

FIO 2008 – Civic Initiatives Fund

In 2008 and 2009 two large projects aimed at the promotion and reconstruction of the cultural heritage of the Hrubieszów Commune were implemented. The emphasis was put on the archaeological heritage connected with the research on the Gothic civilisation in Masłomęcz. The first project (August-September 2008) entitled “Life in the Land of the Goths – Promotion and Reconstruction of the Cultural Heritage of the Village of Masłomęcz” was financed from the Civic Initiatives Fund FIO (Fundusz Inicjatyw Obywatelskich) 2008.

The basic aim was the creation of an intergenerational group cultivating the cultural and historical heritage of the Hrubieszów Commune. As part of the aforementioned projects the Hrubieszów-Mircze Association “Better Tomorrow” – Local Action Group organised a series of training courses for the inhabitants of the region presenting traditional crafts and rituals of the Goths from the Hrubieszów Basin. Content-related supervision was provided by archaeologists from the Rev. Stanisław Staszic Museum in Hrubieszów.

Subsequent stages of the implementation of the project were presented in local press, web portals and websites. Overviews of individual activities were presented during cyclical events on the subject of archaeology – archaeological festivals – taking place in Masłomęcz.

Pottery

Among the activities undertaken by the Gothic community inhabiting the Hrubieszów Basin between the 2nd and the 4th centuries AD, a significant function was the production of clay dishes. There are two basic categories of dishes: those moulded by hand and those made using a potter's wheel.

In 2008 the first stage of training courses for the inhabitants of Masłomęcz started, its purpose was to instruct participants in the production of clay dishes. During two days of regular theoretical and practical classes supervised by a qualified ceramicist, Marta Wasilczyk, several dozen clay dishes were made, their patterns being based on authentic finds from excavations in Masłomęcz and Gródek. Almost all objects are copies of original artefacts, and the characteristic methods of ornamentation and finishing the surface were retained. The participants in the course were first made acquainted with an extensive database of reference sources in the form of display boards, illustrations and photographs. To expand their knowledge, before starting the process of reconstruction of Gothic dishes, the participants also familiarised themselves with artefacts from the collections of the museum in Hrubieszów. Among the items produced were both simple everyday kitchen dishes, and crockery that was complex in terms of form and ornamentation. In accordance with archaeological sources, bone, stone and wooden tools were used for finishing the surface of vessels. The level of knowledge some participants acquired made it possible for them to work independently and conduct classes in pottery for children, young people and adults visiting the Gothic hut in Masłomęcz.

Reproductions of Gothic jewellery (“glass” beads)

The source database built during long-term excavation works made it possible to reconstruct some of the elements of costume worn by the Goths inhabiting the Hrubieszów Basin. In cooperation with specialists experienced in historical-archaeological reconstructions, the process of making ornaments from 1700 years ago was partially reconstructed. The emphasis was placed on two categories of artefacts – glass beads and metal elements of costume. Glass objects were particularly desirable in times of the Gothic settlement in the Hrubieszów region, and the number of glass beads found in graves attests to the high social and economic status of the inhabitants. Since the Goths did not have advanced skills of melting glass, they imported ready-made objects from the territory of the Roman Empire. The process is difficult to reconstruct in a modern domestic setting, so another material (modelling clay) has been used, employing the same technology. Reconstruction of individual types of glass jewellery requires extraordinary accuracy. Accurate copies of many objects were made on the basis of original archaeological artefacts from the territory of the Gothic circle.

Weaving (weaving frames, rigid heddles)

Clay artefacts such as spindle whorls and weaving weights found in large numbers in the area inhabited by the Goths made it possible to try to reconstruct the ways of making fabrics used to make clothes and decorative woven bands. To weave linen canvas and woollen fabric, vertical looms made of hewn wood are used. To make colour woven bands, square frames (made of

wood, bone or hardened skin) or a specially prepared wooden tool in the form of a ladder, referred to as a rigid heddle, are now used.