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THE BEGINNINGS OF INHUMATION IN THE PIAST DYNASTY STATE IN THE LIGHT OF RADIOCARBON DATING

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One of the key issues concerning the Middle Ages in Poland are the beginnings of inhumation, i.e. the use of the so-called skeletal funeral ritual. From the very beginning of their presence on Polish lands, i.e. at least from the 5th - 6th centuries CE, the Slavs practiced the custom of burning their dead at the stake and then placing their remains in urns or pits in the ground. The introduction among the Slavs, but in different areas at different times, of the inhumation is most often associated with the adoption of Christianity. In the case of Poland, it took place, as evidenced by written sources, in the second half of the 10th century, around the year 966.

However, there is a discussion among archaeologists whether inhumation was introduced immediately after the baptism of Duke Mieszko I, or whether it became popular only in the times of his son Boleslav I the Brave. One of the ways to answer this question is to conduct radiocarbon dating of skeletons from the oldest (initial) phases of use of early Christian skeletal cemeteries. In the presentation, the results of 14C research obtained for individuals buried in elite chamber graves from the area of the early Piast dynasty state will be presented and discussed. Carrying out this type of research resulted from the assumption that in the first phase of Christianization, the new religion was accepted by social elites and only later it spread among the rest of society. Therefore, the oldest Christian burials should be sought among elite graves.

Keywords

Middle Ages, Christianity, Inhumation, Radiocarbon dating

Note/comment