Bartosz Kontny

Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

Magdalena NATUNIEWICZ-SEKUŁA

Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences

A spur from Myślęcin (?) as an odd piece in a puzzle

As it is widely known, burials in the Wielbark culture are characterized by the absence of weapons in graves. The few exceptions from this rule have been discussed in the literature of the subject (KACZANOWSKI, ZABOROWSKI 1988; KOKOWSKI 1993; KONTNY 2006A; KONTNY 2006B; KONTNY, NATUNIEWICZ-SEKUŁA 2006, 2007). The same rule applied to elements of horse harness but spurs were apparently exempt. Publications on spurs in the Wielbark culture have been sporadic (GODŁOWSKI 1970, 8-9, 39; KOKOWSKI 1993, 337-338; KOKOWSKI 1995, 290-291; SOKOŁOWSKI 2004; also, see ROMAN 1997 for a publication on chair-shaped spurs, however the study is incomplete and contains errors). The subject must be considered as underresearched, and no comprehensive study on spurs in the Wielbark culture is available (although there is SOKOŁOWSKI 2004, a noteworthy unpublished B.A. thesis on spurs from Subgroup E after J. Ginalski (1991). It should be noted that only some of the spurs from the territory of the Wielbark culture have their equivalents in Ginalski's classification, which is based on Przeworsk culture material (Subgroups C, E and F). Others, although they seem to be stylistically related to the Przeworsk culture spurs in Subgroup G after J. Ginalski, constitute a distinct solution that is specific to the territory of the Wielbark culture (KONTNY, NATUNIEWICZ-SEKUŁA 2006, 307-308; 2007, 161), and to the territories of the Balts (cf. TISCHLER, KEMKE 1902, Pl. XVI-XVII). Similarly noteworthy is the presence of chair-shaped spurs (which are much rarer in the Przeworsk culture) and of Leuna type spurs (GIESLER 1978). Spurs in the Wielbark culture clearly indicate an influence from Skandinavia and the Przeworsk culture, and possibly also from the territories of Balts. This article does not claim to be a comprehensive study of spurs. Instead, we would like to shed a light on a very interesting spur find which had been published several dozens years ago...

The spur in question comes from a collection of artefacts acquired from unprofessional excavations in Wielbark culture sites in Weklice, Elblag com. - formerly Wöklitz or Woeklitz, Kreis Elbing and Myślęcin, Elbląg com. - formerly Meislatein, Kr. Elbing (KRAUSE 1825). In the 1820s, a Protestant minister named Krause wrote from Przezmark to Carl (Friedrich) Abramowski, administrator of Elbing, to inform him that the villagers from Myślęcin were finding various beads and urn fragments on a nearby hill. Reverend Krause had also taken notice of the so-called Burgberg ("Hilfort Hill") near Weklice, a hill where he was hoping to find ritual vessels and relics formerly used by pagan priests, and which he believed was hiding the remains of the Wekliz castle. Krause informed Abramowski about his ideas, who granted the minister's request and assigned 60 men to excavate in the area in May 1822. The results were disappointing: they only found charcoals and fragments of old vessels in varying colours and quantities lying several feet under the ground. One Sunday, the villagers from the neighbouring Myślęcin were spurred to undertake "excavations" of their own on a sandy hill near their village. Their results proved much more interesting. They sent word to Abramowski, who ordered repeated excavations by about 100 men. Within the space of several days, artefacts were found and delivered to Abramowski (then paying a visit to Przezmark) and to his host,

Reverend Krause. At the same time, a worker informed Abramowski and Krause that similar finds had been made on the Crooked Hill (*Schiefen Berg*) near Weklice, and a party of about a dozen diggers were sent there. According to a report published by Reverend Krause in 1825, the Weklice site yielded nothing. According to F. Jacobson (1927), the *Schiefen Berg* was the same hill as the one where a cemetery is currently under excavation¹. In the summer 1823, new excavations were undertaken at Myślęcin after the harvest season. Theodor von Schön, Oberpräsident of West Prussia, then earmarked extra funding for the project, and a new round of excavations was carried out in October 1823 (KRAUSE 1825, 72–88).

Initially, the entire collection of artefacts went into hands of private collectors or into the Sammlung vaterländischer Altertümer beim königlichen Staatsarchiv in Königsberg before it was formally handed over to the Prussia-Museum in 1888. Those finds were dispersed in 1945 along with the whole collection of the Prussia-Museum². Our only source of information about them is the descriptions contained in the work of E. Blume and R. Dorr, and in articles by O. Kleemann and F. Jakobson (BLUME 1912, 90, 91, 97, 116, 122, 160, 193, 201; 1915, 44, 55, 81, 85, 93, 97, 106–109; DORR 1983, I, 39–42, II, 43; JACOBSON 1927, 123–135; KLEEMANN 1938, 29–30). Also, as pointed out by R. Dorr and F. Jakobson, there are doubts about the indexing of individual artefacts attributed to the Weklice site. According to R. Dorr and F. Jakobson, as Reverend Krause reported that no significant finds had been made in Weklice, the items must have actually come from Myślęcin, contrary to what E. Blume stated³. This means we cannot be utterly sure which cemetery yielded the spur under discussion here, although the Myślęcin provenance as suggested by R. Dorr and F. Jakobson seems more probable. Regardless of whether the attribution is correct, the collection is of great significance and provides an important source of information about the microregion.

Detailed information about the spur in question were first published by E. Blume (1912, 122), and then again by O. Kleemann (1938, 29, Pl. V:r), who also provided an illustration. According to these sources, we may assume that the spur was a bronze specimen, riveted, with a band-shaped bow, wider at both ends of the prick base (Fig. 1:1). The prick was made of bronze⁴ and was domed in the upper section, with a narrowing in the middle section (indicated by two horizontal lines in the drawing), and a rectangular cross-section in the bottom section. On four sides, the prick base was decorated with pairs of stamped circles. The arms of the bow were profiled and had a trapezoid cross-section. At the end of each arm there was a circular plate with a rivet hole for fastening the spur, with small ornamental areas above each plate, each carrying an envelope-like ornament and a horizontal line. Only one rivet survived; it was made of iron. Traces of corrosion were also preserved on the bow, where traces of fabric were also discernible.

The analyzed spur is similar to the Leuna type spur described by U. Giesler (1978)⁵. However, the Myślęcin (?) spur departs slightly from U. Giesler's definition in having a pair of plates at the prick base instead of a hook. Although it is theoretically possible that one of the plates (which had obviously broken off) originally tapered off into a hook-like shape, it seems most probable that the two protrusions were symmetrical. Another untypical trait includes the circular ornaments at the prick base and the envelope-like pattern on the bow arms. Both should be classified as belonging to the category of Barbarian decorative patterns found on arrowheads,

The history of the excavation of the Weklice cemetery has been related in several earlier publications and will not be discussed here in detail (see NATUNIEWICZ-SEKUŁA, OKULICZ-KOZARYN 2006, 440–441; 2007, 46, footnote 4, 2008, 227–228, footnote 4).

Despite our queries in the warehouse and archives of the *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte*, which hold part of the old Prussia Museum collection, we have not been able to recover the Weklice finds. However, the museum does have two finds from Myślęcin as published by O. Kleemann (see KLEEMANN 1938, Pl. V:i, k).

M. Jahn (1921, 120) agrees with this location suggested by E. Blume.

⁴ The authors of these description do not state explicitly that it was made of bronze but the find is described as a bronze spur with iron rivets. If the prick had been made of a different material, it would probably have been pointed out, as it was the case with the iron rivets.

Theoretically, it could be classified as belonging to Group IX with some traits of Group VIII according to the classification of K. Godlowski (1970), but that classification is no longer borne out by currently available data. No analogies can be found with the Goth spurs described by A. Kokowski (1993, 337–338).

brooches, belt-end fittings, combs (circle patterns), buckles and ceramic vessels (envelopeshaped patterns). In this situation is would be invalid to place this find within Variant D (western Roman provincial), to which it is reasonably similar⁶. We would have to go along with U. Giesler's opinion that we are dealing with a form that is parallel to Variant D but fails to meet its criteria because of the missing hook fastening (GIESLER 1978, 31, footnote 95)⁷. Such forms are primarily characteristic for the Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture (Fig. 1:2-6)8 although exceptionally they could appear also outside this area9. Out of the examples supplied by U. Giesler (1978, footnote 95), only the specimen from Lyublino, rayon Zelenogradsk (formerly Serappen, Kreis Fischhausen), grave 13 (TISCHLER, KEMKE 1902, 36, Pl. XVII:4) and a pair of spurs from Pervomayskoe, rayon Laduschkin (formerly Warnikam, Kreis Heiligenbeil), grave 31 (TISCHLER, KEMKE 1902, 43, Pl. XVII:3) can be considered as somewhat related to the spur under discussion¹⁰. The spur found on the former site had rectangular protrusions separated from the prick base by a narrowing. A similar design solution can be seen in spurs from former Cojehnen, Kreis Fischhausen, grave XVII (HEYDECK 1909A, 223), former Grebieten, Kreis Fischhausen, gr. 108 (Prussia Sammlung collection in the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin, cat. no IV.220.5416.108)¹¹ and in the case of the pair of spurs from the former Warengen, Kreis Fischhausen, grave 44 (HEYDECK 1909B, 237–238) and Pervomayskoe, rayon Laduschkin (formerly Warnikam, Kreis Heiligenbeil), grave 59 (TISCHLER, KEMKE 1902, 44, Pl. XVII:6). It should be noted that the finds from the two latter sites did not have circular plates at the extremities of their arms. The spurs from Pervomayskoe, grave 31, were characterized by circular protrusions at the prick base, with an analogous design solution found in grave 30 from Pervomayskoe (TISCHLER, KEMKE 1902, 43; archive of Feliks Jakobson¹²) and in the specimen from Theodor von Blell's collection, which probably originated from East Prussia (JAHN 1921, 83, 120, Fig. 86). There is another known specimen with a trapezoid protrusion from Pervomayskoe, grave 49 (TISCHLER, KEMKE 1902, 44; archive of Feliks Jakobson) and a loosely found silvered iron spur from Kovrovo, rayon Zelenogradsk (formerly Dollkeim, Kreis Fischhausen), which had a semi-circular protrusion (KULAKOV 2004, 122, Fig. 88:3)¹³. From this cemetery the additional pair of bronze spurs of that type is known (from grave 370) unfortunately the exact shape of protrusion is unknown for us because of unclear drawing (KULAKOV 2008, 27–28, Fig. 2). The spurs mentioned above were made of iron (Kovrovo – loose find, Pervomayskoe, grave 49, former Warengen, grave 44, the spur from Blell's

Variant D is characterized by faceting on the bow (with a triangular or trapezoid cross-section), a hook-like protrusion at the prick base, and arms ending with rivet plates of various shapes and sizes (mainly circular ones). Specimens classified as belonging to Variant D had bronze bows and, as a rule, iron pricks. Another of their distinguishing features was the shape of the prick base, which was swallowtail-shaped, trapeze-shaped (with the bottom edge occasionally taking on a wavy) or rosette-shaped (GIESLER 1978, 12–13). For more information on the only known Roman Leuna-type spur belonging to Variant D in Poland, found in a Przeworsk culture settlement in Pełczyska, Złota com., see KONTNY, RUDNICKI 2006.

U. Giesler erroneously describes the site name as "Myślecin" (1978, footnote 95).

Interestingly, M. Jahn also classified the specimen under discussion as belonging to a form typical of East Prussia, inspired by western Roman provincial forms, and concluded that this was the only find of this kind made outside the region (Jahn 1921, 83, 120) excepting the spur from Tharand-Dresden in Sachsen (ZSCHILLE, FORRER 1891, Pl. 11:4; Jahn 1921, 82–83, 120, Fig. 85). However, the latter is clearly different because of its band-shaped bow devoid of profiling and because of extra rivets on the bow above and below the prick.

We know two bronze specimens of that type (loose finds) from the East Lithuanian Barrows culture cemetery at Pamusiai, raj. Varena (former Pomusie). They are known only from unpublished sketches in one of the letters incoming to Erazm Majewski from local collectors, now stored in State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw (personal information of Maria Krajewska, who is working on these files; we would like do express our gratitude for this).

At the end of one of the circular protrusions of the Pervomayskoe spur, grave 31, a broken-off element sticks out – possibly part of a hook-shaped fastening. If that is the case, we would be dealing with a Leuna-type spur.

We are grateful for an access to those materials to Prof. Wilfried Menghin, Director of Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte. We take this opportunity to thank Prof. Wilfried Menghin, Dr. Christine Reich and Dr. Horst Wieder for their generous assistance.

This is kept in the Latvias Nācionalis Vēstures Muzejs in Riga. We are grateful to its keeper, Jānis Ciglis M.A., and to Prof. Wojciech Nowakowski for the opportunity to consult it.

The other protrusion is less well preserved and cannot be credibly reconstructed.

collection) or bronze (former Grebieten, grave 108, Pervomayskoe, grave 30, Pamusiai – loose find, Koyrovo, grave 370). The dating of those spurs points fairly consistently to Phase D of the Migration Period as indicated by the accompanying finds. In graves 30 and 31 from Pervomayskoe there were found (among others) a buckle with a metope at the base of the spike (German: Schnalle mit Metopendorn), a Murga-type jug and a brooch with a star-shaped foot of Type II according to the classification of A. Bitner-Wróblewska (1991). The spur from grave 49 can be dated on the basis of a crossbow fibula with a full catch-plate (decorated in a way that is typical of brooches with star-shaped feet and adorned with an envelope-like ornament on the head) and a Sättra/Ilkjær 11 lancehead¹⁴. In grave 59 from the same cemetery, a buckle was found that was probably analogous to the one found in grave 60, dated to Phase D on the basis of the tongue-shaped strap-ends¹⁵. As refers to the spur from grave 13 at Lyublino it was found together with a fibula with a star-shaped foot of Type IV according to A. Bitner-Wróblewska's classification. In grave 44 from former Warengen there were, among other finds, two crossbow tendril brooches and a shield boss analogous to the specimen found in former Cojehnen, grave VIII (Nowakowski 1996, Pl. 87:2; archive of M. Jahn in the collection of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw)¹⁶, i.e. a form with a domelike upper part characteristic for the Late Roman Period or the Early Migration Period (TEJRAL 1992, 233, Fig. 4; GODŁOWSKI 1994, Fig. 1). The finds from grave 370 at Kovrovo could be attributed to phase D, basing on (see KULAKOV 2008, Fig. 2) i. a. two tongue-shaped strap ends, a star-foot fibula or belt buckles type H38 and form close to type H25 after R. Madyda-Legutko (1986). Concerning the chronology of the spur found in grave 108 from former Grebieten, we can only rely on the material collected in the Prussia-Sammlung¹⁷. Indexed and described as found in the same grave is a bronze brooch Type Almgren 159 (1923) of a late form, as suggested by its band-shaped bow, which is slightly wider near the head (see: NOWAKOWSKI 2001, 139–140).

In this situation it seems clear that the specimen under analysis in this article should be dated to Phase D. A dating stretching back to Phase C₃ would seem less likely considering the envelope-like ornament on the arm of the spur. Such motifs were frequently placed on artefacts from Phase D in the Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture, as were the stamped circles frequently found on the analogically dated tongue-shaped belt-end fittings (cf. TISCHLER, KEMKE 1902, Pl. XI:5, 10, 14, 19). In addition to the above-mentioned brooch from grave 49 at Pervomayskoe we should particularly point out the buckles with metopes on spikes' bases which are typical of Phases 1–2 according to A. Bitner-Wróblewska's chronology, which fit within Phase D (though ending before its final stage) (BITNER-WRÓBLEWSKA 2001, 117–120).

This is where doubts arise concerning the cultural origin of the spur under discussion. Found in a Wielbark culture site, it dates back to a time when the Wielbark culture settlement had almost disappeared in the region of what it now Elblag¹⁸. The question arises: perhaps the spur is a piece of evidence showing not so much the Balt influence bearing on the Wielbark culture, as the actual presence of a Balt newcomer arriving in the deserted territories formerly occupied by a Wielbark culture population?¹⁹ It is worth pointing out that migration from Sambian Peninsula is cited to explain why Balt artefacts are present in inventories of the Elblag

B. Kontny was able to identify this specimen in the *Prussia-Sammlung* collection in the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin (cat. no 5471). Such forms are dated in Scandinavia to the waning of Phase C₃ and Phase D₁ (ILKJÆR 1990, Fig. 198).

O. Tischler and H. Kemke include (probably in error) a cross-reference to an analogue in Table XI:14 (1902, 44), which instead of a buckle contains a belt-end fitting from a different site. It would seem that the cross-reference actually intended was Table XI:4 depicting a buckle from grave 60 at Pervomayskoe.

¹⁶ Cf. Heydeck 1909A, 222; 1909B, 238.

The publication offers no data on grave sets (BUJACK 1888; HEYDECK 1888). We have been similarly unable to find any information about the inventory of grave 108 in the *Prussia-Archiv* held in the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin.

The latest known finds from the Weklice cemetery can be dated to C₃-D (KONTNY, NATUNIEWICZ-SEKUŁA, forthcoming).

The problem of contacts between Balts and the Wielbark culture has been already discussed (BITNER-WRÓBLEWSKA 1989; NOWAKOWSKI 1989; ANDRZEJOWSKI, CIEŚLIŃSKI 2007; as regards weaponry, see also KONTNY, forthcoming).

group in the Late Migration Period, and why many cemeteries in Sambia had been abandoned (OKULICZ 1973, 469–470; KOWALSKI 2000, 219). The find under discussion here seems to suggest that the first attempts at penetration from the territory of the Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture had taken place even before Phase E, which would have seemed perfectly justifiable on strategic grounds²⁰. To date, the concept of the *exploratores* (BIERBRAUER 1995, 98–105) who entered new lands before the main body of a migrating population has been used with regard to the Goths. Perhaps this find shows a new application of this concept relating to Balts people (a scout travelling on horseback?). The question must remain unanswered until new sources become available...

Abbreviations:

ALMGREN.	α
ALMURRIN	

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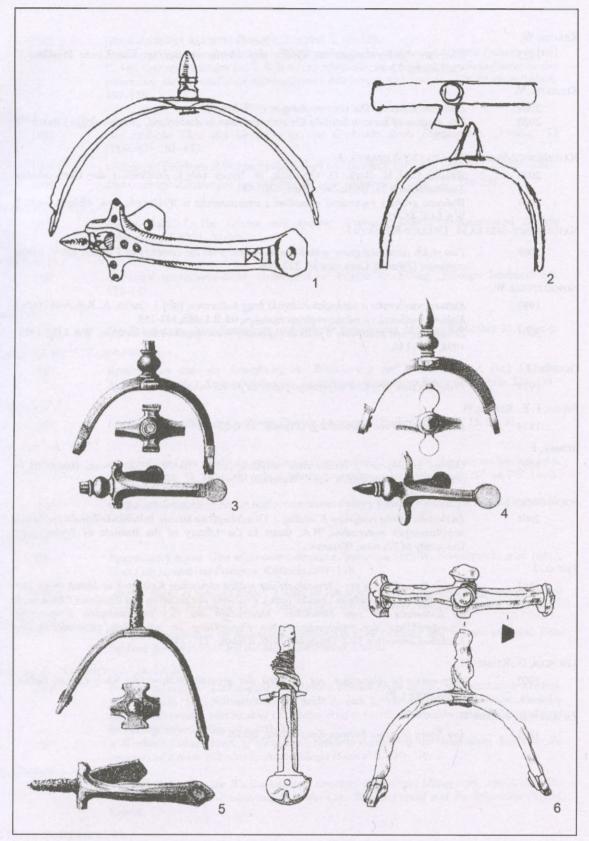


Fig. 1. Spur from Myślęcin (1) and its analogies (2-6):

1. Myślęcin (?), loose find; 2. Pervomayskoe, grave 49; 3. Lyublino, grave 13; 4. Pervomayskoe, grave 31; 5. Pervomayskoe, grave 59; 6. Kovrovo, loose find 1. after Kleemann 1938, Pl. V:r; 2. after archive of Feliks Jakobson; 3. after Tischler, Kemke 1902, Pl. XVII:4;

4. after Tischler, Kemke 1902, Pl. XVII:3; 5. after Tischler, Kemke 1902, Pl. XVII:6; 6. after Kulakov 2004, Fig. 88:3