

THE CROSSBOW ANIMAL-HEADED BROOCHES FROM GRAVE 165 OF THE SAMBIAN-NATANGIAN CULTURE BURIAL GROUND AT BOL'SHOE ISAKOVO (FORMERLY LAUTH)*

OLGA KHOMIAKOVA

Abstract

The article presents the publication and an attempt at the analysis of the brooches from grave 165 of the Bol'shoe Isakovo (formerly Lauth) burial ground. These are special finds which produces pieces of animal-headed crossbow brooches of the Migration Period in Sambian-Natangian culture and the western Baltic region. Brooches from the grave of the Bol'shoe Isakovo burial ground should be one of the earliest examples of the animal style in the southeast Baltic, and an instance of contacts between northern Europe and the Sambian population in the Early Migration Period.

Key words: Bol'shoe Isakovo burial ground, Sambian-Natangian culture, animal-headed crossbow brooches, Early Migration Period.

Crossbow animal-headed or zoomorphic brooches became widespread in the eastern Baltic and on the islands in the Baltic Sea in the fifth to seventh centuries. Multiple specimens are known in the Finno-Ugric area and in antiquities of Kiev culture (Kazakevičius 1983, p.189ff; Tautavičius 1996, p.201ff; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, p.195ff). These brooches play a special role in archaeological evidence of the Balts, as one of the reflections of the complex cultural situation in the region. It is worth devoting attention to any of them, especially to brooches of sub-types that were formerly unknown.

The main subject of this article are two crossbow animal-headed brooches, found in grave 165 of the Bol'shoe Isakovo burial ground in the Guryevsky district of the Kaliningrad region (formerly Lauth, Kreis Königsberg), which belongs to Sambian-Natangian culture (or Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture). This work is also devoted to a material analysis of these ornaments, to the question of dating and identifying them in the context of already-known typological schemes.

Grave 165 was uncovered during excavations of the Bol'shoe Isakovo burial ground conducted by the Sambian-Natangian archaeological expedition of the Kaliningrad State Museum of History and Art (KOI-HM) by K.N. Skvortsov¹ (Skvortzov 2003, p.31ff,

Figs. 140-143). The grave was located in the eastern part of the burial ground, and was described as a cremation of 0.79 by 0.57 metres in size and 0.21 metres in depth. The remains of cremated bones were put in a ceramic urn² and placed in the lower part. The upper part of the urn was disturbed by ploughing. The grave goods consisted of clothes and personal ornaments. The finds were situated above the bones, and were affected by fire. In the centre were two bronze crossbow brooches with stylised animal heads on feet (Fig. 1.1-2). Near them was a fragment of a third brooch, ornamented with wire coils (Fig. 1.3-4), which possibly belonged to the so-called *Große Armbrustfibeln* type. In the filling of the pit, a spiral bronze ring was found (Fig. 1.6). This belonged to the C. Beckmann Type 30 form (Beckmann 1969, Plates 2 and 30-38, Figs. 14-17). Near the southwest side of the urn, a clay biconical spindle-whorl was discovered (Fig. 1.7). The only find untouched by fire was a disc-shaped lathed amber bead TM 439 (Tempelmann-Mączynska 1985, p.75, Plate 67), found in the northwest part of the urn (Fig. 1.5). The character and combination of finds in this grave allow us to consider it as a female grave, and to date it to the Early Migration Period (phase D₁ after the chronological system proposed by K. Godłowski).

The brooches described above (Fig. 2, see Plate V) have a crossbow construction, with flat (about 0.3cm thick) feet with a short cast catchplate. They are small in size. The length of their body is about 4.9 and 4.6 centimetres, the axis 2.7 and 2.5 centimetres, and the

* This work was carried out in the framework of the project RGNF № 09-01-00511a 'Contacts and Interactions of the Forest and Forest-Steppe Zone Population of East Europe in the Late Roman Period and Migration Period (according to female costume)'.

¹ The author is grateful to K.N. Skvortsov for the opportunity to use unpublished data from the Bol'shoe Isakovo (formerly Lauth) burial ground.

² A bone data anthropological analysis of grave 165 has not yet been done. The individual gender of the buried person is determined by identification of the grave goods.

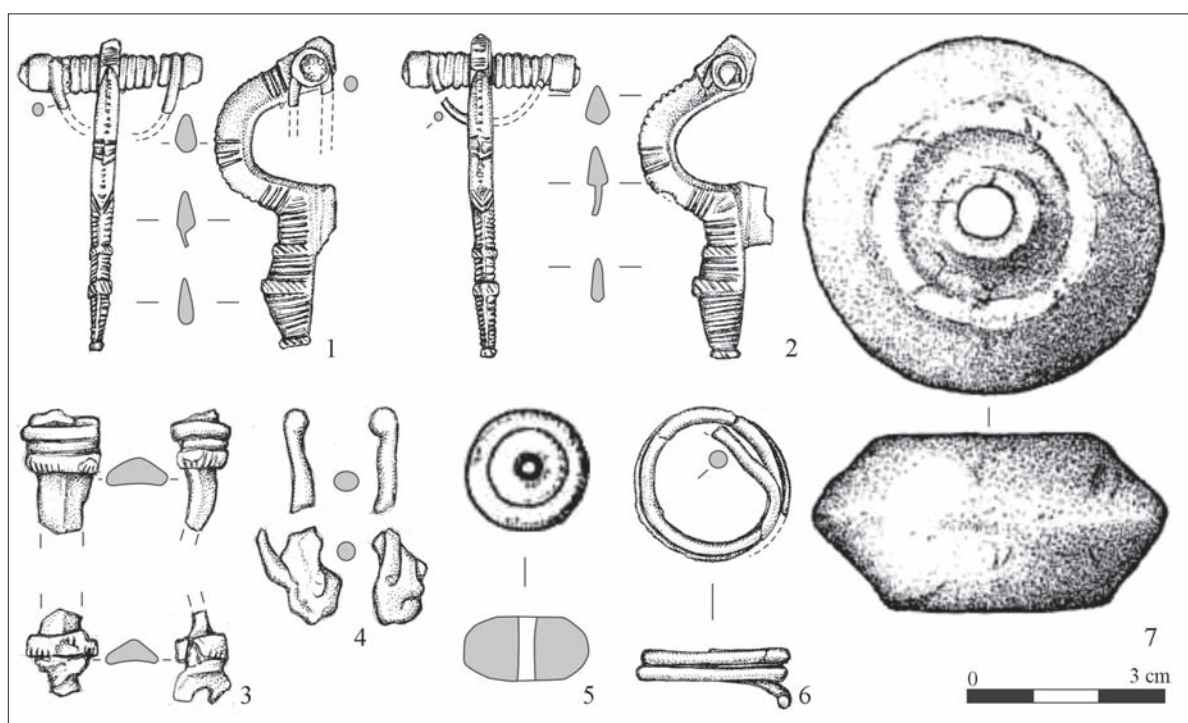


Fig. 1. Bol'shoe Isakovo, female grave 165. Grave goods: 1–4, 6 bronze; 5 amber; 7 pottery. 1–4, 5 (drawings by O. Khomiakova; 5, 7 after Skvortzov 2003, Fig. 143).

height of the bows about 2.2 centimetres. The terminals of the axis are decorated by hemispherical knobs. At the head of the feet are small facing notches. The side surface of the bow is decorated with relief decoration, zones of grooves. The ribs are also decorated with notches. The long foot of every such brooch has an imitation of an animal head. It is characterised by a slight rise in the profile, which is covered by an embossed belt with skew notches. There were also similar belts on the feet terminals. The side surface of the brooches' feet between belts was filled by riffling.

A classification of the crossbow animal-headed brooches was proposed for the first time by N. Åberg. The basis consists of examples from former East Prussia (Åberg 1919, p.94, Figs. 127-131). This scheme for the development of the type, which was completed by examples from other areas, is accepted today (Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, p.77ff, Figs. 15, 17). But it should be admitted that there is not a common viewpoint on the typology of crossbow animal-headed brooches of the Balts. Thus, in compliance with another classification, these fibulae are divided into three groups, characterised by their decoration and chronology: specimens with animal motifs and spirals, pieces decorated in the Germanic style, and brooches made according to Germanic prototypes (Bliujienė 2002, p.151ff, Figs. 6-12). Another typology of crossbow animal-headed brooches has been proposed by V. Kulakov (Kulakov 1990, pp.204-215), but this typology cannot be regarded as satisfactory. It has no clear classification criteria; in

this case, brooches of the same type belong either to different variations (group 2 and 4), or combine into one (group 3) (Kulakov 1990, Figs. 3-4).

Most similar to brooches from Bol'shoe Isakovo, according to morphology and stylistics, might be examples from Mrągowo (formerly Sensburg) of the Masurian Lakeland (Åberg 1919, Fig. 12) (Fig. 3.1), which represent the earliest phase of the development of zoomorphic fibulae (Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, pp.79ff, 195). They were made of bronze, their corpus had a prolonged form, being decorated with relief ornament, and had a stylised snake's head on the foot. Findings of such brooches have been known in Germanic areas: the islands of Öland and Bornholm (Magnus 2004, p.271ff) (Fig. 3.2). From here, as a result of different interactions, they came into the area of the Balts (Kazakevičius 1983, p.194ff; Bliujienė 2002, p.145ff; Šimėnas 2006, p.58).

The main difference between the Bol'shoe Isakovo and Mrągowo specimens is the major schematisation in the decoration of Sambian fibulae: the feet terminals here are represented by quite conditional animal head images (it seems like a 'hint' of a zoomorphic head). In addition, there are some morphological features uncharacteristic of these sub-types: facetings at the foot's head, hemispherical knobs in the terminals of the axis, relief ornamentation and an elongated catchplate. These features are more appropriate to Schönwarling/Skowarcz type (Tischler, Kemke 1902, Plate IV.16,

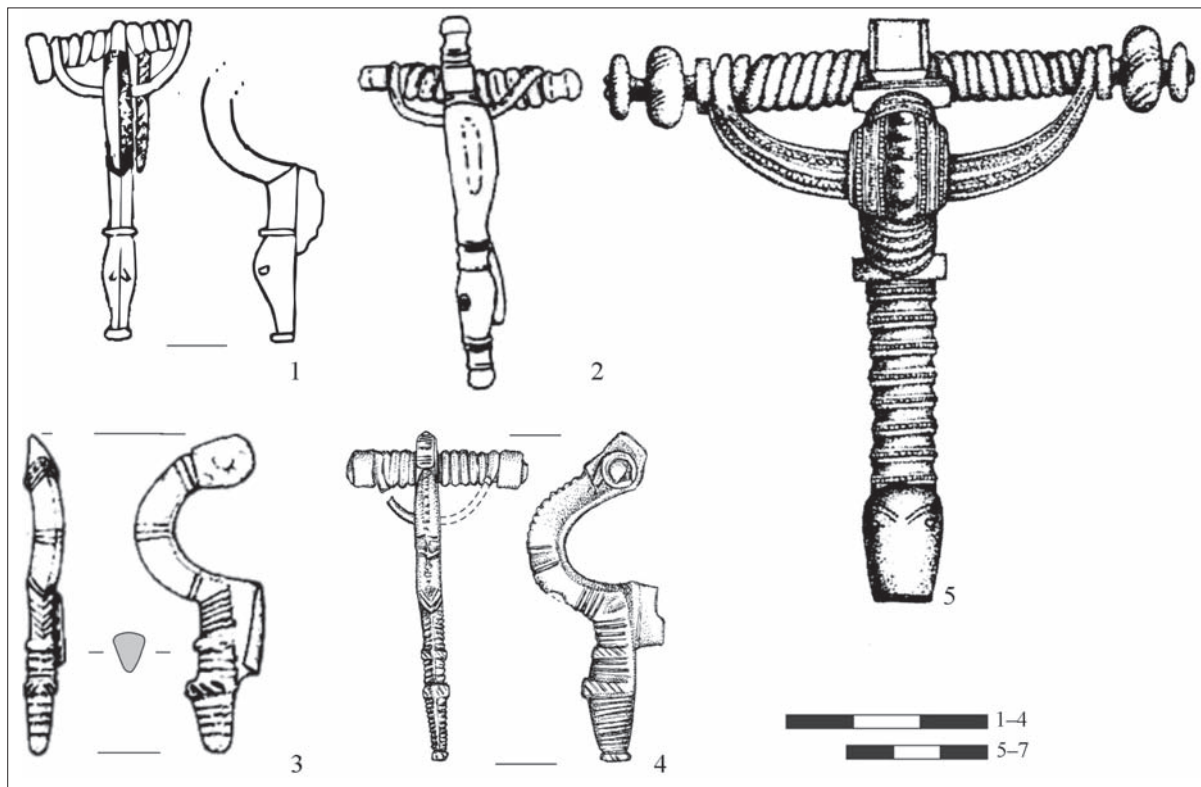


Fig. 3. Crossbow animal-headed brooches of Sensburg/Mragowo sub-type: 1 Mragowo, stray find (Warmian-Masurian voivodeship, Poland); 2 Bornholm, unknown site; 3 Wyszembork site IVa (Warmian-Masurian voivodeship, Poland); 4 Bol'shoe Isakovo burial ground, grave 165 (Kaliningrad region, Russia); 5 Rubokai burial ground, grave 43 (Šilutė district, Lithuania) (1 after Åberg, 1919, Fig. 127; 2 after Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, Plate LII.5; 3 after Szymanski 2005, Plate V. 6; 4-5 after Kazakevičius 1983, Fig. 5).

23, 25; Skvorzov 2007, Table 49, 72; Kulakov 2007, Figs. 50.1, 53.1; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, pp.34-41) and Dollkeim/Kovrovo type brooches (Tishler, Kemke 1902, Table V.14; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, Plates V-VI), which became widespread in Sambian-Natangian culture at the beginning of the Migration Period (Godłowski 1974, Plate VII.7), or on Stufe IV of the Dollkeim burial ground (interface of phases D/E) after W. Nowakowski (Nowakowski 1996, p.20ff, Table 17). Such a mixture, in my opinion, might be interpreted as a consequence of the Sambian Peninsula's special situation. It was situated at a crossroads of different cultural influences. So Sambian craftsmen, in their production, could orientate towards different sets of traits. As a result of such 'combinations', a new sub-type of brooches could be produced. This phenomenon, known as 'superimposition of influences', has been noted earlier (Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, p.81ff).

Crossbow animal-headed brooches similar to Sambian specimens are known from the Lower Nemunas region. They are considered to be a sort of imitation of Sensburg/Mragowo forms, with stylisation and roughening. Their forms become massive, their zoomorphic heads become shorter, they are more stylised now. The bow is additionally decorated by 'cockscomb', more

usual for much earlier patterns from Öland and Bornholm. Their dating compares to the end of the fifth century to the beginning of the sixth century. A 'classic' example of this sub-type is a brooch from the region of the Lower Nemunas, from Rubokai, grave 43 (Kazakevičius 1983, Fig. 1.3) (Fig. 3.5). Such brooches also find analogies in materials from central Lithuania, particularly from the Plinkagailis burial ground, burial 107 (Kazakevičius 1993, Fig. 172; Tautavičius 1996, Figs. 88, 89; Bliujienė 2002, p.155, Fig. 12.1).

The brooches from Bol'shoe Isakovo described here do not have analogies in Sambian-Natangian culture. Specimens of zoomorphic fibulae from Osokino (formerly Gross Waldeck, Kreis Pr.-Eylau), Prudovka (formerly Popelken, Kreis Wehlau) and Yaroslavskoe (formerly Schlakalken, Kreis Fischhausen) belong to another version of West Balt crossbow animal-headed brooches, which find parallels in Tumiany (formerly Daumen) (Åberg, 1919, Figs. 130, 131; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, p.197, Fig. 17; Bliujienė 2002, p.152, Fig. 6). Such brooches, dated to the fifth and sixth centuries, are also known from survivals from the Lower Nemunas region: Vidgiriai grave 30 (Šimėnas 2006, p.58, Figs. 42, 43) and Plinkaigalis graves 106 and 107 (Kazakevičius 1983, Fig.1; Vaitkunskienė

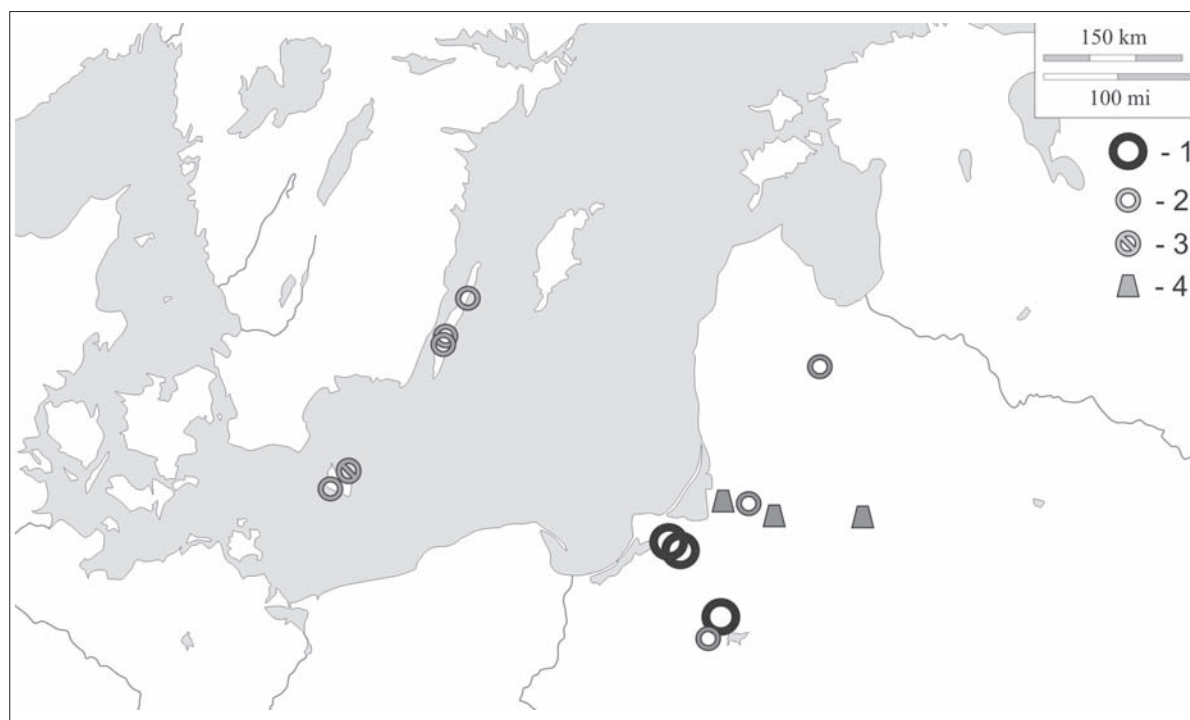


Fig. 4. The distribution of crossbow brooches of Sensburg/Mragowo sub-type: 1 Bol'shoe Isakovo burial ground and Wyszembork site IVa; 2 brooches of Sensburg/Mragowo type; 3 brooches of Bornholm (Smørenge) variant; 4 brooches of Rubokiai variant (after A. Bitner-Wroblewska 2001, Fig. 16, with additions).

1986, pp.38-39). This sub-type differs by morphology: the foot and the axis of the fibulae are of almost equal proportions, and there is a strong stylisation of the foot's zoomorphic terminal. The axis is decorated with knobs in the shape of buds. Precious metals might have been used in the process of manufacturing these brooches. Probably, traditions of strong stylisation inherited by brooches from Bol'shoe Isakovo might have some influence on this sub-type, notably Sambian-Natangian fibulae. Maybe there was a common 'field' (or set of traits), in the framework of which West Balt craftsmen worked and created new forms of clothes fittings and ornaments.

By the character of the main features, it should be mentioned that these specimens were not used exclusively by tribal elites. This might be topical only in the case of Daumen/Tumiany-type brooches (Vaitkunskienė 1987, pp.46-47; Šimėnas 2006, p.58), which were made from precious metals. Bronze goods from Bol'shoe Isakovo were discovered in a complex which was not noticeable against the background of other Early Migration Period burials of this site (Skvorzov 2007, Tables 28, 40, 49, 58, 61).

A fibula almost identical to the crossbow animal-headed brooches from Bol'shoe Isakovo is known among the finds from Wyszembork site IVa. The crossbow animal-headed fibula from Wyszembork IVa is a loose find. This fine ornament is just briefly mentioned

among the finds of Bogaczewo culture (Szymański 2005, Table V.6) (cf. Fig. 3.3-4). However, the brooch from Wyszembork site IVa is similar to ornaments from Bol'shoe Isakovo, by the similar decoration and the measurements of the foot (the foot's length is about 4.8cm, the bow's height about 2.6cm, and the thickness of the bow's cross-section about 0.4cm). Such a similarity of morphological features allows us to consider that the brooch found in Wyszembork site IVa might have been imported from the Sambian-Natangian culture area during period D₁. Of course, it is possible that the brooch from Wyszembork site IVa was produced locally, under the influence of Sambian-Natangian culture. During the Early Migration Period close connections between both regions are mentioned (Szymański 2008, p.170).

Thus, brooches from burial 165 of Bol'shoe Isakovo should be one of the earliest local specimens of Sensburg/Mragowo type, and probably one of the earliest examples of animal-style in the southeast Baltic. The mapping of such zoomorphic brooches (Fig. 4) allows us to make clearer presumptions about the main vector of its progress. By this point, the Sambian Peninsula might be a major interaction area in the formation of this type. The west Lithuanian coast might also be such a zone of contact. Probably, new finds of brooches belonging to this type in the region will allow us to confirm or deny this suggestion.

The appearance of such brooches in Sambian materials might be considered as one of many manifestations of the intensification of contacts between northern Europe (especially with islands in the Baltic Sea, like Öland and Bornholm) and the local population in the Early Migration Period. On the other hand, the brooches described here should be a striking example of the individuality of the art of Balt jewellers.

Translated by Roman Shirouchov

Abbreviations

Arhiv IA RAN – Arhiv Instituta arheologii Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk, Moskva.
MADA – Lietuvos TSR Mokslų akademijos darbai, A serija, Vilnius, from 1955 to 1989.

References

Manuscripts

SKVORTSOV, K.N., 2003. Arhiv IA RAN. R-I. №25796. Otchet po raskopkam gruntovogo mogil'nika Lauth-Bol'shoe Isakovo Sambiisko-Natangiiskoi arheologicheskoi ekspeditsiei v 2003 godu.

Literature

ÅBERG, N., 1919. *Ostpreußen in der Völkerwanderungszeit*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri-A.-D.
BECKMANN, C., 1969. Metallfingerringe der Römischen Kaiserzeit im Freien Germanien. *Saalburg Jahrbuch*, 37, 7-106.
BITNER-WRÓBLEWSKA, A., 2001. *From Samland to Rogaland. East-west connections in the Baltic basin during the Early Migration Period*. Warsaw.
BLIUJENĖ, A., 2002. The Main Stylistic Features of the Baltic Crossbow Brooches in the Migration Period. *Archaeologia Baltica*, 5, 145-161.
GODŁOWSKI, K., 1974. Chronologia okresu późnorzymskiego i wczesnego okresu wędrówek ludów w polsce północno – wschodniej. *Rocznik Białostocki*, 12, 9-109.
KAZAKEVIČIUS, V., 1983. A rare animal-headed crossbow brooch from Plinkaigalis in Lithuania. *Fornvännen*, 78, 189-196.
KAZAKEVIČIUS, V., 1993. Plinkaigalio kapinynas. *Lietuvos archeologija*, 10.
KULAKOV, V.I., 2007. *Dollkeim–Kovrovo. Issledovaniia 1992–2002 gg*. Minsk: Institut istorii NAN Belarusi.
KULAKOV, V.I., 1990. “Zverinogolovye” fibuly baltov (V–VII vv.). *Sovetskaija arheologija*, 2, 204-215.
MAGNUS, B., 2004. Brooches on the move in Migration Period Europe. *Fornvännen*, 99, 271-283.
NOWAKOWSKI, W., 1996. *Das Samland in der römischen Kaiserzeit und seine Verbindungen mit dem römischen Reich und der barbarischen Welt*. Veröffentlichung des Vorgeschiechtlichen Seminars Marburg. Sonderband, 10. C. von CARNAP-BORNHEIM, ed. Marburg–Warszawa.

ŠIMĖNAS, V., 2006. *Et mokultūriniai procesai. Vakary Lietuvoje pirmojo mūsų eros tūkstantmečio viduryje*. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla.
SKVORTSOV, K., 2004/2005. Das Gräberfeld der römischen Kaiserzeit von Bol'shoe Isakovo (ehemals Lauth, Kreis Königsberg). Katalog der Funde aus den Grabungen 1998 und 1999. *Offa*, 61/62, 111-219.
SZYMAŃSKI, P., 2005. Mikroregion osadniczy z okresu wpływow rzymskich e rejonie jeziora Sałęt na Pojezierzu Mazurskim. *Światowit. Supplement. Series P: Prehistory and Middle Ages X*, Warsaw.
SZYMAŃSKI, P., 2008. Kurganii mogil'nik sudavskoi kul'tury v Chervonom Dvore voze Goldapa. In: O. RADJUSH, K. SKVORTSOV, eds. *Germania-Sarmatia. Drevnosti Central'noi i Vostochnoi Evropy epohi rimskogo vlianiia i pereseleniia narodov*. Kaliningrad, 166-179.
TAUTAVIČIUS, A., 1996. Vidurinis geležies amžius Lietuvoje (V–IX a.). Vilnius: Lietuvos pilys.
TEMPELMANN-MAÇZYNSKA, M., 1985. Die Perlen der römischen Kaiserzeit und der fruher Phase der Völkerwanderungszeit im mitteleuropaischen Barbaricum. In: *Römisch-Germanische Forschungen*, 43, Mainz am Rhein.
TISCHLER, O., KEMKE, H., 1902. *Ostpreiſische Altertümer aus der Zeit der großen Graberfelder nach Christi Geburt*. Königsberg i.Pr.
VAITKUNSKIENĖ, L., 1986. Mitologiniai ir ritualiniai simboliai m. e. I tūkstantmečio vidurio Lietuvos metalo plastikoje. *MADA*, 3(96), 37-50.
VAITKUNSKIENĖ, L., 1987. Mitologiniai ir ritualiniai simboliai m.e. I tūkstantmečio viduri Lietuvos metalo plastikoje (2. Kosmogoniniai vaizdiniai). *MADA*, 4(101), 44-55.

Received: 20 September 2010; Revised 14 December 2010; Accepted: 28 December 2010.

Olga Khomiakova,
Institute of Archaeology
Dm.Ulianova street 19
Moscow, Russia
E-mail: olga_homsy@mail.ru

SEBOS-NOTANGOS KULTŪROS LANKINĖS ZOOMORFINĖS SEGĖS IŠ BOLŠOJE ISAKOVO (BUV. LAUTH) KAPINYNO KAPO 165

OLGA HOMIAKOVA

Santrauka

Lankinės zoomorfinės segės iš Bolšoje Isakovo (buvęs Lauth) kapinyno kapo 165 datuojamos D1 faze (1–2 pav. įklija). Dabartiniu metu jos yra vienintelės panašios segės Sembos-Notangos kultūros archeologinėje medžiagoje. Schemiškas gyvulinės galvos ant kojelės atvaizdas, taip pat keletas kitų morfologinių požymių leidžia laikyti jas artimas Mrağowo (buvęs Sensburg)

radiniams (3: 1 pav.). Kai kurie jų morfologiniai požymiai yra būdingi kitoms to laikotarpio kultūros segėms.

Apžvelgiami papuošalai gali būti vienas ankstyviausių lankinių zoomorfinių segių pavyzdžių vakarų baltų areale. Šių segių tolesnė raida rutuliojosi Vakarų Lietuvos teritorijoje ir Nemuno žemupyje. Artimiausios analogijos Bolšoje Isakovo kapinyno segėms žinomos D1 periodu, datuojamame Wyszembork IV kapinyne, kur jos galėjo patekti kaip importas arba būti kultūrinių kontaktų pasekmė (3: 3 pav.). Panašių segių atsiradimas Semboje tautų kraustymosi laikotarpio pradžioje liudija bendravimo su Šiaurės Europos (ypač su Olando ir Bornholmo salų) gyventojais sustiprėjimą.

Iš rusų kalbos vertė Roman Shirouchov