

Objects Made of Antler and Stone

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While antler combs are extremely infrequent at Polish cemeteries, two such artifacts were discovered at Bodzia. A single-sided comb was unearthed in the grave of a small child, near its feet. Another comb, fragmentarily preserved, was uncovered near the skull of a woman buried below the child, in a pit lined with wood. These graves were located one next to another, in one row in the eastern part of the cemetery. Another equally rare kind of grave goods is a stone whorl made of Volhynian slate from the burial of a young woman, which was one of the five graves in a collective burial located in the center of the cemetery. In the same grave a quernstone was placed over the head and chest of the deceased. This is a very rare type of find in grave assemblages in the region.

Antler Objects

At the cemetery of Bodzia, objects made of antler were represented by two combs (a complete one and a small fragment of another) included in the grave goods. The former comes from Feature E856 and was made of antler.¹ It is a one-sided, three-layered specimen composed of 8 plates with teeth, each 3.3–3.5 cm wide (Fig. 15.1: 1). The plates were fixed with 10 bronze (?) rivets: the terminal plates were fixed with a separate rivet each and the central ones with rivets located precisely at the junctions of the plates.² The side plates had triangular spines and straight bases. They were decorated with linear motifs, in a central panel defined by incised lines there were vertical grooves spaced out in 4 triangular zones inscribed in a rectangle, and groups of vertical grooves at the sides. This comb may be classified as Group IB, Type VII, Variant 5, sub-variant b, after E. Cnotliwy.³ A very similar specimen was found in Sigtuna, but in that case the ornament in the central zone was doubled.⁴ It was found in a feature dated to the late 10th century. Also in Birka, in Grave 887 a comb was found

1 The analysis was conducted by Marta Osypińska, Ph.D.

2 Cnotliwy 1973, 105–106.

3 Cnotliwy 1973, 104.

4 Bäck, Carlsson 1994, 62, fig. 41.

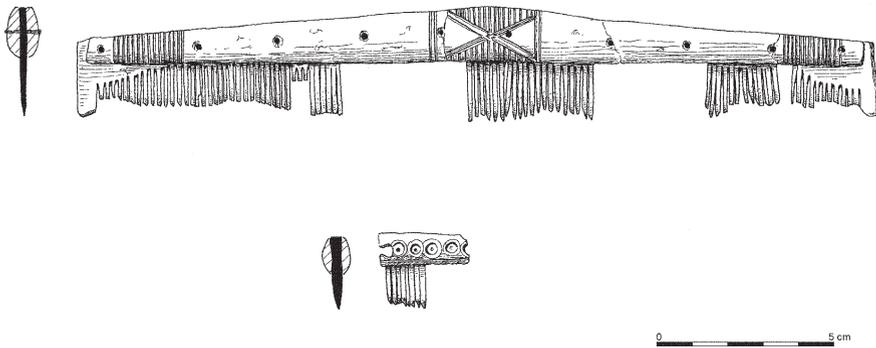


FIGURE 15.1 Antler combs from graves: 1—Feature E856, 2—Feature E855 (DRAWING: J. SAWICKA).

with a similar decorative motif.⁵ This is the most similar specimen to the one from Bodzia in the type and arrangement of the ornament.⁶ The decoration of this comb is virtually identical with that of the specimen from Grave E856 at Bodzia, even though the form of the former is slightly different. The comb from the cemetery at Bodzia was found in a burial pit in which a child aged 2–4 years was buried. The comb lay to the right of the deceased, near the legs (feet?).

The second comb found in Bodzia comes from Feature E855 and only small fragments of the side plate and toothed plate have been preserved (Fig. 15.1: 2). On one of its longer sides, shallow incisions (16 of them) can be seen, spaced every 1 mm, underlined with a narrow groove running alongside. On the external side there are 4 ‘eyes’ probably made with a drafting compass. Near one of the shorter sides there is a trapeze-shaped (3 × 4 mm) incision, probably for the rivet which held the plates of the comb together. The preserved remains of the side plate suggest that the comb may have had a straight base and an arched spine. The toothed plates have the dimensions of 2 × 1.1 cm, out of which 8 teeth and the edge of one of the holes for the rivet holding the parts of the comb together have been preserved. The object is made of antler.⁷ The fragment of the side plate was found under the skull of a woman aged *maturus* resting in a pit located below the skeleton of a child aged 3–5 (*infans* I).

Combs made of antler are an exceptionally rare kind of grave equipment in the Polish lands. One of the few graves containing such finds is the burial from the cemetery at Niemcza in Lower Silesia, dated to the late 10th–11th century.⁸

5 Ambrosiani 1984, Abb. 18:6.

6 Arbman 1943, Abb. 294.

7 The analysis was conducted by Marta Osypińska, Ph.D.

8 Jaworski 1998, 421–422.