

IN SEARCH OF THE EXCLUSIVE OMEGA CROSS

by Peter von Lipinski

Since the beginning of the time, gravesides have been marked in various ways. For example, some normandic tribes in Pommerania used rocks to build a mount to identify a graveside, while other tribes used the so called face urns to bury the ashes of the deceased. Different people had different ways to mark the burial side of a friend or relative.

After Christianity was accepted by more and more people in the area what was later known as Pommerania, Kashubia and West Prussia, wooden crosses were used throughout the land as gravemarkers to identify somebody's final resting place.

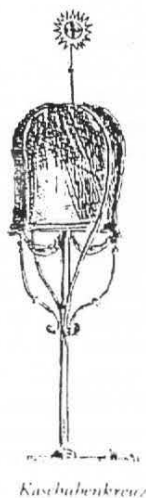
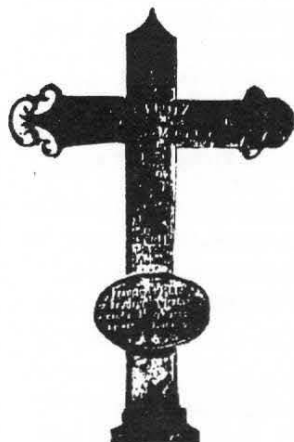
The disadvantage with the wooden crosses was, that this type of grave-marker did not withstand the onslaught of thievery harsh weather condition for a long time. It would not take long, and the inscription on the cross, name, date of birth and death would not be legible anymore, and soon the wooden cross would also succumb to the elements. During the later part of the Renaissance time, wrought iron crosses became popular, and people of the catholic faith preferred this type of grave marker, if one could afford it. In many cases the grave side would also be fenced in with a wrought iron fence. Sometimes a religious figure/ statue would be added to the grave side, to enhance the appearance of someone's final resting place.

Later on, around the beginning of the 1900's, cast iron crosses were also produced at a much lower cost, as compared to the hand made wrought iron crosses. Their iron crosses could also be produced at a much quicker pace, but did not become all that popular to be used as gravemarkers. In addition to the wooden, wrought iron and cast iron crosses as gravemarkers, the use of marble and granite headstones became very popular as well as fashionable.

Some of the handmade wrought iron crosses were truly a piece of art. Each blacksmith had his own special way of producing a very fine wrought iron cross, with his own so called 'special signature'. People could tell by the design of these crosses, who the blacksmith was. A few of these iron crosses can still be found in different parts of Germany, as well as in the U.S.A., and Canada, where German settlers once had settled to start a new life, after leaving the old country. In areas of Pomerania, where the Kashubian's use to live, a different hand made wrought iron cross was sometimes used by the Kashubians as a gravemarker, also known as the 'Kashubian Kreuz'. The Kashubian Kreuz/ cross was fashioned in the shape of the Greek letter 'OMEGA', which was fastened on top of a iron rod. On the top of the letter 'OMEGA' was a replica of the sun. These Kashubian crosses, as well as hand carved figures, hand painted pottery and Kashubian needle art, are truly a mirror of Kashubian craftsmanship.

The Kashubian crosses are being mentioned in several books, but to find them today seems almost impossible. During a visit to Bytow in the fall of 1997, the author visited several cemeteries around Bytow, but was unable discover even one of these old traditional gravemarkers. Only in the old churchyard in Borzyszkowo did the author discover a fairly simply wrought iron cross, which does not even come close to a Kashubian cross. The cemetery from Piaseczno to this day has a wrought iron gate, and in another cemetery by Niezabyszewo, a couple of very plain crosses are still standing. The sketch of the 'Kashuben Cross' was taken from the *!Pommern Lexikon!*. Since there are no known pictures of any kind from these Kashubian gravemarkers/ crosses on file, the mystery to their real appearance only deepens.

If any reader of this newsletter has in his or her possession an old picture of any kind showing these old Kashubian crosses, the editor of this newsletter would appreciate receiving a copy of their picture.



Kashubenkreuz