

NOT LOST IN TIME¹

Organic Remains from the Hallstatt Period Cemetery in Domasław (PL)

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/szausav.2024.71.19>

Keywords: Domasław, Lower Silesia, Hallstatt period, funerary textiles, bark and wickerwork, funeral rites, burial practices

The vast necropolis from the Hallstatt period with 803 cremation burials, including about 300 chamber graves, was discovered in Domasław, near Wrocław in Lower Silesia (Poland). It appears that those who buried the dead at the cemetery maintained extensive contacts with the important Early Iron Age centres and adopted the customs of the Hallstatt elites among the local community. One of the notable practices was wrapping urns, jewellery, dress accessories, tools and weapons in fabric. The remnants of textiles were preserved in 62 graves, but their presence was confirmed in many others.

Exceptionally numerous organic remnants were preserved in the graves. The pieces of bark have been found on and underneath the urns and grave goods. In the most opulent burials in the necropolis, the remnants of the wickerwork, including baskets with bronze vessels, were uncovered. The unique discoveries on this site are a wooden needle and beetles coiled on a blade of grass, the latter one is most likely a form of decoration or amulet. All these findings may contribute to understanding the organization of funeral ceremonies, including the intentions behind these customs. Clearly, these practices allow to connect local rituals with cultural traditions of European communities.

INTRODUCTION

The vast cemetery from the Urnfield and Hallstatt period has been excavated in Domasław, Wrocław County, Lower Silesian Voivodeship (Gediga/Józefowska 2019; Gediga *et al.* 2020, with references). The eastern part of necropolis with over one thousand objects such as graves, ceramic deposits and ditches, dates to the Early Iron Age. In this period, strong influences from the Hallstatt circle had led to changes in beliefs and cultural practices what can be seen in the rituals and in the origin and types of goods placed in the graves, particularly the opulent ones. The local elites adopted practices of the aristocracy in Iron Age Europe, such as building internal, wooden chambers, patterns of grave goods with drinking and dining equipment (Gediga 2010; Gediga/Bugaj 2022; Gediga/Józefowska 2019; Gediga *et al.* 2020; Józefowska 2018), as well as the custom of wrapping up objects in fabric (Gleba 2014, with references).

An organic residue layer preserved around metal objects was uncovered in most of the chamber graves in Domasław (Fig. 1). The residues were the remains of textiles and other materials of plant and animal origin. Preserved fabrics, bark, wicker and leaves (in the past probably also roots, phloem, leather, and fur) served as a wrapping for the urns and grave goods, containers, lids and pads, as well as a lining on the bottom of the chests. Some other organic residue was mineralized wood from the floor of the chambers or biers (Sady-Bugajska 2020).

¹ The paper is part of a project: Feeding and ritual practices of the Early Iron Age based on the settlement in Milejowice and the necropolis in Domasław. Between the function and meaning of the ceramic ‘collections’ (2021/41/B/HS3/02531), financed by Narodowe Centrum Nauki (National Science Center).



Fig. 1. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Organic residue layer in the grave No. 10000. Photo L. Nowaczyk.

REMAINS OF TEXTILES

Ninety-three textile fragments were found in sixty-two graves, but their presence was confirmed in many other burials during excavation and pre-laboratory works. Corroded pieces of fabric were discovered mainly on the iron objects because the metal corrosion compounds had preserved the fibres. They are completely mineralized, and this prevents determining what raw material they were made from. Neither is it possible to recreate their original size, appearance and colour. The analysed pieces (thirty-six samples from nineteen graves; *Maik/Rybarczyk 2015; 2016*) were probably made of wool, while the other fragments, which appear to be more delicate, may have been woven from flax. They are spun solely in Z-twist, generally of a single yarn. The textiles from six burials are woven in 2/2 twill (Fig. 2), eleven in tabby, two in rep-weave and one in tablet weave. A delicate piece of textile from the grave No. 4269 has two weaves, tabby and repp, which gives an impression of elongated strips. In three graves, two types of textiles were found. In the grave No. 5970 pieces of textile woven in rep-weave and the remains of a tablet-woven ribbon were found. The warp in a thick textile in repp was spun from S/2Z-plied yarn and the weft is in Z-single yarn (*Maik/Rybarczyk 2016, 38*).

The twills from Domasław are the oldest discoveries of such a type in Poland and resemble other discoveries of the Hallstatt culture from the sites in Hallstatt and Dürrnberg near Hallein in Austria and Langenthal, Ersingen, Subingen in Switzerland (*Grömer 2012; Rast-Eicher 2012*). Similar textiles were also found in the princely grave in Eberdingen-Hochdorf in Southern Germany, as well as in Verucchio, Saso di Furbara, Vedretta di Ries, Tarquinia, and San Basilio in Northern and Central Italy (*Maik/Rybarczyk*

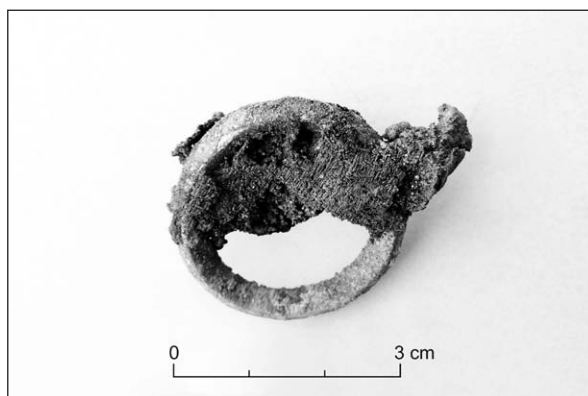


Fig. 2. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Delicate textile from the grave No. 283 in 2/2 twill. Photo J. Słomska; after *Maik/Rybarczyk 2016, fig. 10*.

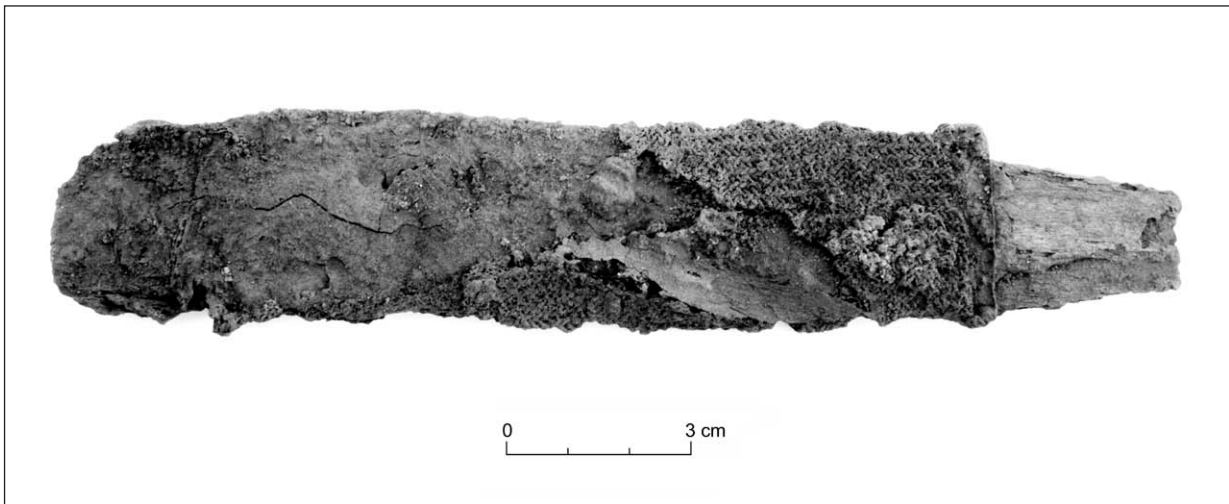


Fig. 3. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Knife from the grave No. 8943. Photo I. Dolata-Daszkiewicz.

2016, 35, 36). It should be emphasized that textiles in a 2/2 twill weave are unknown around the Lusatian Culture settlement. Therefore, the findings from Domasław are unique and strengthen the hypothesis that Silesia is the north-eastern region of the Hallstatt culture (*Gediga 2010; 2011; Słomska-Bolonek/Antosik 2022, 234*).

The textiles in the graves in Domasław were preserved on jewellery and dress accessories, tools and weapons deposited in the grave pits, besides and on urns. It can be considered that they wrapped urns and objects, either individually or together. As fabrics have been preserved also on the grave goods inside urns (22), it is likely that the items or the bones were wrapped in cloth.

The fabrics were discovered on seventeen knives. As knives were found at a certain distance from urns, one can assume that the knives were separately wrapped in fabrics. On three items, the direction of wrapping can be traced. On the knife from the grave No. 8943, textile seems to have constituted an outer layer of the sheath (Fig. 3). In contrast to the knives, the eight swords found in Domasław bear no traces of textile. Three objects were placed in wooden scabbards, one in a leather sheath. It is unclear whether other swords were deposited without a 'wrapping' or whether organic scabbards and textiles were not preserved.

In twelve graves, the remains of the textiles were preserved on the toiletry sets. Clearly, they might have served as belts to hang the toiletries and the pouches to store them. In one case, the ribbon wrapped around the tweezers was found. In twenty-two graves, the remains of textiles were present on pins which could hold the fabrics together. The pieces of fabric have also survived on necklaces, bracelets, needles, chisels, a sickle, arrowheads, fibulae, spiral, and plaques. Sometimes these are single pieces of fabric in graves, but occasionally there are multiple objects with textiles in them.

In the grave No. 4269, the urn was surrounded by an organic residue. The remains of delicate textile have been preserved on iron and iron-bronze grave goods placed on the urn with other objects. On the urn, a strip of other fabric was also uncovered. It was likely a kind of a belt or headband with at least two hundred delicate bronze staple plaques stuck densely in rows. In the grave No. 283, two types of delicate textiles have been survived, one may have been attached to the toiletry set and the second covered the vessel. Also, the urns in graves Nos. 384 and 5611 were wrapped up in a dress. The vessels and the metal objects gathered on and near vessels were covered with an organic substance, and textiles have been preserved between the iron objects and the vessels' walls. In the grave No. 4297, textiles were found on the metal objects on the urn.

The imprints of fabric were found on the wood preserved under the binocular pendants in the grave No. 3797. In the grave No. 612, the impression of textile has survived on the patina covering the plant remains (such as flax) wrapping the bronze bracelet.

In many graves, wrapping up urns was confirmed by the positions of the objects in relation to the walls of urns. The pins, fibulae, rings, spirals which would have fallen off the ceramic surface if they had not been fastened the textile (Fig. 4). The pins placed on the urns in the graves Nos. 1849, 2877, 3311, 3318,



Fig. 4. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Urn in the grave No. 8888. Photo A. Józefowska.

8946, might also have been fixed to the material. The perpendicular position of gold spirals to the vessel's wall in the grave No. 360 proves that they were originally attached to the fabric.

It seems that the delicate bronze spirals found in nineteen graves may have been attached to headbands or bonnets or strung on hair (the remains of textiles were preserved only on the spiral in the grave No. 570). Headbands and belts were probably made of textile, leather, and fabrics sewn with leather. In seven graves semi-circular looped buttons were found (in amount 1–7). They were probably used to decorate dresses, bands and belts. Similar items ornamented the robes of the dead in Germany, Austria and Italy (Słomska/Antosik 2018, 60, 61). A great example of a ceremonial cloth was found in the grave in Stična in Slovenia, where a woman was buried in an elaborately decorated dress and had a headdress with gold elements [Hellmuth 2008 (2010)].

In two graves in Domasław, tutuli-like buttons that decorate a horse harness were found. They were discovered along with the remains of textiles in the grave No. 460, and surrounded by an organic residue while in the grave No. 4857. Although the amber and glass beads were usually strung on strings, they could also be sewn onto textiles or used as a pendant (such is the case of the toiletry set in the grave No. 3795).

The practices recorded in burials in Domasław can be easily traced to the Hallstatt culture influences. Likewise, similar customs were observed in the Greek and Roman antiquity (Gleba 2014, 143, 144, with references). Objects wrapped in textiles were found in the cemetery in Hallstatt and in the grave in Eberdingen-Hochdorf, where all the rich equipment, including a wagon, was wrapped in cloth (Banck-Burgess 1999, 18–32; 2012, 143; 2014; Biel 1985; Grömer 2010, 272–275; 2012, 39, fig. 1: 10; 2016). Finally, the pieces of fabric on the wagon wheels and bronze applications were also recorded on the burial side in Apremont, where the bronze cauldron, iron sword, razor and all the iron parts of the chariot were found with fabric remnants (Gleba 2014, 143; Masurel 1990).



Fig. 5. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Braided horsetail in the grave No. 6691. Photo L. Nowaczyk.

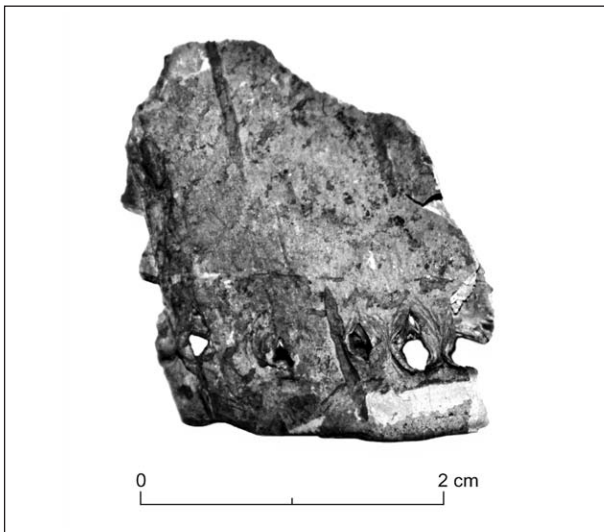


Fig. 6. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Fragment of birch bark with stitch holes from the grave No. 543. Photo A. Sady-Bugajska; after *Sady-Bugajska 2020*, fig. 2.

REMNANTS OF WICKERWORK, BARK AND WOOD

Small fragments of wickerwork were found in three urns, while softwood sticks, most likely poplar or willow, in two others. On the bronze necklace placed on the urn in the grave No. 6691, a horsetail woven was uncovered (Fig. 5), a plant often recognized in organic remains in Domasław (*Sady-Bugajska 2020*). The remnants of a wicker basket were discovered outside the chamber in the grave No. 4851. Unfortunately, the basket did not last.

In the urn in grave No. 543, where the remains of two different kinds of textile were found, there was a bronze fibula with a wattle from thin wicker sticks attached, as well as a decoration or amulet made of seventeen mid-trunks of beetles threaded onto a grass. Braided stalks of plants were likely attached to it. Above the fibula, there was an oval-shaped object of birch bark with holes for sewing. In the past, it might have been attached to the wickerwork (Fig. 6). Because fibula protruded over the urn's rim and the cremated bones did not fill even half of the vase, one can conclude that the fibula must have been hung or at least fastened to something else. In the eastern part of the chamber, there were remains of belt with the bronze clasp as well as a stone tinder, iron chisel, razor, tool and seven bronze looped buttons. On the belt, there were eight bronze rings that might have served as a tool to tie leather or textile strings to them. The remnants of the braid and a piece of leather were preserved underneath metal elements. Clasps were found in seven other graves, but no remains of fabric or leather were found with them. The clasps appear to have been attached to one end of the belt and then hooked through a corresponding hole at the end of another leather or woollen object. One clasp was found near the toiletry set, which allows to conclude that the latter had been attached to a belt. In several graves, the arrangement of toiletry objects has indicated that these items used to be hung. The examples are the grave No. 2834 with clasp, the grave No. 3795 with a belt hook, pins, three bronze rings and amber beads. Large amber rings found in eleven graves might have also served as belt fasteners. In the graves Nos. 619, 1017, 3412, 3798, 8905, they were additionally accompanied by toiletry sets.

Two rectangular spaces composed of dark humus were discovered in the lavish chamber grave No. 390. The shapes indicate that there must have been some containers in the past. These spaces were delineated by black-coloured walls, which are likely the traces of baskets and chests made of young bark, wood planks or wicker (Fig. 7). In the first space, there were the urn, toiletry sets, a pin, and the bronze

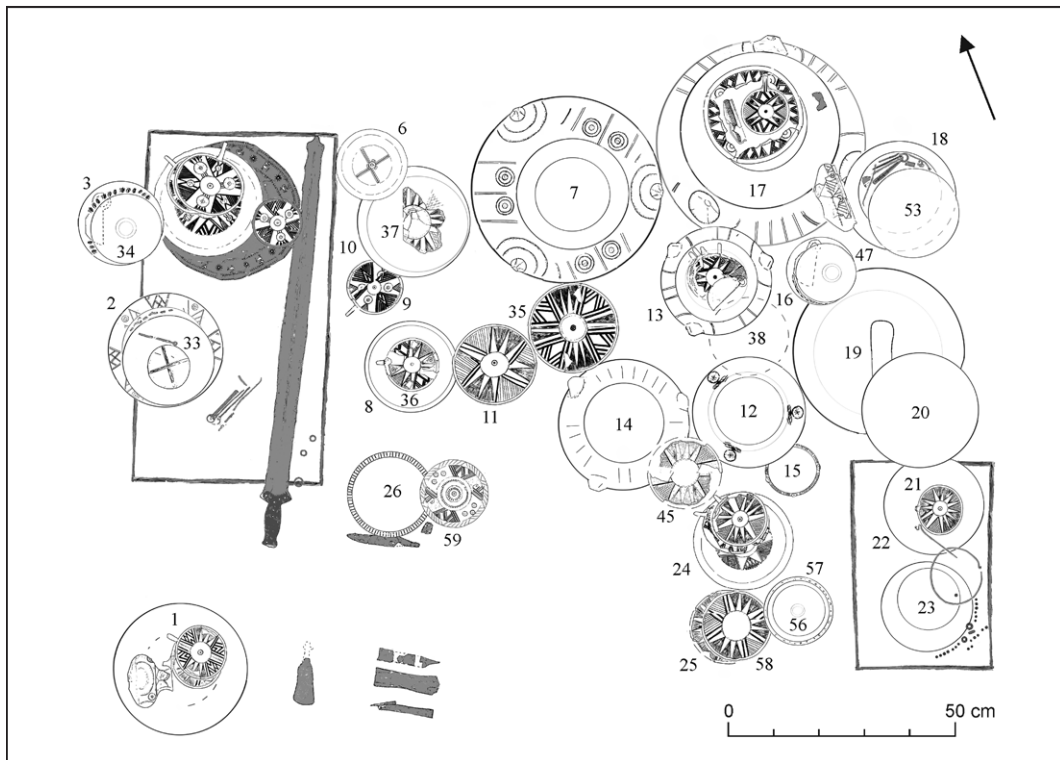


Fig. 7. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Chamber grave No. 390. Picture A. Józefowska.



Fig. 8. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Chamber grave No. 4269. Photo A. Woźniak.

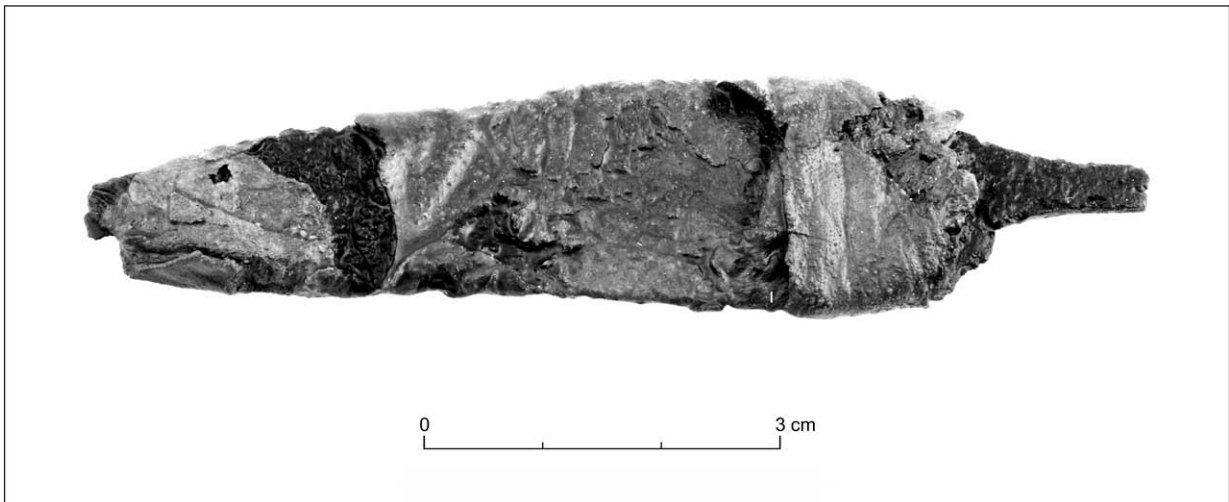


Fig. 9. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Iron knife from the grave No. 8943. Photo I. Dolata-Daszkiewicz.

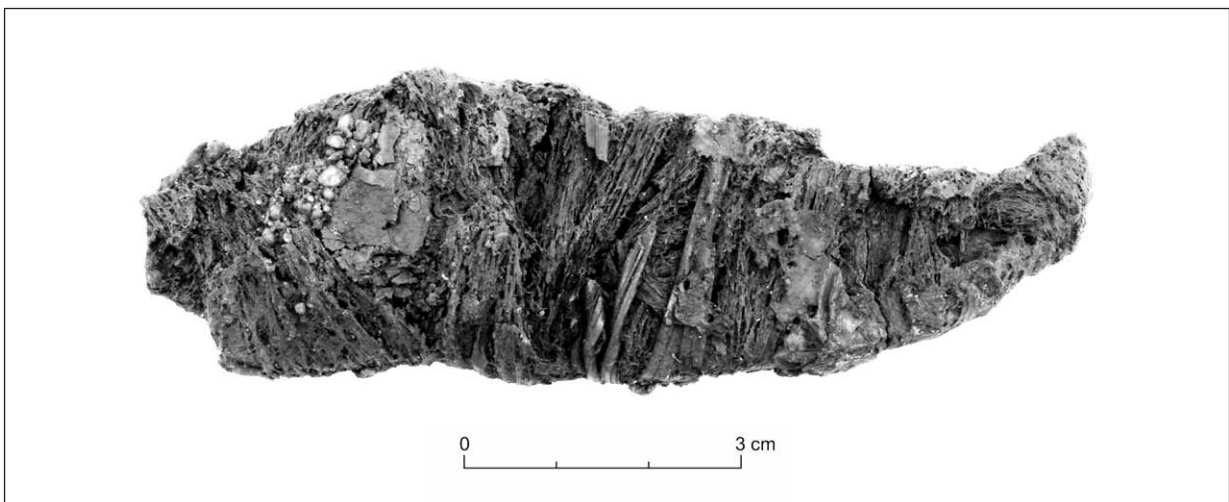


Fig. 10. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Iron razor from the grave No. 543. Photo I. Dolata-Daszkiewicz.

vessel covered with bark. A few centimetres thick organic layer lining the basket is likely to be remnants of textiles, plants, bark and/or fur. The second basket contained the urn, bronze and amber ornaments. In the grave No. 8905 with a sword, there was also a regular internal space filled with dark organic matter around the bronze vessel.

In the grave No. 4269, the traces of a rectangular shaped structure have been preserved. Due to the presence of iron fittings and the thin black wall-like layer of darker colour, the structure can be considered the remains of a wood or bark container (Fig. 8). Regular walls of the container were also detected in cross-section view. The container had the urn and a set of ornaments wrapped in textiles inside it. Additionally, in the graves Nos. 528 and 1014, very shallow objects with a regular outline were discovered at the bottom of the chests; they can be the remains of mats or platforms.

It is noteworthy that wicker objects are rarely found in the Hallstatt period. The remains of wicker objects were found on a bronze bucket in the wagon grave No. 6 of the Bylany culture in Prague-Letňany (Trefný *et al.* 2019). In the grave in Pürger, Bavaria, a bronze bowl contained the remains of a wicker basket and a small clay vessel. The bronze vessel was covered with birch bark (Hundt 1962, 182; Kossack 1959, 209). The remains of wicker near or in a bronze vessel was already described by M. Egg, it points to the conclusion that the use of wicker containers or mats was characteristic of wealthy social elite graves (Egg 1985, fig. 41).

The remains of bark were found inside, underneath and around the urns and on the jewellery and toiletry sets in at least twenty-one graves. The patches of birch bark have been preserved on the necklace and bracelets and on the urn in the grave No. 521. The oval birch patches had the shape of round lids. In the grave No. 1014, large fragments of bark were uncovered on the urn but under the jewellery arranged on vessel. The bark was also preserved on four knives: probably as remains of pouches/sheaths (Fig. 9). The iron razor from the grave No. 543 was wrapped in leaves (Fig. 10). Plant fibres, flax and hemp have been preserved on metal objects in several urns (e.g., in graves Nos. 612, 3317) and above the knives in the grave No. 366. The ‘beads’ made of beetles from the grave No. 543 and beads of glass from the grave No. 5977 were hung on blades of grass.

Just like in the case of the cemetery in Świbie (*Michnik/Dzięgielewski 2022*), the remnants of mineralized construction wood from were often found in graves in Domasław. Most of the elements of the chests and/or biers exposed under the grave goods were made of oak wood (*Sady-Bugajska 2020*). Thank to pieces of tiny sheet bronze, large pieces of oak have been preserved in the ceramic vessel in the grave No. 8919. Likely, the bronze sheet with an incised ornament would have serve as a prestigious cover for a wooden bucket. Wood was also preserved on the spikes of iron knives as remnants of organic handles, and in the sleeves of socketed axes, spearheads and chisels. The swords in graves Nos. 7429 and 8905 were placed in wooden scabbards with bronze fittings. The pieces of wood, possibly from the sheath, were discovered on the sword in the grave No. 8956. The remnants of wood, on the blade’s upper part as well as the leather covering the cutting edge, were found on the sword in the grave No. 390. A unique discovery is a wooden needle with a pointed end found in one of tubes of the needle holder in the grave No. 8946 (Fig. 11).

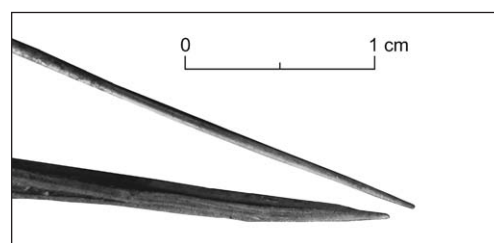


Fig. 11. Domasław 10/11/12, Wrocław district. Wooden needle from the grave No. 8946 (down) juxtaposed with a contemporary metal needle (up). Photo R. Kosina.

CONCLUSIONS

The ritual of wrapping urns and grave objects might have had many meanings and intentions. However, based on the analysis of findings from the Hallstatt culture, it can be assumed that the textiles placed in burials, including those from Domasław, were not only decorations but also an element of the funeral ceremonies. Such burial practices existed in Italy, Greece, France and in the Alpine area, so the custom of wrapping of funeral objects had a wide, pan-European significance (*Gleba 2014*, 135, with references). It is still unclear whether the custom of grave goods’ wrapping should be treated symbolically, as an element of ‘clothing’ and/or ‘hiding’, or as a protection, cover, a way of carrying, storing, and assembling bones and objects. The urns were dressed in ‘clothes’ that reflected the status, gender, age and origin of the deceased. Textiles placed on urns, possibly as dresses, cape, belts, caps or headbands, might have served as shrouds covering the body of the dead, just like the bags into which burnt bones were poured. Furthermore, it is also possible that the fabrics were also used to decorate chests.

In Domasław, the grave goods were not only wrapped up, but also placed in organic pouches and covers. It can be assumed that the clusters of bones exposed in the necropolis were also wrapped in fabric or placed in containers.

The bark was used to cover and/or pack the urn and grave goods. We cannot rule out that the urns were secured in this way. It is also possible that bark was used to line the chambers. Exceptionally, the bronze vessel from the grave No. 390 was covered with bark. The modest remains of wickerwork and braids give only clues about their use in the funeral aspect by the communities of that time. Horsetail recorded in several graves may also have been used to braid. Grave goods from Domasław were certainly wrapped in textiles, plants, bark. The discoveries of the remains of textiles in Domasław indicate the adaptation of the customs of the Hallstatt elites. Therefore, it seems probable that the local community from Domasław adopted the use of textiles as one of the elements of the symbolic meaning of the grave. Their use proves the existence of a strong interregional network of contacts in the Early Iron Age and the exercise of similar practices by people living in distant areas.

The fragmentary nature of the organic remains does not allow for a full reconstruction of the funeral scenario. However, the unique preservation of organic remnants in graves can help us understand the different rituals and intentions behind burial practice of the Hallstatt societies and allows to imagine a wide variety of chamber decorations, colourful textiles, flowers, feathers, mats and baskets, important elements of funeral rite.

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Zachované v čase

Organické zvyšky z pohrebiska doby halštatskej v Domasławe (PL)

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Súhrn

Na pohrebisku Domasław neďaleko Wrocławu v Dolnom Sliezske bolo objavených 803 žiarových hrobov z doby halštatskej, z nich 300 hrobov bolo komorových. Komunita pochovávala svojich mŕtvych na tejto nekropole udržiavala intenzívne kontakty s dôležitými európskymi centrami staršej doby železnej, a prispôbovala si zvyklosti halštatských elít. Jednou z významných praktík bolo obaľovanie urien, šperkov, súčastí odevu, nástrojov a zbraní do textílií. Zvyšky textílií sa zachovali v 62 hroboch, a ich prítomnosť bola potvrdená aj v mnohých ďalších.

Na základe analýz nálezov z halštatskej kultúry sa dá predpokladať, že textílie umiestňované do hrobov, aj do tých z Domasławu, slúžili nielen na ozdobu, ale boli významným elementom pri pohrebných obradoch. Podobné pohrebné rituály sú známe aj z Itálie, Grécka, Francúzska a z alpskej oblasti, to znamená, že zvyk obaľovať predmety vkladané do hrobov mal široký paneurópsky význam. Treba zdôrazniť, že textílie tkané v 2/2 keprovej väzbe nájdené v Domasławe potvrdzujú hypotézu, že Sliezsko bolo severovýchodným regiónom halštatskej kultúry.

Fragmenty kôry sa našli najmenej v 21 hroboch na alebo pod hrobovými prídkami, urnami, a tiež na bronzovej nádobe. V najhonosnejších hroboch boli identifikované zvyšky opaskov, ozdôb hlavy (čeleniek), ale aj prútených košíkov pre bronzové nádoby. Skromné zvyšky prútených a pletených výrobkov poskytujú len indicie k porozumeniu ich významu v pohrebných obradoch vtedajších komunít. Praslička zaznamenaná v niekoľkých hroboch mohla byť tiež použitá na pletenie. Čepele nožov boli obaľované do textílií, rastlín, kôry. K unikátnym nálezom patrí ozdoba či amulet z tiel chrobákov a drevená ihla.

Doklady použitia textílií a kôry na rozličné typy obalov vo funerálnom kontexte umožňujú hľadanie súvislostí medzi lokálnymi pohrebnými obradmi s praktikami európskych komunít. Textílie v hroboch v Domasławe naznačujú

adaptáciu zvyklostí halštatských elit. Zdá sa byť preto pravdepodobné, že lokálna komunita v Domasławe prevzala zvyk používania textílií ako jeden zo symbolických prvkov pri pochovávaní svojich mŕtvych. Ich použitie dokazuje existenciu silnej medziregionálnej siete kontaktov v staršej dobe železnej a praktizovanie podobných zvyklostí aj vo vzdialených regiónoch. Unikátne zachované organické zvyšky v Domasławe môžu pomôcť pri pochopení rozličných rituálov a zámerov súvisiacich s pohrebným obradom halštatských spoločností a dovoľujú vytvoriť si predstavu o pestrej škále výzdoby pohrebných komôr, o využívaní farebných textílií, kvetov, vtáčích pier, podložiek a košov ako dôležitých súčastí pohrebného ritu.

Obr. 1. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Vrstva organických zvyškov v hrobe č. 10 000. Foto L. Nowaczyk.

Obr. 2. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Jemná textília z hrobu č. 283 v 2/2 keprovej väzbe. Foto J. Słomska; podľa *Maik/Rybarczyk* 2016, obr. 10.

Obr. 3. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Nôž z hrobu č. 8943. Foto I. Dolata-Daszkiewicz.

Obr. 4. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Urna z hrobu č. 8888. Foto A. Józefowska.

Obr. 5. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Pletená praslička v hrobe č. 6691. Foto L. Nowaczyk.

Obr. 6. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Fragment brezovej kôry s dierami po zošívání z hrobu č. 543. Foto A. Sady-Bugańska; podľa *Sady-Bugańska* 2020, obr. 2.

Obr. 7. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Komorový hrob č. 390. Obrázok A. Józefowska.

Obr. 8. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Komorový hrob č. 4269. Foto A. Woźniak.

Obr. 9. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Železný nôž z hrobu č. 8943. Foto I. Dolata-Daszkiewicz.

Obr. 10. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Železná britva z hrobu č. 543. Foto I. Dolata-Daszkiewicz.

Obr. 11. Domasław 10/11/12, okres Wrocław. Drevená ihla z hrobu č. 8946 (dole) porovnaná so súčasnou kovovou ihlou (hore). Foto R. Kosina.

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Súhrn preložila Lucia Benediková s využitím DeepL.com (free version)

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