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The Celtic Sword with Bronze Hilt Elements from Siarzewo, Nieszawa Commune, Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship

Abstract

A sword with bronze pseudo-anthropomorphic hilt elements typical of the Middle La Tène was found in the Vistula River not far from the village of Siarzewo, Nieszawa commune, Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. The scabbard was discarded and lost, but the sword is now in the Kujawy and Dobrzyń Land Museum in Włocławek. The hilt consists of three solid bronze elements: the guard, the tang ring, and the pommel. At present, these elements are separated by empty spaces which were previously covered with elements made from organic materials. The pommel and guard are decorated on the surface with three small circles with a point inside. The blade of the sword is also very interesting. The surface of the sword is covered with a chagrinage decoration. In the middle part of the blade, below the top part of the hilt end, a crescent-shaped, star-like stamp (punchmark) is located. Similar bronze hilts and hilt elements are more typical of Celtic daggers and short swords, hence a sword with these elements appearing a long way north of the main Celtic area is a major surprise and mystery.

Keywords: Siarzewo, Celtic sword, pseudo-anthropomorphic hilt, La Tène Culture, chagrinage decoration, crescent-shaped punchmark

Introduction

This article is about a sword which is part of the collection of the Kujawy and Dobrzyń Land Museum in Włocławek. Unfortunately, there is little information about the circumstances of its discovery. According to the account of the finder, the sword was taken from the bottom of the Vistula River, not far from the village of Siarzewo, Nieszawa commune, Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship (Fig. 1.1). Originally, the sword was bent and still in its metal scabbard. Because of its gold colour, the scabbard was taken to a jeweller and analysed. When this demonstrated that the plates were not gold but rather made from copper, the scabbard was taken off and discarded. After some time, the next owner bought the straightened sword from the finder. Finally, the sword was given to the Kujawy and Dobrzyń Land Museum in Włocławek (cat. no. MK-H 919/17132). Following this, in the 1980s, the sword was taken to the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology in Łódź, where its authenticity was confirmed.

The sword

The total length of the Siarzewo sword is 844 mm. The length of the blade is 704 mm from the tip to the lower part of the hilt end. The maximum width of the blade is 35 mm (Fig. 2). The blade is lenticular in section, with a small midrib in the middle through most of its length. The hilt tang is 140 mm long, rectangular in section, from 11 to 9 mm wide and 3.5 mm thick.

The most interesting part of this sword is the hilt (Fig. 3). It consists of three solid bronze elements: the guard, the ring-shaped covering in the middle part of the tang (hereafter 'tang ring'), and the pommel. All of these are separated by what are now empty spaces previously covered with elements made from organic materials.

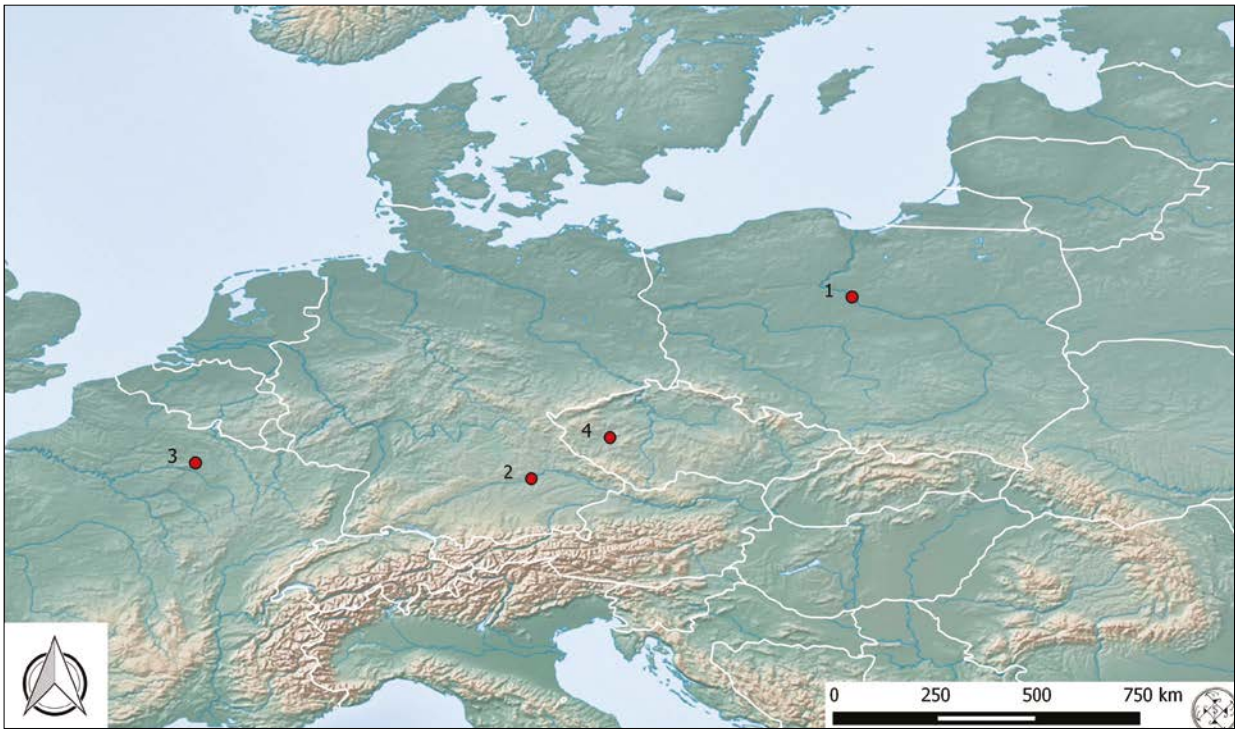

Fig. 1. Location plan: 1. Siarzewo; 2. Irnsing; 3. Prosnes; 4. Kyšice (compiled by P. Szmyd).

Fig. 2. Celtic sword from Siarzewo (photo by P. Sobczyk).

Fig. 3. Siarzewo sword hilt, both sides and the edge (photo by P. Sobczyk).

The upper empty part between the pommel and the tang ring is 14 mm long, and the lower part between the tang ring and the guard is 16 mm long. The first massive bronze element is a campanulate guard which, in the upper part, becomes a cylinder-shaped hilt in the lower third of the tang's length. The guard is 45 mm long with 'legs' extending down, with a maximum thickness of 11 mm in their middle part and 6 mm at the end. The broadest – 39 mm – is the lower part of the guard. In the central part of the grip, there is the tang ring. Its shape is a contoured cylinder with a 5 mm high cone-shaped collar in the middle. This element is 16 mm long and 19 mm wide, with the maximum diameter of 19 mm (13 mm at the top and 12 mm in the lower part). The third massive bronze element is the pommel, which is 51 mm high. Its shape is more or less similar to that of the guard, also starting as a cylinder-shaped part of the grip and then increasing to 41 mm in width. It creates 'arms' extending upwards with a small bulge on the top. Their width and thickness are between 5 and 6 mm, with the total width between their outer borders amounting to 22 mm. In the middle part, between the 'arms', is a rectangular niche 12.5 mm wide. Inside this niche, there is an iron, barrel-shaped knob 11 mm high and 10 mm in diameter, with a thin collar in the middle. The knob is slightly thinner, 8 mm wide in the top part. The pommel and guard are decorated on the surfaces with three small circles, 7 to 8 mm in diameter, with a point inside. On the pommel, the circles are located in the central top part and on the 'arms'. On the guard, the decoration is on the central part and on both lower ends of the campanulate 'legs'. In both cases, the circles form a triangle. Unfortunately, nowadays the circles are barely visible due to heavy wear, but the middle points are very clear. It is possible that originally this decoration was slightly raised.

Physical and cultural associations

The bronze elements of the Siarzewo sword hilt are unique. It is very difficult to find a sword with similar kind of elements among the most common La Tène Culture weaponry. However, their shape and location on the sword can be compared to known forms of the European pseudo-anthropomorphic metal hilts of swords and daggers. The armament with human-looking, X-shaped hilts has been an important subject of debates since the beginning of the La Tène Culture research.[1] One of the broadest studies has been performed by R.R. Clarke and C.F.C. Hawkes.[2] The researchers analysed every example known to them from Europe and divided them into seven types named in alphabetical order from A to G. The main division criterion was the shape and construction of the hilt. This issue was also undertaken by J. Filip in his major publication about the Celts in Central Europe.[3] Later, the finds from Hungary were reanalysed and presented by É.F. Petres.[4] Similar objects from Moravia were described by M. Čižmář,[5] whereas P. Sankot[6] published finds from the Czech Republic. This type of weaponry was also a subject of interest to such researchers as F. Drilhon and A. Duval[7] or R. Pleiner[8] and A.P. Fitzpatrick[9]. Fitzpatrick turned his attention to a particular aspect, namely the presence of distinctive astral 'stamps', which were inlaid with copper alloys or precious metals, on the blades of some weapons. However, it needs to be pointed out that the above-mentioned publications have described mainly weapons which were defined as short swords or daggers,[10] but the specimen from Siarzewo is a long sword. There are only three other examples of longer swords with pseudo-anthropomorphic hilts, and only one of them is longer than 700 mm.

The first specimen comes from a disturbed Celtic grave from Kyšice,[11] Plzeň-City district in the Plzeň region of the Czech Republic (Fig. 1.4). The full length of this sword is 670 mm, with the blade 560 mm long and 360 mm wide.[12] The decorated hilt of this sword is made of bronze, with the grip rectangular in section and with five big knobs. Two knobs are on the pommel, on the ends of the 'arms', and two are on the ends of the convex guard 'legs'. The fifth one, the 'head', is in the central part of the pommel between the arm knobs. The tang, similarly to the grip, is rectangular in section. The decoration on the grip is composed of three vertically oriented circles in the lower part of the pommel, in the central part of the hilt, and in the middle part of the massive grip.

The second longer sword comes from a warrior grave in Prosnes, Marne Department in northern France (Fig. 1.3).[13] The full length is 670 mm, with the blade 550 mm long and 43 mm wide. The hilt is made of iron

[1] Déchellette 1927, 643–649.
[2] Clarke, Hawkes 1955.
[3] Filip 1956, 158–159.
[4] Petres 1979.
[5] Čižmář 1996.
[6] Sankot 1995.
[7] Drilhon, Duval 1985.
[8] Pleiner 1993.
[9] Fitzpatrick 1996.
[10] Brunaux-Lambot 1987, 90–91; Pleiner 1993, 69; Fitzpatrick 1996, 373.
[11] Clarke, Hawkes 1955, 204–206, 221, fig. 2:1; Filip 1956, 159, tab. 5:3, tab. VIII:1; Sankot 1995, 413–414, figs 1–3; 2003, 12, tabs 12, 20.
[12] Sankot 2003, 17–20, tabs 1–2.
[13] Rapin 2002.

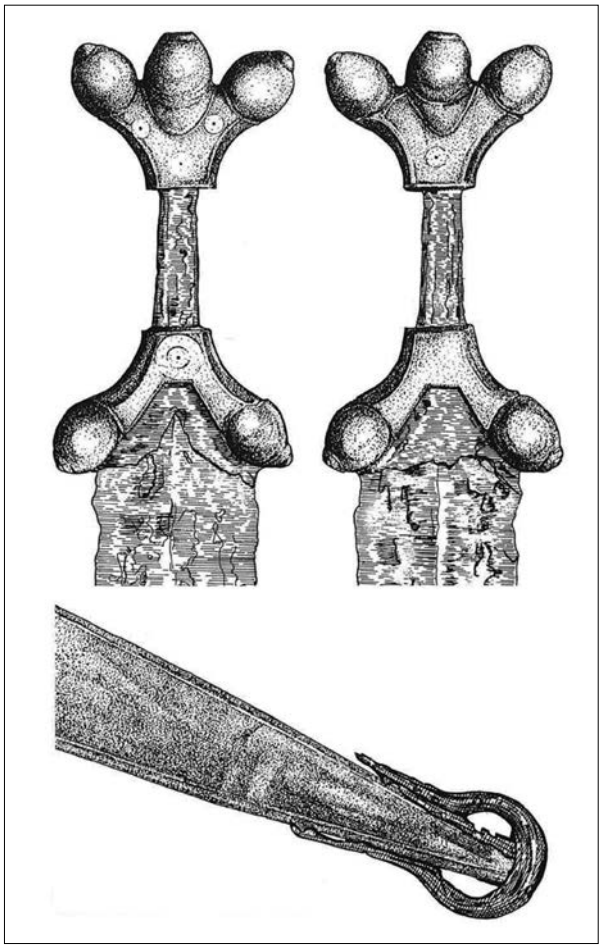

Fig. 4. Irnsing sword (after Sievers 2001, Abb. 2).

and contains five acorn-shaped knobs. The first one is in the central part of the pommel, two are on the ends of the 'arms', and the next two are on the ends of the convex 'legs' of the guard. The grip is rectangular in section and embellished with gold-inlaid ornaments. The next two decorative elements of this sword are located on the blade below the hilt. The first of these consists of two astral-shaped punchmarks, the moon and the sun, placed on one side of the blade, while the other is found on the opposite side of the blade and consist of two carved goats.

The third example is a sword found on the bottom of the Danube, not far from the village of Irnsing,[14] the Free State of Bavaria in Germany (Figs 1.2, 4). The full length of the sword is 770 mm, whereas the blade is 661 mm long and 50 mm wide. The tang of this example is equipped with a massive bronze guard and a pommel with five acorn-shaped knobs (Fig. 4). Three of these make the head and arms of the pommel, the next two are on the triangular-shaped guard 'legs'. Both of these elements were originally separated by a grip made of organic materials. The bronze pommel is ornamented on both sides. On the front, there are three circles arranged to form a triangle, while on the back there is only one in the middle. A decoration consisting of two concentric circles is also placed on the central part of the guard.

Decorative motifs

Circles as a decorative motif are very common on the pseudo-anthropomorphic hilts, especially types D and E. A similar embellishment is found on the hilt of the short sword from the Zihl River in Switzerland,[15] on the specimen from Kölesd-Lencsepuszta, Tolna county in Hungary,[16] and on two swords from Klucov, Kolín district, and Údrnická Lhota, Jičín district in the Czech Republic.[17] As described above, this kind of decoration appears also on type A bronze hilt of the sword from Kyšice.[18] In most cases, the ornament is curved, except for the two swords from Klucov and Údrnická Lhota, where it is composed of round dimples. S. Sievers acknowledged that the location of the circles on the hilt of the Irnsing sword is similar to the locations of rivets holding the organic hilt elements of Celtic long swords. It is highly probable that the circles on the hilt of the Siarzewo sword are also associated with rivets.

There is another hilt from Poland which contains bronze elements with similar ornamentation (Fig. 5). This find was discovered in the grave (no. 41) of a healer/warrior in Żukowice, Głogów commune, Lower Silesian Voivodeship. The iron tang, 105 mm long and rectangular in section, has a bronze pommel and two bronze rings attached to the tang. The first bronze ring is in the place of the guard, while the second smaller ring is placed in the middle part of the grip. The third one is the pommel, which has the shape of a stylised human head with big ears, nose, lips, and brows. On the top of the head, there is a curved isosceles cross in a circle, whereas the second decorative circle with a dot in the middle is on the back of the head. The identical decoration is placed on the lower part of the lower ring.[19] The hilt from Żukowice is a part of an unknown kind of tool, probably a knife.[20] The bronze elements of this hilt create a trifid arrangement with a ring in the middle, similar to the construction of the Siarzewo hilt.

[14] Sievers 2001.
[15] Clarke, Hawkes 1955, 210, 222, fig. 5:1.
[16] Petres 1979, fig. 1, tab. I:2; Szabó, Petres 1992, 93–94, tab. 42.
[17] Sankot 1995, figs 7–10.
[18] Clarke, Hawkes 1955, pic. 2:1; Sankot 1995, figs 1–3; Sievers 2001, 19.
[19] I would like to thank Krzysztof Demidziuk for his help and detailed information.
[20] Łuczkiewicz 2009, 81, fig. 1B.

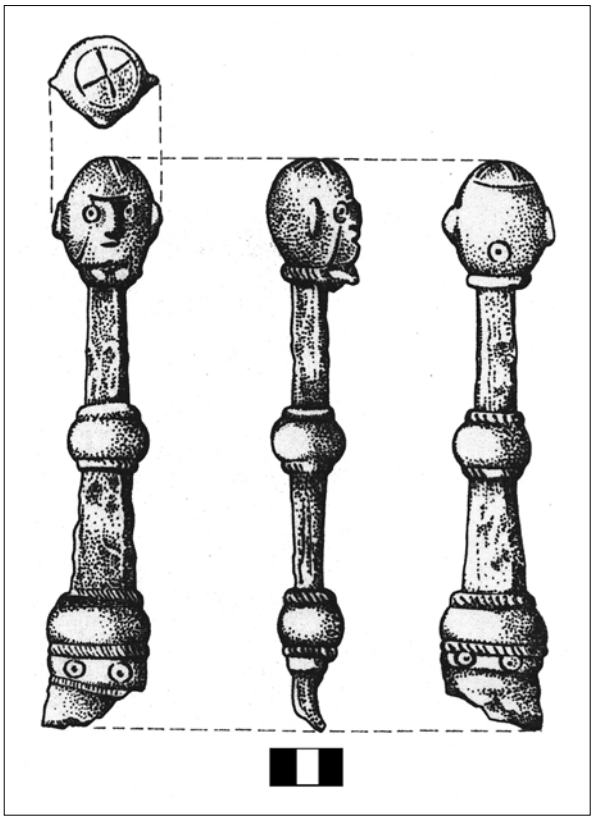

Fig. 5. Żukowice hilt from the burial no. 41 (drawing by Teresa Demidziuk).

Tang rings

Tang rings are elements of the hilt known from Celtic worlds. A ring made of an iron plate 7 mm thick was located in the central part of the sword hilt from the Early La Tène rich warrior burial from Wintrich, Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany.[21] This kind of hilt element was more often used in the late phase of the Middle and into the Late La Tène Period. Nonetheless, the earlier rings were made not only from metal but also from organic materials. Two bone tang rings with thin bronze plates on their tops and bottoms were placed on the tang of the sword from the burial no. 225 in Povegliano, Verona province in north Italy.[22] The grave is dated to La Tène D1. Antler-made tang rings and a bronze campanulate-shaped hilt end were mounted on the tang of the sword from the burial no. 548 from Sion, the canton of Valais in Switzerland.[23] This burial was dated to La Tène C2 or La Tène D1. Among the large number of finds revealed in the oppidum of Stradonice, Beroun district in the Czech Republic, one very interesting object was found. It was an iron tang, 35 mm long, with a bronze ring on it.[24]

Ornamental elements on tang ends

In the construction of the Siarzewo sword hilt there is one element which does not appear in other pseudo-anthropomorphic hilts. It is an iron, barrel-shaped knob located on the end of the tang, inside the pommel niche. The plastic small elements located on the ends of the sword tangs appear in the Early La Tène Period. For example, there is a sword in a warrior grave from Hochscheid, Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany,[25] and an item from a burial in Bescheid, Rhineland-Palatinate. On the end of the tang of the sword from Bescheid, there was a small bronze stylised human head.[26] Nonetheless, these tang elements are more often seen in more recent phases of the La Tène Period. The largest number of swords with small plastic knobs on the ends of their grip tangs come from Central Europe.[27] It is worth highlighting that a large number of swords of the Hatvan-Boldog type have a big cylindrical knob on the tops of their tangs. The swords from Hatvan-Boldog, Heves county, and Gáva-Katóhalom, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, both in Hungary,[28] as well as from the burial no. 102 in Dürrnberg, Hallein district in Austria, may serve as references in this regard.[29] Another very interesting specimen is the Middle La Tène sword from Detva, Detva district in Slovakia,[30] with an iron cylindrical knob on the end of the tang.

The surfaces of the knobs of the Middle La Tène swords from Kupinovo, Srem district in Serbia, and Szob, Pest district in Hungary, exhibit decorations featuring human faces.[31]

Sword hilts

Hilts of Celtic swords were made mainly from organic materials.[32] Most of them have not survived, but there are a few examples where wooden pieces were found.[33] The best-preserved surviving wooden hilt elements come from the Early La Tène skeleton burials

[21] Nortman *et al.* 2004, 137, 139, fig. 8.
[22] Bolla *et al.* 1993, 11, 15.
[23] Curdy *et al.* 2009, 62–63, fig. 215, pl. 7:4782.
[23] Pič 1906, pl. IX:35.
[25] Sievers 2001, fig. 5.
[26] Haffner 1999, 125, 128, figs 2, 5.
[27] Szabó, Petres 1985; 1992; Sankot 2005, 139.
[28] Szabó, Petres 1985; 1992, pls 13, 18.
[29] Stöllner 1998.
[30] Zachar 1987, pl. 131; Sankot 2005, pic. 2:1.
[31] Szabó, Petres 1992, pl. 71, 11.
[32] Pleiner 1993, 62.
[33] Pleiner 1993.

from Glauberg, the State of Hesse, and Hochscheid, Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany.[34] A large number of 'well-preserved' hilts come from the Münsingen-Rain (burials nos 79, 96, and 138)[35] and Münsingen-Tägermatten (burial no. 21) burial grounds, the canton of Bern in Switzerland.[36] The remains of bone-made fittings have been found in the burial no. 19 in Dubnik, Nové Zámky district in Slovakia.[37]

Metal elements were used in the design of long sword hilts since the Early La Tène Period. Bronze pommels with arms pointing up were put on top of swords from Hallstatt, Upper Austria (burial no. 994), and Herzogenburg-Kalkofen, Lower Austria (burial no. 11),[38] in Austria. Very interesting remains of a wooden hilt with bronze, cone-shaped fittings were found in the warrior barrow in Liebau, the Free State of Saxony in Germany.[39] These bronze fittings were placed as decorations on the pommel and guard ends. The wooden grip of the sword from Fiskerton, Lincolnshire in England, was also decorated with ornamented bronze fittings.[40] However, at the end of the Early La Tène Period, Celtic craftsmen stopped using bronze to make hilt elements. This trend is visible all across Europe, except on the British Isles, where bronze was still in use.[41] Since then, two-piece hilts fitted with iron rivets became the dominant form of sword grips. However, there are some sporadic departures from this rule. The sword in the burial no. 126 from Mana, Nové Zámky district in Slovakia, has bronze rivets.[42] In this period, the wing-like iron tin plates were very often installed on top of pommels. These elements are known from Pottenbrunn (burial no. 23)[43] and Mannersdorf (burials nos 60 and 76),[44] Lower Austria in Austria. Similar wing-like pommel ends came from Csabrendek, Jutas 4, Sümeg district, and Kósd, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén district in Hungary.[45] Another very interesting sword was also found at the burial ground in Pottembrunn in the burial no. 562.[46] The bow-shaped wooden pommel and the guard of this specimen were originally covered with decorated iron tin plates joined by two rivets. Between the arms of the pommel there was also an ornamented iron knob.

At the end of the Early La Tène Period, the first metal-made convex and campanulate hilt ends started to appear. In the Middle La Tène Period, round flat tin plates and other metal elements started to be used in the construction of sword hilts more often. Iron and bronze were used to make them. These elements have been found on sword tangs from Neunkirchen, Lower Austria in Austria,[47] Balassagyarmat, Nógrád county, Halmajugra 1, Heves district in Hungary, Iža, Komárno district in Slovakia,[48] and the above-mentioned specimens from Povegliano in Italy and Sion in Switzerland. The tang on the sword from Courgenay, Yonne department in France, has three iron tang rings, and its massive campanulate hilt end is decorated with circles. This weapon also has a punchmark, a human head in profile on the blade below the hilt, and the relic of a bronze scabbard.[49] The metal hilt elements have also been found on the swords which come from La Tène, Neuenburg canton in Switzerland. The tang of the sword no. 80 was equipped with an iron tang ring.[50] From this site, there comes another sword with two very interesting iron hilt elements. The first is a half-rounded and vertical stripe made of iron. The second is a campanulate iron hilt end with extended and upward pointing ends, which were flattened and pierced with rivets.[51] From the end of the La Tène Period, swords are known which contained a set of tin plates placed on the grip tangs. These plates were made of iron, bronze, and sometimes brass. These finds mainly came from the area of northern Germany and the Netherlands.[52]

The Siarzewo sword

The measurements of the Siarzewo sword are similar to the dimensions of other finds of this type from Europe.[53] The almost identical-sized swords are known from the area of the La Tène Culture including the finds from the enclaves of this culture in Poland, such as the two swords from Głownin, Lower Silesian Voivodeship (burial no. 2-3/1904).[54] From a typological perspective, the Siarzewo sword is similar to Type 6 or 8, according to

[34] Raftery 1988, pic. 83; 1998, 64, pic. 3; Sievers 2001, pic. 5.
[35] Hodson 1968, pls 97, 98, 99, 101:530.
[36] Osterwalder 1975, 23–24, Abb. 21.
[37] Bujna 1989, 268.
[38] Egg, Schönfelder 2009, 30, Abb. 2.
[39] Coblenz, Pietzsch 1956; Pleiner 1993, 62, fig. 6:1.
[40] Stead 2006, 23, fig. 54.
[41] Stead 2006, 23, 32; Fitzpatrick 2007, 27, 29, figs 1, 2.
[42] Benadik 1983, 58, fig. XLIX.
[43] Ramsl 2002, 74–75, fig. 34:1.
[44] Ramsl 2011, 162, Tafs 82:11, 90:6.
[45] Szabó, Petres 1992, pls 10:1, 23, 40.
[46] Ramsl 2002, 48, fig. 65.
[47] Pittioni 1930, 47, pic. 9, pl. 11:2.
[48] Szabó, Petres 1992, pls 2, 3, 16, 89.
[49] Drack 1954/55, 233, pics 8, 49, pics 14, 49, pl. 66, 49; Parruzot 1955.
[50] Navarro, 1972, 409, pl. XXXVI:3.a–b.
[51] Vouga 1923, 33–34, pl. III:7; Drack 1954–1955, 233, pics 14, 50, pl. 68.50.
[52] Verwers, Ypey 1975; Lejars 1996, 90, fig. 6:6.
[53] Navarro 1972, 401, 402, tabs XXXI:4, XXXII:3.a–b.
[54] Woźniak 1970, 59, 61–62, pl. XV:3, 4–4.a; 1979, 213.

Fig. 6. Chagrinage decoration (photo by P. Kieca).

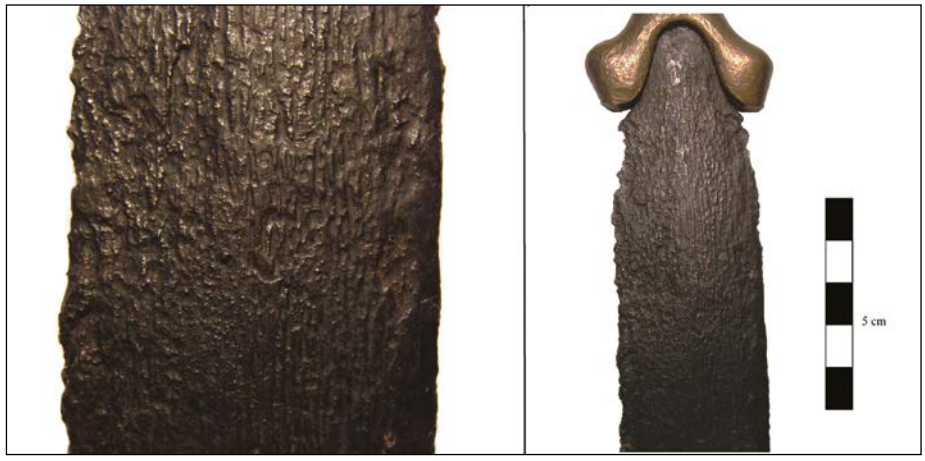

Fig. 7. Siarzewo sword blade, astral-shaped stamp in the shape of a crescent (photo by P. Kieca).

the typology of swords from Gournay Sur Aronde, Oise department in France, proposed by J.-L. Brunaux and B. Lambort,[55] and to Type I in the typology of swords from the Przeworsk Culture proposed by T. Bochnak.[56] However, its dimensions are closer to those of Type IV by Bochnak.[57]

The blade of the Siarzewo sword has another very interesting attribute, namely a decoration made of punched or incised dots, or the chagrinage ornament (Fig. 6).[58] This kind of decoration is known from the sword blades from the La Tène Culture area[59] and the swords from the Przeworsk Culture area.[60] A closer examination of the blade's surface revealed a punchmark located in the middle part of the blade, 77 mm below the top part of the hilt's end. It is an example of an astral-shaped stamp in the shape of a crescent, 75 mm high by 4 mm wide and 1 mm thick (Fig. 7), on the right side of the blade. The punchmarks and the associated swords have been very thoroughly analysed, which led to various interpretations of the purpose of this special decoration. These varied from the thesis that it was a blacksmith's or owner's mark, to the theses about their magical and symbolic meaning.[61] Inlaid with gold, silver, or base metal, the astral-shaped stamps on dagger/sword blades with pseudo-anthropomorphic hilts have been analysed by A.P. Fitzpatrick.[62] The author suggests that this weapon

[55] Brunaux, Lambot 1987, 120–121.
[56] Bochnak 2005, 24.
[57] Bochnak 2005, 39–40.
[58] Pleiner 1993, 64; Bochnak 2005, 33.
[59] Navarro 1972, 145, 209–210, pl. XII:3.
[60] Bochnak 2005, 32–33.
[61] Drak 1954/55; Pleiner 1993, 65; Bochnak 2005, 34–36; Dulęba 2006; 2009; Deutscher 2012.
[62] Fitzpatrick 1996.

played a major role in the Celtic religion.[63] According to his interpretation, these swords were used for religious ceremonies, probably related to counting the passage of time and the Celtic calendar.

In the light of the above-mentioned information, it can be considered that this sword came from a Celtic workshop, but it is really hard to pinpoint the precise place of its production.

However, it is worth mentioning that to the west of the Rhine there are no pseudo-anthropomorphicly hilted swords/daggers with similar hilt decoration, neither is there a weapon with analogical construction and components. They are, however, found across Switzerland, Bavaria in Germany, and Hungary. It is highly possible that the area of Central Europe is the place where one should look for their manufacturer's workshop. The presence of the above-mentioned bronze-hilted swords from Irnsing and Kyšice in this part of Europe also corroborates this theory. The finds proving the presence of workshops manufacturing anthropomorphic hilts in this area are commonly known. One find is a bronze pommel in the shape of a human head from the oppidum of Manching, the Free State of Bavaria in Germany.[64] Identical finds also come from the oppidum of Stradonice, Beroun district in the Czech Republic,[65] and the oppidum of Staré Hradisko, Prostějov district in Moravia.[66] These finds are elements of swords/daggers with Type G pseudo-anthropomorphic hilts according to the typology of R.R. Clarke and C.F.C. Hawkes.[67] A very interesting object, a mould used to cast a campanulate hilt end, was found in the oppidum of Heidetränk,[68] the State of Hesse in Germany. This find is a proof of the existence of a workshop where bronze hilt elements were made.

Votive offerings in rivers

The sword from Siarzewo is an example of a very interesting piece of weaponry, and its find-spot was also very unusual. From the finder's account, we know that the sword came from the bottom of the Vistula River. This allows us to propose a theory about the votive context of this find. A large number of small swords/daggers with pseudo-anthropomorphic hilts come from rivers.[69] The Irnsing sword came from the bottom of the Danube,[70] and the sword/dagger with a decorated hilt came from the Zihl River in Switzerland.[71] It is also worth mentioning that two other swords with punchmarks known from Poland were found in a river. These are the specimens from the Noteć River, which were found in Białośliwie, Piła district, and Inowrocław-Mątwy, Inowrocław district.[72] The sword from Białośliwie, like the Siarzewo sword, has a chagrinage ornament on the blade.[73] Stamped swords are very often associated with water votive offering sites.[74] A river itself was probably a home of a deity, and weaponry was an offering or a result of a vow. These kinds of finds mainly come from places where there were probably river crossings, fords, especially on slow rivers like the Saône.[75] S. Sievers, in her paper about the Irnsing sword, also suggested that the role of this votive offering was to amplify a tribal border, which was the river.

The chronology

It is very important to determine a proper dating of this sword. Taking into consideration the shape and measurements, the Siarzewo find fits into the Middle La Tène horizon, which is also supported by the presence of the punchmark. The custom of decorating sword blades with blacksmiths' stamps was widespread in the Middle La Tène Period, and the majority of the Celtic swords with stamps on their blades come from this period.[76]

However, it is important to point out that the sword was originally found in a metal scabbard, which, according to the finder's account, was made of copper. It is possible that it was bronze with a very low tin content and was thus labelled as copper by mistake. Colour metals were commonly used as a material for scabbard plates at the end of the 5th century BC and in the beginning of the 4th century BC. Later, they were abandoned in favour of iron sheets. But there is a small number of non-iron finds from the Middle La Tène horizon. Two of them come from La Tène[77] – probably the scabbard of the sword from Courgenay, Yonne department in France, was also made of bronze. Similarly, the front sheet of

[63] Fitzpatrick 1996, 388–389.
[64] Sievers 2010, 22, pic. 7.
[65] Pič 1906, pl. XX:8.
[66] Meduna 1961, pl. I:9.
[67] Clarke, Hawkes 1955, 213–217, pics 4–6.
[68] The find from the oppidum of Heidetränk is held by the Vortaunusmuseum in Oberursel, see Auszüge aus den Inventarbüchern 1, 1973/74–5, 1981/82 (archive of the Centre de Recherche Archéologique Européen de Bibracte, Glux-en-Glenne).
[69] Clarke, Hawkes 1955; Sievers 2001, 20.
[70] Sievers 2001, 13, fig. 1.
[71] Clarke, Hawkes 1955, 222.
[72] Makiewicz 1992; Bochnak 2002, 34; 2006; Dulęba 2006; 2009.
[73] Dulęba 2006, 179.
[74] Dulęba 2006, 184; Deutscher 2012, 252.
[75] Sievers 2001, 20; Bochnak 2006.
[76] Dulęba 2006, 185, 192; 2009; Deutscher 2012, 252, 293.
[77] Navarro 1972, 21, tab. XX:3.a–c.

the Irnsing sword's scabbard was made of bronze as well. At the end of the 2nd century and in the beginning of the 1st century BC, bronze and other colour metals made a come-back as materials for sword scabbard elements. The bimetallic scabbards of Ludwigshafen and Orme types[78] are good examples. Probably closer to the middle of the 1st century BC, brass started to be used as well.[79] Bronze scabbards are also related to pseudo-anthropomorphic weaponry. The sword from the Zihl River in Switzerland was found with a bronze scabbard,[80] similarly to the chronologically earlier (1st century BC) specimens from Châtillon-sur-Indre, Indre department, Mirebeau-sur-Bèze, Côte-d'Or department, Tesson, Charente-Maritime department in France, and the sword in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.[81] In the light of the information provided above, it is possible to suggest that the Siarzewo sword should be dated to between the end of the 2nd and the first half of the 1st century BC.

Conclusions

The Celtic sword from Siarzewo is an example of weaponry which was not only of utilitarian but also ceremonial function. It was probably a part of a high-status warrior's equipment, similarly to the swords/daggers with pseudo-anthropomorphic hilts.[82] But it needs to be highlighted that this is a long sword, and, except for the Early La Tène finds, no chronologically younger long swords with similar hilt elements have been known so far.

It remains a big mystery how this sword appeared in the centre of a Germanic land, so far north from the heartland of the Celtic cultural zone. It seems that this lends considerable support to the suggestion by P. Dulęba that, like the swords with punchmarks, the Siarzewo sword was a war booty.[83] It is possible that the presence of this sword in this area in the younger Pre-Roman Period was related to the expansion of the Przeworsk Culture towards the south. The context of its finding suggests that, similarly to the swords from Irnsing and the Noteć River, it was a water-related votive offering.

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[78] Lejars 2003, 11–12; Istenič 2010, 143.
[79] Verwers, Ypey 1975, 90–91, fig. 7; Istenič 2010, 143–144; 2015.
[80] Clarke, Hawkes 1955, 210, 222, fig. 5:1.
[81] Fitzpatrick 1996, 393–394, figs 12, 14; Megaw 2002, 408, fig. 7.a–b; Deutsher 2012, 263.
[82] Pleiner 1993, 51.
[83] Dulęba 2006, 192.

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