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## A MASŁOMĘCZ TYPE BROOCH FROM NORTHWEST THURINGIA

## ZAPINKA TYPU MASŁOMĘCZ Z PÓŁNOCNO-ZACHODNIEJ TURYNII

**Abstract:** From a settlement site at Ufhoven, part of Langensalza in Thuringia, comes a bird-shaped brooch of copper alloy, which can be classified as belonging to the Masłomęcz type. According to well-dated parallels in Eastern Poland and Western Belarus, it can be placed in the beginning of the Younger Roman Iron Age, i.e. subphase C1a. The site at Ufhoven yielded rich material of Germanic and Roman origin and seems to have been a residence of Germanic elites.

**Słowa kluczowe:** okres wpływów rzymskich, fibula w kształcie ptaka, typ Masłomęcz, Turynia

**Keywords:** Roman Iron Age, bird brooch, Masłomęcz type, Thuringia

For years, the Mühlhäuser Museen has been carrying out systematic prospection on a site at Ufhoven (Fig. 1), part of Bad Langensalza (site 44), Unstrut-Hainich district (Thuringia), which was occupied continuously from the Middle La Tène to the Late Migration Period. The numerous finds collected from the surface were spread over about 8 ha of farmland. In addition to a large number of fragments of Germanic hand-made and wheel-made pottery, hundreds of significant small finds were recorded, including Germanic jewellery and attire components, made of non-ferrous and precious metals, and a striking spectrum of Roman imports, such as *terra sigillata*, coins, metal vessel fragments, elements of military equipment, brooches, finger rings, utensils, many millstone fragments from Mayen basalt, an elaborately cast, gilded silver cock figure from a Mercury statuette, etc. The site also provided direct and indirect evidence of intensive non-ferrous/precious metal and iron working. Most of the Germanic and Roman material dates back to the end of the early to late Roman Iron Age (mid-2<sup>nd</sup> to late 3<sup>rd</sup> century). On the basis of the spectrum of high-quality Germanic and Roman finds and the evidence of intensive metalworking, the site, similarly to a number of other known settlements in the region that are comparable in terms of find pattern and dating, can be assumed to be a central site and residence of a Germanic elite.

An exceptional copper-alloy brooch<sup>1</sup> discovered in the year 2003 deserves special attention (Fig. 2). It represents a brooch type that has recently been the topic of several papers<sup>2</sup>, in

which the specimen in question – first published in a popular science magazine<sup>3</sup> – was not taken into account due to the unexpected location of its find spot. That is why it is presented again in this journal.

The 3.8-cm-long, solidly cast brooch is formed as a fully plastic bird and has a cast axle eye for the spring that is now missing. The apparently originally high catch plate is partially broken off. The bird's body shows geometrically incised grooves representing plumage. The piece is completely foreign to the Germanic milieu of the then Thuringia. The best parallels come from the eastern regions of Europe. Well known is a small series of four such brooches found in three graves at the necropolis at Masłomęcz in Eastern Poland<sup>4</sup>, which are the main pillar for the dating of this type of fibula to stage C1a. A. Kokowski assumed that these brooches are evidence of Germanic-Sarmatian interaction, as comparable specimens were found at two Sarmatian sites in what is today Hungary. In the meantime, however, the find pattern has changed considerably. In addition to other examples from the geographical environment of the Masłomęcz Group<sup>5</sup>, there is also evidence from the Wielbark necropolis of Pyatrovichi/Пятровічы in Belarus<sup>6</sup>, and a new find can be reported from Vrbová Lhota in Bohemia<sup>7</sup>. However, the largest increase in the number of brooches found has been observed in Ukraine. A few years ago, an old find of a pair of brooches from Velikiy Ostrozhok/Великий Острожок, obl. Vinnitsa in Western Ukraine, kept

<sup>3</sup> W. WALTHER 2004.

<sup>4</sup> A. KOKOWSKI 1983, pl. 302; 1987, fig. 29:a–c; 1998, 127–128, fig. 1:k; A. KOKOWSKI, W. KOMAN 1985, pl. 337.

<sup>5</sup> B. NIEZABITOWSKA-WIŚNIEWSKA 2015, 333–334, fig. 2:1.

<sup>6</sup> V. BELEVETS 2007, 314, fig. 6/13:2.

<sup>7</sup> E. DROBERJAR 2018.

<sup>1</sup> Find number 192; Mühlhäuser Museen, inventory number III/2003/54.

<sup>2</sup> A. GAŁĘZOWSKA 2010; B. NIEZABITOWSKA-WIŚNIEWSKA 2015, 333–334, fig. 1:1; E. DROBERJAR 2018; A. KOKOWSKI 2021; J. SCHUSTER 2021, 243.



Fig. 1. Localization of Bad Langensalza-Ufhoven in Thuringia.

Ryc. 1. Położenie miejscowości Bad Langensalza-Ufhoven w Turynii.

at the Archaeological Museum in Poznań, was highlighted by A. Gałęzowska<sup>8</sup>. To a certain extent, these brooches have already anticipated the geographical range of new finds of recent times: ten specimens come from the area between the Bug River and the middle Dnieper River<sup>9</sup>. Unfortunately, all were found illegally by metal detectorists and offered for sale on internet auctions. The region where they were discovered is only roughly localizable. Therefore, no statements can be made about their specific context, and the question of the cultural background of the sites also remains unresolved. However, the thesis of the Sarmatian origin of this type of fibula can probably be put to rest. It is possible they are related to Roman bird brooches<sup>10</sup>, which might have served as an inspiration for the production of barbarian specimens. Certain similarities of the Ufhoven specimen to Roman bird brooches and also to Romanic pigeon brooches of the Early Middle Ages cannot be denied<sup>11</sup>, but this is not surprising because of the subject matter. Nevertheless, we do not consider the fibula from Ufhoven to be a Roman

<sup>8</sup> A. GAŁĘZOWSKA 2010, 251–255, fig. 2:1, 3.

<sup>9</sup> J. SCHUSTER 2021, 243, fig. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. H. WINTER 1986.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. H. WINTHER 1988; on imitations of southern pigeon brooches in eastern Central Europe most recently: A. BAREJKO, W. NOWAKOWSKI 2021.

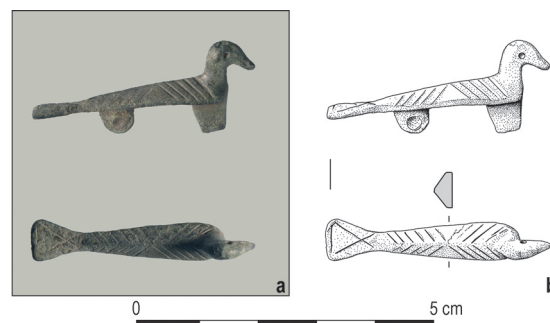


Fig. 2. Bird brooch found at Bad Langensalza-Ufhoven. Photo: B. Stefan (TLDA). Drawing: J. Schuster.

Rys. 2. Zapinka w kształcie ptaka z Bad Langensalza-Ufhoven. Fot.: B. Stefan (TLDA). Rys.: J. Schuster.

piece or an imitation of one. Stylistically<sup>12</sup>, it best matches the brooches of the Masłomęcz type and should therefore be categorized as such.

The bird brooch, which was discovered almost 1,000 km west of the narrower distribution area and which is very similar to the south-eastern comparative pieces, can be assumed to have been imported directly from the eastern part of *Germania magna*. Although the bird brooch from Ufhoven cannot be dated on its own, it is likely to belong to an early phase of the younger Roman Iron Age, which is well attested on the site by a number of Germanic brooches with high catch-plate as well as small Germanic and Roman disc brooches. How the brooch came to Northwest Thuringia can only be discussed on a purely speculative basis. Considering the known mobility of Germanic associations, direct contacts with the regions along the Bug cannot be ruled out. Last but not least, the question arises as to whether the fibula, part of a female costume, was imported as an individual piece or perhaps even reached Thuringia in the wake of exogamy.

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<sup>12</sup> See especially the geometric ornamentation.

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## STRESZCZENIE

W 2003 roku na stan. 44 w Ufhoven (dzielnica miasta Bad Langensalza), Unstrut-Hainich-Kreis w Turynii (Ryc. 1), znaleziono fibule w kształcie ptaka.

Stanowisko jest znane dzięki licznym materiałom odkrywanym od wielu lat podczas badań powierzchniowych. Dzięki nim wiemy, że znajdująca się tu osada była zamieszkiwana od środkowego okresu lateńskiego po młodszy okres wędrówek ludów. Zajmowała ona obszar nie mniejszy niż 8 ha (na takiej powierzchni rozproszone są zabytki). Oprócz licznych fragmentów germańskiej ceramiki, lepionej ręcznie oraz robionej na kole garncarskim, zarejestrowano setki innych znalezisk, w tym germańską biżuterię i elementy stroju wykonane z metali kolorowych i szlachetnych, a także szerokie spektrum importów rzymskich, takich jak monety, fragmenty ceramiki *terra sigillata* i naczyń metalowych, elementy ekwipunku wojskowego, fibule, pierścionki, liczne fragmenty rzymskich żaren z bazaltu, misternie odlana, połączana srebrna figurka koguta (część statuetki Merkurego) itp. Stanowisko dostarczyło również bezpośrednich i pośrednich dowodów na intensywną obróbkę metali nieżelaznych, w tym szlachetnych, i żelaza. Większość materiałów germańskich i rzymskich pochodzi z końca wczesnej lub z późnej rzymskiej epoki żelaza (od połowy II do końca III wieku).

Wykonana ze stopu miedzi zapinka ma 3,8 cm długości (Ryc. 2). Zabytek jest formą całkowicie obcą w germańskim środowisku ówczesnej Turynii, znajduje natomiast kilka analogii we wschodniej części Europy Środkowej i w Europie Wschodniej. Ostatnio ich znaleziska zestawiono i omówiono w kilku pracach, pomijając jednak opublikowany już dawno – choć w magazynie popularnonaukowym – okaz z Ufhoven. Fibule te, często zwane „kaczkowatymi”, ostatnio określono jako fibule typu *Masłomęcz*. Datowane są one na podfazę C<sub>1a</sub> młodszego okresu wpływów rzymskich. Trudno stwierdzić, w jaki sposób zapinka z Ufhoven trafiła w głąb Turynii. Jednym z możliwych scenariuszy jest egzogamia, ponieważ fibule typu *Masłomęcz* należały do kobiecego zestawu stroju.