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## **Bird-shaped hanging bowl escutcheon from the Slavic fortress-settlement complex at Friedrichsruhe**

### **Okucie misy do zawieszania z uszkiem w kształcie ptaka ze słowiańskiego zespołu osadniczo-grodowego z Friedrichsruhe**

**Abstract:** During the excavations within the fortress-settlement complex at Friedrichsruhe (Lkr. Parchim, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) several artefacts that have been found are indicating the presence of a local Slavic elite. Among these objects is a bronze bird-shaped escutcheon of a *hanging bowl* which comes from the British Isles (Ireland, England, Scotland, Orkney Isles). This find is the first such object from the area of Slavic settlement, shifting into focus questions as to the object's significance within its cultural environment and the form of its distribution into the Slavic sphere.

**Keywords:** Slavic elite, hanging bowls, hillforts, settlements, trade, gifts

**Abstrakt:** W trakcie wykopalisk na terenie słowiańskiego zespołu osadniczo-grodowego we Friedrichsruhe (Lkr. Parchim, Meklemburgia-Pomorze Przednie) odkryto kilka zabytków wskazujących na obecność lokalnych elit słowiańskich. Pośród nich znajdowało się okucie misy do zawieszania z uszkiem w kształcie ptaka pochodzące z Wysp Brytyjskich (Irlandia, Anglia, Szkocja, Orkady). Jest to pierwsze tego rodzaju znalezisko występujące na obszarze Słowiańszczyzny, skłaniające do postawienia pytań o znaczenie zabytku w jego kontekście kulturowym oraz sposób rozprzestrzeniania się na obszarze wpływów Słowian.

**Słowa kluczowe:** elity słowiańskie, misy do zawieszania, grodziska, osady, handel, dary

## **Introduction**

Various, and as yet largely unanswered questions about the Slavic settlement history, the emergence of elites and associated construction of fortresses, as well as the usage and change of the landscape within the region along the lower stretches of the Middle Elbe led to extensive research activities between 2004 and 2009 – thankfully initiated a.o. by Friedrich Lüth. Apart from archaeological and historical investigations these also comprised comprehensive scientific analyses (Beug *et al.* 2013; Lüth, Messal 2008; Willroth 2007; 2013). Within the scope of these studies, excavations carried out at the Slavic fortress-settlement complex at Friedrichsruhe (Lkr. Parchim, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)

produced extensive results on the site's construction and settlement history, its structure and manorial and economic role as well as on the interaction between the emerging power structures and the construction of fortresses (Jöns, Messal 2007; Messal 2009a; 2009b; 2011; 2013). The documented development, from unfortified settlement (the 8<sup>th</sup> century) via fortified settlement/large fortress (around AD 802) to heavily fortified circular rampart (around AD 830), can be understood as a manifestation of the continuous social differentiation within the Slavic population, eventually leading to the emergence of a Slavic elite (Fig. 1).

Apart from the findings of consecutive phases of fortification, the presence of a local Slavic elite is indicated by high-quality foreign goods which can be understood as evidence for a ruling- or elite culture. According to S. Brather these goods comprise weapons and military equipment in particular, as well as their indigenous adoptions (Brather 1996). Likewise, the items of jewellery and basic commodities of "foreign" character found in the hinterland of the immediate contact zone of the Baltic Sea can definitely be placed within the context of an elite culture, as they would certainly have served an elite self-portrayal, emphasising respectively their owners' manorial-economic status and their adaptation of a "foreign" courtly culture.

### **Circumstances of discovery and stratigraphic/chronological classification**

Among the foreign objects from Friedrichsruhe is a bronze bird-shaped escutcheon, recovered during the investigation of the interior of the mid-Slavic circular rampart. The object was found in an oval, bowl-shaped pit measuring 2 × 1.7 m, cut into the natural and still retaining a depth of ca. 0.26 m when uncovered (Fig. 2). The pit's stratigraphic position is of particular significance as it was situated below the settlement layers which were part of the circular rampart, thus clearly pre-dating the fortification. On the basis of the recovered pottery undoubtedly belonging to the Slavic period, the pit dates to the horizon of the open settlement and its subsequent fortification phase (large fortress). Dendro-chronological analysis dates the object's deposition in the pit between the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and AD 830 (Messal 2009b, 378–379; 2011; 2013).

### **Object and Identification**

The complete, domed object, measuring 83 mm long and 67 mm wide, depicts a bird-like animal seen from above (Figs 3–5). The head is highly abstract, a slight dimple indicating the transition to the beak (Fig. 4). The wings are apparently folded; semi-circular bulges at either side appear to represent

the bird's shoulders; the tail is triangular. Rivet holes perforating the shoulders and the tail allowed the escutcheon to be attached to a vessel. The piece is undecorated, but there are clearly discernible small remains of a possible surface coating (silver/tin?).

It is likely that the object was intended as an escutcheon for a bronze dish or bowl, which, in the style of Celtic and Roman archetypes (occasionally with chains for suspension), have become known as (insular) *hanging bowls* (cf. Brenan 1991; Bruce-Mitford, Raven 2005; Fowler 1968; Henry 1936; Müller 2006; Roth 1999; Müller-Wille 1976, 58 ff.). Apart from numerous comparisons of escutcheons of unadorned bird design from the Baltic and North Sea regions (Raven Group 2; Fig. 6; Raven 2005, 44 ff.), this identification is suggested in particular by the almost identical escutcheons found in their original position on a *hanging bowl* from chamber grave V at Hedeby near Schleswig (Fig. 7; Arents 1992, 206, Taf. 209; Arents, Eisenschmidt 2010, 425, Taf. 117). Hanging bowls are chased, round-bodied copper alloy basins with high walls fitted with escutcheons and usually thickening, inverted or chamfered, folded rims (Brenan 1991, 1; Bruce-Mitford, Raven 2005; Müller 2006, 72; Roth 1999, 631–632). There are several basins with rims folded around iron rods (cf. Trotzig 1984; 1991). Furthermore, the bowls usually feature a standing base, suggestive of a functional interaction between carrying (hanging) and standing (Roth 1999, 635).

### Origin of hanging bowls

Considering the origin of *hanging bowls* the terminus “Irish hanging bowls” (Arents 1992, 206), occasionally found in the German literature, is confusing since although the majority of the bowls come from the British Isles (Ireland, England, Scotland, Orkney Isles), they have predominantly been found in Eastern England (Fig. 8; Brenan 1991, 1 f.; Bruce-Mitford, Raven 2005, 23 ff.). While production is still assumed to have taken place in Ireland, there is also the expectation of a production within an Anglo-Saxon context (Brenan 1991, 21 ff.). Substantial numbers of *hanging bowls* have also been found in Scandinavian finds assemblages while they are significantly less common in Continental ones (Arents 1992, 206 f.; Raven 2005; Eisenschmidt 2004, 163 ff.; Müller 2006, 70 ff.; Müller-Wille 1976, 58 ff.; Vierck 1970, 29, Abb. 7). Even though the insular origin of individual bowls has repeatedly been called into question in the past, favouring Scandinavian or Continental production (Müller 2006, 70), the majority of the finds from the North- and Baltic Sea regions is indeed likely to be of insular origin (Müller 2006, 72; Müller-Wille 1976, 60 f.; Raven 2005, 58 ff.; Trotzig 1984, 229 f.).

## Role

There is extensive literature discussing the purpose of hanging bowls, considering both secular and religious uses for these bronze basins (Brenan 1991, 27 ff.; Bruce-Mitford, Raven 2005, 30 ff.; Müller 2006, 75 ff.; Roth 1999, 635; Vierck 1970); the matter has not yet been conclusively decided. A determination of their original or primary function is partly complicated by the possible mobile use of the basins, which could evidently be used suspended (escutcheons) or standing (flat base) (Roth 1999, 635). Due to the circumstances of discovery it is considerably more complicated, compared to those from Scandinavia, to determine the original function of the predominantly isolated finds of bronze basins from the British Isles. According to J. Brennan, there is a noticeable strong tendency in the British literature for interpretations in terms of a religious-liturgical function; in her opinion the number of individual basins with Christian symbolism or finds of basins within a church environment is too small to suggest a predominant use within the framework of the Christian church (Brenan 1991, 41; contra Vierck 1970). Conversely, a secular use as part of a drinking service can be presumed as more likely, which appears to be backed up by frequently documented combinations with other drinking vessel, predominantly from well-furnished grave contexts such as Sutton Hoo (Brenan 1991, 33 f.). It has to be remembered, however, that Viking-period raids frequently targeted insular churches and monasteries, which would mean that the basins found in Scandinavia could indeed originate from a Christian context (cf. Vierck 1970, 28).

The bronze basins found in Scandinavia have long since been identified as constituent parts of the tableware (Ellmers 1964/1965; see also Eisenschmidt 2004, 165; Müller 2006, 71; Müller-Wille 1976, 58 ff.; Raven 2005, 43). They were a central element for the washing of hands, both in a secular as well as ritual sense. Apart from written and documentary sources – for instance the Bayeux tapestry (Wilson 1985, Taf. 48) – this is particularly indicated by the finds contexts as the basins have been found predominantly in high-ranking, usually well-furnished Viking-period burials (Müller 2006, 35 ff.; 73; Raven 2005, 42 ff.)<sup>1</sup>. They are thus testament to a courtly elite culture.

## Dating

There is, likewise, a difference in the dating of insular and Scandinavian *hanging bowls*. The production of the insular examples is presumed to have lasted from the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> until the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, with occasional assumptions of an even longer period of manufacture (Brenan 1991, 71 ff.; 132; see also

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<sup>1</sup> The basins' position within the grave is of particular significance in this regard.

Bruce-Mitford, Raven 2005, 34 ff.; Geake 1999). By contrast, in graves within the Baltic region the Scandinavian finds do not occur before the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (Müller 2006, 74 f.; 313 ff., list 1; Raven 2005, 54 ff.)<sup>2</sup>. The discrepancy between the two groups of finds is likely to be due to two fundamental factors: on the one hand 8<sup>th</sup>-century bronze basins are absent in the insular region because of changes affecting furnished burial custom (summarised in Brenan 1991, 71 ff.), on the other hand the Scandinavian *hanging bowls* are commonly interpreted as loot which only found its way into the Baltic region with the beginning of the Viking raids in England and Ireland (Arents 1992, 207; Müller-Wille 1976, 60; Raven 2005, 42 ff.), thus at a time when bronze basins were no longer deposited in English and Irish graves.

### **Classification of the Friedrichsruhe escutcheon**

The find of a hanging bowl escutcheon from the fortress-settlement complex at Friedrichsruhe is the first such object from the area of Slavic settlement, shifting into focus questions as to the object's significance within its cultural environment and the form of its distribution into the Slavic sphere.

Foreign objects of insular origin are but rare finds within the North-West Slavic settlement area. Distribution maps of "insular import" are largely confined to the coastal area (see explanation of the term in Wamers 2000), in particular the so-called ports of trade or emporia and their surroundings. Several objects are known, for instance, from Ilow near Groß Strömkendorf (Saalow in prep.), Rostock-Dierkow (Messal 2019, 61) as well as from Menzlin (Schoknecht 1977, 40 ff.; 78 f.; see also Kleingärtner 2014, 106). Additionally, there are several records of insular import from Hedeby (Capelle 1968, 76 ff.; Müller-Wille 1976, 58 ff.; Vierck 1984; Wamers 1985, 109, Kat.-Nr. 163–170). Seaborne distribution of these items can be assumed; however, it is likely that the objects were owned by "foreign", most likely Scandinavian, merchants and were lost on site or buried together with their owners (Brather 1996, 61). Against this background, and considering the fact that the oldest Scandinavian graves with insular imports in Western Norway date to around AD 800 (Wamers 1998, 51 ff.; 2000, 367; 2011 (settlement finds); see also Raven 2005, 40 f.), the finds from the ports of trade can hardly date to before the early 9<sup>th</sup> century – provided they found their way there via Scandinavia. Beyond the coastal sites there are as yet no records of objects of insular origin from North-West Slavic inland areas; an interpretation of the Friedrichsruhe piece as being the property of a "foreign" merchant can thus almost certainly be excluded, particularly as it appears to be unlikely that non-Slavic merchants would have left

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<sup>2</sup> High-medieval engraved bronze dishes, which are very numerous in the Baltic region, will not be considered here.

the ports of trade headed towards the hinterland<sup>3</sup>. On that basis it is conceivable that the bird-shaped escutcheon found its way to Friedrichsruhe as an item of trade or within the scope of gift exchange; if the former, its starting point could have been one of the ports of trade. Alternatively, it could have reached the site using the North Sea route via the lower Elbe and the Hammaburg (Hamburg), which was under Slavic control between AD 804 and 817 (Laux 1994, 19 ff.). However, if it is not assumed that a complete *hanging bowl* had been imported, it is equally feasible that the escutcheon could have been a piece of scrap metal for non-ferrous metalworking. In the Slavic settlement area, the demand for bronze could frequently only be met through trade in scrap metal; there is clear evidence for this circumstance from Glienke (Messal 2008, 261, 273; 2015, 184) or Starigard/Oldenburg (Gabriel 1991, 235 f.). During the Late Slavic period, at least, raw material in the form of bronze scrap or sheet metal, including fragments of cut-down bronze basins, was evidently imported and further processed (Gabriel 1991, 235 f.)<sup>4</sup>. Individual indications for non-ferrous metalworking have also been recorded at Friedrichsruhe, but these come from another area of the settlement complex (Messal 2009a, 133).

Another strand of interpretation assumes an exchange of items of the elite culture in the form of gifts or presents. Apart from a large number of insular imports there is a number of *hanging bowls* from the Continent which date to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries (Vierck 1970, 29 f., Abb. 7; 1984, 382, Abb. 178), thus partly filling the dating gap between the insular and Scandinavian examples (Fig. 7). These hanging vessels reached the mainland with the journeys of Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionaries and have been recorded as single finds and in richly furnished grave assemblages within the Merovingian and Carolingian empires, respectively. Analogous to indigenous, continental bronze basins (e.g. Krefeld Gellep, grave 1782) they are predominantly interpreted as being part of tableware and as hand wash basins (Müller 2006, 55 ff.; Wamers 2000, 365; see also Müller 2006, 35 ff. on written and documentary sources). Bronze dishes and hanging vessels were also elements of elite culture in the Carolingian empire and accordingly could have been handed on or gifted in this function<sup>5</sup>. A similar function cannot be excluded for the – albeit incomplete – Friedrichsruhe-find;

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<sup>3</sup> There are but few exceptions, notably the journeys of Arab diplomats and merchants whose impressions were conveyed in the accounts of their travels. The only verifiable journey was Ibrāhīm ibn Ya‘cūb’s – presumably on a diplomatic mission – who visited large parts of the West-Slavic inland area, amongst others e.g. the Mecklenburg and Magdeburg (Richter-Bernburg 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Evidence for sheet metalworking in Starigard/Oldenburg is confined to the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century and has thus no connection to the early medieval bronze basins.

<sup>5</sup> S. Brather (1996, 75) put forward a similar interpretation for several finds found in the North-West Slavic settlement area and featuring Anglo-Carolingian animal ornament.

the adoption of Frankish courtly culture into the Slavic ruling classes has repeatedly been mentioned in the literature (cf. Brather 1996, 80 f.; Gabriel 1988; 1991).

In fact, this interpretation appears feasible when considering the history of the Middle Elbe region during the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries (summarized in Willroth 2013), particularly regarding the historically documented alliances between the Frankish realm and the Slavic Obodrites during Charlemagne's Saxon Wars. The relative vicinity of the fortress-settlement complex to the River Elbe, and thus to the border of the Carolingian empire, but equally the site's character as an early tribal fortress within the Obodritic sphere of influence both point to the possibility of it belonging to a potential ally (Messal 2009b; Ruchhöft 2008, 90). Furthermore, there are several accounts of the presence at the imperial Frankish court of Slavic elites, which is not only suggesting but making it more than likely that an exchange of gifts and presents took place. The Royal Frankish Annals for AD 823, for instance, record Emperor Louis the Pius giving gifts to Slavic elites (cf. Rau 1974, 133). It is equally probable that the allied Slavic elite received gifts when, at Hollenstedt near Hamburg in AD 804, Charlemagne proclaimed the Slavic prince Thrasco king and ceded to the Obodrites the Saxon districts north of the Elbe as well as the Este valley to its south (Laux 1994, 19 ff.). These contacts eventually led to the adoption and reception of courtly customs and conventions of the Frankish realm, for which there is irrefutable evidence particularly from Starigard/Oldenburg in Eastern Holstein (Gabriel 1988; 1991). It has to remain undecided whether the Slavic ruling classes residing at Friedrichsruhe took part in the event at Hollenstedt in AD 804 and received gifts for their allegiance; the finds context of the bird-shaped escutcheon would at least not rule it out, especially the date of the assumed deposition earlier than AD 830. Hence it is likely that the object found its way to Friedrichsruhe via the Hammaburg and the lower Middle Elbe. Moreover, it might be possible to trace yet another potential route from the Frankish realm into the Slavic settlement area, if J. Schneeweiß's identification of the oldest Saxon settlement at Meetschow as being the border site of Schezla, mentioned in the Diedenhofen capitulary of AD 805, turns out to be true (Schneeweiß 2013; Schneeweiß, Kennecke 2013).

In conclusion it can be stated that the source material permits several interpretations for the bird-shaped escutcheon from Friedrichsruhe, each depending on different explications of, or ideas about, the channels of distribution. If the interpretation of a princely exchange of gifts or a present is correct, possibly within the scope of an alliance between the Franks and the Slavic Obodrites, then it might equally be possible that the bronze bowl's function as a hand wash basin had been adopted, and thus an aspect of Frankish elite life style had been embraced by a Slavic ruling class (cf. Brather 1996, 80 f.).

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. H. Jöns (Wilhelmshaven), Dr. D. Winger (Rostock), Dr. J. Schneeweiß (Kiel) and Prof. Dr. J. Staecker (†) for reading an earlier draft, providing important advice and an inspiring discussion. The text was translated from German by Dr. Jörn Schuster (ARCHÆOLOGICALsmallFINDS).





Fig. 1. Fortress at Friedrichsruhe in the floodplain of the River Mühlenbach. View from the south, some of the settlement area of the outer bailey is visible in the foreground to the east. Photograph by F. Ruchhöft

Ryc. 1. Grodzisko we Friedrichsruhe na terasie zalewowej rzeki Mühlenbach. Widok od południa, część obszaru osady po zewnętrznej stronie wału widoczna od wschodu. Fot. F. Ruchhöft



Fig. 2. Friedrichsrue. Pits recorded at the bottom of the trench in the interior of the fortress below the fortress-period occupation. Photograph by S. Messal

Ryc. 2. Friedrichsrue. Jamy zarejestrowane na dnie wykopu zlokalizowanego na majdanie grodziska. Obiekty datowane są na okres przed powstaniem grodziska. Fot. S. Messal



Fig. 3. Friedrichsruhe. Bird-shaped bronze escutcheon. View from above. Photograph by J. Bahlo. No scale

Ryc. 3. Friedrichsruhe. Brązowe okucie w kształcie ptaka. Widok z góry. Fot. J. Bahlo. Bez skali



Fig. 4. Friedrichsruhe. Bird-shaped bronze escutcheon. Side view with detail of the head. Photograph by J. Bahlo. No scale

Ryc. 4. Friedrichsruhe. Brązowe okucie w kształcie ptaka. Widok z boku z detalami głowy. Fot. J. Bahlo. Bez skali

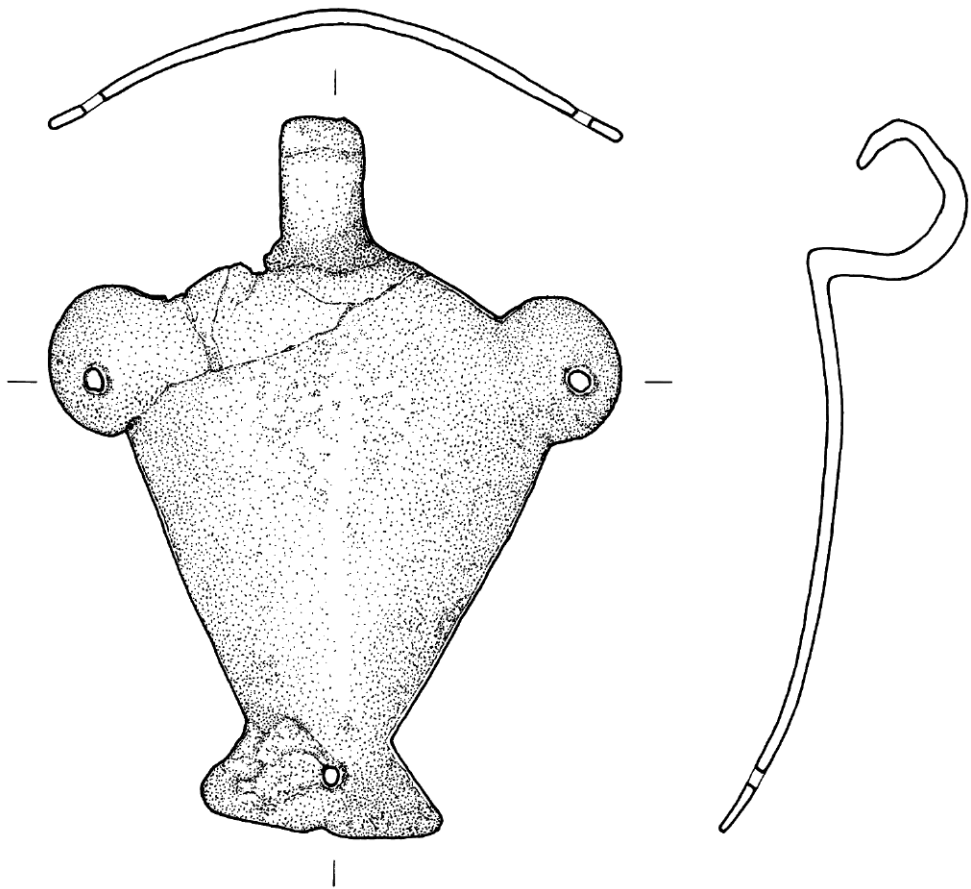


Fig. 5. Friedrichsruhe. Bird-shaped bronze escutcheon. Drawing by S. Dolereit. Scale 1:1  
Ryc. 5. Friedrichsruhe. Brązowe okucie w kształcie ptaka. Rys. S. Dolereitskała. Skala 1:1

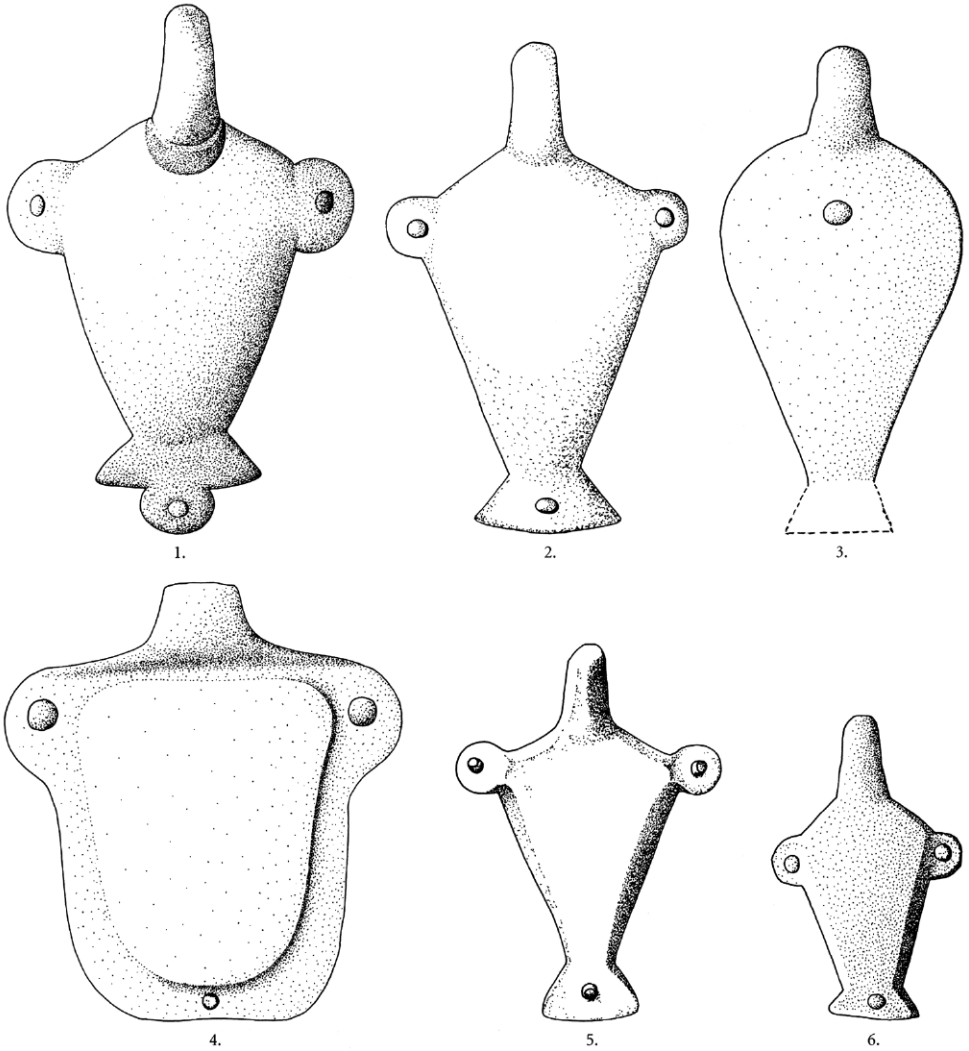


Fig. 6. Continental-found hanging-bowls of Raven-Group 2 (Raven 2005, 48, Fig. j): 1 – Setnes, Norway; 2 – Hedeby, Germany; 3 – Hopperstad, Norway; 4 – Skisjordet, Norway; 5 – Holstad, Norway; 6 – Mo, Norway. Scale 1:1

Ryc. 6. Znajdziska okuń mis wiszących grupy 2 wg Ravena (Raven 2005, 48, Fig. j): 1 – Setnes, Norwegia; 2 – Hedeby, Niemcy; 3 – Hopperstad, Norwegia; 4 – Skisjordet, Norwegia; 5 – Holstad, Norwegia; 6 – Mo, Norwegia. Skala 1:1

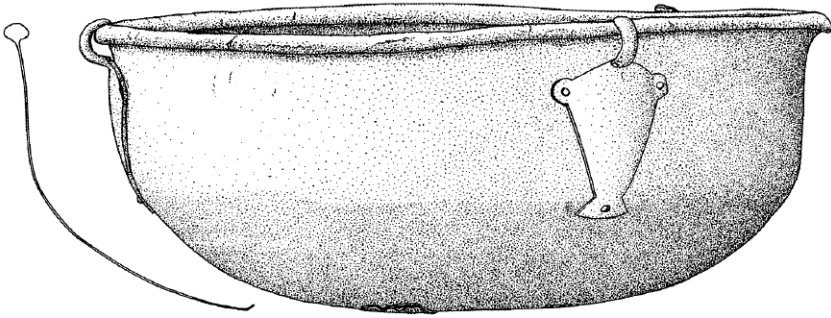


Fig. 7. Hedeby, chamber grave V. Insular hanging bowl with bird-shaped bronze escutcheons (Arents, Eisenschmidt 2010, 415, Taf. 117). Scale 1:3  
 Ryc. 7. Hedeby, grób komorowy V. Misa wisząca z brązowymi okuciami w kształcie ptaka pochodząca z Wysp Brytyjskich (Arents, Eisenschmidt 2010, 415, Taf. 117). Skala 1:3

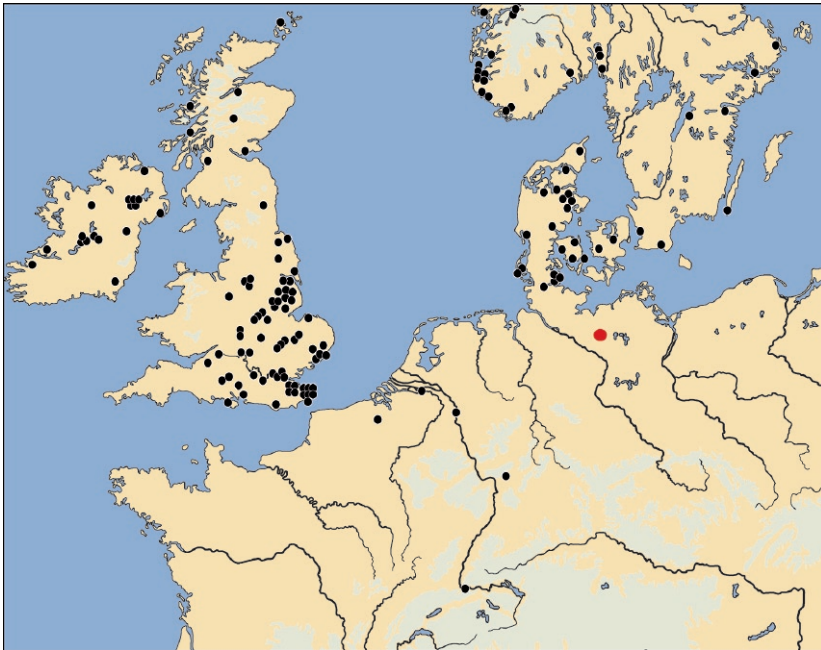


Fig. 8. Distribution of hanging bowls (no chronological distinction). Friedrichsruhe is highlighted in red (after: Vierck 1970, 29, Fig. 7, with additions; Brenan 1991, 4, fig. 2 [England]; Bruce-Mitford, Raven 2005, 28, map 9 [Ireland]; 29, map 10 [Scotland]; Müller 2006, 71, map 1; Raven 2005, 42, map 11 [Norway]). Not to scale  
 Ryc. 8. Rozprzestrzenienie mis wiszących (bez rozróżnienia chronologii). Friedrichsruhe oznaczono czerwonym punktem (za: Vierck 1970, 29, Fig. 7, ze zmianami; Brenan 1991, 4 fig. 2 [Anglia]; Bruce-Mitford, Raven 2005, 28, map 9 [Irlandia]; 29, map 10 [Szkocja]; Müller 2006, 71 map 1; Raven 2005, 42, map 11 [Norwegia]). Bez skali

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**Bird-shaped hanging bowl escutcheon  
from the Slavic fortress-settlement complex at Friedrichsruhe**

**Summary**

During archaeological and historical investigations as well as comprehensive scientific analyses at the Slavic fortress-settlement complex at Friedrichsruhe (Lkr. Parchim, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) extensive results on the site's construction and settlement history, its structure and manorial and economic role as well as on the interaction between the emerging power structures and the construction of fortresses were produced. Among the foreign objects from Friedrichsruhe is a bronze bird-shaped escutcheon of a hanging bowl, recovered during the investigation of the interior of the mid-Slavic circular rampart. Hanging bowls have predominantly been found in Eastern England. Substantial numbers of hanging bowls have also been found in Scandinavian finds assemblages and less common in Continental ones. However, the find of a hanging bowl escutcheon from the fortress-settlement complex at Friedrichsruhe is the first such object from the area of Slavic settlement, shifting into focus questions as to the object's significance within its cultural environment and the form of its distribution into the Slavic sphere. Taking historical as well as archaeological sources into consideration the material permits several interpretations for the bird-shaped escutcheon from Friedrichsruhe, each depending on different explications of, or ideas about, the channels of distribution. However, if the favoured interpretation of a princely exchange of gifts or a present is correct, possibly within the scope of an alliance between the Franks and the Slavic Obodrites, then it might equally be possible that the bronze bowl's function as a hand wash basin had been adopted, and thus an aspect of Frankish elite life style had been embraced by a Slavic ruling class.

**Okucie misy do zawieszania z uszkiem w kształcie ptaka  
ze słowiańskiego zespołu osadniczo-grodowego z Friedrichsruhe**

**Streszczenie**

Podczas badań archeologiczno-historycznych na terenie słowiańskiego zespołu osadniczo-grodowego we Friedrichsruhe (Lkr. Parchim, Meklemburgia-Pomorze Przednie) oraz towarzyszących im porównawczych analiz specjalistycznych uzyskano szereg informacji nt. rozplanowania stanowiska, historii zasiedlenia, roli grodu jako ośrodka władzy oraz centrum gospodarczego, a także dane nt. powstawania struktur władzy i konstrukcji samej budowli obronnej. Wśród przedmiotów importowanych na stanowisku we Friedrichsruhe znalazło się okucie misy do zawieszania z uszkiem w kształcie ptaka, pozyskane podczas prac na majdanie środkowosłowiańskiego grodziska. Misy te w większości znajdowane były we Wschodniej Anglii. Zabytki tego rodzaju znane są też ze stanowisk skandynawskich, a także (choć w niewielkiej liczbie) z kontynentalnej Europy. Odkrycie okucia misy do zawieszania na terenie kompleksu grodowo-osadniczego we Friedrichsruhe jest pierwszym znanym przypadkiem wystąpienia tego typu zabytku na terenie Słowiańszczyzny. Skłania to do postawienia pytania o znaczenie zabytku w jego kontekście kulturowym oraz sposób dystrybucji misy na tereny kontrolowane przez Słowian. Biorąc pod uwagę dane archeologiczne i historyczne możliwe jest wiele interpretacji okucia w kształcie ptaka z Friedrichsruhe, zależnie od przyjętych hipotez dotyczących przedostania się zabytku na teren grodziska. Jeśli przyjmiemy interpretację zakładającą wymianę darów na poziomie książęcym, możliwą w kontekście sojuszu pomiędzy Frankami a Obotrytami, może to również oznaczać pełnienie przez misę funkcji naczynia do mycia rąk, co może wskazywać na częściowe przyjęcie zwyczajów i stylu życia elit frankońskich przez rządzącą klasę Słowian.

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