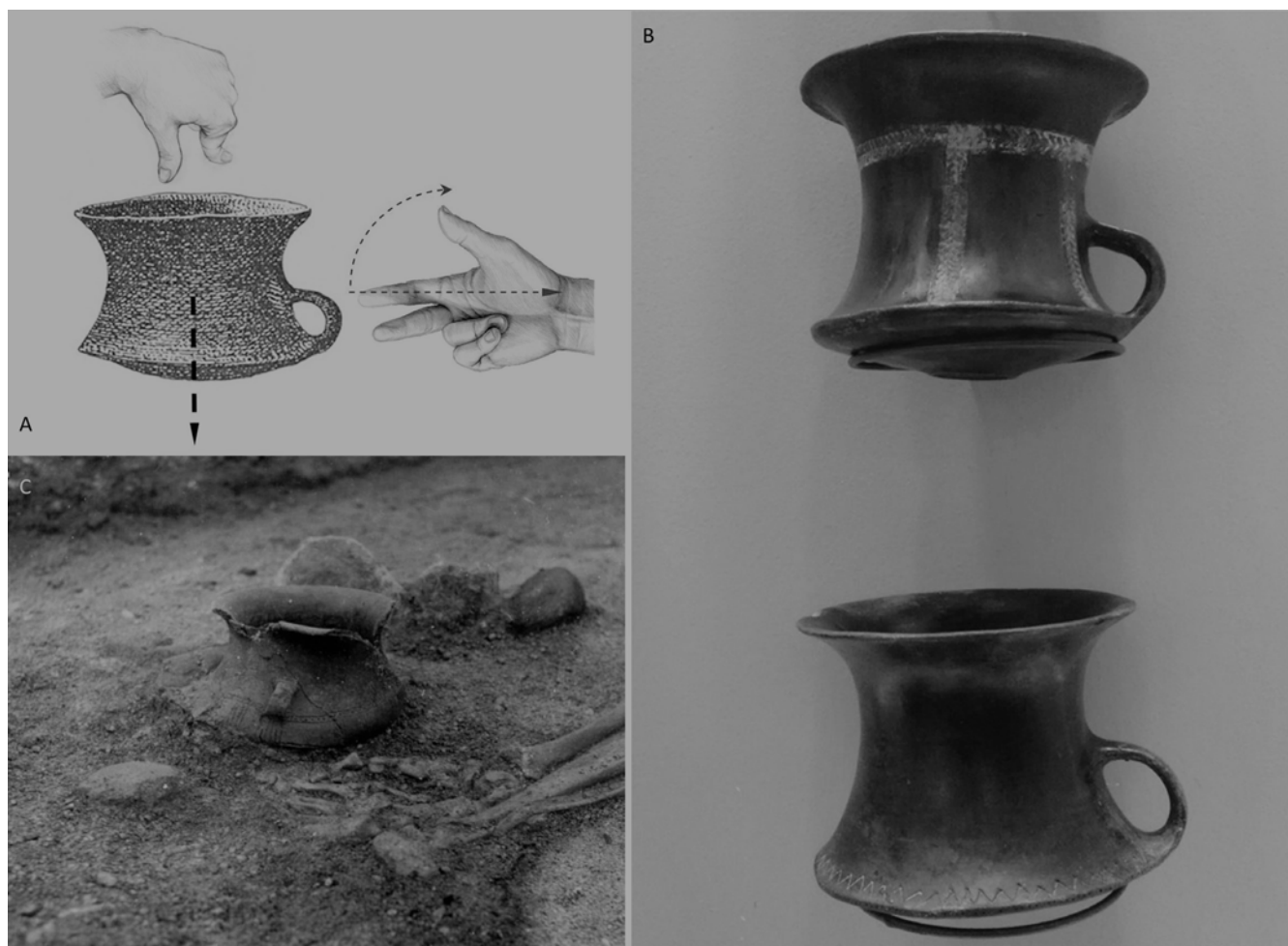


Fig. 4. Shared habits: A) Uneticean grip. After Pokutta 2014; B) Uneticean mugs, Archaeological Museum in Brno. Photo by D. Pokutta; C) a dead hand holding ceramic vessel a close up, Przecławice grave 52. Photo by I. Lasak (archival)

Ryc. 4. Prehistoryczne rytuały konsumpcji napojów jako elementy tożsamości plemiennych: A) „chwyt unietycki”. Wg Pokutta 2014; B) kubki unietyckie, Muzeum Archeologiczne w Brnie, Czechy. Foto: D. Pokutta; C) dłoń zmarłego obejmująca naczynie – detal fotografii archiwalnej; cmentarzysko w Przecławicach, woj. dolnośląskie. Foto: I. Lasak

In approximately 20% of burials, stone settings were found (Fig. 7D). Erection of a full stone setting or just a partial one (a few stones in the corners of grave) seems to be quite a common practice observed in all phases of the EBA in Central Europe. Solid stone pavements covering the interment are occasionally found (e.g. Przecławice graves; Tomice burial 19 or Opatowice grave 12). Sarnowska pointed out the possible relationship between some of those burials and the presence of barrows: according to her hypothesis some of the stone settings might have been the lowest part of a no longer existing barrows earth mantle (Sarnowska 1969, 21). Interestingly, stone coffins, or primitive sarcophagi, also appear in the archaeological record, but they are rare. However this proves a certain level of diversity in the burial practices. The stone coffin from Borów was 1.1×0.75 m and made of 2 cm thin stone slabs (Sarnowska 1969, 251). Machnik suggests that stone coffins might be connected with the later phases of the Unetice period (Machnik 1978, 93–94). Undoubtedly, the presence of stone embankments in common flat graves stays in relationship with Uneticean barrows, where core chambers were constructed of stones.

Wooden coffins can be seen as another distinction in mentioned group. Coffin burials appear in Central Europe in the

Neolithic and are well known from Bell Beaker and Corded Ware cultures in Moravia, however it would be difficult to prove that the coffin as a universal attribute of a burial ceremony can be associated with any particular archaeological culture (Ondráček 1962, 60). Generally this custom originates in Late Neolithic traditions. The Unetice culture wooden coffins are found in the Czech Republic and Moravian territories from the beginning, nevertheless the main core of finds seems to belong to younger phases (Ondráček 1962, 61). Similar objects have also been discovered on Unetice sites in Austria, Slovakia and central Germany. Coffins are also found in the neighbouring EBA Mierzanowice culture in Little Poland, SE Poland (Machnik 1978, 54–62).

Alternatively, the body may also have been wrapped in slightly less expensive organic materials such as wickerwork or leather (textiles?). An internment of this sort was, for example, discovered at Bruszczewo, a fortified settlement in Greater Poland (Müller et al. 2010, 725–729; Jaeger 2012). A wickerwork coffins have been found in graves in Przecławice, Łagiewniki and Gostkowice (Butent-Stefaniak 1997, 187; Lasak 1982, 127; Pazda 1982, 165). In all cases, the organic wrapping had been secured usually with a large stone placed on top. It is impor-

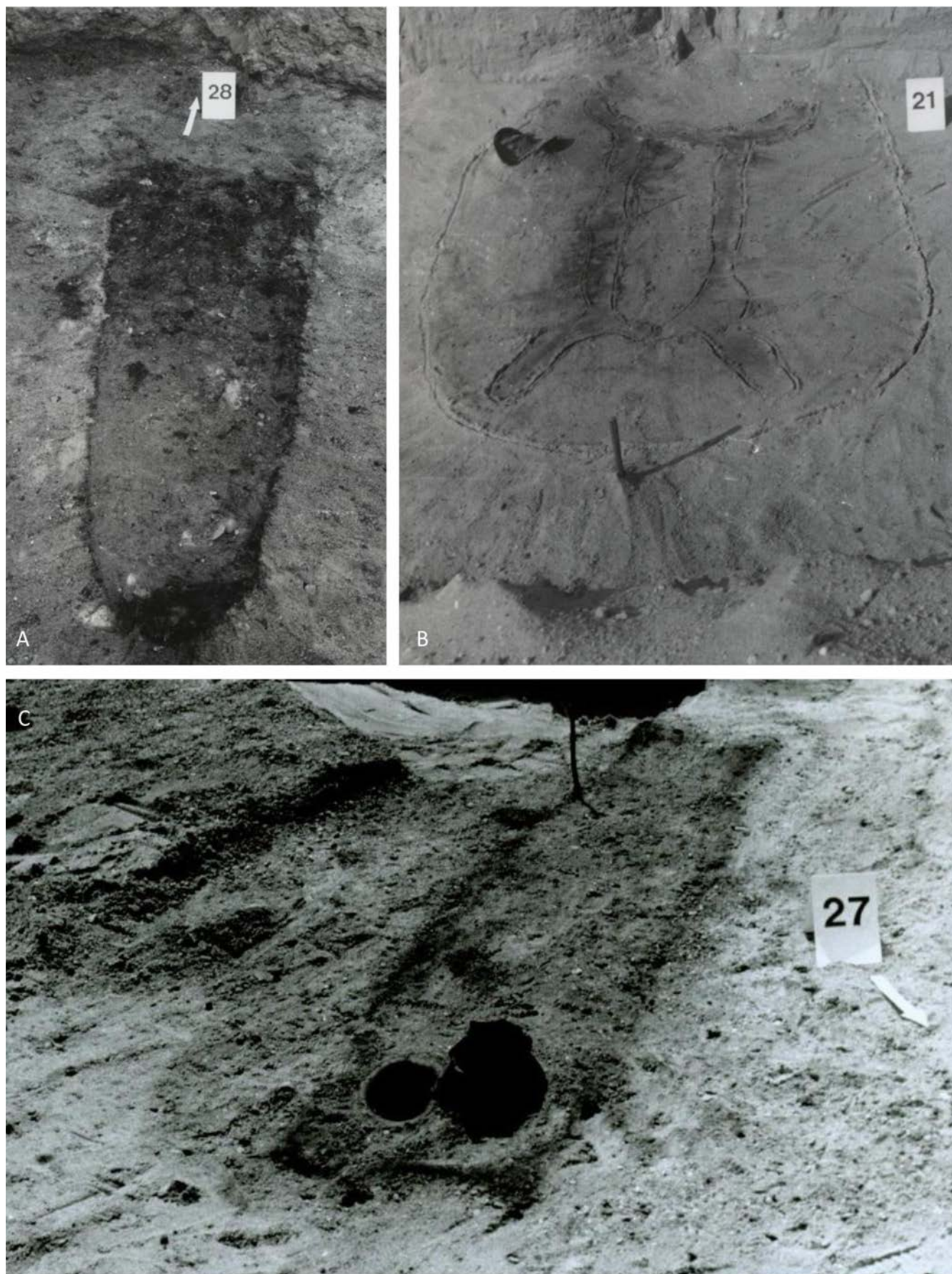


Fig.5. Typology of the EBA coffins: A) a canoe type; B) a stretcher type; C) a rectangular type. After Lasak 1982; Pokutta 2013. Photo: I. Lasak (archival)

Ryc. 5. Typologia trumien kultury unietyckiej: A) typ łódkowaty; B) typ noszy; C) typ prostokątny. Wg Lasak 1982; Pokutta 2013. Foto: I. Lasak (niepublikowane zdjęcia archiwalne)



Fig. 6. Typical Unetice flat inhumation: Modrice, southern Moravia, grave no. 8752. Photo: Z. Tvrđy and D. Parma
 Ryc. 6. Pochówki szkieletowe kultury unietyckiej: Modrice, południowe Morawy, grób 8752. Foto: Z. Tvrđy i D. Parma

tant to stress, that mats and rugs are typical for the Mierzanowice culture, a contemporary and neighbouring EBA population from south-eastern Poland. Moreover, shrouds and braids of Mierzanowice provenance were generously decorated with a variety of bone beads and shells. Butent-Stefaniak stresses the important connection between the presence of organic mats in Uneticean burials and possible cultural impact from their south-eastern neighbours (Butent-Stefaniak 1997, 186–187). An interesting and very rare type of burial was discovered at Przecławice (grave 14; Lasak 1982). The skeletal remains of a child were deposited in a large (approx. 60 cm high) vessel. All the grave goods were also inserted directly into the same vessel. Pithos graves (germ. *Pithosgrab*) are considered to be rare and appear chronologically very late. This type of interment is sporadically found in Hungary, Bohemia and Germany (Točík 1981, 46–47; Müller 1982, 119). It is considered strongly associated with Mediterranean burial traditions, but Moucha points out that a direct relationship between the appearance of this practice in the Uneticean environment and the influence of the Madarovce-Věteřov culture circle in some way connects Central Europe with the remote territories of Southern Europe (Moucha 1963, 57; 2005).

Paradoxically, grave furnishing provides very little information in terms of social ranking. Burial rites were regulated by specific religious customs and assumptions, and there is strong uniformity in this respect. The deceased were buried with several ceramic vessels (usually from 3 to 5) containing food and drinks *for the journey in the underworld*. Graves con-

tain also personal belongings, small bronze items or jewellery of rather sentimental value. The archaeological data indicate that the deceased were dressed accordingly for the season of the year, when the burial was taking place. Bronze and bone pins fastening mantles or furs were found at Przecławice and Tomice, mainly in the vicinity of the shoulders or centrally on chest (feasible winter graves). There are indications that the fastening of cloaks in the Unetice culture might have been related to gender. In female burials pins are more often found on right shoulder, while in male graves bone pins (especially in Proto – and Early – Unetice phases) occur on the left side; however this remains inconclusive due to incompleteness of the data (Romanow 1973, 101–151).

The consistent method in which bodies were deposited on cemeteries in classic phase (ca. 1800–1700 BC) indicates that specialized workforce might have been involved in burial ceremonies (the undertakers). The graves are usually located in parallel rows within mortuary space. Family burials are clearly marked clustering in sectors, and individual graves are frequently marked with stone stela on top. Also the location of the burial ground is frequently not accidental. To facilitate burial ceremonies, the majority of cemeteries is located within distance of up to 400 m from the settlements.

Fragmentary inhumations are extremely rare. They can be divided into two types: a) deposition of the head only, and b) a mixed and random combination of skeletal elements, with the absence of any significant part of a skeleton. Partial inhumations are known from Czechia and Moravia in relation



Fig. 7. Typology of the burials: A–B) Skeletal inhumation of an adult female, who died during pregnancy; Close up showing the foetus; Modrice cemetery, grave 3898; C) burial 3868, Modrice cemetery, Moravia, Czechia; D) stone embankment inside of the grave, Modrice cemetery, Moravia, grave 3886. Photos: Z. Tvrđy, D. Parma

Ryc. 7. Typologia pochówków z epoki wczesnego brązu: A–B) pochówek dorosłej kobiety zmarłej w czasie zaawansowanej ciąży; zbliżenie ukazuje szczątki płodu, Modrice, grób 3898; C) grób 3868, Modrice; D) kamienna obstwa w grobie 3886, cmentarzysko w Modricach, Morawy, Czechy. Foto: Z. Tvrđy i D. Parma

to the older Uneticean phase (Pleinerová 1967, 22; Tihelka 1953, 241). In Silesia deposits of human heads were discovered in Nosovice where three human heads were placed at a depth of 0.7 m and surrounded by a stone setting, possibly dated to the Proto-Unetice phase. According to archive data, the Nosovice skulls displayed some anomalies as e.g. a circular, trepanation-like cut on one skull and evidence of burning on another (Segeter 1916). At the Wojkowice cemetery three graves were classified as partial inhumations as well (Gralak et al. 2001, 190–193). In grave 846-III-00 a human skull and part of the lumbar spine of an adult female were discovered, and her bones had been covered with a ceramic vase. In grave 1044-III-99 from Wojkowice the remains of another adult

female have been found showing evidence of *post mortem* mutilation, including extraction of the frontal teeth (Gralak et al. 2001, 190). Fragmentary burials cannot be associated with a specific age group or sex and their spatial distribution is random. They can be seen as reburial practices, as prehistoric murder/accident cases (especially when only a head was found), or as an outcome of grave robbery.

Individual life histories and death circumstances seemed to play an important role in modifications of burial customs in local Uneticean communities. We find archaeological evidence for that in Modrice cemetery, southern Moravia. Grave 3898 contained the body of a pregnant female, who died during pregnancy. The skeletal remains of unborn foetus (6 months)



Fig. 8. Szczepankowice barrows during excavations: the main chamber stone setting; the grinding stone centrally in front; the bottom of central chamber surrounded by stone circle. Cross-sections of the barrows. After: Pokutta 2013, 58. Photos courtesy Archaeological Museum of Wrocław

Ryc. 8. Kurhany w Szczepankowicach podczas wykopalsk: wnętrze konstrukcji kamiennej komory centralnej; kamień żarnowy w ścianach grobowca na pierwszym planie; komora centralna wraz z otaczającym okręgiem kamiennym; profil kurhanu. Wg Pokutta 2013, 58. Zdjęcia archiwalne: Muzeum Archeologiczne we Wrocławiu

have been found in her grave as well (Fig. 7A–7B). The grave was significantly deeper (depth 1.3 m) and the deceased was placed with head south, but facing west (in the opposite direction than the rest of interments).

Another interesting example of deviation from norm in burial rites was recorded in Bruszczewo, Greater Poland. Single grave contained the body of a young male has been wrapped in mat stitched with thread and buried in fortified settlement area. The use of cheaper organic materials may indicate lower social strata in mentioned case. The anthropological assessment revealed however that the deceased suffered from several disorders, including head traumas (feasibly epilepsy or some other neurological disorder). His burial was located outside of cemetery, the body was aligned W-E facing north and the head of a dead was covered with ceramic bowl (Müller et al. 2010).

The most striking evidence for societal exclusion of the whole Uneticean community can be found in Chociwel cemetery in SW Poland. Chociwel is situated just a few kilometres north of Strzelin, at the foreground of the Sudetes Mountains (Fig. 1–2). One of the most controversial issues regarding Chociwel is the west-east orientation of all interments. As

pointed out by Lasak and Machnik, this kind of practice appears in the Unetice culture only in very early phases (phases I–II, Proto-Early Unetice period: before and around 2000 BC). During classic phase it was recorded extremely rarely and mainly in multiple burials of families (Machnik 1978, 99; Lasak 1996, 133). Diametrically different burial customs in Chociwel was constant over centuries (chronological sequence c. 1959–1610 cal BC; Pokutta 2013). Apart from that burials are equipped with typical Uneticean ceramics and grave furnishing typically consists ceramics, with no bronzes and occasionally flint artefacts.

It should be highlighted that flints seldom appear as part of regular Uneticean grave furnishings and they almost never play a central role. Sometime the presence of flint implements may indicate a violent, accidental death (broken cutters, arrow heads in-between ribs). Most recent genetic studies helped to reveal potential reasons for abnormal rituals in Chociwel (Rasmussen et al. 2015). This community had been affected by the pestilence around 2000 BC (3645 ± 31 BP, bubonic plague; *Yersinia pestis*). This is based on single skeleton (grave 20), however taking under consideration nature of the pestilence,

we should assume that the whole local community must have been infected in a very short time (Pokutta 2013, 230). The pestilence burial no. 20 in Chociwel was additionally marked by a presence of unusual items of possibly shamanistic value. The dead was buried wearing a necklace of bird bones. The remains of this birds in graves are exceptionally rare. Another bird was discovered by Sarnowska in EBA barrows of Szcze-

pankowice (Sarnowska 1962). Genetic study of Mühlemann et al. (2018) revealed that mentioned female also died as a result of fatal infectious disease (*Hepatitis B*). The common link between both of mentioned cases, is the presence of birds in graves. Today we can see them as elements of tribal shamanistic medical practise; rather desperate attempt to protect dying patient and to heal unknown sickness.

5. MORTUARY DATA AS EVIDENCE OF RANKING 2: THE ELITE AND BARROW INHUMATIONS

The so-called *princely grave*, an Uneticean barrow in its most classic form, is a very distinctive archaeological feature. Typical Uneticean barrow was 15–20 m in diameter and up to 10 m high. The stability of the structure was achieved by gradual deposition of thick mantel around and on top of stone core. The internal core, frequently called the *house of the dead*, was build, design and equipped to resemble actual chamber, a real house interior within mortuary space. A small house covered by thick mantel and tones of soil. Typologically, all Uneticean barrows are organized around similar constructional concept (Fig. 8). In agrarian communities of early metal makers social hierarchy among people was dictated by prosperity of their households primarily. Varying details regarding the size of the barrow, depth of the internal stone structures, etc. depended on chronological phase and location of a given monument.

Approximately 55 Uneticean barrows has been found in Central Europe; the majority of monuments was published in archaeological literature, but only approximately 60% of that number has been excavated according to modern standards. Barrows are also known from Greater Poland (Łęki Małe; Kowiańska-Piaszykowa 2008; Knapowska-Mikołajczykowa 1957), and Germany (Leubingen, Helmsdorf, Baalberge, Dieskau II, Nienstedt, Kleinkornbetha, Hohenbergen, Sömmerda I–II, Königsau and Österkörner; Steffen 2010, 19; Kadrow 2001, 123; Gimbutas 1965, 262–268). However the highest concentration of the EBA barrows can be found in northern and central Bohemia (e.g. Brandýs, Březno, Mladá Boleslav-Čejetický-Choboty, Horní Příim, Chotěšov, Kojetice, Konobříž, Litovice, Odolena Voda, Prague 5 – Řeporyje, Prague 6 – Bubeneč, Selibice, Stračovská Lhota, Toužetín, Tursko, Zlončice and Želeč; Danielisová 2013, 81; Kruťová and Turek 2004; Ernee 2020).

The best preserved examples of the so-called *princely graves* in SW Poland were located at Szczepankowice and Kąty Wrocławskie, but the number of barrows in Silesia was originally much higher. Many tombs had been found early in the beginning of 20th century. As previously mentioned a number of rich flat graves covered with stone pavements are considered to be the remains of barrows. Among these are Kromolin, Gola Górowska with the remains of three monuments, Krzesin, Platków and possibly Kotla (sites no. 5–10, Sarnowska 1969, 89, 344; Blajer 2001). A barrow discovered in 1934 in Nowy Zagórz might have been associated with the EBA: the inner core of the barrow was built of large stones forming a massive internal flange, typical for Unetice building technology. Another example derives from Groß Gastrose, first excavated by Jentsch in 1888, where a stone box was recorded beneath the burial mound (Butent-Stefaniak 1997, 188). Forms of rulership evolved through centuries in a whole EBA Central Europe. Typologically, the *princely grave* barrow comes as a fi-

nal result of evolution starting before 2000 BC, therefore the actual forms of these graves in the classic phase vary (Fig. 9). In the Proto- and Early Unetice period (before 2000 BC) we encounter evolutionary predecessors of the princely graves, a *mini-barrows* and *anti-barrows*.

In Silesia, for example, the typological evolution of elite interments can be divided into 3 main phases starting approx. 1950 BC with a *mini-barrow* from Wojkowice (tomb 1058), and in the following stages tombs grew in size significantly. A *mini-barrow* from Wojkowice was located centrally in the graveyard. The tomb was 4 times bigger than usual grave and contained the remains of an adult older male in a coffin (Pokutta 2013). This early form contained the mantel as constructional feature, however it was missing typical in later phases housing structure within the grave.

On the other hand, the ‘anti-barrows’ (e.g. Jelšovce 527; Fig. 6) contained the housing structure (‘the house of the dead’), but they were lacking the soil cover of the tomb (the mantel). The grave 527 from Jelšovce cemetery was located outside of the main burial ground, in a distance of approx. 200 m. The tomb was a free standing wooden house (ca. 20 m²), inside of which the burial chamber was dug into the ground. In the middle of the house a large hearth contained burnt personal belongings of the deceased (family group of 5 individuals). The radiocarbon dating revealed that the tomb was in use in the classic period (ca. 3500 BP) for at least 200 years, and the bodies of the deceased were added gradually over longer period of time (Bátora and Pokutta, in prep.). Typologically the *anti-barrow* from Jelšovce represents all key elements of a typical *princely grave*, except of the soil mantel. In Czechia many other combinations of hybrid forms of elite interments can be found (e.g. concentric cluster of flat graves covered by mini-barrow), but in general the first phase (approx. 2150–2050, identifiable with the Proto-Unetice) represents group formation processes driven by introduction of bronze making and increased mobility.

Around and after 2000 BC, the first fully formed example of the princely graves can be found in territories of modern-day Germany, Poland and Czechia. But the barrows, such as Leubingen or Szczepankowice are fairly untypical. At first the *princely grave* was related to a single individual (usually adult male), but that changed when barrows actually begun to represent a specific segment of Uneticean society, the whole cast of people associated with power, including children and females. A specific exception should be made for the Kościan group, discussed below, which in general share a different evolutionary model. The appearance and impact of females sharing a similar position and range of power with men, might have resulted from the progressive production of bronzes which,

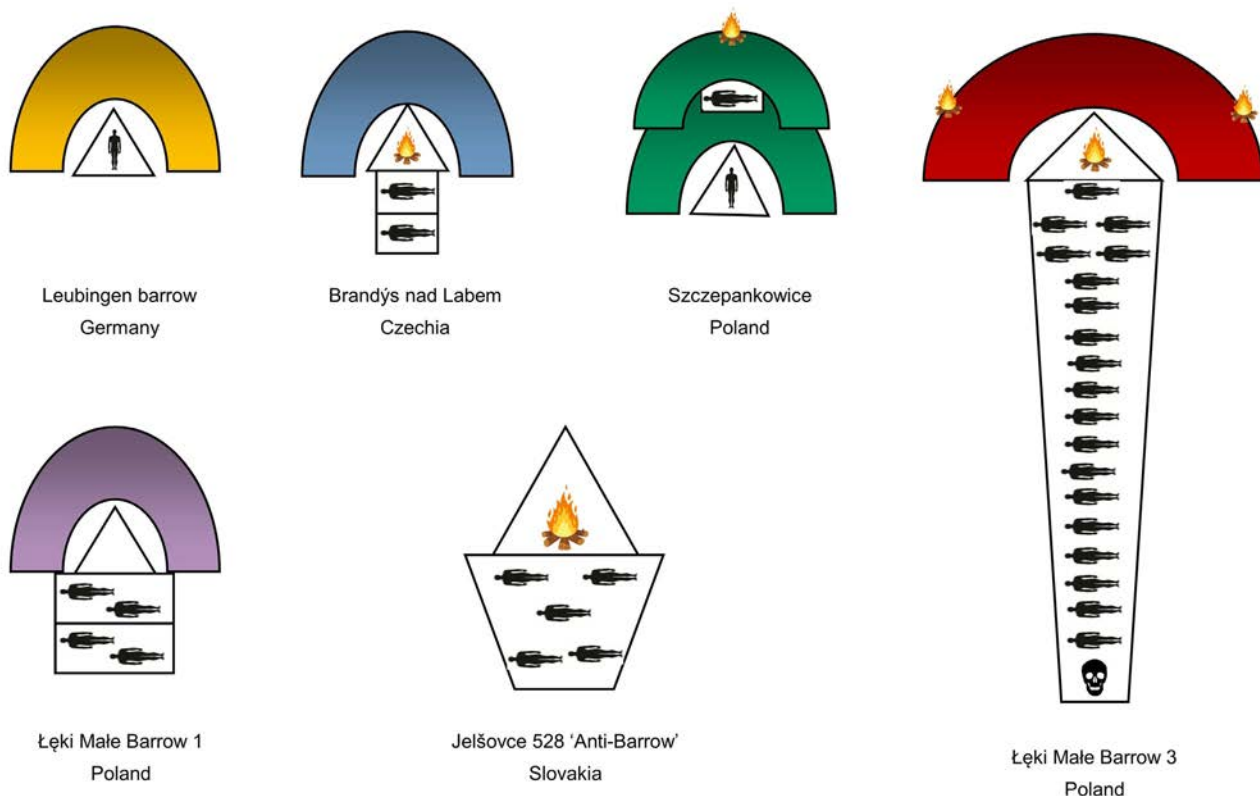


Fig. 9. Various forms of the princely grave – examples

Ryc. 9. Zróżnicowanie konstrukcyjne i typologiczne tzw. kurhanów książęcych w kulturze unietyckiej

combined with timocratical foundations of the social order led to the creation of an expansive sector of women as bronze consumers (jewellery mainly, but we should note that, e.g. possession of daggers was not restricted to males exclusively).

In our view this might be correlated with societal transformations observed by Machnik and Kadrow in the Mierzanowice culture at the same time (Kadrow 1995). Around 1800 BC certain changes in burial rites of the eastern neighbours of the Unetice indicate gender-related transformations (Fig. 10).

The function of princely graves can be better understood when we clarify two major pillars of this institution: a) in the Uneticean concept of power there was no separation of economy (personal wealth) from rulership, and b) a certain level of decentralization and flexibility can be observed within some sectors of the early metalmaking society, as well as between regions and sub-periods. The concept of Uneticean barrow combines sacrum with profane, merging occupational space of the settlement (*the house*) with mortuary setting of burial ground. Certain types of items are frequently found in barrows, for example querns, cattle skulls and luxury bronze items. It seems feasible that the common values and the concept of the membership in Uneticean elite was dependent on possession of property (especially livestock and houses), and the voice of an individual in the community mattered proportionally to gained wealth and prestige. In this sense Uneticean society was linked to timocratical forms of societal organization, where possession, wealth and prestige are dominating factors, and analysis of the social position of children seems to confirm such interpretation (Pokutta and Howcroft 2015).

Timocratical society requires the existence of tribal law, and structurally is fragile, especially when it comes to inheritance matters. The death of any member of society, who possessed the property (i.e. cattle, house, etc.) opened the question of how to share the goods among children and relatives. Lack of legal procedures would lead probably to internal conflicts between families, vendettas, thefts and disturbances for the rest of the population. The role of a judge, standing aside personal interests of heirs, could have been essential to sanction community legal actions and to interpret the tribal traditions. Individuals buried in princely graves, due to lack of better terminology, can be named the high priests or judges, the spiritual and moral, possibly also legal leaders of communities, whose liability was to dispense, approve and justify collective actions. Expanding bronze production and extensive trade; all these, in combination with a growing population and significant economic potential, led the Uneticean populations in one direction, and to only one form of societal organization – the theocratic rulership.

If we look closer at a number of other archaeological cultures, we can conclude that theocratic rulership might have been one of the most common in the EBA world. The grounds for my assumption can be found e.g. in the EBA Britain where hundreds of barrows congregating around Stonehenge indicate that the political evolution of the Wessex culture followed the same track. In southern parts of Europe the Vučedol culture is considered to be run by shamans, while from the very beginning Egypt represents the pure definition of a highly developed theocratic monarchy, linked in addition to African concepts of power, where rulers turn from god's representatives into the gods themselves (Ciałowicz 1999; on social complex-

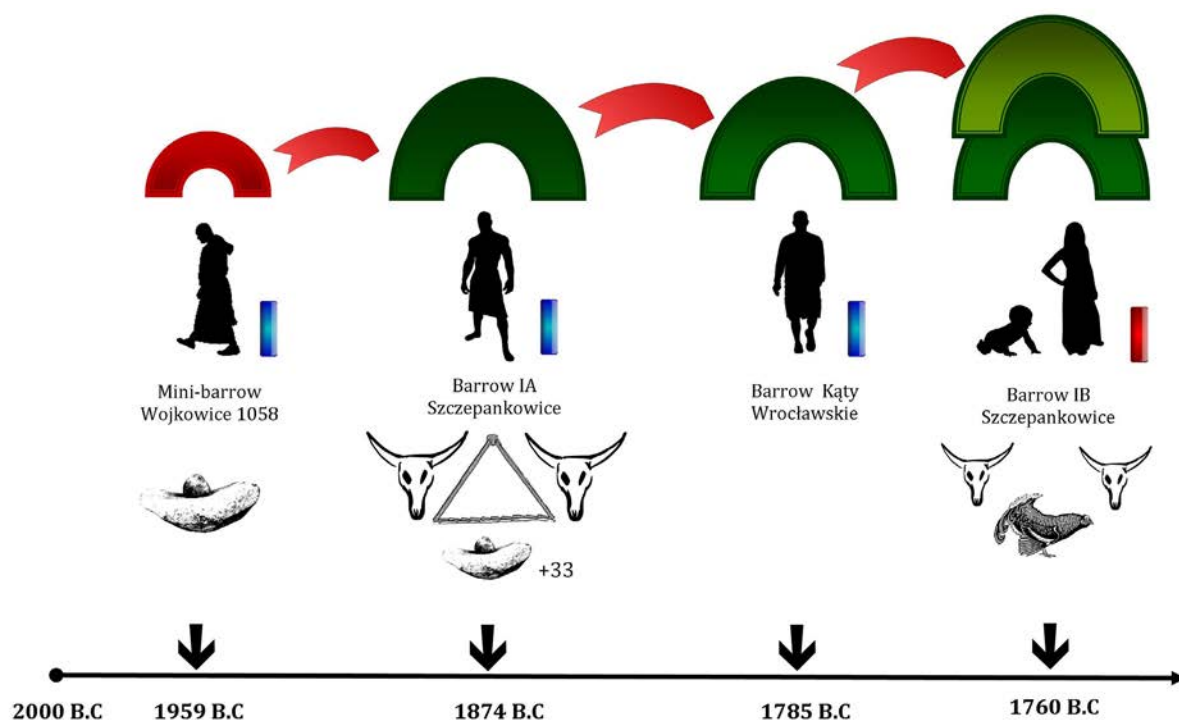


Fig. 10. Typological and chronological evolution of the princely graves in Silesia; blue signs non-locals, red- local individuals ($^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ analyses, Pokutta 2013). Barrows furnishing: Wojkowice 1058 – grinding stone, Szczepankowice IA: wooden structure – the house of death, 34 querns, large volume of cattle bones, Szczepankowice IB: cattle bones and great bustard

Ryc. 10. Typologiczna i chronologiczna ewolucja kurhanów tzw. grupy śląskiej kultury unietyckiej; markery koloru niebieskiego: osoby które nie urodziły się lokalnie; markery czerwone: osoby urodzone lokalnie (analizy izotopu strontu, Pokutta 2013). Wyposażenie kurhanów: mini-kurhan w Wojkowicach (pochówek 1058) – pojedynczy kamień żarnowy; Szczepankowice IA: drewniana struktura tzw. domu zmarłego, 34 kamienie żarnowe, duże ilości kości krowich; Szczepankowice IB: pozostałości uczty pogrzebowej: kości krowie oraz szczątki dropia (Otistarda)

ity of Egyptian state in Predynastic period, cf. Midant-Reynes et al. 2008). We encounter a similar situation in Mesopotamia, where almost all city-states were governed by king-priests and Southern Mesopotamian cities identified themselves through their worship. An excellent example can be given for Lagash, where prince Gudea (2144–2124 BC) dedicated his whole state to Ningirsu, the god of war and promoted this cult zealously. In the Indus Valley civilization, in the late Harappan period, city-states were quite originally the combination of theocracies and pacifistic republics, while in China Xia dynasty

(2070–1600 BC) introduced not only bronze metallurgy, but also Confucianism. The concept of the so-called *Mandate of Heaven* (*Tiānmìng*), still functioning in Chinese culture rule, that divine approval is essential and gods will bless the authority of only a righteous individual, date back to these times. In EBA Central Europe the progressive changes in societal patterning of tribal organizations ran in a number of different ways, and the evolution of political structures of the Kościan group in Greater Poland represents a quite different and unusual scenario which deserves a few comments.

6. RELIGION AND STATE FORMATION PROCESSES: THE KOŚCIAN GROUP

The barrows of the Kościan group in Greater Poland are probably the biggest and the oldest among all Uneticean elite tombs ever found (Kowiańska-Piaszykowska 2008; Jaeger 2012; Czebreszuk 2001). While formal and typological evolution of barrows went from small to bigger forms in majority of cases, in Greater Poland barrows decreased in size over time. The archaeological record shows five barrows at the necropolis of Łęki Małe, county Kościan in Greater Poland with the possible existence of a few other heavily destroyed monuments (Fig. 8). The first and the largest among them, barrow IV, built hundreds of years before even the beginning of the consolidation of the Silesian population, opens the sequence of tombs which seems to be a part of truly royal sized cemetery, holding the

key to the long forgotten history of one of the most amazing political experiments regarding the Unetice culture in Europe.

The Łęki Małe barrows were built in reverse order meaning that the first of them and the oldest (barrow IV, c. 2300 BC) was 50 m in diameter, while barrows III and II were smaller (both ca. 30 m diameter) and the youngest barrow I being approx. 24 m in diameter (comparable with Szczepankowice IA in Silesia). The site was organized spatially along a north-south alignment and displays spatial elements of proper planning with organization based on awareness of principles of geometry and astronomy. None of the barrows interred a single individual and all should be classified as multiple burials, e.g. tomb I contained the remains of a couple, a male and a female

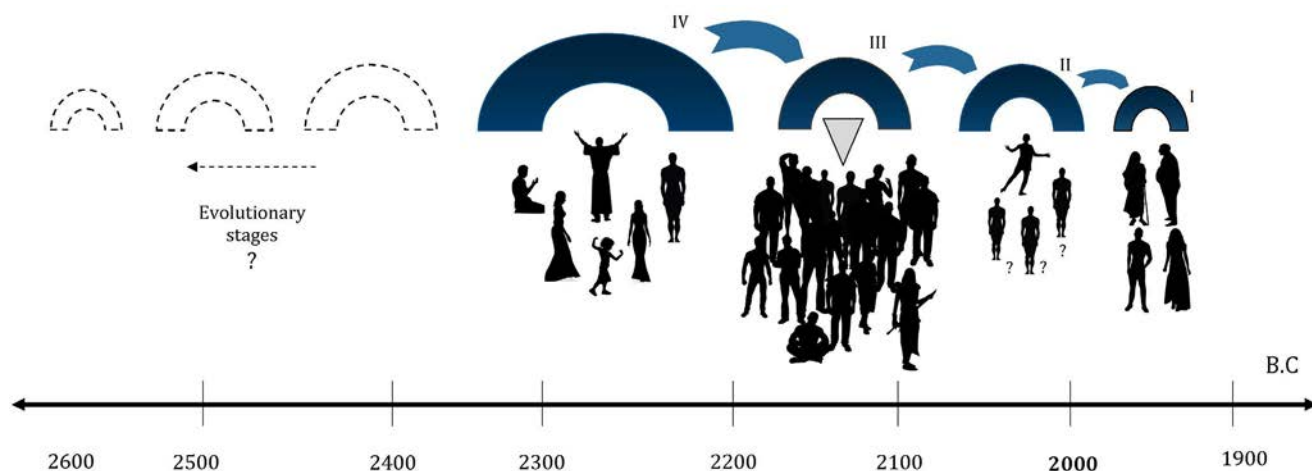


Fig. 11. Łęki Małe barrows, Greater Poland: evolution of rulership in the Kościan group of the Unetice culture according to time scale
Ryc. 11. Kurhany w Łękach Małych, Wielkopolska: rozwój kurhanów i ewolucja struktur władzy w tzw. grupie Kościan kultury unietyckiej

and their family. Barrows were built fast, in an organized manner according to a plan and this can be seen in the stratigraphy (Kowiańska-Piaszykowa 2008, 74). Two leading types can be distinguished: a) tombs with massive internal stone cores holding the remains of the founders, and b) barrows with sarcophagi made of wood and stone. A number of valuable items have been retrieved, halberds, decorated daggers, jewellery, amber beads, rings of Transylvanian gold, a lot of pottery including oversized storage vessels in graves, however, it is not my intention to enlist all of them here, and I am interested in different aspects of this cemetery.

A grinding stone was found in barrow IV, and the number of cattle bones discovered in these tombs significantly exceeds any quantities found in any Uneticean barrow in Europe. Just to illustrate how much, I will give the example of the smallest barrow I, where 7 horses, 3 pigs and few sheep were offered, making in total equivalent of 2 000 kg of meat (Kowiańska-Piaszykowa 2008, 74, 218). Barrow III, in the form of a large, 9 m-deep funnel, contained the inhumations of over 20 individuals who were likely to have died at the same time (possibly after a battle-like event, males were mainly identified, Fig. 11), deer antlers were also found in this tomb.

In all major monuments satellite inhumations were found, in some cases it was not the additional burials of single people, but whole family groups. The positioning of their graves within structures of a particular barrow somehow symbolized the relationship with the main individual buried in the middle, in the central chamber (lower or higher in strata, but all in the western corners of the monuments; Kowiańska-Piaszykowa 2008, 223). Some characteristics of Kościan barrows are exceptional, like the presence of an entrance gate to monuments (III), a processional alley, ora deep shaft made of clay and oak wood inside of the tombs. In some barrows a deep well-like corridor from the top of barrow run down to burials, which were stuck in a vertical position and the deceased were actually standing not lying, looking at each other. Barrow no. IV was showered, after burial ceremonies with pigments – ochre and fragments of broken pots, which were recorded as a layer present all over the place. The founder of this last, huge monument was older male (age 50+), buried in a central grave deep inside of the mound.

Strong social stratification of the Kościan community, complex cosmology and complicated rituals represent in fact dynastic setting of power, and the presence of females in barrows indicate that this population had reached the level of institutional progression, which in other territories of the Unetice culture would have appeared a few centuries later, if ever. The evidence of cult are strongly orientated towards Uneticean fertility cults with an already formed and distinctively superimposed cast of high priests. Typologically and chronologically the Kościan barrows in Łęki Małe seem to evolve also, but in a diametrically opposite direction than in other regions. To illustrate that: when barrow no. IV at Łęki Małe was erected, in territories of Silesia and Bohemia we encounter small elite tombs (previously discussed *mini-barrows* and *anti-barrows*).

The detectable chronological sequence of the necropolis at Łęki Małe ends soon before the Szczepankowice IA barrow was erected in Silesia (Fig. 10). However, a significant number of other barrows present on the site (10 monuments; Kowiańska-Piaszykowa 2008, 164) indicate, that the societal evolution of this population began much earlier and that the presence of destroyed barrows may represent former stages of that process. The uniqueness of the discussed population from Greater Poland relies not only in the volume of artifacts, bronzes or gold objects found in the tombs of the tribal leaders.

Social respect can be manifested in various way. We may choose to *measure power* by the size of the barrow, or by the workload required to build it. However, the real power is about trust and respect. The archaeological evidence from *princely graves* provide us with unique opportunity to uncover mourning rituals associated with burials of the tribal leader. When the barrow IV was erected in Łęki Małe, bombastic funeral ceremonies lasted probably for several days. The whole barrow was surrounded by bonfires involving probably hundreds of mourners. Large quantities of animal bones scattered around the tomb indicate *en mass* feasting celebrations. The monument was showered, covered with thick layer of ochre and hundreds of broken vessels. Inside of the main central burial chamber a quern was found (missing hand stone), representing metaphorically *broken life/broken household*. Inside

of the main burial chamber in Szczepankowice (Silesia, SW Poland) over similar 30 querns (all incomplete missing hand stones) were deposited within walls of the barrow (Pokutta and Frei 2011).

These elements represents stability of power but also long-lasting bond and commitment of local community towards the leader. Uneticean grieving rituals might have also included self-mutilation (e.g. showing respect by voluntary teeth extraction during funeral), but the evidence for that are know from flat graves of commoners (Pokutta 2013, 132).

Four major conclusions in respect of socio-political organization of the Kościan population would be that: a) the development of this population took a different course in comparison with other Uneticean groups, starting much earlier;

b) around 2200/2300 BC the community was led by separated cast of possibly theocratic leaders and displayed strong social stratification, complicated rituals, cosmology and significant economic and organizational level of advancement, indicating the existence of a large population in demographic perspective; c) contacts with the Brandenburg group of the Unetice culture can be documented as well as international trade connections (e.g. at scale from Baltic to Transylvania); and d) the Kościan population possessed knowledge of bronze making as well as mathematics and astronomy. In territories of Poland, two neighbouring Uneticean populations (the Kościan and Silesian groups) shared the same material culture (archaeologically), however from a palaeosociological perspective they represented two differing organisms.

7. DISCUSSION – MILITARISM AND THE UNETICEAN SUPER-STATE

Kinship is central to the ranking of statuses in many chiefdoms. In prehistoric societies, the kin system in the mechanism, but also needed is an ideology justifying the appropriateness and meaning of rank distinctions. In most recent debate regarding the Uneticean society, H. Meller suggested certain new approach based on an idea of the *Unetice super-state* (Meller 2017). Based on materials from Leubingen, Helmsdorf and newly excavated burial mound in Bornhöck near Dieskau, the author suggested the existence of Uneticean army with highly militarised warlord as a leader. This opinion was based on analyses of hoards and bronze artefacts from settlements. The problem here lies in fact, that if the *Uneticean super-state* ever existed, but in fact that the author is looking for it using problematic set of archaeological evidence. Regardless, of that, the study by Meller shows growing necessity for reorientation in research.

This leads us to one of the most unfortunate misunderstandings still present in archaeological literature regarding organizational forms of rulership in the Unetice culture, mainly the princely grave phenomenon. We are referring to the *militaristic theories* deforming the concept of social ranking in the EBA presented first by Otto (1955, 1958) and his modern-day followers (e.g. Vandkilde 2007). Otto examined the inventories of a few selectively chosen Uneticean barrows based on a very simplistic *rich grave-poor grave* criterium. Impressed by the richness of these interments, mentioned author concluded that:

a) the Unetice culture was ruled by chieftains, obviously the head of the tribes and warriors, whose graves visibly differ from normal flat graves (barrow); in this group Otto saw Helmsdorf and Leubingen barrows;

b) the social hierarchy comprised of three other sub-classes, and all observations were based on the assumed high value of metals in male burials, so the second group consisted of

very gold rich burials (such as Łęki Małe; note paradox: also barrows); group three congregated burials with no weaponry (Otto's presumed lower social class/lack of warrior skills), and finally poor graves equipped only with pottery. The fact that some graves were not furnished at all, was in Otto's opinion unimportant. As for mass graves Otto implied their connections to human offerings based on unknown in nature religious rituals.

Similar, copied opinions were later repeated hundreds of times in literature (cf. Vandkilde 2007). But they all have certain elements in common. The first assumption is the Uneticean society did not change nor evolved though centuries of its existence. Second assumption is that that societal differentiation of the living culture was based on bronze production, mainly because these can be detected archaeologically ('*easy for us*' option). Thirdly, that social stratification was/or might have been paired with gender segregation; and lastly that the creation of power centers involved external forces (preferably war) which led to stratification and barrow burials (the term 'princely' already indicates '*expected*' associations). None of these opinions can be supported by archaeological evidence to full extent.

When it comes to recently published isotopic studies of the diet regarding both Uneticean flat graves and barrows, we are at the very early stage of research (cf. Knipper et al. 2015; Pokutta et al. 2014; Pokutta and Howcroft 2015). So far there is no tangible evidence for the 'better diet of the elites' from bioarchaeological perspective. In Silesia, isotopic investigation of nutritional patterns took an unexpected turn, revealing that some local Uneticean communities (e.g. Przecławice) display better nutrition and unlimited access to food sources when compared to barrow inhumations (Pokutta 2013). The problem relies on representativeness of isotopic data and the fact that barrow inhumations are scanty.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Renfrew notes that while recognition of ranking in the archaeological record is not easy and has not been well thought out, the problem goes deeper than archaeological method (Renfrew 1982, 2). Presented reconstruction of the leading elements

in the group formation processes is guided by the concepts of cultural functionalism, to some extent also cultural evolutionism (Radcliffe-Brown 1952; Bock 1963). The theoretical concepts of functionalism assume that the society can be envisioned as

a living organism, and therefore the institutions can be examined according to the practical functions they play in that collective body. This approach was reinforced by observations by Malinowski (1944) who suggested that specific modes of societal interaction (between tribes for example) are driven by the survival value of their culture. Transformations depended on how resistant, popular and accepted these joint values/customs really were. Moreover, Malinowski suggested that elements of

culture in a particular group of people (language, institutions, forms of rulership etc.) can be transmitted to another society without war or military conquest, based solely on the attractiveness and functions of the cultural survival values. These conclusions must be recognized as tentative as well as limited. More insight into the status organization of the Unetice Culture Group will certainly come to light from first hand excavation reports, and also from bioarchaeological analyses.

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Grupy kultury unietyckiej w ujęciu paleosocjologicznym

Streszczenie

Bazując na aktualnym stanie wiedzy w badaniach nad kulturą unietycką w Polsce, artykuł omawia kilka kluczowych kwestii dla rekonstrukcji paleosocjologicznych społeczeństw prehistorycznych. Odchodząc od klasycznej definicji kultury archeologicznej i opierając się na rezultatach, m.in. analiz bioarcheologicznych, autorzy omawiają problemy tożsamości

jednostkowej i kolektywnej w epoce wczesnego brązu (tzw. model opery) oraz powiązane z tym zagadnienia terytorialności, wspólnoty językowej i zwyczajów. Artykuł obszerniej przedstawia, m.in. unietycki ryt pogrzebowy oraz typologię i ewolucję kurhanów (tzw. grobów książęcych).

