IV. WARRIORS AND ARMAMENTS FROM THE VISTULA TO THE DAUGUVA

A WIELBARK CULTURE PIECE OF WEAPONRY? REMARKS CONCERNING THE ASTONISHING FIND FROM THE CEMETERY AT KROSNO (CROSSEN)

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Abstract

The authors recall their reconstruction of the Wielbark Culture cemetery at Krosno grave 27 furnishing. One of the most interesting elements in the grave is a boat-shaped fitting, probably the pommel of a sword typical of Scandinavia. The chronology of the grave corresponds to the dating of such boat-shaped pommels.

Key words: the Roman Period, Wielbark Culture, weapon, sword-pommel.

Introduction

The recent years of increased interest in Prussian antiquities have given rise to a vividly developing “archive” archaeology (ie Andrzejowski and Bursche 1987; Gedl 1999; Kolendo and Nowakowski 2000). Archive studies of private records of archaeologists active in the interwar period and of archives and museum collections discovered since the Cold War are a rich base of source material, with so-called “new” discoveries concerning the Iron Age, especially from the areas occupied by the Balts, but also from Wielbark Culture (eg Cieśliński 2000, pp.89-97; 2001, pp.47-63). A particularly important source is a large part of the materials and records from the Prussia Museum now stored in the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin, among them the collection from the former Ostpreußische Provinzial-Museum (further OPM) in Königsberg, included in the collection of the Prussia Museum in 1905 (Reich 2003, p. 110). Besides the finds, it consists of a great number of metrices, catalogue cards and other archive materials.

During archive studies on the Prussia Museum collection at present stored in the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, we came across a box with Wielbark Culture artefacts. Some of them had original sheets of paper with the OPM inventory number and had been signed “Crossen” or “Krossen, Kr. Pr. Holland” (nowadays Krosno, Pasłęk district). Most of the artefacts had sheets with inventory numbers attached to them. Luckily, also separate metrices with inventory numbers and numbers of graves were preserved for part of the finds which allowed for their further identification. Thanks to the information from the sheets, it was possible to associate part of the finds with actual burial assemblages. Furthermore, in some cases it was possible to identify the finds which did not have an OPM number. The artefacts come from several graves, of which the furnishing of grave 27 from the cemetery at Krosno deserves particular attention.

Grave 27 from Krosno and its furnishings

Grave 27 is one of the objects from Krosno that is most frequently mentioned in literature. The first reliable information about the goods from that burial were issued in Blume’s works (1912, p.107 and 121, Fig. 150, Plate 58a; 1915, pp.41, 46-47 and 53). Single finds from the burial were mentioned in various monographs (Ebert 1926, p.72; Gaerte 1929, p.185, Fig. 136: e; Schindler 1940, p.144, No. 184; Eggers 1951, p.102, No. 586; Madyda 1977, pp.382-383; 1987, p.150; Lund Hansen 2005).

1 For more on the history of the collection see: Reich (2003, 2005).
An attempt at collecting the scattered information about this and other graves from the cemetery at Krosno was made by Andrzejowski and Bursche (1987, pp.233-277). Later on, finds from grave 27 were mentioned several times, often without the full data on the furnishing known from the literature (Stawiarska 1999, p.266).

On the basis of the above mentioned data as well as the surviving artefacts, we tried to reconstruct the furnishings of the grave (Kontny, Natuniewicz-Sekuła 2006). Altogether, the assemblage from grave 27 may be reconstructed as follows:

2. Bronze spur, close to Subgroup G1 after Ginalski (1991) (Fig. 1: a); fragmentarily preserved; preserved length: 4.6 cm, maximum width of a bow 0.8 cm (OPM 20841).
3. Bronze spur, close to Subgroup G1 after Ginalski (1991) (Fig. 1: b); fragmentarily preserved; preserved length: 3.8 cm, maximum width of a bow 0.7 cm (OPM 20842).
4. Belt buckle, bronze Type D 29 after Madyda-Legutko (1987); missing (OPM 20843).
5. Belt-end fitting, bronze, Type O15 after Raddatz (1957) (Fig. 1: c); length 4.8 cm (OPM 20844).
6. Glass goblet Type 216 after Eggers (1951); missing (OPM 20845).
7. Boat-shaped fitting, bronze (Fig. 2: a-c); a detailed description is presented below (OPM 20846).
8. Fragment of a bronze sheet, which was probably part of a strap-end Type JII3? after Raddatz (1957) (Fig. 1: d); length 3.3 cm (OPM 20847).
9. Fragments of a bone or antler comb Type I after Thomas (1960); missing (OPM 20848).
10. Plate of a bronze buckle and bronze belt hanger (?); missing (OPM 20849).

The assemblage of finds presented above was most probably discovered in an inhumation grave. The deceased, probably a man, had two belts, which is suggested by the elements of sets of the belt fittings. The presence of two belts seems to indicate the social role played by the deceased: one of the belts was probably on his hips, whereas the second one might have served as a balteus, i.e. a belt worn across the shoulder and used for suspending a sword.

Based on the dating of particular elements of the furnishing, we established the chronology of the grave to Phase C₂, perhaps in its earlier stage (for a detailed chronological analysis, see: Kontny, Natuniewicz-Sekuła 2006, p.311).

Reconstruction of the sword-pommel

Among the grave goods from grave 27, particular attention should be devoted to the object described as a bronze boat-shaped fitting (Fig. 2: a-c). This mysterious bronze object is lenticular in plan. It has an edge

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3 This is indicated by the lack of traces of burning on the preserved artefacts. Even though when describing the graves from Krosno, Blume occasionally mentions the burial rite (only for graves 83, 121, 145 does he mention that these were urn burials) we may assume that in the case of the other burial features he meant inhumation (Andrzejowski and Bursche 1987, p.234).
4 This interpretation was proposed by Madyda-Legutko for Przeworsk Culture in a slightly earlier period of time. She saw an evident correlation between the presence of pairs of buckles (including one with a double tongue) and high-quality swords imported from Rome (Madyda-Legutko 1990).
and a protuberance also lenticular in plan. Its culmination is clearly linearly distinguished (the broken line follows the long axe of the object). The item is 8.8 centimetres long, 1.4 centimetres high and originally it was probably around 3.5 centimetres wide. The width of the edge oscillates between 0.2 and 0.8 centimetres, reaching the greatest values in the top parts of the object. No traces of fixing in the form of rivets or nails can be seen on the surface of the artefact. It is worth noticing the pronounced top parts of the edge, which may have served to fasten the object in a casing. It should, however, be remarked that among the finds from the grave there are no elements of the supposed casing. Almost half of the artefact has not been preserved, which, as the irregularities of the edge suggest, was probably due to corrosion. In one place at a small distance from the top, a deformation of the edge is visible: the bronze sheet is broken and slightly bent. This may have been done when the object was pulled off the surface to which it was fixed.

The object has its closest analogies as to shape and proportions among so-called boat-shaped pommels\(^5\) (Fig. 3), which were elements of double-edged sword casing (Bemmann and Hahne 1994, pp.376-377). Boat-shaped pommels were usually part of an hourglass hilt and had two versions. The earlier one had thicker proportions (the proportion of the length to the width was around 2:1) and was slightly shorter. They appeared together with indicators of so-called Group By of weapon-graves from Norway dated to Phases C\(_{1b}-C\_2\) (Bemmann and Hahne 1994, p.307), and Group Vøien, dated to Phase C\(_3\) (Bemmann and Hahne 1994, p.312)\(^6\). The later version of boat-shaped pommels embraced slimmer and longer items with proportions ap-

\(^5\) German: *bootsförmige Knäufe*.

\(^6\) The issue of reconstruction of the hilts of the swords from the Roman Period was taken up by Biborski (1978, p.135-
approximately 3:1. They appeared with objects included in Group Mollestad, placed in the second half of the fourth century, ie in the developed and late part of Phase C₃ and in Phase D₁ (Bemmann and Hahne 1994, p.316).¹³⁸; however, his conclusions can be used for the problems analyzed in this paper only to a very small extent.

A different concept was presented by Menghin, who distinguished two types of boat-shaped pommels according to different criteria. In his proposal the Snartemo-Blučina Type is composed of pommels made of silver, gold or gilded silver on which stylised animal figures are represented; this kind of pommel was part of the most intricate swords of the period, ie Group A, dated after Menghin to ca 450–480 AD (Menghin 1983, pp.58 and 135, Fig. 25). Type Simris, grave 54-Krefeld-Gellep, grave from 1812, in turn, was simpler in form and less decorative or not decorated at all (Menghin 1983, pp.63-64 and 306-307; Fig. 29), matching the criteria for the boat-shaped pommels adopted by Bemmann and Hahne (1994). The criteria put forward by the latter are used in this paper.

According to Behmer, it is not entirely clear if the pommel from Thorsberg belongs to the same sword as the remaining part of the hilt (Behmer 1939, p.41).

In the catalogue of the exhibition “The Spoils of Victory” two silver boat-shaped pommels from the same horizon are presented: a more slender one and a thicker one (The Spoils of... p.420, Cat. 6.5). This seems to indicate that the borderline between the two versions of the two boat-shaped pommels is not sharp.

One of them has small projections in the central part of the sides of the pommel (Engelhardt 1869, Plate 6: 19; Menghin 1983, p.307) similar to the ones noticeable on the pommel from Krosno.

Bemmann and Hahne also noticed an identically dated, late variant of a boat-shaped pommel from the Danish water find at Næssund (1994, pp.376-377, Footnote 368).
Boat-shaped pommels have been found on the areas occupied by the Franks (Krefeld-Gellep, grave from 1812 (Pirling 1974, Plate 55: 1))\(^1\). According to Menghin, the late forms derived from the Scandinavian model and appeared sporadically until the late Phase C after Menghin (1983, p.135, Fig. 77), ie till the late first half of the fourth century (Menghin 1983, p.59, Fig. 25), yet they may have been parts of hilts other than hour-glass shaped ones (e.g. Krefeld-Gellep, grave from 1812).

Boat-shaped pommels were made both of silver and bronze sheets. Very often they had a stamped ornament on the part near the edge and at the edge near the culmination of the convexity. It should, however, be remarked that some of them were undecorated (Behmer 1939, Plate XXI: 7a; Ørsnes 1988, p.52, Plate 94: 5–6, 12), both the bronze and the silver ones. The fittings from Scandinavia usually have a hole at either end for long rivets connecting the pommel with an oval plate (Ørsnes 1988, Plate 90: 2; Raddatz 1987, Fig. 3). The space between the pommel and plate and the bronze band holding them together was filled with organic material (eg wood) which was the basic part of the hilt (Menghin 1983, Fig. 28: 2; Raddatz 1987, Fig. 3; Jørgensen and Petersen 2003, p.270, Fig. 13). There are also items the wooden part of the pommel of which is not reinforced with a bronze band. Particularly important in this case is the item from grave 54 at Simris in Scania (Fig. 4: a). The silver boat-shaped pommel found in it differs from the ones mentioned above: according to the author of the publication, it was fixed directly to the wooden part by means of a long rivet (Ørsnes 1988, Plate 90: 2; Raddatz 1987, Fig. 3). The rivets, however, were soldered without any additional manipulations such as excavating the base and fixing them in the hole (we would like to thank Xenia Pauli Jensen, who is investigating the materials form Vimose, for making them available to us). It is also possible that their chronology is not clearly determined (the finds from Vimose are a random collection which was not recorded in context during the excavations)\(^4\). In both cases, the rivets were soldered to the inside part of the pommel\(^15\). Curiously enough, a very similar method of attaching the rivets to the inside part of the convexity of the pommel without making holes has been discovered in the item from grave 144 at Wageningen in Holland (Fig. 4: c) (van Es 1964, Fig. 71: 2) mentioned above. There arises the question, however, if the above method of attaching the pommel was durable? The small surface at which the rivet meets the inside part of the pommel suggests that it was not. Perhaps for that reason it was found in few items in comparison to the total number of boat-shaped pommels.

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\(^1\) They appeared together with scabbard suspensions (Kivikoski 1955, Fig. 5: 3; Behmer 1939, Plate XXI: 7b), included in Type Indre Kvarøy, decorated with heads of birds. Suspensions of this kind are associated with Group Møllestad (late stage of Phase C\(_1\) and Phase D\(_1\)) (Bermann and Hahne 1994, p.316 and 393).

\(^2\) Menghin includes in this group also the items from Wageningen, grave 144 (Holland) and Westerwanna, grave 535 in Lower Saxony (1983, p.307, Map 1), but in reality they resemble Scandinavian boat-shaped pommels only very slightly: the item from Westerwanna is disc-shaped in plan but is entirely flat (Zimmer-Linnfeld 1960, p.32, Plate 72: b), and the find from Wageningen refers to Type Snartemo-Blüeina to a greater extent due to the pattern of animal heads on the blunt sides (van Es 1964, p.227, Fig. 71: 2). The latter concerns also the sword from Nummedal in Norway (Behmer 1939, Plate XIX: 2) included by Menghin to Type Simris, grave 54-Krefeld-Gellep, grave from 1812 (Menghin 1983, p.306).

\(^3\) According to Behmer to Type Simris, grave 54-Krefeld-Gellep, grave from 1812 (Menghin 1983, Plate XXXI: 7a; Menghin 1983, p.306).

\(^4\) In Vimose one more boat-shaped pommel was found. It also did not have rivet holes in its upper part (the rivets themselves have not been preserved); (Behmer 1939, Plate XV: 1).

\(^5\) The pommel from Vimose published by Engelhardt is known to us from personal inspection. It is worth noting that it is thick, much thicker than the pommels from Simris. The rivets, however, were soldered without any additional manipulations such as excavating the base and fixing them in the hole (we would like to thank Xenia Pauli Jensen, who is investigating the materials form Vimose, for making them available to us). It is also possible that the item from Simris was fixed in a similar way and the reconstruction suggested by Stjernquist (1955, Plate XXII: 4) requires correction (reproducing the way in which the pommel was fixed, she based herself only on two fragments of the supposed long rivet, which in fact could have been attached in the same way as in the items from Vimose mentioned above). It should, however, be stressed that the item from Vimose was made from a solid piece of silver, only a little concave, thus in this respect it differs entirely from the item from Krosno and from the majority of boat-shaped pommels.
shaped pommels. It may seem that this was a prototype and less perfect method than the later (?) one, but to confirm this hypothesis a greater set of artefacts than the one now available is necessary.

In the light of the above, the lack of rivet holes in the item from Krosno is not surprising and does not undermine the determined function of the artefact. What is, however, remarkable is the similar chronology of the finds from Simris and Krosno. The lack of rivet holes on the pommel from Krosno may be in this case associated with its early chronology and justified by using a not very efficient (prototype) method of using a very long rivet going inside the pommel or a pair of rivets soldered inside the convexity of the boat-shaped pommel. The use of a relatively thin sheet of metal, unlike in the majority of later applications\(^\text{16}\), was probably caused by a lack of experience of the craftsmen, and only after some time was it made more carefully, decorated and securely fixed. The find from Krosno is perhaps a “trial” item which was not tested, and that is why it was also slightly larger than the other examples of boat-shaped pommels.

Theoretically, it is also possible that the analysed object is a mounting of the belt Type Sætrang\(^\text{17}\). Ornamental mountings, attached horizontally to the belt, had a shape similar to a boat, being in agreement with the decoration style of the epoch (following the shape of the fire stones carried inside). The mountings were richly decorated: they were made of bronze and covered with silver gilded foil and encrusted with pieces of glass or with enamel. An analysis of their form and context allows us to assume that they may have been covers of wooden boxes for tinder attached to the belt (Bemmann and Hahne 1994, p.489; Christensen 2005, p.60). Mountings of this kind were found at Sætrang (Slomann 1959, p.55, Plates V-VI) and Nydam (in a pine boat deposited in the bog around 300 AD) (Jørgensen, Petersen 2003, pp.267-268, Fig. 8). The find from Krosno, however, should not be interpreted as an ornamental belt mounting\(^\text{18}\). This is due to the form (belt mountings are flatter and have straighter sides than boat-shaped pommels) and the method used to make it: the mysterious object from Krosno cannot in any way be treated as an element of a parade belt indicating a very high standing in the milieu of the north European Barbarians. The chronological discrepancies are also important. The discussed belt mountings appeared in assemblages assigned to Group Mollestad, and thus in the developed and late part of Phase C\(_1\), and in Phase D\(_1\) (Bemmann and Hahne 1994, pp.316 and 489), whereas the late forms, characterised by some special details, appeared in burials determined as Group Kvamme, perhaps even until Group Snartemo (Bemmann and Hahne 1994, p.497), ie from around 400 AD till the early sixth century (Bemmann, Hahne 1994, p.318 and 329). This differs considerably from the chronology established for the burial at Kros

\[^{16}\text{Nota bene} \] the find from Simris was made from a very thin sheet of metal (Stjernquist 1955, Plate XXII: 4).

\[^{17}\text{We would like to express our gratitude for this suggestion to Marcin Biborski PhD from the Institute of Archaeology at Jagiellonian University.}\]

\[^{18}\text{The same opinion was expressed by Prof. Jørgen Ilkjær from Moesgård Museum, whom we consulted on this problem, for which we would like to express our gratitude.}\]
KONTNY AND MAGDALENA

Concerning the Astonishing Find from the Cemetery at Sekuła Krosno (Crossen)

It became better known only thanks to Martin Jahn’s archives. In grave 13 after Biborski (1923), dated to Phase B, Wołągiewicz (1964, p.102, Plate VIII: 2; Wołągiewicz 1965, p.182, Plate II; Eggers and Stary 2001, Plate 189: 4), which does not, however, allow for a complete reconstruction and establishing the dimensions of the weapon. In grave 13 a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewicz (1964) was discovered. Unfortunately, the preserved parts consisted only of hilt and a part placed just beneath the hilt, as well as two small fragments of the scabbard (Wołągiewicz 1964, p.102, Plate VIII: 2; Wołągiewicz 1965, p.182, Plate II; Eggers and Stary 2001, Plate 189: 4), which does not, however, allow for a complete reconstruction and establishing the dimensions of the weapon. In grave 13 a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewicz was found, and was accompanied by a bronze brooch Type Almgren 12 (1923), dated to Phase B, (Grasselt 1998), a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewiczowie (1964) was discovered. Unfortunately, the preserved parts consisted only of hilt and a part placed just beneath the hilt, as well as two small fragments of the scabbard (Wołągiewicz 1964, p.102, Plate VIII: 2; Wołągiewicz 1965, p.182, Plate II; Eggers and Stary 2001, Plate 189: 4), which does not, however, allow for a complete reconstruction and establishing the dimensions of the weapon. In grave 13 a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewicz was found, and was accompanied by a bronze brooch Type Almgren 12 (1923), dated to Phase B, (Grasselt 1998), a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewicz (1964) was discovered. Unfortunately, the preserved parts consisted only of hilt and a part placed just beneath the hilt, as well as two small fragments of the scabbard (Wołągiewicz 1964, p.102, Plate VIII: 2; Wołągiewicz 1965, p.182, Plate II; Eggers and Stary 2001, Plate 189: 4), which does not, however, allow for a complete reconstruction and establishing the dimensions of the weapon. In grave 13 a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewicz was found, and was accompanied by a bronze brooch Type Almgren 12 (1923), dated to Phase B.

Furthermore, the assemblage did not contain any other elements characteristic of belts of the Sætrang type, such as propeller-shaped pendants.

The weapons are sometimes discovered in the contact zone between Wielbark and Przeworsk cultures. In such cases, the cultural affiliation of the discovered artefacts inspires many doubts (Kaczanowski and Zaborowski 1988). Finds of swords or parts of them are particularly rare. The “Wielbark” finds from the Early Roman Period include the ones from Warszkwowo, Sławno district.

In grave 2, besides a bronze brooch Type Almgren 12 (1923), dated to Phase B, (Grasselt 1998), a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewiczowie (1964) was discovered. Unfortunately, the preserved parts consisted only of hilt and a part placed just beneath the hilt, as well as two small fragments of the scabbard (Wołągiewicz 1964, p.102, Plate VIII: 2; Wołągiewicz 1965, p.182, Plate II; Eggers and Stary 2001, Plate 189: 4), which does not, however, allow for a complete reconstruction and establishing the dimensions of the weapon. In grave 13 a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewicz was found, and was accompanied by a bronze brooch Type Almgren 12 (1923), dated to Phase B, (Grasselt 1998), a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewicz (1964) was discovered. Unfortunately, the preserved parts consisted only of hilt and a part placed just beneath the hilt, as well as two small fragments of the scabbard (Wołągiewicz 1964, p.102, Plate VIII: 2; Wołągiewicz 1965, p.182, Plate II; Eggers and Stary 2001, Plate 189: 4), which does not, however, allow for a complete reconstruction and establishing the dimensions of the weapon. In grave 13 a one-edged sword Type III after Wołągiewicz was found, and was accompanied by a bronze brooch Type Almgren 12 (1923), dated to Phase B.

More information about swords from the area of Wielbark Culture (including items erroneously assigned to that culture) has been presented in another publication (Kontny 2006a).

Symbolic value of the pommel from grave 27 at Krosno

The exact function of the pommel from Krosno in the grave furnishings remains unclear. It might be assumed that it had a symbolic value, e.g. a talisman. Similar situations are confirmed in Przeworsk Culture: in grave 1186 at Opatów, Kłobuck district, dated analogically to the Krosno find, i.e. Phase C, a Roman box-like chape was found. Most probably it served as an amulet, which is proved by the existence of holes used to fasten the leather strap or string in order to hang it. It is worth noticing that the item appeared in the burial of a child in age infans I, who in no way could be counted in the group of warriors (Godłowski 1979, p.153-154, Fig. 3; Godłowski and Madyda 1975, p.154). Cases of the occurrence of scabbards without swords in grave assemblages are confirmed in Przeworsk Culture, although they are quite rare. Indeed, the percentage of such graves increases in the Younger and Late Roman Period, but it remains scarce (not more than a few per cent of the weapon-graves with swords/scabbards) (Kontny 2003, p.136, diagram 4). The above situation might be accounted for in different ways, like putting organic imitations of swords stuck in scabbards on the funeral pyre. It let a precious weapon remain in the world of the living. Then we may presume the applica-

19 More information about swords from the area of Wielbark Culture (including items erroneously assigned to that culture) has been presented in another publication (Kontny 2006a).

20 It does not matter if we are dealing with an import or a similar (slightly larger and attached in a specific way) imitation; we cannot settle this issue definitely. It is, however, worth noting that a similar situation concerns the area of Finland, located at the periphery of the Scandinavian cultural centre: hence also there simple, bronze items without ornament were found. Possibly in the two cases we are dealing with simplified imitations of originals known from the Jutland Peninsula, Scania or Norway.
tion of the *pars-pro-toto* principle: in that way a scabbard meant that the dead person owned the real sword. One cannot exclude the wish to keep a link with the dead, whose sword stood among the living, and a scabbard was put into the burial with the corpse (Kontrny 2003, p.120). Such explanations are good for Przeworsk Culture but not for Wielbark, characterised by excluding the weapon from the grave furnishings. Also, it seems improbable that we are dealing with an amulet, as, what is confirmed by the character of the grave goods, in grave 27 at Krosno a man (warrior?), not a child or female was buried.

The context is different from the Opatów case also because of the absence of any solutions aimed at hanging the amulet. Taking into consideration the possible traces of tearing the pommel off the surface, it seems that the act of destruction was somehow connected with funeral ceremonies. Then the pommel might have been put in intentionally as a grave good. If the presumption was right, it would be proof of the weapon’s application during the funeral: maybe the family of the dead wanted to underline his position by giving him just a bronze element of a sword, not the whole iron (that means forbidden) sword itself. Nevertheless, we are aware that this is the time to stop here, to avoid becoming fantasy writers ...

Translated by S. Twardo, B. Kontrny and M. Naturiewicz-Sekuła

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A Wi el b a r k C u l t u r e Piece o f We a p o n r y ? R e m a r k s

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KROSNO (CROSSEN) KAPINYNO

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VIELBARKO KULTŪROS GINKLO DALIS? PASTABOS APIE STEBINANTĮ RADINĮ ŠI KROSNO (CROSSEN) KAPINYNO
A Wielbark Culture Piece of Weaponry? Remarks Concerning the Astonishing Find from the Cemetery at Krusno (Crosen)
