

## **A MIRROR HANDLE FOUND IN KURZAŃKOWICE (POW. OŁAWA / PL)**

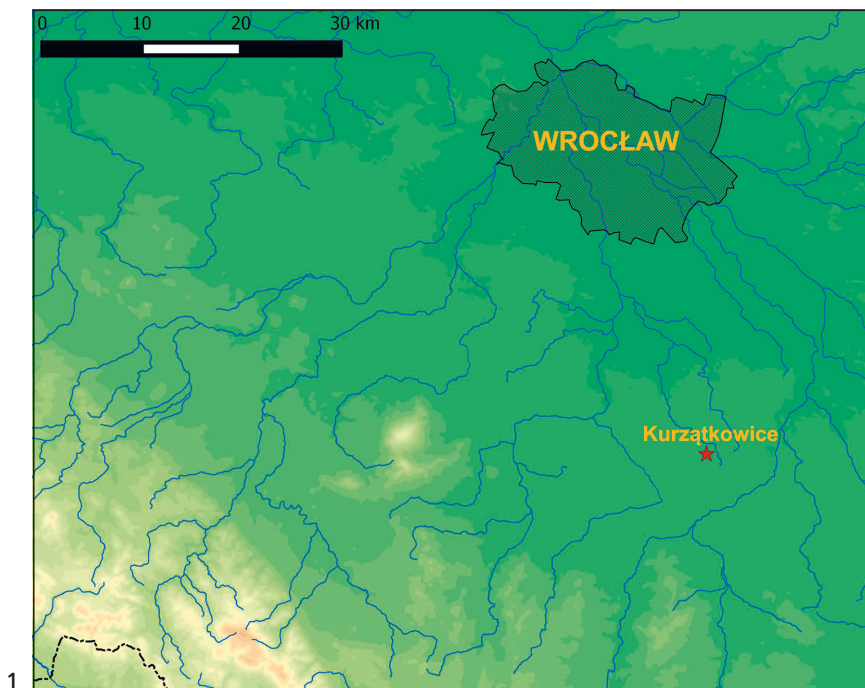
### **A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF INTERREGIONAL CONTACTS IN LOWER SILESIA IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY BC**

There is much that remains to be explained regarding interregional contacts in Lower Silesia in the late pre-Roman period (late La Tène period)<sup>1</sup>. The area in question, probably on the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, is distinguished by relatively large settlement activity, as evidenced by numerous sites dated to this period (Pazda 1980, 22-23 map 2). The overwhelming majority of these sites are cemeteries of the Przeworsk culture. A large amount of data acquired from regular surface prospecting has confirmed the region's enormous settlement potential, however, it is difficult to state anything more about the specific nature of these settlements, as relatively few sites (Dobrakowski et al. 2001, 142-149; Markiewicz 2009; Żygadło 2012; Bohr 2014) have been studied with the use of large-scale excavations conducted on a number of cohesive complexes necessary for detailed analysis. Furthermore, a significant majority of the available information can be dated only generally to the later pre-Roman period, mainly because finds from these sites were discovered only during surface surveys or small trial excavations. Moreover, the excavations have not revealed a broader series of artefacts (other than pottery) that would add variety to the monotonous looking material culture of this time. For this reason, every newly discovered object that could shed light on interregional contacts of local communities during the late pre-Roman period is extraordinarily valuable.

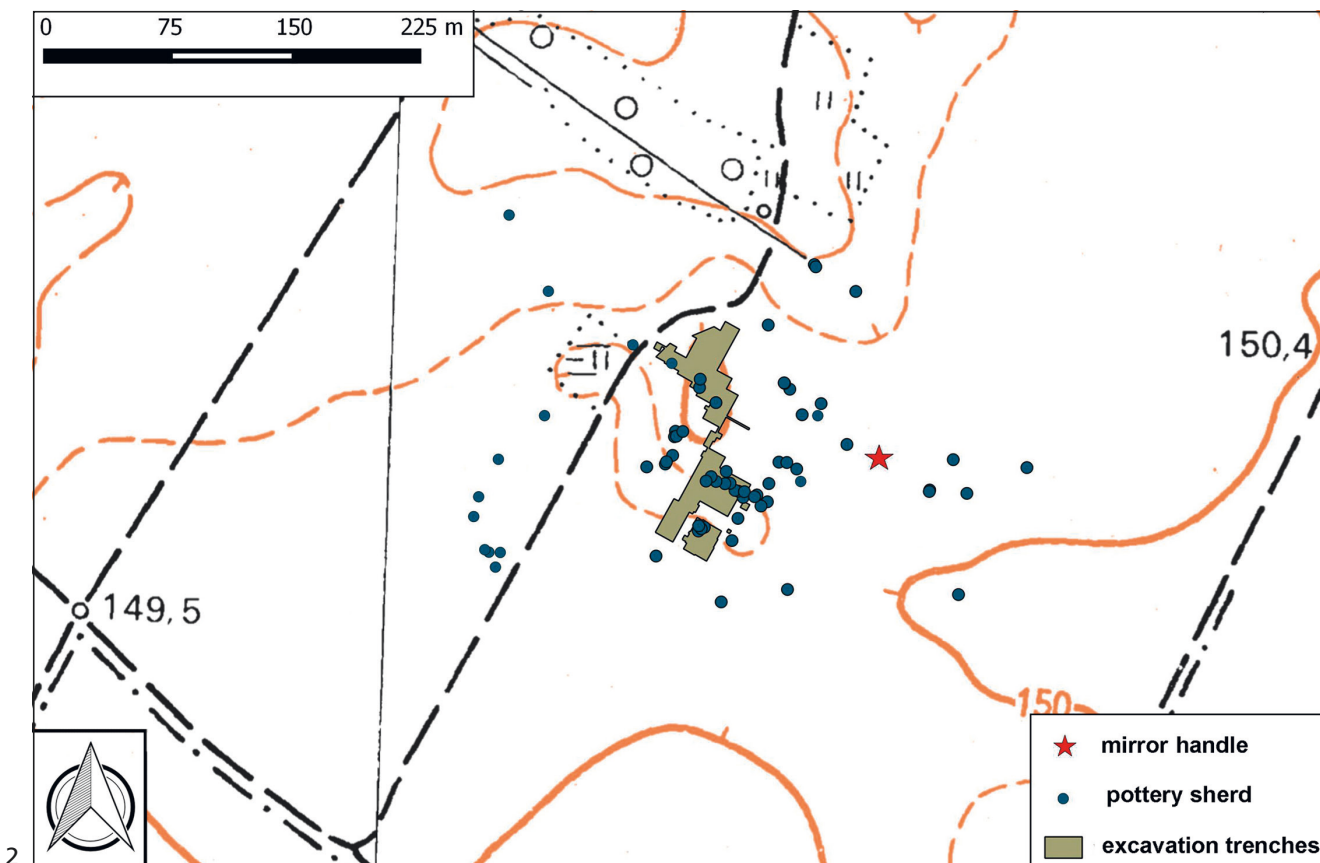
#### **CONTEXT**

In 2015, archaeologists conducting surface surveys at the multicultural settlement of Kurzątkowice site 1 (pow. Oława, woj. dolnośląskie/PL; **fig. 1**), discovered an almost fully preserved mirror handle<sup>2</sup>. This artefact was found close to a site with settlement features from the Neolithic to the Medieval period (**fig. 2**), excavated in 1990, 1993-1994 and 1996-1998 (Kosicki 1992; 1996). The most interesting data resulted from this research belong to the Iron Age. In Kurzątkowice, archaeologists discovered traces of a settlement of the La Tène culture and of the Przeworsk culture, the latter belonging to the later pre-Roman period. As the excavations touched only parts of the settlement and failed to provide a significant amount of information regarding the precise chronology and layout of the settlement, it was decided that in 2015 the site should be verified using surface surveys involving a precise spatial analysis of the artefacts and mapping all of the findings with the use of mobile GPS receivers (**fig. 1, 2**). This approach enabled a rather precise determination of the range of the prehistoric settlement, particularly of the relics of the Iron Age.

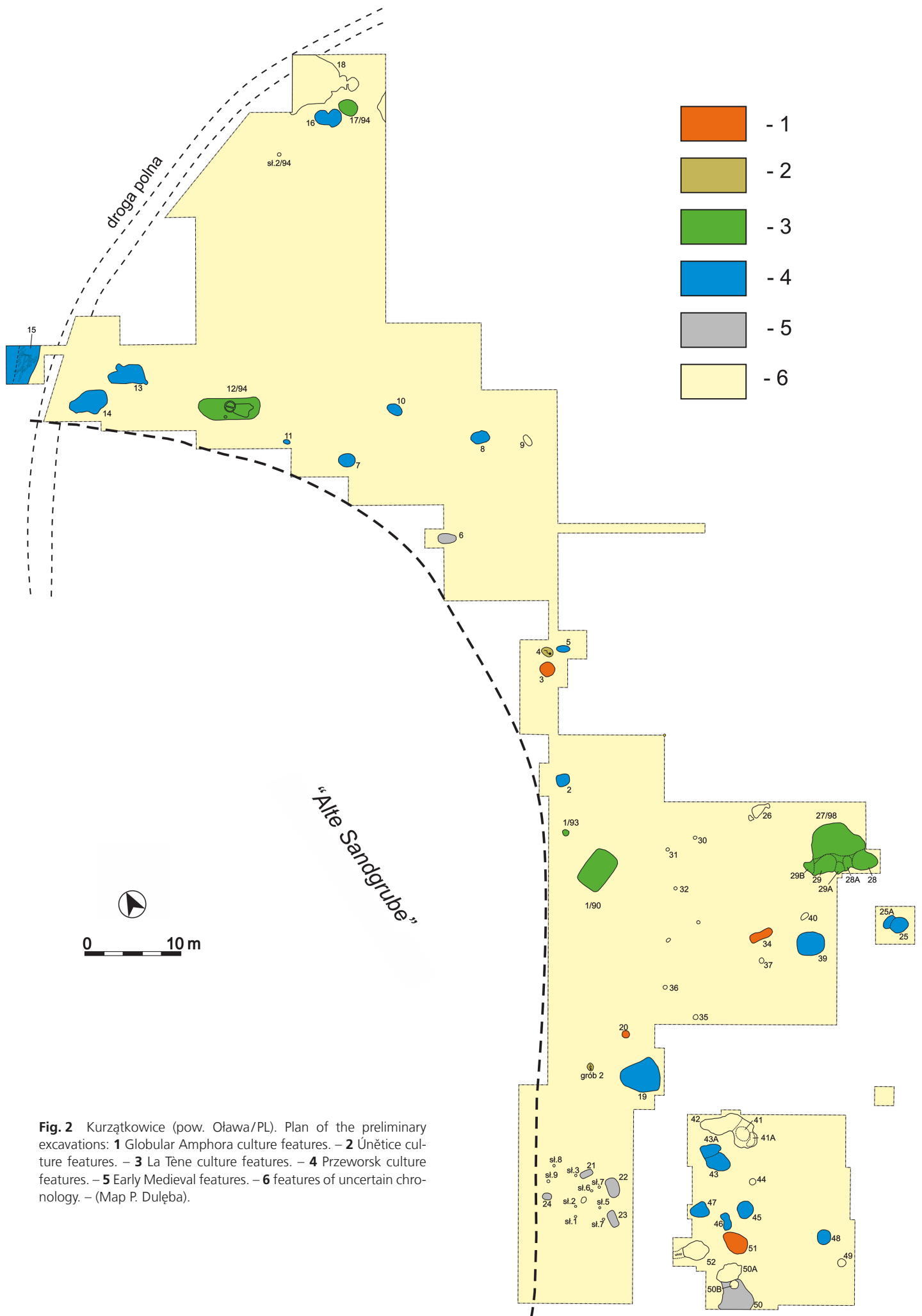
The mirror handle in question was found in the northeastern part of the site, approx. 80-90m east of the preliminary excavations in the 1990s. This location revealed five La Tène culture settlement features (a pottery kiln, a pit-house, a large mud-pit, and two other pits) as well as 20 settlement features (mostly pits used for various purposes and traces of a wooden platform) which may be connected to the Przeworsk culture, dating to the later pre-Roman period<sup>3</sup>. Unfortunately, these excavations provided an insignificant number of artefacts, not enough for precise dating. Based on the analysis of the discovered pottery, it may be concluded that

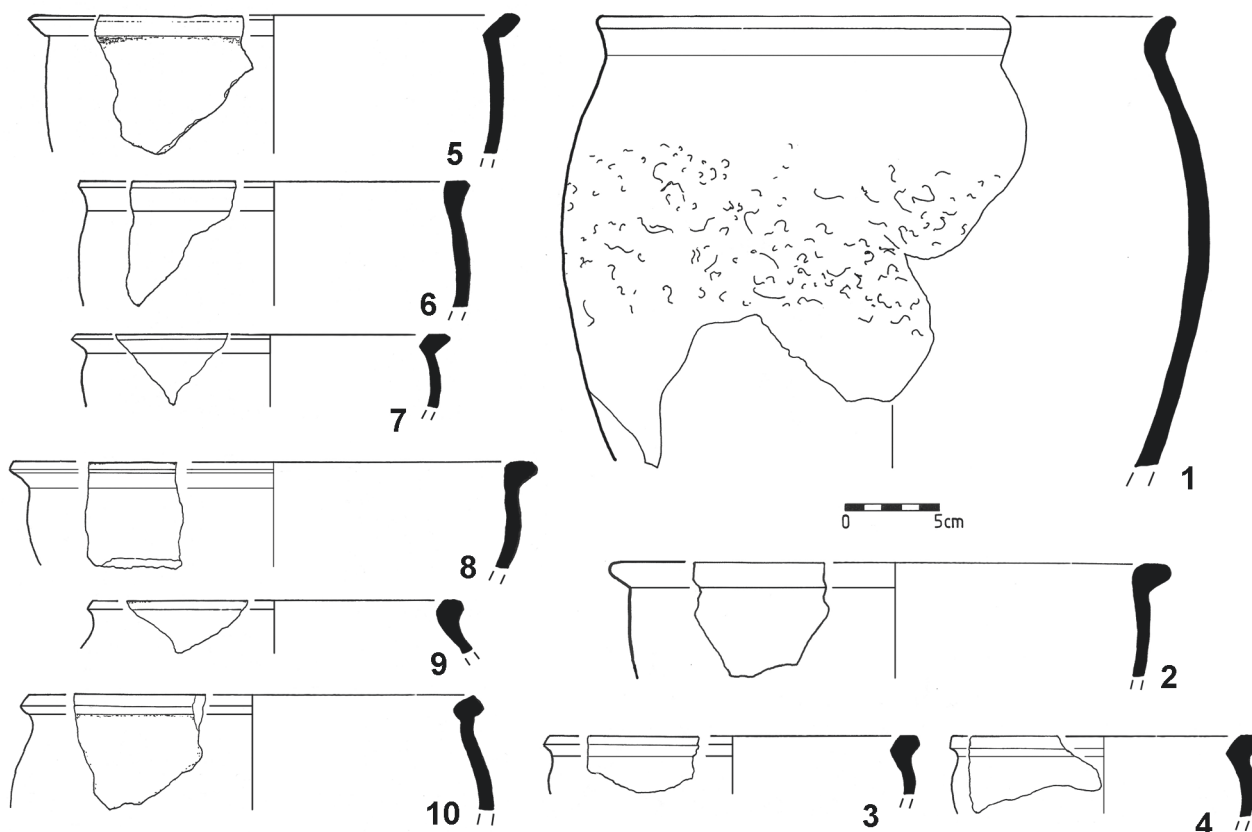


**Fig. 1** Kurzątkowice (pow. Olawa/PL): **1** localisation of the site. – **2** plan of site 1 with the spatial analysis of the finds discovered by surface surveys in 2015. – (Map P. Dulęba).

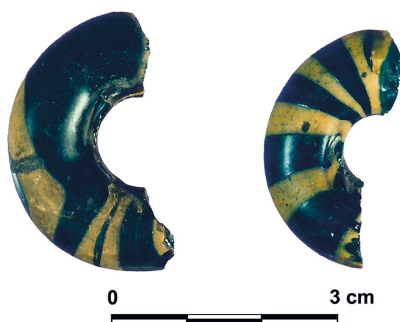


the La Tène culture features date back to the early La Tène period (Lt B1-B2), however, it cannot be excluded that some of the pottery belongs to the beginning of the middle La Tène period. The discovered Przeworsk culture features contained pottery ascribed to the so-called older style (fig. 3), which is generally dated to the phase A1-A2 (Dąbrowska 1988, 30). The only datable finds uncovered during the studies in the 1990s were





**Fig. 3** Kurzątkowice (pow. Olawa/PL). Hand-made pottery from late pre-Roman period features (1-10). – (Drawings A. Kosicki / P. Dulęba).

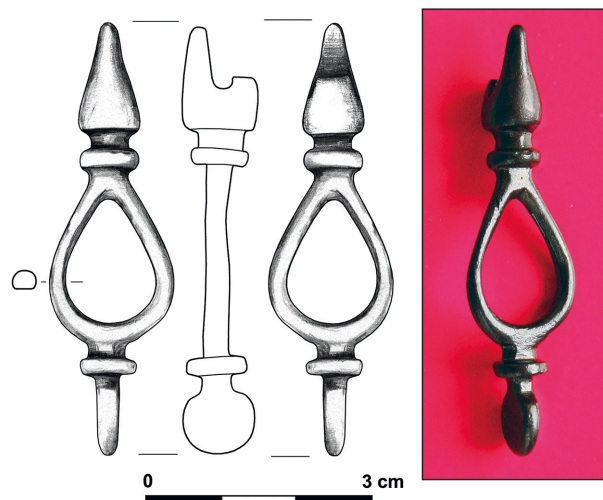


**Fig. 4** Kurzątkowice (pow. Olawa/PL). Glass rings. – (Photo A. Kosicki).

discovered outside the features. They include two Celtic ring beads (*Ringperlen*) made of blue and violet glass and ornamented with diagonal bands of yellow glass (fig. 4; Haevernick type 23; Karwowski 1997, 60 fig. 10g-h pl. 4c-d). Such beads of Lt D1 are highly characteristic for *oppida* and Celtic settlements (Zepezauer 1993, 51. 95 fig. 8); their dating corresponds to the phase A2 and the transitional A2/A3 stage in the periodization of the Przeworsk culture. Considered the dating above, both glass beads should be regarded as imports associated with the presence of a Przeworsk culture settlement in Kurzątkowice.

## DESCRIPTION

The mirror handle from Kurzątkowice is a small, profiled handle, 5.8cm in length (fig. 5). In the middle section, it takes the form of an almond-shaped openwork ring with a maximum width of 1.6cm, to which



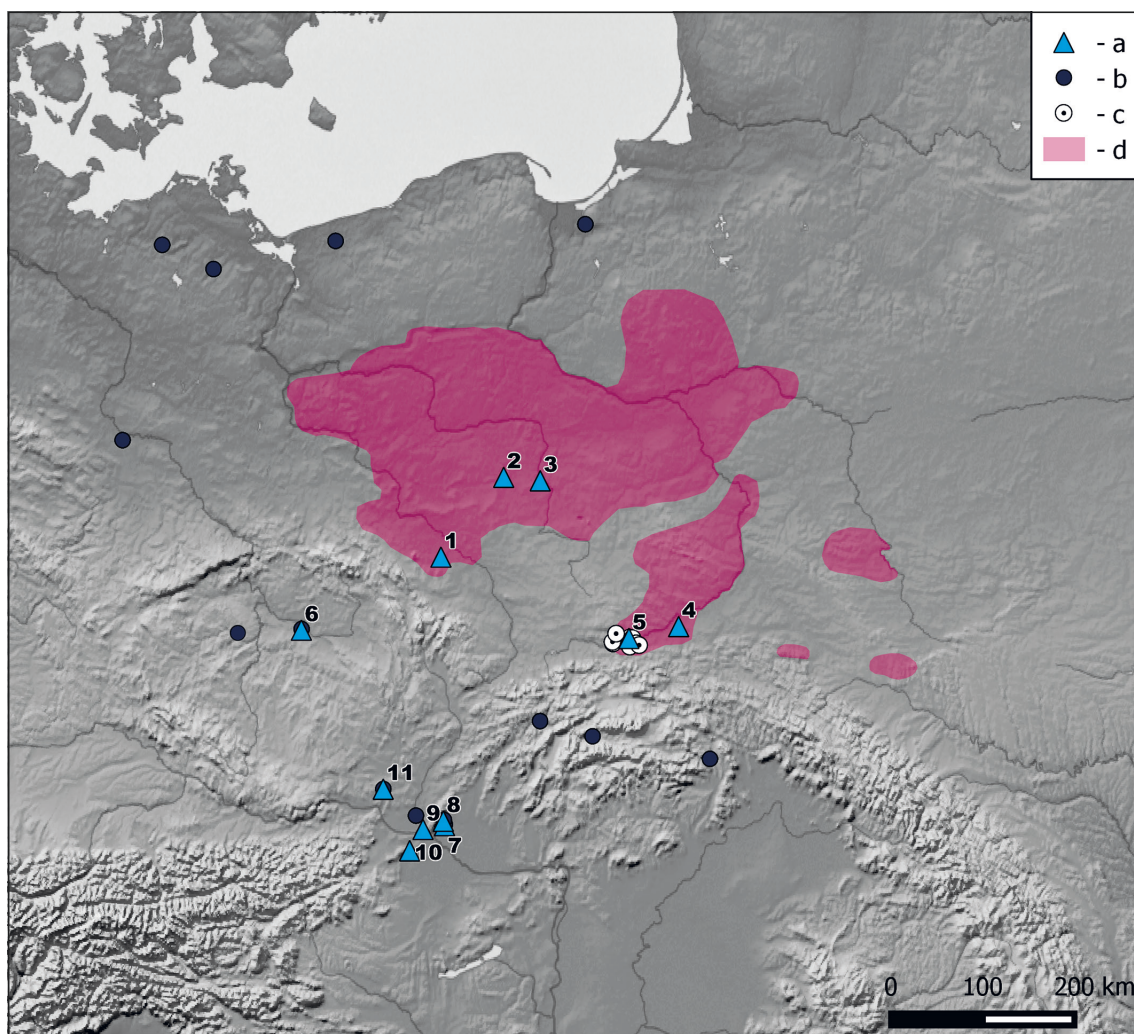
**Fig. 5** Kurzątkowice (pow. Olawa/PL). Bronze mirror handle. – (Drawing N. Lenkow; photo M. Konczewska).

a semi-circular, flattened badge pendant is attached from the bottom. The upper part of the handle, to which a circular mirror would have been attached, is broken on the side on which likely was a hole for the rivet used to fasten the mirror. The maximum thickness of the artefact is approx. 1 cm. The handle in question was manufactured with great care using a copper alloy cast (most likely bronze).

## ANALOGIES

The mirror handle from Kurzątkowice is among a small number of highly characteristic artefacts found in Central Europe (fig. 6). These objects were uncovered during the studies on sites of the La Tène culture and in parts of the Barbaricum settled by Germanic tribes, where they occur as imports (Szpunar/Dułęba 2007-2008, 128-131 fig. 14). The best parallel to the item from Kurzątkowice seems to be the mirror handle from a La Tène culture settlement in Chorvátsky Grob (okr. Senec; fig. 7A) in the southeast of Slovakia (Pieta 2008, fig. 18, 16). This site also yielded a nearly intact circular mirror made of bronze (Pieta 2008, fig. 18, 13), to which the handle may have been attached. Archaeological research in the neighbouring village of Slovenský Grob (okr. Pezinok/SK) revealed a second, more poorly preserved handle and a fragment of another mirror (Pieta 2008, fig. 18, 7. 11). Two better preserved handles are known from the *oppidum* of Bratislava-Devín (Pieta 1996, 187-188 fig. 3, 5. 13), where they were found in a settlement feature that has been interpreted to be the trace of a casting, metalworking, and jewellery workshop used by a craftsman for working various metal objects (Pieta 2008, 154 fig. 70). Further, three bronze mirror handles were discovered at the Celtic upland settlement of Oberleiserberg in Lower Austria (Bez. Korneuburg/A; Kern 1987, pl. 46, 7-8; Karwowski 2009, fig. 6). Another example is known from Jois (Bez. Neusiedl am See/A), quite close to Bratislava (Nowak/Roth 1994, 772 fig. 514). Aside from the artefact discussed in this article, at least three of such objects have been discovered in the area of the Przeworsk culture. One intact bronze mirror (fig. 7B) was found in a cremation burial of the large cemetery in Zadowice (pow. Kalisz, woj. wielkopolskie/PL; Kaszewska 1980, 186-187 pl. I, 2). A poorly preserved mirror handle closely resembling the one from Kurzątkowice was discovered in grave 25 at a cemetery in Chałupia Mała (pow. Sieradz, woj. łódzkie/PL; Kurowicz/Olędzki 2002, 23 pl. 17, 2). The object found in Pasięka Otfinowska (pow. Tarnów, woj. małopolskie/PL) had been deposited in a settlement feature (Szpunar/Dułęba 2007-2008). An additional fourth mirror was excavated in a settlement of the Tyniec group at site 1 in Kraków-Mogiła<sup>4</sup>. Besides these close parallels to the mirror handle from Kurzątkowice, different mirrors are known from Central





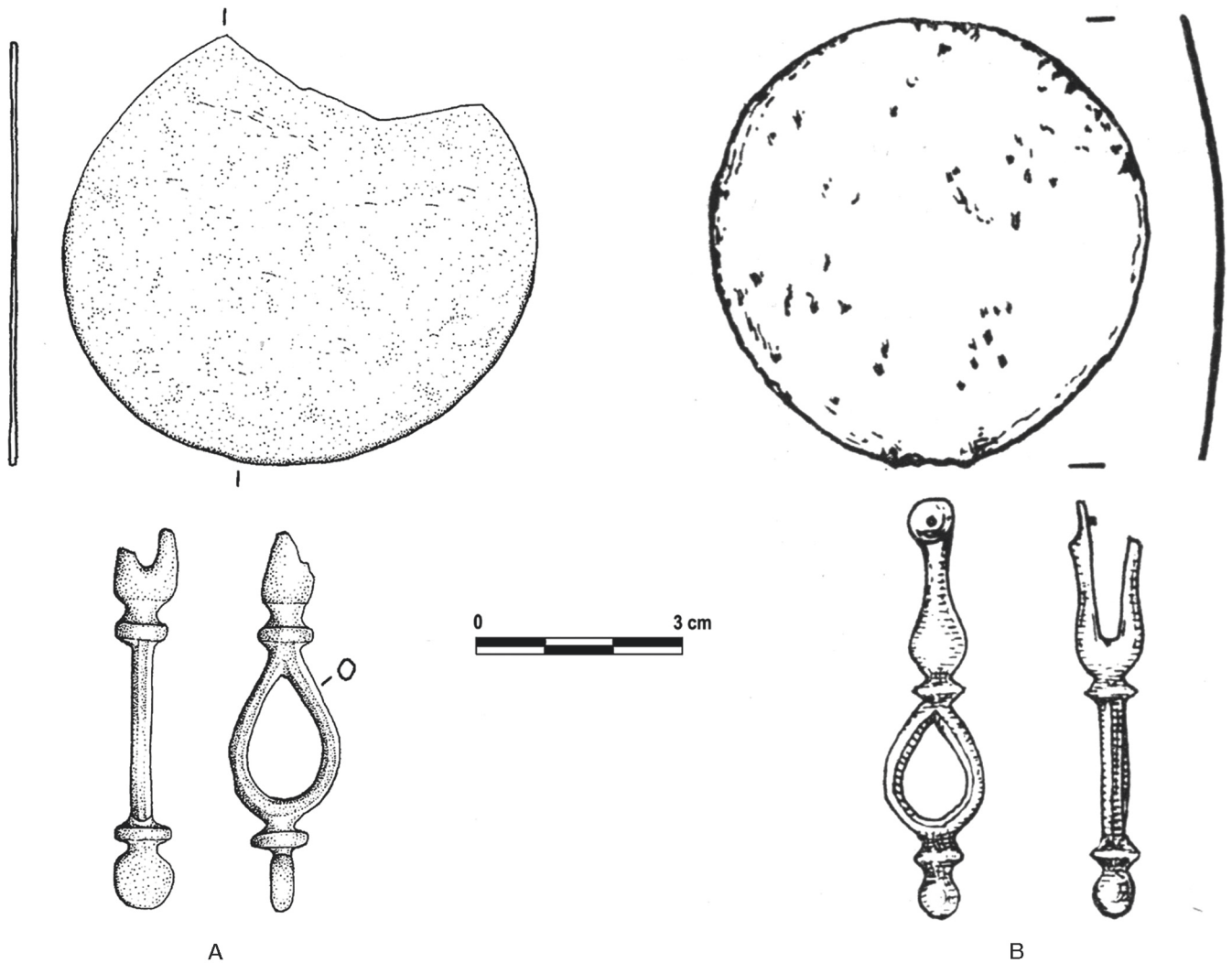
**Fig. 6** Distribution of bronze mirrors with openwork handles dated to the La Tène and early Roman periods: **a** finds of the Zadowice type complete mirrors or mirror handles. – **b** finds of mirrors of various types. – **c** Tyniec group settlement. – **d** area settled by Przeworsk culture populations during the A2-A3 phases. – List of the Zadowice type mirror finds: **1** Kurzątkowice (pow. Oława/PL). – **2** Zadowice (pow. Kalisz/PL). – **3** Chartup ia Mała (pow. Sieradz/PL). – **4** Pasieka Otfinowska (pow. Tarnów/PL). – **5** Kraków-Mogiła/PL. – **6** Dobřichov-Piřhora (okr. Kolin/CZ). – **7** Chorvátsky Grob (okr. Senec/SK). – **8** Slovenský Grob (okr. Pezinok/SK). – **9** Bratislava-Devín/SK. – **10** Jois (Bez. Neusiedl am See/A). – **11** Oberleis (Bez. Korneuburg/A). – (After Szpunar/Dulęba 2007-2008, fig. 14; with additions).

Europe (Szpunar/Dulęba 2007-2008). Two mirror fragments, including a part of a handle that appears to resemble the one discussed above, were found at a Marcomanni cemetery in Dobřichov-Piřhora (okr. Kolin/CZ; Drobrejar 1999, 245-246 pls 53, 3; 105, 2), partially deformed by the heat of cremation.

All abovementioned artefacts can be described as a clearly separate group of Zadowice type mirrors. A prototype can possibly be seen in a fragment of a bronze mirror found at the *oppidum* in Stradonice (okr. Beroun/CZ; Pič 1903, pl. XXVII, 11).

## DATING AND PROVENIENCE

Mirrors of Zadowice type can only be dated by their find context. Due to the peculiar nature of the funeral ritual in the central and eastern part of Europe from Lt C2 onwards – leaving no or only very few archaeo-



**Fig. 7** Celtic mirrors with openwork handles: **A** Chorvátsky Grob (okr. Senec/SK), stray find. – **B** Zadowice (pow. Kalisz/PL), grave 773. – (A after Pieta 2009, fig. 18; B after Kaszewska 1980, pl. I, 2).

logical traces – all mirrors come to light in this region are from settlement sites. Numerous finds of mirror fragments had been discovered in *oppida* in Central Europe, but besides the mentioned find from Stradonice, there are no handles among them (see e.g. Meduna 1961, 11 pl. 3, 17-18; van Endert 1991, 62-64). The hilltop settlement of Oberleiserberg had its peak in Lt D1, later finds are very scattered (Karwowski 2009, 119). Therefore, the bronze mirrors with openwork handles may still be associated with Lt D1, specifically with its later stage (Lt D1b). The *oppidum* Bratislava-Devín was inhabited throughout nearly the entire late La Tène period, though it had its greatest prosperity in Lt D2. Both mirror handles discussed above were found in a settlement context with traces of a workshop of a bronze caster. The feature also contained a relatively large number of Roman imports, two Simmering type Celtic coins, a bronze ring ornamented with knobs (*Knotenring*), and an assortment of pottery comprising late La Tène forms as well as typical vessels of Dacian ware (Pieta 1996, figs 3-4). Silver Simmering coins are among the latest coins minted by the Boii and are contemporaneous to BIATEC tetradrachms. These coins should be dated to the period preceding the war between Boii and Taurisci against the Dacian state ruled by Burebista, which is documented in written

sources and is believed to have occurred in the second half of the 40s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Dobesch 1995). More recent finds have also revealed that the coinage in question had been in circulation at least as late as Lt D2, as attested in hoards of the vicinity of Bratislava (Čambal et al. 2015, 238 fig. 8). For this reason, the Bratislava-Devín assemblage should be dated to Lt D1b-D2. A similar dating can be proposed for mirror handles discovered in settlements at Chorvátsky Grob and Slovenský Grob, which had finds of Lt D1b and D2 as well as the early Roman phase B1a: palmette belt hooks and fibulae of Alesia, Feugère 11a and Almgren 18b types (Pieta 2008, fig. 18).

Mirrors found in the area of the Przeworsk culture are known from burial sites, which can usually be dated with greater precision. Grave 25 at Charłupia Mała (woj. łódzkie/PL), where the mirror handle was e.g. accompanied by an iron fibula of type N according to J. Kostrzewski's classification (Kurowicz/Olędzki 2002, 22-23 pl. XVII, 1), is dated to A3 (roughly corresponds to Lt D2 phase). The fully preserved mirror from Zadowice comprised a part of the inventory of grave 773, which has been dated to the turn of A3 and B1a (Szpunar/Dulęba 2007-2008, 129) based on the large assortment of vessels deposited in it (Kaszewska 1980, 187-189 pls I, 6; II).

A similar date has been assigned to a find from Pasięka Otfinowska, which was uncovered in a settlement feature that contained a large amount of pottery stylistically resembling the two aforementioned grave features and over a dozen sherds of Celtic graphite-coated vessels (Szpunar/Dulęba 2007-2008, figs 4-12). The feature also yielded a Haevernick type 23 glass ring (Szpunar/Dulęba 2007-2008, fig. 2c) which, as previously observed, is an older artefact belonging to the Lt D1 phase.

The latest dated mirror (phase B1b) is an artefact found in grave 68 of Dobřichov-Piřhora, which was associated with an Almgren type 45 eye fibula (Droberjar 1999, pl. 53, 2). It should be noted that this item differs somewhat in its technical details from the exemplars listed above, and may, therefore, be an intermediary form of this type of object manufactured at a later period.

In sum, it should be concluded that mirrors equipped with openwork handles resembling the exemplar from Kurzątkowice were in use for a relatively long period of time, stretching from the Lt D1b phase to the beginning of the Roman period (phase B1a). This abovementioned find from Bohemia should be treated as a remnant of old fashion, whose peak period falls on the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

Bronze mirrors of the type discussed in this article have been described as products of craftsmen from the broadly-defined Celtic realm of *regnum Noricum* (Szpunar/Dulęba 2007-2008), which seems doubtful given the lack of such finds in this area. However, it should be emphasized that the artefacts in question bear a strong resemblance to the style of metal ornaments and pieces of clothing typical of the later provinces of Noricum and Pannonia. From this original Celtic style the later, heavily-profiled style used in metal ornaments and pieces of clothing in the early Roman period evolved. Numerous iconographic depictions of lavishly-dressed women holding mirrors are known from stone grave stelae found in the aforementioned region (Garbsch 1965, pls I, 13; II, 16-17. 20; III, 10. 40; IV, 16; XII, 2; XV, 23). These items were likely elements of festive outfits and thus served as symbols of the wealth and high social status of their owners: women belonging to the local Celtic communities submitted to intense romanization. Interestingly, these female outfits are depicted in extraordinary detail, enabling us to recognize metal elements that are known from archaeological finds. These typically finds include fibulae of the types A 238 and A 240, as well as Noric-Pannonian belts. The discovery of mirror handles at sites such as Bratislava-Devín and Oberleiserberg, where the existence of large craft industries dating to the late La Tène period is well attested, indicates their local provenance. Considering all the arguments presented above, mirrors of this type should be regarded as associated not only with the area later incorporated into the Roman provinces of Noricum and Pannonia, but indeed with the entire expanse of the Middle Danube, where intensive Celtic settlement persisted until as late as the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.



## COMMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN LOWER SILESIA AT THE END OF THE PRE-ROMAN IRON AGE

The analogies presented above clearly demonstrate that the mirror handle from Kurzątkowice is associated with a local settlement of the Przeworsk culture, which was certainly inhabited during the phase A2. The dating of this settlement to an earlier period is unlikely, as indicated by the entire context of the site of the Wrocław Plain in the later pre-Roman period. As it has been widely discussed (Pazda 1980, 24; Godłowski 1985, 23-24), there is no possibility to identify assemblages of A1 in this region. In the 30 years since these observations, no convincing evidence has been published for the existence of the earliest stage of the Przeworsk culture on the fertile Wrocław Plain south of the Oder river, between the rivers Bystrzyca and Oława. Fibulae of Kostrzewski type A and B mentioned in the earlier literature are very poorly-preserved finds that cannot be properly identified, while all type C fibulae known from this region are of the short variant (Pescheck 1939, 21 figs 11; 40; 77, 9), which should be dated to the beginning of A2 (Dąbrowska 1988, 39). In the light of recent discoveries, Lower Silesia in the late pre-Roman period appears to be the area in which contacts between Germanic communities of the Przeworsk culture and people of the Celtic *oppidum* civilization are only occasional. This is particularly well illustrated by the distribution map of the most widespread category of Celtic imports found in Przeworsk sites, namely fibulae typical of Lt D1 and D2 (Bochnak 2014, figs 11. 13. 15; Maciałowicz 2015, 285 fig. 9). The complete lack of such finds in Silesia contrasts with the visible concentration of these finds in the Vistula river valley and along the Prosna river. During A3 the scarcity of precisely dated finds suggests a sudden collapse of settlements in Lower Silesia, an event that some scholars have linked to large-scale migration (Pazda 1980, 41-46 map 3). It is not until the turn of the A3 and B1a phases, that the region experienced an influx of new inhabitants and the subsequent stabilization of settlement activity (Godłowski 1985, 36-37).

## CONCLUSIONS

How can we date and interpret the Celtic mirror handle from Kurzątkowice, and how did it get to Lower Silesia? The former question is difficult to answer due to the poor data on dated Przeworsk artefacts at this site. It seems that this object could have appeared at two moments in time. Two fragments of glass ring beads, mentioned at the beginning, indicate that this could have occurred during the transitional A2/A3 phase, which corresponds to Lt D1b. This phase marks a moment in history during which there continues to exist a broad network of Celtic *oppida* from which various products of advanced craftsmanship were distributed northwards and in other directions. The second possible moment is the turn of the A3 and B1a phases, at which settlement activity by the local Przeworsk culture stabilized. This is indicated by the dating of the contexts in which similar mirrors with openwork handles had been found, like the handles of Chwałupia Mała and Chorvátsky Grob (fig. 7A-B). It should be mentioned that a precise dating of the Zadowice type mirrors discussed here may be also hindered by the nature of their use, as they belonged to a group of luxury products, and may, therefore, have experienced a particularly intensive and prolonged use. These finds of mirrors from the Przeworsk culture confirm that elements of outfit distinguishing the Celtic elites are as well accepted. The mirror is not a typical element of clothing (like brooch, belt etc.) and can be, therefore, treated as an object of luxury or even, in some cases, significant for a higher social position.

The mirror handle uncovered in Kurzątkowice may have been cast in one of the workshops of Celtic craftsmen in a late La Tène settlement at the Middle Danube, particularly in the area of modern-day Bratislava, where two *oppida* existed at the time in Bratislava-hrad and Bratislava-Devín. This pair of settlements con-

trolled two key intersecting trade and communication routes: the so-called Danube route (from West to East) and the Amber Road (from North to South). The Zadowice type mirror handle uncovered at the Tyniec group settlement in Kraków-Mogiła, mentioned earlier, may confirm the important role played by the dwindling local Celtic population, which likely served as an intermediary between Celts in the South and Germanic communities inhabiting wide parts of land north of the Sudetes and the Carpathian Mountains.

## Notes

- 1) There is a fundamental formal problem if discussing the cultural divisions of regions settled by people of the Przeworsk culture, when these areas had previously been the locations of La Tène settlements. In the case of sites belonging to the La Tène culture, the periodization used is the one typically applied to the area south of the Sudetes and the Carpathians, while the Przeworsk culture is linked to the later pre-Roman chronology applied to the North European Plain. While the two periodization systems usually correlate with each other, it should be noted that there are numerous specific findings that cannot be linked across both cultural zones.
- 2) The research presented in this article was funded by Narodowe Centrum Nauki (National Science Centre) under the project: »La Tène culture in Silesia. Chronology, range and interregional connections« (2013/08/S/HS3/00278).
- 3) The cultural attribution of the features is based on an analysis of the finds, which are part of the collections of the Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, oddział we Wrocławiu (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Wrocław Branch). – Information kindly provided by Andrzej Kosicki.
- 4) The finds belong to the Muzeum Archeologiczne w Krakowie (Archaeological Museum in Kraków). – Information kindly provided by Zenon Woźniak and Paulina Poleska.

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### Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

#### Ein Spiegelgriff aus Kurzątkowice (pow. Oława/PL).

#### Ein Beitrag zur Untersuchung überregionaler Kontakte in Niederschlesien im 1. Jahrhundert v. Chr.

Bei Begehungen einer Siedlung der Przeworsk-Kultur aus der späten vorrömischen Eisenzeit wurde ein bronzener Spiegelgriff entdeckt. Das Fundstück gehört zu einer kleinen Gruppe höchst charakteristischer Funde in Mitteleuropa, eindrücklich repräsentiert durch den vollständig erhaltenen Spiegel von Zadowice. Im Gegensatz zu früheren Aussagen stellt die genaue Datierung solcher Gegenstände eine große Herausforderung dar, weshalb der Spiegelgriff chronologisch in die Zeit eingeordnet wird, welche die Spätlatènezeit (Lt D1b) bis zur Phase B1a der römischen Epoche umfasst. Vergleichbare Bronzespiegel wurden in den Werkstätten keltischer Handwerker in Spätlatènesiedlungen hergestellt, die sich an der mittleren Donau befanden, insbesondere in der Nähe des heutigen Bratislava. Die Datierung und zahlreiche Vergleichsfunde legen nahe, dass das Stück von Kurzątkowice als Import angesehen werden sollte und wahrscheinlich im Zusammenhang mit den lokalen Siedlungen der Przeworsk-Kultur der späten vorrömischen Eisenzeit steht.

Übersetzung: M. Struck

#### A Mirror Handle Found in Kurzątkowice (pow. Oława/PL).

#### A Contribution to the Study of Interregional Contacts in Lower Silesia in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC

A bronze mirror handle was discovered during surface surveys of a Przeworsk culture settlement dating to the late pre-Roman period. The object in question belongs to a small number of highly characteristic finds uncovered in Central Europe, which are primarily represented by the fully preserved mirror from Zadowice. Contrary to earlier claims, the precise dating of such artefacts poses a significant challenge, and therefore, it should be placed chronologically in the period spanning the late La Tène phase (Lt D1b) to the B1a stage of the Roman period. Analogous bronze mirrors were manufactured in the workshops of Celtic craftsmen in late La Tène settlement centres located in the middle Danube region, particularly in the vicinity of modern-day Bratislava. Dating and numerous analogs indicate that the artefact found in Kurzątkowice should be regarded as an import and is likely to be associated with the local Przeworsk culture settlements of the late pre-Roman period.

### Un manche de miroir en provenance de Kurzątkowice (pow. Oława/PL).

#### Une contribution à l'étude des contacts interrégionaux en Basse-Silésie au 1<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C.

Un manche de miroir en bronze a été découvert lors de prospections sur un établissement de la culture de Przeworsk datant de la fin de l'époque pré-romaine. L'objet en question appartient à un petit nombre de trouvailles très caractéristiques découvertes en Europe centrale, qui sont principalement représentées par le miroir entièrement conservé de Zadowice. Contrairement aux affirmations antérieures, la datation précise de tels artefacts pose d'importants défis et, par conséquent, elle devrait être placée chronologiquement dans la période allant de la phase tardive de La Tène (Lt D1b) à la phase B1a de la période romaine. Des miroirs en bronze analogues ont été fabriqués dans les ateliers d'artisans celtes dans les centres de peuplement de La Tène tardive situés dans la région du Danube moyen, en particulier à proximité de l'actuelle Bratislava. La datation et de nombreuses analogies indiquent que l'artefact trouvé sur Kurzątkowice doit être considéré comme une importation et est probablement associé aux établissements locaux de la culture de Przeworsk de la fin de la période pré-romaine.

Traduction: L. Bernard

#### *Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots clés*

Polen / Latènezeit / Przeworsk-Kultur / Austausch / Importe / Bronzespiegel

Poland / La Tène period / Przeworsk culture / exchange / imports / bronze mirror

Pologne / La Tène / culture de Przeworsk / échanges / importations / miroir de bronze

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