

LATVIA AS PART OF A SPHERE OF CONTACTS IN THE BRONZE AGE

ANDREJS VASKS

Abstract

This paper discusses Bronze Age exchange contacts in Latvia. Changes in the directions of contacts and the nature of the exchange are investigated, looking back at the Neolithic for comparison, and at developments in the Early and Late Bronze Age, focussing on the routes by which bronze arrived and the mechanisms by which objects spread. In the Late Neolithic, directional commercial trade is observable, something that is no longer characteristic of the Early Bronze Age, but which appears again in the Late Bronze Age, when bronze-working centres, which had an important role in the regulation of social relations, developed along the River Daugava. During all of these periods, a prestige chain remained in existence.

Key words: Latvia, Bronze Age, exchange contacts, bronze-working, social relationships.

Introduction

As is indicated by the distribution of amber, flint and slate artefacts, by the Middle Neolithic (4100–2900 BC Cal) there was a development of exchange connecting present-day Latvia with the surrounding areas. In the Bronze Age (1800–500 BC Cal), such contacts are most clearly reflected in the distribution of bronze artefacts, and in the presence of bronze-working centres. In view of this, the small number of bronze objects from Latvia, compared with northern Europe or the southeast Baltic, along with evidence of bronze-working on a large scale at a string of Late Bronze Age hill-forts, poses several questions.

In the first place, there is the question of whether and how the direction of contact and exchange shifted at the beginning of the Bronze Age, compared with the Neolithic. Secondly, there is the question of the possible routes of the influx and spread of bronze objects in the area of present-day Latvia in the Early and Late Bronze Age. Thirdly, there is the issue of the role of bronze exchange in the economic and social relations of local societies.

In the literature on the Early Bronze Age or the Early Metal Period, exchange contacts, bronze objects and bronze-working have been discussed as separate phenomena, noting that exchange contacts were not sufficiently well developed and exchange was not a full-time occupation (Latvijas 1974, p.90; Graudonis 2001, p.177ff). Issues relating to the organisation of exchange contacts, and likewise the influence of exchange contacts and bronze on social complexity, have not been discussed. Evidently, the lack of attention to these issues is a consequence of the paradigm accepted

in Soviet historical studies that the Bronze Age was characterised by the social relations of the so-called ‘primitive community’, in which there was no place for greater complexity.

At the same time, in Western archaeology, particularly within the framework of processual archaeology since the 1960s, considerable attention has been paid to exchange in prehistoric societies, to the role it played and the mechanisms by which it operated. Applying ethnological and ethnoarchaeological parallels, exchange mechanisms have been studied in hunter-gatherer, agrarian and urban societies, and in terms of the core-periphery-margin paradigm (Sherratt 1993; Renfrew, Bahn 1996, p.335ff, pp.350-368 and bibliography pp.573-574; Harding 2000, p.187ff; Lavento 2001, p.172ff and references therein). In describing the mechanisms of exchange and trade in the Aegean Bronze Age, Colin Renfrew distinguishes four models: down-the-line exchange, the prestige chain, freelance commercial trade and directional commercial trade (Renfrew 1972, p.465ff). These models have been applied creatively in research on Neolithic and Bronze Age exchange in northern Europe (e.g. Vuorinen 1984; Lavento 2001, p.172ff), and they can serve as a basis for characterising exchange in the eastern Baltic. As regards the terms ‘exchange’ and ‘trade’, the former is more appropriate to northern Europe and the eastern Baltic, since trade is closely connected with a particular kind of good accepted by all the parties involved as an equivalent for the value of all other kinds of goods, namely money. There is no indication that such an equivalent was in use among the societies of these areas.

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The Neolithic background

In the Middle and Late Neolithic (4100–2900–1800 BC), the most important items of exchange (but not the only ones) were amber and flint. This can be traced clearly at the Neolithic settlements of Sārņate and Siliņupe, located near the coast, and especially at the extensively studied settlements of the Lake Lubāns Depression. There is evidence of large-scale amber-working on at least 12 sites in the vicinity of Lake Lubāns (Loze 1979, p.117, Table 11; 2003), which serves to characterise this lowland area as one of the largest amber-working centres in the east Baltic. A centre could continue to exist over a long period only if there was a regular supply of amber. Since the Lake Lubāns Depression lies 300 to 400 kilometres from the source areas of amber, along the shores of the Baltic (Litorina) Sea, amber would probably have been supplied in the framework of a *directional commercial trade* model, or else through *freelance commercial trade*. Evidently, the Rivers Aiviekste and Daugava, and perhaps also the River Lielupe and the smaller rivers of this basin, served as communication routes with the source areas. From the amber workshops of the Lake Lubāns Depression, finished products were taken to areas further north and east, hundreds of kilometres away. It seems that exchange in an easterly direction, to the Valdai Uplands and the Upper Volga area, may have been particularly important, because of the flint sources in these areas. Since the Neolithic sites of the Lake Lubāns Depression characteristically have rich sources of flint, and since flint-working also took place there, it may be that the high-quality Valdai flint in particular was the exchange equivalent for finished amber artefacts in this exchange with the east. This is indicated quite unequivocally by the several thousand amber artefacts, analogous to those from the Lubāns area, that have been found with burials in the cemetery at Konchansk in the Msta Basin in the northern part of the Valdai Uplands (Zimina 2003). It seems that in the contacts between the sites of the Lubāns Depression and the Valdai area, the same models of exchange apply as in the contacts with the Baltic coast. This does not exclude the possibility that, alongside these models of exchange, down-the-line exchange or a prestige chain also existed, operating on a local scale, among the settlements of the Lake Lubāns Depression, and with settlements outside this area. In recent times, some publications on amber exchange in neighbouring areas have appeared. Mirja Ots examined Stone Age amber finds in Estonia, and came to the conclusion that amber ornaments came to Estonia from the west coast of Lithuania and from Lubāna Depression amber-processing centres (Ots 2003). In her comprehensive monograph on Lithuanian amber in prehistory, Audrone Bliujiene,

concerning the Neolithic and Bronze Age, notes the existence of several exchange models in parallel in the whole eastern Baltic region (Bliujiene 2007, p.531ff). In his turn, Alexander Zhulnikov discusses the driving forces and mechanisms of the spread of amber adornments in northeast Europe, and especially in northern Russia. He stresses the connection between the spread of amber and changes in the social strategies of hunter-gatherer communities (Zhulnikov 2008, p.13).

The earliest evidence of bronze, and exchange in the Early Bronze Age

The first bronze objects appeared in the area of present-day Latvia in the Early Bronze Age. So far, the oldest finds, from Montelius' Period II, are a spearhead from Bārta and a small flanged axe from the environs of Lake Lubāns. Traces of the earliest bronze-working activities, in the form of clay crucibles, have been found at the Lagaža site in the Lake Lubāns Depression, dated by Loze to the second and third quarter of the second millennium BC (Loze 1972). In Lithuania, the earliest evidence of bronze-working comes from the Kretuonas 1C site, dated by Girininkas, who directed the excavation there, to 2000–1700 BC (A. Girininkas, personal communication). Both sites were located in areas that had been densely populated during the Neolithic.

These relatively densely populated local areas, population centres, had already become nodes of exchange by the Neolithic. Exchange routes were very important, not only for the maintenance of various social contacts, including marriage, between close and distant neighbours, but also for the spread of new materials and techniques. Such developments find a particularly clear expression in the areas around the nodes of exchange routes, such as the above-mentioned Lake Lubāns Depression. It is precisely here that the earliest pottery has been discovered (at the Osa and Zvidze sites), and likewise the earliest evidence of animal husbandry (the Zvidze site). The pottery finds characteristic of Funnel Beaker Culture and the working of amber from the Baltic coast at sites in the Lubāns Depression indicate that stable long-distance contacts had already been established in the Neolithic. In this context, the appearance of the new bronze-working technology in the Lake Lubāns Depression appears quite logical.

However, in the Early Bronze Age, significant changes took place in the range of exchange items. We may compare some of the statistics for the settlements from the Late Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age, namely Abora I and Lagaža, with those for the Late Bronze Age hill-forts of Brikuļi and Ķivutkalns. At Abora I, 22% of the 3,907 artefacts found were flint

tools, and 31% were amber artefacts. For Lagaža, the figures are 19% and 8%, respectively, out of a total of 464 artefacts (data after Loze 1979, Table 1.3). It is possible that the relatively low proportion of amber artefacts at Lagaža marks the decline of the Lake Lubāns Depression as a centre of amber-working. By comparison, out of 1,000 artefacts found in the course of excavations at Brikuļi hill-fort by Lake Lubāns, flint artefacts constituted 9% and amber artefacts were absent altogether (data after Vasks 1994, Table 1). At Ķivutkalns hill-fort on the lower Daugava, flint artefacts made up 3% of the 2,700 artefact finds, with a similar number of amber artefacts (data after Graudonis 1989, Table 1). As these figures indicate, in the period from the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age up to the Late Bronze Age, the volume of exchange in amber and flint artefacts fell drastically. What could be the reasons for the almost total disappearance of amber and flint exchange? It seems that the initial reasons for these changes must be sought outside the eastern Baltic, in a setting where amber, brought from afar, acquired the status of a highly prestigious material, namely, in the hierarchical societies of Central and southern Europe (Shennan 1982, p.34ff). On the other hand, in the societies of the east coast of the Baltic, bronze artefacts from Central Europe evidently became very prestigious. As a result, in the coastal areas that were the source areas for amber, the main direction of contacts shifted to the south and southwest, to the centres of bronze metallurgy.

There is another factor that must have influenced the mechanisms and content of exchange contacts in Latvia. The Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age was a time of transition to a food production economy. This brought with it changes in settlement patterns and social organisation. Some excavated Early Bronze Age cemeteries provide evidence of the latter, but archaeological evidence of the settlement sites of this period is scarce. There is reason to believe, however, that in the Early Bronze Age small family farms, open settlements, became characteristic, periodically relocated under the conditions of an extensive clearance farming system. Thus, a strongly expressed cultural layer was not formed at such settlement sites, which is why they are difficult to identify (Vasks 2005, p.83).

Thus, it may be suggested that in the Late Neolithic and at the beginning of the Bronze Age, a situation had developed where two subsistence strategy models existed side by side. One of these was the previous model of hunting, fishing and gathering, well attested to in the archaeological material, which gradually declined until it finally ceased altogether. The second was the new,

ascendant model, the strategic direction of which was connected with the adoption of animal husbandry and agriculture as the main activities. Each of these models functioned in an ecological setting appropriate to its economic priorities. Judging from the distribution of finds of battle-axes and certain other artefacts, in the Late Neolithic the new economic model was connected with upland areas covered by glacial till and with large river valleys. In the Early Bronze Age, the distribution of barrow graves, stray finds of bronze objects, and especially simple stonework axes points to these same areas. The new settlement structure, based, as described above, on a network of small autonomous farms, also determined the character of exchange.

An indication of the direction of contacts in the Early Bronze Age is provided by the distribution of bronze objects. There are 37 bronze objects dating from the Early Bronze Age, the majority of them found in western Latvia. That analogies for bronze artefacts (axe and spearhead forms) can be found to the southwest has been pointed out already, in the 1930s, by Eduards Šturms (1931), and in fact the very earliest forms have more distant analogies than the later ones. Thus, for example, the spear from Bārta that has already been mentioned has its closest parallels in Denmark and northern Germany (Šturms 1931). The same is true of a Period I halberd found in western Lithuania: the closest analogies are in Poland, between the Vistula and the Oder (Grigalavichene, Miarkiavichius 1980, p.27). Analogies in the structure of grave barrows also provide some indication of contact with Central and northern Europe in the Early Bronze Age (Vasks 2003, p.134). However, starting from Period III, a local cultural area developed in the eastern Baltic, centred on the former East Prussia. Accordingly, from this time onwards, as in the area of present-day Lithuania, the forms of bronze objects reflect the contact with this centre.

The distribution of bronze artefacts of the Early Bronze Age shows that the number for find spots decreases from west to east, and from south to north (Fig. 1). Considering the prestige status of these bronze artefacts (there are no finds that might be regarded as raw material intended for re-casting), it might be suggested that they reflect gift exchange between individual leaders of local communities. This kind of exchange is referred to in anthropological literature as reciprocity, involving independent individuals of similar social status (Renfrew, Bahn 1996, p.338). This kind of exchange is not directed towards material gain, but rather has the diplomatic purpose of maintaining good-neighbourly relations. Apart from this, as has been put

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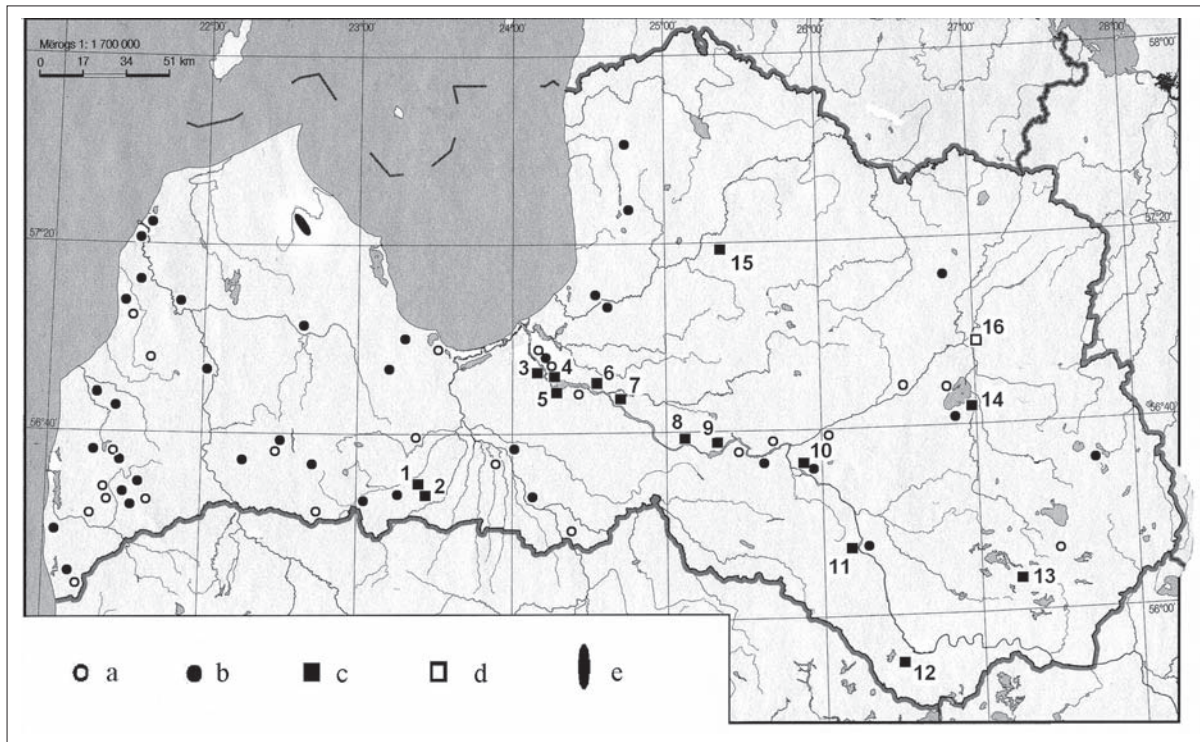


Fig. 1. The distribution of bronze artefacts and bronze-working centres: a Early Bronze Age bronze artefact; b Late Bronze Age bronze artefact; c hill-fort where bronze-working equipment has been found; d open settlement where bronze-working equipment has been found; e the boat-shaped stone settings. Residential sites where bronze-working equipment has been found: 1 Tērvete; 2 Klosterkalns; 3 Saulieši; 4 Ķivutkalns; 5 Kļauģukalns; 6 Vīnakalns; 7 Ķenteskalns; 8 Dievukalns; 9 Mūkukalns; 10 Asote; 11 Dignāja; 12 Baltkāji; 13 Madalāni; 14 Brikuļi; 15 Sārūmkalns; 16 Lagaža.

most aptly by Goldman, 'Exchange is the code through which status information is communicated' (quoted from Kristiansen 1987, p.77). Such a mechanism of exchange can be described as a *prestige chain*, although, considering the fall, described above, in the number of find spots as we move eastwards and northwards, *down-the-line exchange* is also possible. Although the sparseness of Early Bronze Age archaeological material precludes a more detailed analysis of exchange contacts, it does seem that the *directional commercial trade* or *freelance commercial trade*, observed in Late Neolithic amber exchange, was not characteristic of this period.

Since the finds of bronze objects from the Early Bronze Age indicate the use of the Daugava and Aiviekste waterways, along which bronze reached the Lake Lubāns Depression, we may conclude that the routes for contact established in the Neolithic, at least the main ones, continued to function in the Bronze Age. Finds of four bronze artefacts in the Lielupe Basin indicate that the river network of this basin was used for communication. There is no evidence that contact was maintained across the Baltic Sea in the Early Bronze Age.

The direction of contacts and exchange in the Late Bronze Age

Judging from the distribution of bronze artefacts, in the Late Bronze Age the earlier communication routes remained in use and were extended. Thus, in addition to the routes mentioned above, we have clearer evidence of the use of waterways such as the River Venta in western Latvia and the River Gauja in eastern Latvia. The increased number of bronze objects (249 pieces have been recorded) also points to the intensification of exchange. Although, as before, contact in a south-westerly direction, with the southeastern shore of the Baltic, was still important, a new feature was the development of direct contact with Scandinavia across the Baltic. This is indicated by the so-called 'Devil's Boats' of northern Kurzeme: burials in boat-shaped stone settings, which are not characteristic of the east Baltic. Burial in stone boats or ships is a typical Scandinavian tradition, particularly on Gotland, where as many as 350 stone boats have been recorded (Vasks 2000). In northern Kurzeme, these symbolic boats, built of large boulders and measuring eight to 24 metres in length, are distributed in a belt about 15 kilome-

tres long, a very limited area, near the right bank of the River Roja. Only one of these stone boats, at Dundagas Plintiņi, lies somewhat further from the rest: 12 kilometres away. This boat was also the longest example, measuring 24 metres. Altogether, nine such boats are known, in five locations. In view of the parallels with Scandinavia, researchers studying the 'Devil's Boats' of northern Kurzeme have, since the 19th century, traditionally connected them with immigrants from Scandinavia. However, the role of the people buried in the ship settings in the Bronze Age in western Latvia was quite poorly understood. It became somewhat clearer with the discovery in 2001, at Staldzene on the Baltic coast near Ventspils, of a hoard of bronze weighing 5.6 kilograms, an immense amount for the eastern Baltic. It included fragments of bronze neck-rings, armbands, dress-pins and other kinds of ornaments, which had become worn in the course of use and had been broken, along with armband-like bronze rings. The objects in the hoard are typical of Scandinavia, and have been dated to the seventh century BC (Vasks, Vijups 2004, pp.21-34). In terms of its character, the find may be regarded as a 'founder's hoard', consisting of material intended for re-casting. It seems that this stock of bronze had been brought across the sea, probably from Gotland, for exchange with local bronze-workers. It seems very likely that the people transporting the material were professional seafarers, people who would have been buried in symbolic stone ships near the place where they lived, in the vicinity of the River Roja. The location of the ship graves, near the River Roja, also indicates the route that the mariners could conveniently have used to reach the sea quickly. However, their settlements by the Roja were remote, and apparently also isolated in terms of contacts, from the rest of western Latvia, south of the Venta-Abava line. It is characteristic that in western Latvia the distribution of bronze objects does not reach further north than this line. Apart from this, among the bronze artefacts found in western Latvia, there is only one socketed axe, from Strazdenieki, which may be of Scandinavian origin; the remaining objects representing forms traditional in the eastern Baltic. This suggests that the interests of the people buried in the ship settings were mainly connected with long-distance exchange contacts in an east-west direction, between Scandinavia and the Volga-Kama metallurgy centre. The Daugava waterway may also have been a branch of this direction of communication.

The Irbe Straits form a kind of western gateway to this route. On the southern side of this gateway is northern Kurzeme, with Cape Kolka; while on the northern side is the Sörve Peninsula of Saaremaa (which was actually still a separate island in the Bronze Age). It is

important to note that seafaring people also lived on the northern side of this gateway, on the Sörve Peninsula. Two ship settings here were excavated in 1967 by Vello Lõugas (1970). It is interesting that in the early 20th century, a couple of dozen kilometres north of the two ship settings, at the village of Tehumardi, another 'founder's hoard' was discovered, consisting of broken bronze objects (fragments of two swords, a fibula, a razor, a neck-ring and a spearhead), also considered to be of Scandinavian origin (Jaaniņš *et al.* 1982, p.154). The fact that contact with Scandinavia was maintained via the River Daugava is indicated by finds of a few objects of Scandinavian origin along this river (Šturms 1936, p.77ff). The existence of long-distance contact between Scandinavia and the Volga-Kama region via the Daugava is also indicated by finds of four Mälaren-type socketed bronze axes by the Daugava and in the Daugava Basin (Vasks 1994, p.63ff).

Who were the seafarers buried in these stone ships? They are traditionally regarded as newcomers from Gotland who established a colony here (Graudonis 1967, p.73 and references therein). However, the possibility cannot be excluded, as noted by V. Lõugas (1970), that they were seafarers of local origin, who, taking advantage of the exchange in bronze, became involved in contacts across the sea. This possibility is suggested by local traits observable in the construction of the stone boats and the form of the burial urns. In the first place, the area enclosed by the boulders representing the sides of the boat was covered in a spread of smaller stones, something that is not characteristic of the boats on Gotland. Also uncharacteristic of the latter is the arrangement of urns in stone chambers on two levels. Secondly, although the urns are typically Scandinavian in form, the striated surface of some of them is an east Baltic pottery tradition, not characteristic of Scandinavia. Unfortunately, no settlement sites corresponding to the ship settings have so far been found. Such sites could provide a better insight into the material culture of these people. Dangerous sea voyages, regular long trips away from home and contact with alien peoples were evidently elements of the way of life of these mariners. This could have been a sufficient basis for the development of a common religion, culture and ideology, regardless of the place of origin of the people belonging to it.

The mechanism of exchange connected with the Staldzene Hoard and the seafarers of northern Kurzeme might best be described as *directional commercial trade*. In this model (Renfrew 1972, p.470), it is generally raw materials that are exchanged, in this case scrap bronze. Secondly, exchange is a regular activity, evidently maintained by the professional seafarers. Thirdly, some of the locations lying at a considerable

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distance from the areas of origin (in this case, Gotland) are better provided than areas lying closer by. The main bronze-working centres along the Daugava and in the Daugava Basin could have been places of this kind. Apart from this, in this kind of exchange, the items of exchange may not be brought from the point of origin to the destination directly, but instead may be conveyed by intermediaries. The available archaeological material does not tell us whether bronze, as a raw material, was brought to its users from Scandinavia by the intermediaries of northern Kurzeme themselves, or whether it was carried further by other intermediaries (for example, from northern Kurzeme to the Lower Daugava area and beyond).

Exchange contacts and bronze-working centres

Now let us look at exchange contacts and their significance from the point of view of the local bronze-workers. There are 15 known locations in the area of present-day Latvia where bronze-working was practised in the Late Bronze Age. These include 12 hill-forts along the Daugava and in the Daugava Basin, two in the Lielupe Basin, and one in the Gauja Basin. Bronze-working took place on the largest scale in the Lower Daugava area, where the largest centre was Ķivutkalns on Dole Island. Of the 2,094 artefacts found there, 33.5% were fragments of clay crucibles and moulds. The corresponding figures are 23.7% for Kļauģi hill-fort, and 10.4% for Vīnakalns. At hill-forts further upstream along the Daugava, the proportion of crucibles and moulds within the total artefact assemblage is smaller, and at hill-forts outside the Daugava Valley (including Tērvete and Klosterkalns in the Lielupe Basin, and Sārūmkalns in the Gauja Basin), the number of such finds is quite insignificant, just one or a few mould fragments. An exception in this regard is Brikūļi hill-fort by Lake Lubāns. Here, out of 1,000 artefacts, crucible and mould fragments constituted 41.8% (Vasks 2005, pp.84-86).

So far, no evidence of bronze-working has been found in western Latvia. Several hill-forts have been excavated in this region, and at four of them, Matkule, Padure, Paplaka and Milzūkalns, there is evidence of occupation in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Although the artefact material is not particularly extensive, the finds include four fragments of armband-like rings from Paplaka hill-fort, and a bronze razor fragment with a loop handle from Milzūkalns (Vasks 2005, p.89). The number of stray finds of Bronze Age bronze artefacts is larger in western Latvia than that obtained from the rest of Latvia, and this, together with the mentioned bronze objects within the numerically

small artefact assemblages from both hill-forts, indicates that the metal was more widely used in western Latvia. At the same time, there are no finds of crucibles or moulds from these hill-forts. However, the lack of bronze-working evidence in western Latvia could be explained in terms of insufficient archaeological investigations in the region.

Thus, judging from the finds of bronze-working equipment and bronze products, there were some major bronze-working centres along the Daugava and in the Daugava Basin (Ķivutkalns, Kļauģukalns and Brikūļi hill-fort), as well as several smaller centres (Vīnakalns, Ķente, Asote and other hill-forts). The artefacts made and used at these hill-forts (ornaments, weapons and toiletry articles), with rare exceptions (tools), were intended to assert the elite status of particular individuals. It should also be borne in mind that bronze-working was a technically complicated process, which required special knowledge and could appear to the outsider like a magic ritual, which gave the people who understood the process a special elite status. Thus, these hill-forts, and the bronze-workers active there, had an important role in regulating social relations. This provides some basis for regarding these bronze-working hill-forts also as centres for maintaining the social hierarchy. They can be regarded as the power bases of separate polities (independent communities), with lower-level hill-forts and open settlements under their control.

A precondition for the existence of such bronze-working centres was a regular supply of bronze, which could only be provided through regular exchange contacts. Since bronze-working had an important role in maintaining the social status of the elite and the regulation of social relationships, elite control over exchange contacts was also very important. As is shown by research in Central Europe, long-distance exchange took place between one central fortified settlement and another, across areas with lower-level settlements, sometimes spanning distances of 100 to 150 kilometres (Kristiansen 1998, p.98). Evidently, it is precisely in this way, on the basis of a model of *directional commercial trade*, that we can explain the long-term existence of Ķivutkalns and Brikūļi as the largest bronze-working centres in the Lower Daugava area and the Lubāns Lowlands. However, there was another precondition for the existence of such centres, namely the capacity for obtaining the resources needed for maintaining the long-distance contacts. This could be ensured by a form of exchange known as redistribution, where the flow of exchange goods within the polity is determined by the authority (elite) of a central place (Renfrew, Bahn 1996, p.338). In this case, the exchange goods could be products of local origin. By obtaining these from the surrounding open settlements in exchange

for bronze articles or other local products, the elite at a centre such as Ķivutkalns or Brikuļi hill-fort could maintain a degree of specialisation in bronze-working, using part of the local products obtained for long-distance exchange in order to secure bronze as a raw material.

It is quite hard to say what the local communities exchanged for bronze. In Central and southern Europe, Baltic amber, of course, had already been popular since the beginning of the Bronze Age. However, amber exchange can explain only those bronze objects that ended up in the Baltic littoral zone. Other products commonly suggested include furs, dried fish, agricultural produce and stock (Kristiansen 1987, p.83). This could have been so in the area of present-day Latvia as well. Beaver pelts were evidently particularly significant. At Ķivutkalns, 55% of all wild animal bones were from beavers; at Vīnakalns they made up as much as 65%, at Mūkukalns 37%, and at Asote 29%. On the other hand, at Brikuļi hill-fort, beaver is only the third most common, at 13%, after elk and wild boar (Vasks 2005, p.93).

However, *directional commercial trade* and *redistribution* were not the only exchange mechanisms and probably not the main ones in Late Bronze Age Latvia. In the distribution of stray finds of bronze artefacts, as in the Early Bronze Age, we see a reduction in the number of find spots from south to north, and from west to east. Thus, there is reason to believe that in the Late Bronze Age, the earlier *prestige chain* model continued to exist, that is, gift exchange for maintaining various kinds of contacts between independent partners of equal status.

Conclusions

A growth in exchange activity began in the Middle Neolithic and continued in the Late Neolithic. In archaeological material, this is most clearly indicated by the spread of objects made of amber and flint. Items made from both materials have been found at all Middle and Late Neolithic settlements. This indicates the existence of a stable network of contacts, which was evidently based on a need to maintain inter-community marriage contacts and other social contacts. The movement of amber and flint within this network can be characterised as ceremonial gift exchange between communities, as *down-the-line exchange* or else as a *prestige chain*.¹ However, as is shown by the development of

¹ Of course, this does not mean that these gift-giving activities serving 'diplomatic' purposes did not involve items made from materials of local origin, such as bone, antler, stone, etc, in addition to amber and flint. It is particularly through the exchange of such items that it is

an amber-working centre in the Lake Lubāns Depression, the existence of which was only possible if there was a regular supply of amber, another mechanism of exchange was also in operation, *directional commercial trade*.

At the beginning of the Bronze Age, the earlier directions and routes of contact continued to exist, but there was a marked shift in the kinds of objects being exchanged: the exchange of amber and flint ceased almost entirely, while bronze objects became the most visible kind of exchange item. The decline of amber exchange in the area of present-day Latvia (and in the east Baltic as a whole) can be explained in terms of a shift in the direction of exchange, which now linked the source areas of amber on the southeast coast of the Baltic with Central and southern Europe. In the Early Bronze Age (Period III), the southeast Baltic developed as a local cultural centre, from which bronze articles also reached the area of present-day Latvia. The number of recovered bronze objects from the Early Bronze Age is small, so it is hard to assess the character of exchange mechanisms. It seems that the spread of these bronze items can best be explained in terms of a prestige chain model. The bronze-working evidence from the Early Bronze Age settlement of Lagāža indicates that the Lake Lubāns Depression had not lost its significance as a node of communications routes, and thus also as an area where technical innovations were adopted.

In the Late Bronze Age, contact with the southeast Baltic continued. The unequivocal evidence for contacts across the Baltic, between Scandinavia and northern Kurzeme, is new in this period. Bronze, as a raw material for exchange, evidently played the main role in these contacts. At this time, a string of bronze-working centres developed along the River Daugava and in the Daugava Basin, and these could have been the users of the bronze coming from across the sea. The elites of these centres had an interest in maintaining the regular flow of bronze as a raw material for prestige items, and thus also in the maintenance and control of long-distance exchange. The continued existence of these centres could most likely be ensured only through *directional commercial trade*, with one or more intermediaries. At the same time, the prestige chain between local communities, which had become established earlier, continued to exist.

Translated by Valdis Bērziņš

possible to explain the degree of homogeneity of material culture over a fairly large area.

Abbreviation

Amber in Archaeology – C.W. BECK, I.B. LOZE, J.M. TODD, eds. *Amber in Archaeology. Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Amber in Archaeology*, Talsi 2001. Rīga: Institute of the History of Latvia Publishers.

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University of Latvia
 Āraišu street 29
 Rīga LV-1039
 Latvia
 Andrejs.Vasks@lu.lv

LATVIJA KAIP KONTAKTŪ SFEROS BRONZOS AMŽIUJE SRITIS

ANDREJS VASKS

Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariami bronzos amžiaus mainų kontaktai dabartinės Latvijos teritorijoje. Tiriama kontaktų kryptis ir jų pobūdis kaita, lyginami neolito ir besivystantys ankstyvojo bei vėlyvojo bronzos amžiaus mainai, ypač kreipiant dėmesį į kelius, kuriais buvo atgabenama bronzos, ir jos sklaidos modelius (1 pav.). Bronzos amžiaus kontaktų tyrinėjimams autorius pritaikė Colin Renfrew 1970 m. paskelbtus mainų ir prekybos modelius. Autorius juos kūrybiškai pritaikė Šiaurės Europos neolito ir bronzos amžiaus mainų tyrinėjimams.

Aktyvūs mainai, prasidėję viduriniame neolite, plėtėsi ir vėlyvajame neolite. Labiausiai tai pastebima iš

gintaro ir titnago dirbinių plitimo. Iš abiejų medžiagų pagamintų dirbinių rasta visose vidurinio ir vėlyvojo neolito gyvenvietėse. Tai patvirtina, kad būta nuolatinio kontaktų tinklo, kuris neabejotinai buvo grindžiamas būtinybe palaikyti tarpbendruomeninius santuokų ir kitus socialinius kontaktus. Gintaro ir titnago plitimą šio tinklo viduje galima apibūdinti kaip tarp bendruomenių vykusių ceremoninius pasikeitimus dovanomis, tai yra linijinius mainus arba dar kitaip – prestižinių dirbinių mainų tinklą. Tačiau, kaip rodo Lubāna ežero žemumos gintaro dirbinių apdirbimo centro raida, tokio tinklo gyvavimas buvo įmanomas tik esant nuolatiniam gintaro žaliavos tiekimui, kartu veikė ir kitas mainų mechanizmas – kryptinga komercinė prekyba.

Bronzos amžiaus pradžioje egzistavo jau anksčiau susiklostę mainų maršrutai, bet pasikeitė mainų objektas: titnago ir gintaro žaliavos mainai beveik nutrūko, o bronzos žaliava tapo pagrindiniu mainų objektu. Gintaro mainų mažėjimą šiandieninės Latvijos teritorijoje (ir visoje Rytų Baltijos pakrantėje) galima aiškinti pasikeitimu mainų krypties, kuri dabar iš gintaro žaliavos sričių pietrytinėse Baltijos pakrantėse pasuko į Vidurio ir Pietų Europą. Ankstyvajame bronzos amžiuje (III periodas) pietrytinė Baltijos pakrantė iškilo kaip lokalus kultūrinis centras, iš kurio bronzos dirbiniai pasiekė ir dabartinės Latvijos teritoriją. Išlikusių ankstyvojo bronzos amžiaus dirbinių skaičius yra

menkas, todėl sunku nustatyti mainų modelio pobūdį. Atrodo, šių bronzinių dirbinių paplitimą geriausiai gali paaikškinti prestižinių dirbinių plitimo tinklo modelis. Ankstyvojo bronzos amžiaus dirbinių gamyba Lagaža gyvenvietėje liudija, kad Lubāna ežero žemuma neprarado savo, kaip kelių sankryžos, svarbos kaip ir vietos, kurioje buvo pritaikomos technologinės naujovės, reikšmės.

Vėlyvajame bronzos amžiuje ryšiai su Pietryčių Baltijos regionu tęsiasi. Naujas šio periodo reiškinys – neabejotini kontaktai aplink Baltijos jūrą, tarp Skandinavijos ir Šiaurės Kuržemės. Bronzos kaip žaliavos mainai buvo svarbiausias šių kontaktų veiksnys. Tuo metu palei Dauguvą ir Dauguvos baseine atsirado bronzos apdirbimo centrų, kurie ir tapo pagrindiniais iš už jūros atkeliaujančios bronzos žaliavos naudotojais. Šių centrų elitas buvo suinteresuotas, kad bronzos žaliavos prestižo dirbiniais srutas nenutrūktų, taigi buvo svarbu palaikyti šią toli siekiančią mainų grandinę. Ilgą šių centrų egzistavimą, labiausiai tikėtina, galėjo užtikrinti tik kryptinga komercinė prekyba per vieną ar kelis tarpininkus. Tuo pat metu jau anksčiau susidaręs prestižo prekių tinklas tarp vietos bendruomenių veikė ir toliau.

Vertė Audronė Bliujienė

II

PEOPLE
AT THE
CROSSROADS
OF SPACE
AND TIME