Religions and their things. Comparative analysis of early medieval objects connected with religiosity discovered on the territory of Poland

– Project funded by National Science Centre Poland (2017/24/C/HS3/00116)

The main aim of this project is a reflection on the relationship between the archaeological sources and the possibilities to become familiar with the religion of early medieval communities. Accomplishment of this particular problem comes to the conclusion that the analyzed objects should be interpreted as active elements of past cultural reality which were related directly to the number of religious and mythical meanings. The central part of the project will be an analysis of early medieval archaeological relics discovered on the area of Poland in which we are able to notice some aspects of religiosity. The particular artifacts include both objects associated with traditional pagan religion and objects associated with Christianity. An assumed fact is that the analyzed objects were polysemantic and a specific object could be related to entirely different meanings, both before and after the conversion, acquiring multi-threaded, syncretic character.

Theoretical assumptions and research methods used in this project assume the use of the results of the exploration within the broader anthropology of things and images. They emphasize an active and causative nature of material culture products. The project involves the analysis of a very wide source material which includes anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imaginations, crosses, 'kaptorgas', masks, amulets, rattles, jewellery, ceramic vessels, and other items of daily use by their unusual form and / or the context of discovery can be associated with the sphere of the early medieval sacrum. The project also involves a large enquiry in the country museums and scientific-research institutes, which result will be creation of the fullest possible catalog of the analyzed things.

The analysis has a strict comparative and interdisciplinary character, and for the creation of the interpretation this paper uses the sources and methods of history, cultural anthropology, religious studies, philosophy and cultural history. The project's aim is to show any signs of early medieval religious which can be seen in archaeological sources, dating from the great transformations of ideologies and politics associated with the introduction of Christianity. The result of the project will demonstrate the complexity of the issues of early medieval religiousness and will try to show syncretic and dynamic nature of this religiousness.