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BRADATICA FROM THE STRZELIŃSKIE HILLS

ABSTRACT

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The excavations in the Strzelińskie Hills, regularly conducted for more than 10 years led to discoveries of many interesting sites. In 2015 was examined the area of the Borowe Skalki located on the slopes of the Gromnik – the highest peak of the Strzelińskie Hills. In the vicinity of the rock outcrops were encountered traces of settlements from the Upper Palaeolithic, the Mesolithic, the Iron Age as well as the early and late Middle Ages. Also an iron battleaxe, the so-called *bradatica* was found associated with the Great Moravian influence. This artefact belongs to relatively rare finds. From the area of south-west Poland it is the seventh battleaxe of this type, and yet one of the best preserved. This find sheds a new light on the other artefacts from the early Middle Ages in the Strzelińskie Hills, which allow to identify new links between this part of the Sudetes Foreland and the Great Moravian sphere of influence.

Keywords: early Middle Ages, Sudetes Foreland, Strzelińskie Hills, Great Moravian influences, battleaxes of *bradatica* type, settlement near rock shelters

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In the past 10 years, a clear increase in interest of archaeologist in the prehistory and the Middle Ages of the Strzelińskie Hills contributed to discoveries of several new sites and verification of views concerning previously known assemblages. An impulse to initiate a broader scale field prospection was research on the highest peak of the Strzelińskie Hills – the Gromnik undertaken in 2003. The excavations which are still conducted in this place allowed to unearth previously unknown remains of castle walls from the 15th century be-

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longing to the von Czirn family as well as a tribal stronghold with bailey existing here in the 9th-10th centuries (Jaworski and Pankiewicz 2007; 2008; 2008a). An interest in excavations at the Gromnik caused research on new areas in this region (Fig. 1). In 2006 was excavated the area of the *Marienstein* rock near Gębczyce, revealing the existence in this place of a medieval quarry (personal communication A. Pankiewicz). In 2007 and 2008 were carried out excavations in the area of the abandoned medieval village Gębczyce, which allowed to determine the chronology of the complex and the time of its abandonment (Fokt 2010). Another medieval abandoned village was recorded to the west of Jegłowa, by analysing aerial laser scanning data (Fokt and Legut-Pintal 2014, 221-224; 2016, 127-131). In 2010 the prospection of the medieval quarry on slopes of the Gromnik was undertaken, thanks to which the technology of raw material acquisition in this place was determined (Lisowska 2010; 2013, 42-45). In 2014-2015 was also excavated a part of an early medieval stronghold in Witostowice (Samborski *et al.* in press).

In 2015 we started with Andrzej Wiśniewski a joint project aiming to determination of former settlement in the Strzelińskie Hills within several groups of rocks, which due to their morphology could have been convenient places of temporary stay in the past. These sites were selected based on field observations, taking into account the vicinity of water-courses, rocks' exposition and inclination in relation to the ground surface allowing a potential shelter. These studies were carried out in the Strzelińskie Hills in the area of the Borowe Skalki and the Skalickie Skalki (Wiśniewski *et al.* 2015; Wiśniewski and Lisowska 2016). Both sites were examined to date only by test trenches, with implementation of three-dimensional mapping. The excavations located at the foot of the rocks were complemented by prospection of immediate surroundings of a given site using metal detector. Thanks to this method in the area of the Borowe Skalki were discovered two objects from the 15th century – a key and a spur, as well as an artefact of exceptional scientific value – the early medieval battleaxe, so-called *bradatica*.

In place of the *bradatica* discovery a trench with dimensions of 1.5 x 1.5 m was set. It was marked as Borowe Skalki F (Fig. 2). Within it, apart from the said metal object, no evidence of any other archaeological material was found. The battleaxe was deposited in the top layer of forest podzol soil, 20 cm below the current surface. Next to it was a massive stone (Fig. 3). The *bradatica* was placed almost upright, right next to the rock. This context may indicate a possibility of an accidental loss of the object.

The discovered fragment of the blunt weapon is very well preserved (Fig. 4). The blade is elongated and slightly inclined in relation to the vertical axis of the handle, forming with it an angle of about 75 degrees. Symmetrical, oval shaft-hole is provided with well-marked projections, but the attention draws the loss of one of them. The knob is rectangular in cross-section and fan-ended. The narrow, slender and asymmetrical cutting edge is clearly undercut and drooping. After conservation of the artefact, on its surface became perceptible small cavities and defects. The artefact has the following dimensions (according to the proposal: Nadolski 1954, 284 with amendments by: Kotowicz 2014, 9, fig. 1):

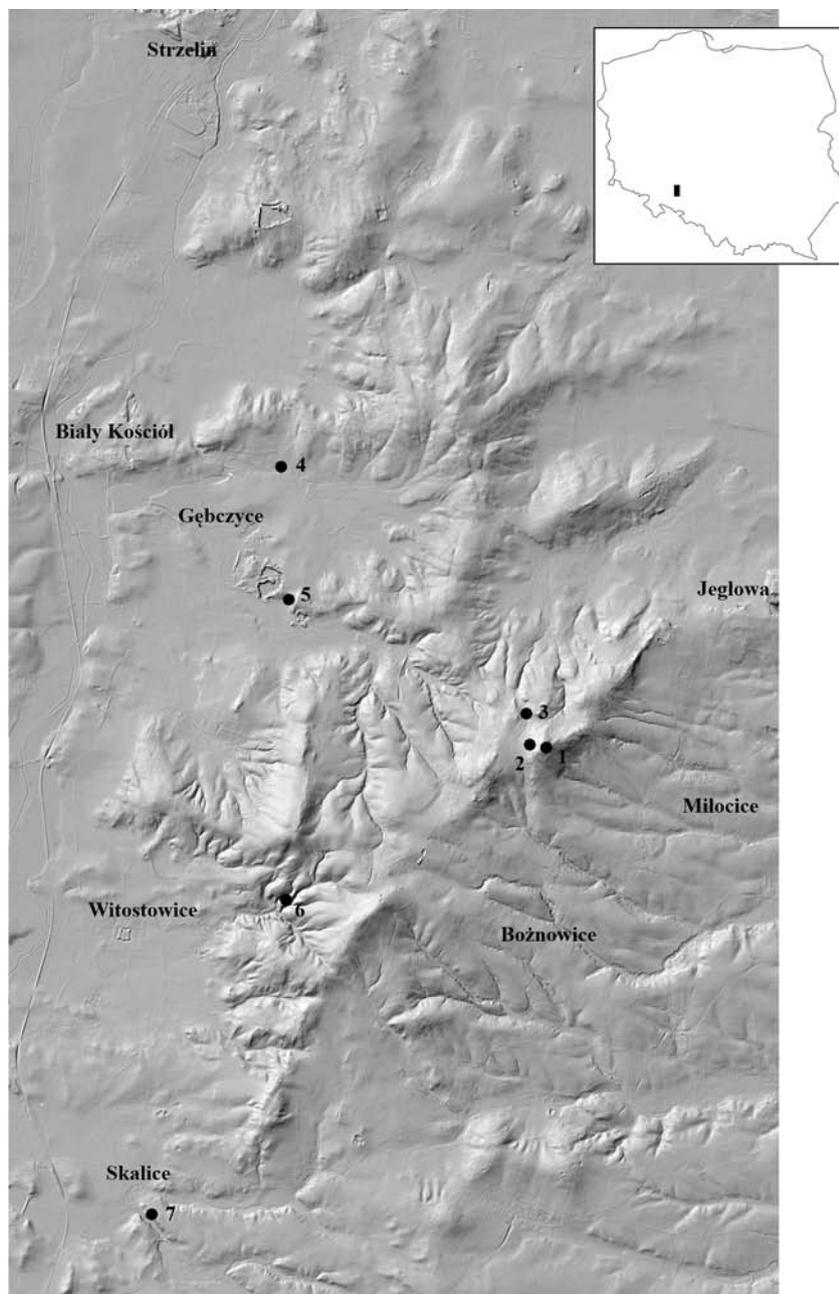


Fig. 1. The Strzelińskie Hills. Sites excavated in the years 2003-2015. 1 – Gromnik castle and the stronghold, 2 – Gromnik medieval quarry, 3 – Borowe Skałki, 4 – Gębczyce medieval village, 5 – Gębczyce *Marienstein*, 6 – Witostowice, site 2, 7 – Skalickie Skałki (drawing E. Lisowska based on CODGiK data)

Total length: 14.4 cm

Height of the cutting edge: 4.3 cm (preserved), 7 cm (original reconstructed)

Minimal height of the neck: 1.44 cm

Width of the shaft-hole: 3.5 cm

Height of the shaft-hole: 1.5 cm

Height of the shaft-hole with projections: 5.66 cm

Diameter of the shaft-hole: 2.6 cm

Length of the knob: 2.5 cm

Weight: 209,2 gram

The *bradatica* discovered in the Borowe Skalki, taking into account the most frequently cited classifications of this type of weapon, should be linked with the type IA after V. Hruby (1955, fig. 28), the type IA after A. Dostál (1966, fig. 15) and the type IA after A. Ruttkay (1976, fig. 42).

Numerous specimens of weapon of this type are known primarily from Moravia, i.e. from the central part of the area occupied in the 9th and the early 10th century by the Great Moravia state (Dostál 1966; Ruttkay 1976; Měřínský 2005). Much less frequently they are observed on sites in Lower Austria, Poland and the west Czech Republic (Friesinger 1972; Ginalski *et al.* 2013; Jaworski 2005; 2014; Poleski 2004; Poulik 1948, 33-38). These objects are dated to the 9th-10th centuries (Hruby 1955, 172; Klanica 2006; Jaworski 2014), and several single finds – mainly from Moravia, not without a discussion, are dated to the end of the 8th century (Kotowicz 2009, 388 – there older references). From Poland to date are known 21 such artefacts, and 18 of them have been discussed with appropriate commentary by P. Kotowicz (Kotowicz 2009; 2014). Most of them were recorded in Lesser Poland (Kotowicz 2009). According to many researchers (Poleski 2013, 174 and following; Jaworski, 2005a, 364) these objects appeared to the north of the main ridge of the Carpathians and the Sudetes in the 9th and the 10th centuries (and even in individual cases later) as a direct expression of influence, perhaps military, of the Great Moravia state, during its glory days and shortly after its fall. In the case of finds from south-east Poland, some scholars are also of the opinion that these battleaxes were produced locally, under the influence of 'fashion' from the south (Poleski 2004, 169-172).

Similar artefacts are known from other early medieval sites in Lower Silesia. Three of them were discovered in the lowland parts of the region: in Chobienia, Lubin district (Bierman *et al.* 2011, 117), Gostyń, Polkowice district (Rzeźnik 1997, 275-278; 1998, fig. 5b) and Popęszyce, Nowa Sól district (Kotowicz 2014, 103-104, catalogue No. 398 there older references). The *bradatica* from Chobienia was discovered on the stronghold from the second half of the 9th-9th/10th century, within trench III, located at the ramparts, at the bottom of a pit. Amongst the accompanying artefacts were recorded pottery fragments and a volute knife (Bierman *et al.* 2011, 117). The specimen from Chobienia has preserved only the shaft-hole with projections, without the cutting edge, which makes impossible its complete classification. In much better condition survived the *bradatica* discovered on the

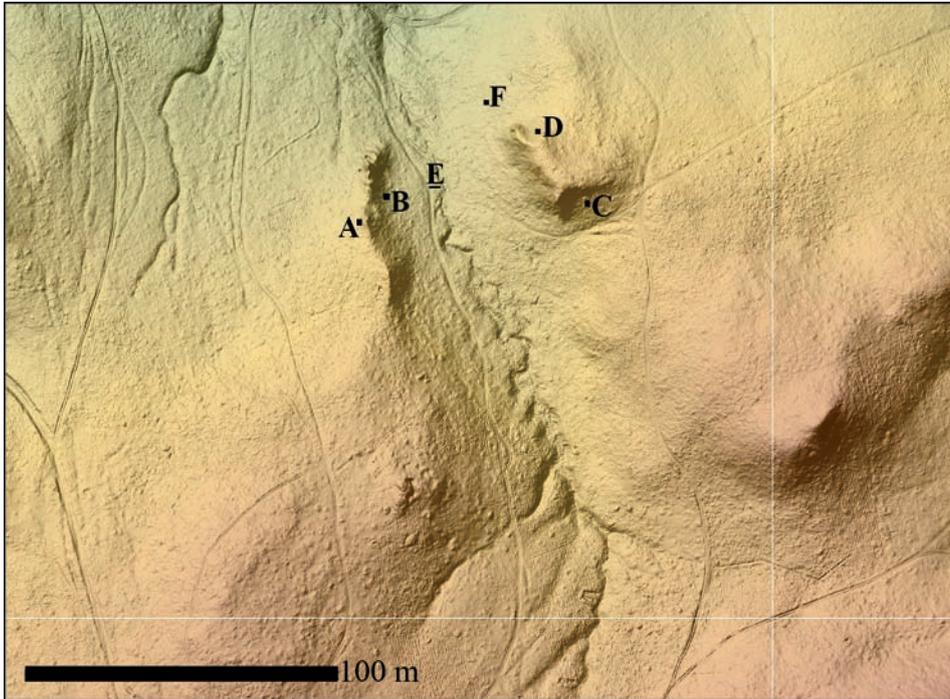


Fig. 2. Location of the trench Borowe Skałki F in the Gromnik Massif (drawing E. Lisowska and A. Łuczak based on CODGiK data)

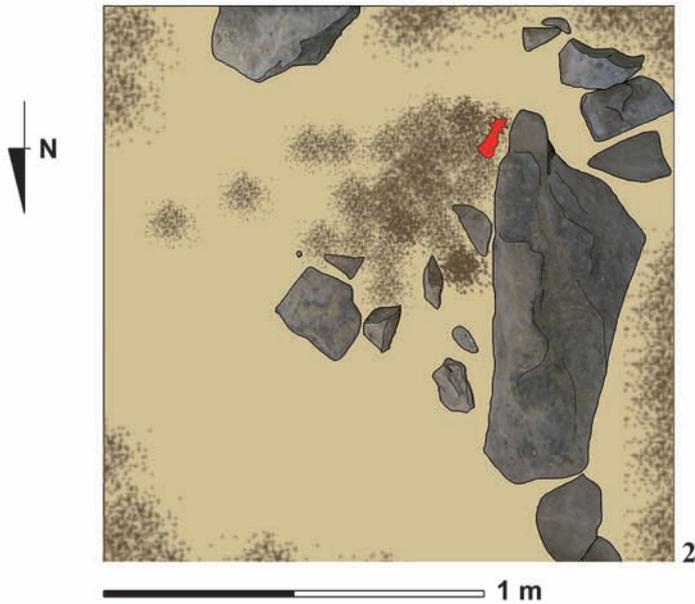


Fig. 3. Place of find of *bradatica*.
1 – general view of the trench, 2 – plan of the trench with the artefact marked
(drawing and photograph E. Lisowska)

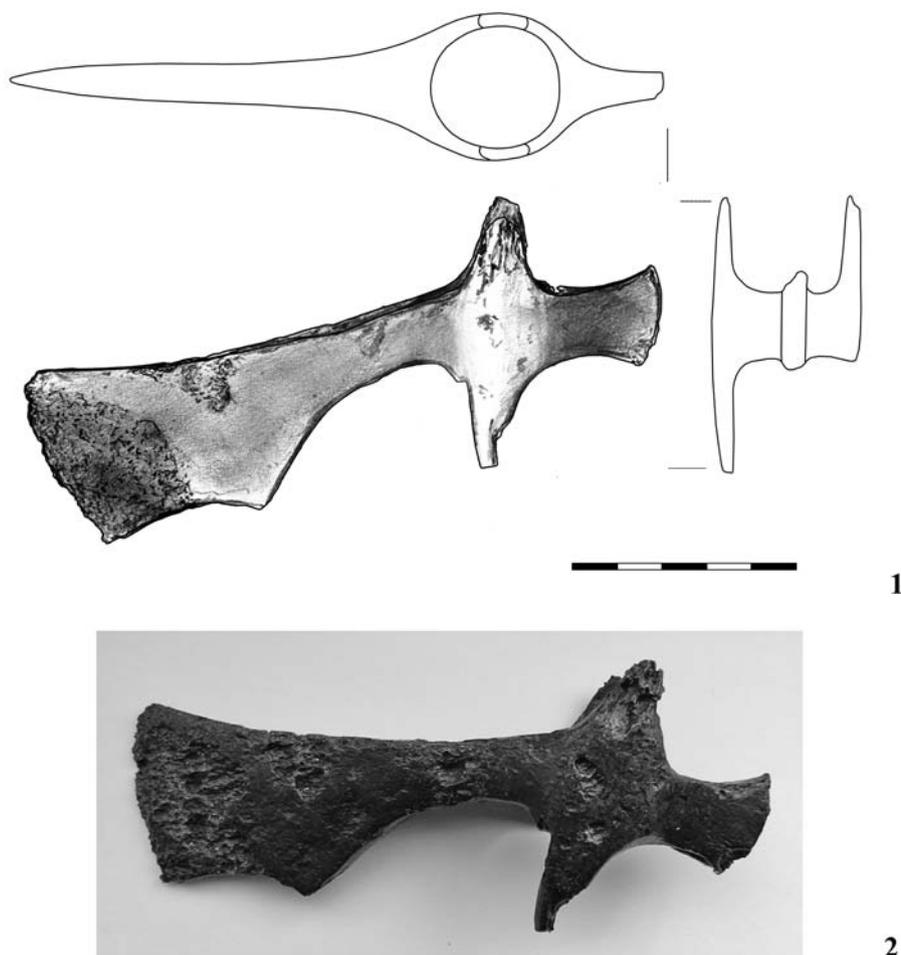


Fig. 4. *Bradatica* from the trench Borowe Skalki F.
 1 – plan and sections (drawing N. Lenkow); 2 – photograph (E. Lisowska)

stronghold from the second half of the 9th – the first half of the 10th century in Gostyń on the ‘Kowalowa Góra’ (almost complete specimen with cutting edge and damaged shaft-hole). It was found in trench VII/96 within a dwelling building No. 2 (Rzeźnik 1997, 275-278). In the fill of the feature were also recorded pottery fragments, iron bowls of the Silesian type, buckle, fire strikers, arrowhead, spindle whorl, whetstones and six glass beads. The last battleaxe from the lowland part of Lower Silesia, and also discovered as the first, was (the artefact was lost) the *bradatica* found in 1926 on the stronghold from the end of the 9th – the beginning of the 10th century in Popęszyce (Jahn 1937, 109-111). Like the previous one it was preserved almost completely representing the full form of the cutting

edge and the shaft-hole with projections (Jahn 1937, fig. 5; Kotowicz 2014, 104 – there further references), which can be classified as type IA after B. Dostál (1966, fig. 15). It was found in the cultural layer located in trench 2, cutting the stronghold's ramparts.

Another three *bradaticas* were recorded in the Sudetes and the Sudetes Foreland. Two are stray finds from Łądek Zdrój, Kłodzko district (Konczewska and Konczewski 2010, 171-176) and from Słupice, Dzierżoniów district (Jaworski 2014, fig. 1d). The *bradatica* from Łądek Zdrój was found in the Góry Złote (Golden Mountains) in the top part of the Konik Mount, at an altitude of about 480 m above sea level. The artefact was deposited in a crevice located in a group of small gneissic rocks crowning the peak (Konczewska and Konczewski 2010, 172). The battleaxe was discovered in a very good condition allowing to its classification as type IA after B. Dostál (1966, fig. 15). Equally well preserved is the *bradatica* from the area of village Słupice (Jaworski 2014, 175). It was discovered about 700 meters west of the green trail leading from the Radunia Mount towards Słupice, at the edge of a forest above fields over the village (personal communication T. Ciasnocha and K. Jaworski). Like the previous one it can be linked with the type IA after B. Dostál (1966, fig. 15). Only one *bradatica* from the Sudetes was found in the course of excavations, during the archaeological research on the stronghold from the end of 9th – beginning of the 10th century in Wałbrzych-Stary Książ (Jaworski 1994, 514-516; 1997, 120-121; 2001, 202; 2005, 288). The artefact was discovered 8 cm under the ground within of the secondary deposit, in destroyed southern part of the first inner rampart of the stronghold. At a distance of about 1.2 m away, also in the top damaged part of the rampart an iron semi-scythe was discovered. Apart from the artefacts in question no early medieval material in this place was found (Jaworski 1994, 515). The fragment of *bradatica* from Stary Książ survived only in the form of the shaft-hole with projections, and it is worth mentioning that this part belongs to the most massive amongst the specimens known from Lower Silesia (the diameter of the shaft-hole's circumference is 4.5 cm).

It is interesting that the *bradaticas* discovered in Lower Silesia mostly represent a similar type. Their common feature is the shape of blade, which is usually slightly inclined in relation to the vertical axis of the handle. The observed specimens have also (if preserved) drooping blade and clearly marked shaft-hole projections (they fit the best the type IA or IB after Dostál 1966). The Lower Silesian specimens, instead, differ slightly in shape of knob, which in side view is slightly fan-shaped, and forms of end of cross-section are spindle-shaped, rectangular and square. Type IA is also the most common amongst the artefacts discovered in the area of Moravia (Dostál 1966, 70).

This find, instead, is very important in the context of discoveries in the Niemczańsko-Strzelińskie Hills. This is an area of an intensive settlement in the 9th and the 10th centuries (Lodowski 1980, Map 3; Jaworski 2005, 314), often linked with a functioning here in the 9th and the 10th centuries the *Sleenzane* tribe known, amongst others, from written sources: Bavarian Geographer (about 845/846) or the Prague Document (1086). Over the past 20 years, the area of the Niemczańsko-Strzelińskie Hills, mainly thanks to excava-

tions on the stronghold in Gilów, but also as a result of reinterpretation of earlier finds (Niemcza I) became also a region linked with influence from the Great Moravia in the second half of the 9th century and the early 10th century. An evidence of the arrival at this time of a population from the south is undoubtedly the stronghold in Gilów, which, according to K. Jaworski was founded by a Great Moravian military unit in the second half of the 9th century (Jaworski 2005, 322-325; Jaworski 2012, 211; 2014, 174). Such origins of this complex indicates its construction in the form of ramparts with stone facing (Jaworski 2005, 125-163), as well as numerous metal artefacts (Jaworski 2005, 263 and following; Jaworski and Pankiewicz 2008b, 205) and pottery with Great Moravian features (Jaworski and Rzeźnik 1994, 309; Rzeźnik 1997b, 127; Pankiewicz 2012, 180-186). Another site which that can be associated with influence from the south is discovered in the late 19th century inhumation cemetery in Niemcza I (Kurtz 1936, 27, 60). Apart from the nature of the necropolis, it is linked with influence from the south also by style of pottery discovered there (Pankiewicz 2012, 186-188). Certain southern elements, such as stone facing or vessels referring to the southern forms are also present on a nearby stronghold in Niemcza (Jaworski 2005, 321 and following; Pankiewicz 2012, 188-191).

For some time the area of this influence in the Niemczańsko-Strzelińskie Hills known to the Middle Ages researchers, remained only its western part, also determined by geographers as a separate unit – the Niemczańskie Hills (Staffa *et al.* 2008, 13). A breakthrough in this matter was discovery in the Strzelińskie Hills metal products of the Great Moravian character – bronze globular button (gombik) and iron objects for horses' hooves cleaning. These items were found in the bailey of the stronghold functioning in the 9th-10th century at the top of the Gromnik Mount (Jaworski 2014, 174), which form was almost completely destroyed by later, 15th-century and 19th-century transformation of the peak's dome (Jaworski and Pankiewicz 2008a, 51-100). There was however no clear resemblance to the southern materials, in forms of pottery from the Gromnik (Jaworski and Pankiewicz 2008a; Pankiewicz 2012, 191-193).

In this light, to very interesting finds belong two deposits (hoards?) of iron bowls of the Silesian type discovered in the Strzelińskie Hills. The first of them containing 8 specimens was discovered also in an unspecified location in the Gromnik area (Rzeźnik 2008). The second deposit containing 39 bowls was discovered on the stronghold 1 in Witostowice (Czechowski, Jaworski and Hojniak 2016). Metal products, including the *bradaticas* are also present in hoards with other types of metal objects (Bartošková 1986; Ginalski 1997). From the Sudetes region there are known three hoards where there were iron products of the Great Moravian provenance, discovered in Gilów and Stary Książ (Jaworski 2005, 288 and following).

The presence of these metal objects in the Strzelińskie Hills, including the *bradatica* in question, may indicate sporadic contacts of the local population directly with the newcomers from the south, or more likely, the contacts with already functioning Great Moravian population in the Niemczańskie Hills (Gilów, Niemcza). The find of *bradatica* less than 1 km in

a straight line from the aforementioned bailey on the Gromnik, sheds a new light on single to date Great Moravian artefacts from the area of the peak's dome of this mount. This area could have been subjected to a short-term penetration of the population having direct or indirect contact with elements of the Great Moravian culture. In this context, the find of *bradatica*, although a single one, may hypothetically indicate an unknown from other sources military action, which took place within the Strzelińskie Hills at the end of the 9th – the beginning of the 10th century. The anxiety of the population caused by existence of a potential military threat could have manifested itself in securing the valuable iron raw material. On the other hand, objects of southern provenance discovered in the Gromnik area may evidence a certain type of fashion in this part of Silesia in the 9th-10th century.

In light of the presented finds it should be also undertaken the issue of possible contacts of the population living in this area, identified as the *Sleenzane* tribe, with arriving newcomers from the south (Jaworski 2005, 135). These contacts, as long as they could have been of purely military nature, and focused on the interception of tactically important points (the highest elevation in the area – the peak of the Gromnik) or economically productive deposits (outcrops of quartz slates in nearby Jegłowa). An enigmatic evidence of links of the Great Moravian inhabitants of the stronghold in Gilów with the Strzelińskie Hills is fragment of whetstone made of quartz-sericite slate quarried in Jegłowa, discovered on the stronghold in Gilów (Jaworski and Wójcik 1997, 138; Lisowska 2013, 239). Perhaps this most appreciated in the early Middle Ages in Silesia outcrop of rock materials (Lisowska 2013, 204 and following) was determined at the stage of an attempt of domination of the region by Great Moravia, at the same time wanting to access it.

The discovery of *bradatica* dated to the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century in the area of Gromnik Mount together with the aforementioned metal objects discovered here in the last few years, extend the reach of penetration of this part of the Sudetes Foreland by people carrying with them elements of the Great Moravia culture. Due to the local nature of pottery and other materials from the bailey on Gromnik and on the stronghold in Witostowice, they do not evidence an attempt to settle this area as in the case of the Niemczańskie Hills (Great Moravian stronghold in Gilów and cementary with 'southern elements' in Niemcza I). However, the finds from the Strzelińskie Hills certify contacts of the population dwelling on the Gromnik peak's dome with the Great Moravian people at the end of the 9th and the early 10th century. The presence of exclusively metal objects of Great Moravian origin may indicate some military penetration of this resource-rich part of the Sudetes Foreland.

There is also interesting the fact that the *bradatica* was discovered in the area of a young glacial valley opening towards the dome of the Gromnik. The analysis of geomorphology of this area indicates that this pass is the most convenient route, by which one can reach the peak of the Gromnik from the north and west. In the late Middle Ages there probably functioned a road leading to the castle located on the top which is confirmed by data from aerial scanning and the field observations as well as single finds of spur and key from the

15th century. This road could have also functioned 500 years earlier, and the Borowe Skalki could have been a shelter for travelling people, or a place to prepare a potential ambush. This assumption is to date reflected in the very small source base, but it can be a starting point for further research in this area.

The research in the area of the Borowe Skalki, on top of the Gromnik, as well as in Witostowice will continue in next years. The examples of listed here finds clearly show a need to penetrate not only the immediate vicinity of the site, but also of search focusing on the examination of a much larger area, with special emphasis on characteristic places – exposed points, water sources, smaller and larger valleys, as well as poorly visible in field network of old roads.

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