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TO BE OR NOT TO BE A CHRISTIAN? BURIAL AND STATUS IN 11-12TH C. POMERANIA

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Early medieval Pomerania is one of the most interesting, but still poorly recognised by archaeologists, areas of the Polish lands. The area was Christianised very early, as evidenced by the establishment of the bishopric of Kolobrzeg in 1000. However, this institution lasted only a few years. The formal Christianisation of Pomerania occurred in the first decades of 12th century after the missions of St. Otto of Bamberg. The formal diversity of early medieval graves in Pomerania is very high. Despite apparent Christianization, cremation burials are still known, which was a direct manifestation of pagan beliefs. In addition to urn graves, there were also cremation graves of the Alt Käbelich type, referring to the idea of the house of the dead. In addition, we also know of cremation and skeletal barrow graves, along with their unique type, which are quadrilateral objects of the Orzeszkowo type. From the area of Pomerania, we also know inhumation flat cemeteries. The diversity of graves in these cemeteries is enormous. One of the essential elements is diversity between modest, simple graves without equipment and rich chamber graves. The lasts are connected by scholars directly with Christianisation, but the reality was probably more complex. The multitude of interpretative problems related to funerary rites mainly concerns the question of belonging the dead to the Christian religion or cultivating pagan traditions. The long persistence of pre-Christian beliefs in Pomerania and contacts with the Christian world through contacts with the peoples of the Baltic Sea and Eastern Europe are evident in the distinctiveness of Pomerania from the Piast's first state. Our proposed analysis of selected elements of Pomeranian funerary rites in the early Middle Ages will allow us to understand the process of the Christianisation of Pomerania and answer the question posed in the title.

Keywords

burial archaeology, Christianisation of Pomerania, early mediaval archaeology, funerary rituals, pre-Christian beliefs, cremation and inhumation

Note/comment