

Abhandlung

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Goths' indigenous weapon? Wielbark Culture Axes from the Roman Period

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Zusammenfassung: Der Autor untersucht Axtköpfe, die der Wielbark-Kultur zugerechnet werden können. Diese werden nach ihrem Fundkontext gruppiert (mögliche Grabfunde, Gewässerfunde, mögliche Wielbark-Kultur-Objekte von außerhalb ihres Territoriums, Streufunde). Die Mehrzahl der Axtköpfe der Wielbark-Kultur datiert in die jüngere und späte Römische Kaiserzeit sowie in die frühe Völkerwanderungszeit. Gegenstände aus der frühen Römische Kaiserzeit fehlen nahezu völlig, was einen hypothetischen Einfluss des spätrömischen Militärmodells (der Oksywie-Kultur) unwahrscheinlich macht. Äxte waren hingegen bei den Balten eine beliebte Waffe, so dass es wahrscheinlicher ist, dass die Äxte der Wielbark-Kultur aus dem westbaltischen Kreis übernommen wurden. Die Popularität der symmetrischen Formen der Gruppe II nach B. Kontny scheint diese Vermutung zu bestätigen, obwohl auch andere Muster u. a. der Typen Żarnowiec, Oder-Elbe und Leśnica in der Wielbark-Kultur dokumentiert sind. Der Żarnowiec-Typ wurde bisher allgemein mit dem Gebiet Polens in Verbindung gebracht, der Leśnica-Typ mit dem südlichen Gebiet der Przeworsk-Kultur und der Oder-Elbe-Typ mit der Luboszyce-Kultur, dem Elbgermanischen Kreis und Südsandinavien. Ein solches Bild bedarf der Überprüfung: Die Typen Leśnica und Żarnowiec sind aus der Wielbark-, Černâhov- und der Sântana de Mureş-Kultur und der Oder-Elbe in Pommern bekannt. Die Einführung der Axt fand gleichzeitig in einigen anderen Kultureinheiten statt, nämlich in der Luboszyce-Kultur und im Elbgermanischen Kreis, wahrscheinlich in Westpommern (Dębczyno-Gruppe), und bald darauf in der Černâhov- und der Sântana

de Mureş-Kultur. Es scheint, dass wir es hier mit einer wirklichen Transformation des barbarischen Bewaffnungsmodells kurz vor und während der Reichskrise des dritten Jahrhunderts zu tun haben.

Schlüsselworte: Kriegsbeuteopfer, Černâhov-Kultur, Oksywie-Kultur, militärische Ausrüstung, Schreinerwerkzeug, archivalische Quellen, Depot, Depositum, Reichskrise des dritten Jahrhunderts

Abstract: The author studies the axe heads which may be attributed to the Wielbark Culture. They are grouped according to their finding contexts (possible grave finds, watery finds, possible Wielbark-culture objects from beyond its territory, stray finds). Majority of the Wielbark-culture axe heads dates to the Younger and Late Roman Period as well as the Early Migration Period. Early Roman Period items are almost lacking, which makes the hypothetical influence of the Late Pre-Roman military model (the Oksywie Culture) improbable. Axes were a popular weapon among the Balts, thus it seems probable that Wielbark-culture axes had been borrowed from the West Balt Circle. Popularity of the symmetrical forms of Group II after B. Kontny seems to confirm this supposition, although also other patterns i.a. Types Żarnowiec, Oder-Elbe and Leśnica are documented in the Wielbark Culture. Among them, the Żarnowiec Type has so far been associated generally with the territory of Poland, Type Leśnica – with the south of the Przeworsk Culture territory and the Oder-Elbe – with Luboszyce Culture, Elbe Germanic Circle and southern Scandinavia. Such an image requires verification: Types Leśnica and Żarnowiec are known from the Wielbark, Černâhov and the Sântana de Mureş Cultures and Oder-Elbe in Pomerania. The introduction of the axe took place simultaneously in some other cultural units: the Luboszyce Culture and Elbe Germanic Circle, probably in western Pomerania (the Dębczyno Group), and soon after in the Černâhov and the Sântana de Mureş Cultures. It seems that we deal with the real transformation of the Barbarian model of armament just before and during the crisis of the third century.

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Keywords: war booty offerings, Černâhov Culture, Oksywie Culture, military equipment, carpenter's tool, archival sources, depot, deposit, crisis of the third century

Abstrakt: Autor poddaje analizie żelężca toporów, które można przyporządkować do kultury wielbarskiej. Pogrupowano je biorąc pod uwagę kontekst odkrycia (potencjalne znaleziska grobowe; wodne; żelężca hipotetycznie związane z kulturą wielbarską, znalezione poza jej obszarem; znaleziska luźne). Większość z nich datowana jest na młodszy i późny okres rzymski, oraz wczesny okres wędrówek ludów. Niemal zupełny brak znalezisk z okresu wczesnorzymskiego sprawia, że ewentualny związek między pojawieniem się toporów w kulturze wielbarskiej, a przetrwaniem tradycji młodszego okresu przedrzymskiego (kultury oksywskiej) jest mało prawdopodobny. Topory były za to popularne wśród ludności kręgu zachodniobałtyjskiego już w okresie wczesnorzymskim, możliwe zatem, że oddziaływania z tego obszaru przyczyniły się do włączenia toporów do armamentarium wielbarskiego. Zdają się to potwierdzać – znane z kultury wielbarskiej – topory grupy II wg B. Kontnego, charakterystyczne dla kultur bałtyjskich. Ponadto na obszarze kultury wielbarskiej znaleziono inne rozwiązania, m.in. żelężca typów Żarnowiec, Odra-Łąba i Leśnica. Spośród nich typ Żarnowiec wiązano dotąd z obszarem ziem polskich, typ Leśnica – z południowym obszarem kultury przeworskiej, zaś typ Odra-Łąba – z kulturą luboszycką, kręgiem nadłabskim i południową Skandynawią. Obraz ten wymaga weryfikacji: typy Leśnica i Żarnowiec znane są także z kręgu kultur gockich (wielbarska, czerniachowska, Sântana de Mureș) zaś typ Odra-Łąba – z Pomorza. Wprowadzenie toporów do uzbrojenia nastąpiło w podobnym okresie także w innych jednostkach kulturowych: kulturze luboszyckiej, kręgu nadłabskim, prawdopodobnie także na zachodnim Pomorzu (grupa dębczyńska) oraz – niewiele później – w kulturach czerniachowskiej i Sântana de Mureș. Mamy zatem do czynienia ze zmianą modelu uzbrojenia znaczącej części barbarzyńców przed i w trakcie trwania kryzysu trzeciego wieku.

Słowa kluczowe: wodne stanowiska ofiarne, kultura czerniachowska, kultura oksywska, uzbrojenie, narzędzia cieślarskie, źródła archiwalne, skarb, depozyt, kryzys trzeciego wieku

Weaponry in the Wielbark Culture

Studies on the Wielbark Culture armament were initialised by P. Kaczanowski and J. Zaborowski¹ and continued

by B. Kontny². The problem has been summarised lately³. Research bases upon selective and not fully representative data due to the fact that finds of weapons are exceptional in burials. Moreover, they are recorded in cemeteries specifically in the earliest phase i.e. the Early Roman Period which is presumably related to a long duration of earlier traditions related to the Oksywie Culture, on whose basis the Wielbark Culture formed.

Wielbark Culture arsenal was dominated by shafted weapons of forms that were characteristic of the Przeworsk Culture. A significant role was played by shields. Swords were also of considerable importance, although it is difficult to precisely assess their significance. In the Early Roman Period, these were both double- and single-edged weapons, which matched central European standards. As regards shield parts, the only difference from the Przeworsk Culture may have consisted in the possible use of bronze shield-grips. This seems to imply the existence of some Scandinavian-Elbe Germanic links, which are also testified to by discoveries of putative bone/antler shafted weapon heads and chair-shaped spurs. Spurs from the Early Roman Period, however, imitate Przeworsk Culture patterns⁴.

A significant change took place in the Younger Roman Period, which was related to a partial adaptation of the Scandinavian weaponry model. This is testified to by i.a. the sword pommel, the fragment of a mail fastener and parts of sword shoulder belts, but most importantly by a distinctive cultural marker – shafted weapon heads. The spurs from this period are evidence of the weakening of Przeworsk Culture influences, however, with a preservation of original forms that were not dominated by the Scandinavian model. In contrast to what has been hitherto assumed, bows and arrows did not play a military role in this period, and were rather used as hunting weapons⁵. This image, where until the beginning of the Younger Roman Period the Wielbark Culture military equipment is dominated by the Przeworsk Culture model followed by the dominance of the Scandinavian pattern⁶ with Černâhov Culture elements, is not only testified to by weaponry. An analysis of men's belts in the Wielbark Culture leads to the same conclusions⁷. It turns out that metal fittings of men's belts dated to the developed Phase B2 and Subphase C1a demonstrate similar stylistic traits as those worn by warriors from the neighbouring cultural areas, chiefly from the Przeworsk Culture milieu. On

1 Kaczanowski/Zaborowski 1988.

2 E.g. Kontny 2006; 2008; Kontny/Natuniewicz-Sekuła 2006.

3 Kontny 2019a, 69–113; 2023a, 75–117.

4 *Ibid.* 72–83; 85–89; 2023a, 110–111.

5 *Ibid.* 72–83; 85–89; 2023a, 105–110.

6 Kontny 2019b, 347–351.

7 Madyda-Legutko 2015, 437–446.

the other hand, in later phases of the Roman Period there are metal parts of belts which are characteristic of the Scandinavian zone.

The decline of the Wielbark Culture does not offer many opportunities to assess the nature of weaponry. It can only be assumed that in the Early Migration Period warriors were armed in a way that was similar to the East Germanic model, including its characteristic acceptance of some nomadic patterns. This is suggested by the grave from Juszkowo⁸ and single stray finds like the arrowhead from Cecele⁹ and conceivably also point of the sword from Hrebenne¹⁰, as well as by provincial Roman spurs and their imitations¹¹.

The role of the axes was not clear. From one hand P. Kaczanowski and J. Zaborowski paid attention to their considerable significance in the Wielbark Culture, noting that the very custom of furnishing graves with this type of weapon dates back to the Oksywie Culture¹². However, after thorough verification of a list of finds that are mentioned in their work¹³ it seemed that axes did not play a prominent role at least in the Early Roman Period as there are no finds that could be dated with certainty to Phase B. Later materials did not allow making any conclusions in that matter. However, in the light of new finds it has become possible to propose new hypotheses. Below I present the axe heads which more or less may be attributed to the Wielbark Culture mentioning also the ones excluded from the list. Some results base on the earlier studies. They are grouped according to their finding contexts.

Possible grave finds

The axe head from the inhumation Grave II in Drawsko Pomorskie, powiat Drawsko Pomorskie¹⁴, was classified as the western Series of Group 5 according to G. Kieferling¹⁵ with cross sections attributed to patterns Bb.03 and 5.017 after Kieferling¹⁶. However, this assemblage encompasses artefacts which are varied in their morphology and chronology. It includes finds related to the Late Pre-Roman Period (Oksywie Culture), and from the Roman Period (among others, Elbe Germanic area, Przeworsk Culture and

Černâhov Culture). Therefore, the shape of the axe head alone cannot be used as a chronological marker. What is more, the remaining furnishings – scissors and a knife – do not help in dating the find either. Only the clasp Type 1 (Hornbek) Variety e after R. Madyda-Legutko¹⁷ is dated to the beginning of the Roman Period i.e. B1–B2a¹⁸ but the attribution of that item is not certain: some archival sources treated it as a stray find, not connected with weapons¹⁹. It is supported by the fact that in the Grave II a female skull was found which suggests mixing of the materials²⁰. Thus, it can be asked whether the axe head from Drawsko can in fact be related to the Wielbark Culture phase of use of the necropolis. Similar forms with symmetrical blades which are slightly widened in an arcuate manner and with rounded butts are known from the Oksywie Culture²¹ apart from the strongly asymmetrical ones (Fig. 1)²². Furthermore, inhumation graves also occur in this culture, thus outpacing a

17 Madyda-Legutko 1990, 160 Abb. 2,8.

18 Schuster 2010, 148.

19 Chrupek 2019, 126–127 with further readings.

20 See: *Ibid.* Note 24.

21 Podwiesiek, powiat Chełmno, Site 2, Grave 341 – Bokiniec 2005, 66 pl. CXVI,341.6; Nowe Dobra, powiat Chełmno, Grave 11 – Kostrzewski 1919, 172 Fig. 187; Kaczanowski/Zaborowski 1988, Abb. 8,A; Parsęcko (former *Persanzig*), powiat Szczecinek – Eggers/Stary 2001, 67 pl. 188,1; Grudziądz-Rządź (former *Rondsen*), powiat Grudziądz, Grave 92 – Anger 1890, 16–17 Pl. 14,17; Kurzyńska 2020, 80 Pls. 121,8, 194,8.

22 Two unusual axe heads (slender and wavy with low butts) are known from the Oksywie Culture: Podwiesiek, powiat Chełmno, grave 418 (Fig. 1,1) from Phase A2 – Bokiniec 2005, 78, 107 Pl. CXLIX,418.3 and a stray find from Radzyń Chełmiński, powiat Grudziądz (former *Rehden*, Kr. Graudenz), stray find (Fig. 1,2) – originally in grave as skeletal remains were sticking to it (M. Jahn's heritage, before the World War II it was kept in Museum Danzig under inv. No 1898). Analogous forms called wedge-shaped axe heads appeared in Balt areas – Lithuania (Fig. 1,3–4.6) – Malonaitis 2008, 292–293 Fig. 1, and Latvia (Fig. 1,5,7–8) – mostly stray finds, only three – from a tarand grave at Strazdē pagast allow dating to the time-span from the second century BC until first–second century AD. They were discovered also in tarand-graves in Finnland, Latvia and Estonia, in east European cultural units Dnieper-Dvina Culture, Milograd Culture and Yukhnove Culture, Striated Ware Culture, among the Geto-Dacians and in the north Pontic zone. They are dated to ca. the turn of the eras but slightly earlier and later dating seems possible. Most probably they originate from Scythian pattern – Ciglis 2003. Probably they influenced later Lithuanian forms (type 1 after A. Malonaitis – 2008, 293; 296) but seemingly West Balt asymmetrical axe heads of Group 1 after B. Kontny 2018, 71–74, likewise. Two examples from the Chełmno Land are so far the westernmost wedge-shaped axe heads. Taking into account their dating also to the first centuries AD one cannot exclude that the stray find from Radzyń Chełmiński should be attributed to the Wielbark Culture although it does not seem very probable. M. Jahn mentioned axe head and spearhead from the site as probably dated to the La Tène Period – “LT.Z?” (M. Jahn's heritage). Most probably it comes from the Pre-Roman Period cemetery in former *Rehden* (Amtlicher... XIX, 1898, 47–48; XXII, 1906, 51).

8 Kontny/Maczyńska 2015.

9 Jaskanis 1996, 110–112 Pl. LXXIX,14.

10 Niezabitowska-Wisniewska 2009, 202 Fig. 23,1.

11 Kontny/Michalak 2021.

12 Kaczanowski/Zaborowski 1988, 232 Abb. 8.

13 Kontny 2019a, 83–85.

14 Wołagiewicz 1969, 10–11; Chrupek 2019, 126–127.

15 Kieferling 1994, 343 Abb. 7,3.

16 See: Chrupek 2019, 126.

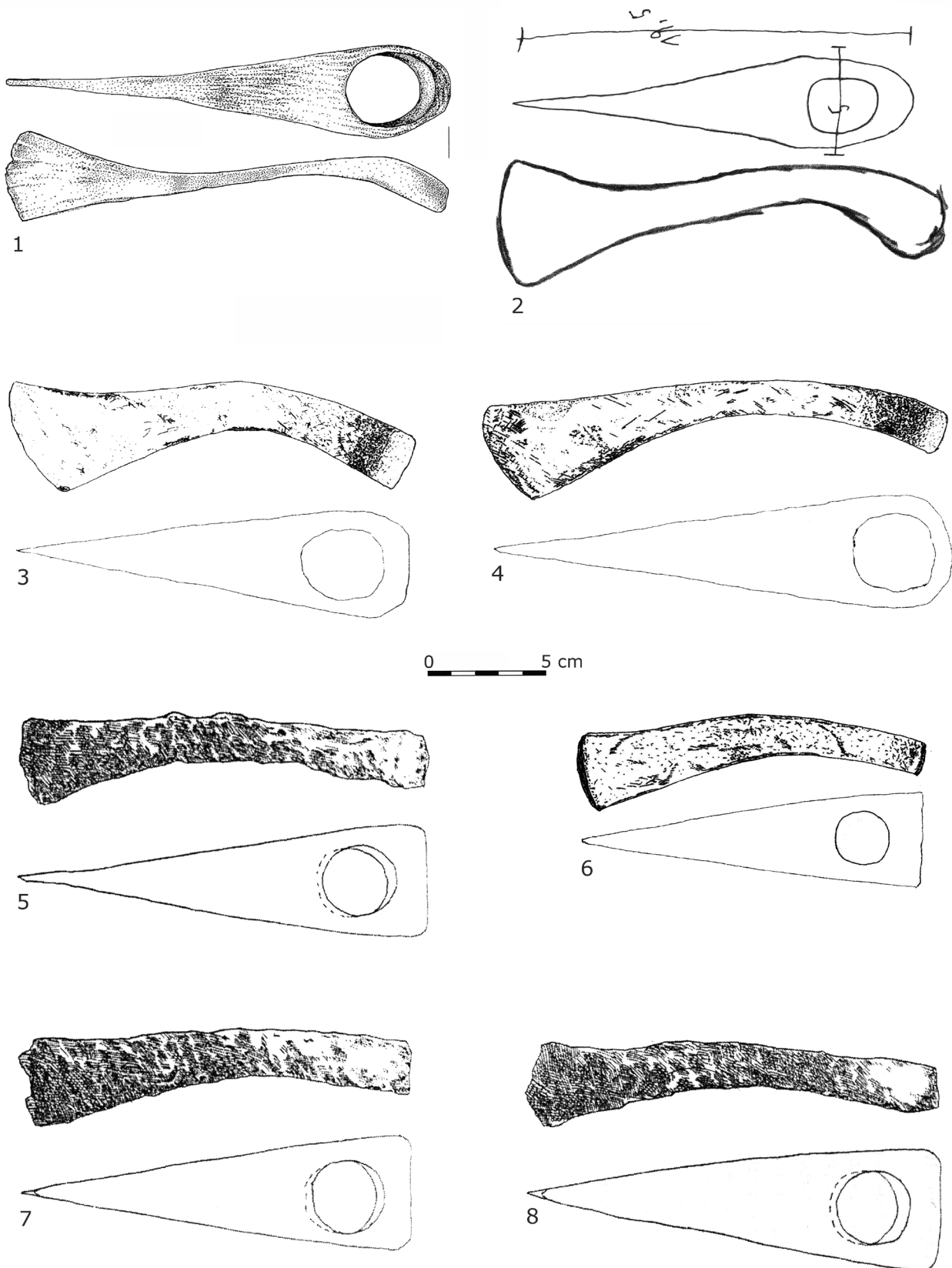


Fig. 1: Wedge-shaped axe heads. 1 – Podwiesiek, Grave 418 (after Bokinić 2005); 2 – Radzyń Chełmiński, stray find (after M. Jahn's heritage); 3 – unknown locality in Lithuania (after Malonaitis 2008); 4 – Paketuriai, rajon Kupiškis (after Malonaitis 2008); 5, 7–8 – Strazdė (after Ciglis 2003), 6 – Palaukiai, rajon Panevėžys (after Malonaitis 2008).

breakthrough in this sphere of rites that took place with the advent of the Wielbark Culture²³. Therefore, it seems more probable that we are dealing here with an Oksywie Culture artefact.

Yet another axe head that was believed to be a Wielbark Culture artefact is a find from an urn grave in former *Rohrwiese*. It is known from M. Jahn's archival records²⁴. The present-day name of the locality is Niekursko, powiat Czarnków-Trzcianka, and a considerable part of the grave furnishings survived, though this does not, regrettably, apply to the axe head (Fig. 3:6). Apart from the axe head, classified as the western Series of Group Kieferling 5²⁵, the assemblage included an urn, an iron comb, a leaf-bladed arrowhead, an adze, a key, two knives and scissors. The urn fits within the stylistics of so-called *Schalenurnen* from the territory of Saxony and Mecklenburg. Due to this, A. Kokowski, who prepared a new work on these finds, interpreted this urn as a testimony of migrations of people from Saxony to the east in Phase C2²⁶. No matter how we explain the presence of the grave with the axe, which is atypical for the Roman Period in this region²⁷, this feature is not related to the Wielbark Culture but to its western neighbour, the Dębczyno Group. This group was a separate cultural formation in the Younger and Late Roman Period, and in the Early Migration Period, and the weapons are lacking in grave furnishing here.

Uncertain places of discovery

Two axe heads are known from Skowarcz (former *Schönwarling*), powiat Gdańsk. One of these was 18.5 cm long and its butt was 4 cm wide and not very high. The blade was broad, and its asymmetry was perhaps only partially due to corrosion (Fig. 2:5). Before the Second World War finds from Skowarcz were stored in the museum in Gdańsk. Today, they are believed to have been lost (the axe's inv. No. was 12520). A sketch in M. Jahn's archive is careless and its published version (in fact, an afterdrawing) is incomplete (the lengthwise cross-section was omitted) and amended²⁸. The lack of data on the context of discovery prevents the determination of the artefact's chronology. In theory, it most resembles some finds classified as the western series of Group Kieferling 5; however, the borders of this series were not marked

precisely. As there is hardly any similarity to Oksywie Culture forms in this case, and it is possible to point out many analogies in the Černâhov Culture and the Sântana de Mureş Culture – type A1v/b after O. Raduś²⁹. I would rather relate the discussed artefact to the Roman Period (Younger?) and thus classify it as a Wielbark Culture find.

The case of the other axe head from Skowarcz (also a stray find – Fig. 2:6) is completely different. It belongs to forms that are typical of the Oksywie Culture, also concerning its size³⁰. The sole detail that is different is a 4 cm long vertical tang which is attached by corrosion to the internal side of the axe head's eye. This tang may have originally been a wedge which fastened the axe's haft³¹. It was not part of the head, and published images are confusing with regard to that. Another distinctive trait is its ornament in the shape of engraved lines along the lower and the upper edge of the butt, as well as diagonal incisions in the space between the lines and the edge. A pair of vertical lines was placed on the axe's neck, and in the central part of the axe head near the lower and the upper edge there is an ornament composed of dots. Between them a motif of lines and point was placed, which resembles an impression of a bird's foot. A similar pattern (without the opposing line) can be found in the upper part of the blade and both motifs perhaps stand for a symbol of furcated thunder, popular among weapon ornaments³². G. Kieferling dated this find to Phase B1, but without offering any explanation³³. On the other hand, P. Kaczanowski and J. Zaborowski assumed that there were no analogies for this ornament within the Oksywie Culture³⁴. Thus, it would be justified to relate this find to another decorative artefact from Piła presented further (Fig. 2.4) – and date it to the Roman Period. However, such a late chronology is not obvious either. With regard to its morphology, the discussed find is typical of the Pre-Roman Period symmetrical axe heads. Its ornament, although known in the Roman

²³ Margos 2000, 257; 260–263.

²⁴ Jahn's heritage; Kaczanowski/Zaborowski 1988, 232 Fig. 8,D.

²⁵ Kieferling 1994, 343 Abb. 7,4.

²⁶ Kokowski 2006, 132–133 Photo 5, Figs. 1,3.

²⁷ E.g. H. Machajewski assumes that grave from Niekursko may be connected with a small group of different cultural traditions (2021, 79).

²⁸ Kaczanowski/Zaborowski 1988, 232 Fig. 8,B.

²⁹ Raduś 2022, 170–171 Ris. 53. E.g., Fântânele, județul Bistrița-Năsăud, inhumation grave; Knyšivka, rajon Gadăc, stronghold find; Krasnopilia 1, rajon Krasnopol'e, settlement find; Budești, județul Călărași, settlement find (Magomedov/Levada 1996, 304 Ris. 5:1, 3, 10, 16 with further readings), Kompanijcy, rajon Kobelâky, grave 86 or Kapulivka, rajon Nikopol', settlement find – Raduś 2022, 170–171 Ris. 53; 56,3,4 with further readings.

³⁰ A detailed drawing in M. Jahn's archive offers the dimensions of the artefact: butt height 2.5 cm, cutting edge width 4.5 cm, total length 11.5 cm. It was also said that the find had been provided with inventory No. 14938 and had been covered with fire patina (which demonstrates that it came from a cremation grave).

³¹ Bohnsack 1938, 71 Note 3. M. Jahn noted: *Keil 4 lg*.

³² Biborski 1986, 125; 127; Kaczanowski 1988, 62; 68.

³³ Kieferling 1994, 353.

³⁴ Kaczanowski/Zaborowski 1988, 232 Abb. 8,C. The afterdrawing in this work erroneously depicts an iron wedge.

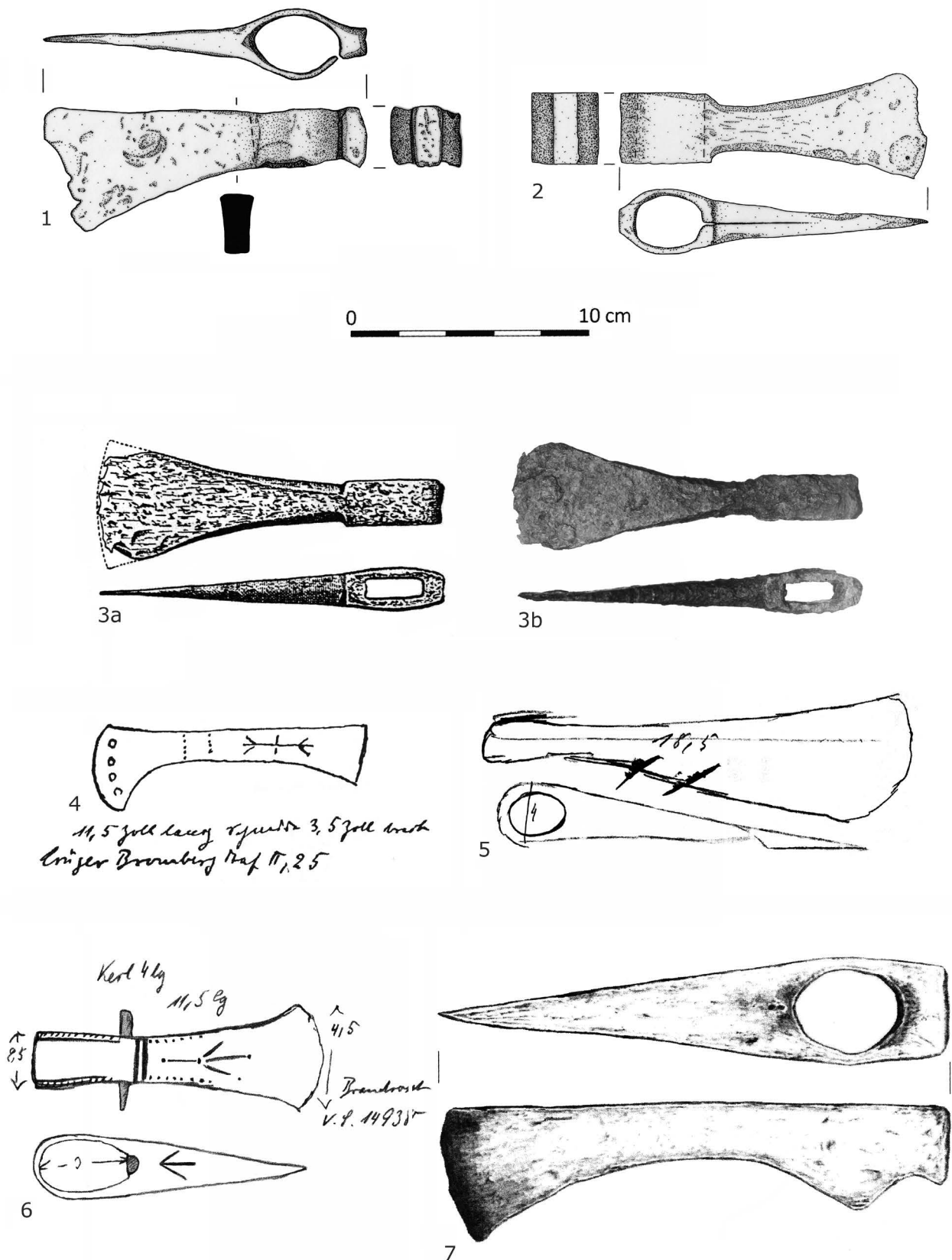


Fig. 2: Wielbark-culture axe heads. 1 – Mielno, stray find (drawing Piotr Kotowicz); 2 – Żuków, stray find (drawing Piotr Kotowicz); 3 – Żarnowiec, possible war booty offering (3a – after La Baume 1940; 3b – M. Jahn's heritage, after Kontry 2006); 4 – Piła, bog find (after Kontry 2019a); 5–6 – Skowarcz (after Kontry 2019a); 7 – Lake Krępsko (after Chudziak *et al.* 2016).

Period³⁵, was also recorded in the Oksywie Culture, see e.g. clasps³⁶. Therefore, in my opinion there are no grounds to exclude the Oksywie Culture provenance of this find, which was already proposed by D. Bohnsack³⁷. From the other side the item may resemble axe heads of Subgroup Kontny II.3³⁸ from the Roman Period but the polls of those are generally not fully rounded.

There are even more axe heads which should be attributed to the Wielbark Culture. Stray find from Świerże, powiat Chełm³⁹ may be ascertained as Subgroup II.2 after B. Kontny⁴⁰, i.e. a form characteristic mostly of the Younger Roman Period thus the times in which the area was occupied by the Wielbark Culture peoples.

Next axe head, weighting 0.857 kg, comes from vicinity of villages Osuchy and Podsośnina, powiat Biłgoraj⁴¹. It represents Type Leśnica after G. Kieferling⁴², dated to Phases C2–D1 when the region was settled by the Wielbark Culture peoples. Easily identifiable Type Leśnica was recognised as a typically Przeworsk-culture form distributed in the south Poland⁴³. Such image definitely resulted from the state of research as at the moment we may indicate such forms also in the Wielbark Culture (see: the piece from Komarów-Osada characterised further) and in the Sântana de Mureș Culture – group C2a after O. Raduș⁴⁴.

Specimen from Mielno, powiat Ostróda (Fig. 2:1)⁴⁵ is a stray find found in AD 2008, stored in collection of the Museum of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (inv. no 1958, cat. no 5108). Form resembles western Series of Group 5 after G. Kieferling⁴⁶ and has good parallels in Scandinavian war

booty offering at Illerup (Place A dated to the early stage of Subphase C1b), inv. no RTY and AAMC⁴⁷. Conceivably also item from Żuków, powiat Zamość may be assigned to the Wielbark Culture (Fig. 2.2)⁴⁸. We deal here with Type Żarnowiec after G. Kieferling⁴⁹ or Subgroup II.2 after the author⁵⁰, which is broadly dated to the times of both Przeworsk-culture and Wielbark-culture occupation of the land. One should notice that Group II is proved not only for the West Balt Circle but also the Przeworsk Culture⁵¹, and Černâhov and Sântana de Mureș Cultures⁵².

Surprising discovery has been done lately in Gródek, powiat Hrubieszów. It is an iron axe head (Figure 3.5): slender with asymmetrical, bearded blade and high poll covering large part of the shoulder on the underside⁵³. Unfortunately, the context is lacking. It represents eastern Series of Group 5 after G. Kieferling⁵⁴ or type 6a after A. Malonaitis⁵⁵ typical of the Balt milieu. Latter type is dated from the end of the fourth century to the tenth century but variety d only from late fourth until eighth century⁵⁶. If early dating is assumed – which is not utterly clear – it could be the object used by the population of the Masłomęcz Group, related to the Wielbark Culture⁵⁷. Balt element found so far

35 See a shafted weapon head from Stenstugu in Gotland, dated to Phase B2 – Almgren/Nerman 1923, 117; 125 Taf. 42,601; Kaczanowski 1988, 58–59 Abb. 3.2.

36 Warszkowo, powiat Wejherowo, Grave 88 (both a motif in the shape of a complete impression of the bird's foot and in its reduced form) – Eggers/Stary 2001, Taf. 195,1. This clasp belongs to Type VD and is dated to Phase A3 – Wiloch 1995, 16; 40.

37 Bohnsack 1938, 71.

38 See e.g. Kontny 2018, Fig. 113.

39 Personal communication: Dawid Rembecki, M.A. – a Ph.D. student from the University of Warsaw who is preparing doctoral dissertation on Roman-period sacrificial deposits from the territory of Poland and whom I would like to express my gratitude for aforementioned information.

40 Kontny 2018.

41 I would like to thank Artur Proć from the Biłorajska Land Museum in Biłgoraj for this information.

42 Kieferling 1994, 339 Abb. 5.

43 *Ibid.* Abb. 5.

44 Raduș 2022, Ris. 53. Ruseni-4, raionul Edineț (Moldova), settlement find – Magomedov/Levada 1996, fig. 5,18; Raduș 2022, Ris. 57,3.

45 Personal communication: Piotr Kotowicz, Ph.D. from the Museum in Sanok whom I am very grateful for this.

46 Kieferling 1994, Abb. 7.

47 Pauli Jensen/Nørbach 2009, 261; 287.

48 As above.

49 Kieferling 1994, 341 Abb. 6.

50 Kontny 2018.

51 Subgroup II.2 after B. Kontny – Cieblówice Duże, powiat Tomaszów Mazowiecki, grave 48 (Dzięgielewska/Kulczyńska 2008, 22; 37; 61 Pl. XXXVII,7) and 122 (Dzięgielewska/Kulczyńska 2008, 37; 61 Pl. LXXVI,8), Opoka, powiat Puławy, grave 77 (Szarek-Waszkowska 1971, 104 Pl. XLI,4), Radymno, powiat Jarosław (Koperski 1980; collection of the National Museum of the Przemysł Land, inv. no PM-A 1328; personal communication: Piotr Kotowicz, Ph.D. from the Museum in Sanok), Spycimierz, powiat Poddębice, grave 42 (Kietlińska/Dąbrowska 1963, 151 Pl. VII,5); Subgroup II.3 after B. Kontny – Janocin, powiat Inowrocław, stray find (M. Jahn's heritage), Sobótka, powiat Łęczyca, grave 1 (Rycel 1981, Tabl. I,8), probably also starkly corroded specimen from Ostrów, powiat Przemysł, grave 20 (Lasota/Stempniak 2019, Ryc. 1,1).

52 Subgroup II.3 after B. Kontny – see Type A1v/b1, e.g. Romoś, rajon Sokal', settlement find (Raduș 2022, Ris. 54,8), Vojtenki, rajon Valki, stray find (Raduș 2022, Ris. 55,2); Subgroup II.2 after B. Kontny – see Type B2a after O. Raduș (2022, Ris. 53) – Sokol'niki, rajon Pustomyty, settlement find (Raduș 2022, Ris. 56,6).

53 Niezabitowska-Wiśniewska *et al.* 2021, 53; 328; 330; 331 Fig. 87 Pl. VII,48.

54 Kieferling 1994, 343 Fig. 8. Not the Early Roman-period Subgroup I.2 after B. Kontny (2018) as it is mentioned in the text (Niezabitowska-Wiśniewska *et al.* 2021, 53; 328; 330).

55 Malonaitis 2008.

56 Malonaitis 2008, 53; 298.

57 Analogous axe head from Łazdoje, powiat Kętrzyn – Wyczółkowski 2007, 499–501 Ryc. 4,c – is worth mentioning here. Conceivably it is connected with the Migration-period Olsztyn Group – Kontny 2019a, 146–147 Ryc. 45.

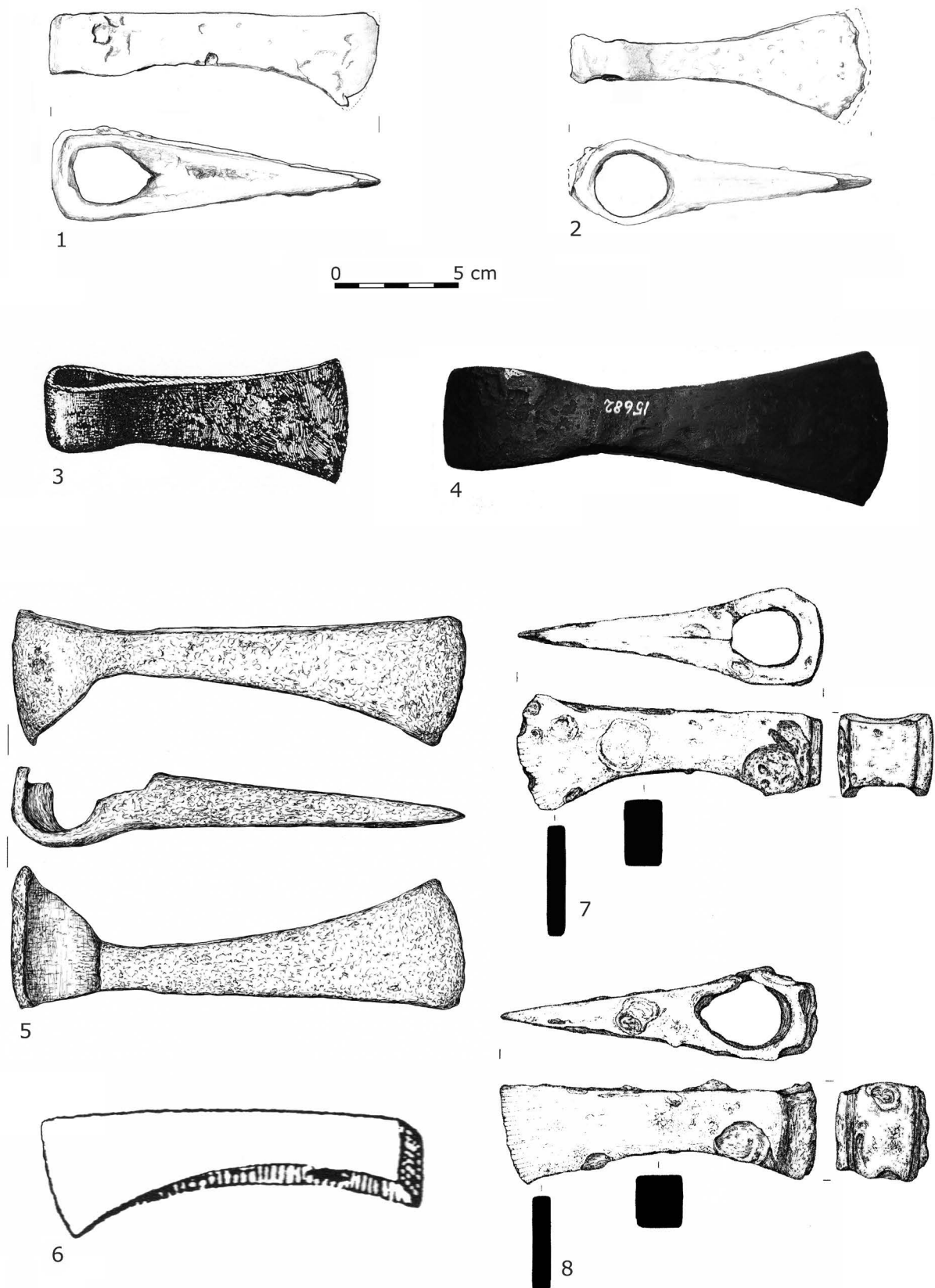


Fig. 3: Possible Goth's Circle axe heads from beyond the territory of the Wielbark Culture. 1–2 – Lake Lubanowo (drawing Bartosz Kontny); 3–4 – Vimose (after Kontny 2017, with further readings); 5 – Gródek (after Niezabitowska-Wiśniewska *et al.* 2021); 6 – Niekursko, grave (after Kokowski 2006); 7–8 – Stare Dłusko, depot (after Rembecki 2019).

to the south is not surprising if we remember vivid contacts between the Černâhov, Sântana de Mureş and Wielbark Cultures from one side and the West Balt Circle from another in the Phases C and D, very well expressed in the distribution of the enamelled jewellery or spurs⁵⁸. Multi-ethnic retinues active in the central-eastern European Barbaricum embracing, i.a. Balt warriors⁵⁹ explain the model of weapons' exchange and their spread among the raiders of various origins. However, it should be noted that with such a broad chronological framework of the Gródek axe, its connection with the final stage of the Masłomęcz Group is at most hypothetical.

Watery finds

An axe head with a fan-shaped symmetrical cutting edge from a possible lake deposit⁶⁰ in Żarnowiec (Fig. 2.3) and of probable Wielbark-culture provenance was classified as Type Żarnowiec⁶¹. However, the type itself was not defined in a satisfactory manner. It is not dated precisely (from Phase B2 to Phase C2, but mainly the Younger Roman Period), and similar forms were sporadically found in the Przeworsk Culture, more often in the West Balt zone⁶² but also in the Černâhov and Sântana de Mureş Cultures⁶³.

Ornamented axe head from Piła, powiat Piła (Fig. 2.4) comes from Crüger's collection⁶⁴. Its sketch in a card from M. Jahn's files is very schematic, and it does not allow for a meticulous typological analysis, although its following dimensions were given: length 11.5 inches (Germ. *Zoll*) and width 3.5 inches. Jahn's sketch is a direct afterdrawing from the work of Crüger⁶⁵ as implied by all the details. The discussed artefact was big, evidently slender, and the bottom part of the axe head was lowered. In the cutting edge there was an ornament of four circles located along the cutting edge, two vertical lines composed of dots on the axe's neck, and a double motif of a bird's foot near the butt. A similarity of ornaments of the axes from Piła and Skowarcz was also

noticed by M. Jahn, who recorded analogies on both cards⁶⁶. This, however, does not mean that both axes come from the same period. They certainly represent different forms, but it is difficult to draw any deeper conclusions on the basis of the schematic image. It is probable that the find from Piła is a Roman Period artefact as it strongly resembles Type Oder-Elbe by G. Kieferling which appeared in Phases C–D⁶⁷. It is enormously significant that the artefact – considered by Crüger to be a steel hammer that was an offering tool – was found in a local peat bog. It was not strongly corroded, analogously to finds from Nydam, as we learn from Crüger's letter to Wilhelm Schwartz⁶⁸ from 26 January 1875⁶⁹. Therefore, we are probably dealing with yet another Wielbark Culture bog or riverine site near Żarnowiec.

A Type Oder-Elbe axe head was hauled up from the waters of Lake Krępsko (Fig. 2:7) in the Krajeńskie Lakeland (Pomerania), close to a peninsula at Krępsk, powiat Człuchów, during an archaeological survey carried out by scholars from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń⁷⁰. It was found next to two spearheads and an early medieval sword⁷¹. One of the spearheads⁷² resembles some early medieval artefacts but also artefacts attributed to Type Kaczanowski XV, known from Subphase B2b until Subphase C1b, but most popular in Subphase C1a⁷³. In fact, it cannot be assigned to Roman Period forms as lower parts of its blade's edges are thick, which is a non-protohistoric trait⁷⁴. This problematic identification is a result of an im-

58 E.g. Bitner-Vrublevska 2019; Kontny/Lewoc 2018, with further readings.

59 Kontny 2013; 2019c; 2022a.

60 Discussion concerning the site's interpretation is presented elsewhere – Kontny 2006, 151–152; see also: La Baume 1940, 43; Makiewicz 1992, 118–120; Kokowski 1993, 88; 96.

61 Kieferling 1994, 341–343.

62 Kontny 2006, 148–149 Ryc. 1.F.2.

63 Cf. Magomedov/Levada 1996, Ris. 5,1; 13; Raduš 2022, 171 Ris. 53; 56,7.8 – Type B12b/6.

64 Kaczanowski/Zaborowski 1988, 232 Abb. 8,E; Verzeichnis... 1876, (222); Kontny 2019d, 156 Fig. 4.3.

65 See: Crüger 1872, Taf. II,25; after Kaczmarek 1998, Ryc. 3.

66 Piła: vgl. ganz ähnlich Schönwarling; Skowarcz: vgl. ganz ähnlich Schneidemühl!.

67 Kieferling 1994, 339 Abb. 4. Similar but by no means identical ornament can be found on the miniature axe (Fig. 4) from Hoard I in Szilágysomlyó (Simleul Silvaniei) in Transylvania, dated to the mid-fifth century and associated with the Goths – Gschwanter 1999, 70 Abb. 19. For the summary of ideas concerning hoard's chronology see: Kiss 2021, 478–484; 494.

68 Director of Friedrich-Wilhelm Gymnasium in Poznań in the years 1872–1882 and a member of the Berlin Anthropological Association. He was gathering materials for an archaeological map of Greater Poland, see: Kaczmarek 1998, 327.

69 Correspondence survived in the archive of the Archaeological Museum in Poznań, cf. Kaczmarek 1998, 333 Ryc. 2. Kaczmarek mentions that in this letter the find place was referred to as Fulmen but obviously the phrase *Hammer mit dem Fulmen* means that the axe head was ornamented with the bolt image (Latin *fulmen*). Crüger also wrote that it was found in a sacred peat bog (*im heiligen Torfbruche gefunden*) and the analogy to the finds from war booty offering from Nydam is mentioned. Therefore one may assume wetlands or ponds situated on the floodplain of the Gwda River as a place of discovery.

70 Chudziak *et al.* 2016, 72 Ryc. 56,c.

71 Chudziak *et al.* 2016, 72–75 Ryc. 56,a–b; 57.

72 Chudziak *et al.* 2016, Ryc. 56,a.

73 See: Kaczanowski 1995, 23 Tabl. XII,3.

74 Kontny 2024a, 178.

precise drawing as well⁷⁵, ignoring the socket with facets and profiled blade⁷⁶. The axe head was erroneously linked with the Middle Ages⁷⁷, whereas it is rather a typical Roman Period form⁷⁸. The artefact's cultural affiliation is not completely clear. It may be related to the Wielbark Culture, and a settlement of this cultural unit – Krępsk, Site 13 – was recorded on the opposite side of the lake, ca. 500 m north-west as the crow flies⁷⁹. However, the area was abandoned by its Wielbark Culture population at the beginning of the Younger Roman Period, and a new phenomenon, the Dębczyno Group, appeared at the turn of Subphases C1a and C1b⁸⁰. Therefore, one cannot exclude a connection with the latter – taking into account quite a long chronology of the type, which encompassed the entire Younger and Late Roman Period.

Another axe reported as a bog find was discovered in Komarów-Osada, powiat Zamość⁸¹. It is a heavy specimen weighing 1.04 kg, belonging to Type Leśnica, i.e. it is dated analogously to the find from the museum in Biłgoraj so to the period during which the Wielbark Culture people populated the land.

The Axe from Charleż, powiat Łęczna (smaller, weighing 0.5 kg) was declared as found close to the Bystrzyca River⁸². It should be counted to Group 5, western Series after G. Kieferling as it finds parallels among certain examples of that group⁸³ though it is definitely non-homogenous, embracing both stocky symmetrical objects and elongated asymmetrical ones. Such forms are described as characteristic of the Wielbark and Černâhov Cultures⁸⁴ but no clearly Wielbark-culture find is mentioned; according to G. Kieferling they are dated to Younger and Late Roman Periods and Early Migration Period. Truly it finds good analogies in the



Fig. 4: Miniature axe from the gold chain discovered in Szilágysomlyó, Hoard I (after Gschwantler 1999).

Černâhov and Sântana de Mureş Cultures, namely among the items Variety A1b-1/A16-1 and A1v-2/A1b-2⁸⁵. It is worth to mention another find: aforementioned mid-fifth century pendant in form of a miniature axe from a golden chain found in Hoard I in Szilágysomlyó (Fig. 4)⁸⁶. Due to the heterogeneity of Group 5, western Series there is no need to trust in the distribution map embracing also the Przeworsk Culture, Elbe-Germanic areas, Marcomannic-Quadic Circle and south-west Germany as well⁸⁷.

Finds from beyond the territory of the Wielbark Culture

The possibility cannot be excluded that the list of Wielbark Culture axes should be completed with finds from Lake Lubanowo in the locality of Lubanowo (former *Liebenow*), powiat Gryfino. It has been methodically surveyed annually since 2014 by a team of underwater archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology (now: Faculty of Archaeology), University of Warsaw, formerly featuring the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences⁸⁸. During underwater research, weapons (i.a. spearheads, javelin heads, an apex of a shield boss, and arrowheads), horse harness elements (including chain reins), potsherds and tools have been found. Among them, two axes – of Types Żarnowiec (Fig. 3:2) and Elbe-Oder (Fig. 3:1)⁸⁹ – should be mentioned. The deposits are dated mainly to the Roman Period, from Phase B1 to C1b⁹⁰. This site is located beyond the territory of the Wielbark Culture. However,

⁷⁵ See Chudziak *et al.* 2016, Ryc. 232.

⁷⁶ As it is shown herein, the classification of the Przeworsk Culture shafted weapons' heads (to which one may attribute spearheads) is adequate here, as in the case of the Wielbark Culture the armament types of the Przeworsk Culture prevailed in the Early Roman Period until Subphase C1a, see: Kontny 2019a, 89–90; 2023a, 78–85).

⁷⁷ Chudziak *et al.* 2016, 72; 75.

⁷⁸ See the analogous finds from Lubanowo and Piła. In theory, one may attempt at relating them to Variant IB.3.27 – see Kotowicz 2018, 69. However, if compared to Type Oder-Elbe artefacts with lower widenings at the shaft-hole – Kieferling 1994, Abb. 4, their Roman Period origin seems more probable.

⁷⁹ See Chudziak *et al.* 2016, Ryc. 51. Another phenomenon typical of the Wielbark Culture from Krępsk is the cemetery with stone circular constructions – Kokowski 2012.

⁸⁰ Machajewski 1992, 165.

⁸¹ Courtesy: Dawid Rembecki. See: note 11.

⁸² Courtesy: Dawid Rembecki. See: note 11.

⁸³ Kieferling 1994, Abb. 7:2, 5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 343 Abb. 7.

⁸⁵ Raduś 2022, 168–170 Ris. 53. See Pietroasele, județul Buzău – Raduś 2022, Ris. 54:4, and Knyšivka, rajon Gadăc, stronghold find – Raduś 2022, Ris. 56:2.

⁸⁶ Gschwantler 1999, 70 Abb. 19.

⁸⁷ Kieferling 1994, 343 Abb. 7.

⁸⁸ Nowakiewicz 2016, 17–20; Brzóska/Kontny 2016.

⁸⁹ See: Kieferling 1994, 339 Abb. 4.

⁹⁰ Kontny 2016, 292–294.

axes are absent in local cultural contexts (cemeteries and settlements of the Lubusz Group)⁹¹. Therefore, it is possible that these are booty weapons, taken from Wielbark Culture invaders and deposited as an offering.

The fact that axes were more popular in Pomerania and in Western Poland than previously believed seems to be also implied by wetland depots of iron artefacts (carpenters', blacksmiths', and agricultural tools as well as axes – one attributed to Type Oder-Elbe and another to western Series of the Group 5 after G. Kieferling⁹²) from Czarnkowo (former *Zarnekow*), powiat Białogard⁹³. In this case, the data is much more comprehensive. The finds included iron tools like pliers, hammers, adzes, half-scythes, an anvil, scissors, augers, chisels, and three axe heads (one assigned to Type Oder-Elbe, another to Group 5 – western Series, and the next being small and slightly asymmetric – close to the latter series), found in the bog, which is still recognisable as a depression in the ground. Furthermore, in Stare Dłusko, powiat Międzyrzecz in the Land of Lubusz, western Poland⁹⁴ two axe heads (one also of Type Oder-Elbe – Figure 3.7 and another – Figure 3.8 – western Series of the Group 5 after G. Kieferling⁹⁵), fragments of single-edged swords and a double-edged one, as well as tools (adzes, a half-scythe, possibly an auger) and a suspension set of a Roman kettle were acquired by an amateur detectorist, on the wet surface of a flood terrace of the River Warta. Both sites are dated to the Roman Period: the former perhaps to its younger phase (C), the latter to the end of the Early Roman Period. Their cultural affiliation is unclear. In the case of the depot from Stare Dłusko, this lack of clarity results from the peripheral location of the find place⁹⁶. As regards Czarnkowo, one may link the deposit with the Wielbark Culture – assuming that the chronology is the late stage of Phase B or the very beginning of the Younger Roman Period – or with the Dębczyno Group, provided that the assemblage is dated to the later stages of Phase C.

Theoretically one may ponder over identifications of Wielbark-culture axes in other sacrificial places. The most promising one is Vimose 1 on Funen, from the early stage of B2 phase, and Vimose 2a, from the late B2 phase⁹⁷. Prze-

worsk-culture and Balt elements can be pointed here⁹⁸. Assumed participation in raids aimed at Vimose region demanded the use of boats due to the island position of the site. This seems conceivable as sea trade and war bands were intermingled, because the latter were formed from the well-trained crews of oarsmen. Also, it may explain why war-bands were well-informed as refers to potential aims of attack. But the Przeworsk-culture people living far from the sea, including the Balts, in particular the ones occupying the lakelands, seem unlikely candidates to organise shipping. For the Wielbark culture, however, its partly littoral position seems quite a good area for preparing such expeditions, thus theoretically we may assume their participation in the events⁹⁹. Wielbark-culture weapons from the Early Roman and beginning of the Younger Roman Periods were similar to the Przeworsk culture ones¹⁰⁰ therefore they may not be traced easily among the Vimose finds. Axe heads were found in Vimose next to another weapon. Among them there is one assigned to Subgroup II.2 (Fig. 3:4) and another to Subgroup II.3 (Fig. 3:3) after B. Kontny¹⁰¹. They were identified as the arms of the Balts¹⁰² as West Balt elements are obvious here, but hypothetically one may accept the idea that we deal with Wielbark-culture axes, as aforementioned types are proved for that cultural unit too. Przeworsk-culture warriors cannot be taken into consideration due to the fact that axe was not a popular weapon among them.

Weapon or tool?

For the Roman period items, there are no well-established traits which allow distinguishing weapons from tools among the axes in a certain way. Such studies of early medieval items have been done by P. Kotowicz¹⁰³, who has linked the smallest forms (below 10 cm in length, weighting less than 100 g, frequently having short hafts, up to 40 cm) with specialized carpenters' tools. He ascribed the biggest and heaviest ones (over 500 g) to the same functional group; the specimens with asymmetrical blades in top view (distinguishing them from the symmetrical ones) to the group of weapons.

⁹¹ See: Czarnecka 1995; Rogalski 2021.

⁹² Kieferling 1994, 339, 343 Abb. 4, 7.

⁹³ H.-J. Eggers' heritage, file *Kreis Belgard*; see Rembecki 2019, 17–18; 31; 34 Ryc. 6,2; Kontny 2022b, 91. I would like to thank Krzysztof Kowalski and Bartłomiej Rogalski PhD. from the National Museum in Szczecin for this data.

⁹⁴ Rembecki 2019; Kontny 2022b, Fig. 9.

⁹⁵ Kieferling 1994, 339; 343 Abb. 4, 7.

⁹⁶ Rembecki 2019.

⁹⁷ Pauli Jensen 2011, 47 Figs. 6–7.

⁹⁸ Kontny 2017, 35–40 Figs. 14–16.

⁹⁹ Kontny 2019c, 164, 176 Fig. 5. Shell-first/lashed-lug made boats analogous to famous Nydam ones – Rieck 2013 – have been confirmed in Wielbark-culture territory – two frames were found in Puck Bay and radiocarbon dates place them in the Late Roman and Migration Period – Ossowski 2010, 169 Ryc. 158; see also Kontny 2019e, Note 13 Fig. 4,4; 2023b, 120, Fig. 12,1.

¹⁰⁰ Kontny 2019b, 347–351.

¹⁰¹ Kontny 2018.

¹⁰² Kontny 2017, 35 Fig. 15.

¹⁰³ Kotowicz 2013, 78–81; 2018, 155–165.

guished and sharpened one-sidedly) have been attributed therein likewise. Kotowicz has also quoted the idea that the angular cross-section of an eyehole preventing from twisting the haft while performing repeatable cuts may indicate the utensil as well. Aforementioned criteria do not have to be fit for the Roman period axes. Basing on the finds of the handles from the Roman Period, i.a., from Scandinavian sacrificial bog sites one may imagine hafts' length as 60–90 cm, i.e., having the range of the swords¹⁰⁴. In the West Balt Circle, axe heads were frequently found together with the other weapons. This leads to the conclusion that they served as a substitute of the swords which does not exclude their multipurpose use (e.g. cutting firewood, cutting out penetrations in the forest thicket, but wood processing as well), however with the primary military employment¹⁰⁵. This refers also to the weapon graves of the Luboszyce Culture and the Elbe Germanic area¹⁰⁶ but not to the Przeworsk Culture¹⁰⁷.

Unfortunately, Wielbark-culture axes do not originate from graves, so there is no possibility to check their co-occurrence with certain weapons. Only in few cases it was possible to weigh them: axe head from Żuków – 0.212 kg, vicinity of Mielno – 0.161 kg, Lubanowo – 0.227 kg (Type Oder-Elbe) and 0.119 kg (Type Żarnowiec), Komarów-Osada – 1.04 kg, Świerże – 1.139 kg, Charleż – 0.5 kg and Gródek – 0.499 kg. Thus, they represent objects of medium size and weight, definitely not the specialised carpenters' tools; moreover none of them was sharpened one-sidedly. Apart from the Komarów-Osada, Osuchy/Podsośnina and Świerże finds (rather too heavy to serve for martial purposes) they seem to represent multifunctional tools. Multiple use was natural in the busy lifestyle of a warrior, but in my opinion, axes were an essential blunt weapon, and being a part of a warrior's equipment, they were also used for other purposes, which can be considered as equivalent at best. In favor of their prevalent military use speaks their context in the Černâhov and the Sântana de Mureş Cultures where they frequently appeared in grave equipment¹⁰⁸. They represent three traditions: the Balt one, forest-zone heritage and Roman-Germanic legacy¹⁰⁹. Except for the forest zone, they are recognized in the Wielbark Culture. Therefore, it seems justified to assume – at least with regard to the Younger and Late Roman Period, and Early Migration

Period too – that axes were national weapons in the Goths' cultural circle, including the Wielbark Culture¹¹⁰.

Conclusions

Majority of the Wielbark-culture axe heads dates to the Younger and Late Roman Period as well as the Early Migration Period with territorial range characteristic for these phases (Fig. 5). Early Roman Period items are almost lacking, which makes the hypothetical influence of the Late Pre-Roman military model (the Oksywie Culture) improbable. The dominance of the Przeworsk Culture weaponry model in the Early Roman Period in the Wielbark Culture (Kontny 2019b, 347–351) was due to its attractiveness and the close neighbourhood of both cultures. Przeworsk-culture standard did not include axes, which is consistent with aforementioned observations made for the Wielbark Culture. The change took place in the Younger Roman Period. It may result, i.a. from the shift of the territory and the emergence of immediate proximity between the Wielbark Culture and the West Balt Circle. Axes were a popular weapon among the Balts starting from the Early Roman Period through the Phase C and D until the Middle Ages (Kontny 2018; see: Malonaitis 2008). Therefore, it seems probable that Wielbark-culture axes had been borrowed from the West Balt Circle and then became typical element of Wielbark-culture warrior panoply (Fig. 6). Popularity of the symmetrical forms of Group II after B. Kontny¹¹¹ seems to confirm this supposition, although one should remember that other pattern, i.a. Types Żarnowiec, Oder-Elbe and Leśnica are also documented in the Wielbark Culture. Among them, the Żarnowiec Type has so far been associated generally with the Przeworsk Culture, Leśnica – with the south of the Przeworsk Culture territory and the Oder-Elbe – with Luboszyce Culture, Elbe Germanic Circle and southern Scandinavia¹¹². Definitely such an image requires verification: Types Leśnica and Żarnowiec are known from the Wielbark, Černâhov and the Sântana de Mureş Cultures and Elbe-Oder in Pomerania.

The introduction of the axe took place simultaneously in some other cultural units: the Luboszyce Culture and

¹⁰⁴ Kontny 2018, 80–81 Ryc. 12.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 80–84.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Domański 1979, 51–52; Bemmann 2007, 76–77.

¹⁰⁷ Kontny 2008, 130 diagram 15; 2019a, 39.

¹⁰⁸ see Magomedov/Levada 1996, 307–308 Ris. 5; Raduš 2022, 166–177 Ris. 53.

¹⁰⁹ Raduš 2022, 176–177.

¹¹⁰ An indirect premise in favor of such an interpretation could be to find Wielbark weapons in water contexts (e.g. single-edged sword from Białosławie in the Noteć River – Kontny 2022b: 90–91 fig. 7,6), which may prove the military purpose of the axes. Unfortunately, tools also exist in similar contexts, together with weapons (Żarnowiec, Stare Dłusko) so it cannot serve as a decisive argument.

¹¹¹ Kontny 2018.

¹¹² Kiefferling 1994, Abb. 4–6.

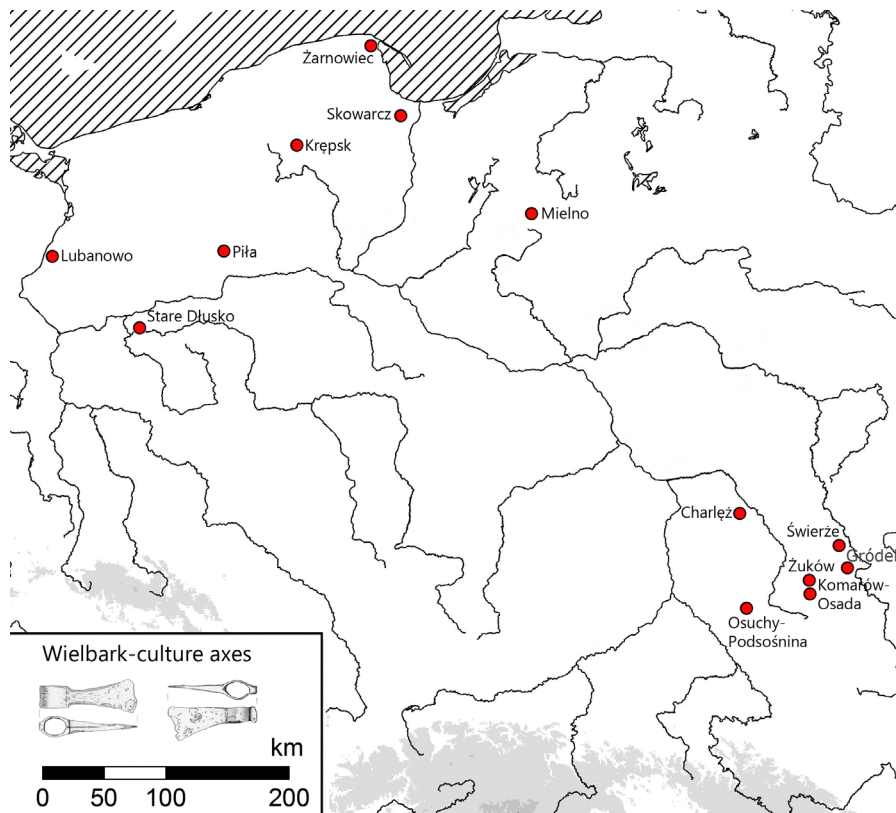


Fig. 5: Distribution of the Wielbark-culture axe heads.

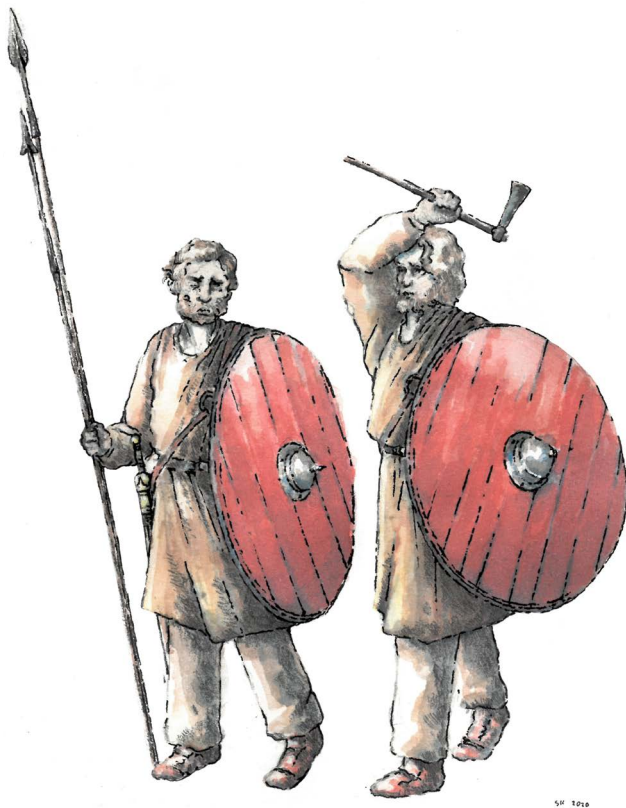


Fig. 6: Reconstruction of the Younger Roman Period Wielbark-culture warriors (concept Bartosz Kontny, drawing Stanisław Kontny).

Elbe Germanic Circle, probably in western Pomerania (the Dębczyno Group), and soon after in the Černáhov and the Sântana de Mureș Cultures. It seems that we deal with real transformation of the Barbarian model of armament just before and during the crisis of the third century¹¹³ which may express turbulences among the Barbarians and emergence of a 'New Model Retinue'. What may have worked in favour of axes' spread were perhaps common military enterprises, especially within the framework of multi-ethnic retinues. However, it should be underlined that the breakthrough was made on a limited scale – it did not affect some important areas of Barbaricum, e.g. the Przeworsk Culture, Scandinavia, Marcomannic-Quadic area, Sarmatians or west Germans.

Undoubtedly, the verification of the presented findings will be possible as the sources grow. Therefore, hope should be pinned primarily on new discoveries of sacrificial deposits in wetlands and waters.

¹¹³ See: Kontny 2024b.

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