THE SHIELD BOSSES OF THE HORGOS TYPE IN THE LIGHT OF NEW FINDS FROM THE PRZEWORSK CULTURE

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Abstract: The authors present a small group of artefacts, in terms of quantity, but significant in terms of quality, in which belong shield bosses of the Horgos type. These artefacts are characterized by individual, at the same time strongly marked, typological features which are reflected in the determinable, relatively well-documented chronology of the early phase of the Migration period. In addition, they can also serve, apart from other culturally related forms, as a kind of tool useful in reconstructing ancient routes along which in the early Migration period wandered so-called Barbarii wanting to move from central and eastern Europe to Roman Gaul and Spain. Two new finds of the Horgos type shield bosses from the Przeworsk culture territory indicate quite clearly that it was in the area of the aforementioned culture, commonly associated with the Vandal tribes, the first specimens of this type appeared. This is evidenced by their dating to subphase D1. They, as well as their further exemplifications, can therefore be considered as a determinant of both the Vandal ethnos and the indicator marking the direction of its migration.

Keywords: Horgos type shield bosses; Early Migration period; 'Chef militaire' type graves, Vandals; migrations and their directions.

The shield boss discovered in a cremation grave in Horgos, Hungary (today Horgoš, Vojvodina in Serbia), quite early appeared in the scientific archaeological literature, i.e. at the end of the 19th century³. However, the find context, in which it was presented on the published figure, only to a small degree may be synchronised with the shield boss ⁴. For example, there are Avar stirrups, at least a quarter of a millennium younger than it. However, the content of the grave, as well as the shield boss itself, were subjected to a reanalysis and verification, which brought us a bit closer to the original and, at the same time, actual composition of artefacts which occurred along with the shield boss. In turn, in the publication by Eszter Istvánovits and Valéria Kulcsár devoted to graves furnished with shield bosses in the Carpathian Basin, a photo of already heavily damaged artefact was published and its basic dimensions were given⁵ (Fig. 1).

According to these data, the shield boss is 18 cm high and its diameter at the base is 14.3 cm. Its characteristic feature is a slender, tapering towards the end and sharp point⁶, as well as a slight

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³ TERGINA 1894, 198–206. The artefact is stored in the Móra Ferenc Múzeum in Szeged, Hungary.
⁴ TERGINA 1894, 204, Pl. II.
⁵ ISTVÁNOVITS/KULCSÁR 1992, 54–55, Fig. 1.
⁶ In terms of form, the shield boss resembles type G2 after N. Zieling (1989, Pl. 10) and types 6 and 7b after M. Jahn (1916, Pl. III), but it is slightly larger than these, and above all much younger in the chronological dimension – see below. It is only worth mentioning here that the shield bosses of G2 type or of Jahn 6 and Jahn 7b types are dated to the early Roman period (ZIELING 1989, 1049, Pl. 1), while the ones of the Horgos type generally to the Early Migration period. A proper exemplification of the G2 type shield boss is, for example, a specimen discovered in Káloz, Kom. Fejér (KACZANOWSKI 1993, Fig. 4), dated to the end of phase B1, as well as a quite
undercut of a rather high rim, however much smaller than the one presented in the publication by G. Tergina and J. Tejral using this source. The issue of the shield bosses in question context addressed with a positive result by K. Godłowski, who discussed the problems with Dr. E. Istvánovits from the Jósa Andráš Museum in Nyíregyháza, an eminent specialist in the issues of the Roman period and the Migration period in Hungary. The set of artefacts accompanying the discussed shield boss presented by K. Godłowski currently consists of: sword of type XI/2 after M. Biborski or otherwise of the ‘Asiatic’ type after Chr. Miks, iron fitting of a wooden bucket, fragment of iron shield edge fitting, fragment of iron fire striker combined with a buckle with corrugated frame of type H23–24 after R. Madyda-Legutko as well as two knives – a small one and a very large, probably a combat knife. The best indicator of chronology is, of course, the sword, which should be dated to the early phase of the Migration period (phase D), but without the possibility of its internal division. The same applies to the second indicator of chronology – the buckle with corrugated frame. Summa summarum the shield boss from Horgoš should rather be linked with subphase D2 than D1, and to the smallest degree with subphase D3. Discussing the aforementioned artefacts, K. Godłowski put forward a convincing hypothesis that in view of the fact that they have so-called fire patina, usually resulting from cremation burial rite, most likely they should be associated with cremation and weapon-equipped burials of Vandals, and let us add – with the Vandals’ Hasdingi. These, as shows the Jordanes account, then settled the area between Kőrős (Criş) and Someş (Szamos), i.e. not too far from the town of Horgoš.

Leaving aside the previous consideration, one should also consider the particular form of the Horgos type shield bosses, which implies its quite obvious function. In our opinion, it is equally defensive (as an integral and the most important part of the shield) and offensive. After all, it was possible to stab with such a shield boss an opponent almost like with a sword or a spear. Already Tacitus wrote about stabbing with shield bosses by Germanic warriors. Moreover, there must have been a special demand for this type of shield bosses, as today’s re-enactment metallurgists claim that making an analogous specimen is more difficult than forging a sword. Obviously, the shield boss in question could have worked in direct combat, and therefore served better the infantry than the cavalry, but cavalrymen could also – depending on the circumstances – adopt the infantry combat mode.

large number of shield bosses from the Przeworsk culture territory belonging to the so-called the second group of graves with weapons after K. Godłowski, which generally includes the turn of phases B1/B2 (GODŁOWSKI 1992, 72, Fig. 2/2).

7 Tergina 1894, Pl. II.
8 TEJRAL 2011, Fig. 287/5.
9 GODŁOWSKI 1993, 81–83, Fig. 6.
10 BIBORSKI 1978, 93–94.
11 MIKS 2007, 106.
12 MADYDA-LEGUTKO 1987, 67. The iron fire striker (‘fused’) with the buckle was an inseparable element of the warrior’s equipment during the Migration period. Thanks to the buckle, it was possible to fasten it to the belt. The flint forming a pendant and necessary to set fire, was usually kept in a leather bag also attached to the belt.
13 GODŁOWSKI 1993, 81–82.
14 Jordanes, Getica 113–114.
15 Tacitus, Iulii Agricolae Vita 36. The opinion of Tacitus can, of course, be directly related to the shield bosses of type G2 after N. Zieling (1989), which is justified in this case by chronological reasons.
16 SŁAWIŃSKI 2002, 180–181. It concerns swords produced in Barbaricum, not swords produced in pattern welding technique in Roman provincial workshops, which for the Barbarians were matchless and kind of Wunderwaffe.
17 Of course, an infantry warrior fighting individually, and not grouped, for example, in tripex acies, because while grouped in line one could hurt comrades. It is clear, then, that at the same time, Roman soldiers grouped in the old way in ranks, let us say in the so-called tripex acies, were equipped with domed shield bosses, also present in the world
In 1993 an important work by P. Kaczanowski was published about the finds of ‘Barbarians’ weapons discovered in the territories of the Roman state\textsuperscript{18}. The author devoted a lot of space to the finds of various types of shield bosses, including the Horgos type. At the same time, he also discussed many other specimens similar or close in terms of form and dating to the Horgos type, and that is why we will try to present them for a clear distinction from the Horgos specimens understood \textit{sensu stricto}. To the aforementioned related forms should be included, for example, specimens from Neuilly, Dép. Côte-d’Or, Rhenen, Prov. Utrecht, grave 833 and Misery, Dép. Somme\textsuperscript{19}, which point is admittedly prolonged, but at the end intentionally blunt. The same applies to shield bosses from Liebenau, Kr. Nienburg and Marcelová, Okres Komárno\textsuperscript{20}, which points were widened at the top and at the very end hammered. Whereas, the most similar to the Horgos type shield bosses is the specimen from Ártánd-Kisfarkasdomb (Hungary), from grave No. 26\textsuperscript{21}, dated to subphase D2. However, we do not include this specimen to the Horgos type of shield bosses, because the profile of its dome has a slightly different form and is also quite low. The line leading from the base to the sharp point is in fact a concave one, not as in the case of the Horgos type shield bosses usually slightly bulged or at least even. We also do not include the specimens from Crimolois and the already mentioned Neuilly near Dijon, analysed by F. Vallet\textsuperscript{22}. These are conical specimens with a blunt point (Neuilly) or simply with a short and poorly marked one (Crimolois). The other thing is that, discussed by F. Vallet militaria from the area of Dijon constitute quite a large group, which can be associated with ‘Barbarians’, mainly Germanic people, arrived from central and eastern Europe. It is also very likely that their representatives were in fact the Vandals and possibly the Alans federated with them. After all, the former to phases D1 and D2, inclusive, represented the late or the post-Przeworsk culture, the numerous traces of which, e.g. in the form of round buckles with thickened frame and long fibulae of type A.158, the most typical of this culture, are found in the central and western France\textsuperscript{23}. Apart from F. Vallet’s study, J. Kleemann\textsuperscript{24} provides examples of them and their location.

Therefore, to the Horgos type shield bosses in the strict sense, we include only 8 specimens (Fig. 2 – map). These are specimens from: Vermand, Dép. Aisne, grave B\textsuperscript{25}, Bretenière, Dép.Côte-d’Or\textsuperscript{26}, Dalj, Opcina Erdut (Croatia) – two analogous specimens without context\textsuperscript{27}; obviously the one from Horgoš itself (see above), from Tőszeg-Kénsavgyár, Kom. Debrecen (Hungary) – finding without context\textsuperscript{28} and two newly acquired specimens from the main area of the Przeworsk culture, i.e. shield boss from Mokra, Kłobuck district, Silesian Voivodeship\textsuperscript{29} and from Pludwiny, Żgierz district, Łódź Voivodeship, grave 8\textsuperscript{30}.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[18] KACZANOWSKI 1993, 131–156.
\item[19] KACZANOWSKI 1993, Figs. 8/b–d and 9/a.
\item[20] KACZANOWSKI 1993, Figs. 8/e and 9/f.
\item[21] TEJRAL 2011, 363–364, Fig. 286.
\item[22] VALLET 1993, 249–258, Figs. 2–3.
\item[23] We do not mention here numerous \textit{spatha} type swords, because they may have an intercultural character, although they may also indicate the Vandals’ presence.
\item[25] BÖHME 1974, footnote 1, catalogue No. 192; CARNAP-BORNHEIM 1999, 49–50, 61, Fig. 1.
\item[26] BAUDOT 1960, 129–131; KACZANOWSKI 1993, 146, Fig. 8/A.
\item[27] HOFFFILLER 1912, 66, Fig. 25; KACZANOWSKI 1993, 140, Fig. 6/b–c.
\item[28] ROME 1993, 178, Fig. 83/20.
\item[29] BIBORSKI 2010, 137–151.
\item[30] Unpublished yet.
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The shield boss from Vermand, which only after the publication of the photo (Fig. 3) by Prof. C. von Carnap-Bornheim\(^{31}\) could be fully recognised as belonging to the Horgos type, occurred in a very rich burial of a warrior, referred to as ‘Chef militaire’. The warrior's inhumation burial took place in a stone sarcophagus furnished with numerous grave goods, which included 11 spearheads, one of them very large\(^{32}\), iron shield grip, silver fittings, silver belt buckle decorated with animal heads – group I after R. Madyda-Legutko\(^{33}\) and a gold coin (*solidus*) of the Emperor Arcadius, minted in 383–388 AD. The listed artefacts, in particular the buckle and the coin, seem to indicate that the burial took place still in subphase D1 or at the turn of phases D1/D2\(^{34}\). The shield boss from Bretenière is probably younger and can be dated to subphase D2. It is evidenced by rich furnishing of the inhumation grave in which it was discovered, although the compactness of the find is not one hundred percent sure\(^{35}\). It included, apart from shield boss, amongst others, a large *spatha* type sword with a length of 90 cm and a width of 6 cm (also the guard survived), an iron spearhead, a fragment of an iron knife, a part of an iron fibula with preserved spring, four silver buckles with thickened frame, of which one had a corrugated decoration and a silver coin of the Gallic usurper Jovinus (411–413) constituting the *terminus post quem* of the entire assemblage. We do not illustrate this shield boss in this paper because at our disposal there is only a small and rather schematic drawing contained in the source position by H. Baudot\(^{36}\), which we prefer not to process, fearing overinterpretation. The aforementioned author, instead, gives the dimensions of the shield boss in question – the diameter at the base is 17.5 cm and its height is 15.5 cm. Therefore, the shield boss from Bretenière was, as for the Horgos type specimens, low and squat, and from what one can see quite similar to the Ártánd-Kisfarkasdomb shield bosses.

We have discussed the dating of the Horgoš shield boss at the beginning of the article, and when it comes to two analogous specimens from Dalj and single one from Tőszeg-Kénsavgyár, *nota bene* largely damaged by corrosion, and, as for the Horgos type specimens, exceptionally small (Fig. 4)\(^{37}\), about their context nothing can be said, because they belong to stray finds. Hence, let us move to the most recent finds from the Przeworsk culture area, especially important for us, because they suggest the genetic origin of the artefacts discussed in the text. The first of these shield bosses was discovered by M. Biborski\(^{38}\) in the vast burial ground in Mokra, Miedźno commune, Silesian Voivodeship, containing 476 graves of the Przeworsk culture. The state of preservation of the shield boss is rather poor, nevertheless the form is perfectly perceptible (Fig. 5/1). Its reconstructed height is approximately 18 cm, while the base diameter is approximately 15 cm. The artefact is very similar to the shield boss from Horgoš, only that it does not have an undercut rim, having a cylindrical rim instead. The shield boss from Mokra belongs to stray finds and probably comes from a damaged grave, but it is not completely devoid of context. It consists of an assemblage of accompanying artefacts, mostly stray finds located in the southern part of the burial ground, which, according to the discoverer, constitutes a separate, youngest part of the cemetery. In fact, almost all of these objects, considering their typology, seem to be synchronous to the shield boss in question. Amongst

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31 CARNAP-BORNHEIM 1999, Fig. 1.
32 These were probably grave goods offered by the crew members to the leader. Compare, for example, 17 spurs in the ‘royal’ grave in Mušov (PEŠKA 2002, Fig. 7).
33 MADYDA-LEGUTKO 1987, 77–78, Pl. 22.
34 C. VON CARNAP-BORNHEIM 1999, 61, dates the burial to about 400 AD.
36 BAUDOT 1960, Fig. on page 130.
37 Shield boss from Tőszeg-Kénsavgyár is 13.5 cm high and 16 cm in diameter at the base. It can therefore be said that it is a miniaturised variant of the Horgos type.
38 BIBORSKI 2010, 146–147, Fig. 7/1.
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them it is worth to mention another shield boss, this time a conical one (Fig. 5/2), which is a close analogy to the shield boss from Misery, Dép. Somme, France, which C. von Carnap-Bornheim dated to about 400 AD. In turn, amongst the belt buckles, deserves attention the Strzegocice-Tiszaládány-Kerč type specimen (Fig. 5/4) with a stamp decoration. There are also present chronologically ‘sensitive’ fibulae, e.g. a large specimen of A.158 type, defined by I. Jakubczyk as the Zadowice-Opatów type (Fig. 5/15) and two A.159 type fibulae made of wide band, with a stamp decoration (Figs. 5, 7–8). All presented types fit exactly within the subphase D1, although one should be aware that dating the shield boss using the aforementioned items is only a general, and more precisely, an indirect treatment.

The second Przeworsk culture’s shield boss, and the last one on our list, comes from burial ground in Pludwiny, Zgierz commune, Lodz Voivodeship (central Poland), from the urn cremation grave No. 8. In total, 36 graves and numerous stray artefacts were discovered in the cemetery. This archaeological site was already recognised before World War II, but excavations were carried out on it as late as in the 1970s, and materials were deposited at the Regional Museum in Brzeziny near Łódź. The complete material, however, was not published, but only became the subject of the master’s thesis defended at the University of Lodz. The centre of the grave constituted a hand made vase filled with bones, amongst which there were two buckles (Fig. 6). One of them was made of iron, without a ferrule, belonging to type H9 after R. Madyda-Legutko, and the second one was larger, made of bronze, with a thickened frame and a ferrule resembling the Strzegocice-Tiszaládány-Kerč type, though definitely more modestly decorated. Under the urn occurred – a spearhead and a shield boss, both artefacts were directed downwards with pointed parts. The spearhead belongs to the type XXIII after P. Kaczanowski and, just like the aforementioned objects, it is the guiding form of phase D1. The shield boss has survived in a very poor condition, has a largely damaged base (like the shield boss from Mokra) and broken off the sharp end of the point. Nevertheless, in its better preserved parts there are traces of the so-called fire patina which evidence that it was on the cremation pyre. Its reconstructed height was probably about 16 cm, and the diameter of the base could have originally been around 13.5 cm. It belongs therefore to smaller specimens of the Horgos type. Its value, however, lies in the fact that thanks to well-dated context, it can be placed without any doubt in the earliest phase of the Migration period, i.e. in subphase D1.

Summing up the previous considerations, we conclude that the Horgos type shield bosses in gremio should be dated within boundaries of phases D1–D2: the older ones to phase D1, while the younger ones to phase D2, not as stated P. Kaczanowski (1993, passim) exclusively to phase D2. Their dispersion reaching as far as to France may point to the first great wave of ‘Barbarians’ migrations – the Suebi, the Alans and the Vandals – associated with historical events.
in years 406–409\textsuperscript{47}. In addition, the sequence of their chronology clearly points to those areas from where they most likely originated, i.e. where they were originally produced. Therefore, we are convinced that shield bosses of this type originate mainly from the core territory of the Przeworsk culture (today’s central and southern Poland) or possibly the Blažice – Bereg culture, containing its cultural elements, located in the upper Tisza River basin\textsuperscript{48}. There in fact, sources locate in a convincing way the tribe of the Vandals’ Hasdingi\textsuperscript{49}. In turn, the presence of the Horgos type shield bosses in the areas of Vojvodina (the shield boss from Horgoš) and Slavonia (two shield bosses from Dalj) proves that the west migration of the aforementioned barbarian peoples did not necessarily have to run along the Danube River, and if it actually ran that way, maybe there was some additional route leading along the Drava River. At this point it should be stated that with such a small number of finds (including even related ones), all such assumptions are highly speculative. What is certain, however, is that the forms of protective equipment, which are the Horgos type shield bosses originating from the areas inhabited by the Vandals, travelled with them to the areas west of the Rhine River.

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Fig. 1. Horgoš, Vojvodina (Autonomna Pokrajina Vojvodina), Serbia
(source: ISTVÁNOVITS/KULCSÁR 1992, Fig. 1)
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Fig. 3. Vermant, Dép. Aisne (source: CARNAP-BORNHEIM 1999, Fig. 1).

Fig. 4. Tőszeg-Kénsavgyár, Kom. Debrecen (source: ROME 1993, Fig. 83/20)
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Fig. 5. Mokra, Kłobuck district (source: BIBORSKI 2010, Fig. 7)
Fig. 6/a–d. Pludwiny, Zgierz district, Lodz Voivodeship. Grave goods from grave No. 8: a — Shield boss; b — Spearhead; c — Buckle with a ferrule; d — Buckle (edited by M Olędzki and L. Tyszler).