Profane Death in Burial Practices of a Pre-Industrial Society

A study from Silesia

Paweł Duma

Archaeopress Archaeology

Cover: View of the gallows in Kąty Wrocławskie (Kanth) *ca.* 1935. The construction was dismantled after 1945. From author's collection.

Translated by Anna Kinecka and Jan Skorupka

Contents

List of figures

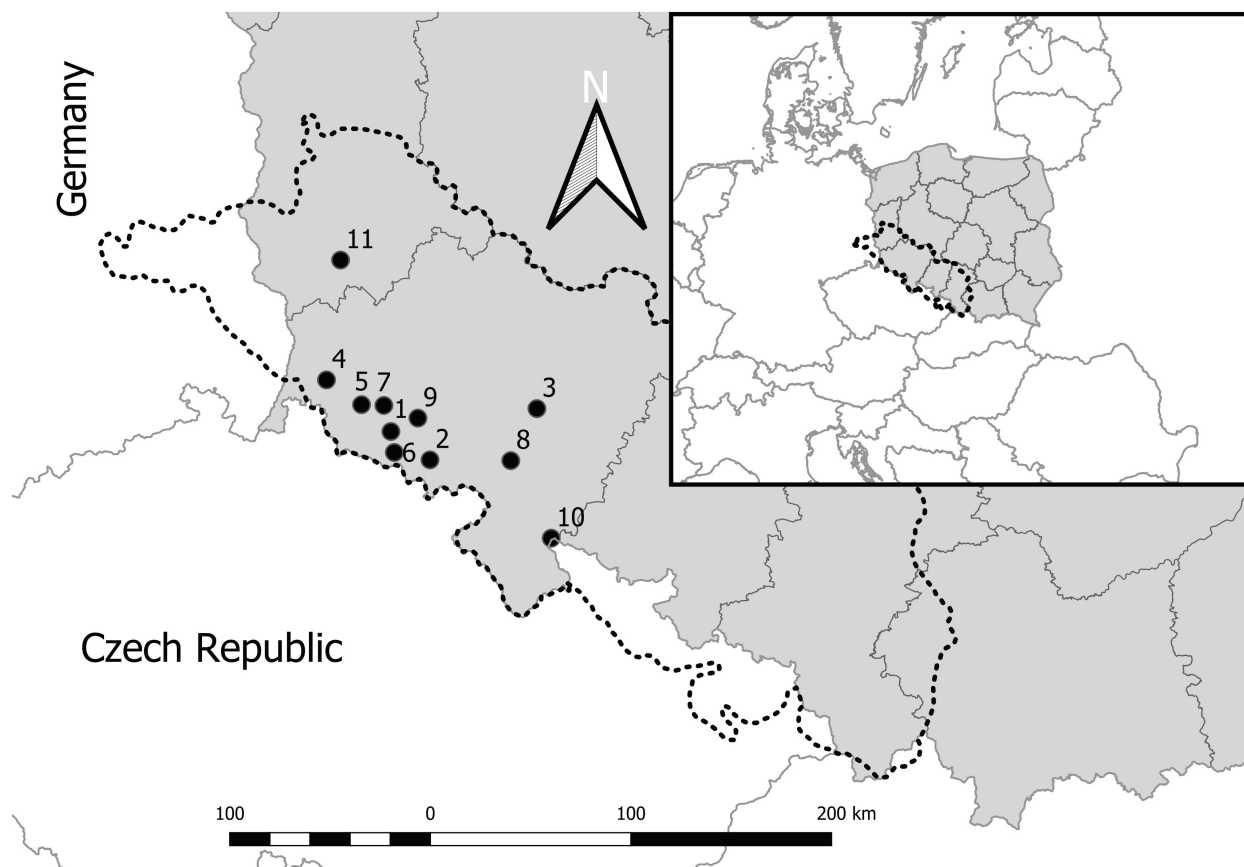# List of tables

Map showing Poland in its modern-day boundaries. The dashed line marks the historical Silesian border in the 18th and 19th centuries.
The dots mark excavated execution sites and remaining gallows: 1 – Jelenia Góra; 2 – Kamienna Góra; 3 – Kąty Wrocławskie; 4 – Lubań; 5 – Lubomierz; 6 – Miłków; 7 – Modrzewie; 8 – Mościsko; 9 – Wojcieszów; 10 – Złoty Stok; 11 – Żagań. By P. Duma.

Introduction

It is often said that graves truly are the key to understanding societies of the bygone age. It is they who speak to us of the aesthetic disposition, beliefs and well-being of people who left no written records of these aspects of their existence. Graves are so important in fact that many archaeological cultures bear names derived from the common forms of burial practised by various communities. They provide the very sources which allow us to reconstruct sometimes long extinct religious systems and, in a broader sense, the bygone reality. However, the importance of graves pales somewhat once we begin to examine the Late Middle Ages and the modern period. As burial features become predictable, uniform and devoid of grave goods, our focus tends to shift towards settlements, forts or temples. According to the commonly accepted view, the advent of Christianity extinguished vernacular cultures to a large extent and significantly modified burial customs. While some early medieval graves can still be identified as an expression of fading pagan customs lingering within societies who had already accepted Christianity, the unification of burial practices prevails as the new faith gains more and more ground. In time, grave goods disappear entirely and nearly all bodies are interred with the head pointing to the west. The juxtaposition of the two worlds seems inevitable if we wish to achieve typological coherence. And so, the pagan reality is viewed simply as an alternative to the Christian monolith (Urbańczyk 2011: 33). However, some crucial studies - albeit fragmentary and incidental at times - seem to contradict this generalised picture of the problem. So far, Polish historical archaeology has been known to marginalise burials as a category of finds and ignore their potential to further research in the field. Fuelled by ignorance of written sources and therefore a certain lack of imagination, the stereotypical approach we mentioned above has lead to almost automatic classification of all 'atypical' burials as either graves of 'vampires' or as an expression of 'anti-vampire' practices (Gardeła 2017: 75-84). In this book, we hope to showcase the complexity of the phenomenon by demonstrating that Christian cemeteries (even those from the modern period) can, and do, contain 'mysterious' burials which stand in stark contrast with the mainstream perception of a uniform burial custom we know from subject literature.

Our awareness and knowledge of the past evolves constantly under the influence of the mass-produced and ubiquitous to the point of being unnoticeable popular culture. For this reason, it's often difficult for scholars to see the vast differences in the perception of death by modern and pre-industrial people. The narratives produced by the contemporary film industry impose certain interpretations on the phenomena observed in archaeology. This frequently leads to superficial and often inadequate conclusions.

The lack of a broader perspective is the very cause of our ignorance of the practices of people whose lives we'd like to explore. In part, this flaw may follow from still incomplete studies of available sources, the scarcity of relevant archaeological research or the fact that researchers do not always publish their findings. With this book, we hope to propose a new systematic interpretation of findings which have been published to date. We also wish to showcase that the geographical area this book will explore, should be treated as clearly distinct from its neighbouring regions. While we may be familiar with funerary treatment of people who died in less socially acceptable circumstances in general, understanding the scale of these mortuary practices and how they evolved over time remains difficult. Similarly, we know very little of how exactly execution sites may have looked like and where the execution or (less commonly) suicide victims were buried. Undoubtedly, the phenomena we wish to explore were not standard mortuary rituals. Still, for marginal practices, they were extremely varied and as such, they make for very promising subjects of study. Furthermore, the aim of this book is also to reconstruct certain belief systems and to present the possible material effects of those beliefs, as well the associated distinct regional terminology. All the while, we must bear in mind that the imagination of contemporary humans was dominated by a model of a 'good' death and that any deviations from that model had their consequences.

The opposing notion of 'bad death' however was very broad. A bad death could be slow and painful or it may have happened in a wrong place at a wrong time, such as far away from home, which made it difficult, or impossible, to transport the body. The death of a child while its parents still lived was also 'bad' (Brather 2009: 106). These bad deaths became the subject of tales in many cultures. Most often, sources tell us of thieves and murderers, of how they were put to death and buried in disarray; or of suicides, the still born or unbaptised children and even of women who died in labour (Stülzebach 1990: 100). The fear of a bad death was commonplace and those who died in irregular circumstances were feared by association. We will call all these individuals 'the alienated' (Duma 2010).

1

The denial of a proper burial in sanctified soil could also be a form of defence against all disturbers of social order, as well as a kind of punishment. Such treatment was viewed as especially dishonouring when employed towards members of the upper classes of society. Let us recall the fate of regicide Otto VIII, Count Palatine of Bavaria, who assassinated king Philip of Swabia in the year 1208. After the ill-considered act, the perpetrator was forced to flee before being captured a year later. He was finally apprehended in a barn in the village of Oberndorf near Regensburg. The murderer was challenged to a duel by the *ministerialis* Henry of Kalden and decapitated. Otto's head was thrown into the Danube and his body buried in the fields (Zientara 1975: 147-149). The story, with all its gruesome details, was preserved for posterity and retold as a cautionary tale to all those who would dare raise their hand against the monarchy. Burial in unsanctified ground was also considered dishonouring to knights fallen in battle. It's therefore no surprise that in some cases, the bodies of the fallen were exhumed and reinterred properly according to Christian ritual (cf. Illi 1994: 278). And so, we hope it becomes apparent that the subject of this book will touch upon many cultural phenomena and that a full understanding of the problems we wish to consider cannot be achieved without a broader contextual analysis.

In a manner of speaking, this book continues the discussion of subjects we have elaborated on before (Duma 2010). Here, we hope to present these problems in much greater detail, applying a broader cultural perspective. In order to produce a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis, this book will narrow down its geographical scope to the region of Silesia (including Upper Lusatia and the County of Kladsko). The history of research in this field, as well as of the older subject literature is discussed in our previous book so we will omit it here. Readers who wish to explore the subject are invited to consult the previous publication. Of the more recent publications, we'd like to mention the third, and final volume of the *Richtstättenarchäologie* (Auler 2012), a collection of articles in execution site archaeology presenting the newest research in this field conducted in Europe (including Poland). Another noteworthy collection is by Skóra and Kurasiński (2010) discussing atypical phenomena in funerary ritual from pre-history to modern times, in Polish only. We also must mention some of the works which, although pertaining mostly to periods preceding the scope of this study, proved invaluable to our research nonetheless (Reynolds 2009). Let us hope that such research initiatives will be continued in the future and that they'll eventually come to explore similar phenomena in modern period contexts. The newest editions of proceedings from the *Funeralia lednickie* meetings are also very valuable. And in spite of what the title of the current volume might suggest, the contents provide some very interesting

information concerning the subject of our study. The *Wratislavia Antiqua* series, and especially the volumes dedicated to the cemeteries of Wrocław (vol. 12, 15, 17 and 21) also mention some valuable details relevant to the subject of this book. The periodical *Pomniki Dawnego Prawa* [Monuments of Past Law] appearing quarterly systematically publishes articles presenting outcomes or archaeological excavations of old execution sites (35 issues have appeared so far). Apart from study reports, the articles cover various subjects in legal archaeology.

The discipline of legal archaeology arose in the 19th century and found many supporters in Poland (Maisel 1982, 1989). Research in the field has grown rapidly in recent times (Trzciński 2001; Wojtucki 2009, 2014). However, the studies are mainly concerned with Greater Poland and Silesia, leaving other regions of the country rather under-represented. However, the work of Edwin Rozenkranz discussing legal archaeology research in Gdańsk (1993) is a noteworthy exception. Albeit not very extensive, the publication should be acknowledged for laying down the foundations for further legal archaeology studies of the city. Rozenkranz found his continuator in Dariusz Kaczor, who writes about depictions of Gdańsk execution sites in iconography (2003). The works of Marcin Kamler are also loosely related to this area of research. Recently, Kamler published a book on criminality in historical Poland (Kamler 2010). The subjects discussed by all these authors often intersect. For instance, Tadeusz Grabarczyk (2008) provides a concise overview of punishment sentences in the Medieval Poland. However, only a small part of his work can be seen as directly relevant to the subject of this book (Grabarczyk 2008: 101-103). In turn, Daniel Wojtucki (2009: 7) justly points to the need for systematisation of Polish terminology used in the context of execution site archaeology (*Richtstättenarchäologie*). While large sections of our book will indeed be dedicated to problems in execution site archaeology, we also hope to present a much wider perspective. We believe we'll be able to demonstrate that historical execution sites functioned within a broader cultural context and that it is impossible to understand their significance without looking at the bigger picture. Apart from places of executions, we'll also explore subjects such as the beliefs in the 'living dead', the attitudes towards unbaptised children and women who died in labour or victims of the plague. Although all these research problems might seem disconnected, they do in fact share a common denominator. Unfortunately, we've struggled to find larger Polish publications which would help us to study beliefs associated with the 'living dead' in Silesia. Apart from the excellent but somewhat forgotten paper by Edward Potkowski (1973), Polish archaeology lacks recent relevant publications presenting a synthetic analysis of the problem. By contrast, the German book by Thomas Schürmann (1990), despite its minor

shortcomings, is an able discussion of the 'living dead' theme. The author makes a remarkable effort to explain the origins of the phenomenon and to show how it manifested in different areas of Central Europe. The works of Karen Lambrecht (1994) concerning witch-hunting follow the same line of inquiry.

We've grown used to thinking that archaeological research should be based primarily on excavations. And yet, it's difficult to fully agree with this view while studying the Late Medieval and modern periods. It was then that people developed belief systems and notions which we observe continuously (more or less) until the present day. This continuity gives us a remarkable advantage of having access to materials and sources unavailable to those studying earlier periods. By tapping into historical and ethnographic research, archaeologists have the opportunity to expand their horizons and ultimately, will be better equipped to tackle the research problems at hand. After all, it is the historical and ethnographic records that allow us to interpret otherwise puzzling finds.

This book draws extensively from historical sources whenever they were useful in helping us to better understand individuals appearing in either the archaeological material or in the records of various chronicles. At times, the readers might see large discrepancies between the archaeological record and the other types of sources we've used. However, these are to be expected considering how recently such interdisciplinary methods developed and bearing in mind that research in this particular area hasn't had time to mature fully. We also hope to demonstrate the usefulness of archive archaeology, a field which has been gaining supporters in recent years. The archives are not just repositories for source materials, but also document the outcomes of research conducted by several generations of archaeologists, in addition to providing ethnographic data on people who left Silesia after 1945 (now, a closed data set). We must also remember that interests of mainstream archaeology have changed across recent decades and many 'unremarkable' discoveries of the past, with the right expertise, could now be reinterpreted.

However, we acknowledge that the archives related to Late Medieval and modern periods are so vast that they cannot possibly be analysed by one person. The task is all the more difficult since the catalogues (some of them pre-WWII) haven't always been modernised and the content lists are known to contain errors. Most of the sources referenced in this book are held in the collections of the Wrocław University Library (in the Former Silesia-Lausitz Cabinet and the Manuscripts and Old Prints Departments). Collections of the Wrocław State Archive proved equally useful in supplying valuable archaeological records from before 1945, as well as files containing records of 'profane deaths'. The files describing fatal accidents, including suicides, are particularly noteworthy.

Auxiliary sources included the collections of country branches of the Wrocław State Archive located in Jelenia Góra and Legnica, as well as the Zielona Góra State Archive. However, they were at times less adequate than our main sources. Most useful were some little known city chronicles containing a wide spectrum of information. Some of them provided valuable analytical details concerning suicide deaths. While a proportion of the sources required further verification, as we will show later on in the book, others were easily corroborated by more credible materials (i.e. State documents), despite their anecdotal character. Some of our findings have already been presented elsewhere (Duma 2010a). Here, they will be reinforced with previously unknown details and presented more clearly, without some minor mistakes we hadn't been able to avoid in the previous publication.

The territories we'll be discussing in this book include Lower and Upper Silesia, Upper Lusatia and the County of Kladsko. We selected these regions because of how strongly they are, and always have been connected to one another, despite at times having a strikingly different political history. Having said that, at times we did have to venture out to other geographical areas in search of relevant examples. While studying the phenomena we wanted to explore within these territories, it was impossible not to notice the underlying Slavic cultural influence which played an important role in shaping the belief systems of the local population. Of course, the evolution of local customs or rituals in the modern period was visibly fuelled by western ideas. However, it is the Slavic background which made these regions (and especially Lower Silesia) so distinct within the wider geographical area. Notably, we're not alone in adopting this view and are glad to say that some of our German colleagues have also expressed similar opinions (Schürmann 1990, Wiegelmann 1966, Lambrecht 1994). Apart from the Slavic cultural undertones, we've also detected some evidence, although not as prominent, of beliefs traceable back to Antiquity. These were in part adopted along with the Christian religion, or may be the remnants of enduring ancient traditions.

Chronologically, our studies were limited to the period between the 15th and the 19th century. However, whenever relevant and justified, we took the liberty to include both earlier (Early Medieval) and later examples. As we'll see, the phenomena we'll examine were surprisingly enduring and long-lived. Suffice to say that some of them are attested by modern ethnographic research.

The methods we used in our work were often akin to those employed by historians. They were particularly useful in analysing written sources, archive materials or old prints. We often found ourselves dealing with original subject matter and sources which either had never been published before, or had barely been studied. This forced us to conduct proper archive research, supported by methods of statistical analysis whenever applicable. The results were interesting to say the least, but were unfortunately limited to phenomena associated with suicides. Regrettably, we were not able to collect sufficiently large amounts of data to apply the same research methods to the other mortuary practices we studied. Next, we proceeded to examine a number of archaeological sites which had the potential to produce meaningful finds, and which hadn't been explored fully by previous research projects. The excavations we conducted at the sites were aimed at establishing both the dimensions and significance of the so called 'false cemeteries'. Subsequent anthropological analysis of the excavated remains allowed us to formulate conclusions about the health and appearance of the executed criminals.

In this book, we wanted to examine specific groups of people who, for various reasons, were only buried in sanctified soil conditionally or reluctantly, as well as those who were denied a sanctified resting place altogether. In order to present such phenomena in the rich contexts in which they no doubt occurred, we begin by explaining the significance and Valorisation of cemeteries in the daily lives of people (Chapter 1). As we know, the 'unworthy' could sometimes be 'conditionally' buried in sanctified soil. People who took their own lives were undoubtedly subjected to 'post-mortem stigmatisation' for longest periods of time (Chapter 2). At the time, to take one's life meant to commit murder. As such, suicides were often equated with criminals. Such treatment clearly depended, at least in part, on the cause of death. We presented an analysis of this phenomenon in Wrocław in another article (Duma 2011). We will also see how suicides could, in extreme cases, become the direct cause of social unrest or even spark demonstrations, i.e. when a decision of the authorities didn't exactly align with the opinions of the people. As we'll explain, the status of suicides was similar to that of executed convicts. The latter were often buried at the execution sites where the sentence was carried out. In general, readers will find that much of what we discuss in chapter four is based on the analysis of the archaeological material. In addition to the analysis of excavated execution burials, we offer a description of individual features associated with gallows, as well as an overview of the finds assemblage. In some cases, we were even able to reconstruct demolished features. When we discuss features such as remnants of brick gallows, the finds or the graves, we have to remember that they all used to belong to the same kind of space - a site of public execution. It is from these elements that we can infer how often an execution site was used and deduce the functions of particular areas within it. The readers will see that both the interiors of walled gallows structures and the areas directly adjacent to them from the outside were analysed separately. This book is intended as a synthesis of research we've conducted in recent years. Although some of it was occasionally presented abroad (Duma, Wojtucki 2012), we haven't so far had the chance to distil it into a comprehensive publication. Additionally, here we present some previously unpublished new ideas and excavation findings.

The archive research, and also the excavations but to a lesser extent, revealed evidence of supernatural beliefs associated with unbaptised children and executed criminals or suicides. Such beliefs and traditions are one of the longest lasting phenomena within the human culture. In the words of Aron Gurevich, 'Popular magic does not seem to have changed much over the centuries, maybe even the millennia, even if its forms have' (Gurevich 1988: 95). In this view, magical beliefs become very important to any archaeologist and discussing them becomes necessary to understand the subject of our book. Regrettably, Polish publications rarely explore such phenomena. We believe this may be caused partly by insufficient awareness of similar foreign language literature. On the other hand, Silesia, Upper Lusatia and the County of Kladsko, are often treated in a reductionist way as regions of Poland and the influence of other cultures on these lands is ignored. In reality, foreign cultures (to Poland) were often strongest in these lands. As we will find, beliefs that the body parts of those who died a 'bad death', and were consequently atypically interred, possessed magical properties were deeply rooted in local customs. So much so that even objects associated with the gallows were also said to possess supernatural powers. Readers interested in the conclusions we drew from our research into the 'supernatural' will find most of them in Chapter three, where we discuss burials of criminals. However, we also recommend Chapters two and five where we elaborate on the subjects of suicides and unbaptised children. We'll also see how the beliefs in the magical were shared by all, from peasant to prince, and how the executioner often actively encouraged such superstitions, possibly exploiting them for financial gain.

The subsequent chapters explain the attitudes towards women who died in childbirth. For many reasons, they were considered impure and had to be buried according to many strict rules (Chapter 4). However, we struggled to find enough material evidence to determine with certainty to what extent these practices resembled the descriptions we find in written sources. What we do know is that the fate of the child in such cases was bound to that of its mother (see Chapter 5). In the

past, it was common for both mother and child to not survive labour and the rules applied to the burial of an unchristened newborn were often even more strict than in the case of the woman who died in confinement. Burying unbaptised children in sanctified soil had been forbidden for centuries before the 17th century, which was when the first subtle changes in attitudes began. We also suspected that such attitudes towards stillborn children might be related to the largely unexplored phenomenon of burials of infants in ceramic vessels. Although such finds were not many, we attempt to identify their common features and to propose a roadmap for further study of the research problem.

In our research, we've also devoted some attention to individuals whose amoral conduct in life, according to contemporary norms, earned them marginalising treatment also in death. These were among others alcoholics, the godless or gamblers (Chapter 6). The subject is inextricably linked with the phenomenon we'll call the 'belief in the living dead' (Chapter 7) to which we dedicated another recent publication (Duma 2012b). Within the geographical area this book will examine, the phenomenon has often been mistakenly associated with 'vampirism', which in our opinion makes for a superficial interpretation. As we hope to demonstrate, the living dead were much more than just vampires and the corresponding beliefs are unmistakably linked with the notion of profane death. We'll also show how such beliefs often intensified at times of hardship caused by worsening climate conditions or by devastation of war. As an example, the causal effect of climate on beliefs and funerary practices is most clearly identifiable during the Little Ice Age (c. 1570-1630). Finally, we'll examine the rich typology of revenants in contemporary belief systems and show that many of the types of revenants find no equivalent in the Slavic world.

The closing chapter of our book is dedicated to the devastating time of the plague (Chapter 8). The plague links with the subject of profane death in the sense that in the face of the horror of advancing pestilence, people often resort to behaviours and practices which wouldn't be acceptable under normal circumstances. We'll see how in extreme cases, funerary norms were abandoned altogether and the victims of the plague were interred in ways similar to those we observe in cases of profane death burials. The final chapter of our book also presents some very interesting explanations of certain atypical phenomena.

We must admit we are aware that the book does not use the available archive and library sources to their full potential. Similarly, the archaeological research we conducted, despite examining several sites, remains incomplete and will need to be continued in order to produce a fully comprehensive analysis of at least one execution site. So far, the excavations have been limited to the central areas of the sites. Nevertheless, we would not expect the outcomes of further archaeological research to discredit or significantly change the hypotheses presented in this book. Instead, we hope they might complement our ideas and further elucidate already available evidence. We will discuss our hopes for future research in detail in the following chapters.

As a humanities discipline, archaeology has recently found itself in crisis. Quite often, the results of research in the areas we discuss in our book cannot be easily quantified, which is increasingly viewed as a flaw. This problem seems to be particularly common in historical archaeology, where the funding is often scarce and limited to sporadic and ineffectively awarded grants. What is more, the sites are often examined during rescue archaeological surveys of debatable quality. It's therefore hardly surprising that the quality and scope of research conducted in Western Europe is visibly superior to what we see in Poland. For this reason, our book cannot pretend to exhaust the subjects outlined above and should be seen more as reconnaissance work. The approach we present in this publication is that of an archaeologist. However, we must admit that the archaeological material was not the most prominent type of source we used in our research. Nevertheless, we hope that the information presented here will act as an incentive for further excavations and will bring some previously neglected research problems (and not only those related to Silesia) to the fore. Most of all, we'd like for our efforts to continue and eventually produce meaningful analyses of the research problems we outline in this publication.

1. Valorisation of cemetery space

In the Antiquity, the burial grounds and settlements could not occupy the same space. The rule of separating the world of the living from the domain of the dead was strictly adhered to. While the deceased were considered impure, they were treated with respect which also shaped the ways of thinking about their resting place. Such an ambivalent attitude towards the dead was in part caused by the fear that they might one day 'return' to haunt the living (Ariès 1989: 42-43). At the beginning of the rise of Christianity, the newly converted communities initially remained faithful to pagan traditions and sometimes followed them ardently and with conviction. It did not take long however, before the attitudes began to change. The shift was first observed in Africa and later spread to Rome. And so, a new chapter in mortuary treatment began. From then on, the dead were no longer as fearsome (at least not in all historical periods) and for a time up until the 18th century, the burial grounds were incorporated into the space of the living (Ariès 1989: 43).

The reasons for the revolution were many. On the one hand, the Christian concept of general resurrection must have offered some comfort. And on the other, we observe a true explosion of the cult of martyrs and their sacred graves. It was believed that the martyrs' spilled blood would help the living enter the paradise. The direct vicinity of their graves became preferred burial sites for the contemporary, as the proximity of a martyr promised salvation. However, the practices were not free from complex contradictions. It was also believed that desecrating a nearby grave would hinder the awakening of the martyr on the Judgement Day. This conviction was particularly strong amongst the early Christians but later lost some of its importance. What remained important however, was to bury your dead somewhere in the proximity of a saint. Although what happened to their bodies afterwards was of little interest. After some time, many of the remains were unceremoniously removed to make room for more. This however was not viewed as desecration since the bodies remained within the churchyard (Ariès 1989: 45). As we will see, the churchyard space and soil was also itself subject to Valorisation conditional on historical circumstances.

The cemeteries which appeared in the above conditions are a unique phenomenon which might seem difficult to interpret today. Contrary to ancient customs, the dead began to be perceived as an integral element of the space of the living in both urban and rural areas. This arrangement remained in place for centuries and had a lasting effect on the day-to-day lives of communities. Once again, we must stress how unusual these cemeteries may seem, particularly in the medieval context, for being consistently placed within settlements. This arrangement did not become common until the 6th century and survived until the 18th (Morawski 1991: 93). While initially commonly accepted, the placement of cemeteries within settlements eventually became the source of various social tensions. We will attempt to discuss the contributing factors in the further sections of our book. The forms of cemeteries also varied across regions. Their particular spatial arrangement was dictated by differences in terrain, as well as varying interpretations of Christianity developed by local communities. As we will demonstrate, local mortuary practices and attitudes towards the burial grounds were often regulated by customs which had little to do with Christian teachings. The following discussion of cemetery space and its characteristics will help us to better understand the emotions of people who, for whatever reason, found themselves unable to provide a proper ritual burial to their loved ones in a place where they often spent their entire lives.

1.1. Cemetery boundaries

As relevant sources remain scarce, the exact spatial boundaries of cemeteries are often difficult to establish. We simply do not know by what means the burial grounds were separated from the rest of a town or city and in which period exactly the 'fencing' began. A town churchyard cemetery differed significantly from those found in rural areas. For one, it was much busier and could often become overcrowded. It therefore seems reasonable that fencing would be an important consideration of cemetery planning in towns. However, excavations conducted to date recorded but a few examples of features associated with cemetery boundaries. Nevertheless, excavation research has shown that cemeteries created shortly before or at the time when a settlement was granted town privileges, could occupy relatively large areas. Such was the case of medieval Wrocław. The exact spatial dimensions of town burial grounds were inherently irregular which makes their boundaries, if such a concept indeed existed, difficult to establish today. The regulation ordering the fencing of cemeteries in Wrocław was not issued until mid-13th century and was subsequently renewed in 1285, which attests to its initial ineffectiveness (Wachowski 2002: 121). However, because the cemeteries had more than one function, fencing them could mean that the grounds were not fully accessible to the local population. Although the rationale may have been to create a sacred space enclosure, fencing attempts were at times opposed by town municipalities (Morawski 1991: 97).

Rural settlements followed slightly different rules. It seems that the drawing of cemetery boundaries coincided

with the construction of the village church. First of all, possibly even before the work started, the chosen area had to be consecrated. The ritual demanded that five timber crosses be erected within the cemetery: one in each corner and another in the centre. Next, a candle holder was placed before each cross (Čechura 2011: 218). At present, it is difficult to say much more about the characteristics of old burial grounds. The problem remains understudied and is in desperate need of further research. What we do know is that since the Middle Ages, rural cemeteries were not very large. Their boundaries typically lay within three to five metres from the walls of the church. Most often, they were enclosed by a wooden fence or more rarely a wall. In some cases a ditch was cut around them. It is likely that the function of the ditch was not purely utilitarian but that such structures also carried a symbolic meaning. A few of those cemetery ditches were recorded during archaeological investigations conducted in the Czech Republic (Čechura 2006: 286-289). Interestingly, the material excavated from the features suggests that the ditches were filled in the early modern period. While it has been suggested that some of them may have functioned as defensive structures, it is important to note that their relatively small size would have made them virtually useless (in one particular case the ditch was up to 2.5 m wide and up to 1.5 m deep). On the other hand, even such a small structure would have prevented stray cattle from entering the grounds in the absence of a fence or wall (Čechura 2006: 286). Such measures were not taken solely to preserve the peaceful rest of the dead, but also to protect the churchyard grass which, especially in rural areas, was of great value. Let us remember that the graves were often quite shallow and so the fresh bodies were at risk of being disturbed (and eaten) by scavenging animals.

The access points to a cemetery would have been clearly marked with gates or wickets. The entrances were fitted with iron 'leg breakers' (*crurifraga, Beinbrecher*) to prevent the animals from entering (Čechura 2011: 218). Sources tell us that stock animals (cows, horses, dogs, geese) were frequent cemetery trespassers. Of them all, pigs were particularly unwelcome and most frequently became the subject of complaints (Grün 1925: 84). The presence of animals on cemetery grounds is attested not only in written sources, but also by archaeological finds. Bones of small animals, birds or even pigs' teeth are often recorded in the archaeological material excavated not only from inhumation levels but also from the grave pit fill (Čechura 2011: 219). This suggests that the presence of animals was in fact the norm. It is believed that the practice of covering some graves with stone flags initially began mainly as a means of protecting them from animals. However, the attitudes towards the presence of animals within cemeteries were also not free from puzzling contradictions. For instance, sources attest that in some villages parish priests enjoyed the privilege of grazing their cattle on cemetery grass (Grün 1925: 84-87).

To us, it may seem absurd that the animals would be able to reach the bodies despite the authorities issuing regulations concerning the minimum depth of graves. However, let us remember that even the most organized communities are seldom free from negligent behaviour. In this case this is attested in frequent complaints and repeated regulations such as the one we mentioned above. Most often, it was because of the grave diggers' negligence that the corpses were disturbed by animals or that they were washed out during floods (Grün 1925: 88-89).

1.2. Functions of cemeteries

Cemeteries were places of special symbolic significance. The most common German word for cemetery - *Friedhof*, or earlier *Freithof* - is a perfect illustration of the exceptional status of such places. The root of the word is cognate with the old German *friten*, meaning to protect, or to surround with care. And so, various interpretations of cemetery space arose as a result. First of all, funerary space was considered sacred and separate from the profane sphere of life. As such, it could provide asylum to all who entered, although the origins of this customs are difficult to establish. All individuals wanted for committing a crime could seek refuge in a cemetery or a church and expect mercy and protection. Most importantly, they were able to escape being lynched and await proper trial. This right to asylum in cemeteries - gradually withdrawn over time - functioned throughout the Middle Ages to finally disappear towards the end of the medieval period. Lastly, at least in principle, the funerary space offered protection from animals (Schnelbögl 1975: 109).

However, cemetery spaces had other functions and uses, many of which arose as a result of the increasing overcrowding of late medieval cities. Apart from their primary sepulchral function, the city burial grounds often found purely secular uses. At times, they were used for convening the court of law, but could also become a space of much less stately business such as a seasonal market place. Interestingly, cemeteries were thought to be particularly fit for making important transactions requiring trustworthiness. The above connection is reflected by early Polish chartered towns (Morawski 1991: 95). Occasionally, craftsmen were allowed to utilise the space. Lime slaking or mortar mixing pits were often dug within the church grounds while the building was being renovated. On-site casting of church bells in especially dug furnace pits allowed to reduce production and labour costs (Čechura 2006: 231-232). At other times, cemeteries could host festivities or wedding ceremonies. Warriors gathered there before going into battle or departing on a campaign. By contrast, walled village cemeteries provided refuge for the local population during turbulent times. Quite unlike our modern cemeteries, the burial grounds of old seem to have been spaces where the contemporaries would happily spend their free time (Illi

1992: 37). As we know from certain written sources, this 'free time' could sometimes be understood in surprising ways and the 'sanctified soil' of church burial grounds often incorporated a privy. Sources indicate that such features were not uncommon in Bohemian cemeteries. These were usually simple pits, crudely covered with wooden planks. Unfortunately, the existence of cemetery latrines known from written sources has not been confirmed by archaeological data as yet (Čechura 2006: 231). As we would understand them, cemetery spaces in those times may have been akin to city parks, often being the only oases of greenery available to all (Morawski 1991: 96). The paths between graves did not follow any specific plan and often criss-crossed it haphazardly, a surprising feature considering that cemeteries were sites of Way of the Cross and other processions (Pytlak 2009: 29). And so, the cemetery was an integral part of day-to-day life. During the middle ages, and practically until the 17th century, in addition to being the final resting place for the dead, it also constituted public space of the city. As such, the cemetery was often the busiest and noisiest place of an urban or rural area (Ariès 1989: 73-75). Moreover, the burial grounds were associated with the supernatural but, contrary to what we might expect, their magical functions could be entirely unrelated to death and funerary practices. These arcane functions were particularly important for town communes (Morawski 1991: 93). Some objects retrieved from graves, or even the cemetery soil itself, were believed to possess extraordinary properties. We shall return to this subject later in this discussion.

The overcrowding of late medieval cities triggered important shifts in the approaches to spatial organisation. The process had a profound effect on city cemeteries and the scale of the resulting changes might seem difficult to imagine for us today. In simple terms, the living and the dead had to 'cohabit' within the same space. The phenomenon became particularly visible in towns and cities. Small buildings quickly began to appear around cemetery borders and their inhabitants seemed not to mind watching funeral ceremonies through their windows, or the sight of mass graves which sometimes stayed open for weeks or months (Ariès 1989: 75). Such was the situation of Paris. And although, for obvious reasons, we cannot directly compare any of the Silesian towns with the French metropolis, we can safely say that similar living arrangements did occur throughout Europe at the time.

Readers might recall we have mentioned the problem of animal activity at cemeteries before. It seems that the damage caused by animals was at least in part a result of human negligence. For one, too shallow burials seem to have been a common issue. In general, the depth of graves varied even though specific regulations were often put in place in an attempt to standardise funerary practices and to introduce some order. However,

archaeological research continues to find many shallow inhumations from this period (Čechura 2006: 224). In order to prevent such instances, grave diggers were given a metal rod, the length of which would act as a rule of the desired grave depth for an adult individual (Grün 1925: 88-89). Apparently, such measures were not strictly observed. In the Late Medieval period, ossuaries began to appear, first in city cemeteries, as a direct result of overcrowding (Baeriswyl 1999: 76-77). In later periods, similar buildings were erected in village cemeteries as well. We may therefore conclude that even for rural communities, available funerary spaces were not sufficient. Even bakeries (sic!) were located in direct proximity of cemeteries. And so, we may suppose customers were not discouraged by the sight of ossuaries where bones were being kept. Medieval and modern people must have been quite accustomed to such situations and treated them with indifference (Ariès 1989: 78). Eventually, the state of affairs could become bad enough for hospitals to introduce regulations ordering the poor to collect bones from burial grounds and deposit them in ossuaries (Morawski 1991: 96). It seems that no one else would attend to this task. Perhaps the grave diggers were being lenient and neglectful of their duties. What is more, the newly dug graves would naturally intersect with older inhumations. The sight of disarticulated remains in freshly dug pits must have therefore been common and we have reasons to believe this was in fact the case. The popular Polish-German phrase book by Volkmar, first printed in 1612, includes the following sample dialogue in the chapter dedicated to funerals. The conversation could well have taken place in any contemporary town:

> *Przecieć żałosna rzecz, że umarłych kości tak rozrzucone leżą.* [Pity, isn't it, that bones of so many a dead soul lie scattered in such manner.] And later, perhaps to the grave digger: *przyjacielu dobry, pozbierajcie te kości, a zanieście do koś[t]nice, bo to wasza powinność* [my good friend, gather these bones, would you, and take them to the charnel house. That is your duty, is it not?] (Kizik 2001: 409-410)

It seems plausible that witnessing such sights would have encouraged the city dwellers to try to obtain a burial spot less likely to be disturbed in similar ways.

1.3. Hierarchy of cemeteries

On the one hand, town dwellers could not escape contemplating what would happen to their own remains after death but on the other, being constantly exposed to the sight of burials and scattered human remains must have deadened their sensibility. For village folk, the death as an event may have been rare. In fact, funerary rites and associated belief systems display much greater complexity in rural areas (Peuckert 1928:

227-236). By contrast, for city dwellers, the funerary spectacle was very much an element of their daily life, if not routine. Organizing funerals was an important (if not the only) function of every guild (Morawski 1991: 96). While a traditional municipality may have seemed unswerving in its efforts to preserve the current state of affairs, we can clearly see that subversive tendencies eventually began to emerge. The change of attitudes is clearly retrievable from contemporary records. A conversation which survived from mid 18th century France (thus, sometime after these events) provides some valuable insight: *The lesson of the dead is not received better by virtue of ambling amongst them and treading on their ashes... Finding oneself surrounded by the dead so completely, one seldom, or hardly ever at all, spares them a thought. Their message might reach one much better were they to be sent outside the city. To visit them would then become much more emotional...* (Vovelle 2008: 452). The disputes were particularly fierce in many German towns, where the Protestants and Catholics clashed over the matter. The former advocated moving the cemeteries outside the city walls and claimed the new arrangement would only improve the situation. It is then hardly surprising that the earliest extramural cemeteries are found near towns with strong Protestant congregations (Wilhelm-Schaffer 1999: 393-395, Wachowski 2015).

It is commonly believed that the tradition of establishing cemeteries outside the city limits emerged in Europe with the advent of the Modern Period. For various reasons, to which we will return, extramural burial sites began to function as permanent cemeteries at that time. Before the shift occurred, they were a temporary measure arising out of necessity and were quickly removed when the exceptional circumstances subsided. Most commonly, the practice would be associated with large scale calamitous events such as the plague, and not indicative of any changes in contemporary attitudes. Such burial sites were usually referred to as plague cemeteries. Although they usually disappeared quickly, these sites could for a time function as places for burying dishonourable individuals (Kizik 1998: 191). This function of extramural cemeteries is particularly important to us as it lets us understand the contemporary attitudes of the society and the initial distrust towards burials beyond the city walls. The ill fame of such sites seems to have been difficult to overcome among the commoners. It is believed that the first 'generation' of permanent extramural cemeteries did not appear in Europe until the 16th century. Before, it was not uncommon for dishonourable natives and outsiders alike to be given proper churchyard burials. However, the natives often objected to this state of affairs. It is likely that the popular resistance these burials caused, resulted in the shift in burial practices we observe in the16th century Europe. More and more often, the dishonourable individuals were inhumed at cemeteries located either beyond the city fortifications

or within the space separating the medieval and modern town defences (Kizik 1998: 190). In many cities, this new arrangement reinforced the association of extramural burials with an act of exclusion from the community (Morawski 1991: 96). Additionally, these new sites were exempt from the usual funerary charges applied at churchyard cemeteries, and so, many began to view them as cemeteries for the poor. Meanwhile, in an effort to encourage more funerals within these newly established spaces, the authorities raised the charges applied at old parish cemeteries (Grün 1925: 75).

As the population of towns increased, they began to outgrow their former boundaries delimited by the city walls. Settlements located beyond the fortifications grew and strengthened their functional ties with the cities. However, the separation of cities from suburb settlements was not purely territorial. Spatial boundaries often translated into different standards of social treatment. These differences were also reflected by variations in mortuary treatment, as we see in St. Jacob's parish in the 15th century Nysa in Lower Silesia. While the townsmen of Nysa enjoyed the privilege of eternal rest next to the parish church, the suburb dwellers had to make do with the cemetery established on the outskirts (Wółkiewicz 2006: 310). Therefore, while analysing each urban centre, we must consider its internal complexity. Otherwise, we risk falling into generalisations which do not fully explain the phenomena we want to explore.

But what of the spatial organisation of extramural cemeteries. While they may have originally been used as burial grounds for the common folk, it does not mean they did not have their own functional hierarchy. Separate municipal cemeteries were established for various social outcasts, the unworthy, the suicides or the executed convicts (if they were not buried directly by the gallows or in another isolated area). These sites could bear many names according to the 'category' of their 'residents'. Edmund Kizik (1998: 191) quotes a few of these names such as *Armenkirchhof, Pracherkirchhof, Armensünderkirchhof, Armengottesacker* or *Malefikanterfriedhof.* However, more neutral names were also in use. For instance *Feldbegräbniss* or simply *Gottesacker* (Wilhelm-Schaffer 1999: 390). Church sources typically from larger cities, tell us of *coemiterium peregrinorum* - burial sites for the poor and the outsiders or foreigners (Grün 1925: 77). Despite their inevitably lower status within the cemetery hierarchy, the extramural burial sites were usually walled for protection from wild animals - *vor den wilden Tieren* (Schnelbögl 1975: 115). We will explore this subject further in the following chapters.

Individual burial plots, as well as the cemetery space in general, were subject to charges and could be traded. At the beginning of the 17th century, many asylums

and other institutions began to provide funerary services to their residents or members in return for signing over their estate. Most almshouses (German *Armenhäuser*) would lease burial space. This could either be a designated area within a city cemetery or an entire burial ground. It is believed that those who received care from almshouses or other charitable institutions were among the first social groups to be consistently interred in extramural cemeteries (Lindemann 1983: 133).

Therefore, it seems plausible that the choice of burial plot depended largely on the social status of the deceased. The wealthy could literally afford to 'rest in peace' for longer. For centuries after cemeteries were moved beyond the line of walled defences, members of the higher classes retained the privilege to be buried within the most prestigious churches of the city. Thus, they would rest eternally within the sanctuary of a church chapel. Although the circumstances certainly changed throughout centuries and at times the payment for a church burial may have been affordable to all, the privilege always remained reserved for a select few. In the words of Michel Vovelle (2008: 339): *In this world of strict hierarchy and boundaries, the cemetery is a place for peasants. In cities, it is a place for the poor.* The church interior was certainly considered the most prestigious resting place of all. For centuries, a burial within the church was the privilege of priests, bishops or patrons. Therefore, it is not surprising that all who were able to afford it, would have wanted to rest in their esteemed company. Additionally, it was believed that every mass offered in the honour of the deceased individual shortened the time their soul had to endure in Purgatory. (With the exception of Protestants of course.) By virtue of being buried within the church, such individuals were able to participate in the mass directly. Even after the Reformation, church burials were viewed as a distinction amongst the Protestants. Until as late as the 17th century, burial plots within churches were not available to the commoners (Grün 1925: 65-66). However, the focus of this book directs our attention to the burial grounds located outside the temple walls. As we will see, the character of this funerary space differed significantly from the relative 'order' of the church interior.

Each burial plot within a church was marked accordingly with a flagstone with a carved inscription, or at least with a number indexed within the church records. Contrary to popular belief, graves in medieval cemeteries were not arranged in neat rows. The caretaker, when choosing a new grave, would simply look for an empty space between existing plots. For centuries, town cemeteries were haphazard collections of unmarked graves, the precise location of which was only known to the family of the deceased (Morawski 1991: 97). Nevertheless, some rules did exist. For one, it was crucial that bodies be buried with the head pointing west. As we know, the 'eternal rest' of the deceased in these early cemeteries

could only last for a few decades. However, residents of disturbed graves were not at risk of being denied general resurrection. Even those whose bodily remains had been disturbed could hope for eternal salvation. We have previously discussed this issue in greater detail.

1.4. Hierarchy within cemeteries

The cemeteries were themselves subject to complex internal hierarchy. Sources often mention a designated burial area called *locus separatum*, the location of which is not specifically defined but which would have been used only in exceptional circumstances. Despite being part of the 'sacred' per se, the *locus separatum* was considered impure (Grün 1925: 80). Such areas were likely adjacent to the cemetery wall since, as is usually believed, the value of burial plots decreased with increasing distance from the church or chapel building. The very lowest places in this hierarchy were occupied by plots located by the wall, rarely kept tidy and usually overgrown, where even recent burials were quickly forgotten. Apart from the 'unworthy' individuals, such spaces were also reserved for the 'outsiders' (Pytlak 2009: 29). At times, the area was also known as *Elendsseite* (Schweizer 1956: 58). First burial pits were also dug by the cemetery wall. These were used to deposit remains unearthed during preparation of new graves before ossuaries took the form we know from contemporary engravings. The images most commonly show a brick construction with an opening for the remains, covered with a gable roof (Čechura 2006: 220). Burial pits located in marginal areas of the cemetery have been attested by research excavations in the Czech Republic (Unger 2002: 49). What we do not know however, is how refuse was managed within the cemetery space and what contemporary attitudes were towards the issue. Most likely, at least some of the litter would have been piled onto isolated plots, which would further diminish their value in the eyes of the community. While such plots would have, in theory, remained part of the sacred, certainly, they would have been considered 'worst available'. Such areas of the cemetery would be visited, often by night and in absolute silence, by quiet processions or small groups of mourners carrying bodies of those who did not deserve a proper funeral. Thanks to some written sources, we know such places often developed their own traditions. 'Suicides' corners' were formed and the land directly by the wall was dedicated to unbaptised infants. While we will return to this subject later on, we must mention here that burials of unchristened children are only known in Germany from after 1500 (Grün 1925: 81). These infants were interred on both sides of the cemetery wall. Archaeological research has also shown that infant burials often concentrated alongside the church walls, both inside and out, between the chancel and the nave, or in front of the western façade (Čechura 2006: 229). We can suppose

that infants honoured in this fashion were children of members of the community elites. This can be seen as a slight improvement on the attitudes and practices accepted by the Late Medieval society. Before, the boundaries of the sacred were off limits to the deceased of ill repute. The treatment of particular categories of the profane dead varied slightly across time and geographical regions. A lot depended on the size of the burial space available as well as on the historical period in question. Especially in the early modern period, when the long established funerary customs related to particular groups of individuals began to change, the local variations become more apparent. For instance, the inhabitants of Wrocław developed a long standing tradition of burying women who died in childbirth in fenced isolated areas (Bunzel 1981: 175). Even ordinary parish cemeteries were divided into plots dedicated to specific categories of the dead such as children, women in labour, homicide victims etc. (Kizik 1998: 191).

Unsurprisingly, the living who forged various kinds or relationships with each other, such as kinship, friendship or good neighbour relations, endeavoured to preserve at least some of these ties also at the cemetery. Funerals of outsiders or foreigners were often frowned upon, even if they were high-born (Grün 1925: 77). Most cemeteries, even those in rural areas, had designated sections for burying individuals of unknown backgrounds. This practice was particularly common in settlements located near busy roads. After all, it was not uncommon for people to pass away while travelling, making it virtually impossible for locals to establish their identity, especially if they were travelling alone.

Even if an unidentified individual, a soldier, or an 'unworthy' had been interred in local sanctified soil, they still could not expect the same treatment as the other residents of the cemetery. Decrees issued time and time again over the years state that all outsiders deceased in hospitals should be buried either alongside or under a wall or next to a ditch (Grün 1925: 77). Such institutionalised mortuary practices were much more than a simple denial of common funerary space to these individuals. They were a stigma of dishonour (Grün 1925: 80). The following chapter, in which we turn our focus to suicides will explore this subject further. For now, let us say that cases are known where details of a person's death were concealed so as to avoid a dishonourable burial. Excavations of marginal areas of cemeteries have revealed some telling deviations from the usually observed positioning of the body in graves, or even in the depth of the grave pit. Such treatment of the body may have been a result of the caretaker's negligence - after all, they could be relatively sure no one would be watching a funeral of an 'outsider' or outcast - but could as well be a sign of apotropaic or preventive measures employed so that the body would not return from the afterworld. This particular hypothesis relates to a find from the excavation at the site of the no longer existing the Holy Cross church in Wodzisław Śląski, located just outside the town limits, probably beyond the town walls (Figure 1).
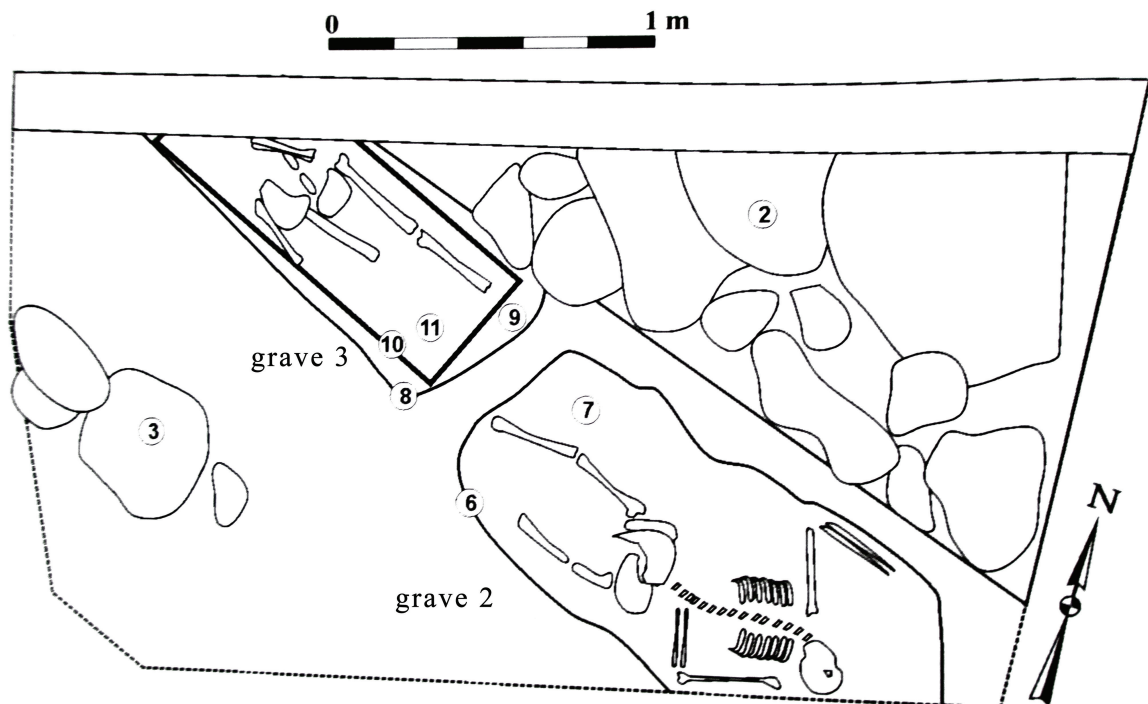

Figure 1. Wodzisław Śląski. Holy Cross church. Atypical burial of a woman found by the cemetery boundary.
Source: Furmanek, Kulpa 2004: 262.

The original timber church used to serve the nearby hospital and has been dated to the Late Middle Ages. Research excavations of the site revealed a peculiar grave feature exhibiting some interesting deviations in the positioning of the body. The skeleton was found oriented along the East-West axis, but the head pointed eastward. One of the upper limbs lay extended above the head with the fist clenched. The other had been flexed and positioned on the torso. The legs lay extended and slightly apart with bones of the feet missing. According to the anthropological analysis, the individual may have been buried in a prone position. The skeleton was identified to be a female between 45 and 50 years old and 155 cm tall. Curiously, the morphological and typological analysis of the skull revealed pronounced Mongoloid features which suggest Asian origin of the woman (Furmanek, Kulpa 2004: 260-263). The excavation records do not specify the exact location of the grave within the cemetery. However, plans of the site show it was found near the foundations of a larger stone feature (a wall), indicating the plot had once lay in the periphery of the burial ground.

A similar find was recorded in Gorzów Wielkopolski, at the cemetery of St. George's Church which once stood outside the medieval city walls. An archive search revealed that the cemetery had been used since 1365 until the beginning of the 17th century, when it was destroyed during the Thirty Years' War (Pytlak 2009: 20-21). While exploring the northern border of the cemetery, the researchers recorded an extraordinary grave feature, containing the remains of a 30-35 year old male measuring 164 cm. His body had originally been positioned in line with other remains found at the cemetery - along the E-W axis with the head pointing west. However, the individual was buried prone. The left upper limb lay extended alongside the torso. The right had been flexed pointing away from the body. The legs were quite far apart. No indication of a coffin was recorded (Pytlak 2009: 35), suggesting a neglectful and perhaps disdainful attitude towards the individual. Another noteworthy find is known from the marginal areas of the cemetery in Pławna near Lubomierz, Lower Silesia, of which a more detailed description can be found in chapter 7.

Another burial site worth mentioning here is the enigmatic graveyard behind the cathedral in Wrocław which has been puzzling researchers for quite some time. Previous research, including analyses of historical written sources suggests that the location was used as a dedicated burial ground for a particular group of individuals who, for various reasons, had been denied a proper burial in sanctified soil. Originally, the cemetery was probably just a pastureland (*Viehweide*) where the locals would bury all 'outcasts' (Wojcieszak 2010: 20-21). Unfortunately, the researchers are not certain if the actual archaeological site can be

definitely identified with the location known from written historical sources. Nevertheless, let us discuss the finds. The majority of the 318 excavated inhumations reveal no remarkable features and the burials exhibit traits consistent with contemporary liturgy. A large number of remains had been buried in coffins and some graves even contained various grave goods. However, two inhumations recorded within the western margin of the burial ground stand out as truly remarkable. These are graves 82 and 113. Both individuals had been buried on the N-S axis with the heads pointing south. Judging by the size of the coffins, they were not very tall. Excavation records show that the coffin from grave 113 measured 153 cm and that from grave 82, 146 cm. If both individuals were adults, they would have been considered short, if not dwarfs, by their contemporaries. Although the skeletons were incomplete, the surviving remains suggest that the positioning of the body in both cases was not atypical by contemporary norms. Curiously, both graves were found within the same small area (Wojcieszak 2010: 13), which might indicate that the funerals took place not too far apart in time. Nevertheless, we cannot exclude the possibility that such a close positioning of both burials was just an unlikely coincidence. The find raises some very interesting questions indeed. For one, what might have been the background of such individuals buried not only in a 'second class' cemetery, but also in an atypical fashion? It is also unclear whether the research project covered the entire surface of the cemetery or if the excavations were limited to an area which happened to contain some atypical features. We must also remember that even though initially such cemeteries may have served the poorer classes, their reputation usually increased over time.

In Wrocław alone, similar examples have been recorded and dated to even earlier times. This could point to the continuity of certain processes which we observe from pre-Christian to medieval times. Excavations at the site of the historical St. Vincent's church in Ołbin [historical suburb of Wrocław] revealed sections of a cemetery. Some of the excavated trenches intersected with the borders of the burial ground. 25 meters to the south-east of the established border of the cemetery, a single inhumation of an adult individual was recorded and marked as grave 235 (Piekalski 1991: 46). Despite its location in unsanctified soil, the feature exhibited traits of a proper Christian burial. The body was found oriented along the E-W axis with the hands resting on the pelvis. The reasons for which this individual may have been separated from the other graves remains unknown. What is more, it is unclear whether the cemetery was fenced or enclosed in any other way. We do know however that the burial ground was likely only used until the first half of the 13th century (Piekalski 1991: 60). Within the cemetery proper, researchers found two noteworthy inhumations (graves 189 and

190) which we would like to mention here. These were found within the eastern area of the site. However, since the excavations did not reach the east border of the cemetery, we cannot be certain whether the graves were originally located in its margins. A brick measuring 28 × 16.5 × 4 cm was recorded just above the skull of the individual from grave 190. Brick finds in graves are known across Europe and we will discuss their significance later on. In grave 189, a fieldstone of 30 × 20 × 15 cm was recorded above the left hip bone of the skeleton (Piekalski 1991: 52). The two graves were located close to one another and were unique in the sense that none of the other excavated grave features exhibited any unusual traits or deviations from the established contemporary ritual. Nevertheless, the question remains open: did the cemetery have a space designated specifically to individuals who, while buried in sanctified soil per se, were considered a threat for some reason and had to be isolated? Did this division exist at such an early time already?

The above overview demonstrates that although the 'sacred' burial space may have appeared coherent and contained within clearly drawn boundaries, some of the areas within it could in fact have less holy and more negative connotations. These were spaces where the 'outcasts' could be buried by way of exception. This however did not mean that such individuals would be given a proper funeral ceremony. We believe that such areas were created out of necessity. While the criteria for who had the right to a cemetery burial and who did not may have been clear, in many cases, attempts were made to circumvent the rules. The insubordination was often motivated by fear of exclusion of the deceased from the community which would have threatened their salvation. Initially, the life of an individual was valued much less than the well-being of the community. Gradually however, the attitudes began to shift and rules protecting the community were bent in the interest of an individual.

In archaeology, opportunities for a thorough study of an entire cemetery area are quite rare. Cemeteries often fall into the domain of rescue archaeology and when they are explored, the research is limited to specific sections which overlap with planned construction sites. It is naturally quite difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about the internal functional divisions of cemeteries based on such limited data sets. Additionally, burial sites tend to be used over centuries and therefore their internal divisions are not immutable. However, on the basis of both archaeological and archive research we can safely assume that the atypical funerary treatment of certain individuals was not limited to the choice of specific burial areas, but also manifested in peculiar treatment of the body. While we will elaborate on this subject in the following chapters, we hope that by now the readers will see that particular areas of a cemetery can be defined based not only on their spatial characteristics (such as in the case of burial plots near the cemetery wall or fence), but also on certain atypical features such as a peculiar orientation of the body or the presence of unusual grave goods.