THEORETICAL POSSIBILITIES OF IDENTIFYING A SACRAL PLACE

Summary

Religious problems are among the most difficult in archaeological researches and interpretations. They are usually passed over in monographs and are, as a rule, referred to in a stereotype manner in syntheses on the margin of other problems. Two types of approach to these problems have been observed in archaeological practice.

The first, which can be defined as "methodical rigorism", ascribes the sacral character to an investigated archaeological source only when possibilities of rational (utilizable) interpretation have been exhausted[1]*. In consequence, however, this apparently correct procedure causes researches to acknowledge all relics the purpose of which cannot be explained otherwise, as sources of cult[2]. This resulted in much scepticism towards this problem among remaining researchers and at least two incorrect beliefs prevail: 1. Problems concerning prehistoric beliefs, in principle, go beyond strictly scientific issues. 2. Ancient cults and beliefs represent a group of prejudices and anachronisms lacking a rational nucleus[3], towards which archaeology with its research methods seems to be helpless. Moreover, the "rigoristic" attitude includes an additional serious methodical error, namely the reduction of the sense of archaeological interpretation exclusively to the elucidation of the function of particular relics, assuming that the technical-functional and sacral character of a product exclude each other[4]. It is obvious, that in concrete historical reality these two categories are closely connected[5].

* Cf. notes to the Polish text.

The second approach can be described as a complete methodical option based on a rather casual use of literature relating to ethnology and the study of religion, which has led to a repetition of current stereotypes, sometimes supplemented with the author's imagination[6]. Together, these two methods of interpretation, though different, incline most archaeologists to be reserved towards these problems, to avoid them or even to treat works on ancient religions as a kind of "scientific poetry". In turn, this leads to ignorance about literature dealing with the study of religion and contemporary currents and theories concerning this discipline.

Two main interpretation levels can be distinguished in archaeological problems involving religion: a) the identification of single archaeological facts and groups of facts as sacral phenomena, b) the definition of their cult significance and placing them within a wider system of beliefs. It seems, the second complex of problems causes less difficulties, since an archaeologist disposes of several theories of religious and ethnological knowledge describing and reconstructing various systems of beliefs which can be associated with known prehistoric phenomena. Principles of using ethnographic interpretations in archaeological studies have recently been formulated in Polish archaeological literature[7-9]. They can also be referred to as loans from the sphere of religious studies. Such a co-ordination is necessary, since an archaeologist is unable to independently elucidate facts and systems of beliefs. The use of these principles allows to avoid glaring mistakes hitherto appearing frequently in archaeological works.

Archaeologists who distinguish sacral objects — lacking elaborated methodical foundations and analogies — use, as a rule, the criterion of uncommonness applied intuitively[14]. This procedure is easier in relation to the youngest prehistoric periods, where there exists a reference in the form of ancient and early Christian sanctuaries[15, 16]. The main reason for this disadvantageous situation should be sought in the absence of methodical reflections relating to relevant problems and in the lack of co-operation with the study of religion and ethnology. Especially disconcerting is the non-employment by archaeologists and historians of basic achievements of the latter discipline[17], which, due to the elaboration of relevant theories and research methods, is predestined to play a decisive role in studies of prehistoric religions[18]. It seems, that studies of religion can assist archaeologists in breaking through the impasse by supplying criteria of distinguishing cultural elements of a sacral character[19].

An article by Carstens Colpe, a West German religion researcher, written within this context and representing the first step in this direction, deserves particular attention[20]. It seems appropriate to discuss this work for three reasons: 1. Although years have passed since it was written (1970), it produced practically no response in Polish literature covering these issues[21]. 2. Its author, a historian and theorist of religion, has advanced a theory — contrary to archaeologists — to confront it subsequently with archaeological facts. 3. The several apparent prehistoric sanctuaries which have been discovered in Poland in recent years, should be verified on the basis of criteria proposed by C. Colpe[22, 23].

Colpe's article refers to traditions of religious studies known as phenomenology of religion. This specific research attitude involves an analysis of the empirical — usually historical — material, to reveal analogous common structures. They serve as a basis to encompass religious data as a whole, subsequently subjected to interpretation and elucidation. The objective of research, therefore, is the essence of religion, its structure and external features and not its historical development or origin[25]. F. D. E. Schleiermacher, W. Dilthey and E. Husserl are recognized as forerunners of phenomenology. Methodical assumptions of phenomenology have been realized — on the basis of religious studies — by R. Otto, who founded a religious concept based on a non-defined notion of deity assumed to be unknowable (numinosum)[29, 30]. It is a force which affects man, filling him with terror and fright, but, at the same time, it attracts, captivates and fascinates (misterium tremendum et fascinans). Numinosum constitutes, therefore, an a priori, a-historic and extra-moral category. The other essential component of Otto's concept of religion is sacrum — a category defining experience, an original and specific feeling, which seeks communication with numinosum, can be revealed in facts or individuals and can be rendered accessible only by means of symbolics.

An important moment in the development of phenomenology was the transfer of this research tradition to the United States by J. Wach, a German historian and sociologist, founder of the Chicago School of religions studies. His successor there — M. Eliade, a Rumanian scholar — has played a leading role in contemporary studies of religion. The essence of religious theory formulated by Eliade — who was strongly influenced by C. G. Jung — can be reduced to two basic points: 1. The basic principle of religious thinking involves a distinction between sacred (sacrum) and profane (profanum) elements. 2. We should distinguish between the vision of the world prevailing in ancient religions, and historical, linear visions, descending from biblical traditions. The first interprets the notion of time in a cyclic and mythical manner and refers to fundamental events (creation of the world, the origin and the fall of man), or even mythical times — illud tempus (holy, eternal time existing in mythical reality when world order prevailed undisturbed); this time can be reproduced if a defined ritual is performed or by repeating a particular myth.

M. Eliade's concept of sacredness, playing an important role in Colpe's work, presupposes further that sacred-

ness is revealed by hierophants (e.g., myths, deities, cult objects, symbols, cosmologies, animals, plants, sacred places, rites)[33, 34]. Hierophants appear in every sector of physiological, economic, spiritual and social life. Anything may become a sacred object; there is, probably, no such object which would not have attained a sacred character at a moment in history; however, none of the known religions or races has hitherto cumulated all these objects. What is more, only some objects can achieve the rank of sacredness within the framework of a certain category[36], since hierophant dialectics always presuppose a particularization of the sacredness carrier from its secular environment[37].

The phenomenalistic current in studies of religion, formally contrasting the historical approach, acquired during its development a more and more open attitude towards the latter, and many eminent experts on religion, including R. Pettazzoni, appealed for a further bringing nearer of these two leading research attitudes[39].

Colpe preceded the presentation of his methodical proposition by indicating a characteristic error often made in archaeological interpretations leading to the differentiation of temples and sacrificial offerings. Some finds have been recognized as remains of offerings since they were in sites of cult objects; on the other hand, when temples are distinguished, scientists generally use arguments referring to the presence of vestiges of offerings. The only way of avoiding this tautology would require and independent analysis of the two phenomena. Such a separate analysis would, at the beginning, necessitate a consideration of the whole complexity of "sacredness", revealed during the linguistic reconstruction of its original meaning. A philological analysis allows to get synonyms of this notion: "something quite different", "fascinating", "being quite dependent", which, however, cannot replace it entirely.

In the principle part of his exposition. C. Colpe critically revalued hitherto used concepts of sacredness basing his reasoning on I. Kant's (1793) normative a priori approach, whose consequences have abode until our days — in prehistory, for example. Kant's views have also been referred to by R. Otto who, starting with the real religious act of consciousness, endeavoured to specify possibilities of human cognition in general and sources of religious cognition in particular. According to him, this is the only way to reach the essence of religion, which is elusive from the aspect of empirical-inductive cognition. This attempt, based on "inner experience", ended unsuccessfully, just like E. Troeltsch's concept relating to the pre-empirical and transcendental character of religious apriority. Colpe has criticized these incorrect theoretical assumptions affecting prehistorians' studies of primitive mentality as burdened by this influence of psychology of depth or even by vulgarized psychological arguments.

These failings prompted the author to suggest a tentative introduction of apriority into studies of prehistoric religion, completely free from experience which is substantiated by a much greater possibility of making a mistake than in other branches of prehistoric studies. Experiences, which are the essence of religion need not be reflected exactly in material cult equipment but can be linked with religious experience which includes an a priori aspect. The initial condition required to meet this postulate involves, therefore, the acceptance of a necessary, though not proved and only hypothetical premise concerning the importance (validity, *Gültigkeit*) of a religious experience in the place of a "universal doubting"[41], or "absolute scepticism"[42] binding so far in the positivistic approach to sacral problems.

The acceptance of this assumption allows to apply to prehistoric problems M. Eliade's already referred to stereotype of sacredness and secularity. According to this scholar, the cult of a sacred stone or a tree concerns to a smaller degree the chosen object (hierophany), than a general idea of sacredness revealed by this object by means of a "sacred code", making initiation possible. The problem of identifying sacral objects has been reduced, therefore, to a transcendental substantiation of these dialectics of sacredness in relation to a particular aspect of the external world (space, time, nature, or their fragments, or man and his activity), which — within the framework of a specific prehistoric cult could have comprised this code: "we are dealing with something sacred where categories of religious apriority have been preserved, and with something secular, where they failed"[43].

Considering the restrictions imposed by such archaeological sources, Colpe thought it necessary to start only from the aspect of the phenomenology of a sacral space — i.e., from the sum of knowledge about the religious function of temples, gathered by means of generalizing results of a comparative analysis. We are informed that sanctuaries have often been built in accordance with principles strictly defined by tradition and treated on this ground as an original revelation, reproduced every time a new cult object was created. This made it possible to achieve redemption by getting in touch with the beginning of the world (*illud tempus*). Besides "built" objects, phenomenology recognizes natural sanctuaries discerned by their peculiarity (mountain, tree).

Colpe suggests two groups of criteria in distinguishing prehistoric sanctuaries. The first one is composed of aetiological myths containing one of the characteristic (organo-, cosmo- and sociologic, paradisial, etc.) motifs. An archaeologist disposes here of "a means... excluding all these mythologies, which have failed to clearly indicate the sacredness of a specific place on the basis of a priori importance". A basic role is played here by the second group of criteria based on the original seeds of rituals particularized within myths. Ritualization is

revealed in three ways: 1. By repeated forms of sanctuaries — category of repetition. 2. A room for discovery is created within the foundation of a complex — category of discovery. 3. When a particular place has been singled out due to its uniqueness, we speak of a category of symbolics of extraordinariness.

The first criterion is quite comprehensible in the light of a basic, a priori and transcendental religious category — i.e., the notion of eternity. Man wants to get closer to it and — in the form of a sanctuary — copies the arrangement of a place in which the original initiation took place. The category of discovery is linked with the necessity of finding an appropriate place for a "built" temple. Temples cannot be created or their site chosen, they can only be discovered (by divination etc.)[44]. The finding of a site for a temple can be valid a priori because the discovery does not result from the existing system of settlement, trade or cultural-geographic conditions but preceds them or even co-creates or establishes such a system. The adoption of the discovery criterion includes, therefore, two consequences for an archaeologist: on one hand, it makes him conscious of possibilities of the existence of sacral aspects undetectable by professional methods, on the other hand, it prevents him from a categorical exclusion of the presence of a sacred place in a specific spot. Contrary to the general belief, maintaining that material signs of religious cults are the fewest among archaeological finds, Colpe found that "the opposite — i.e., the assertion that sacred objects could appear everywhere — should be obvious, in accordance with prehistoric sciences and an increasing understanding…"[46]. Contrary to the category of repetition which makes available several basic reasons leading to the identification of a sanctuary, the category of discovery removes all reasons which could exclude the identification of a specific site as a sacred place.

The analysis of the symbolism of extraordinariness stems from its special variant — i.e., the symbolism of the centre — the most particular point. This idea includes both natural sanctuaries (mountain, tree) and "constructed" objects, representing the centre of the world (e.g., Mesopotamian zikkurats). Contrary to the previous two, this criterion belongs to a natural, not historical, category; the apriority of religious validity in this case is reduced — as in Otto's and Troeltsch's — to something given in an empirical-psychological manner.

An additional negative criterion in identifying sanctuaries is the category of sacrifices since offerings constituted a ritual linked with magic thinking and not with a religious belief. Colpe stressed the necessity of separating the notion of sacrifice from certain associated theories (authority mediation taboo). According to Colpe, a sacrifice should fulfil three conditions: a) it should have the the intentional character of a deposit, b) it should not assume faith in God, c) it should be associated with a particular society (problem of human sacrifices).

These confrontations with principles of sanctuary identification indicate only few sacral objects in Poland, grouped in several regions: Silesia — Ślęża Mountain, Radunia Mountain and Kościuszko Mountain; Świętokrzyskie Mountains — Łysa Góra (Łysa Mountain), Góra Grodowa (Grodowa Mountain) in Tumlin and Góra Dobrzeszowska (Dobrzeszowska Mountain) at Dobrzeszów; Kuiavia — Janikowo and Krusza Zamkowa; Mazovia — Otalążka; Great Poland — Bieżyń. In all, the selected series embraces ten objects of a different chronology, ranging from the Lusatian culture (Ślęża, Radunia, Kościuszko Mountain), through the Przeworsk culture (Góra Dobrzeszowska, Bieżyń, Janikowo, Krusza Zamkowa, Otalążka), up to the Early Middle Ages (Łysa Góra, Tumlin). They are presented concisely in chronological succession:

1. Ślęża[48]. About thirty kilometres south of Wrocław, there rises a lonely mountain range with several peaks and the centrally situated Ślęża (altitude 718 m Fig. 1). Remnants of three prehistoric stone constructions (Fig. 2), at present considerably damaged, have been found in various parts of this range. One of these stone walls surrounded the peak on three sides; no traces of ancient dwelling have been discovered within this circle. Researchers concluded that, originally, there was on top of the Ślęża a stone embankment of a non-defensive type (analogical to constructions on the Radunia and Kościuszko Mountain). On it, a defensive embankment linked with the ducal castellany, was built in the middle of the 13th century. There is another low stone construction (Fig. 3) — three metres wide and (still remaining) 50 cm high, containing traces of Lusatian culture pottery — on the mountain slope, several hundred metres from the top. The third crescent-shaped wall stretches at the foot of the mountain and contains identical ancient material. Available data indicate that these walls were built by the Lusatian culture population. Discovered pottery implies that they were also used during the Roman period and in the Early Middle Ages[49].

2. Radunia[50]. A mountain situated in the Ślęża massif (Fig. 1). An oval wall, 2 km long and 3–5 m wide, heaped from small (20–30 cm in diameter) rocks (Figs. 4, 5), stretches along the gentle slope reaching the top on two sides. It embraces an area of 20 ha, with no springs or traces of permanent settlement. Only Lusatian culture pottery has been found in the wall filling.

3. Kościuszko Mountain[51]. Extant on this height, adjoining the Ślęża massif, are fragments of an analogical stone wall (5 m wide and (still) 50 m high), stretching along a gentle slope near the top (Fig. 6). According to discovered pottery, this object has been dated to the Hallstatt period.

4. Janikowo, woj. Bydgoszcz[52]. The centre of the sacral complex (Fig. 7) was made up of a clay floor measuring 4.4 by 2.8 m, with an engraved ornament in the middle representing two concentric squares (Fig. 8); the outer square measured 63 by 65 m. There exist two versions relating to the reconstruction of the former structure: 1 — a single-room building measuring 6 by 5.7 m, with a fire-place at the eastern wall; 2 — a two-room building, 11 m long, enclosing a room corresponding to the length of the entire building — as in the previous version — and a vestibule (6 by 5.3 m) with an entrance from the lake. Vestiges of six buried dogs were discovered nearby, four were in a line, parallel to the building wall. This object included pottery from the decline of the pre-Roman period and the B_1 Roman period.

5. Krusza Zamkowa, woj. Bydgoszcz[53]. In the centre of a Przeworsk culture settlement researchers discovered a building (Fig. 9) with an earth-beaten floor carefully smoothed out and painted, and with an engraved circle of a 30 cm diameter. The walls of the 2.1 by 2.2 m building were made of a row of pile-columns of a 25 cm diameter, placed every 30–60 cm. This was probably a part of a larger sacral complex from the late pre-Roman and Roman periods, which also included human and animal burials (2 graves of dogs and one of a goat).

6. Góra Dobrzeszowska, woj. Kielce[54]. A compact massif 365.5 m high. The top part is surrounded by a threefold line of walls in the shape of an elipse with a preserved hight of 1.3—1.6 m and a width of 3 m. Their inner rim, surrounding the proper sanctuary, shows many traces of fires. The entire object measures 188 by 45 m. A stone foundation of a central altar (?) has been discovered in the central part opposite the entrance. In other parts of the complex, there are menhirs, a group of five steles, a large stone block of a somewhat zoomorphic shape and a large hearth area. This sanctuary was probably constructed in the late pre-Roman period and used also in the Roman period.

7. Bieżyń, woj. Leszno[55]. A fragment of a monumental stone foundation was discovered on a Przeworsk culture cemetery, dated to B_1–B_2 stadia of the Roman period. There are three regular pavements stretching parallel at a distance of 2.2 and 4 m to each other (Fig. 10). Two of them are 2.5 m wide, the third is 6 m wide. The pavement has been placed on rock-bed level in deliberately dug ditches. The facing is made of rows of large rocks (Fig. 11). They are, probably, a part of a larger, still hidden complex object. Some Przeworsk culture graves are dug into the pavement, others are beneath.

8. Otalążka, woj. Radom[56]. The sanctuary (?) lies on marsh meadows on the Mogilenka, a Pilica tributary, and covers an area of 0.6 ha on both sides of a former river bend (Fig. 12). On the right bank, researchers discovered a place frequently used as a hearth, measuring 12 m² containing numerous sherds, vestiges of domestic

animals and a wooden lister coulter. From the north this region was surrounded by a fence, its surface was paved — enforcing the marshy river bank. There were also two wooden benches there. A concentration of sherds and animal bones representing a purposeful deposit (sherds were linked together with pottery from hearths) have been discovered at a depth of 2.2 to 3 m in a small river bay. On the left bank, there was a stone circle of a 6 m diameter, originally embraced from three sides by the river and interpreted as a type of altar. In its vicinity researchers found a successive concentration of relics including a felloe of a cart wheel, defined as a sun symbol of a votive function. Other objects of this complex were deposited along a timber footbridge stretching 10 m from the stone circle. They were three wood constructions of piles and staves containing several deposed objects. The chronology of the site embraces the decline of the Roman period and the Migration period (stadia C_3–D).

9. Łysa Góra, woj. Kielce[59]. The 594 metres high mountain was surrounded by an embankment (Fig. 13) in the shape of an elongated elipse comprising two horseshoe sections from heaped stones (Figs. 14–16). An opening (original gate?) may be seen in the eastern, most thoroughly finished part of the wall. This part is 813 m long. The western part has never been finished, it was 11 m wide and preserved up to 2 m high (Figs. 15–17). The movable assemblage included only pottery. The walls (in the eastern part) were built in the 9th or first part of the 10th century, the entire complex was most intensively used in the 11th and 12th centuries, the construction of the western part of walls was stopped between 966 and 1130.

10. Góra Grodowa in Tumlin, woj. Kielce[58]. This hight (altitude 386 m) lies 11 km north-west of Kielce. The three concentric non-defensive stone walls surrounding the top were preserved until the 19th century. Excavations have shown that no stronghold existed there; a small settlement was situated on the mountain slope beyond the walls in the 9th–11th century.

The determination of the sacral character of these objects is based on independent data: buildings with ornamented clay floors from Janikowo and Krusza Zamkowa have analogies in the circle of ancient cultures (the Dacian culture in the 2nd–1st centuries B. C.[59] and the Thracian culture in the 4th–3rd centuries B.C.[60]); the cult significance of Ślęża and Łysa Góra was mentioned in medieval written sources (Thietmar's Chronicle[63], the *Wielkopolska Chronicle*, the Długosz Chronicle[64]); the sacral function of Łysa Góra and Góra Grodowa in Tumlin have been indicated by associated legends[65, 66]. The centres at Radunia, Kościuszko Mountain and the Góra Dobrzeszowska represent close analogies to the Ślęża object. Only in regard to Otalążka and Bieżyń, have we found objects listed as sanctuaries merely on

the basis of their inner analysis; the first, however, has numerous analogies in Northern Europe and their origin as cult objects has never been questioned[67]. Bieżyń, with its monumental stone construction on the cemetery, which are linked with objects of a decisively ritual character (boat-shaped stone artefacts), should be recognized as a sanctuary, regardless of C. Colpe's principles.

Four groups have been distinguished within sacral objects in Poland: 1 — mountain sanctuaries (6 objects); 2 — sanctuaries with ornamented clay floors (2), 3 — aquatic sanctuaries (1), 4 — cemetery sanctuaries (1).

The first group includes all so far discovered South Polish assemblages. They were characterized by low (non-defensive) stone walls surrounding the summit and a considerable area near the top in the form of a plateau, furnishing room for a great number of people. There were no traces of any utility objects on those sites. Three rows of walls (sometimes fragmentary) appeared on three sites (Góra Grodowa, Góra Dobrzeszowska, Ślęża), indicating the significance of that number. A moumental gate leading to the interior may be seen in the best preserved objects (Łysa Góra, Góra Dobrzeszowska). The similarity of the described mountain sanctuaries (the shape of walls, their construction and position, gates and the number of walls) is striking if we consider the considerable chronological differences separating these objects. The set of common characteristics is sufficient to consider Colpe's principle of repetition to be applicable. The criterion of symbolics of extraordinariness (mountain as the seat of Gods, point at which heaven and earth meet) can also be applied to this group[70]. In regard to Góra Dobrzeszowska there exist, moreover, premises allowing the application of the remaining principle — of discovery (altar, inner stone circle and menhirs suggesting the existence of an inner sanctuary accessible to chosen individuals only).

The second group of objects (Janikowo and Krusza Zamkowa) embraces two similar objects with ornamented clay floors. Analogical objects have also been discovered in Rumania[71], Bulgaria[72], Denmark[73], etc., strengthening the criterion of repetition. Ornaments appearing there suggest symbolic qualities (circle — symbol of the Sun or the universe[75], square — symbol of the four quarters of the globe[76]), and, thus, fulfil the criterion of extraordinariness. If we accept the two-room reconstruction version of the Janikowo sanctuary, there would be an additional category of discovery (a close sanctuary with an ornamented floor and an entrance from the vestibule).

Much more complex is the interpretation of the Otalążka object — representing the third group. According to W. Bender, author of studies, the discovery of numerous traces of sacrificial offerings was the principal factor in distinguishing the object as a sanctuary. On the basis of Colpe's initial utterances, this proof should be recogni-

zed as tautology. But the Otalążka centre probably functioned about 100–150 years[78], a time sufficient for the development of the custom of permanent offerings certainly leading to ritualization (special constructions for sacrificial offerings) and, thus, allowing to recognize this complex as a cult place[79]. Considering Colpe's confrontation category, this site does not fulfil the principle of repetition (there are only general analogies in Northern Europe)[80], but it fits into the category of discovery (stone circle — "altar" on the left bank of the river situated on a very slimy site and a footbridge leading to it, clearly contrasting with the generally accessible, wide stone platform on the opposite bank).

The last of the analyzed sites — the cemetery sanctuary at Bieżyń, is analogous only in a general way to other sites in Poland[82, 83], which do not substantiate the category of repetition. Since excavation works are still carried out in this site, we can only hypothetically indicate the criterion of symbolics of extraordinariness (if it turned out that the uncovered stone walls encircle a closed area) and the criterion of discovery (if the two narrower pavements were enclosing a road leading to a specially designated place on the cemetery).

This confrontation has proved the complete usefulness of discussed identification criteria in archaeological analyses; at least two of them have been met in all considered sacral objects. Particularly important in Colpe's proposition seems to be the criterion of repetition and the symbolic of extraordinariness; the first is close to (though not identified with) the method of analogy so general in archaeology; the other, particularly its special case — symbolics of the centre, considers, above all, natural spacial arrangements, in the registration of which archaeology due to its methods is the most competent. The criterion of discovery is most difficult to apply in practice, considering, first of all, interpretation obstacles in concrete cases.

Discussed criteria were applied separately to interpretations of a group of great hall buildings, known from settlements of the late Roman period[84]. A representative object of this type was discovered at Wólka Łasiecka, woj. Skierniewice (Fig. 18). It covered an area of 137.7 m² (16.6 by 8.5 m), had a three-nave and two-room construction and two large hearth areas (about 2.1 by 2.7 m). Its movable assemblage was rather poor. None of Colpe's criteria could be applied there. Sacral interpretations used hitherto were, as a rule, based on the *in dubio pro Deo* principle (different from dominating rules of Roman period buildings and shortage of presmises indicating utilization functions)[85]. All this does not ultimately deny the sacral role of such buildings — Colpe emphasized the existence of many similar places which could not be detected by archaeological methods[86] — but indicates the impossibility of a definite solution of the functional analysis with the aid of so far available sources

(i.e., without knowledge of the settlement plan, hitherto reproduced only in 10 per cent)[87].

A doubtless sacral symbolic, however, may be ascribed to the arrangement of circular-shaped prehistoric settlements with a centrally situated, unoccupied bailey (incl. Lubieszowo, woj. Szczecin[88], Nowa Cerekwia, woj. Opole[90], Strobin, woj. Sieradz[91]). From the aspect of studies of religion, human settlements (villages, towns) represent an individual, sacred abode[93]. The Celtic settlement at Nowa Cerekwia (Fig. 20) was situated on a spreading hill, dominating the surrounding countryside, distant from water sources[94]. B. Czerska, who carried out those excavations maintained that this position was chosen from a defensive point of view[95]. This problem was more thoroughly explained, however, only by the category of centre symbolics, particularly if we consider that religious reasons were of a great importance for Celtic imigrants from Moravia who inhabited this settlement. We may assume, therefore, that the planning of a circular settlement with a central yard was based on a sacral aspect — the differentiation of two zones: one's own, known and secure world, encompassed within the settlement, and the external, strange and hostile world.

This analysis has shown that criteria of identifying sacral places based on religious knowledge are useful in archaeological analyses. Results achieved during analyses lead to more general reflections on the co-operation between archaeology and the study of religion. The previously indicated situation prevailing in modern archaeological literature concerning the oldest religions, substantiates the formulation of several relevant postulates. First of all, it seems that examples referred to sufficiently justify the key role of the study of religion in solving the discussed problems. The opposite attitude — i.e., ascribing this role to archaeology itself, is — due to the apparent great diversity of meaning and disputability of basic achievements of religious knowledge — difficult to maintain, if we consider that methodical polycentrism appears in almost every scientific discipline. Such objections are born from the excessive faith in the possibility of a narrow archaeological interpretation (without the participation of auxiliary disciplines) and the ignoring of the necessity of verbalizing basic stages in research procedure here applied.

A different problem concerns the defining of an appropriate way of using achievements of the study of religion

Much too often can we observe a random selection of literature — just as ethnographic analogies have been used in prehistory. Researchers use either out-of-date or even misguiding works, or use works inconsistent with the author's intention. Recent Polish literature includes notorious references to two fundamental items on this problem: S. A. Tokarev's[97] and M. Eliade's[98]. The first has often been used indiscriminately, the latter quite improperly. A scrutiny of Tokarev's work — basically a typology of original forms of religions and an outline of their social development — shows many shortcomings and contradictions (including schematism resulting from accepted methodological assumptions, comprising evolution heritage transferred to the ground of Marxist materialism; an a-historical assessment of the role of religion in history recognizing it merely as a reactionary and negative factor; a non-precise terminology and diversified typology)[99]. Most of these shortcomings resulted from the lack of criteria of distinguishing the oldest religious models and a non-precise choice of source materials (chiefly from Australia and Siberia).

Investigating, in turn, M. Eliade's work on the ground of contemporary Polish archaeology, we found an error in its conception which may be described as a "narrow utilitarian" attitude, since it tends to treat it (despite the author's stipulation) as a sort of a catalogue of original religious forms, in which a researcher can easily find a variant associated with the currently analyzed archaeological material. The effect of this purely mechanical association is treated as a reconstruction of a concrete prehistoric religion. Such a procedure constitutes a gross deformation of the principal thought on which Eliade based his concept. The forms of cults and rituals he distinguished do not represent autonomic religious doctrines but only transcendental structures, which — in successive historical periods — had been embraced by various religious systems playing in them always the same role.

To sum up — archaeologists working on problems of prehistoric religions should acquire a thorough knowledge of achievements of the study of religion seen from the aspect of the present-day methodological situation in this discipline.

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