

BURIALS WITH HORSES AND EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT ON THE LITHUANIAN AND LATVIAN LITTORALS AND HINTERLANDS (FROM THE FIFTH TO THE EIGHTH CENTURIES)

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Abstract

In the fifth to the eighth centuries, graves of well-armed men and their riding horses –or the ritual parts of horses– were spread throughout almost the entire mainland part of Lithuania and Latvia, or in the territory between the Nemunas and Daugava / Western Dvina Rivers. This was the northernmost part of Europe in which the custom had spread in the fifth to the eighth centuries. While the horsemen's and horses' burial customs varied in separate regions of the defined area, still everywhere the horseman and horse were interred in one grave pit, with the horse almost always to the person's left. In their journey to the Afterlife, however, the bond between horseman and horse began to vary in the communities that lived in the more peripheral regions. The variety of burial customs was associated with differences in the communities' social structure; these differences affected interment traditions and formed different burial rites. The custom that existed in the Roman Period on the littorals of Lithuania and Latvia to bury ritual horse parts (the head or head and legs) and spurs with armed men disappeared; here only bridle bits symbolized the horse in armed men's graves in the fifth to the eighth centuries. Warriors' graves with equestrian equipment spread throughout the entire region between the Nemunas and Daugava in the fifth to eighth centuries. With the change in burial customs (with the spread of cremation), and, apparently, in worldview, riding horse burials appeared that no longer could be associated with the concrete burials of people.

Key words: warriors, ritual or sacrificial horse parts, equestrian equipment, Migration Period, Lithuania, Latvia.

Introduction

The littorals of present-day Lithuania and a part of Latvia constituted the northernmost *barbaricum* territory in which riding horses so often were buried with well-armed persons. Armed men's graves with horses are an expressive funerary feature of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave Culture during the Roman Period (from periods B₂ and B₂/C₁)¹. However, in the huge remaining territory between the Nemunas and Daugava/ Western Dvina Rivers in this period, there are no armed men's graves with horses or ritual horse parts except for one burial ground in the lower Nemunas region² and three burial grounds in the influence zone of the Bogaczewo or Sudovian Cultures³ (Bliujienė and Butkus 2007, p.113).

¹ Currently, 21 cemeteries and 86 human graves with riding horses are known (Bliujienė and Butkus 2007, p.96).

² Dauglaukis (Tauragė district) male grave 12, with horse head and part of spine.

³ A partially decomposed horse skeleton was found in the Stanaičiai cemetery (Vilkaviškis d.) among cremation grave remains in urns (Merkevičius 1990, p.84). While the Stanaičiai cemetery and horse burial's chronology is not altogether clear, recent analyses of the ceramics (the urn) and fibula (A133) found in this burial site suggest that the site belongs to phase B₁–B₂/C₁ of the Bogaczewo Culture's influence zone (Grizas, Bitner-Wróblewska 2007, p. 271ff figs.14-16).

The custom of burying sacrificial horse parts, usually only the horse's head or horse's head with legs and hooves, or even teeth with the horsemen on the Lithuanian and Latvian littorals comprises 9.1 percent of known burials of the entire community's members. It must be emphasized that in these men's graves, sacrificial horse parts generally were buried to the left of the person. Such an association between man and horse suggests a clearly understood purpose, one emphasized by the burial rite: the horse was used for riding. The horseman mounts his horse from the left (contemporary riders are taught to mount the horse in this fashion). Thus, this at first glance apparently insignificant burial rite would suggest that both in life and in the Afterlife, the bond between the horseman and his horse was based on practical rules.

A considerable horizon of armed men's graves already exists on the littoral in the Early Roman Period in which only bridles or bridle parts or spurs were placed in the graves in place of the horse. This custom also was widespread in the hinterlands (Michelbertas 2000, fig.2). A larger diffusion of graves with elements of equestrian equipment than the diffused territory of men buried with horses is most likely a distinctive form of expression of the common custom of Balts to bury the horse; it not only marked the buried individual's social status, but also signified a strictly unregulated diversity

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of burial rites. On the other hand, the absence of horse burials beyond the coast, i.e., in the funeral customs of other communities that lived in areas surrounding the Balts, could have formed due to a distinct economic structure, in which horse rearing did not constitute an important part of the economy, so that the burial of horses that were healthy and necessary in vital activities would have been economically unsubstantiated or even detrimental. Thus, instead of the horse, only symbols that denoted the horseman and his horse (bridle parts and spurs) were used for burial rituals and for demonstration of social status or warriors' hierarchy. Horsemen's graves with horses and horsemen's graves with elements of horse gear and spurs are found in the same cemeteries in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave Culture area; they are synchronous. Thus, the burial rite features (to bury ritual horse parts with the armed men) that had developed in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave Culture area illustrate the warriors' hierarchy and military's dependency on the society's nobility that already existed in the Roman Period.

However, graves with horses in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave Culture area markedly diminished at the very end of the third century. Today it is difficult to say with what kind of phenomena this decrease of graves with horses was associated. The number of armed men with horses, just as the number of graves in general, and even of people themselves, possibly decreased because, it might be, that a portion of the Aestii were drawn into the migration of the Wielbark Culture people (Žulkus 1995, p.96ff fig.IX and XII). Therefore, it is altogether possible that some Aestian highest-ranking military chieftains and their mounted warrior retinues, as mobile, well-armed groups of people, streamed into the military being formed by the Gothic elite, and together engaged to the northern shores of the Black Sea. The significant consolidation process of the Gothic military force and its movement southeast might have taken place in the third century (Urbańczyk 1998, p.404ff). It is most likely that Aestian chieftains and their retinues vanished in the long journey southeast or disappeared without leaving a trace in the process of the formation of the Chernyakhov Culture. The third century is the time of the *barbarians'* military activity in the vast *Germania* expanses, when marauding and military raids by mobile groups in the Roman provinces became an inseparable and main aspect of the social life of various *barbarian* groups (Brather 2005, p.159). Thus, in one way or another, Aestian horsemen could have streamed into this process.

Curonian warriors during the Migration Period and the horse symbolism of Lithuania's littoral

The last warriors' graves with horses disappeared from the littoral in the first half of the fifth century and this process coincided with the final collapse of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave Culture and the appearance of a new derivative – the Curonians, who replaced the Roman Period's culture (Fig. 1; Table 1). By the density of its population and level of material culture, the littoral – a previously flourishing region – looked like a peripheral region in the Early Migration Period, compared to the lower Nemunas and Central and East Lithuania. Apparently for ideological and economic reasons, the horses' burial tradition significantly changed along the coast: from the middle of the fifth century until the sunset of the Curonian Culture in the first half of the thirteenth century, neither complete horse nor its ritual parts were buried any longer (Fig. 1). Spurs disappeared in the region together with the last warriors' graves with horses; they are found only in rare exceptions in graves of the second half of the fifth to first half of the seventh century (Table 2). Spurs are found in graves of Curonian warriors of the Viking Period (Table 2), while stirrups occasionally occur in this culture's latest phase. Bridle bits, however, remain the main artefact symbolizing the horse in the Curonian Culture during the fifth to eighth centuries and strongly suggest that the buried man was a horseman (Plate III.17; Table 2).

Only four, more peripheral sites from the Early Migration Period with burials of well-armed horsemen with horses have been found (Fig. 1) (Michelbertas 1968, p.101f; Navickaitė-Kuncienė 1968, p.165 fig.7 and 8; Bliujienė 1998, p. 283 fig.5; Reich 2007, fig.2; Bliujienė and Butkus 2007, pp.99-105). The most noteworthy of these is grave 35 from the Reketė cemetery that dates to the beginning of the fifth century, in which a complete horse was buried on the man's left side (Navickaitė-Kuncienė 1968, p.165 fig.7 and 8). This burial is distinguished in the whole coastal region because it is the only one in which a complete horse skeleton has been found in a horseman's grave in this period. The man from Reketė cemetery's grave 35 was buried as an armed horseman and his set of weapons consisted of two different-sized lances, a socketed axe, and a scythe, which together with whetstone constantly accompanied the coastal men's set of weapons. The burial tradition of including scythes and whetstones to Curonians weapon sets vanished only in the ninth/tenth centuries and this process was coincide with the spread

Table 1. List of male graves with ritual horse remains or horse skeletons dated to the fifth- eighth centuries (table's data compilation based on research reports and publications) 1 site name and culture group; 2 district; 3 total number of researched graves or barrows (B); 4 number of males with horse graves; 5 complete horse skeleton (Sk), head (Hd), head and legs (HdL), teeth only (Teh); 6 chronology: Group I: mid-4th to first quarter of 5th century; Group II: mid-5th to first quarter of 6th century; Group III: 6th-7th centuries; Group IV: 7th-8th centuries

1	2	3	4	5	6
Curonian cemeteries					
1. Reketė	Kretinga	52	1	Sk	I
2. Užpelkiai	Kretinga	103	6	Hd, HdL, Teh	I
3. Rūdaičiai	Kretinga	42	1	Hd	I
4. Aukštkiemiai (former Oberhof) ¹	Klaipėda	452	?	Sk, HdL, Teh	I, II (?)
Cemeteries of the Lower Nemunas region					
5. Barzūnai	Šilutė	25	4	HdL, Teh	II
6. Jurgaičiai	Šilutė	23	5	HdL,	IV
7. Rubokai	Šilutė	51 ²	10	HdL, Sk?	II
8. Vidgiriai	Šilutė	63	9		II
9. Kreivėnai	Šilutė	≈ 48	1	HdL or Sk	IV
10. Greižėnai	Tauragė	18	1	Sk?	II?
11. Viešvilė II	Jurbarkas	1	1	HdL	II
Samogitian cemeteries					
12. Kaštaunaliai	Šilalė	40	6	Hd	IV
13. Požerė	Šilalė	133	16	Hd	IV
14. Pagrybis	Šilalė	217	38	Hd/HdL	II
15. Žviliai	Šilalė	99	13	Hd	IV
16. Naujasis Obelynas	Šilalė	≈ 1	1	Teh	I
17. Skrandėnai	Telšiai	1	1	HdL	II
Central Lithuania's cemeteries					
18. Plinkaigalis	Kėdainiai	361	1	Hd part	II
		7	3	Sk	IV
19. Kalniškiai	Raseiniai	≈253	4	Sk	II
20. Veršvai	Kaunas city	>200 ³	2?	Sk?	II-IV
21. Marvelė	Kaunas city	>100 ⁴	1	Sk	II
East Lithuanian barrows					
22. Antsarė (Laukiai, Sariai)	Švenčionys	8 B	2	Sk	II
23. Taurapilis	Utena	8B	4	Sk	II
24. Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė	Švenčionys	18B	1	Sk	II
25. Pavajuonys-Rėkučiai	Ignalina	2B	1	Sk	II
Reinas cemetery form north of Kurzeme and Semigallian cemeteries from Jelgava district					
26. Reinas (Lazdu Kalniņš)	Tukuma, Latvia	?	1	Teh	I
27. Gaideļi-Viduči	Jelgavas, Latvia	≈24	1	Teh	II
28. Kakužēni	Jelgavas, Latvia	76	1	Teh	II

¹ Christine Reich currently is finishing a thorough publication about this cemetery. Also see: C. Reich article in this volume.

² Approximately 30 men's graves have been found in the Rubokai cemetery (Bezenberger 1909, pp.149-172).

³ Not all research reports have survived, thus the exact number of investigated burials is unclear.

⁴ Mindaugas Bertašius currently is preparing a thorough publication regarding this cemetery.

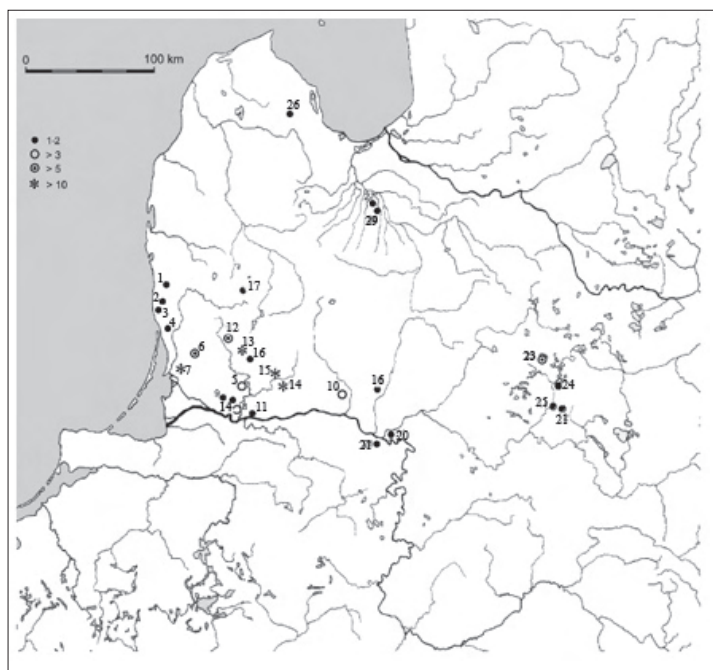


Fig. 1. Spread of the 5th-8th century men's graves with horses between the Nemunas and Daugava / Western Dvina Rivers. Site list shown in Table 1.

and settle over cremations burials rites⁴. Coming back to the Reketė grave 35 it should be mentioned, that additionally a shoulder-belt, silver and bronze fibulae, and tweezers were found. Showing that even in the Afterlife, the horseman controls the horse, in the Roman Period the spurs often are found not by the person, but rather by the horse's ritual parts. The same holds true in this warrior's and horse's grave – the spurs were placed on the horse's forehead (Navickaitė-Kunciene 1968, p.180).

Although the burial of horses stopped in the Early Migration Period on the littoral, another feature of the region was the continual expansion of well-armed men's graves with equestrian equipment (Fig. 2; Table 1). It must be emphasized that only riding bits are found in the graves of well-armed men from the middle of the fifth century⁵ until the end of the thirteenth century. The bridle bits became a symbol of the horse to the southern Curonian warriors of that time, even though their value, within the set of riding gear, must have been quite low (Plate III.17). The worth of the bridle bits seems even smaller when compared to the rare context of the arms, weaponry, and impressive

⁴ There is not possible to deduce parallels between Norwegian "weapons graves" (*Nordische Stufe* V–VII), which sometimes are accompanied from one to three scythes and Curonian's weaponry set which constantly is companioned by scythe, but there is time to testify certain similarities (Nørgård Jørgensen 1999, plates 3; 7; 9; 11; 12; 13 and etc.).

⁵ Algirdas Varnas dated the cessation of horses in graves in Curonian Culture to the seventh century (Varnas 1998, p.292).

ornaments of the Curonians warriors (Plate III). Very elegant bridles adorned with bronze details or bridle bits with cheek-pieces were extremely rare in Curonian Culture (Gaerte 1929, p.296 fig.244a; Danilaitė 1961, p.120; Tautavičius 1996, p.158; Reich 2007, plate III.2) On the other hand, it is unclear whether the entire bridle with leather bridle parts undecorated with metal, the rein, and the iron bits were placed into the grave, or if the bits were abstracted from the bridle during the ritual. Since by Curonian custom the bridle bits were placed at the head together with the weapons and almost always on the left side, and buckles rarely were found near them, we can assume that only bits would more often be placed into the grave, and that these symbolized the horse to the Curonians. The bridle bits become an inseparable part of the Curonian warriors' burial complex from the end of the sixth to the first half of the seventh century (Table 2). In the time period discussed in

this article and in the context of the littoral, a Curonian community that lived in today's Lazdininkai district is distinguished in that it left an exceptional burial site: the Lazdininkai (Kalnalaukis⁶) cemetery (Bliujienė 2006, p.185ff fig.2). All other Curonian burial site material of the time discussed in this article is considerably poorer (Table 2).

Grave 73/2000 of the Lazdininkai cemetery, dated from the end of the sixth to first half of the seventh century, best represents the stratum of this period's highest status warriors. The weaponry of this period's warriors consisted of a one-edged sword, two distinct spears, a socketed axe, and a knife (Plate III.8,9,13-15). A pillum-like spearhead, which perhaps was used by cavalry or by infantrymen against cavalry, is over 60 cm long. It might be that the pillum-like spearheads is Curonian weapons innovation, because only certain parallels are known from the adjacent regions of this time. Nevertheless it seems that long shears with a long ferrule were quite common to the weaponry of the sixth–eighth century, notwithstanding that blades of these lances were distinct. Parallel to the pillum-like spearhead might be a specimen from the Suvorovo (former Zohpen, Dollkeim-Kovrovo Culture) cemetery's grave 453 (Kulakov 1990, pp.70 and 115, plate XXII.5). An analogue to the pillum-like spearhead from Lazdininkai might be lance from former Fifshbach (Kreis Kirfcberg) (Petersen 1939, p.128ff fig.130.c). E. Petersen thought Alamannen weaponry influence on this spearhead type. Quite similar pillum-

⁶ Further referred to as Lazdininkai.

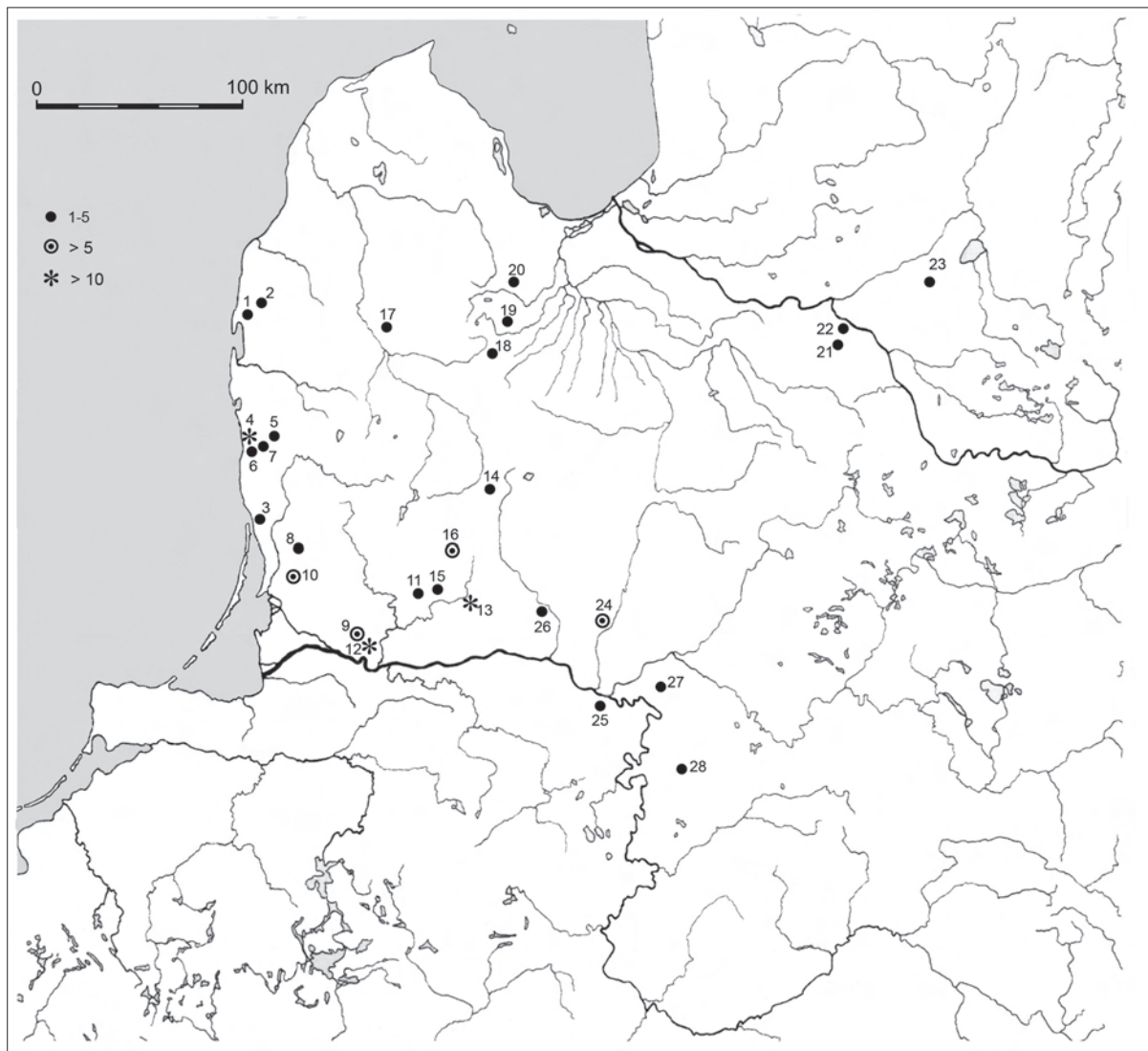


Fig. 2. Spread of the 5th-8th century men's graves with equestrian equipment between the Nemunas and Daugava / Western Dvina Rivers. 1 Kapsēde (Liepāja d.); 2 Ošenieki (Liepāja d.); 3 Aukštkiemiai (Oberhof); 4 Lazdininkai (Kalnalaukis) (Kretinga d.); 5 Reketė (Kretinga d.); 6 Rūdaičiai I (Kretinga d.); 7 Užpelkiai (Kretinga d.); 8 Jurgaičiai (Šilutė d.); 9 Kreivėnai (Šilutė d.); 10 Rubokai (Šilutė d.); 11 Vėluikiai (Tauragė d.); 12 Vidgiriai (Šilutė d.); 13 Pagrybis (Šilalė d.); 14 Sauginiai (Šilalė d.); 15 Žviliai (Šilalė d.); 16 Poežerė (Šilalė d.); 17. Rūsīši-Debeši (Saldus d.); 18 Priedītes (Dobeles d.); 19 Liekņi (Dobeles d.); 20 Šķērstaņi (Doles d.); 21 Razbuki (Jēkabpils d.); 22 Ratulāni (Jēkabpils d.); 23 Salenieki (Luizas d.); 24 Plinkaigalis (Kėdainiai d.); 25 Marvelė (Kaunas city); 26 Kalniškiai (Raseiniai d.); 27 Eitulionys (Trakai d.); 28 Bagočiai (Varėna d.).

like spearheads (Peter Stadler's type 380) occasionally appear in Avar graves of the Late Early or Middle Avar Period (c. 580 to c. 630) in the Carpathian basin, but they are shorter (Garam 1995, p.350 fig.208.9,10)⁷. The shorter spear from Lazdininkai grave 73/2000 resembles Stadler's type 430⁸. The pillum-like spearhead

unknown in Scandinavian (and Gotlandic) weaponry of this time (Nørgård Jørgensen, 1999, pp. 88ff, 134ff fig.71). It might be underlined that Curonian's swords from the end of the sixth to the first half of the seventh century have their equivalents in Scandinavian weaponry (Nørgård Jørgensen, 1999, p.50 figs.12-14,19).

⁷ Type 380 examples appear in the Tiszafüred cemetery in Hungary and Devínska Nová Ves cemetery in Slovakia (Garam 1995, p.350 fig.211 plates 173; 182;183;188; Eisner 1952, plates 20.4; 28.5; 50.1; 65.8; 81.8).

⁸ Type 430 examples appear in the Devínska Nová Ves cemetery's graves 107, 132, 453, 616, 765a, and 842, and Tiszafüred cemetery's graves 721 and 950 (Eisner 1952; Garam 1995 p.349 fig.208.6). They also can be found in the Kölked-Feketekapu A cemetery in Hungary (Kiss 1996, p.233).

An ornate belt (sometimes bound with silver plates decorated with an interlaced design (*Flechtbandornamentik*) and openwork bronze bindings), shoulder-belts, and personal ornaments – usually two or even three fibulae of crossbow ladder or animal-headed type, spiral finger rings, and one or two small or shaped amber beads, comb-shaped pendants, and unique amber artefacts – constitute a characteristic part of graves goods

of men buried in the first half of the seventh century in the Lazdininkai cemetery (Plate III). Furthermore multicoloured glass paste beads this relief 'eyes' are quite common to the Gepidic, and Avaric cemeteries in Hungary as well as to the Mazurian Lakelands cemeteries, and Curonian cemeteries on Lithuanian coast (Stankus 1980, p.34ff; Garam 1995, p.290ff fig. 166; Kiss 1996, p.197 plate 144; 2001, plates 132;133;149; Bitner-Wróblewska, 2008)⁹. The fashionable belt with an interlaced design, just as the spearheads and multicoloured paste beads confirm the certain Balts' connections with the Avaric environment. Most likely that Curonian were involved into inter-regional trade. On the other hand, however, the belts with openwork plates, the interlaced design, and the typical form (lan- cet-shaped) of belt pendants and the fittings on their ends all have proximate analogies in the Olsztyn and Elbląg (former Elbing) groups, and in Gotland, (Nerman 1969, plate 30.327,330; Bliujienė, Butkus 2002, p.88ff figs.3 and 4). An interlaced design were common to Germans in the Merovingian Time (Bertram 1994, pp. 44ff and 221 with figs.32 and 126). In the first half of the seventh century, the Curonians copied the shoulder-belt and sword sheath details as well as décor's elements from the bridles used by the Elbląg group of people (cf. B. Konty *et al.* in this volume).

In placing the long spearheads used in battles with or by cavalry and only horse symbols (bridles) into the graves of well-armed men, the Curonians apparently were guided by the practical side of the matter: the horses were a valuable asset for the military. On the other hand, analogies with geographically more distant and improved weapons suggest that Curonian warriors could have participated in both regional (with communities that were gaining strength, that were in the gateway position in the lower Nemunas and that could block comfortable coastal contact in the south) and interregional conflicts for control of the littoral and domination over the region.

Warriors, horses, and funeral customs in the lower Nemunas region, Samogitia, and Central Lithuania

Horse burial rites differed in the lower Nemunas region from those practiced on the littoral. With the exception of one known grave in the Dauglaukis cemetery, horses were not buried with armed men in the Roman Period in the lower Nemunas (Bliujienė, Butkus 2007, p.113). Armed men's graves with horses appear in the fifth-sixth centuries in the lower Nemunas (Fig. 1; Table 1).

⁹ Multicoloured beads with relief 'eyes' were found in Lazdininkai cemetery during excavation of 2007 and 2008.

Graves of men buried with equestrian equipment also increased in this region (Fig. 2). Ritual horse parts continued to be buried in the graves of armed men in the lower Nemunas in the seventh-eighth centuries. Notably, in the seventh-eighth century Jurgaičiai cemetery horse heads and legs are found to the right of the deceased, and only in the graves containing one-edged swords.

In the fifth-sixth century cemeteries of Barzūnai, Greižėnai, Rubokai, and Vidgiriai, men's burials contain either complete horses or their ritual parts – head and legs, sometimes only teeth (Fig. 1; Table 1). Either a horse or its parts were buried with a third of the men in the Rubokai cemetery (Bezenberger 1909, pp.148-172). Two horses were buried with several riders at the Rubokai (grave 20) and Vidgiriai (graves 23, 30, 35, and 36) cemeteries (Bezenberger 1909, p.158; Šimėnas 1990, p.102). Riders with two horses also are known at Kalniškiai grave 39 in Central Lithuania (Kazakevičius 1990) (Fig. 3). The armed man is buried in one pit, with horse parts usually placed to the left of the well-armed deceased.

The custom of burying ritual horse parts in the lower Nemunas region and Samogitia appeared as a general consequence of Migration Period events in the region. The tradition was not adopted from the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave Culture because along the Baltic coast the custom of burying ritual horse parts broke off some time from the end of the third century to the middle of the fourth century. As mentioned, only single horse burials are known along the coast from the beginning of the fifth century.

The stimulus for the custom of burying ritual horse parts with armed men undoubtedly was also acquired from neighbours to the southwest and southeast: from the Dollkeim-Kovrovo as well as Olsztyn and Elbląg groups of people. Compared to the Roman Period, the number of horse burials significantly increased in the Dollkeim-Kovrovo Culture, where men's burials with horses comprise up to 20 percent in the beginning of the fifth century (Tiurin 2006, p.148). The number of horse burials increases in the Migration Period in the Olsztyn and Elbląg groups' sites, as well as in the Suwałki region (Jaskanis 1966, fig.1; 1968, p.89ff; Baranowski 1996, p.70ff fig. 1 table 1; Piątkowska-Matecka 2000, fig.1 tables 1-3). On the other hand, in the stepped grave pits of the Vidgiriai multi-ethnic community, the horse burial rites share common features with the middle Danube and with the nomads on the other side of the Urals and the Black Sea shore (Šimėnas 2006, p.44ff figs. 14 and 15).

The Avars made a huge new impact on the spread and development of horse burial customs as well as on

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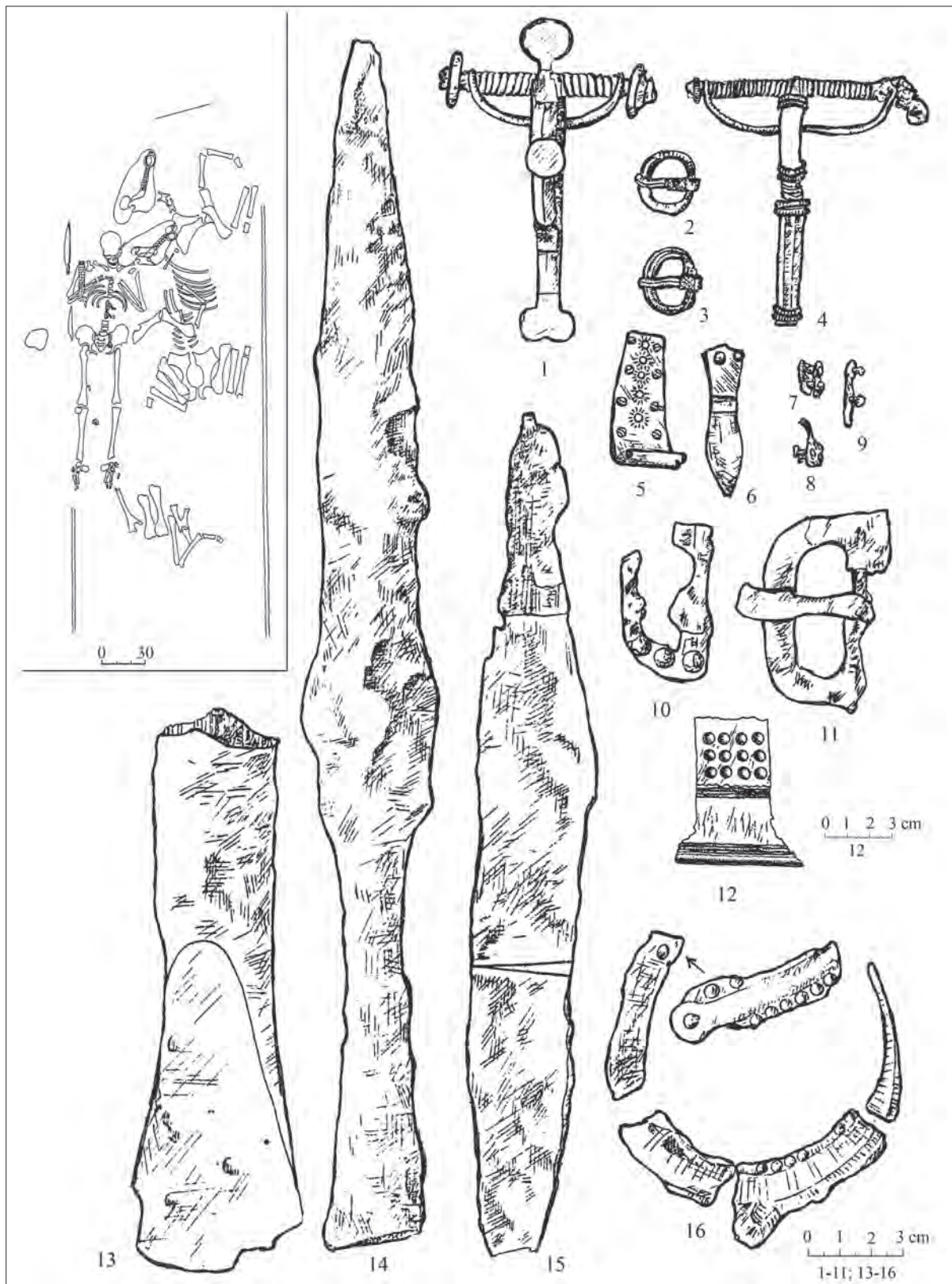


Fig. 3. Warrior's grave with two horses *in situ* from the Kalniškiai cemetery (Raseiniai d.) and some of the warrior's grave goods (after Kazakevičius 1990): 1-3, 5-9 bronze; 4 silver; 10, 12, 16 bronze, pewter leader; 11, 13-15 iron.

the appearance of new elements of horse gear in Europe. Be that as it may, diverse customs of horse and horse gear burials acquired unique regional features in Europe and were intensively practiced (Müller-Wille 1970-1971, p.230ff; Vierck 1970-1971, pp.190-198; Oexle 1984, pp.124-170; Genito 2000, p.234 fig.1; Steuer 2003, p.51ff; Ruttikay 2009, p.286ff).

Judging by the set of grave goods, horses were buried with those well-armed men who held a high social status in the lower Nemunas area – the community's chieftains and military leaders. Shoulder-belts, battle knives, one-edged swords, and ornaments (five fibulae, neck-rings, finger rings) are found in their graves, while the horseman affiliation is indicated by spurs. In the fifth to middle of the sixth century in the lower Nemunas area, just as in Central Lithuania, well-armed men were buried with several rare fibulae and shoulder-belts, and these graves often were accompanied by ritual horse parts (Astrauskas *et al.* 1999, p.123ff, fig. 3; Šimėnas 1999; 2000; 2006, p.80) (Figs. 1; 4). Thus, shoulder-belts are directly associated with the general abundance or scarcity of a buried person's grave goods, including weapons, imports, and silver artefacts. This would suggest that the shoulder-belt signifies the buried person's high social status. Comparing the spread of shoulder-belts on the littoral with the remaining area, it is clear that in the fifth to middle of the sixth century, shoulder-belts were known on the littoral only in the Užpelkiai cemetery (Fig. 4). At the end of the sixth century to the beginning of the seventh century along the coast, a new type of shoulder-belt appears in the Lazdininkai cemetery¹⁰, for which so far no analogies have been discovered in the entire East Baltic region.

The fifth-sixth century territory between the Jūra and Dubysa Rivers – i.e., Samogitia – is distinguished for its abundance of men buried with ritual horse parts (Fig. 1; Table 1). Roman Period horse burials are not found in this area¹¹, since only riding gear – bridles and horsemen's accoutrements – spurs, are found in the men's graves of the time (Bliujienė, Butkus 2007, p.113). The situation cardinally changed in the fifth-sixth centuries when horses' heads and legs, sometimes hooves, began to be buried in that region's graves of

men and even boys (according to the grave goods, size of the grave pit, and surviving anthropological material)¹² (Figs. 1 and 2; Table 1). A fragment of a horse skull (grave 96) and horse hoof (grave 102) were found in the disturbed graves of women at the Pagrybis cemetery (Vaitkunskienė 1995, p.75). No other data are known about ritual horse parts in women's graves.

In Samogitian cemeteries, ritual horse parts usually were placed at the deceased's left side (Vaitkunskienė 1995, pp.73-77 fig.98; 1999, p.116), thereby emphasizing that the horse was used for riding. Occasionally the ritual horse parts were put above the head or by the feet of the deceased, or to riders right (Vaitkunskienė 1999, p.115 fig. 129). The placement of ritual horse parts is noticeably closely associated with weapons, upon which horse parts usually were placed. Moreover, riding bits are found in the majority of horses' mouths, and bridle parts – on their heads (Vaitkunskienė 1995, p.76; 1999, pp.117 and 122 fig.80.4,5). Burial rites of riding horses vary in Samogitia's cemeteries, especially in the seventh-eighth centuries. Single spurs are found both in men's graves with ritual horse parts and without them. However, spurs rarely are found in the sites dated to the fifth-eighth centuries; this period's spurs are known only from 20 find spots (Tautavičius 1996, p.152). Usually one spur would be placed in the grave on the left foot (more often) or on the right foot, or sometimes spurs were placed on both feet (Tautavičius 1996, p.152; Kazakevičius 1993, p.80 and p.146ff; Vaitkunskienė 1995, p.135). However, in some Samogitian cemeteries, spurs are found not only on the left foot, but also above the head or on the chest (Vaitkunskienė 1999, p.122). Regardless of the number of spurs found in the graves, such graves are associated with armed men or horsemen, a portion of which was buried with either horses or sacrificial horse parts, depending on the dominant burial custom of the particular culture (Figs. 1 and 2).

Meanwhile, the vast majority of riding bits are found only in the horses' mouths or under the horses' heads, and also there are bridle bits found on the men's legs or waist. However, among the seventh to eighth century graves with ritual horse parts, there also are graves with no riding bits. A portion of men's burials with ritual horse parts in seventh to eighth century Samogitian cemeteries do not have any more weapons (Vaitkunskienė 1984, p.81ff). It must be emphasized that in Samogitia, just as in the lower Nemunas, both

¹⁰ The shoulder-belts have been found in a very disintegrated state, thus their reconstruction remains unclear. Currently, the shoulder-belts are in the process of being preserved, various analyses are being performed, and a publication is being prepared. It might be that shoulder-belts of similar construction or detail were found at the Ēgliskēs-Anduliai (former Andulen) cemetery (graves CCLXIII, CCCXXVII, and 430) (MVF archive: Ia 663f; Ia 727d-f; Ia 933k).

¹¹ The only known exception is from the Pavėkiai (Šiauliai d.) barrow field, where several horse teeth were found in barrows 14 and 15 (Michelbertas 1986, p.66).

¹² Parts of a foal were found in Pagrybis cemetery in the grave of a child (grave 191); a foal's head was found in child's grave 32 in the Kaštaunaliai cemetery; remnants of a foal's head were found in children's graves 167 and 251 in the Žviliai cemetery (Vaitkunskienė 1984, p.81; 1995, p.50ff; 1999, p.117).

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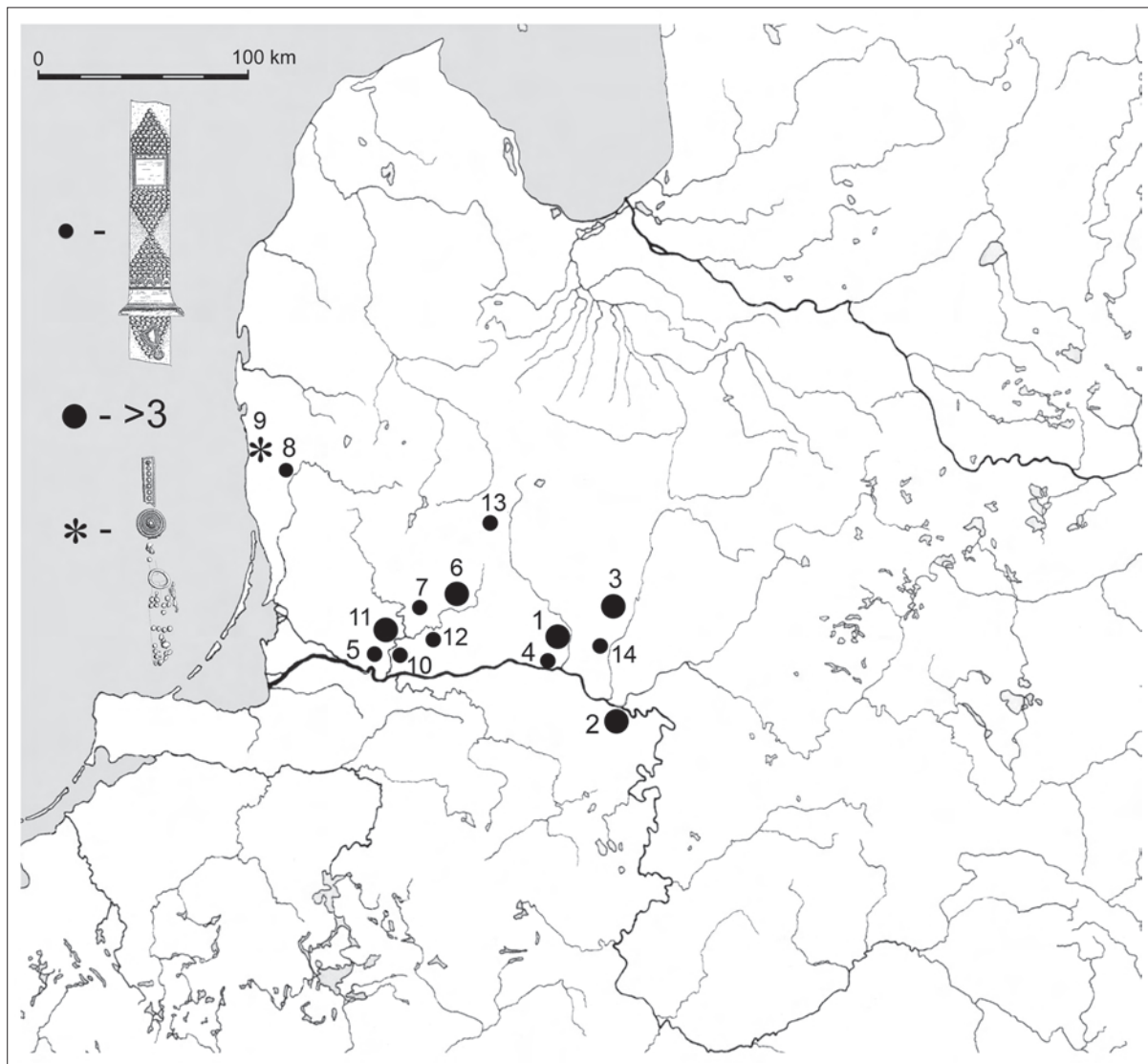


Fig. 4. Spread of end of 4th to middle of 6th century (●) and end of 6th to first half of 7th century (*) men's graves with shoulder-belts in Lithuania

1● Kalniškiai (Raseiniai d.); 2● Marvelė (city of Kaunas); 3● Plinkaigalis (Kėdainiai d.); 4 Seredžius (Jurbarkas d.); 5 Vidgiriai (Šilutė d.); 6 Žviliai (Šilalė d.); 7 Vėluikiai (Tauragė d.); 8 Užpelkiai (Kretingos d.); 9* Lazdininkai (Kalnalaukis) (Kretinga d.); 10● Šaukėnai (Tauragė d.); 11● Barzūnai (Tauragė d.); 12● Pagrybis (Šilalė d.); 13● Paprūdžiai (Kelmė d.).

horse and human are buried in the same pit. Usually men's graves with horses are concentrated in small groups in the cemetery. However, here men's graves with horses are intermixed with women's and children's graves, what could be evidence of strengthening ties among family members. Additionally, the arrangement of the men's graves with horses allows for a discussion of the distinction of separate higher status families (Fig. 5).

Individual men's graves with horse teeth are known from the area between the Mūša and Daugava Rivers as well as from the northern part of Kurzeme (Ziemītis 2004, p.86ff fig.2) (Fig. 1, Table 1). But so far no men's graves with horses have been discovered in the north-eastern part of Lithuania (Varnas 1998, p.298). However, both in the area between the Mūša and Daugava

Rivers and in the northeastern part of Lithuania, individual men's graves with bridle bits or spurs are found (Fig. 2).

In the fifth-sixth centuries, between the Dubysa-Nevėžis basins and confluence of the Neris and Nemunas Rivers, single cemeteries are known in which a horse or even two horses are found alongside well-armed men with shoulder-belts, weaponry, and rare ornaments (e.g., Kalniškiai grave 39) (Fig. 3). However, not many warriors' graves with horses that date to the fifth-sixth centuries are known in this region. The situation changed in Central Lithuania in the seventh century with the spread and establishment of cremation burial rites (Table 1). At that time, inhumed burials of horses which can no longer be associated with specific cremation graves of people become mixed in among

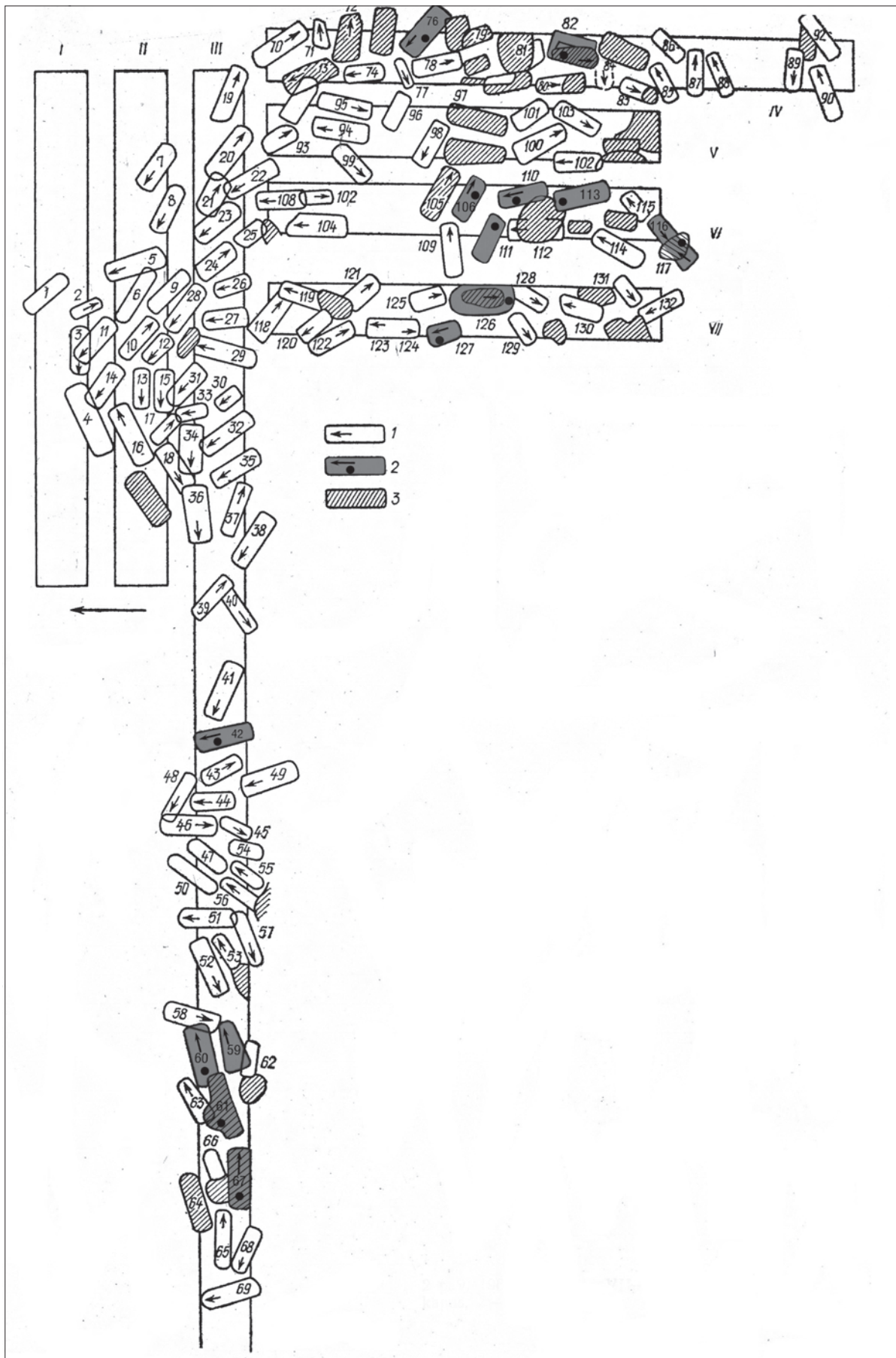


Fig. 5. Distribution scheme of men's graves and men's graves with horses at the Požerė cemetery (after Tautavičius 1984). Horsemen's graves are marked in grey.

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the human cremation graves. Apparently, when the custom of cremation dominated already in the Roman Period, human cremation burials and inhumed horse burials are not associated with any specific person, thus the horse was a part of particular rituals. In the Bogaczewo Culture, inhumed horse burials either border cremated groups of people, or are found along the edges of the cemetery (Szymański 1998, pp.142-154; Karczewska, Karczewski 2007, p.202ff fig.2). We also see a similar tradition in the later sixth-seventh century Olsztyn group cemeteries (Tumiany, former Daumen) in the Mazurian Lakeland; here, inhumed horse burials surround human cremation graves (Baranowski 1996, p.68ff fig.2). Thus, with the appearance of cremation, the view toward the horse changes once again in the region. The complex burial rites of this region would suggest that the horse began to be buried not only when burying people, but also, apparently, when celebrating them during certain holidays. Also, of course, horse offerings are known in the region.

Dukes from the middle Danube – their farthest trip to East Lithuania

Only four barrow cemeteries contain men's graves with horses in the area of East Lithuania's Barrow Culture during the Migration Period (Fig. 1, Table 1). It is noteworthy that almost all of the discussed period's burials with horses were plundered still in antiquity, but even the remains of these burials show that the interred were high-ranking military chieftains and dukes. Among East Lithuania's barrows, a complete horse skeleton was found buried together with a horseman (Tautavičius, 1981, p.23 fig.5; Semėnas 1996, p.85; Steponaitis 2007, p.132ff fig.1 and cf. A. Bliujienė and V. Steponaitis in this volume). In the territory of the East Lithuanian Barrow Culture, riding horses were buried with people of the highest social status, placed on the same footing as dukes, as well as with their retinue, who surrounded the duke even after his death.

Summing up

It is significant that in the fifth-sixth centuries in the region between the Nemunas and Daugava Rivers, ethnic units who buried the horse or its ritual parts with their deceased, emphasized the clear bond with well-armed horsemen, the military, and warrior hierarchy: the horse or its ritual parts (head, legs, and hooves) are buried almost exclusively to the person's left and the horse's dependence on the horseman is stressed by other burial elements. The horse and person were buried in the same grave pit.

On the other hand, the variety of funeral customs involving humans and horses and humans with equestrian equipment reflects a somewhat different view of the horse held by the communities living on the Lithuanian and Latvian littorals and hinterlands. Through the diverse human and horse burial rituals, people accented both the significance of the riding horse in the military and its role as mediator between the living and the dead, as well as, apparently, the gods. Starting with the first half of the fifth century, a symbol of the horse appeared in the southern Curonian area: bridle bits.

In the seventh-eighth centuries, horse burials not associated with any specific human graves appeared due to the custom of cremation; some cemeteries' burials with ritual horse parts either no longer contained weapons, or these men's armament was incomplete. The new form of funeral customs could have been associated with the change in worldview of the Balts.

The diversity of funeral customs in the lower Nemunas, Samogitia, and Central and East Lithuania was associated with differences in social structure among the communities, which affected the burial traditions and formed both different burial rites as well as local differences in Baltic cultures, a phenomenon more clearly expressed along the periphery. It is worth emphasizing that despite the incentives for the expansion of armed men's graves with horses, current Lithuanian territory (the lower Nemunas, Samogitia, Central and Eastern Lithuania), just as in the Roman Period, was the northernmost part of Europe where this tradition was sufficiently widespread in the fifth to eighth centuries.

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Abbreviations

- AB – Archaeologia Baltica, prepared at Klaipėda University's Institute of Baltic Sea Region History and Archaeology since Volume 6
- AL – Archeologija Lituana, Vilnius, from 1999
- ATL – Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje ... metais, Vilnius, from 1967
- LA – Lietuvos archeologija, Vilnius, from 1979
- LAP – Lietuvos archeologiniai paminklai. Lietuvos pajūrio I–VII a. kapinynai. A. TAUTAVIČIUS, ed. Vilnius: Mintis, 1968

MVF – Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin d. – district

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V-VIII AMŽIAUS KAPAI SU ŽIRGAIS IR ŽIRGŲ APRANGA LIETUVOS IR LATVIJOS PAJŪRYJE BEI KRAŠTO GILUMOJE

Audronė Bliujienė, Donatas Butkus

Santrauka

V-VIII a. beveik visoje teritorijoje tarp Nemuno ir Dauguvos upių plito gerai ginkluotų vyrų (raitelių) kapai su žirgais ir jų ritualinėmis dalimis (1 pav.; 1 lentelė) bei vyrų (raitelių) kapai su žirgo apranga (2 pav.; 2 lentelė). Nepaisant paskatų, dėl kurių plito ginkluotų vyrų kapai su žirgais, dabartinė Lietuvos teritorija (Nemuno žemupys, Žemaitija, Vidurio ir Rytų Lietuva), kaip ir romėniškuoju laikotarpiu, buvo šiauriausia Europos dalis, kur šis paprotys V-VIII a. buvo gana plačiai išplitęs. Raitelių ir žirgų laidojimo papročiai atskiruose aptariamojo arealo regionuose buvo įvairūs, bet visur raitelis ir žirgas buvo laidojami vienoje kapo duobėje, žirgas beveik visada žmogaus kairėje. Tačiau raitelio ir žirgo ryšiai žengiant Anapilin įvairesni bendruomenėse, gyvenusiose periferiniuose regionuose. Laidojimo papročių įvairovė buvo susijusi su bendruomenių socialinės struktūros skirtumais, kurie veikė laidojimo papročius ir formavo skirtingus laidojimo ritualus. Kita vertus, baltų laidojimo papročių įvairovė, kalbant apie žmones bei žirgus ir apie žmones bei raitelio aprangą, rodo Lietuvos ir Latvijos pajūryje, krašto gilumoje gyvenusių bendruomenių iš dalies besiskiriančią požiūrį į žirgą. Per laidojimo papročių, siejančių žmogų ir žirgą, įvairovę buvo akcentuojama žirgo svarba karyboje ir

jo, kaip tarpininko tarp gyvųjų bei mirusiųjų pasaulių ir, matyt, dievų, reikšmė.

Lietuvos ir Latvijos pajūryje romėniškuoju laikotarpiu egzistavęs paprotys šalia ginkluotų vyrų vienoje arba skirtingose kapo duobėse laidoti ritualines žirgo dalis (galvą arba galvą ir kojas) bei pentinus išnyko, ir V–VIII a. ginkluotų vyrų kapuose žirgą simbolizavo tik žąslai (III: 17 iliustr.; 2 lentelė).

Pabrėžtina, kad tas etnines grupes, V–VI a. gyvenusias regione tarp Nemuno ir Dauguvos, kurios šalia savo mirusiųjų laidojo žirgą arba jo ritualines dalis, sieja akivaizdus ryšys su gerai ginkluotais raiteliais, karyba, karių hierarchija. Šį ryšį pabrėžia žirgas arba jo ritualinės dalys (galva, kojos ir kanopos), laidojamos beveik išimtinai kairėje pusėje, žirgo priklausomybė raiteliui pabrėžiama kitais laidosenos elementais (4–5 pav.). Žirgas ir žmogus laidojami vienoje kapo duobėje (3; 5 pav.). Tačiau keičiantis laidojimo papročiams (plintant kremacijai) atsiranda žirgų kapų, kurių negalime susieti su konkreto žmogaus kapu. Naujas laidosenos būdas galėjo būti susijęs su baltų pasaulio pasaulėžiūros kaita.

Nemuno žemupio, Žemaitijos, Vidurio ir Rytų Lietuvos laidojimo papročių įvairovė buvo susijusi su bendruomenių socialinės struktūros skirtumais, kurie veikė laidojimo papročius ir formavo skirtingus laidojimo ritualus bei lokalius baltų kultūrų skirtumus, kurie ryškiau pasireiškia periferijoje. Aptariamuoju laikotarpiu raitelių kapai su žirgais kapinyne išdėstyti nedidelėmis grupėmis. Tačiau kartu pastebimas ir kitas reiškinys: raitelių kapai pradeda įsimaišyti tarp moterų ir vaikų kapų. Tai leistų svarstyti apie stiprėjančius šeimoms ryšius (5 pav.). Kita vertus, toks kapų išdėstymas leistų manyti, kad tautų kraustymosi laikais išskyla šeimos, turėjusios aukštesnį socialinį statusą.

III

HORSES,
HORSEMEN,
AND EQUESTRIAN
EQUIPMENT:
PREPARED
FOR WAR,
BURIALS, AND
OFFERINGS