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CHILDREN'S BURIALS FROM THE EARLY MEDIEVAL INHUMATION CEMETERY IN RADOM, SITE 4

Abstract: The paper discusses discoveries of children's burials from the inhumation cemetery in Radom, which was excavated in the 1960s. Data on post-mortem treatment of children from groups of *infans* I and *infans* II was discussed against the general background of burial rites in the territory of Poland in the Early Middle Ages, taking the issue of socialisation of children into consideration. It was expressed by the community in funeral customs, chiefly including the problem of grave goods.

Keywords: cemetery, Early Middle Ages, children's burials, childhood, burial rites

Introduction

The cemetery in Radom is one of the best archaeologically examined Early Medieval sepulchral sites in the area marked out by the Rivers Pilica, Wisła, Kamienna and Czarna. In Late Medieval sources this territory was referred to as the land of Radom (*terra radomiensis*)¹. The interfluvial area of the Wisła and the Pilica marks out the Lesser Poland's-Masovian border zone², which found its reflection in some elements of funeral rites which were characteristic for the discussed necropolis³.

In the period of formation of the Early Piast state the necropolis in question was part of a larger settlement structure. It consisted of a stronghold called "Piotrówka" whose origin is dated to the second half of the 10th c. and open settlements in its vicinity⁴ (Fig. 1).

An identification of the temporal framework of use of the necropolis was possible first of all on the basis of coin finds, as well as by means of analyses of other items from post-mortem furnishings, especially parts of dress, ornaments and weaponry. Some observed traits of burial rites (among others, the arrangement of arms of the dead) were also significant. Furthermore, valuable hints for the identification of the period of use of the necropolis in Radom were yielded by a stratigraphic analysis of the site. The cemetery was established in the area of a previous Early Medieval

settlement, which is why some graves were located in place of previously existing features with various functions (among others, dugouts). Taking all the available data into consideration we can assume that at the discussed site the dead were buried between the last quarter of the 11th and the end of the 12th c.⁵

In the majority of grave pits discovered in the cemetery in Radom artefacts of various kinds were found. Their nature does not differ from grave goods used in the territory of Poland in the period in question. This also concerns their location and the way of deposition. The most numerous group of finds are parts of dress and ornaments (temple rings, beads, buckles, a bracelet, kaptorgas). Weapons were found in two graves only (an axe and a spearhead)⁶. On the other hand, tools and artefacts of daily use are most commonly represented by knives. Other finds included spindle whorls, fire strikes, whetstones, a key, as well as buckets and clay vessels. The list of finds is completed with the assemblage of a few coins. Grave pits also contained bone remains of animals and plant remains (kernels of vine⁷, hazelnuts, grains of cereals).

Regrettably, a large part of the site was destroyed by construction works, which renders an assessment of the original surface of the cemetery and the actual number of graves difficult. 125 grave pits were recorded altogether. In the last season of examinations in 1966⁸, when the largest

¹ Gąssowski 1950, 75; Wilczyńska 1967, 105-117; Fuglewicz 2010, 74-79; Lechowicz 2010, 31-53, Fig. 1; 2011, 25-26, 65-75, Fig. 3.

² For a historical perspective see Teterycz-Puzio 2012, 70-79.

³ See Kurasiński and Skóra 2012b, 69.

⁴ Kurasiński and Skóra 2012b (with relevant scholarship).

⁵ Cf. Kurasiński and Skóra 2013a, 147.

⁶ Kurasiński and Skóra 2012b.

⁷ For this discovery see Kurasiński and Skóra 2013b.

⁸ An earlier reconnaissance of the site took place in 1923 and 1942 (see Gąssowski 1950-1951).



Fig. 1. Radom – location of sites making up the Early Medieval settlement complex: Site 1 – “Piotrówka” stronghold; Sites 2, 3, and 6 – open settlements; Site 4 – settlement and the cemetery. After Trzeciecki 2010, Fig. 1.

area was subject to exploration, 81 graves were recorded. However, only a small part of burials was anthropologically identified as children’s burials⁹.

Characterisation of materials

Only 7 persons were classified as *infans* I. Remains of the youngest child from this group – a foetus or a newborn – were found in a joint grave with a woman died at the age of *adultus*. In one case the child lived until the age of 2 (Grave 54), and in the remaining cases – until the age of 4-5 (Graves 12 and 79) and 5-6 (Graves 19 and 35). It was not possible to more precisely assess the age of the child whose bones were discovered in Grave 58 (*infans* I).

Older childhood (*infans* II) is represented only by two children aged 12-15 (Graves 37 and 47). Furthermore, bone remains from Grave 36 were classified as the turn of *infans* I and *infans* II¹⁰. Grave 34 is also worth taking

into consideration. It contains fragments of the skeleton (long bones of lower limbs) of a young person from the turn of *infans* II and *juvenis*. Apart from them, few bones of an adult female (phalanxes of the hand) were isolated. We may probably have to do with a double burial which was damaged in result of contemporary construction works. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that it came to a secondary interspersing of contents of two neighbouring burials. This is also suggested by the lack of a visible outline of the grave pit.

Furthermore, the anthropological analysis implies that the cemetery yielded bones of another two immature persons. In the first case they belonged to a child from the group of *infans* I (aged 5-6). Remains (a skull) of the other person were not assessed with regard to the age. These remains were ascribed to Graves 9 and 46 respectively. However, it does not come out from available documentation that additional burials of children were found in these features. On the basis of the skeleton’s length it can be said that the first grave contained a burial of an adult person, whose age and sex remain unknown. Perhaps this person’s burial should be related to remains of one of two individuals. These remains belonged to an adult man and a woman aged 20-25 and were packed together with bones of a child. Another burial (Grave 46) was strongly damaged and only part of cervical vertebrae and ribs survived in their natural arrangement. No skull was found there. It is therefore probable that in both cases it came

⁹ Results of an osteological analysis were discussed by B. Borowska-Strugińska in this volume.

¹⁰ Our knowledge of children’s graves from the cemetery in Radom is to some degree completed with data acquired in the course of examinations held in 1942. At that time, three burials of children were isolated, perhaps by means of using a skeleton size criterion. Anthropological analyses were not carried out at that time. These are Grave 19 with remains of a child deposited into the grave in a straight supine position, with the head to the NW (the face to the NE). Only a fossilised shell was found in the pit. J. Gąssowski doubts that it found its way there as part of grave goods (Gąssowski 1950-1951, 313). Another Grave 38 contained the skeleton of a child in a supine position, c. 1.1 m long, with the head to the SE. Near the left arm there was a poorly preserved iron knife with remains of a scabbard (Gąssowski 1950-1951, 318). The third child (from Grave 40) lay in a supine position with the head to the SE. Near the left arm there was a knife, and on the right side of the skull – a clay vessel (Gąssowski

1950-1951, 318). Skull 750 must be mentioned separately – it was the only child’s skull which was included into the assemblage of skeletons analysed by an anthropologist B. Rosiński. The author assessed the age at death as 7 years. Regrettably, it is not possible to relate it to a specific grave (Rosiński 1950-1951, 329). Perhaps it is one of the afore-mentioned burials.

to interspersing of bone remains, possibly in the course of years-long storage, and the discussed bone assemblage comes from the remaining burials¹¹.

The recorded number of children, being about 12% of all burials discovered in 1966 (8.5% – *infans* I; 3.7% – *infans* II)¹² clearly diverges from palaeodemographic expectations concerning mortality within this age group¹³. On the other hand, we do not assume that this trait is determined by cultural circumstances. It rather results from the state of research and destruction of the cemetery.

In spite of these inconveniences it is worth having a look at the youngest representatives of the population using the cemetery in Radom. This group should be discussed against the background of hitherto discoveries concerning the place of children in Early Medieval communities in the territory of Poland. It is obviously necessary

¹¹ We also have to do with a similar situation with regard to other graves (see Borowska-Strugińska in this volume).

¹² If one takes burials published by J. Gąsowski (1950-1951) into consideration, this percentage is even lower – 10.4%.

¹³ The revealed number of children's burials is usually far from the expected percentage of 40-50% - cf., e.g., Beilke-Voigt 2004; Kölbl 2004 (H. Zoll-Adamikowa estimates it at about 30% – Zoll-Adamikowa 1971, 18). In individual cemeteries of the Early Piast Period these figures may be different. Taking the size of the cemetery into consideration, it can be said that the percentage of children recorded in the cemetery in Cedyń, the Gryfino District, Site 2 is representative. It is 21.3% of the entire population (Porzeziński 2006, 162). A similar situation was found in the cemetery in Dziekanowice, the Gniezno District, Site 22. After Research Season 1966, the share of the youngest children was 23.3%, and older children (*infans* II) – 5.8% (Wrzesińska and Wrzesiński 1998a, 31, Tab. 1). After subsequent research seasons it was about 20% and about 6.5% respectively (Wrzesińska and Wrzesiński 2002a, 66, Tab. 3). In another cemetery from the same locality (Site 2) we have only 8.7% of burials of children, and no burials of persons aged less than 5 were recorded (Henneberg and Puch 1989, 148-149; Wrzesiński 1989, 105). There are about 18% of children's burials at Kraków-Zakrzówek, the Kraków District (Kaczanowski 1977, 172). On the other hand, at Kałdus, Site 1, the Chełmno District (examinations in 1997-1999) 15.4% of *infans* I burials and 7.7% of *infans* II burials were recorded (Kozłowski and Drozd 2006, 41, Tab. 2). At Site 4, 31.2% of remains were identified as belonging to children died at the age of less than 10 (Kozłowski 2010, 48, Fig. 11-12). For the cemetery in Czarna Wielka, the Siemiatycze District, the share was 31% (Bieńkowska 2014, 43). The percentage of children's graves was nearly two times less, e.g., at Płock-Podolszyce, the Płock District – about 16% (Łuczak 1992, 107) and at Świecie-Strumiany, the Wysokie Mazowieckie District – 16.4% (Jaskanis 2008, 171). At Bodzia, the Włocławek District, the share of persons died at the age of less than 15 was 26% (Drozd-Lipińska and Kozłowski 2015, 144). On the other hand, in some necropolises the number of children was above the average and it exceeded 40%, for example, at Będzin, the Będzin District (Rogaczewska 1998, 99) and at Złota Pińczowska, the Pińczów District (Zoll-Adamikowa 1971, 28, footnote 31). On the basis of a series encompassing 22 Early Medieval cemeteries from the territory of Poland, J. Kozak calculated that the average share of children's graves slightly exceeds 19% of all the dead (Kozak 2004, 227-228, Tab. 2).

to remember that the image of childhood from this period is seen from an archaeological perspective. Even if it is completed with anthropological observations, it is merely a conceptualised model which only partially corresponds to the reality of the past. However, assuming that social relations from the world of the living are manifested in the way of treating the dead, it is worth undertaking an attempt at inspecting the discoveries from Radom from this point of view, against a broader comparative background.

Graves of children were identified in various parts of the revealed necropolis¹⁴. In spite of the lack of a general tendency to group burials into separate quarters according to sex or age, a small cluster of features was found, which contained bone remains assessed as belonging to children (these are Graves 34, 35, 36 and 37). Next to them there is Feature 38 with skeletons of two sheep (an animal burial?). On the basis of a coin (a cross denar) discovered in Grave 37 it can be assumed that the *terminus post quem* for this cluster is marked by the period of issue of this coin, that is, 1075-1095¹⁵.

Concerning traits of burial rites, the groups of *infans* I and *infans* II generally do not diverge from sepulchral principles applied in the case of persons from older age groups at Radom. In these graves skeletons are found in a supine position. Lower limbs were straightened, and upper limbs were placed along the body. Feature 47 (Fig. 3) was an exception. In this case, the occipital part of the skull was directed upwards; however, this was in all probability a result of post-depositional processes. Not in all cases the state of preservation of burials allowed to determine the arrangement of the body.

Burials were oriented both toward the east or approximately (*infans* I – Graves 12, 19, 35, and 38), as well as toward the west or approximately (*infans* I – Graves 54 and 79; *infans* II – graves 37 and 47). The child died at the perinatal age from Grave 82 was deposited in the same direction as the body of a woman lying next to it.

Due to a poor state of preservation of grave pits with burials of children, it is difficult to substantially assess them in a detailed manner. With regard to the bottom length, outlines of pits vary. Some are short, adjusted to the height of children (e.g., Grave 54), while others are long and exceed the size necessary for a burial. This is the case with Grave 36 which is 210 cm long. The recorded width of pits falls between 50 (a child aged 2 from Grave 54) to 75 cm (a person aged 12-15 from Grave 37). The thickness of grave pits is also diversified. However, due to the degree of destruction of the site this trait is of limited significance for analyses.

In contrasts to burials of adults, children's graves lack remains of wooden constructions. On the other hand,

¹⁴ Cf. Kurasiński and Skóra 2013a, Fig. 2.

¹⁵ Bogucki 2012.

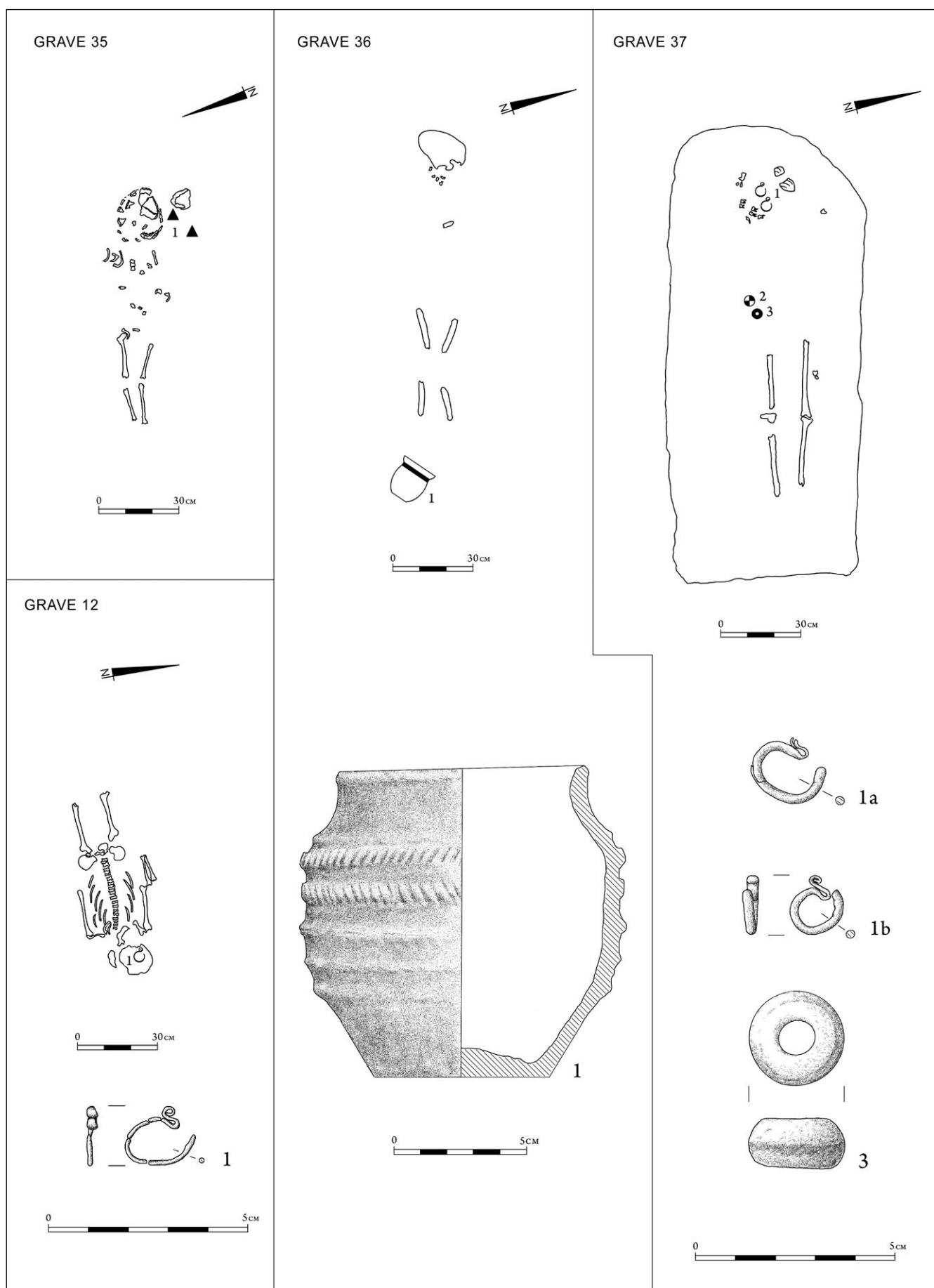


Fig. 2. Radom – children's graves: Grave 12 (child aged 4-5), Grave 35 (child aged 5-6), Grave 36 (*infans I/infans II*), Grave 37 (child aged 12-15). Drawing J. Słomska & B. Fuglewicz; elaborated by J. Słomska.

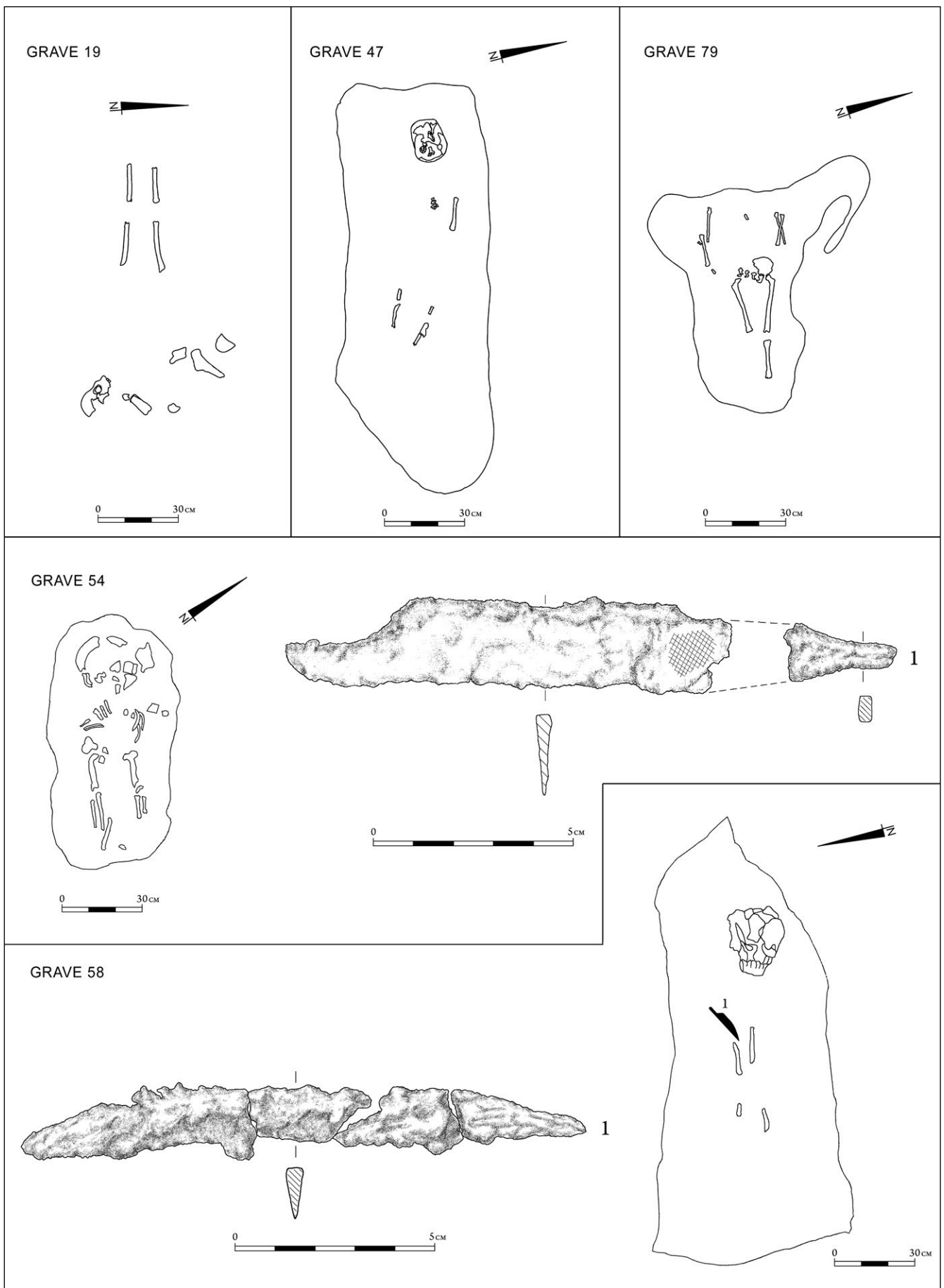


Fig. 3. Radom – children's grave: Grave 19 (child aged 5-6), Grave 47 (child aged 12-15), Grave 54 (child aged about 2), Grave 58 (*infans* I), Grave 79 (child aged about 4-5). Drawing J. Słomska & B. Fuglewicz; elaborated by J. Słomska.

small stones near skulls were found in two burials (Graves 35 and 37 – Fig. 2). Their presence may have been related to a need for supporting the head in the course of deposition of the body into the grave pit. It is difficult, however, to offer any certain conclusions on the actual reason of their presence here. In some burials of persons from other groups than *infans* there were also individual stones near skeletons in various parts of grave pits.

Due to a small number of children's graves and their poor state of preservation, an assessment of the assortment and quality of grave furnishings is possible to a limited degree only. However, some observations can still be made.

The youngest children, that is, a newborn (a foetus?) buried in the joint grave with a woman, as well as a child aged 2 from Grave 54 were not provided with any grave goods. Sparse furnishings commence to first occur in burials of children died at the age of 4-5. However, this concerns Grave 12 only, where a bronze temple ring with textile remains was discovered (Fig. 2). It must be said here that in the cemetery there are no bone remains of persons who died at the age of 3. On the other hand, in burials of older children from the group of *infans* I or its later phases there were shards of clay vessels or entire such vessels.

A greater diversity of post-mortem furnishings can be first seen in the group of *infans* II, which is represented only by two persons died at the age of 12-15. Relatively rich grave goods were found in Grave 37. They included 2 silver temple rings, a coin and a stone spindle whorl (Fig. 2). Furthermore, the presence of shards of clay vessels was identified. In the place of rest of the other person (Grave 47) no artefacts were found (Fig. 3).

The case of Grave 34 is unclear with regard to grave goods. On one of phalanxes of the left hand of a woman there were two glass rings. No finds were discovered near the remains of a teenage person (*infans* II/*juvenis*). It is known, however, that yet another ring (made from bronze) with an ambient ornament of various signs was found in the grave pit. The location of this artefact within the grave pit is unknown, but it does not render its relation to the young person impossible.

It should be said that children from the Radom necropolis were not accompanied with finds discovered in burials of persons from older age groups, such as weaponry, rings, earrings, buckles or buckets. Tools were practically limited to a knife and a spindle whorl. However, it would be difficult to assume that in this case these artefacts symbolised an "occupational" activity which was originally envisaged for the child.

Discussion

The problem of re-construction of stages of socialisation of children on the basis of data from cemeteries is not an easy task. The state of examination of the necropolis, the degree of preservations of skeletons, the structure of mortality and cultural factors (religious, mental and

customary ones) influence the numerical strength of subsequent age groups, not only *infans* I but also *infans* II. A fundamental shortcoming is an underrepresentation of newborns and children under the age of 3 in Early Medieval cemeteries, which is revealed by anthropological analyses.

Observations made at Radom with regard to relationships between the age and burial rites, with special reference to the issue of providing the youngest members of communities of those days with grave goods, are to some degree coherent with results of analyses from other cemeteries of the Early Piast Period. Children died before the completion of the age of 3 were treated in the least favourable manner with regard to analysed traits of burial rites, with special reference to the wealth of grave goods. Grave pits are generally small, with no traces of wooden structures, and grave furnishings are usually absent.

Such a situation was observed in other cemeteries which were chronologically comparable, among others, at Dziekanowice, the Gniezno District, Site 22 and at Lubień, the Piotrków District¹⁶. Communities using these necropolises were giving artefacts to children died at the age of 3 or more. At Dziekanowice, it is first these dead persons that were provided with artefacts, usually with temple rings, or tin or glass beads. Knives first accompany children aged 5¹⁷. On the other hand, children from the group of *infans* II were less frequently provided with beads and temple rings, but knives were more often given to them¹⁸. At Lubień, grave furnishings of children aged 3-4 chiefly contained beads and knives, while temple rings or a bucket were sporadic. An axe, a coin and a fire striker were found in burials of children aged 5-6; however, e.g., rings were not found. Children from the group of *infans* II were statistically slightly more often provided with such categories of artefacts as temple rings or rings. On the other hand, analogously to younger persons, they were not given such artefacts as, for instance, earrings, buckles or belt fittings¹⁹. Furthermore, in the necropolis in Masłowice, the Wieluń District, the youngest child was 2-year-old (Grave 19). No furnishings were found with the burial²⁰. 17 burials of children were found altogether in this cemetery, and almost 50% did not contain any grave goods. Four burials were provided only with a knife or a clay vessel. Only 4 graves can be classified as better furnished, including 3 graves of older children (*infans* II). Grave goods mainly included temple rights, beads, rings, knives, vessels, and exceptionally a coin (in Grave 85) and ornamental fittings (in Grave 21)²¹.

¹⁶ Kurasiński and Skóra 2012a, 116.

¹⁷ Wrzeńska and Wrzeński 1998b, 16, 18; Wrzeńska and Wrzeński 2000, 157; Wrzeńska and Wrzeński 2002b, 282.

¹⁸ Wrzeńska and Wrzeński 1998b, 18.

¹⁹ Kurasiński and Skóra 2012a, 107.

²⁰ Abramek 1980, 232.

²¹ Abramek 1980, 232-233.

Also in the cemetery in Stary Zamek, the Wrocław District²², grave goods (knives, ornaments, clay vessels, a coin) first appear in burials of older children (*infans* II). In some graves remains of wooden structures were also discovered²³. The case of, e.g., Tychy-Cielmice, the Tychy District, is analogous, and one of children (a newborn) was buried in a chest composed of limestone and sandstone plates and covered with stones²⁴.

This tendency is confirmed with regard to graves containing weaponry. There was no anthropologically confirmed case of a post-mortem gift of weaponry to a child died before the completion of the age of 2. So far, the youngest persons buried with a weapon or its imitation (it was possible to more precisely assess the age of the dead) were found in the cemetery in Kaldus, the Chełmno District, Site 1, Grave 14/97 – aged 2-4 (an iron arrowhead) and in Dziekanowice, Site 22, Grave 65/95 – aged 3-5 (a miniature brass axe). It must be remembered, however, that a combat-oriented nature of each of these finds can be questioned. First items with “normal” dimensions appear in burials of children aged at least 5-6²⁵.

Respecting the age of 3 years as a caesura above which it was possible to provide the dead with grave goods was not an absolute rule in the Polish lands. Sporadically, individual artefacts are found in graves of younger children. For example, at Będzin-Góra Zamkowa, the Będzin District, a ring was found in the grave of a child died before the completion of the age of 2 years²⁶. Furthermore, in the cemetery in Pień, the Bydgoszcz District, a rich assemblage of artefacts was found in the grave of a child aged 2 (Grave 40)²⁷. These grave goods included a belt of silk interspersed with golden thread and provided with brass fittings and small gilded bells, another 3 small bronze belts, 2 antler handles, a staved bucket with fittings and a small iron knife. Similar examples were yielded by the necropolis in Czekanów, the Sokołów Podlaski District²⁸. It must be underlined, however, that children died before the completion of the age of 3 years were only occasionally provided with grave goods.

Childhood, and the attitude of the adult part of the society to their offspring in the Middle Ages is marked with ambivalence. This is also reflected in materials from excavations, with special reference to finds from cemeteries. In the Early Middle Ages burials of children are usually not provided with post-mortem furnishings or these furnishings are very poor. However, some grave pits stand

out with regard to the number and quality of grave goods in them. A diversity can also be observed with regard to the size of children's graves and the ways to secure them²⁹. Childhood is a socially meaningful category, which varies considerably from chronological-geographical, cultural, economic and legal points of view. This does not mean, however, that there is a complete absence of biological causations³⁰. Nevertheless, it can be noticed that the group of newborns and generally the stage of childhood under the age of 2 years are marked with a low social significance. This stage of development of the child is namely characterised by a low communicativeness coefficient, need for care, minimum mobility and a low self-awareness.

With some degree of probability it can be assumed that a proper age to mark the social status of the child was about 3-4 years and it was probably related to leaving the suckling age. At this age it comes to a change in the way of nourishing the child and there is a transition to solid food. In a sense, this is the first step toward breaking a complete dependence on maternal care. On the basis of present-day data it is observed that it is at this stage (the age of 2-4 years) that mode developed communicativeness and beginnings of co-operation with others commence to form. This is in spite of the fact that one can still notice limited mobility, low social skills and self-awareness, as well as a need for care. What is also significant is a considerable progress of speaking skills about the 30th month of life. A culmination occurs at the age of 6-7 years, when a child learns basic grammar principle and vocabulary³¹. Other traits which can be observed in the case of children entering the age of 4-6/7 years are development of proper motor coordination, which means a greater mobility and strength, developing social skills and an increase in knowledge. Furthermore, the period between the age of 7 and 10/12 years means full communicativeness, acquisition of rudimentary cultural knowledge and social skills, full mobility and ability to work³².

It seems that noticed differences which first of all concern the way of furnishing of graves in Early Piast Period cemeteries are a sort of resultant of wealth status of families (clans), certain ritual duties toward given groups of the dead, and a necessity to mark the pace of including children into the adult world within the framework of designed initiation rites³³. This means that the lack of grave goods in graves of the youngest members of the community can be explained with the fact that they did not reach the age of

²² Wachowski 1992, 30-31.

²³ Wachowski 1992, 17, 21, 24, 25, 27, 29.

²⁴ Foltyn 2008, 20, 41, Fig. 9.

²⁵ See Kurasiński 2009.

²⁶ Rogaczewska 1998, 53-54.

²⁷ It must be added, however, that the dental age was assessed, with a deviation of +/- 8 months (Drozd et al. 2009, 359).

²⁸ Zawadzka-Antosik 1982, 41, 51-55.

²⁹ For the Polish lands see recently Wrzesińska and Wrzesiński 2000; Wrzesińska and Wrzesiński 2002b; Koperkiewicz 2004; Sulkowska-Tuszyńska 2007; Kurasiński 2010.

³⁰ See, e.g., Sofaer Derevenski 1994; Kamp 2001; Baxter 2008; Pawleta 2009; Pawleta 2013; Lillehammer 2010; with extensive scholarship mentioned in these works.

³¹ Fahlander 2011, 17.

³² Fahlander 2011.

³³ Kurasiński 2010, 329-330.

majority, meaning an acquisition of full social status, and they still remained at the stage of childhood, marked with social indefiniteness.

What is significant there is the border between the period of minority and the stage meaning a legally confirmed social usefulness and an ability to decide about oneself. Late Medieval and Early Modern written sources demonstrate that this threshold could be seen and defined in various ways, depending on sex, psychophysical traits of a given person, as well as secular and Ecclesiastical legislation. The most commonly stated age was 12 years, and for male persons it could be a slightly older age. A completion of this age entitled one to start sexual life and to marry³⁴. This means in the category of the dead from *infans* II and *infans II/juvenis* groups there may have been persons who, according to contemporary views, were not children but full members of the community. This may have been manifested in taking more care to lay them to rest after death in accordance with funeral rites of those days³⁵.

We probably have a testimony of this at Radom in the case of Grave 37 of a person aged 12-15, buried with numerous artefacts in a spacious grave pit. If we assume that a signed ring-annulus is related to a dead person from the group of *infans II/juvenis* who was buried in Grave 34, it may have been the case of a burial of a person who was already recognised as an adult.

Although the amount of sources acquired from Radom which are of interest for us is limited, it seems that one can say on the basis of them that rules related to burials of minors which are characteristic for other Early Medieval necropolises from the territory of Poland and other areas were respected³⁶.

A discussion is also required for the issue of archaeological manifestation of sentimental relations between adults and representatives of the youngest generation. Care for a proper burial seems to reflect close relations to children, which are rather far from indifference³⁷. It can be seen in graves containing remains of children and adults which were deposited together, as it was the case in the cemetery in Radom (Grave 82). There is a considerable probability of a joint burial of a mother with a newborn (or even a foetus)³⁸,

³⁴ Delimata 2004a, 166-169; Dzik 2014, 28. It must be said that in traditional cultures children and the old held a separate place in the social structure. This different position may have been conditioned by the fact that they were seen as defective members of the community, due to their asexuality and incomplete engagement in labour. Their “different” position also resulted from the dependence of their existence on the help from the group – Kalniuk 2014, 55-56.

³⁵ Dzik 2014, 28

³⁶ Cf. Staecker 2009, 485-489.

³⁷ Cf. Zawadzka-Antosik 1982, 44; Wrzesińska and Wrzesiński 2000, 158; 2002, 282-283. A similar image emerges from research carried out by historians – cf. Delimata 2004a; 2004b.

³⁸ In such a case we may have to do with the place of rest of persons whose death occurred in result of perinatal complications

but we cannot be absolutely certain (genetic examinations would be decisive here). Ethnological data points to a possibility of burials of completely unrelated persons in such circumstances³⁹. A burial of a child with an adult may have been related to securing care from older members of the community (not necessarily parents), which was important in the other world⁴⁰. In the opinion of some researchers adults may have been ritually killed for such a purpose. On the other hand, L. Gardęła and K. Kajkowski believe that suicide or death in result of trauma caused by the loss of child it is more probable⁴¹. There are also opinions that a burial of a minor and an adult in one grave pit can be explained by killing of an orphaned child as an act of mercy for such a person, who was deprived of material support⁴². In our opinion, however, at Radom it came to a joint burial in result of one-time death of both persons. In such a case holding one funeral ceremony was justified both in economic and practical terms.

Concluding remarks

While discussing the issue of childhood in the past one must be aware that children do not come of age at the same pace and their socialisation is monitored by the community. Coming of age is anyway an individual matter to some extent. On the other hand, anthropological analyses inform us about the osteological or odontological age of children. In theory, we have knowledge on their biological development, which did not necessarily go synchronically with the development related to social expectations. There is also an issue of “respecting” of the calendrical age in the past. The awareness of years of life was rather of marginal importance, and it was not widespread to refer to it in the wider population, especially the common people. Even in Early Medieval Europe it hardly occurred that one used the annual cycle for this purpose. Some historians assume that an ability to calculate one’s own age and an awareness of time dates back only to the 13th c.⁴³. Therefore, our “historical” perception of children (and childhood) assumes a present-day perspective and may yield an image which diverges from past ideas. Nevertheless, it is only by intensifying research on cemeteries from a social perspective that we can expect a further increase in comparative data, which will be an impulse for studies on the discussed issue. We hope that the present assessment of children’s burials, although based on a modest source basis, will help complete this knowledge to some degree.

or even with a phenomenon called “coffin birth.” In result of it, it came to a post-mortem foetal extrusion – see Fojtík and Prokeš 2004, with examples. Cf. Caselitz 1980; Sayer and Dickinson 2013.

³⁹ See Pollex 2000, 414; Stoodley 2002, 115, 118-119, 121.

⁴⁰ Stoodley 2002, 121; Hanuliak 2004, 118.

⁴¹ Gardęła and Kajkowski 2014, 118.

⁴² Drozd et al. 2010, 102.

⁴³ Myśliwski 2001, 177.

Grave No.	Anthropological assessment of age	Grave pit						Grave furnishings
		Length [cm]	Width [cm]	Depth [cm]	Stone elements	Wooden elements	State of preservation	
INFANS I								
12	4-5 years	-	-	66	-	-	poor	copper alloy temple ring
19	5-6 years	-	-	80	-	-	poor	no
35	5-6 years	-	-	25	medium-sized stone, 5 cm to the left of the skull	-	poor	2 shards of clay vessels
54	about 2 years	90	50	40	-	-	poor	no
58	<i>infans I</i>	150	60	30	-	-	poor	iron knife with a scabbard
79	4-5 lat	>85	60	23	-	-	poor	no
82	adultus woman and foetus/newborn	>150	80	65	-	-	poor	adultus woman: temple rings, earrings and a copper alloy ring, shards of clay vessels
INFANS I/II								
36	<i>infans I/II</i>	210	70	32	-	-	poor	clay vessel
INFANS II								
37	12-15 years	170	75	35	2 stones behind the skull	-	poor	2 silver temple rings, coin, spindle whorl, shards of vessels
47	12-15 years	155	55	50	-	-	poor	no
INFANS II/JUVENIS								
34	<i>infans II/ iuvenis</i> (long bones of lower limbs) and bones of an adult female – only phalanges of the hand	?	?	28	-	-	poor	2 glass rings, bronze ring (on one of phalanges of the left hand of an adult female)

Tab. 1. List of children's burials from the cemetery in Radom.

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Streszczenie

Pochówki dziecięce z wczesnośredniowiecznego cmentarzyska szkieletowego w Radomiu, stan. 4

Cmentarzysko w Radomiu (4. ćwierć XI-XII w.) stanowiło element większej struktury osadniczej, którą tworzyły gród zwany „Piotrówką”, którego początki sięgają 2. połowy X w. oraz okoliczne osady otwarte (Fig. 1). Łącznie zarejestrowano na nim 125 grobów, w większości wyposażonych, z czego 81 odkryto w 1966 r. Niewielką ich część stanowiły pochówki dziecięce. Do klasy *infans* I zaliczono 7 osobników. Dzieciństwo starsze (*infans* II) reprezentowane jest tylko przez dwoje 12-15-letnich dzieci (groby 37 i 47). Ponadto z grobu 36 wydobyto szczątki ludzkie określone na przełom *infans* I i II. Stanowi to około 12% wszystkich pochówków odkrytych w 1966 r.

Groby dziecięce zidentyfikowano w różnych partiach odsłoniętej nekropolii, choć rysuje się niewielkie ich skupisko (groby 34, 35, 36 i 37). Grupa *infans* I i *infans* II pod względem cech obrządku pogrzebowego nie odbiega zasadniczo od reguł sepulkralnych stosowanych wobec osób ze starszych klas wiekowych pochowanych w Radomiu. W tych grobach szkielety znajdowały się w pozycji wyprostowanej na wznak. Pochówki orientowano w kierunkach wschodnim i zachodnim lub do nich zbliżonym. Dziecko zmarłe w wieku okołoporodowym (grób 82) złożono w tym samym kierunku, co zwłoki leżącej obok kobiety.

Dzieciom najmłodszym nie towarzyszyły żadne przedmioty. Nieliczne elementy wyposażenia zaczynają pojawiać się dopiero w pochówkach dzieci zmarłych około 4-5 roku życia, choć dotyczy to tylko grobu 12, w którym natrafiono na kabłączek skroniowy z brązu z tekstylnymi pozostałościami (Fig. 2). Większe urozmaicenie wyposażenia pośmiertnego zaznacza się dopiero od klasy *infans* II. W grobie 37 odkryto stosunkowo bogaty inwentarz (2 srebrne kabłączki skroniowy, moneta i przęślik; Fig. 2). W miejscu spoczynku drugiej z osób (nr 47) nie natrafiono na jakiegokolwiek wyroby (Fig. 3).

Poczynione obserwacje dotyczące relacji wieku i obrządku pogrzebowego, zwłaszcza w zakresie wyposażania grobów dziecięcych, zasadniczo pozostają w zgodzie z wynikami badań z innych cmentarzysk doby wczesnopiastowskiej. Pod względem analizowanych parametrów obrzędowości pogrzebowej, głównie zasobności inwentarzy pośmiertnych, najmniej korzystnie prezentują się dzieci zmarłe przed ukończeniem 3 roku życia. Jamy grobowe są na ogół małe, bez śladów konstrukcji drewnianych, a wyposażenia na ogół brak.

Stan dzieciństwa to kategoria nacechowana społecznie, wykazująca dużą zmienność czasowo-geograficzną, kulturową, ekonomiczną i prawną, co jednak nie oznacza zupełnego braku uwarunkowań biologicznych. Tym niemniej można zauważyć, iż grupę noworodków i ogólnie etap dzieci do 2 roku życia wyróżnia niska istotność społeczna. Wolno założyć, że wiek właściwy do zaznaczenia statusu społecznego dziecka przypadają na około 3-4 rok życia.

Wydaje się, że obserwowane różnice przede wszystkim w sposobie wyposażenia na cmentarzyskach doby wczesnopiastowskiej stanowią swego rodzaju wypadkową majątkowej kondycji rodzin (rodów), określonych powinności rytualnych względem danych grup zmarłych, a koniecznością zaznaczania rytmu włączania dzieci w świat dorosłych w ramach przewidzianych rytów inicjacyjnych. Tym samym nieobecność przedmiotów w grobach najmłodszych członków wspólnoty może być tłumaczona nieosiągnięciem przez nich wieku sprawnego, oznaczającego osiągnięcie pełnoprawnego statusu społecznego. Istotna jest tu granica dzieląca okres małoletniości od etapu oznaczającego popartą prawnie społeczną zdadność i możliwość decydowania o sobie. Próg ten mógł być różnie postrzegany i określany, w zależności od płci i cech psychofizycznych osoby, co znajduje odzwierciedlenie w prawodawstwie świeckim i kościelnym. Najczęściej wskazywano na 12 rok życia, przy czym dla chłopców granica ta mogła być wyznaczana na nieco późniejszy wiek. Zatem w gronie zmarłych z kategorii *infans* II i *infans* II/*juvenis* mogą być jednostki, które według ówczesnych zapatrywań nie były już dziećmi, ale pełnoprawnymi członkami społeczności. Mogło to przekładać się na większą dbałość o zgodne z panującymi zwyczajami grzebalnymi złożenie ich po śmierci do grobu.