

At the confluence of the Corded Ware and the Únětice cultures. The case of amber discs

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the Corded Ware Culture and the Únětice Culture is one of the topics present in the literature, which also gives rise to discussion. The article discusses amber discs and puts forward the thesis that these products belong to the elements that bind both the above-mentioned cultural traditions. Amber discs are known from three contexts: the Globular Amphora Culture, the Corded Ware Culture, and the Únětice Culture. In the first one there is also a decorated version, while in the other two only artefacts without ornaments are known. Therefore, the article focuses on the Corded Ware Culture and the Únětice Culture. The finds were collected and analysed contextually and chronologically. Analyses show that the use of these artefacts continued uninterrupted from the beginning of the Corded Ware Culture (especially in its Jutland variant known as the Single Grave Culture), i.e., from the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, to the classic Únětice Culture (beginning of the 2nd millennium BC). The article also discusses the type of cultural content with which amber discs were associated in the discussed archaeological communities.

KEYWORDS

Amber disc; the Corded Ware Culture; the Únětice Culture; cultural connections.

INTRODUCTION AND TYPOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

Cultural relations between the Corded Ware Culture (CWC) in a broad sense (also including the Single Graves Culture [SGC]) and the Únětice Culture, have been for years a significant challenge for scholars (MÜLLER 2000; CZEBRESZUK 2001, 114; FRÖHLICH – BECKER 2015, 771; SCHWARTZ 2015, 667–668, 697, Abb. 8; SPATZIER 2015, 797; MELLER 2019). Many are sceptical about the hypothesis that proposes contiguity in time between both traditions (e.g., WOLTERMANN 2016, 127, with further references), and even more so as far as the possible influence of the CWC tradition on forming the Únětice world is concerned. Some researchers, however, increasingly advocate recently contrasting views (MÜLLER 2000; CZEBRESZUK 2001, 114; SPATZIER 2015; MELLER 2019, fig. 3). Where else should the origin of princely barrows be sought for than in the CWC tradition? Among the traits linking both traditions, Meller enumerates, apart from barrows, wooden grave constructions, and a preference for weapons and large amphoras as grave goods (MELLER 2019, 42). The most sophisticated body of research into the burial mounds was performed for the Circum-Harz group of the Únětice Culture (cf. MELLER 2019). It has demonstrated that the oldest surviving barrows date to the mid-twentieth century BC (the Leubingen barrow was constructed in 1942 BC according to the dendrochronological age determination – BECKER *et al.* 1989). Recent still unpublished studies by the author of the article on establishing the chronology of Únětice Culture tumuli of the Kościan group (Greater Poland) revealed an earlier date for the beginning of the barrow tradition.

In addition to the above, one more cultural attribute was probably transferred between these two discussed traditions: amber discs. The aim of the article is to illuminate this issue. With the above in mind, we will focus on areas in the southwestern Baltic area (CZEBRESZUK 2001, 11–15), mainly including the following modern regions: Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany and Pomerania, Kuyavia, and Greater Poland in Poland. It is a part of Europe where the Únětice influence zone is the closest to the amber-bearing areas. What is more, it is also an area occupied by communities following different varieties of the CWC tradition.

The south-west Baltic area of interest to us had at the turn of the third and second millennia BC (between 2500 and 1700 BC) its cultural specificity (CZEBRESZUK 2001). It was characterized (among other traits) by the presence of features of both the CWC and Bell Beakers (BB) in a single community (CZEBRESZUK – SZMYT 2019a) as well as the presence of early Únětice Culture influences. First (the proto and old-Únětice stages), this process was visible in the characteristics of ceramics (for example: KOZŁOWSKA 2004) and later (the classic-Únětice stage) – mainly in the presence of Únětice Culture metal artefacts (BLAJER 1990).

In our usage, an amber disc is to be understood as a disc-shaped artefact featuring various lateral sections (from oval to lenticular). A very important feature that distinguishes it from ordinary disc-like beads is its size: diameter reaching 5 cm and more. Amber discs come in two versions: ornamented and unornamented.

HISTORY OF THE USE OF AMBER DISCS

Disc-shaped ornaments enjoyed a wide spatial distribution across the earlier stages of the Neolithic (KLASSEN 2000, 191–206); nevertheless, those made of amber were known earliest in the south-east Baltic area. This was where the rich amber production thrived continuously beginning in the Mesolithic (GIMBUTAS 1985; LOZE 1988), stretching through successive periods of prehistory (LOZE 1975; MAZUROWSKI 1983; RIMANTIENÉ 1984; 1989; 1992; CZARNIAUSKI 1985; GIMBUTAS 1985). The assemblage of amber artefacts – very diverse in typological terms – included also discs, as evidenced by finds, e.g., from Abora I and Eini, Latvia, or Palanga, Lithuania (GIMBUTAS 1985) and Šentoji 4 (RIMANTIENÉ 1996). All the documented artefacts are of the unornamented type. Moreover, at that time, amber discs were known far to the north-east, as far as the Upper Volga and the White Sea coast (GIMBUTAS 1965, 256–257, fig. 5).

In the early 3rd millennium BC, the earliest traits of the Globular Amphora Culture (GAC) began to emerge in the south-east Baltic area (SZMYT 1999). The assemblage characterising the GAC grew and incorporated amber artefacts, including discs (GIMBUTAS 1985; SZMYT 1999; CZEBRESZUK 2011, 36; WOLTERMANN 2016, 129). They comprised both variants, with and without decoration, although those decorated were particularly characteristic of the above-mentioned culture (SZMYT 1996; 1999; CZEBRESZUK 2002). Ornaments were applied with the dotted technique, creating radial patterns in the simplest cross forms. They are known to us from, e.g., Rańsk and Raszynek (NOSEK 1967) or Ivanye and Szwarcenowo (CZEBRESZUK 2002). It should be pointed out that the dotted technique had a long tradition in the south-east Baltic area. Still, it was primarily used to adorn other artefacts than amber discs, as demonstrated by specimens from, e.g., Šventoji I and II and the collection from the Curonian Spit (GIMBUTAS 1985).

Tab. 1: The tendency of changes in the size of amber discs in dated assemblies of the Jutland SGC, according to HÜBNER 2005. (* = the second hole at the edge; n = multiple holes)

Site / Catalog number	Grave No	Diameter (cm), disc 1	Diameter (cm), disc 2	Phase	Average (cm)
Finnerup/906	1	7.8	no data	1a	6.43
Pilgård. Skarrild Overby/977	1	7	6.9	1a	
Skarrild Mose. Skarrild Overby/990	1	5.8	5.7	1a	
Torupgårde/1173	1	5.9	5.3	1a	
Forum/1210	1	5.8	no data	1a	
Tjæreborg/1366	1	6.8	6.4	1a	
Kejlstrup/729	1	4.6	4.6	1b	5.51
Dons/767	1	3.4		1b	
Vester Nebel/769	1	6	2.8	1b	
Aalbækgårde/837	1	5.2	5	1b	
'Lillehøj'. Thyregodlund/857	1	6.8	6.8n	1b	
Thyregodlund/862	1	6	5.6	1b	
Fasterkjær/904	1	5.8	5.6	1b	
Hestkjær/911	1	3.5		1b	
Lille Hamborg/972	1	5.2	4.9	1b	
Skarrild Mose. Skarrild Overby/988	1	8.1	8*	1b	
Borbjerg/1016	1	4.2		1b	
Gørding/1031	1	5.6	no data	1b	
'Vesterhøj'. Ramme/1076	1	1.8		1b	
Kragelund/1085	1	6.4	6.4	1b	
Vittrup/1133	1	6.4	6.4	1b	
Villebøl/1167	1	9		1b	
Meils/1459	1	6.5	6.4	1b	
Snorup/1479	1	7.6	7.5	1b	
Meilby/1497	1	9.6	9.4	1b	
Kjeldgård. Bakgård/141	1	8	8n	1c	3.89
Kejlstrup/728	1	4	3.8	1c	
Thyregodlund/865	1	4	3.6	1c	
Bendichsminde. Øse/1380	1	3		1c	
Nebel/1405	1	4.6	4	1c	
Nørhå/6	1	3		2a	3.85

Site / Catalog number	Grave No	Diameter (cm), disc 1	Diameter (cm), disc 2	Phase	Average (cm)
Erslev/13	1	2.8		2a	
Torup/25	2	3.2		2a	
Suldrup/114	1	3.6		2a	
Stenhøje/918	1	5.4		2a	
Jersild/966	2	3	2	2a	
Kvaglund/1253	2	6.6	no data	2a	
Bakkegården/1501	2	4.9	4	2a	
Nørhå/5	2	3.4		2b	3.49
Nørhå/5	3	4.4	4.2	2b	
Nørre Dråby/19	1	3		2b	
Redsted/34	1	5.4		2b	
Redsted/35		3.8		2b	
Fragdrup/96	1	3.6n	3.2	2b	
Vranum/376	1	3.2	2	2b	
Nørre Gludsted/669	1	4.2		2b	
Vestterp/1373	1	4.4	no data	2b	
Vorbasse/1435	1	4.2		2b	

The GAC took over the raw material (amber), type (disc), and technique and ornamentation (crossing dotted lines) from the communities inhabiting the south-east Baltic zone. But they adapted all these features to suit their cultural requirements. Discs are found mainly in collective graves (particularly in the so-called Polish group: WIŚLAŃSKI 1966; NOSEK 1967; SZMYT 1996) and less frequently in individual burials (particularly in the eastern group: SZMYT 1999). According to reconstructions performed where possible, amber discs used to be placed in the thoracic part of the skeleton (CZEBRESZUK 2002, 70). The GAC communities made amber discs adorned with cross-like patterns the evident symbol of their solar beliefs (GIMBUTAS 1997, 288–289; CZEBRESZUK 2002).

About the same time, ca. 2800 BC, in Jutland (the south-west Baltic area), amber discs exclusively in undecorated types appeared in the earliest SGC graves (EBBESEN 1986; HÜBNER 2005; SIEMEN 2016). They were mainly positioned with adult males (DAMM 1991, fig. 37; WOLTERMANN 2016, tab. 13) though some were also recorded with women and children (SIEMEN 2016, 32). In the later phases of the SGC, amber discs were less frequently found and were smaller than in earlier periods of the culture (WOLTERMANN 2016, tab. 13). According to the data collected by Hübner (2005), amber discs found in unambiguously techno-stylistically dated assemblages belong to the phases 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, and 2b (**Tab. 1**), dated to 2850–2450 BC (HÜBNER 2005, Abb. 477). It has been observed that their size tended to decrease over time (**Tab. 1**). While not excluding a more prolonged use of amber discs by SGC communities in Jutland (SIEMEN 2016), we can admit that also other CWC tradition branches in the south Baltic area (see below) used them over later periods.

Tab. 2: Finds of amber discs in the study area between 2500–1800 BC.

No	Findplace	Region	Country	Grave no.	Chronology (BC)
1	Barniślaw	Zachodniopomorskie	Poland	grave 78	2300–2100
2	Barwice	Zachodniopomorskie	Poland		2000–1800
3	Brusy	Kujawsko-Pomorskie	Poland		2000–1800
4	Budowo	Pomorskie	Poland		
5	Dąbrowa Biskupia 21	Kujawsko-Pomorskie	Poland	grave 214	2500–2300
6	Fockbek	Schleswig-Holstein	Germany	tumulus 3	<i>Untergrabzeit</i>
7	Grevenkrug	Schleswig-Holstein	Germany	tumulus 3 grób A	<i>Untergrabzeit</i>
8	Iwno	Kujawsko-Pomorskie	Poland		2400–2200
9	Lüningsdorf	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Germany		
10	Menkin	Brandenburg	Germany		
11	unknown	Pomorze	Poland		
12	unknown	Pomorze	Poland		
13	Przysieka Polska	Wielkopolskie	Poland		1900–1800
14	Schwaneberg 14	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Germany		before 2500
15	Schwedt	Brandenburg	Germany	grave «Ucki II»	
16	Sellin	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Germany	grave 4	2200–2100
17	Skarbienice	Kujawsko-Pomorskie	Poland		2000–1800
18	Strasburg	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Germany		
19	Szczecin Płonia	Zachodniopomorskie	Poland		2200–2100/2000
20	Szczecin-Podjuchy 2	Zachodniopomorskie	Poland		2400/2300–2100
21	Śmiardowo Krajeńskie	Wielkopolskie	Poland	grave 8	2000–1800
22	Śmiardowo Krajeńskie	Wielkopolskie	Poland	grave 79	2000–1800
23	Śmiardowo Krajeńskie	Wielkopolskie	Poland	grave 3	2000–1800
24	Wahlstedt	Schleswig-Holstein	Germany	tumulus	<i>Untergrabzeit</i>
25	Witkowo	Zachodniopomorskie	Poland		2650–2300

Summarising our reflections so far, we can conclude that both traditions of using amber discs were maintained until the late first half of the third millennium BC. This is when the GAC characteristics faded away from the entire territory of its distribution except for Kujawy (SZMYT 1999, 63–85). Neither is there any other information that would indicate any cultural relationship between the GAC and the Únětice Culture, therefore the GAC thread was omitted in the following discussion. In turn, the CWC survived in various regions until at least 2300 BC (FURHOLT 2003), including the southern Baltic coast between Mecklenburg and Pomerania. Traditions of using amber discs survived in this form until the Únětice Culture inception in 2300–2200 BC.

Culture	Literature	Fig.
CWC/proto ÚněticeC	KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 58–59, ryc. 4:5	2:5
BrA2	SARNOWSKA 1969, 154; KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2012, 122	3:5
ÚněticeC	BUKOWSKI 2002, 31	3:2
	KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 59	
CWC	BUDZISZEWSKI <i>et al.</i> 2008	2:3
SGC	HÜBNER 2005, Kat. Nr. 1617	
SGC	HÜBNER 2005, Kat. Nr. 1621	
IwnoC	CZEBRESZUK – SZMYT 2019	2:4
SGC	SCHULDT 1974, 112–113, Abb. 14; WOLTERMANN 2016, 340	
	KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 59	
	KOWALSKI, KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 59	
	KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 59	
ÚněticeC	SARNOWSKA 1969, 197	3:9
CWC	RASSMANN 1993, 36, 167, Taf. 22d; MATUSZEWSKA 2011, tabl. 17:3	2:1
CWC	WOLTERMANN 2016, 330, Abb. 78	3:8
<i>Spät Neolithicum</i>	RASSMANN 1993, 36, 156, Taf. 18g	3:1
IwnoC	BUKOWSKI 2002, 31	
	KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 59; WOLTERMANN 2016, 343, Typ 5	
ÚněticeC	BUKOWSKI 2002, 30	3:3
CWC	CZEBRESZUK – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2008, 61, tabl. 27:3	2:6
Únětice-Iwno	BOKINIEC – CZEBRESZUK 1993, tab. 2, phase IIIa	3:4
Únětice-Iwno	BOKINIEC – CZEBRESZUK 1993, tab. 2	3:7
Únětice-Iwno	BOKINIEC – CZEBRESZUK 1993, tab. 2, phase IIIa	3:6
SGC	HÜBNER 2005, Kat. Nr. 1666	
CWC	KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 58	2:2

SOURCES

Some tens of finds of amber discs (**Tab. 2; Figs. 1–3**) can be listed for the south-west Baltic area. The discs concerned are dated from the middle of the 3rd to the early 2nd millennium BC. Table 2 contains all the finds of amber discs, but below we shall discuss only the most informative ones.

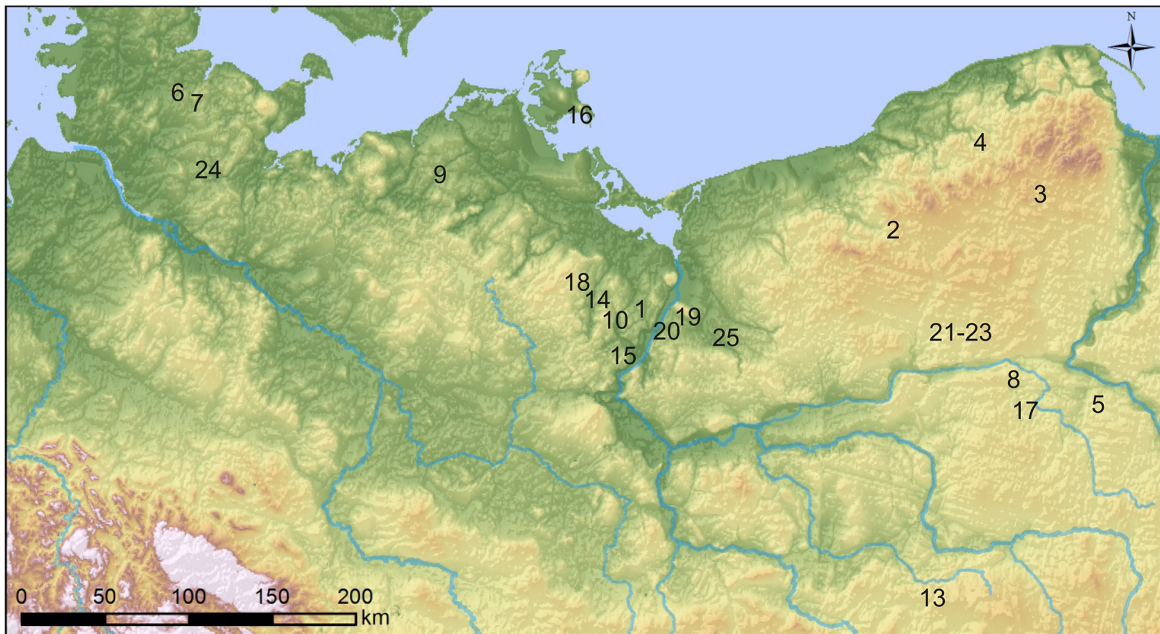


Fig. 1: Location of the cited finds. The numbers on the map correspond to the numbers in Table 2.

SCHWANEBERG 14

(RASSMANN 1993, cat. no. 943, Taf. 22:b-e; MATUSZEWSKA 2011, tab. 17, cat. no. 622). An individual inhumation has been registered under a barely distinguishable mound. The deceased lay in a NE-SW orientation on a stone pavement in a crouched position on the left side with the head to the NE and face to the SE. An amber disc (5.6 cm in diameter) with two small holes at the edges on one side has been documented (**Fig. 2:1**) at the thoracic part of the skeleton. In addition to the body, the grave contained a flat axe, a flint chisel, pottery fragments, and two tiny amber beads (which disintegrated on exploration). The axe suggests that the buried person was a male. It is not easy to specify a more precise chronology regarding the CWC: probably earlier phases of its development, rather contemporary with the GAC (the axe and especially flint chisel can point towards this time). In terms of absolute chronology, the most probable date of the grave is no later than the mid-3rd millennium BC.

WITKOWO, GRAVE 1.

This was an inhumation of two individuals (KOWALSKI - MATUSZEWSKA - TEUL 2010, 221) in a crouched position next to each other in a N-S orientation, with their heads to the S and faces to the E. The disc (its maximum cross-section reaching 9 cm) with a slight irregularity on one side (**Fig. 2:2**) was discovered in the region of the waist of one of those buried (KOWALSKI - MATUSZEWSKA - TEUL 2010, fig. 4:2). The burial has been associated with the second phase of the CWC in the Lower Oder region based on pottery traits (two vessels and sherds of three others) (KOWALSKI - MATUSZEWSKA - TEUL 2010, 230). In terms of absolute dating, this phase spans from 2650 to 2300 BC (MATUSZEWSKA 2011, 113).

DĄBROWA BISKUPIA 21, FEATURE 214 (GRAVE)

(BUDZISZEWSKI *et al.* 2008). This inhumation was found in a N-S pit. The bones have not survived. Doubts arise as to the number of buried individuals: an adult or two (an adult and a child,

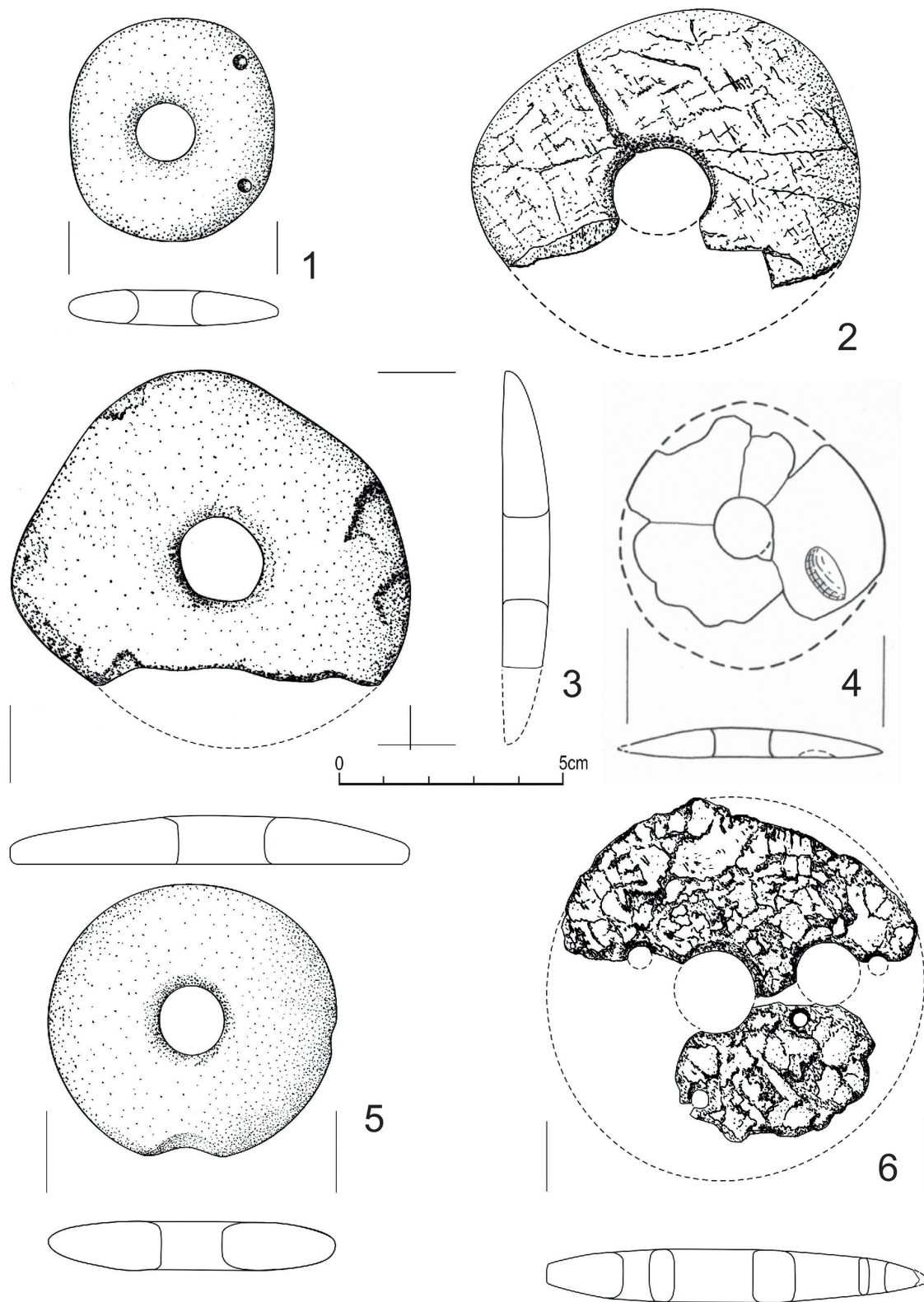


Fig. 2: Discs analysed in the article. 1 - Schwaneberg, 2 - Witkowo, 3 - Dąbrowa Biskupia, 4 - Iwno, 5 - Barnisław, 6 - Szczecin-Podjuchy.

cf. BUDZISZEWSKI *et al.* 2008, 35–38). Grave goods consisted of two vessels, a stone shaft-hole axe, an amber disc (**Fig. 2:3**) with a truncated edge (a maximum diameter of 7 cm) and a rich assemblage of flint artefacts (47 specimens, inc. many arrowheads). The arrowheads indicate that it was likely an archer's grave. The amber disc was found in the middle part of the burial pit (BUDZISZEWSKI *et al.* 2008, ryc. 2:D). The grave was probably established towards the end of the CWC, in 2500–2300 BC (cf. BUDZISZEWSKI *et al.* 2008, 61).

SZCZECIN PODJUCHY 2

This was a grave with a stone framing (CZEBRESZUK – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2008, 61, tabl. 27:1–7). No information is available on the place where a disc, about 8 cm in diameter, was found. This disc had an opening in the centre and several small perforations (**Fig. 2:6**). The burial also contained a flint dagger and a stone axe as grave goods. Stylistic features of four recorded vessels suggest linking the burial to the phase 3a of the CWC in the Lower Oder area, dating between 2400/2300 and 2100 BC (MATUSZEWSKA 2011, cat. no. 719, tab. 19). The grave goods indicate that the buried individual was a male.

IWNO, SITE 2, GRAVE II

(CZEBRESZUK – SZMYT 2019). This was a grave, probably an inhumation in an E-W oriented pit at least 1 m long that contained an adult positioned in a crouched position or a child. This feature was constructed out of stones, including some larger ones (CZEBRESZUK – SZMYT 2019, 22). An amber disc (6.2–6.5 cm in diameter, **Fig. 2:4**) and a flint tool have been registered at the western end of the grave. At its eastern end, two vessels, a fragment of a stone shaft-hole axe and an ochre lump have been found. The grave is associated with the earliest phase of the Iwno culture (BB₂), a regional (Kuyavia) variant of the BB (CZEBRESZUK 1996, 131–139), dated to 2300–2100 BC. The axe suggests that it was a male's/boy's grave.

BARNISŁAW, GRAVE 78

This was a N-S oriented individual inhumation with several stones in the fill (KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 48–59, figs. 4–6). Only the teeth survived from the skeleton, indicating that the deceased had its head directed to the S (KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, fig. 4:1). As suggested by the relatively small space (little more than 1 m), the body was probably buried in a crouched position. Among the grave goods there were ten vessels (intact or fragmented), more than ten flint artefacts (inc. eleven arrowheads) and an amber disc 6.4 cm in diameter (**Fig. 2:5**) positioned in the deceased's thoracic area. The pottery characteristics relate the burial to: the CW tradition (KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, fig. 4:3), the BB – in most forms, the proto-Únětice and the old-Únětice (KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 51–53). The archer's set among the grave goods can indicate a male, and the state of the preserved teeth (developed buds in molars; cf. KOWALSKI – KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2011, 49, note 8) implies that a boy was interred. The grave can be dated from 2300 to 2100 BC.

SELLIN 8

(RASSMANN 1993, cat. no. 728). The find consisted of a destroyed amber disc (the longest preserved diameter was 3.4 cm) with a large central opening (**Fig. 3:1**) and a type Ib flint dagger. It came from a barrow destroyed by looters and was associated with the early stage of the local Late Neolithic (ca. 2200–2100 BC, cf. RASSMANN 1993, Abb. 30). The dagger can indicate a male's burial.

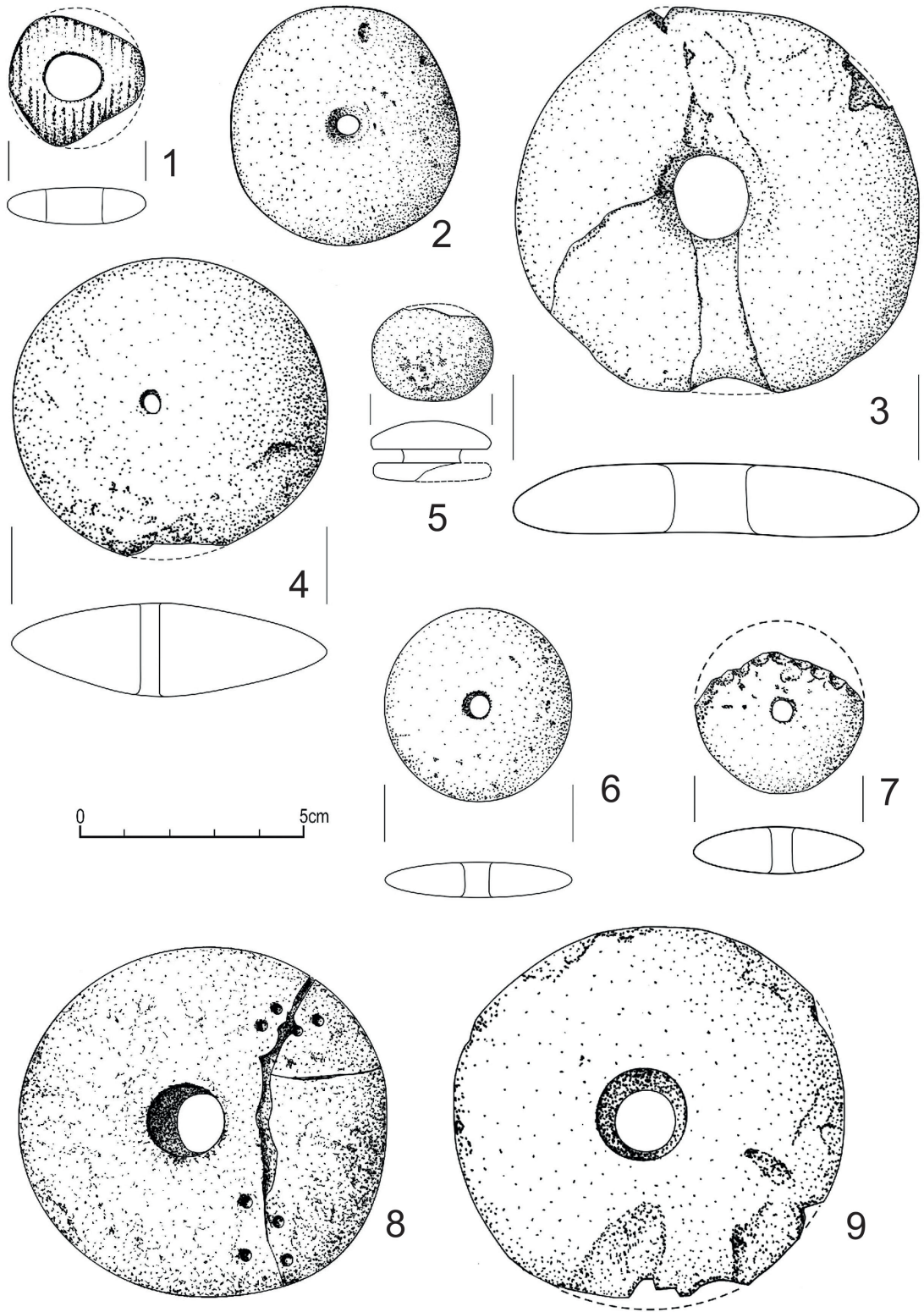


Fig. 3: Discs analysed in the article. 1 - Sellin; 2 - Brusy; 3 - Szczecin-Płonie; 4 - Śmiardowo Krajeńskie grave 8; 5 - Barwice; 6 - Śmiardowo Krajeńskie grave 3; 7 - Śmiardowo Krajeńskie grave 79; 8 - Schwedt; 9 - Przysieka Polska.

SZCZECIN-PŁONIE, SITE 2, GRAVE I

(KOZŁOWSKA 2004). This is a find documented only by archival sources. Besides an amber disc (diameter 9 cm, **Fig. 3:3**), the assemblage consisted of two flint daggers, a gold band of rectangular cross-section, a bronze ring fragment, a fragment of an ornament made of many connected bronze tubes, and four undecorated vessels (KOZŁOWSKA 2004, 87–91). The same inventory number contains a fragment of an unburned long bone, which can prove an inhumation. The assemblage can be dated to the older stages of the Únětice Culture or its early classic phase: 2150–2100/2200 BC. The flint dagger points to a male burial.

BRUSY, CEMETERY

(SARNOWSKA 1969, 130–131). This archival discovery is the result of robbing excavations performed in one of the barrows. It contained six bronze artefacts (a dagger, an axe and four ring fragments), a vessel, and an amber disc (**Fig. 3:2**) 5–5.2 cm in diameter (SARNOWSKA 1969, 130). All these artefacts were probably grave goods, and their composition suggests that a male was laid in the grave. The stylistic characteristics of the metal objects allow us to link them to the classic Únětice (ca. 2000–1800 BC).

ŚMIARDOWO KRAJEŃSKIE, CEMETERY

(SCHÄFER 1987; BOKINIEC – CZEBRESZUK 1993). Amber discs were discovered in three graves, 3, 8, and 79. All were individual skeletal inhumations in elongated pits with walls and a bottom stone setting. Grave 3, oriented N-S, contained, in addition to an amber disc with a diameter of 7 cm (**Fig. 3:4**), two vessels (SCHÄFER 1987, Taf. 41). In contrast, Grave 8 was oriented NW-SE and held four vessels and a slight amber disc (the maximum diameter of it was 3.8 cm, **Fig. 3:7**) (SCHÄFER 1987, Taf. 14; 32 and 43). Grave 79, in turn, partially survived, was probably small and almost circular. Of the grave goods, only a vessel and a disc of amber (**Fig. 3:6**) measuring 4.2 cm in diameter have survived (SCHÄFER 1987, Taf. 65). In typo-chronological terms, Graves 3 and 8 are related to the phase IIIa of the cemetery (BOKINIEC – CZEBRESZUK 1993, tab. 2), the penultimate phase of the site, considered typical of the Iwno stage parallel to the classic Únětice (2000–1800 BC) (BOKINIEC – CZEBRESZUK 1993, 130–131).

SKARBIENICE, A CIST GRAVE

(KNAPOWSKA-MIKOŁAJCZYKOWA 1957, 74–75; SARNOWSKA 1969, 139–140). This find of uncertain make-up comes from archival records. However, it can be said with certainty that the excavations revealed a vessel, six bronze artefacts (inc. two axes), chiselling tools, two gold earrings, an amber disc, and several lumps of amber (KNAPOWSKA-MIKOŁAJCZYKOWA 1957, 74–75). Unfortunately, the amber object has not been preserved. The grave is in broad terms attributed to Br A2 (CZEBRESZUK 1996, cat. no. 1462), so it is justifiable to date it to 1900–1700 BC. Axes and a chiselling tool suggest it is the grave of a male (perhaps a metalworker).

BARWICE, GRAVE II

(SARNOWSKA 1969, 154; KOZŁOWSKA-SKOCZKA 2012, 122). This was a cremation grave with a stone setting. The inventory consisted of two gold *Noppelringe*, a bronze spiral bracelet and an amber disc (perhaps a nodule, **Fig. 3:5**) with a diameter of 2/2.5 cm and ‘with an opening in the centre’ (SARNOWSKA 1969, 154). A rather vague illustration showing the disc (SARNOWSKA 1969, fig. 42h) can suggest a more complex form of the artefact and does not make the opening visible. The assemblage dates most likely to Br A2; in absolute chronology, it falls between 1900 and 1700 BC. In all likelihood, it was a female’s grave.

PRZYSIEKA POLSKA

(SCHWENZER 2004). The assemblage was regarded for many years as a hoard (BLAJER 1991, 126–127). This find known from archival records was discovered under a layer of stones about 2.4 m thick (SCHWENZER 2004, 318), which indicates a barrow of the category of the Únětice princely tumuli such as Leubingen, Helmsdorf or Łęki Małe. Two dagger blades, a dagger cast in one piece with its grip, a bronze axe and chisel, and an amber disc measuring 8.8 cm in diameter (**Fig. 3:9**) constitute the preserved part of the assemblage. It is associated with the advanced Bronze Age, approx. 1900–1800 BC (SCHWENZER 2004). Probably a man was buried there, perhaps a metal worker.

ANALYSIS

The sources examined (**Tab. 2** and descriptions above) confirm the practice of placing amber discs in graves, which have already been observed in the CWC/SGC tradition. Male burials appear to be distinctly more common than female ones in the reported range of data. It can be assumed based on the criterion of the character of grave goods that in ten cases, the individuals buried were males (including one or two boys). Only the Barwice burial showed indications that it could be a woman.

Concerning chronology, all the discussed finds uniformly cover the entire period between the mid-third millennium and 1800 BC, namely spanning from the graves of the late CWC to the features of the classic Únětice Culture (**Tab. 2**).

On four occasions, the disc was placed into the barrow. This act was confirmed in traditions of both the CWC/SGC (Schwaneberg and Sellin) and the Únětice Culture (Brusy and Przysieka Polska). The other four contexts connect the buried individual with their particular role/position. In two cases, it was an archer (Dąbrowa Biskupia and Barnisław). A metalworker's function was assigned to two others (Skarbienice and Przysieka Polska): at both sites chiselling tools were registered in the form of bronze chisels.

It is worth noting the occurrence of amber discs together with gold finds. Such a situation was recorded three times (Szczecin Płonie, Skarbienice, and Barwice).

In summary, the discussed evidence suggests that between the CWC/SGC and the Únětice Culture, amber discs were used continuously.

INTERPRETATION ATTEMPTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The information gathered in this paper is sufficient to support the thesis that amber discs can be regarded as a concept directly transmitted from the CWC/SGC to the Únětice Culture, just as was the idea of building barrows.

This fact entails many questions about the cultural 'content' being transmitted. In the entire Corded Ware circle, the problem is well recognised in the Jutland part of the related circle, namely in the SGC. The amber that occurred there may have been associated with various spheres of life. Siemen's calculations demonstrate that amber artefacts were present in one quarter (about 900) of SGC graves in Jutland (SIEMEN 2016, 14). Moreover, one quarter (228) of all graves with amber contained discs of this material (SIEMEN 2016, 24). For Siemen, the amber has a multilateral implication in the SGC communities; i.e., it is seen as a distinguishing feature of age groups. He acknowledges the relevance of amber for indicating high social status, which, according to Siemen, one-quarter of the population enjoyed. Of the group of

people who had a high standing in the community, one quarter of whom the offering had been given in the form of amber disc(s) must have enjoyed an extraordinary prestige. Some of the adult men formed this group in particular.

The question asked is whether the cultural meanings/contents associated with amber in the SGC/CWC have been transferred unaltered into the Únětice Culture, or did the latter enrich the meaning of the amber. In order to answer this question, we shall discuss the issue separately for amber discs and amber as a raw material.

Amber was a raw material used by the Únětice Culture (ERNÉE 2012) beyond any doubt. It is this culture by which artefacts made of the fossil resin in question reached far into regions remote from the amber-bearing areas (CZEBRESZUK 2011). This material was most widespread in the southern oecumene of the Únětice Culture during the classical phase, namely in the Bohemian Basin and Moravia (CZEBRESZUK 2011, 45–49; ERNÉE 2012; DIVAC 2013), as evidenced by the significant number of sites and finds. This high number may be of surprise. About 4100 objects unearthed in 316 features, including 292 graves from 86 cemeteries, are known from the Bohemian Basin alone (ERNÉE 2012, tab. 3 and 4). However, only four amber discs (type B according to ERNÉE 2012, fig. 14) have been documented of this vast number of artefacts. They are all burial finds and come from Holubice, site 2, grave 2; Kostelec, grave 8; Liběšovice, grave 22; and Zvoleněves, grave 1 (ERNÉE 2012, tab. 2). In contrast, noticeably fewer finds of amber were recorded in the area of the Circum-Harz and Saxon groups of the Únětice Culture. From the German Únětice Culture, we know of a total of 548 amber artefacts from 22 locations (cf. WOLTERMANN 2016, 146). It is similar in the case of the Silesian and Greater Poland concentration of this culture (BUKOWSKI 2002).

In Bohemia, ambers were usually found in female graves (ERNÉE 2012, 110). Given that amber was documented in 16.8 % of all Únětice Culture graves (ERNÉE 2012, tab. 25), it can be assumed that many women could have enjoyed the privilege of receiving amber. This may indicate that the Únětice community (at least from the southern part of the oecumene) gave amber its own meaning: it belonged to a group of women endowed with a special function / prestige.

The adaptation of amber discs by Únětice communities turns out to be another issue. This adaptation can indicate that at least in the northern region of the cultural area, Únětice people also cultivated cultural contents characteristic of the Corded Ware milieu. They were most likely related to the man's role as hunter and warrior and community member who strongly influenced its functioning. Such men were probably an elite group within the given society.

Corded Ware cultural meanings continued in the Únětice Culture and covered the lowlands to the south of the Baltic Sea. In the western portion of this territory (Middle Elbe-Saale-Region), this process involved CWC communities that some generations earlier had adopted BB models and, as such, are identified by scholars today (MELLER 2019, 40–42). The inhabitants of regions east of the Oder (in Greater Poland and Kuyavia), on the other hand, retained their Corded Ware cultural identity for a longer time, although they also acquired many BB characteristics (CZEBRESZUK 1996; 2003; MAKAROWICZ 2003; CZEBRESZUK – SZMYT 2012). At about the same time (i.e., towards the end of the third millennium BC), Corded Ware societies joined the Únětice community by adopting southern cultural models and brought to it such elements as a particular type of tomb (barrows, cf. MELLER 2019) aimed at burying representatives of elites and amber discs – a symbol of the elite class. The pattern presented above – the takeover of the Únětice traits by Post-Corded Ware societies is corroborated by genetic data which demonstrate for Central Europe close genetic relations of populations of the CWC/SGC, BB, and the Únětice (e.g., ALLENTOFT *et al.* 2015, 168).

Future research should answer another question of whether the (Post)-Corded Ware descent of people related to the northern part of the Únětice community made it in whatever

manner and form different in culture and identity from their southern counterparts, inhabiting the Bohemian Basin, Moravia, and the north-western borderland of the Carpathian Basin.

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