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REMARKS ON THE RESEARCH ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND ORGANISATION OF SPACE WITHIN THE CEMETERIES OF THE LUSATIAN CULTURE POPULATION IN THE LUBLIN REGION

ABSTRACT

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This text addresses the issue of the layout of space within the cemeteries of the Lusatian culture communities of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in the Lublin region. It was observed that the local, typically small necropoleis had a linear layout, with the graves arranged along the NE-SW axis. It can be assumed that the history of a cemetery started either from the east or at the most significant culmination within the area. The cemeteries were likely the primary focal points of attention for the local population within specific settlement regions.

Keywords: Lublin region, Lusatian culture, Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, space within cemeteries

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The subject of this short study is the space within the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cemeteries. When working on the necropoleis of the Lusatian culture population, archaeologists always devote a great deal of attention, apart from the essential determinations relating to the morphology and periodisation of the finds, to the issues concerning the layout of the graves and the shape of the cemetery. They also attempt to determine the

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extent of these sites, specifically cemeteries and the presence of additional infrastructure dedicated to them, such as dug-out structures and pyres within them. The work of Jacek Woźny (2000) should be regarded as the most up-to-date and comprehensive attempt to elaborate on these issues. It also shows a somewhat different approach to the discussed matters.

I, without, of course, aspiring to the brilliant achievements of the researcher mentioned above, would also like to take a slightly different look at the cemeteries of the Lusatian culture. To do so, I have chosen necropoleis from the Lublin region. This is not an easy task because, despite the relatively large number of cemeteries in this area (to date, nearly 200 sepulchral sites are known from the region), the identification of their spatial structure leaves much to be desired. It can be said that only two cemeteries in the Lublin region have been thoroughly examined. These are the cemetery in Kosin, Kraśnik district, Site II, explored by Michał Drewko in 1925 (Miśkiewicz and Węgrzynowicz 1974) and the cemetery in Wołkowiany, Chełm district, Site 3, researched by Zygmunt Ślusarski in 1963, which has never been published.

Before moving on to the issue of space within the cemeteries of the Lublin region, I would like to list some basic features of these sites:

- cremation is definitely the dominant type of burial, and the graves are mainly in urns (only occasionally with accompanying grave goods). The inhumation graves recorded in the south-eastern margins of the Lublin region belong to the Wysocka culture,
- graves are shallow, and burial pits are usually not perceptible,
- the cemeteries are linear in form; most commonly, the line of graves runs along the E-W or EEN-WWS axis,
- there is a lack of continuity between Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cemeteries (however, this may be due to the state of research),
- unprecedented features appeared in the early Iron Age. These included large, usually mass graves, where some of the dead were burnt in situ. Wooden structures often occur in graves. However, whether we are still dealing with the urn culture in the case of these cemeteries is uncertain.

Undoubtedly, cemeteries are the best context for studying prehistoric spiritual culture (Gediga 1979, 320). They are the places which, not only in colloquial but also in scientific reasoning, harbour extraordinary qualities and characteristics (Woźny 2007, 217). The space of the hereafter, identified with them, undeniably belonged entirely to the realm of the sacred. It is believed that the decisions made by people building a grave, burying a deceased member of the community and choosing grave goods for them may have resulted from various circumstances, such as tradition, emotions, or deeper religious motivations (Lewartowski 2001, 140). However, it seems that when faced with death, all these circumstances were intertwined.

Apart from the practical criteria of site selection, such as proximity to the settlement (from where the body was moved), proximity to a forest (providing the building material

for the grave structures and fuel for the pyres), safe distance from rivers (but at the same time appropriate to extinguish the pyre and wash the bones), the presence of dry (Węgrzynowicz 1973, 102), loose and permeable ground (facilitating the construction of the graves), the act of creating a necropolis was subject to certain symbolic conditions. A cemetery became a specific fragment of space where death was tamed and overcome, and these essential acts took place according to strictly established cultural rules. Burials were thus ritualised here, and the memory of them was perpetuated (Woźny 2007, 217). The spatial arrangement of the cemetery could also be a reflection of social relations, wealth, gender differences, or a way of distinguishing one's own and strangers, *etc.* The cemetery stabilised the settlement network and was a crucial point of reference, reinforcing the identity of the community inhabiting the region. It also provided a place of mediation between the living people, the ancestors, and the world of the gods.

Observation of the distribution of Lusatian culture necropoleis in the Lublin region leads to the conclusion that they functioned individually within small micro-regions as central and dominant features set against the background of one or more settlements, *e.g.*, Perespa, Tomaszów Lubelski district, Site 54 (Kłosińska 2006), Wronowice, Tomaszów Lubelski district, Sites 5A, 5B (Wichrowski 1989), or they also occurred in the form of several, contemporary 'branches' – used, perhaps, by representatives of separate lineages living within one settlement, *e.g.*, Topornica, Zamość district, Site 1 (Głosik 1958), Wieprzec, Zamość district, Site 1 (Dziedziak 2003).

Notable routes likely connected the burial sites and the settlements nearby. However, they were separated by natural, artificial, and probably symbolic boundaries. These real barriers, such as rivers or palisades, were also rich in symbolic content. It is worth mentioning here that the fact of separating settlements from cemeteries was noted in various places within the range of the Lusatian culture (Malinowski 1962, 92, 93; Węgrzynowicz 1973, 101, 102), and in the Lublin region, it could have taken place in the case of sites from Wieprzec and Topornica, separated from each other by valleys of minor watercourses, tributaries of the rivers Topornica and Wieprzec (Fig. 1), and Wronowice and Wieprzec, where relics of a palisade were found. Due to their exposed location, we can also assume that the cemeteries were visible from both the settlement and, at least, from some areas that were economically exploited. This trait reinforced the connection with the ancestors. These burial sites played an essential role in consolidating the local community, defining its religious status, referencing the past, and sanctioning the future exploitation of previously occupied land (Woźny 2007, 221); in the same way that cemeteries and accompanying religious buildings do in modern times. They undoubtedly had the respect of the living (Węgrzynowicz 1973, 102).

However, the most important motivations for establishing cemeteries lay in the system of prevailing beliefs, as these places belonged not only to the dead, 'immersed' in their secret existence, but also to their descendants, performing rituals for the good of their ancestors and their own. The place where the cemetery was founded had to be, by all

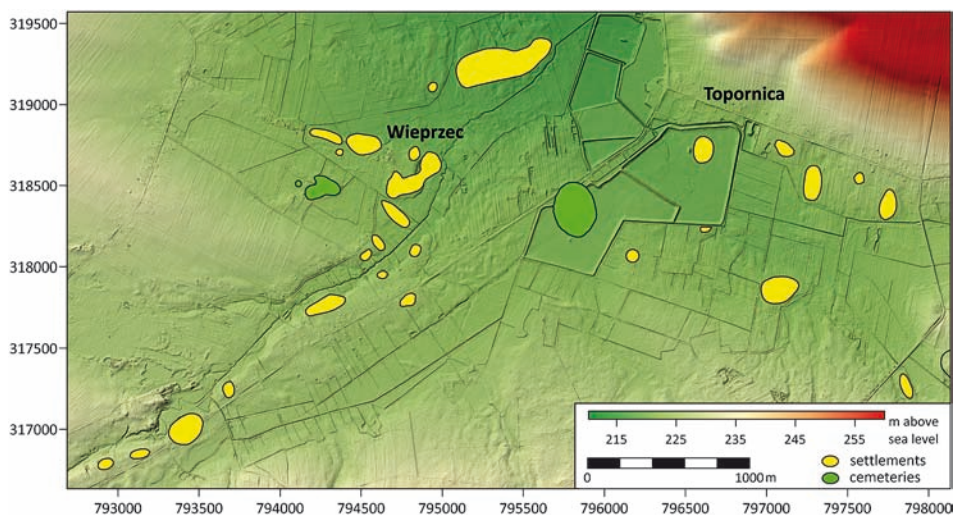


Fig. 1. Map of the cemeteries of the Lusatian culture population in Topornica, Site 1 and in Wieprzec, Site 1, together with the contemporaneous settlement sites. The map is plotted on a base map that consists of a digital terrain model. LiDAR data source: www.geoportal.gov.pl. Horizontal coordinate system: PL-1992. Elevation system: PL-KRON86-NH (developed by M. Piotrowski)

means, appropriate, chosen intentionally from the universal space known to the community. The shape, size, and internal layout of spaces of this type reflected the prevailing religion, social order, and various cultural norms. It is also believed that the spatial order in which the cemetery was created was a symbolic creation of the cosmic order, and that when another feature of this type was established. More graves were placed within it; reference was made to the original pattern, the archetype at the centre of the contemporary world. A cemetery was the meeting point of all levels – heaven, earth, and the underworld, as well as of the powers operating within them (Woźny 2007, 219-221). The burial space was valorised accordingly. Its creation was based on various imperatives and prohibitions. It had designated gates and boundaries (stone and wooden structures). Areas of varying degrees of sacredness lay within it (Woźny 2000, *passim*). Its size was probably predetermined. However, this was not likely to have been influenced by natural factors alone (Buśko 1987, 69) but by a preconceived idea deriving from religious motivations. In the case of the necropoleis in the Lublin region, this space was demarcated not only by the wooden elements of the sarcophagi, *e.g.*, Bliskowice, Kraśnik district (Gurba 1965); Krupy, Lubartów district, Site 1 (Misiewicz 2003; 2005); Jakubowice Murowane, pow. Lublin district, Site 5 (Kurzątkowska and Rozwałka 1990), suspected fences and palisades, *e.g.*, Bielsko, Opole Lubelskie district, Site 1 (Kłosińska and Klisz 2003); Wronowice, or poles, *e.g.*, Świeciechów Duży, Kraśnik district, Site 1 (Wichrowski 2006); Wojciechów, Chełm district, Site 8 (Gołub 1987), stone structures, *e.g.*: Wojciechów; Wołkowiany, but also firepits,

e.g., Bielsko; Kosin; Wojciechów; Wolkowiany), 'turfing' and small embankments (Kosin; Wieprzec). The demarcation of space was likely also associated with the relationships present within the community that used the cemetery. Small, linear, circular or amorphous clusters of graves lying within larger linear structures may have reflected, for example, family quarters or social ties of a different order, resulting from the funerary norms of the day.

Thus, certain places in the terrain were particularly predestined to fulfil a ceremonial role. Above all, hills were chosen as symbols of the sacred mountain, the centre of the world, where all levels of the cosmos of the time and points of communication between humans and supernatural beings were concentrated. Ideal sites were also located near water, a distinctive tree or stone (Woźny 2007, 220). In the Lublin area, the basis for the recognition of the sacrum within a particular space was the existence of exposed places lying next to bodies of water. It is challenging to confirm the presence of the other components of an ideal sacred site using archaeological methods. Seemingly, the places were located on raised sandy areas within small valleys, such as slopes, folds, headlands, and elevations with all-around exposure. In significant valley areas, they were located within the terraces above the floodplain and on its edges. The preferred soil chosen for cemeteries was definitely sandy (Nosek 1957, 109), permeable and not troublesome when constructing a grave or embedding an urn. The linear layout of the burial ground sometimes corresponded to the course of a watercourse. However, most probably, it was not due to the topographical conditions within the valley but to the symbolic intention of its creators and users. The people of the Lusatian culture likely located necropoleis near forests. So far, only in the case of the wooden structure of the grave at Bliskowice were the tree species identified, and these were oak and pine (Gurba 1965, 274). The latter species was probably often found accompanying cemeteries established on dunes.

A linear arrangement of graves was observed in all the cemeteries in the Lublin region that have been adequately studied (Figs 2-4). It seems that with their special arrangement, they showed the way to the land of ancestors, following the celestial path of the sun across the sky, and reflected the mythical understanding of the world at that time. This would not be surprising when one considers the dominance of solar cults in the Bronze Age and early Iron Age. Undoubtedly, the experience of natural processes and the daily observation of astronomical phenomena formed the basis for the establishment of cemeteries and the development of belief structures around them. Accordingly, the space of the necropolis was delimited, and value was assigned to specific zones, where, it is believed, especially the eastern and southern ones were categorised positively (Kłosińska and Klisz 2003, 59-61; *cf.*, also Woźny 2007, 222). These zones were associated with the rising, travelling and setting sun, *i.e.*, the carrier of celestial fire that dispels darkness, brings order to chaos, abolishes death, and regenerates life (Kowalski 2007, 516). A new world was thus constructed, in essence, recreating the work of a divine being (Eliade 1995, 146). The place where the history of the cemetery began was most probably the highest point or the eastern edge of

the elevation chosen to establish the burial ground, both of which now, after many centuries, are almost imperceptible in the field. The first 'foundation' graves placed here may have been significant as models relating to the burial traditions of the ancestors. These first graves likely sought to align with the point of sunrise at the given time, establishing the model direction of the cemetery's succession. Perhaps, within a single burial field, representatives of particular social macro-structures (lineages?) commenced its use in two places at similar times, creating two (or more) lines of graves. It appears that these two lines of model graves marked the beginning of the main part of the cemetery in Wołkowiany (Fig. 2). At this location, among other features, we can observe a line composed of a few sparsely spaced graves. Most likely, this was the oldest part of the cemetery, which began with Grave 128, located in the easternmost section. In this burial, the burnt remains of the deceased were placed in a vessel with a pointed base, closely resembling the forms of the late phase of the Trzciniec culture. Younger graves formed another line, extending above the first one and characterised by a high density of burials. Both lines of graves were oriented along the NE-SW axis. What is noteworthy here is that within the dense line of graves, there were further linear microstructures oriented along the NNE-SSE or NNW-SSE axis.

The observation of linear arrangements of the graves within the necropoleis of the Lublin region brings interesting conclusions. The sites were generally oriented along the E-W axis, but with some apparent deviations. Only three of them had the most accurate east-west orientation: Bielsko, Kosin, and probably Wieprzec.

It seems that when locating these first 'foundation' graves at any of the above-mentioned sites, not only was the point of sunrise at a given time observed, but simple technical

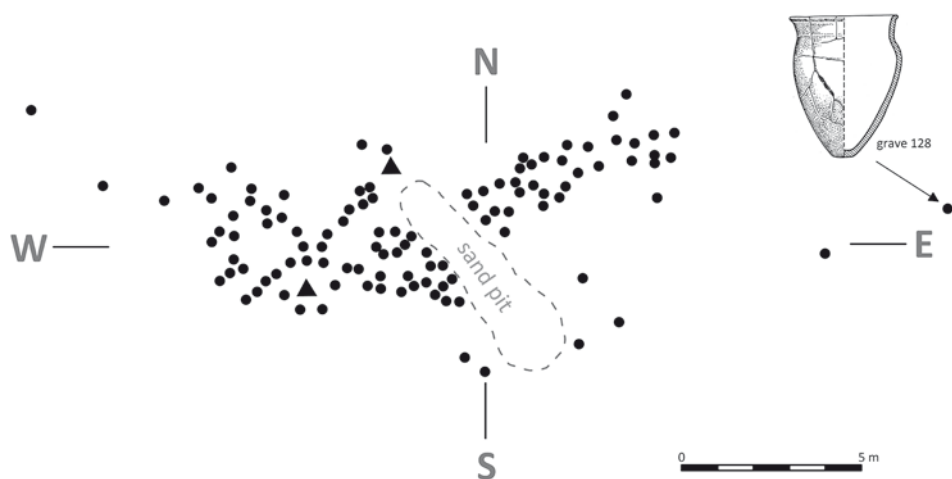


Fig. 2. Wołkowiany, Site 3. The overview of the central part of the Bronze Age cemetery.

Legend: ● – cremation urn burial; ▲ – cremation pit burial

(according to unpublished documentation from the collection of the National Museum in Lublin)

means were also used, such as posts driven into the ground, casting a shadow – a reference line, so to speak, for the initiation of the cemetery. This was probably also how the time of the day was read (in some traditional societies, until recently, the time of the day was determined by measuring the length of the shadow – Kowalski 2007, 461), and mythical time was created. It is worth mentioning at this point that relics of poles, stabilised with stones, were recorded in Krupy, Świeciechów Duży, and Wojciechów.

It is believed that a road led to the sacred centre within a given cemetery, which its users used in order to cross various boundaries and levels, functioning both in reality and in the symbolic sphere (Woźny 2007, 221). The existence of such a route in the case of the necropoleis of the Lublin region is difficult to confirm unequivocally, mainly due to the state of exploration of these sites. Such a path probably ran within the space, along rows of graves and between their smaller clusters. It cannot be ruled out that such a route commenced on the positively valorised side of a given cemetery. In Wołkowiany, the communication tract leading to the main line of graves may have originated from the southeastern side, within the empty space between bonfires and patches of burnt earth. It has been noted that this was a particular canon in Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cremation cemeteries, as the area on the south-eastern side was particularly valued. Furthermore, it is thought that an entryway and open space extended here, which led to the sacred place where the dead resided, and that traversing it reflected an upward movement towards the sun. Rituals of great significance took place there (Woźny 2007, 222). It is assumed that corpse burning, for example, may have taken place in this zone (Woźny 2007, 222). However, in the case of the Lublin region, and many other provinces inhabited by the people of the Lusatian culture, no remains of pyres have ever been encountered, neither there nor elsewhere. Hence, there is a belief that bodies were burnt entirely outside the burial space (Dąbrowski 2001, 42).

An interesting observation in this respect was made regarding the cemetery in Topornica, which, in a sense, had been ‘opened’ on the eastern side by a cluster of small ceramic forms, among which there were small vessels, a rattle, and a figurine of a rider on a horse (Kłosińska and Klisz 2003, 63). This was probably the ‘entrance’ place, a symbolic gateway, where mediation took place between the rising sun and those performing ritual acts, probably on their own behalf and on behalf of the dead. A similar situation may have been repeated at the cemetery in Pniówek, Zamość district, Site 1 (Kuśnierz 1990), where the alleged ‘entrance’ zone was opened by a place where a vessel was deposited – a shoe, viz. an object usually used in rites of passage (*cf.*, Górka 2000) and as a universal amulet with various prerogatives (Górka and Groblica 2007).

It has already been mentioned that at several of the cemeteries analysed within the Lublin region, there was a distinct rise in the density of urns in the central zone of the linear arrangements of graves. Such a situation was most clearly observed in Bielsko and Komarów-Osada, Zamość district, Site 9 (Fig. 3). It probably coincided with the former highest point of culmination of the entire site and can be assumed to have been the sacred

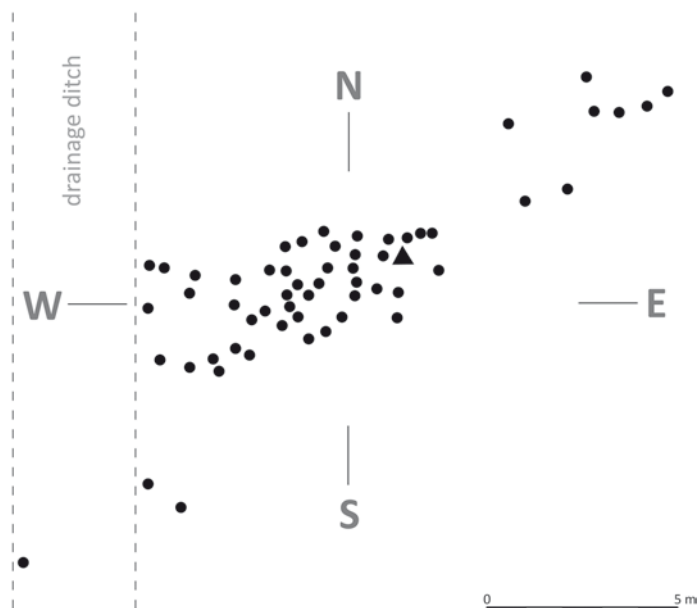


Fig. 3. Komarów-Osada, Site. 9. Overview of the central part of the Bronze Age cemetery.
 Legend: ● – cremation urn burial; ▲ – cremation pit burial (according to J. Niedźwiedź 1992)

centre of the cemetery and the space closest to the sun in zenith. The sun's highest position is also the middle of the day, midday, when the 'central opening' to the celestial sacrum occurs. It is a time of exceptional clarity, order, and orientation towards life. Magical practices also took effect at this time of day (Kowalski 2007, 460, 464). There may have been two models for the establishment of burial sites in the funerary rituals in the Lublin region. One consisted of locating the first model graves at the eastern edge of the designated cemetery space. This boundary place should be associated with the dawn – the time of mediation. From this point, the cemetery expanded westward, and in this situation, we would be dealing with a chronological succession of graves. An analogous model of cemetery succession was noted within the Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture (Czopek 1996, 56). At Wołkowiany in the Lublin region, this is how, perhaps, one of the rows of graves was initiated. It 'commenced' from the east with a cremation burial deposited in a Late Trzciniec vessel with a pointed base. This was the oldest grave within this cemetery. It is worth noting that the eastern opening zone of a cemetery may also have coincided with the highest elevation in the field. This was the case in Perespa, where the line of graves sloped gently from east to west along the valley's slope. Another model for the spatial design of a burial site involved the placement of model graves in the central, exposed part of the selected area. This was the 'opening' place, by all means appropriate, as it reflected not only the symbolism of the centre of the world, reshaped for the needs of the dead and their successors, but also the

closest point between heaven and earth at midday. This part of the cemetery must have been particularly attractive to its users, which is probably why more and more new urns were placed here. It cannot be ruled out that these urns contained the remains of exceptionally privileged deceased, *such as members of a specific social microstructure*. It is also possible that a so-called cyclic model, identified for some Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cemeteries, existed here, in which the space was extended away from a certain point, and then there was a return movement towards the said point and hence the presence of older and younger graves next to each other (Woźny 2000, 116; 2007, 223, 224). In such clusters, the graves were spaced so close together that the urns even touched each other. The close placement of graves next to each other was especially possible in the necropoleis of the Lublin region, where the urns were most likely visible on the ground surface. This prevented the destruction of older structures when new ones were established. The extremely rare cases of placing one urn on top of another are also worth mentioning, which probably reflected some kind of social or kinship microstructure. Increasing the density within the burial space also had other consequences, for it cannot be ruled out that when the chosen area was filled and with a larger number of dead, new solutions were sought, for example, by occupying a zone with unfavourable characteristics. This was the case with the Kosin necropolis, which, in its youngest stage of use, was expanded to the north (Kostek 1989, 404).

The act of assigning value to the space concerned not only the burial site but also the individual graves and the burials within them. When making the burials, an attempt was made to refer to the positively regarded directions, *i.e.*, east and south. There was a clear astronomical basis for the orientation of the wooden sarcophagi in the cemeteries in Krupy and Jakubowice Murowane (Fig. 4). The long axis of these features ran from south to

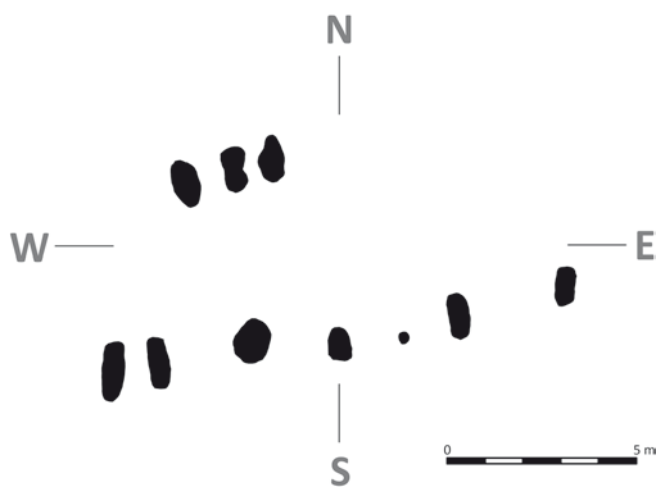


Fig. 4. Jakubowice Murowane, Site 5. Layout of graves within the surveyed part of the Early Iron Age cemetery (according to U. Kurzątkowska and A. Rozwałka 1990)

north. The bodies of the deceased, where the anatomical arrangement of the corpse was preserved, had been arranged with their heads to the south. Such a situation was recorded, for example, in Krupy and Jakubowice Murowane. Inhumation burials in Brodzica, Hrubieszów district, Site 19 (Padło and Ratajczak 2007), Gródek, Hrubieszów district, Site 1C (Kłosińska 2005) and in Strzyżów, Hrubieszów district, Site II (Kietlińska 1936) were also interred with the heads towards the south. This direction, universal for inhumation burials not only within the territory of the Lusatian culture but also in the Wysocka culture, also indicates a distinct value attribution to the human body.

The northern zone of the cemeteries was probably not recognised as positively valued, *e.g.* in Świeciechów Duży. At this cemetery, only pit graves were located within the northern zone. Anthropological analysis showed that these pit graves contained exclusively the remains of deceased children and juveniles. These were probably not fully-fledged members of the local community (who had died, *e.g.*, before their initiation), buried in the part of the cemetery with a negative connotation, which was perceived as such due to the absence of sunlight.

The topic of the spatial arrangement of the cemeteries in the Lublin region is a broad research field. The subject concerning the space within the graves themselves, *e.g.* how bones were placed in the urns themselves and why some urns were tilted or even turned upside down, has already been partly outlined. The question of where animal bone deposits, flints, and belemnites appeared in the graves in the Lublin region was also asked (Kłosińska 2012). Additionally, it is worth mentioning the existence of communication holes in vessels, which were always oriented to the south (Kłosińska and Klisz 2003). This is a fascinating subject matter requiring separate study and elaboration. So is the entirely 'untouched' issue of the distances within the cemeteries, be it between the cemetery lines or the graves themselves. The population of those times used some kind of measurement system, such as on settlements. Exciting and convincing conclusions on this subject have recently been published (Gralak 2009). Finally, another aspect of studying space within cemeteries is outlined, which is both challenging and stimulating. Namely, a question arises as to whether the act of cemetery foundation could have been linked to the astronomical changes of the seasons. This cannot be ruled out, given the probable, powerful experience of natural processes perceived by Bronze Age and Early Iron Age people and the way they shaped their lives.

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