

ATTEMPT TO ANALYSE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EARLY MEDIEVAL FEMALE SILVER JEWELLERY FROM THE SOUTHWESTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN AREA OF POLAND

Dagmara Król

University of Wrocław
dagmara_krol@onet.eu

Abstract: The article is an attempt to analyze female silver jewellery produces and used during Early Middle Ages in regions of southeastern and southwestern Poland. Those regions correspond to the area of nowadays Poland, respectively southwestern voivodeships: Dolnoslaskie, Slaskie, Opolskie, Malopolskie and southeastern voivodeships: Podkarpackie and Lubuskie.

The presented work deals with similarities and differences in quality and types of jewellery from those regions. The analysis focuses on silver items found in settlements, cemeteries and hoards. The recovered female jewellery highlights the divergence between east, under influence of culture from Byzantine Empire, and west.

Thanks to described archeological relics, the southern region of present Poland can be easily divided into two distinguishable parts representing different cultures.

Keywords: silver, Poland, jewellery, Early Middle Ages, archeology.

DOI: 10.14795/j.v2i3.126

ISSN 2360 – 266X

ISSN–L 2360 – 266X

Before discussion on women's early medieval jewellery from the area of southwestern and southeastern Poland can be started, one question should be asked first: when jewellery begun to be treated as an object of research in general. For years, scientist's attention was focused primarily on coins, and all of the ornaments that were found with them were treated very superficially. Moreover, initially the origin of the jewellery was determined as *Arabic*. The theory was propounded in the mid-nineteenth century by H. Hildebrand¹. The main idea of the theory bases on a claim that ornaments found in deposits in the company of Arabic coins have also oriental origins. Although some modifications of this thesis allowed local production, they still based on imitation of Arabic works. This approach continued until the early twentieth century and was eventually disproved with a theory put forward by R. Jakimowicz.² Jakimowicz conducted meticulous examinations of the contents of deposits from the areas of eastern, western and northern Europe.

1 KÓČKA-KRENZ 1982, 38-39.

2 JAKIMOWICZ 1933, 103- 138.

He concluded that the items contained in the deposits indicated local origin. Furthermore, their characteristics differed from the jewellery with Arabic and Byzantine influences that had reached the area of Poland indirectly, in roundabout way. Because of diversity of ornaments, Jakimowicz distinguished fifteen territorial groups. The division gave a basis for further discussion. This theory was soon accepted by a broader group of researchers³.

In the twentieth century subject of early medieval Slavic ornaments was more appreciated and analyzed more deeply. It was also a time when numerous studies concerning the hoards⁴, the origin of artifacts⁵ and typologies of monuments were created⁶. In the process of manufacturing jewellery, noticeable priority in the usage as a raw material belonged to precious, semiprecious metals and base metals that imitated them (among poorer population great popularity had copper and bronze characterized by reddish-yellow gloss imitating gold).

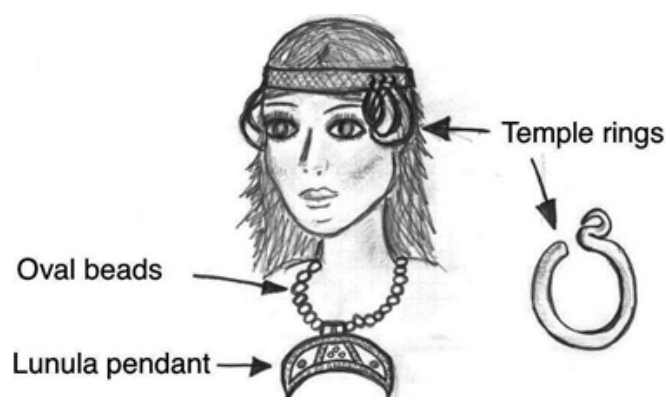


Fig. 1. A sketch of common Slavic female jewellery from Early Middle Ages. Król, D.

It is worth mentioning that silvery-white shine and plasticity lead to dissemination of extraction and adoption of silver in Early Middle Ages. The commonness of silver deposits (as opposed to gold) resulted in silver being more affordable and cheaper in both the areas of Central and Eastern Europe as well as within present-day Poland. Jewellery made from this ore begins to appear massively in early medieval graves (silver was valuable but not as much as gold, thus it often became part of an offering) and deposits in the company of coins and other objects. This informs us that the purpose was not to preserve their artistic qualities, and that these items were treated as raw material with intention for further processing⁷.

During the studied period, the southwestern parts of Polish lands were inhabited by the northwestern Slavs. On the basis of the preserved material remains preserved this aspect can be noted for large number of cases in large numbers. These are the areas of historical Silesia and western, historical Malopolska, and today known as the areas of the voievodships: Dolnoslaskie, Slaskie, Opolskie and Malopolskie (according to the administrative subdivisions of

3 Further information about the publication KÓČKA-KRENZ 1982, 40.

4 HAIŠING/KIERSNOWSKI/REYMAN 1966,

5 SZAFRAŃSKI 1963, 367- 380 and KOSTRZEWSKI 1962, 139- 211.

6 Beginning of, inter alia, typology of temple rings, most common Slavic female jewellery worn in a period of Early Middle Ages. The typology was highlighted by MUSIANOWICZ 1949.

7 WACHOWSKI 1997, 69.

Poland).

Silver-made ornaments are a common occurrence in the cemeteries located in those areas, in hoards and a little less in settlements (hoards are often found around towns and villages, and then their contents are included in the findings of settlement). What is important, the presence of such burial inventory usually suggests a tomb belonging to a female⁸. Among the relics found in necropolises, one can observe the domination of temple rings, mostly the type III⁹, situated on the skull, near the temples of the deceased, woman or girl, (the majority on the left side). One of the many examples of known burial sites with a large number of female jewellery is located in Tomice (Dolnoslaskie Voievodship). It contains a large number of relics, e.g. grave No. 9 with the remains of a child (girl) who buried with four temple rings of the type III (*S-shaped*) and one temple ring of eyelet-shaped loop¹⁰.

Temple rings were jewellery worn by Slavic women on the temples. Made of wire or piece of metal sheet they resembled open ring with differently formed endings. Based on the diversity of these endings a typology has been created. In southwestern Poland, the type III is definitely the most prevalent one. In accordance with this, five S-shaped temple rings were found amidst numerous burial grounds of women at a position Niemcza II (Dolnoslaskie Voievodship).

Unsurprisingly rings and crosses are far rarer findings in southwestern Poland. However, it is noteworthy, that several specimens of the rings woven with silver wire were recorded at a site in Strzemieszyce Wielkie (Slaskie Voievodship), and a silver cross found at the a site on Wroclaw - Ostrow Tumski. The findings of this type were also recorded on a site in Czermno (southeastern Poland), with an extraordinary discovery of an engolpion¹¹

Next conspicuous pieces of early medieval jewellery are earrings¹², more often recovered from silver deposits than cemeteries. An excellent example is a hoard found at a settlement in Zawada Lanckorońska (Malopolskie Voievodship)¹³. This hoard consisted of numerous specimens of earrings with cast grape pendant, along with earrings with four to five beads, as well as with silver knobbed beads and lunulae pendants¹⁴. Discoveries of lunulae¹⁵ are not frequent in areas of southwestern Poland and it can be assumed that the specimens have eastern provenance.

The region of southeastern Poland, that today spreads over territories of Lubelskie and Podkarpackie voievodships, and which in the Early Middle Ages were the western outskirts of Kievan Rus, and where the border

8 Individual offerings in male burial grounds can be treated as an exception. There are known cases of discoveries of a ring or a temple ring located nearby legs of deceased male.

9 According to typology of Musianowicz. Type III the so-called *S-shaped temple rings*, which name was taken from the shape of the eyelets.

10 WACHOWSKI/ROMANOW/MISZKIEWICZ 1973

11 A capsule worn by Christians, contained holy relics or quotes from Holy Bible, occasionally treated as an amulet.

12 Conclusion from analysis conducted in master thesis by KRÓL 2013, 93.

13 Jewellery found in deposit from Zawada Lanckorońska bears a resemblance to items discovered in area of southeastern Poland based on the quality of the craft.

14 ZOLL-ADAMIKOWA/NOSEK/ DEKÓWNA 1999, 119.

15 Lunulae, also called *lunar pendants* or *lunulae pendants*, in their shape remind crescent moon with tips directed downwards. Lunulae were considered as solar jewellery, which was richly adorned but only on the front.

zone that separate the West and the East Slavic zones (Latin-Orthodox borderline). There are such hubs as Przemyśl, Trepcza, Chelm or Drahichyn and settlements in Gródek, Czerwno (historic Czerwien) and Sasiadka (historical Volyn)¹⁶ identified with the so-called *Cherven Cities*¹⁷.



Fig. 2. Administrative subdivision map of Poland. Blue: Dolnoslaskie, Slaskie, Opolskie, Malopolskie voievodeships; Yellow: Podkarpackie, Lubelskie voievodeships. Król, D.

It is worth mentioning that in the Early Middle Ages, the area of Rus belonged to the Byzantine civilization, commonly named *Byzantine community of nations*¹⁸, which decisively explains the Byzantine influences seen, for instance, in jewellery worn by women.

Numerous relics and two hoards of early medieval silver decorations (discovered at a site in Czerwno during stocktaking examinations of inventory in April 2011) found in these regions have different characteristics and quality than relics found so far in the areas of southwestern Poland. Furthermore, comparing the areas of east and west, we conclude that the *West* is more impoverished in terms of diversity of findings and that the ornaments are more modestly decorated than those from the *East*.

The aforementioned deposits found on a site in Czerwno in 2011 show us that the jewellery worn by social elites at the time also includes ornaments made of sterling silver and items manufactured using variety of techniques: gilding, granulation, filigree and niello.¹⁹ One of deposits that was discovered in a clay pot contained two decorated wristband bracelets, two spiral bracelets (unadorned, with tapered endings), two earrings, two rings, nineteen whole

plaques sewn on headgear (and several in fragments²⁰) and two kolts²¹. The second hoard was hidden directly in the ground (perhaps originally located in a wooden container or in a leather or fabric packaging that decomposed before it was excavated) and includes: one unembellished spiral bracelet, two kolts, four earrings and ornamented bead²².

Among relics from southeastern areas, frequently occurring category of decorations are temporal rings (similarly to southwestern Poland, with the difference of the type) that were classified in 1949²³, and later described in detail by H. Kóčka-Krenz in 1993²⁴. As opposed to areas of western parts of Poland, in the eastern territories, there is no type that would occur considerably more often than other kinds.

Another fairly common type of jewellery in the eastern region are a special type of earrings which were worn by women on their temples (decoration also occurring in areas Western Slavs, however, more often found in hoards than in burial grounds). Determining the way they were worn sometimes causes difficulties and confusion. It is believed that they served both purposes - some items were worn in an ear as ordinary earring and some were placed on a wristband or a hat, but similarly to temple rings. In the southwestern area, there are occasionally found rings, beads and kaptorgas²⁵. Correspondingly, rings and beads also appear in the region of the eastern Poland.

Relics not encountered in the areas inhabited by the western Slavs (or their findings or publications are not known to the author), but commonly used in the east were kolts. They were among the most prestigious decorations of women from Kievan Rus and had most likely Byzantine provenance. This case is analogous to situation of wristband bracelets (known from the site in Czerwno). This type of jewellery belongs to the category of ornaments typical for areas of Kievan Rus and the Byzantine provenance. Wristband bracelets were not that popular in the west and were mainly worn by a Russian elite society and those found in Czerwno have been so far the first such a discovery in Poland.

Additionally, earrings decorated with three baskets²⁶, were a very popular category of jewellery²⁷, (with many similar findings in Rus), however, do not occur in the region of western Poland. There have been discoveries of spiral bracelets at the site in Czerwno, which were common in Scandinavia and among Baltic tribes, though the relics from the eastern Poland are more massive and ornamented²⁸.

A detailed analysis will require a more comprehensive examination of the area of eastern Poland. Unfortunately,

16 LÜBKE/WOŁOSZYN 2011, 38.

17 Cherven Cities are believed to have been an urban complex. Mentioned several times in Russian scriptures and in a book *Powieść lat minionych* from the beginning of 12th century.

18 A statement said by M. Wołoszyn during his lecture *Ex oriente lux czyli archeologia Grodow Czerwienskich* presented at the Polish Academy of Sciences, 8 January 2014.

19 A decorative technique that used black enamel-like mixture of powdered metal compound (silver, copper and lead sulphides) as an inlay on engraved or etched surface of a metal.

20 LÜBKE/WOŁOSZYN 2011, 188.

21 Ornament of female aristocracy, worn during 12th - 14th centuries in the area of Rus. Placed on both sides of headgear (bands, coifs) they composed ceremonial dress. It is accepted, that empty interiors were filled with scraps of cloths or oakum soaked with fragrances, which when swayed released their scents.

22 PIOTROWSKI/WOŁOSZYN 2012, 185-189.

23 MUSIANOWICZ 1949, 115-232.

24 KÓČKA-KRENZ 1993.

25 Kaptorgas were pendant containers worn around a neck, commonly produced in two shapes: rectangular or trapezoidal, and additionally equipped with a lid.

26 Found in the area of present Poland.

27 PIOTROWSKI/WOŁOSZYN 2012, 188.

28 PIOTROWSKI/WOŁOSZYN 2012, 188.

it must be admitted that the archaeological work on the Early Middle Ages in these areas was not a priority in the postwar period until 1989. Research conducted in 1952 by A. Gięsztor was a source of an enormous amount of relics, which matched the importance of Czeremno with the sites in Gniezno and Poznań (considered as the birthplace of Poland). Unfortunately, the examinations were interrupted and resumed only after more than ten years. To date, results of research from the 70's and 80's of twentieth century have not been published yet. Regrettably, over the years, this position has been illegally being dug up and robbed by treasure hunters, not only local. Many items have been exported abroad.

This raises the following question: why only the monuments from two sites (Czeremno and Grodek) in the eastern regions are discussed? In fact, the eastern Poland still needs a more deep exploration. The research of these sites has just recently begun. In the next years, the publications on research in this area are expected to come out. According to the statement by M. Wołoszyn: *The main objective is to prepare four books about Charven Cities, but we are also carrying out archaeological work.*²⁹

It can be concluded that ornaments under study from the area of southwestern and southeastern Poland show some similarities. The following jewellery appears on both areas: temple rings, earrings, beads. However, in the east additionally kolts and wristband bracelets. Despite the many disadvantages caused by the lack of sufficient funds and amount of research in the areas of southeastern Poland, we have to admit that the relics from these areas are much better quality, in both variety and ornamentation. Moreover, the eastern area abounds in categories of jewellery not known or not very popular among the western Slavs. One of possible reasons is the proximity of Kievan Rus, which was strongly influenced by the Byzantine Empire in the Early Middle Ages. On the other hand, areas of southwestern Poland, even though they are more meticulously examined, provide us with jewellery in simpler forms and with poorer decoration. The dominant relic in this region is temple ring with *S shaped* eyelet, or type III.

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²⁹ <http://www.dziennikwschodni.pl/zamosc/n,1000165757,co-archeolodzy-znalezli-w-czeremnie.html> (accessed: 01.09.2015).