

FUNERALIA GNIĘŹNIEŃSKIE – SPOTKANIE 25
GNIĘZNO FUNERALIA – MEETING 25



ADAM MICKIEWICZ
UNIVERSITY
POZNAŃ



25 YEARS HAVE PASSED. GRAVE – MAN – ENVIRONMENT



HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG

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Mateusz Jaeger, Jacek Tomczyk, Jacek Wrzesiński

INSTYTUT KULTURY EUROPEJSKIEJ W GNIEŹNIE
UNIwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu

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Legal and financial responsibility for the illustrations contained herein rests with the authors of articles.

The publication was funded by the resources of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and by a grant from the National Science Centre (project no. 2023/51/B/HS3/01381).

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <https://dnb.de/> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <https://dnb.de/>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our website <https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/>

© By IKE and Authors, published by Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2026
Kreuzberger Ring 7c–d, 65205 Wiesbaden, produktsicherheit.verlag@harrassowitz.de

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Printed on permanent/durable paper.

Printing and binding: PrimeRate Zrt.

Printed in Hungary

ISBN 978-3-447-12574-1

eISBN 978-3-447-39825-1

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25 years of Funeralia – An Introduction

In 2025, the conference “Funeralia” was held for the 25th time. Originally known as the *Lednica Funeralia* (*Funeralia Lednickie*), the meetings are now held under the name *Gniezno Funeralia* (*Funeralia Gnieźnieńskie*). This exceptionally long-running conference series in Poland constitutes a dialogue between representatives of two leading disciplines – archaeology and anthropology. However, scholars from other fields are also invited to participate, including historical, biological and natural sciences, philosophy, linguistics, as well as physics and chemistry.

When, in 1992, the results of research on an early medieval cemetery in Dziekanowice were presented, probably no one imagined that this scholarly meeting would evolve into a series of systematic conferences devoted to cemetery and burial research, regardless of period or cultural context. And yet, nearly every meeting in Poznań – formal or informal – ended with discussions about creating a forum for the exchange of experience in the excavation, analysis, interpretation, and publication of cemetery research. Bożena and Wojciech Dzeduszycki from the then Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences (now the Institute of Archaeology and

Ethnology) in Poznań were particularly strong advocates of such meetings. Participants also included, among others, Michał Brzostowicz, Tomasz Kasprowicz, and Maciej Przybył, with occasional participation by Henryk Mamzer and Anna Wrzesińska.

After many discussions and much encouragement, a meeting of researchers of necropolises finally took place in 2000. It was held on Ostrów Lednicki and devoted to atypical graves and burials found in various cultures and not easily subjected to clear, unambiguous interpretation. Such burials are often described as “witch burials,” and this was the title of the meeting – “Witches.”

Ostrów Lednicki, an island where an early medieval stronghold with a palace complex associated with the beginnings of the Polish state once stood, was also a burial place from the 11th to the 14th centuries. As a venue for discussions on cemetery research, Ostrów Lednicki gave rise to the name *Lednica Funeralia*.

The Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, which exercises scholarly supervision over the island, hosted the funerary conferences. Until 2018, the Museum (one of the co-organizers) held the annual conferences, with the permanent conference venue being a historic granary

within the former manorial complex, adapted for museum use from 1994 onward¹.

The need for a direct discussion and exchange of experience between archaeologists and anthropologists studying cemeteries, graves and burials was quickly recognized by representatives of both disciplines. On the anthropological side, this included groups associated with the Institute of Anthropology of the University of Wrocław (now represented by the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences) and the Institute of Anthropology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Archaeologists were primarily members of the Poznań branch of the Scientific Association of Polish Archaeologists. From the start, both substantive and organizational support was provided by successive presidents of the Poznań branch of the Association (Tadeusz Makiewicz, Hanna Kóčka-Krenz, Henryk Machajewski) as well as by chairs of the Polish Anthropological Society (Danuta Kornafel, Maria Kaczmarek, Krzysztof Szostek, Jacek Tomczyk).

From the beginning, everyone was aware that papers presented at the meetings should be published. However, finding a suitable publisher and funding proved difficult. Initial support came from friends, with help from the company *Akme–Zdzisław Wiśniewski* and from Wojtek Fabisiak's colleague at the S. Dunajewski Ślęza Museum in Sobótka. Thanks to them, it was possible to publish the proceedings of the 2nd and 4th conferences. The third meeting was never published as a standalone volume. From the fifth Funeralia onward, with a unified graphic design prepared by Monika Śniedzewska and Tomasz Lerczak, the volumes were published regularly each year until the outbreak of the pandemic. For many years, significant financial support was provided by the Greater Poland Provincial Conservator of Monuments (Aleksander Starzyński, later Jolanta Goszczyńska), as well as by friendly

donors. Occasionally, funding was also obtained from the Marshal's Office of the Greater Poland Voivodeship. All these individuals and institutions made it possible to systematically publish articles in successive volumes reflecting the May funerary discussions.

From volume 6 onward, the texts were peer-reviewed. The first reviewer was the anthropologist Prof. Jan Strzałko, joined in volume 7 by the archaeologist Prof. Henryk Mamzer. After the death of Prof. Strzałko, the reviewer of subsequent volumes became the anthropologist Prof. Krzysztof Borylski. Today, the group of reviewers has expanded and includes anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians. The funerary conference took place annually without interruption until the pandemic, which halted or slowed virtually all scholarly activity, including conferences and public gatherings.

Resuming meetings and publications after the pandemic was not easy. Although the Polish Anthropological Society secured a grant to organize subsequent Funeralia, pandemic restrictions prevented the organization of any meeting. The conference dates were postponed twice. Additional difficulties arose due to changes at the Museum that had previously hosted the conferences. Reorganization of the institution – particularly the construction of a new museum pavilion – resulted in the granary, the former conference hall, being taken out of use and adapted to house elements of an exhibition transferred from a decommissioned and completely rebuilt former exhibition building (a former manorial barn that no longer met safety standards for archaeological artifacts).

Fortunately, Funeralia found a new venue. The Institute of European Culture at Adam Mickiewicz University in Gniezno (thanks to the goodwill of Leszek Mrozewicz and Mateusz Jaeger) became a co-organizer of the conference and made its facilities available. Thus, after the

¹ In Poland, during the Tadeusz Mazowiecki government, a law was passed in 1990, and appropriate legal provisions were introduced in 1991, allowing for the liquidation of state-owned farms. State-owned farms (PGRs) were enterprises that, under socialist conditions, were intended to ensure Poland's self-sufficiency in food production and, at the same time, to be the foundation of socialism in rural areas after World War II. After 1990, some of them were privatized, companies were established, others were sold, and even parcelled out.

pandemic break, the 21st Funeralia took place in Gniezno under the modified name *Lednica–Gniezno Funeralia*, and from the 23rd edition onward, the series adopted the name *Gniezno Funeralia*.

In its new incarnation, Funeralia also gained permanent media patronage from the magazine *Archeologia Żywa*. The initiative for this patronage came from the then editor-in-chief Paweł Konczewski and has since been continued by Radosław Biel.

We now present to readers the proceedings of the 25th meeting – “25 Years Have Passed. Grave – Human – Environment. Gniezno Funeralia, Meeting 25”, which held at the Institute of European Culture in Gniezno on 14–15 May 2025. During the conference, 33 papers and 9 posters were presented. In addition, workshops were held throughout the conference, allowing participants to become acquainted with bone material scanning, 3D visualization techniques, and multidimensional measurement possibilities. The conference was attended by over 80 participants. Alongside the Polish Anthropological Society and the Institute of European Culture, the Museum of the Origins of the Polish State in Gniezno was also a co-organizer. The President of the City of Gniezno acted as patron of this edition of Funeralia and also provided financial support for its organization.

The volume presented here contains 33 texts reflecting the discussions that took place during the May 2025 meeting.

The volume opens with a paper by the late Jacek Woźny discussing the use of theory in studies of human death, based on selected texts from previous Funeralia publications. Next, Krzysztof Boryśławski, as well as Agata Biesiecka together with Zbigniew Kubiatowski, drawing on their experience and observations, present visions of cooperation between archaeology and anthropology in cemeteries research. Subsequent contributions, through individual case studies, present authors' approaches to the relationship between humans and the environment (very broadly defined) across a wide chronological span – from the Neolithic through the Hallstatt period to modern times.

Neolithic Çatalhöyük provides an excellent example of changes in funerary practices in the context of socio-cultural and environmental transformations within a local community (Katarzyna Harabasz, Arkadiusz Marciniak). Analysis of the settlement complex at Brzoza (barrow cemetery, flat graves, settlement) points to social inequalities sanctioned through the sacred and based on violence (Tomasz Gralak). The cemetery at Masłomęcz provides data illustrating the expansion of the Goths; analyses of archaeological material and DNA revealed population diversity, areas of origin, and extensive contacts (Andrzej Kokowski). Analysis of Roman-period cemeteries in the Sudetes suggests that necropolises were established in less accessible and previously uninhabited areas (Marcin Bohr). Andrzej P. Kowalski compares archaeological data on disturbed Roman-period graves with ancient historical and literary sources as well as linguistic data on Germanic customs.

The article by Nina Tarasow and Paulina Dudek presents current research on strontium isotope levels in Poland across different periods, indicating possibilities for further inference about past populations. Maciej Karczewski, based on detailed analyses of cremation cemeteries in the Masurian Lake District, discusses interpretive possibilities regarding the natural landscape and environment of the Bogaczewo culture. Several subsequent papers concern the early Middle Ages. Jacek Bojarski analyzes relationships between cemeteries and settlements in the context of cultural change and community responses to the introduction of Christianity. A team of authors (Barbara Wąsowicz, Ingrida Domarkienė, Magda Miciak, Marta Rychtarska) analyzes graves suggesting possible family relationships at the cemetery in Giecz using archaeological, anthropological, and genetic methods. Reanalysis of artifacts from the cemetery at Lutomiernik – debated for over 80 years – led Leszek Gardela to conclude that there is no evidence for a “Scandinavian” population at this necropolis.

Marek Florek examines the position and significance of cemeteries in the region of early medieval Sandomierz. Tomasz Kurasiński