

Interaktion ohne Grenzen

Interaction without borders

Band 1 | Volume 1

Interaktion ohne Grenzen

Beispiele archäologischer Forschungen am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts

Interaction without borders

Exemplary archaeological research at the beginning of the 21st century

herausgegeben von | edited by

Berit Valentin Eriksen, Angelika Abegg-Wigg,

Ralf Bleile & Ulf Ickerodt

Band 1 | Volume 1

Schleswig 2017

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung von

Archäologisches Landesmuseum in der Stiftung
Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig

Carlsbergfondet, København

Dronning Margrethe II's Arkæologiske Fond, København

Farumgaard-Fonden, København

Verein zur Förderung des Archäologischen Landesmuseums e. V.
Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig

Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische Archäologie in der Stiftung
Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig

Redaktion

Angelika Abegg-Wigg und Isabel Sonnenschein
unter Mitarbeit von Ronja Mücke und Nele Voß
sowie Wilson Huntley (englische Lesekorrektur)
und Annika Sirkin sowie Birte Anspach (Ortsverzeichnis)

Einbandgestaltung

Jürgen Schüller

Foto Seite V

Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen
Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig

Layout und Herstellung

Wachholtz Verlag, Kiel/Hamburg
www.wachholtz-verlag.de

Vertrieb

Archäologisches Landesamt Schleswig-Holstein (ALSH), Schleswig
www.archaeologie.schleswig-holstein.de

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der
Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten
sind im Internet über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

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Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig, und die Autoren

ISBN 978-3-00-057735-2



Festschrift für Claus von Carnap-Bornheim

zum 60. Geburtstag

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Life after death, or what shall we do with a broken brooch?

Jacek Andrzejowski

Around the middle of the 1st century BC a rather small number of Gaulish brooches made of copper alloy, representing early variants of the so-called *Kragenfibeln* (or, as some would have it, variant Almgren 18b2a), entered the central European Barbaricum (Figs. 1–2). Presumably involved in their influx were some groups of the Przeworsk culture population within the tribal federation of Ariovistus and wars waged by him¹. These brooches, rare and so different from iron wire fibulae with an arched bow (so-called *geschweifte Fibeln*) prevailing in the local Germanic communities, were presumably particularly valued by their owners. This is suggested by one more brooch of their oldest variants – *Obory-Konopnica-Nitriansky Hrádok* – recently recovered in the village of Tarnowa on the River Warta, in northern Greater Poland (Fig. 1).

The fibula survives incomplete – there is no spring and pin, and the end of its foot, as well as the catch plate, is missing (Fig. 3). The bow is short and narrow, with a heavily worn zone of decoration running the length of its back and the edge of the indentation next to the crest, and the foot is long and narrow; the surviving length of the brooch is 52 mm. With the spring mechanism missing it cannot be established whether this is the earliest variant of the *Kragenfibeln* – *Gergovia*, with a support plate (*Stützplatte*) and hook for the chord, or a prototype form of the variant *Bern-Enge*, characterized by a free chord and a poorly marked support plate (MÖLLER 2006, 49–50 figs. 3,1–4). However, this is irrelevant for dating the brooch. Several elements of the fibula from Tarnowa are worth noting. Of these, the foremost are the straightening of the originally lightly arched foot and the rather heavy filing of all of its sides, the removal of all traces of the catch plate, the remains of which – given the size of the elements of the brooch – must have survived, evident sharpening of the foot terminal, and also the filing down of the edges of the right side of the bow and a trace of a circular aperture

in the broken head, given a rounded shape sometime later (Fig. 3). These marks show that the brooch was subject to a considerable alteration as a result of which it was remade for use as a dress pin.

This radical makeover presumably was the result of either failed repairs or other damage to the brooch already repaired on an earlier occasion. Presumably the remains of this ‘original repair’ would be the partly surviving opening on the head, made in order to attach a broken-off hook or the end of the spring. The brooch from Tarnowa is not unique in this respect – the same method was used to repair another, earlier *Kragenfibel*, from Bregenz, Vorarlberg, in Austria (OVERBECK 1982, pl. 1,2). The method of original fastening of the loose end of the spring to the head of the brooch was used quite frequently on many specimens from both series of spring cover brooches (DRESCHER 1957, 84–88; OLĘDZKI 1995, 231–234 figs. 3–4) and brooches belonging to the mixed series Almgren II/IV (ANDRZEJOWSKI 1994, 92–93). Naturally, repairs made in this way are much more rare, although due to the construction of the fibulae relatively common in the case of the spring cover brooches of both series (e.g. COSACK 1979, 19; 53–55 pl. 41,2; 45,3; 67; 68,2–3; PROCHOWICZ 2014). Among eye brooches, both the main and the Prussian series, we find specimens repaired by soldering the loose end of the spring, or a new hook, to the opening in the head (e.g. COSACK 1979, 65–66 pl. 70,5; 85,1; ANDRZEJOWSKI 1998, 58 pl. XLIV,59/5; CVIII,5; SCHUSTER 2014, 202 figs. 3,2; 4). Very rarely a similar method of repair was used on other early Roman brooches, for example on Almgren series 8, group V

1 See ANDRZEJOWSKI 2005, with earlier literature and discussion concerning the classification and dating of early *Kragenfibeln*; cf. also ŁUCZKIEWICZ 2009, 343–344.



Fig. 1 Early *Kragenfibeln* in central European Barbaricum.
 1 Obory, County of Piaseczno (Poland); 2 Konopnica, County of Wieluń (Poland); 3 Nitriansky Hrádok, District of Šurany (Slovakia); 4 Tišice, District of Mělník (Czech Republic); 5 Siemianice, County of Kępno (Poland); 6 Tarnowa, County of Września (Poland).

(e.g. STROBIN 2013, 127 fig. 14). In any case, the repairs of brooches were possibly more frequent than may be concluded based on publications, especially older ones, because it seems that some repairs, for example by having two lengths of spring overlap, remained unobserved, and the actual scale of this phenomenon may only be revealed by closer examination (e.g. COSACK 1979, 28; 51–56; 65–66; VON RICHTHOFEN 1995; 2000, 59–62; SCHULTE 2011, 187–190).

Whereas ‘ordinary’ repairs helping to extend the life of an object and retain its original function obviously required both inventiveness and appropriate skills, they were still quite banal, although they have received too little attention in research. On the other hand, the pin from Tarnowa is an example of special recycling in a situation where retaining the original purpose of the object was no longer possible and for some reason it was not intended as scrap metal for remelting. The finds from the territory of *Germania magna* have furnished quite a few similar examples, although this phenomenon will be discussed here only very briefly since its comprehensive analysis would obviously require extensive studies.

An inhumation burial S3 from Szczytno in Kuyavia, dated by eye brooches of the Prussian series, yielded a necklace of glass beads and spiral twists of bronze wire, the latter including recycled springs of other fibulae of the Prussian series (Fig. 4.1; JAŹDŹEWSKI 1938, 85 figs. 21; 29–30). One of them

was used whole, complete with the chord – naturally the sense of this procedure is obscure at present. Also turned into an element of a necklace was a strap-end, presumably after it became irreparably damaged, discovered in grave 282 at Kowalewko in northern Great Poland and dated to the later stage of phase B2. In its case, after the fracturing of one of the arms of the strap-end, the other was turned into a loop for suspension (Fig. 4.5; SKORUPKA 2001, 78; 160 pl. 85, 282/9). Another pendant was made from a fragment of a crossbow brooch (a tendril form or one with a solid catch plate) found in grave 160 at Krupice in southern Podlasie (Fig. 4.2), although its location in a grave pit suggests it was not part of a necklace of glass and amber beads and a capsule pendant present in the equipment of this inhumation (JASKANIS 2005, 42–43 pl. XLIV, 160/2). Definitely more attractive is a pendant fashioned from the plate of an enamelled disc brooch recovered recently in the village of Netišin/Нетишин on the River Ногун/Горинь, in southern Volhynia (Fig. 4.3). The brooch belonged to a group of fibulae with a representation of a bird of prey attacking a hare, provenanced mainly to Pannonia and dated to the close of the 2nd and the first half of the 3rd century AD (BÓNIS 1991, 37–38 figs. 1, 1–3; 2, 3 pl. 2, 1–3; VADAY 2002, 99–103 figs. 1; 2, 1–4; cf. TUSZYŃSKA 2006, 59–60 figs. 6, 1; 7). The disc, with a diameter of c. 50 mm, was given a setting made of fine foil and pierced on its underside for suspension in a way to avoid damaging the images of the animals and keep the orientation of the composition. Regrettably, this object is known only from an internet antiquarian auction². The procedure used in its case shares close correspondence with the practice, quite common anyhow, in which Roman coins were pierced and used as pendants.

Pendants made from coins, especially numerous in the territory of the Wielbark culture during the late Roman period, may have served a symbolic function (iconography of the coins) or a magical function (use as amulets), very likely combining these two roles (e.g. BURSCHÉ 1998, 151–156; 2011, 14–16; BURSCHÉ/OKULICZ-KOZARYN 1999, 147–153; BURSCHÉ/HAHULA 2005, 143–146). In any case, the secondary use of the Roman coins in the Barbaricum had a much broader range (BURSCHÉ 2008, 400). Very rarely, pendants were also made from – presumably – broken terra sigillata vessels (Fig. 4.4; ANDRZEJOWSKI/PRZYCHODNI 2008, 174 note 81) or the feet of glass vessels (Fig. 4.6; ANDRZEJOWSKI et al. 2002, 255; 257–258 figs. 6, 5; 8; also NIELSEN 2000a, 156; 2000b, 131 fig. x6321). In most cases their context demonstrates without any doubt that they too were amulets.

An example of another kind of adaptation is a finger ring (with inner diameter of c. 17 mm) fashioned from the head and a fragment of the hoop of a snake bracelet

2 <http://auction.violity.com/21480737-drevnij-rim>; access 18.05.2016.

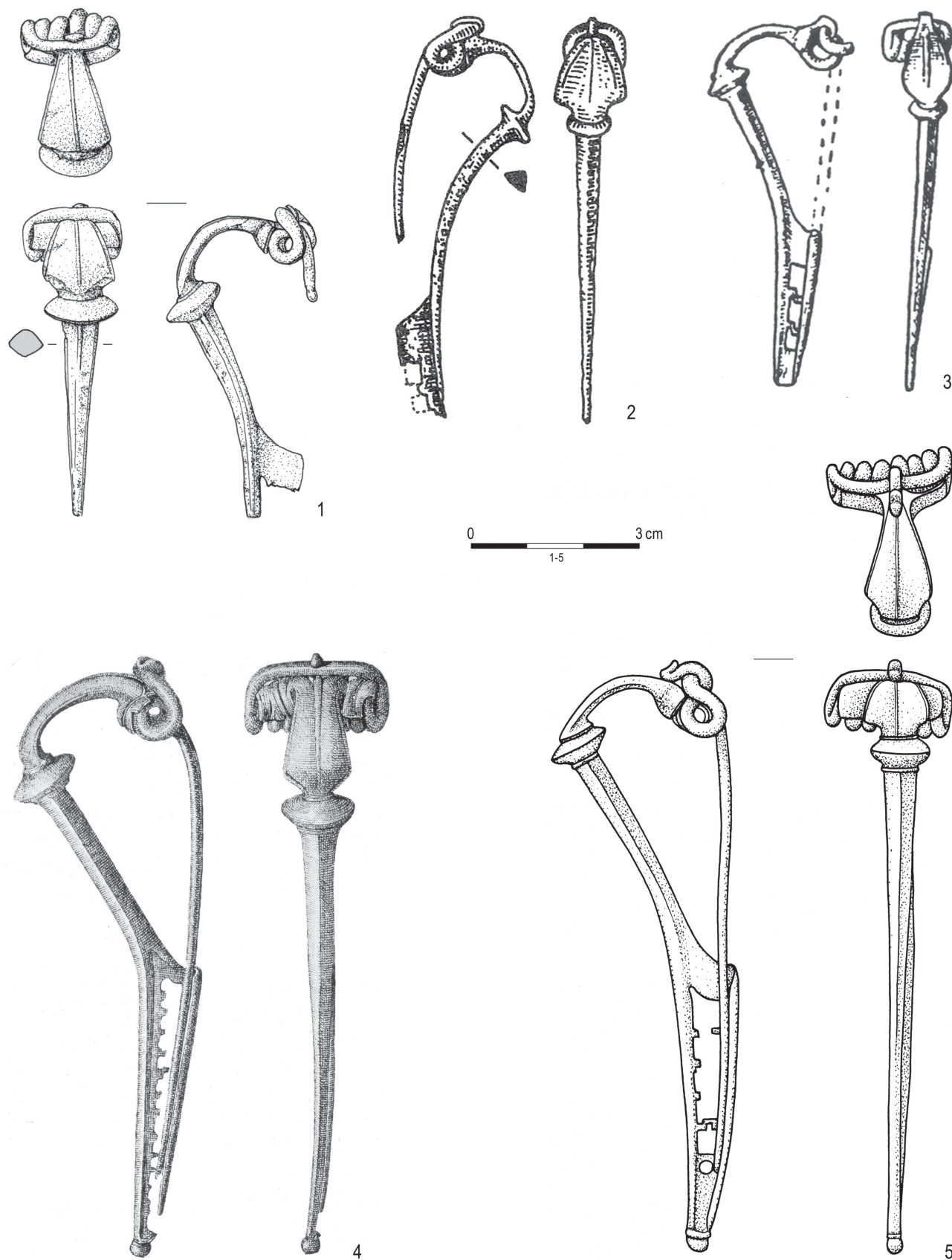


Fig. 2 Early *Kragenfibeln* in central European Barbaricum. 1 Obory, County of Piaseczno (Poland), stray find; 2 Konopnica, County of Wieluń (Poland), grave 93; 3 Nitriansky Hrádok, District of Šurany (Slovakia), stray find; 4 Tišice, District of Mělník (Czech Republic), grave 76; 5 Siemianice, County of Kępno (Poland), grave VIII (1, 5 after ANDRZEJOWSKI 2005; 2 after ABRAMEK 1988; 3 after TOČEK 1959; 4 after MOTYKOVÁ-ŠNEIDROVÁ 1963).

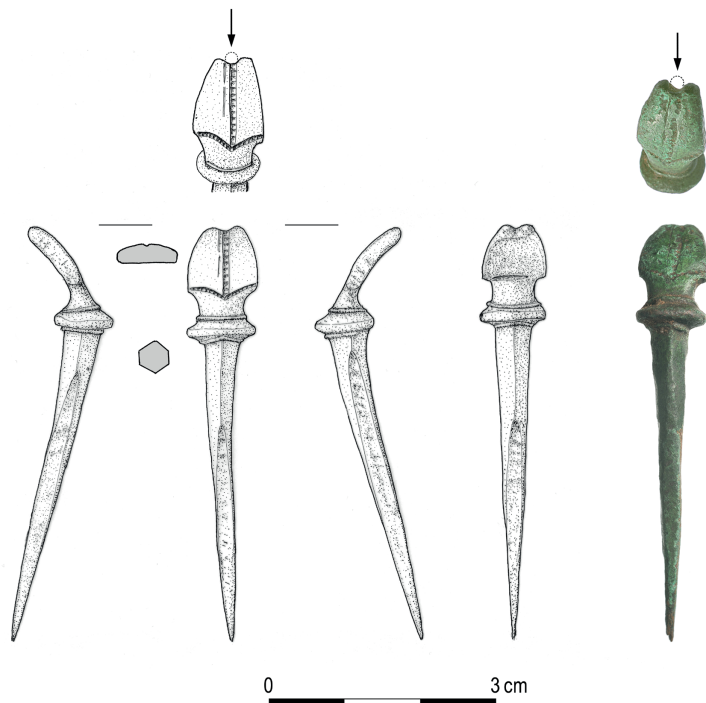


Fig. 3 A pin made from a *Kragenfibel*, found accidentally at Tarnowa (Poland), County of Września (arrow marks an aperture in the head of the brooch) (Drawing: A. Potoczny; photo: M. Kowalewski).

(*Schildkopfarmring*) type Blume I, discovered in the environs of Frombork in Ermland (unpubl., Museum of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn). It is unclear whether it was made from a broken bracelet or from a deliberately cut-off terminal. A similar situation is also observed in the case of bracelets, including snake bracelets, discovered in the graves of children in the cemeteries of the Wielbark culture which are fashioned from a fragment of a full-sized, 'grown-up' specimen (SKÓRA 2014, 215–216). Possibly, this too was a recycling of objects damaged beyond repair (given some evidently repaired snake bracelets, silver ones in particular – see e.g. MACHAJEWSKI 2013, 30; 46 pl. XL,22.4/12; LXX,1; TUSZYŃSKA et al. 2016, 42 fig. 94). It is possible nevertheless that the aim was to adjust a large, 'grown-up' bracelet to a baby's size, as for example with a pair of bracelets having an inner diameter of c.32–35 mm found in grave 242 at Odry in Eastern Pomerania and made from a single 'regular', cut-up specimen (Fig. 4,7; GRZELAKOWSKA 1991, 80–81 fig. 4; SKÓRA 2014, 213; 216 fig. 2,1). It remains an open question whether these small bracelets were functional, or were made especially for a funerary purpose (SKÓRA 2014, 218). After all, we know also of child graves containing 'grown-up' snake bracelets, as in grave 254 from Weklice in the easternmost part of Eastern Pomerania, with an inner diameter of c.55–60 mm (NATUNIEWICZ-SEKUŁA/OKULICZ-KOZARYN 2011, 75 pl. CVI,254/4.5; cf. SKÓRA 2014, 216).

In the case of bracelets with the change in size, the original purpose of the object is not changed. To some extent their original function was served also by damaged sword blades, remade into spear heads, fixed to separately forged sockets, and known from several graves of the Przeworsk culture from the close of the Roman period (CZARNECKA

2010, III–II6 fig. 1–3). On the other hand, an example of a radical modification of an object's purpose is a mount (from a belt?) fashioned from a siliqua of Constantius II, found in Podolia, probably in the Vinnytsia province³. The coin was given a crescent moon shape through cutting and provided with three rivets with wide washers (Fig. 4,8). The symbolic-magical significance of this appliqué is not as obvious as in the case of coins fashioned into pendants because the frontal part of the emperor's image was removed; on the other hand, the symbolic connotation of this object is indicated by the shape given to it ultimately.

A different character is that of objects adapted to an entirely new function in an absolutely deliberate manner. The buckle with an arm fashioned from a suitably folded iron awl and found in late Roman grave 95 in a cemetery at Żdźarów in western Mazovia (NOWAKOWSKI 2003, 295 pl. XXIII,95/1) may be safely interpreted as a funerary object. This is suggested by its shape, which raises serious doubt as to the buckle's usefulness (Fig. 4,9). This is entirely in contrast to a recycled object, the result of a simple reworking, in any case, of a Roman inlaid iron sword chape found in grave 1186 in the cemetery at Opatów in north-western Lesser Poland and dated to phase C2 (GODŁOWSKI 1979, 144 figs. 2–3; MADYDA-LEGUTKO et al. 2011a, 237–238; 2011b, pl. CCCLXVI,1186/2; CDLVII,1). The chape was found in the grave of a 2 to 3-year-old child, which makes it rather unlikely to be a fragment of a no longer surviving sword

3 <http://auction.violity.com/20233121-lunnica-iz-monety-chk-serebro>; access: 24.04.2016. I am indebted to Mr Max Levada from Kiev for details about this artefact.



Fig. 4 Recycled objects from the Roman period in central European Barbaricum. 1 Szczytno, County of Włocławek (Poland), grave S3; 2 Krupice, County of Siemiatycze (Poland), grave 160; 3 Netišin/Нетішин, Province of Khmelnytskyi (Ukraine), stray find; 4 Jartypory, County of Węgrów (Poland), grave 217; 5 Kowalewko, County of Oborniki (Poland), grave 282; 6 Jartypory, County of Węgrów (Poland), grave 122; 7 Odry, County of Chojnice (Poland), grave 242; 8 Podolia, probably Province of Vinnytsia (Ukraine), stray find; 9 Żdźarów, County of Sochaczew (Poland), grave 95; 10 Opatów, County of Kłobuck (Poland), grave 1186 (1 after JAŹDŻEWSKI 1938; 2 after JASKANIS 2005; 3 <http://auction.violity.com/21480737-drevnij-rim>; 4 drawing: A. Potoczny; 5 after SKORUPKA 2001; 6 after ANDRZEJOWSKI et al. 2002; 7 after GRZELAKOWSKA 1991; 8 <http://auction.violity.com/20233121-lunnica-iz-monety-chk-srebro>; 9 after NOWAKOWSKI 2003; 10 Drawing: J. Łupina).

scabbard. Two openings next to the edge of one of the walls in the upper, open part of the chape (Fig. 4.10) suggest on the other hand that this object could have served as a pendant amulet, with a conspicuously displayed rich decoration of its face (cf. GODŁOWSKI 1979, 153; KONTNY 2002, 120). Although the interpretation of the openings as elements of construction was challenged recently (KACZANOWSKI in print; cf. GODŁOWSKI 1979, 154), this does not alter the fact that a sword scabbard chape in the grave of a young child served a role other than the original one.

Possibly the most spectacular example of a secondary reuse of a damaged object would be the fine profiled handle from a bronze bucket, type Eggers 25 or 26, from the so-called hoard from Łubiana in Eastern Pomerania (MĄCZYŃSKA 2011, 381 No. 1077 G 3 pl. 80, G 3; III, G 3; GORECKI 2011, 170–172), used by its finder to decorate the bonnet of his tractor (RUDNICKA 2011, 20). The year was 1986 and the tractor definitely was one of a kind in the whole area of the Warsaw Pact!

In the context of specimens described above the find from Tarnowa appears to be rather exceptional, but this is hard to assess conclusively without a more extensive review of library and museum holdings. Nevertheless, the dress pin from Tarnowa proves that even after prolonged use and, it would seem, the definite ‘death’ of an object, it could be brought back to life, this time in a new form. Naturally we do not know how long the brooch from Tarnowa had been in use prior to its transformation, possibly for as long as several decades (perhaps even sixty years?). Nevertheless the procedures employed in its case show that in such a situation the return to life called for the use of special procedures which played the role of a *rite de passage* of sorts.

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