

# The riddle of the "sacred" stone from the settlement at Konikowo (Rostek) near Goldap

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In 1998–2000 an expedition from the Balt Archaeology Department State Archaeological Museum Warsaw headed by dr Anna Bitner-Wróblewska and mgr. Marcin Engel carried out rescue excavation of a Jatving settlement at Konikowo (Rostek)<sup>1</sup> near the town of Goldap (Engel, Iwanicki, 2001; Engel, 2002).

The settlement (site 2) lies at the foot of an early medieval hill fort, on the lower summit of Góra Goldapska elevation (272 m asl), some three kilometres south of Goldap (fig. 1). The site is situated on a small plateau bounded on one side by the S rampart of the hill fort, on its eastern slope, by a road running from Goldap to Janowo. The natural topography of the terrain around the settlement made it easy to defend on all sides, with additional protection provided on the N and W side by the earthworks of the hill fort.

The 1998–2000 excavation of the settlement at Konikowo (Rostek) was a continuation of fieldwork started in 1974 and carried on and off in subsequent decades. During the 1974 and 1984–1985 seasons (when next to excavation a series of bore samples was taken with a geological drill) work concentrated in the plateau of the settlement, at the foot of the S hill fort rampart (Baranowski, 1976; Brzeziński, 1991a), site of the main area of the settlement containing dwelling structures. Bore samples taken in the 1980s with a geological drill determined the presence of a culture layer also on the slope of the hill lying between the Goldap – Janowo expressway and the E rampart of the hill fort (Brzeziński, 1991b). This part of the settlement was suffering steady destruction on its S

side due to gravel extraction from an extensive gravel mine set up for the purpose of road construction. In 1986 a small sondage trench cut near the caving in edge of the gravel mine to safeguard and investigate the eroding culture layer revealed the traces of a dwelling structure (?), a small hearth and a partly slipped culture deposit dated by ceramic material to the early medieval period.

In 1998 continued destruction of this part of the settlement made it necessary to carry out rescue excavations at the site to safeguard the culture layer visible in the profile of the gravel mine (Engel, 2002). Investigation of a small trench cut near the caving in margin of the gravel mine uncovered a hearth and a slipped culture layer dated by pottery fragments to the early medieval period. During the 1998 season it was observed that the part of the settlement found several score meters NE of the gravel mine bordering the Goldap-Janowo road was also being eroded. Damage was caused by taking away of black earth by the local population which resulted in substantial disturbance of the culture deposit and of the uppermost section of an accidentally exposed feature. Rescue excavations carried out in this area in 1998–2000 produced a number of striking finds. Two features associated with production were uncovered together with a large hearth containing early medieval ceramic material, two post holes and a culture layer featuring numerous fragments of pottery vessels, forms spanning the period from the Roman until the early medieval times (Engel, 2002; 2003).

In 1999 a sondage trench was cut in the area between the road and the E rampart of the hill fort in an attempt at secure possibly undisturbed stratigraphy of the settlement (Engel, 2002). Excavation revealed a culture layer containing a large quantity of pottery and in the W section a concentration of large and medium sized stones and daub. After extending the sondage trench archaeologists exposed a corner of a large quadrangular feature, probably a dwelling (recorded as feature III/99). It had a fairly regu-

<sup>1</sup> The former name of the site given in brackets, used in academic circulation, probably refers to the administrative district in which the locality was found before World War Two (Gaerte, 1927, p. 296). At present the site lies in the village of Konikowo. Both names, Konikowo and Rostek are given here to facilitate reading.



Fig. 1. Konikowo (Rostek), site. 2, district Goldap. Site location. Map Marcin Engel  
1 pav. Konikovo (Rostek), 2 objektas netoli Goldapės. Situacijos planas

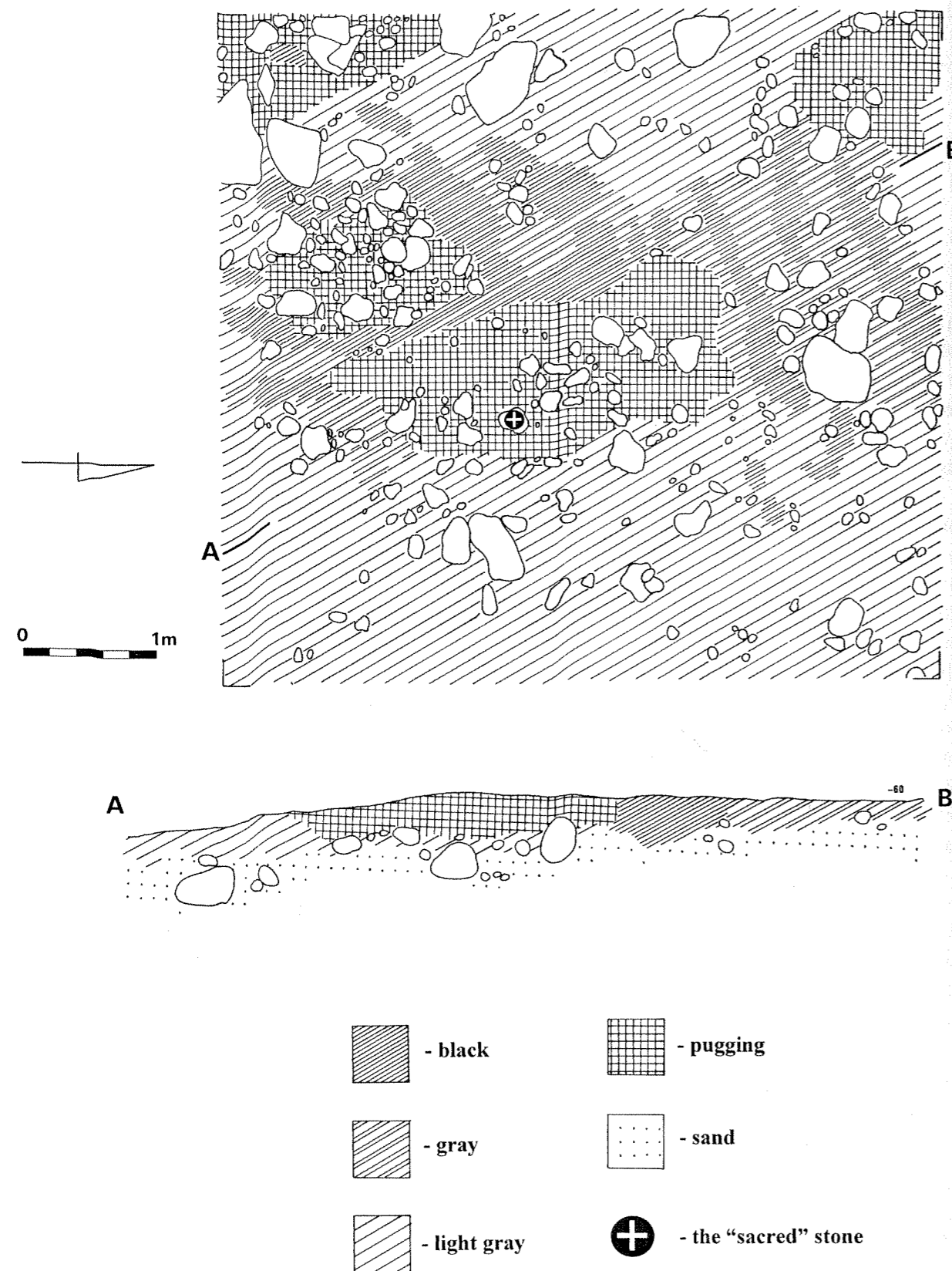


Fig. 2. Plan and cross section of feature III/99. Drawing Bartłomiej Karch  
2 pav. Objekto III/99 planas ir pjūvis. Piešė Bartłomiej Karch

lar 3.6 by 3.6 m outline formed by stones which rather than forming a regular pavement were grouped in several concentrations (fig. 2). The fill of this structure was for the most part dark grey sand, some 20 cm in thickness, resembling the culture deposit observed in the direct vicinity. In E part of the feature one of the stone concentrations was overlain by a 15 cm layer of daub. Traces of daub were also noted across the entire surface of the feature. Once the layer of dark grey sand and daub had been removed well-defined smudges of black sand with minute fragments of charcoal were observed in several places, forming a perpendicular arrangement. Exploration of the fill of a section of feature III/99 produced 40 fragments of pottery as well as one complete and three fragmentary clay spindle whorls (fig. 3). However by far the most intriguing find was a middle-sized stone recovered from the concentration of rocks covered by a layer of daub found at the bottom of the feature (fig. 2).

Petrographic analysis established that the stone is a mica gneiss (a metamorphic rock). It is irregular in shape, with a 23 × 21 × 21 × 16 cm base, its largest flat surface, its outline resembling the shape of the modern day clothes iron (fig. 4). The base and the shorter faces of the stone are marked with oval-shaped and oblong pits (fig. 4 a). The upper face of the stone features another mark resembling in outline an "impression" of the fingers of the right hand (fig. 4 b). The petrographic analysis determined that all these marks were made with a tool showing that the stone was associated with human activity and has the value of an archaeological artefact<sup>2</sup>.

Researchers have been fascinated by carved stones ever since they started to be studied by the first antiquarians and archaeologists. Finds of this type have been recorded in Scandinavia, Germany and Russia. In Polish archaeological literature traces of this fascination survive in the correspondence of Wandalin Szukiewicz and Erazm Majewski published in 1900 in the magazine *Światowit* (Szukiewicz, 1900a; Majewski, 1900). Szukiewicz submitted for publication in this popular archaeological periodical photographs of two stones he had come across in Lithuania in the then district of Lida. One of these stones is carved with two cup-shaped marks and another,

horseshoe in form (Szukiewicz, 1900a, p. 109–110, fig. 45). The other stone (Szukiewicz, 1900b, p. 122–123, fig. 54) is decorated all over its surface with an ornament of abstract designs (a forgery, at present in the collection of the National Museum in Vilnius<sup>3</sup>). In reply Majewski described similar finds recorded in all the three partitions of Poland, mentioning also similar stones noted in Scandinavia Germany, Ukraine, South Europe and even South America (Majewski, 1900, p. 111–116).

Of the Polish finds the most striking are carved stones discovered in the eastern region of Podlasie. These were discussed at more length by Witold Pracki in the same issue of *Światowit*. Most are stones with marks in the form of the human foot, horseshoe and the cross (Pracki, 1900).

Carved stones have been discussed widely also by Lithuanian archaeologists<sup>4</sup>.

In his monograph on sacred sites in Samogitia (Vaitkevičius, 1998) Vyktintas Vaitkevičius gives the following classification of Lithuanian finds:

1. Stones with natural hollows of various size and shape and numerous additional marks and man-made indentations and marks; they are interpreted by Lithuanian researchers as altars, their dating is unclear.
2. Stones-altars with flat-bottomed carved cup-marks; they are dated to the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Stones with narrow-bottomed carved cup-marks; dated to the late medieval period.
4. Cup-shaped stones. Finds of this type are typically associated with Lithuanian barrows and strongholds dated to the Early Iron Age.
5. Stones with marks in the form of human and animal limbs. In Lithuania most of these finds are not associated with any prehistoric complex, not even with settlements. Usually they occur in remote locations, in uninhabited marshy sites, although some have been noted near barrows dated from the Roman to the early medieval period.
6. Stones with a flat upper surface, also interpreted as altars. Some of them have small grooves, as well as natural or man-made flattened areas on their edges (Ibidem, p. 736–739).

<sup>2</sup> The expert opinion on the stone from Konikowo (Rostek) was issued in answer to a request made by the authors of research by dr Jan Dzierżek Geology Institute Warsaw University and dr Bogusław Bagiński Geochemistry, Mineralogy and Petrology Warsaw University (cf Appendix).

<sup>3</sup> For this information I am indebted to Mr. Gytis Grižas.

<sup>4</sup> Among others, by: Tarasenko, 1958; Tautavičius, 1966; Urbanavičius, 1979; Dakanis, 1984; Daugudis, 1984; Matulis, 1990.

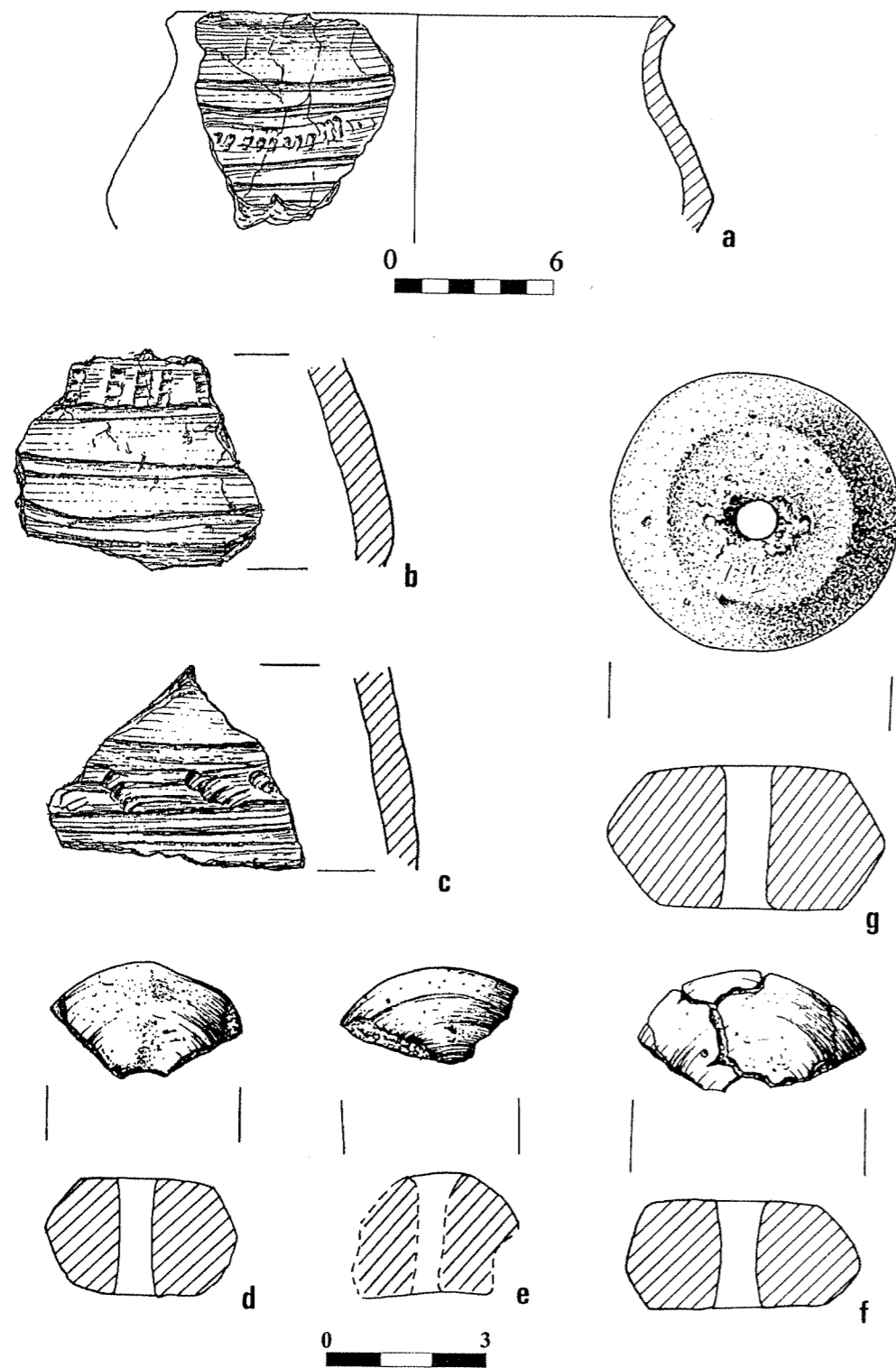


Fig. 3. Material found in feature III/99. Drawing Grażyna Nowakowska, Bartłomiej Karch  
3 pav. Radiniai iš objekto III/99. Piešė Grażyna Nowakowska, Bartłomiej Karch

Upon comparison with the above classification the carved stone specimen from Konikowo (Rostek) was found to be different in many respects. The ornamented specimens from Podlasie and Lithuania are large boulders, usually of the erratic type, over 1m in diameter and height. On the other hand, the stone from feature III/99 is less than 25 cm in diameter. Analysis of this specimen showed no traces of damage ruling out the possibility of it being a broken off fragment of a larger boulder (see Appendix).

Most of the Lithuanian finds lack archaeological context. Their function and chronology tends to be defined basing on their occurrence in the region of strongholds or cemeteries. Some of these stones, as was the case of the specimen presented by Szukiewicz (Szukiewicz, 1900b, p. 122–123, fig. 54) may be common forgeries. Several of the specimens recorded in Podlasie and Lithuania date from the medieval and modern period having been identified as boundary stones used to mark the extent of fields and landed estates (Pracki, 1900, p. 121–122). Unlike them the stone from Konikowo (Rostek) occurred within a well defined archaeological context having been discovered among stones forming part of a structure of a feature, beneath a layer of daub; there can be no doubt that it represents an integral element of the feature and its deposition was intentional.

For their part most of the carved stones from Samland and historical Nadrovia also have a definite archaeological context (Smirnova, 2001). Most typically they have been recorded within stone pavements discovered at strongholds and cemeteries in close proximity to other archaeological material which helped to define their chronology. One such specimen was discovered within a double layer of stones facing a rampart at the stronghold at Kulikovo (former Schwedenschanze bei Kringitten, Sortehenen) (Smirnova, 1992, p. 81–91; Smirnova, 2001, p. 99, fig. 2). One of the edges of this rather flat 0.5 by 0.45 × 0.2 m granite stone featured an irregular carved zigzag-shaped mark. Close to it were found fragments of pottery dated by the researcher investigating the site to the period following the first quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC (Smirnova, 2001, p. 99, fig. 2). At the cemetery at Yrzekapinis/"Klincovka 1" (former Wikiau) two worked stones were discovered within the stone layer covering an area interpreted as a site of worship (Kulakov, 1980, p. 89–91; Smirnova, 1989, p. 124–128; Smirnova, 2001, p. 99, fig. 3, 4). One of them featured the carved

mark of a small even-armed cross. The sacred ground is supposed to have continued in use until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, the an area in the neighbourhood of the stele of grave 147 at the same site produced a 0.5 × 0.6 m granite stone with a carving reminiscent of a trident. Basing on the grave inventory the find was dated to the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Smirnova, 2001, p. 99–100, fig. 3). Another similar specimen originates from the locality of Dubki (former Wikiau-Kunterstrauch) situated nearby the cemetery where an area inside a stone enclosure interpreted as an early medieval place of worship produced two boulders with traces of working. One of them was carved with the mark of a trident, the other with a faint ornament in the form of two carved trefoils or, alternately, even-armed crosses. The site has been dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Ibidem, p. 100–101, fig. 5). Another interesting specimen, recorded inside a pit explored at the cemetery at Kovrovo (formed Dolkeim), featured on one of its faces a carved mark in the form of a human foot (Ibidem, p. 102).

Geographically the closest to the stone from Konikowo (Rostek) is a stone discovered by the meander of the river Goldap, near to the hill-fort at Bociąg (former Schlossberg). This 1 × 0.9 × 0.3 m boulder on one of his faces has a carved zigzag line terminating at one of its ends in two triangular marks. Unfortunately the specimen lacks archaeological context and may be associated only indirectly with the nearby hill-fort which was in use during the 8<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century (Ibidem, p. 104, fig. 8).

Carved stones from Samland and Nadrovia apparently have more in common with the find from Konikowo (Rostek) than do Lithuanian finds. They are closer to it in size even though the specimen from Konikowo (Rostek) is still much smaller. The marks seen on them like on the piece in question do not seem to have served any other purpose than that of decoration, probably symbolic in meaning. Even more important than similarity of morphology is the fact that most of the carved stone finds from Samland and Nadrovia have been recorded within well-defined archaeological contexts, many of them having occurred within various stone pavements and stone facing; in this they also resemble the find from Konikowo (Rostek).

Even so, the carved stone discovered at the settlement at Konikowo (Rostek) is in some ways different from the finds from Samland and Nadrovia. The carved marks seen on its surface are much more legible and deeper than

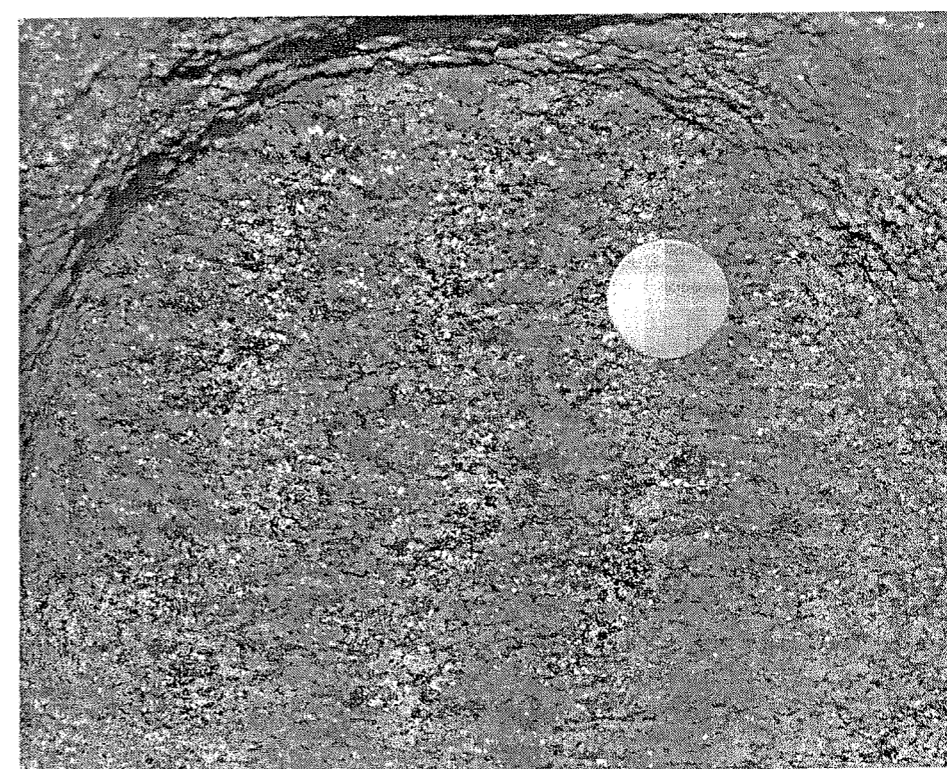
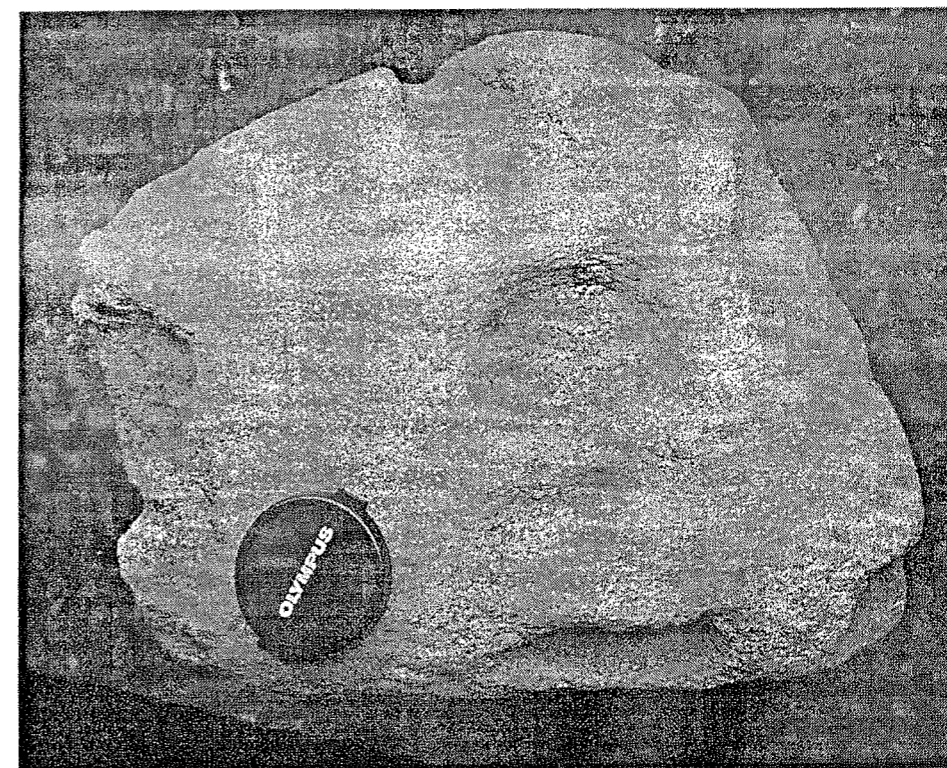
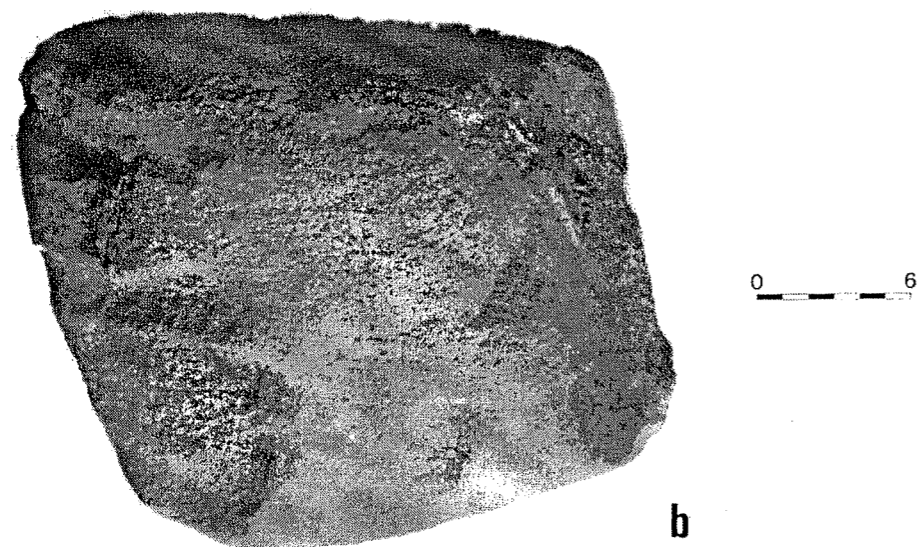
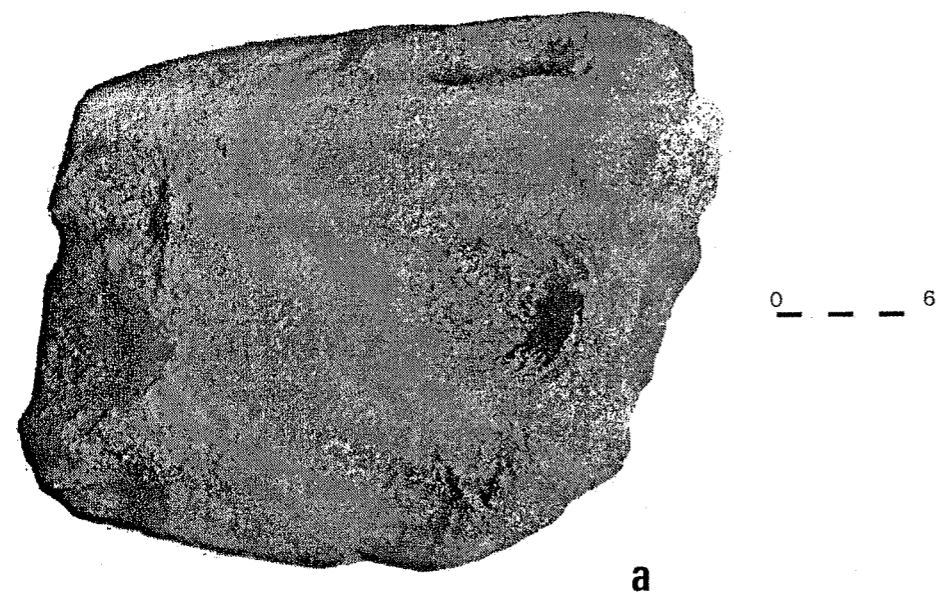


Fig. 4. The base and the upper face of the "sacred" stone from Konikowo (Rostek). Photograph Andrzej Ring  
4 pav. „Sakralinio“ akmenis iš Konikovo (Rostek) priekinė ir užpakalinė pusė. Fotografavo Andrzej Ring

the faint marks carved on specimens from Samland and Nadrovia. More importantly, one of these marks is unique, being carved in the outline of the human hand. According to the petrographic analysis (cf Appendix) the purpose of this mark was probably to facilitate gripping.

All of the above considerations make the carved stone find from feature III/99 at Konikowo (Rostek) a unique find, its form unparalleled within the Balt environment and outside the region as well. Its chronology is another matter. Not having the nature of a diagnostic find the stone had to be dated basing on archaeological material also recovered from the area of feature III/99 explored to date and stratigraphy.

Feature III/99 was superimposed over a several centimetres' thick culture layer containing material dated to the late Roman – Migrations period. Its neighbourhood (on the same stratigraphic level) and the layer directly above it produced early medieval pottery. About 150 cm to the E of the feature below the culture deposit with which it was associated there was a large lime kiln (feature IV/99, 2000). Most of the pottery fragments discovered within its fill have been dated to the late Roman period. Several potsherds originating from the uppermost layer of the kiln had the attributes of early medieval pottery. All of which suggests that an early medieval chronology may be accepted for feature III/99. The dating is supported by analysis of archaeological evidence recovered when the feature in question was excavated.

The only material useful for dating the feature III/99 is pottery (fig. 3 a–c). The biconical spindle whorls (one complete and four fragmentary specimens) which also occurred in the feature are forms typical for the early medieval period and cannot be dated with more precision at the present stage of research (fig. 3 d–g). Pottery discovered inside feature III/99 – forty potsherds in all – without exception entirely hand-built, relatively technologically advanced in character and fired in an inductive temperature. The clay contained fine and medium-grained temper of crushed white and red-coloured rock and sand. The rims are well-defined, formed by careful profiling of the upper vessel section. Basing on vessel form and function, surface finish and ornamentation the pottery from feature III/99 may be divided into two groups.

Group one includes vessel fragments ranging in colour from brown to orange, their internal surfaces carefully smoothed, outer surface roughened by daubing with wet lightly tempered clay. Substantial fragmentation ma-

kes it difficult to reconstruct the size of the vessels. Nevertheless, the dimensions of similar pottery recovered in other features at Konikowo (Rostek) suggests that the vessels in question were relatively large with sizeable mouths and sharply profiled high-set shoulders. None of the pottery fragments discovered in feature III/99 was ornamented. Still, no rim sherds figured among them, and had they occurred they may have been decorated finger pinching similarly as the rims of analogous vessel forms recovered elsewhere at Konikowo (Rostek) (Engel, 2003). Basing on technological attributes the pottery in group one may be classified as kitchen ware. This is primarily because of its low porosity, especially in the part of the vessel near to the base achieved by varying the amount of the crushed rock and sand temper added to the clay and coating the outer vessel surface with a layer of lightly tempered clay.

More may be said of vessels in group two. It includes potsherds ranging in colour from light brown to orange, and a few dark grey in colour. Both the outer and the inner surface shows careful smoothing, presumably using a moistened piece of cloth. Ornamentation in this group tends to be in the form of rows of stamps made with a "comblike" implement arranged either between or within bands of fairly shallow horizontal grooves covering the vessel body between its base and base of the rim (fig. 3 a–c). One unique potsherd featured an ornament of wavy lines. The vessels in group two are mostly medium-sized pots with a sharply profiled body, high-set shoulder and large mouth. The rim lip curves outwards, its edges bevelled. The bases are flat or lightly concave, poorly defined, showing no trace of sanding. Basing on the careful finish, rich ornamentation of the surface and size of pottery forms in group two it has been classified as tableware.

Technological attributes of group one and group two pottery shows them to have a roughly similar dating. The differences between the two groups follow from differences in purpose. Group one of cooking pots includes more conservative forms similar to pottery from settlements known in Sudovian culture. The more conservative attributes are the roughening of the vessel exterior, limited ornamentation (typically in the form of pits made with fingernails and pinching), or high-set angular shoulder. At the same time the technology of production is more advanced to comparison to the pottery from the Migrations period. A new development is the addition of crushed rock and fine sand temper probably to ensure better

firing and lower porosity of vessel walls. A more careful treatment of the inner surfaces of pots is also observed, now carefully smoothed using damp piece of cloth.

Group two of "tableware" vessels from feature III/99 is more advanced in terms of morphology and style. The earlier sharply or gently profiled bowls and vase-like vessels noted in inventories dated to the Roman and Migrations have been replaced with small and medium-sized pots. Smoothing and shining of outer surfaces with a hard implement has given way to careful smoothing of outer surfaces and application of bands of ornamentation. Technologically the vessels in group two are similar to kitchenware, a small admixture of sand has been added to the crushed white and red-coloured rock temper. Some vessels were fired in a reductive temperature, resulting in a dark grey colour.

Decorative patterns observed most frequently in the group of "tableware" vessels include bands of stamps made with a comblike implement. This method of ornamentation is characteristic for settlement and funerary pottery of the Olsztyn group (6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> c.). Stamped ornament was noted among others on a vessel discovered in pit 21 at the settlement at Wyszembork (Nowakowski, 1994, p. 86, fig. 9), as well as on vessel forms recorded in graves 35 and 12 at Tumiany (Baranowski, 1998, p. 284–285, fig. 1, 4). On vessels from Konikowo (Rostek) bands of stamping alternate with ornaments of horizontal grooves which in some specimens cover the entire outer surface of the pots. Similar bands of ornamentation were noted in ornamentation of the Olsztyn group, where they tended to be limited to the upper portion of the vessel (Ibidem, p. 285). In view of what has been said it is probably correct, following the suggestion of some researchers, to derive ornamentation of the described type from "Slav" ornamentation of pottery (Wróblewski, Nowakiewicz, 2003, p. 170). Vessels with an ornament of bands of horizontal grooves start to be recorded on Slav territory adjacent to the West Balt environment as early as the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Szymański, 1987, fig. 1). This is also true of the wavy line pattern noted on one of the potsherds from feature III/99 at Konikowo (Rostek), which become common among Slav neighbours also around the 7<sup>th</sup> c. (Ibidem, fig. 1; Chudziak, 1991, fig. 51; Grążawski, 2002, plate XXVIII).

At the same time vessel forms in group two show direct ties to earlier Sudovian pot-like forms. They continue to be hand-built with no indication of at least partial

turning on the pottery wheel, their shoulder is high-set and most frequently angular, the vessel mouth large as compared to the relatively small diameter of the vessel base. Only the manner of formation of the vessel rim is more advanced, perhaps as an influence from "Slav" pottery, with a turned upper sections from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> century; some of the vessels from feature III/99 had outward curving rims with bevelled edges.

Pottery similar both in its technology, morphology and ornamentation to the "tableware" group found in feature III/99 are recorded at the settlement (site 1) at Janów Pomorski/Truso (Jagodziński, 1991, p. 143, fig. 7, 8). The co-occurred with chronologically diagnostic small finds dated to the period from the close of the 8<sup>th</sup> until the early 10<sup>th</sup> century (Jagodziński, 1991, p. 154; Jagodziński, 1997, p. 98). I should be noted at the same time that the evidence from Janów Pomorski also included partially wheel-turned forms, entirely absent from Konikowo (Rostek).

In the light of the above discussion pottery from feature III/99 may probably be dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> century. Given such dating it is interesting to note the presence in the inventory of the feature in question of kitchenware showing more primitive attributes more typical for the preceding period. A similar situation has been observed also at sites such as Janów Pomorski/Truso (Jagodziński, 1991, fig. 7, 8) Czarny Las (Wróblewski, Nowakiewicz, 2003, p. 172) or Palanga (Żulkus, 1997, p. 197). We would have here an additional proof of the tenacity of traditional techniques of building this type of pottery among early medieval West Balt tribes.

Having more or less resolved the question of its chronology of the unusual carved stone from Konikowo (Rostek) it is now worth attempting some interpretation of its function. Apparently, the stone was deposited deliberately with other stones probably forming the foundation of a large dwelling structure built around the turn of the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> century. This suggests that its function may have been symbolic, possibly sacred – a sort of a votive offering made at the outset of construction of a building, a "cornerstone". Another interpretation is also possible. Basing on examples known from the nearby Samland and Nadrovia to the northeast it is possible to consider feature III/99 to have been an early medieval place of worship in which the carved stone had an essential role to play. At the same time this interpretation is undermined by the fact that the stone as other elements of the structure had

been covered by a layer of daub and could not be seen. Furthermore, there is no other evidence to support the sacred character of the feature. Finally, it is also possible that the stone found its way into the structure by accident as ordinary building material. Traces of working seen on it would have resulted from its having been used at an earlier time (previous to deposition in feature III/99) as some kind of a tool. This would explain why a palm-shaped mark was carved on one of its surfaces – to facili-

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tate a hand-hold. At the same time, petrographic analysis showed no traces of use wear which would support the interpretation of the carved stone as a tool (see Appendix).

At the present stage of research the most probable interpretation is that the exceptional carved stone from Konikowo (Rostek) was a type of a “cornerstone offering”. Perhaps the continued exploration of feature III/99 will help to solve the riddle of the “sacred” stone.

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## „SAKRALINIO“ AKMENS IŠ KONIKOVO (ROSTEKO) GYVENVIETĖS ŠALIA GOLDAPĖS MĮSLĖ

Marcin Engel

## Santrauka

1998–2000 m. Varšuvos valstybinio archeologijos muziejaus Baltų archeologijos skyriaus ekspedicija, vadovaujama dr. Anos Bitner-Wróblewskos ir mgr. Marcino Engelio, atliko gelbstimusius archeologinius tyrinėjimus jotvingių gyvenvietėje Konikove (Rosteke) netoli Goldapės (Geldupės) (Engel, Iwanicki, 2001; Engel, 2002).

Gyvenvietė (2 objektas) yra viduramžių piliakalnio papėdėje, apie 3 km į pietus nuo Goldapės miesto (1 pav.), žemėnėje Goldapės kalno viršūnėje (272 m virš jūros lygio).

1999 m. žvalgomoji perkasa buvo kasama tarp kelio ir rytinio piliakalnio pylimo siekiant atsekti bent jau potencialiai nepažeistą gyvenvietės kultūrinių sluoksnių stratigrafiją (Engel, 2002). Atliekant darbus šioje perkasoje aptiktas kultūrinis sluoksnis, kuriame buvo gausu keramikos, o vakarinėje dalyje pastebėta stambių ir vidutinio dydžio akmenų bei molio tinko koncentracija. Išplėtus perkasa buvo aptiktas didelio keturkampio objekto, veikiausiai gyvenamojo, kampas (pažymėta kaip objektas III/99). Kasinėjant dalies objekto užpildą surasta 40 molinių puodų fragmentų, vienas sveikas ir keturi fragmentiškai išlikę verpstukai. Tačiau įdomiausias radinys – vidutinio dydžio akmuo, kuris gulėjo čia pat pakraštyje, riedulių, padengtų molio tinku, krūvoje.

Petrologiniu aspektu riedulys – tai gneiso atmaina (metamorfuota uoliena). Riedulio forma netaisyklinga, didžiausia plokštuma yra 23 × 21 × 21 × 16 cm dydžio, primena lygintuvo padą (4 pav.). Riedulio pagrinda ir trumpesniuose šonuose matyti ovalių ir pailgų įdubų (4 pav., a). Viršutinėje akmens dalyje yra įdubų, primenančių dešiniojo delno pirštų įspaudus (4 pav., b). Petrografiniai tyrimai parodė,

kad įdubos padarytos įrankiais, o akmuo susijęs su žmogaus veikla ir traktuotinas kaip archeologinis radinys. Akmuo su žmogaus padarytomis įdubomis buvo sąmoningai padėtas tarp kitų akmenų, kurie veikiausiai sudaro didelio gyvenamojo objekto (pagal keramikos radinius datuojamo VIII–IX a. sandūra) pamatą. Toks akmens lokalizavimas rodo jo simbolinių sakralinių funkcijų galimybę. Taigi Konikovo (Rosteko) yra savita statybų pradžios auka arba savitas „kertinis akmuo“. Galima ir kitokia šio radinio interpretacija. Remiantis panašiais radiniais iš Sembos ir Nadruvos (Smirnova, 2001), objektas III/99 gali būti priskirtas prie viduramžiškų kulto vietų, kur akmuo buvo itin svarbus. Tačiau ši hipotezė abejotina, nes minėtas akmuo, kaip ir kiti konstrukcijos akmenys, buvo uždengtas molio tinku ir paviršiuje jo nesimatė. Nėra ir kitokių objekto sakrališkumo įrodymų. Taip pat neatmetama galimybė, kad akmuo pateko į konstrukciją visai atsitiktinai, kaip paprasta statybinė medžiaga. Jame matomi žmogaus veiklos pėdsakai liudytojų, kad jis buvo naudojamas kaip kažkoks neapibrėžtas įrankis dar prieš patekdamas į objektą. Tokia paskirtis paaiškintų delno pėdsakus akmenyje – patogiau paimti. Tačiau petrografinė analizė neparodė jokių naudojimo darbui pėdsakų, įrodančių, kad akmuo galėjo būti įrankis (žr. priedą).

Dabartiniame tyrimų etape labiausiai tikėtina pirmoji hipotezė, aiškinanti šį išskirtinį radinį kaip statybų pradžios auką. Tiesni darbai, kuriais siekiama visiškai atidengti objektą III/99, galbūt padės išspręsti „sakralinio“ akmens mįslę.

Iš lenkų kalbos vertė Aleksiejus Luchtanas

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