

WEALTHY HORSEMEN IN THE REMOTE AND TENEBROUS FORESTS OF EAST LITHUANIA DURING THE MIGRATION PERIOD

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Abstract

According to the data of 2008, eight horsemen buried in grave pits with complete horse skeletons had been discovered in only four of the East Lithuanian barrow cemeteries of the second half of the fifth century. The majority of these graves already were pillaged in antiquity. The barrows with graves of men interred with horses are concentrated in a small territory between Lakes Tauragnas, Žeimenis, and Vajuonis, in an area that does not exceed 50-60 sq. km. Particularly rich burials with silver and silver artefacts, most of which originated in the middle Danube and Carpathian Basin, are found in this small region. Such burials are associated with supreme rulers and high ranking military leaders. Burials of well, but standardly armed, horsemen and infantrymen also are found in the region. They can be associated with the retinue of supreme rulers. Current data suggest that while multi-ethnic groups of people reached the East Lithuanian micro-region between Lakes Tauragnas, Žeimenis, and Vajuonis during the Migration Period, the newcomers vanished from the local population over the course of four generations. This small region's concentration of great wealth and military power, along with marked differences in social structure emphasized even in the structure of the barrow cemeteries, would suggest that a form of government identical to that of a chiefdom had been created in the region.

Key words: horsemen, warriors' hierarchy, East Lithuanian barrows, inhumation graves, migration, middle Danube, chiefdom.

The spread of East Lithuanian barrows with horsemen's graves

By 2008 data, the graves of eight horsemen buried in pits with complete horse skeletons are known in four East Lithuanian barrow cemeteries of the second half of the fifth century. Horsemen's graves have been found in the barrow cemeteries of Antasarė (also known as Laukiai or Sariai, Švenčionys district), Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė 3 (Švenčionys d.), Pavajuonys-Rėkučiai (Ignalina d.), and Taurapolis (Utena d.) (Pokrovskii 1893, p.164ff; Kuncienė 1971; 1972, p.50f; Tautavičius, 1981, p.23 fig.5; Semėnas 1994, 1996, p.85; Steponaitis 2007, p.132ff fig. 1; and cf. A. Bliujienė and D. Butkus in this volume: fig. 1, table 1). These barrows are concentrated in a small, but long-time wooded micro-region, between Lakes Tauragnas, Žeimenis, and Vajuonis (Bielūnienė *et al.* 2002, maps on pp. 30, 32 and 35; Kudaba, Survila 2005, p.66). The area does not exceed 50-60 sq. km (Fig. 1). Barrow cemeteries are known in this small region¹ that have very wealthy graves and luxurious artefacts made of silver, gold, and gilded bronze that generally originated from the middle Danube. The burials of both high ranking rulers and high

ranking military leaders as well as of standardly well-armed infantrymen are found in this region (Bliujienė 2006, p.137ff and fig.8). The grave material suggests a marked hierarchy.

The Antasarė barrow cemetery

Two graves of horsemen with complete horse skeletons were found in the Antasarė barrow cemetery (Figs. 1, 2)². This barrow cemetery was first investigated at the end of the 19th century, when F. Pokrovskii excavated seven barrows. In the pits underneath the earth mounds, he found either one or several inhumation graves (Pokrovskii, 1893, p.164ff). A riding horse with its head facing west was found in the pit of barrow no. 1, at the base of the barrow. The skeleton of the horse was in an unnatural position; apparently the horse was pushed into the burial pit while still alive. By Pokrovskii's description, we can guess that the person was buried parallel to the horse, apparently on the horse's left side. Pieces of unburnt human bones were scattered beside the horse, a portion of which had acquired a greenish colour from the grave furnishings that had been on top of them, but no grave goods of the human were found.

¹ The barrow cemeteries of Cegelnė, Borava (Šilinė), Bialiuliai, and Ziboliškė (all in the Švenčionys d.), and, of course, of Sudota, which definitely is a continuation of the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė barrow cemetery.

² Over fifteen 8–18 m diameter barrows were discovered at the end of the 19th century, scattered over a large area. The mounds of the excavated barrows were encircled with stones (LAA 1977, p.22).

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Fig. 1. Region between Lakes Tauragnas, Žeimenis, and Vajuonis with rich graves dated to the Late Migration Period: 1 Cegelnė; 2 Borava; 3 Baliuliai; 4 Ziboliškės; 5 Sudota; 6 Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė; 7 Antsarė; 8 Pavajuonys-Rėkučiai; 9 Tauropilis (map drawn by G. Grižas).



Fig. 2. Antsarė (Švenčionys d.) barrow cemetery, barrow no. 5, disturbed grave horseman and his horse *in situ* (after Kuncienė 1971).

Thus, it is probable that the grave was pillaged. Five additional, partially destroyed barrows were excavated at the Antsarė barrow cemetery in 1971. A disturbed horse skeleton with its head to the west was found at the centre of barrow no. 5 (diameter 14 m), in a pit at the base of the barrow (Fig. 2). No grave goods and no

human bones or human grave goods were found near the horse's remains (Kuncienė 1971, p.9). Thus, this grave also was disturbed, apparently pillaged, and this horse's remains can be associated with the Migration Period's inhumation grave only based on the data of recent East Lithuanian barrow research.

The Pavajuonys-Rėkučiai barrow cemetery

The Pavajuonys-Rėkučiai barrow cemetery³ is the second Migration Period barrow cemetery in which a pillaged grave of a horseman and horse were found, but in this case the robbers apparently did not take much interest in the horse grave and did not disturb it much (Figs. 1, 3, 4). The barrow cemetery extends for 0.5 km along a road that connects two villages (Semėnas 1994, p.3). Although the barrows are situated in a line that stretches alongside the road, they also are con-

³ Seventy-four barrows are registered in this barrow cemetery, most of which have diameters of 8–13 m. Also recorded are several very large barrows (with diameters of mostly 25–28 m, up to 32 m) (Semėnas 1994, fig.1; 1996, p.85). Only two barrows have been excavated (nos. 6 and 11) (Semėnas 1994).



Fig. 3. Pavajuonys-Rėkučiai (Ignalina d.) barrow cemetery, barrow no. 6. Disturbed grave of horseman and his horse *in situ* (photograph by V. Semėnas 1994).

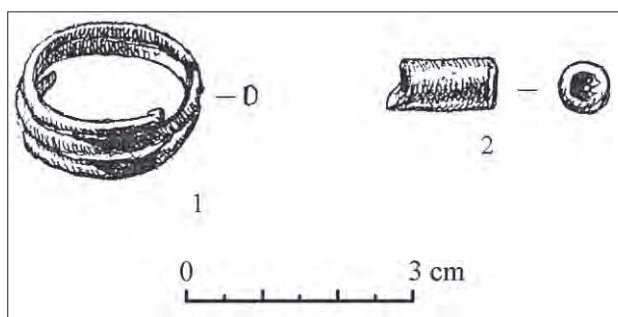


Fig. 4. Pavajuonys-Rėkučiai (Ignalina d.) barrow cemetery, barrow no. 6. Remains of horseman's grave goods (1 bronze; 2 glass paste (after V. Semėnas 1994).

nected in small groups, usually around larger barrows (Semėnas 1994). Barrow no. 6⁴ is near one of the larger barrow cemetery's barrows, barrow no. 70⁵. A partially destroyed grave⁶ in which a horseman was buried with a horse to his left was found in the centre of barrow no. 6, in the pit underneath the barrow mound. The horse lay on its left side, its front legs bent, head oriented to the SW; no grave goods were found near the horse. The disturbed remains of an inhumed person (fragments of a few teeth) were found, with a spiral ring and a glass paste bead as the person's only grave goods (Fig. 4). Judging by the burial rite, the grave could belong to the second half of the fifth century.

The Taurapolis barrow site

Most of the wealthy and exceptionally wealthy burials of horsemen with horses –four of them– have been

⁴ The barrow is encircled with stones; the barrow's diameter is 10 m and its height is 1.4 m.

⁵ The barrow's diameter is 28 m.

⁶ The grave pit is of an irregular shape of 3.3x2.9 m in size, situated at the base, with a depth of 1.1–1.3 m.

found in the Taurapolis barrow cemetery (Figs. 1 and 5). The Taurapolis barrow cemetery is an especially rich and significant site of the Late Migration Period that validates the existence of direct ties with the middle Danube. After Joachim Werner's publication (1977, p.87ff), the grave of the 'duke' of Taurapolis became well-known throughout Europe (Menghin 1983, pp.31 and 52 fig.25; Schulze-Dörrlamm 1986, p.602 figs. 8 and 10; Kazanski 2000, fig.14; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, p.127 fig.33; Kontny 2004, p.251; Böhner 1989, p.440, fig. 12.9; Pinar 2005, p.311f fig.15).

The Taurapolis archaeological site complex consists of the Taurapolis barrow cemetery which is on the shore of Lake Tauragnas, and the Taurapolis hillfort, approximately 600 m to the east. The barrow cemetery is comprised of two groups of barrows, situated 200-300 m from each other (Tautavičius 1981, p.19 figs. 1 and 2). Sėlė's hillfort and disturbed barrows as well as the Šeimatis group of barrows with its so-called cult site that are all located on the southeastern end of Lake Tauragnas undoubtedly also fall into the Taurapolis archaeological site complex (Vaitkevičius 2007, p.158 figs. 4 and 5).

Noteworthy is the fact that the ordinary or common members of the community⁷ were buried in the eastern part of the Taurapolis barrow cemetery, while the supreme ruler or highest status military leader with his retinue were buried in the western part. In other words, the armed horsemen and infantrymen surrounded their leader in the Afterlife just as they had sustained him in armed conflicts, and, apparently, in consolidating rule in this micro-region (Fig. 5). Two of the largest barrows in the western group of barrows were almost at the centre of the hill (barrow no. 5 – the 'duke's', and barrow no. 4 – one of his retinue's horsemen) and three more barrows were found at the edges of the hill. The barrows were partially destroyed not just by ploughing, but also by amateur archaeologists in the beginning of the 20th century as well as by robbers in antiquity. Undisturbed graves were found only in two of the barrows (nos. 5 and 6). In all of the barrows where clearer remains of graves were still found, only graves of men who were, judging by the grave goods, well-armed infantrymen and armed horsemen were found, with the exception of disturbed barrow no. 2, in which the burial of a child and an adult of undetermined gender was found. The people who were buried in barrows encircled with stones were buried individually (except for barrow no. 2), inhumed in a pit underneath the earth mound, together with weapons and ornaments. Horses were buried together with the peo-

⁷ The barrows of the eastern group in which the common members were buried is not discussed in this article.

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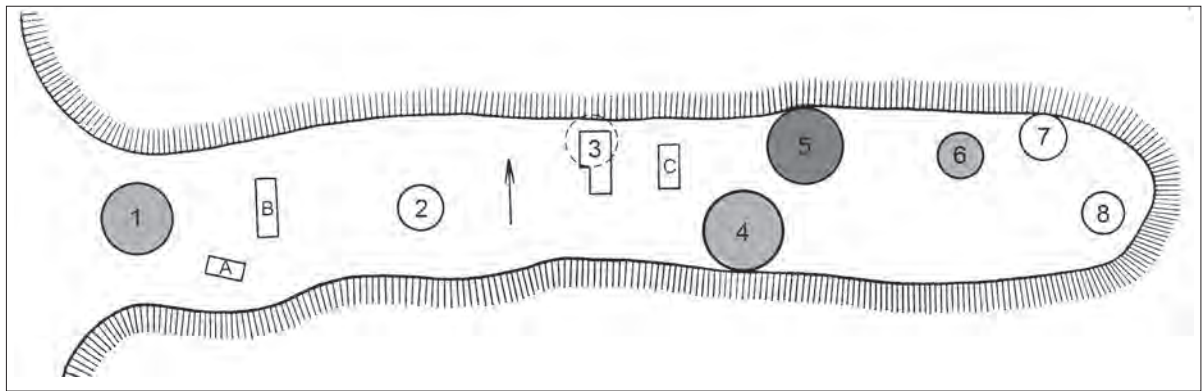


Fig. 5. Distribution of western group of barrows within the Taurapilis (Utena d.) barrow cemetery, in which a so-called duke (marked in darker shade) and his retinue (marked in lighter shade) are buried. The other barrows were disturbed (after Tautavičius 1981, fig.2, with current author's additions).

ple in four of the graves. Later cremation burials were dug into the earth mounds of some of the barrows.

The Taurapilis 'duke'

A 40–50 year old man was buried in barrow no. 5, known as the Taurapilis 'duke' in Lithuanian and other countries' historiography because of his exceptional grave goods and burial rite. Barrow no. 5 was 14–15 m in diameter, 50–60 cm in height, with a 13–13.5 diameter circle of stones around the barrow's mound (Tautavičius 1970–1971, p.18; 1981, p.20ff, figs. 2–4). A person's and horse's skeletons with their heads to the west were found almost at the centre of the barrow, in a 4.0x2.8 m large and 1.4–1.5 m deep pit⁸ at the base of the barrow (Fig. 6). A two year old horse, approximately 1.45 m tall and without any riding gear –not even bridle bits– was buried on its left side and to the deceased person's left (Tautavičius 1970–1971; 1981, p.22 fig. 5). The person was buried with an abundance of grave goods (Figs. 7–13, Plate IV). The arms and armament, even the whetstone, were placed in an order not necessarily typical of the East Lithuanian Barrow Culture: the axe was placed on the deceased's pelvis, the spearheads – just to the right of his feet, the shield – on top of the legs, the whetstone – under his head (Tautavičius 1981, figs.5–6)⁹. The largest group consisted of weapons, which included a double-edged sword¹⁰ (*Zeitgruppe A* or so-called *childerichzeitlich*¹¹ group) in a wooden scabbard richly adorned with gilded

silver mountings, two sword belt dividers covered with bronze and fitted with gilded silver, as well as three buckles which fastened the sword to the man's belt, and a sword-pendant covered with gilded silver mountings (Fig. 8; Plate IV). Such swords are dated from the end of the fifth century to the beginning of the sixth century (Tautavičius 1981, p.81) or the second half of the fifth century (Menghin 1983, pp.31, 52, 58, 205 figs. 25; 50; Böhner 1989, p.440 map 15). The end of the sword's scabbards' was bound in a U-shaped mounting, decorated with volutes. The edge of the mounting must have been decorated with a profiled offshoot that had broken off (Fig. 8.10; Plate IV.1,10)¹². Although the end piece of a totally analogous scabbard's U-shaped mounting has not been found, similar artefacts have been discovered in southern Scandinavia, southern Norway, and the middle Elbe (Tautavičius 1981, p.24; Menghin 1983, p.354 map 18; Böhner 1989, p.440 figs.12.9; 13.3). The tops of such sword scabbards' rectangular mountings are decorated with meander motifs for which close parallels are known in a very broad region: from the southern part of Great Britain, to the upper reaches of the Rhine and Danube, to Scandinavia (Menghin 1983, p.334 map 11). Paired dividers of sword scabbard belts are ascribed to the Nydam–Porskaer type that was widespread in southern Scandinavia, Jutland peninsula and known to have occurred on the island of Öland (Fig. 8.7–8; Plate IV.4–5) (Menghin 1983, p.340 map 13). The principal find sites of cylindrical sword-pendants made of opal (*Kascholong, Cacholong*)¹³ and covered with gilded silver mountings richly decorated with three three-legged swastikas are concentrated between the Tisza and Danube Rivers (Fig. 8.2;

⁸ Deeper than this the pit narrowed; at the bottom, the grave pit was 2.6–3.2 m long and 1.45–1.6 m wide.

⁹ The 'duke's' retinue also was buried in a fashion not altogether typical of East Lithuania's burial rites.

¹⁰ The sword's length is 92.5 cm, blade width is 5 cm. According to Menghin, the sword is 96.0 cm long (1983, p.205).

¹¹ The W. Menghin typology was used to describe the Taurapilis sword set. See: Menghin 1983 pp.31 and 52, fig.25, catalogue no. 29.1–8.

¹² This observation was noted in 2000 by Dr Dieter Quast when he visited the Lithuanian National Museum.

¹³ The material composition was established by Dr Arūnas Kleišmantas of Vilnius University, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Department of Geology and Mineralogy. Tautavičius wrote that the sword's amulet was made from limestone (Tautavičius 1981, p.24). Menghin had guessed that it was made from chalcedony (Menghin 1983, p.205.e).

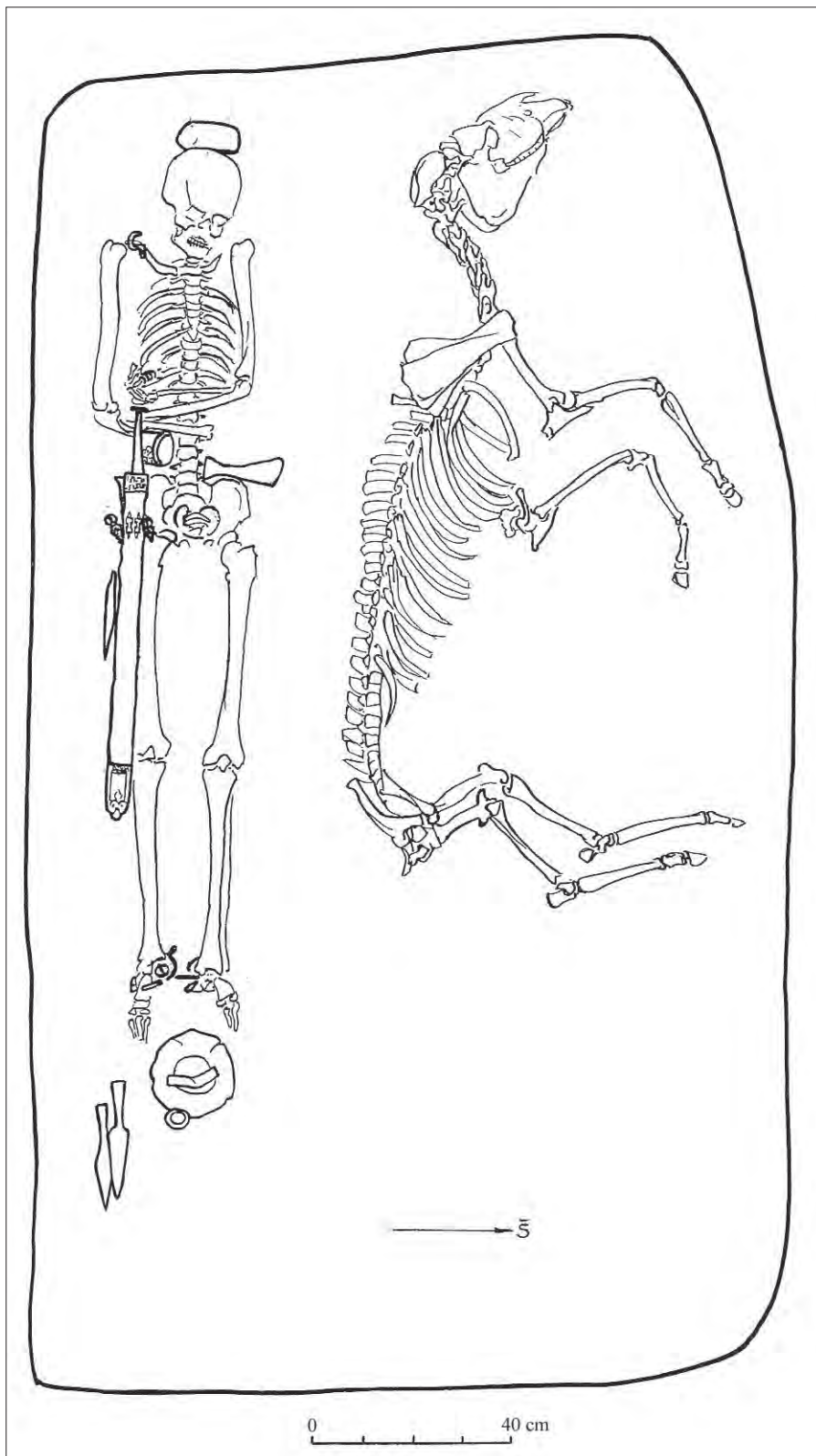


Fig. 6. Taurapilis barrow no. 5, 'duke' and his horse *in situ* (after Tautavičius 1981, fig.5).

ged sword with richly adorned scabbard and sword-pendant has analogies in the middle Danube region, the surroundings of the Franks, Alamanni, Ostrogoths and Gepids, and southern Scandinavia (Werner 1977, p.87; Tautavičius 1981, p.24f, figs.7-16; Menghin 1983, fig. 50; Böhner 1989, p.440 map 15; Legoux *et al.* 2006, pp.31 and 54). The Taurapilis sword is the

Plate IV.2) (Menghin 1983, pp.144 and 356ff map19). The sword was fastened to the belt with three gilded silver buckles richly adorned with S-shaped, scrolled, and triangular motifs (Fig. 8.3-5; Plate IV.6-7). A small, round, silver detail decorated the centre of the sword's scabbard (Fig. 8.9; Plate IV. 8). The sword's trappings are all richly decorated with meanders, scrolls, volutes, three-legged swastikas, S-shaped, and triangular motifs, fashioned by a chip carving (*Kerbschnitt*) technique. The custom of fastening a large bead made from various semi-precious stones, glass, or amber to the hilt of the sword, as the "magical sword-pendant amulet," after Marcomanni Wars as a result of close collaboration between German and Sarmatian military elite, spread between Germanic people already in the phase C_{1b} (von Carnap-Bornheim 2003, p.371ff). It might be that of fastening a large bead resurgent and with a new strength spread in *barbaricum* during time of expansion of the Hun Empire (Werner 1956, pp.26-37, 120-129, plate 21; Raddatz 1958, p.81ff; Hagberg 1967, p.43ff). The double-ed-

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Fig. 7. Taurapolis barrow no. 5, 'duke' *in situ* (photograph by Tautavičius).

northernmost find of its kind, although not the only one discovered in northeastern Europe's forest belt sites¹⁴. This was the second sword of the Migration Period that reached Lithuania; the first was an approximately 1 m long double-edged sword that was found in the rich, but disturbed, inhumation grave of a warrior, grave no. 1 in the Krikštonys (Lazdijai d.) barrow cemetery (Kulikauskas 1959, p.73ff figs. 3-5). According to the grave goods, grave no. 1 of Krikštonys is dated to the middle or second half of the fifth century.

The 'duke's' other weapons and weaponry include two lance-heads that belong to the Kazakevičius III type (Kazakevičius 1988, p.4 fig.15.3 mapVII), a battle axe with a narrow blade and blunt end and dots ornamenting the edges, a knife, and a shield boss with three massive rivets (Fig. 9.1,2,9a-c). Various authors usually consider ornamented axes with blunt ends as battle axes (Malonaitis 2008, p.76ff)¹⁵. Shield bosses with a dotted or pearled pattern along the edges were characteristic of the East Lithuanian group of barrows during

¹⁴ Another one was found in Zarechye, in the province of Ryazan, in grave no. 75a; the sword's length is 96.6 cm, the blade is 5.0 cm wide, and it, too, had a sword amulet, made from amber (Akhmedov *et al.* 2007, p.359).

¹⁵ A. Malonaitis indicated that the Taurapolis 'duke's' axe was not ornamented. See: Malonaitis 2008, p.77.

the Migration Period, but have their earliest prototypes in Scandinavia's zone of influence (Kontny 2004, p.253ff figs.1-5). Two flat bronze rings were found close to the 'duke's' shield boss (Figs. 9.2, 9.3). The two bronze belt buckles of Madyda-Legutko types H 22 and H23 (Madyda-Legutko 1986, plates 19.22, 19.23) and flat bronze rings found with this 'duke' might belong to the weaponry's hitch system. The everyday items found in his grave include a whetstone and bronze tweezers (Figs. 8.11 and 9.10). Bronze tweezers were a common grave good for men buried with *Zeitgruppe A* (*childerichzeitlich*) type swords (Menghin 1983). Two bronze spurs of type Leuna, sub-type E were found on the 'duke's' foot (Giesler 1978, p.13ff and p.52ff). The spurs were fastened by straps that had metal bindings and were decorated with rivets (Tautavičius 1981, p.26 figs. 18-21) (Fig. 10).

An iron belt buckle, manufactured by the *Tauschierunger* technique, with a quadrangular iron belt plate embellished with garnets inlays¹⁶ (in *cloisonné* technique), fastened the 'duke's' belt (Fig. 11; Plate IV.11).¹⁷ This fashionable metalwork is ascribed to the Komorn-Gültlingen-Bingen type, based on Quast's typology; such belt buckles are found in both women's and men's graves of the second half of the fifth century (Werner 1977, p.88ff fig.2; Quast 1993, p.84ff and 125 figs.50, 51). Although such buckles are known only from fourteen localities, they are spread over a wide area from Georgia in the southeast to the lower reaches of the Rhine and Sena Rivers in the west. Still, the main find sites of this type of buckle are concentrated between the upper reaches of the Main, Rhine, and Danube Rivers (Quast 1993, fig.51).

The 'duke's' ornaments were relatively ordinary: a bronze crossbow fibula of the Prague type (Schulze-Dörlamm 1986, p.602 fig. 8) found on his right shoulder, and one silver spiral finger-ring on his left hand (Fig. 12.1-2). The fibula was fastened with its foot facing downward. Its placement on the right shoulder suggests that it was not an ordinary ornament, but rather one that signifies the deceased's exceptional status (Fig. 7; 12.2). Romans and Germanics of high status or of the highest rank usually would have golden fibulae fastened to their right shoulders, but with the foot of the fibula facing upward (Almgren 191; Menghin 1983, figs.55, 58; Roberto 2008, p.164ff). It is noteworthy that other fibulae belonging to the Migration Period and fastened to the right shoulder have not been found in Lithuania. However, also noteworthy is the fact that

¹⁶ Gem determination by Dr A. Kleišmontas.

¹⁷ The belt buckle is 4.7x2.8 cm; the quadrangular belt plate is 3.8x1.9 cm.

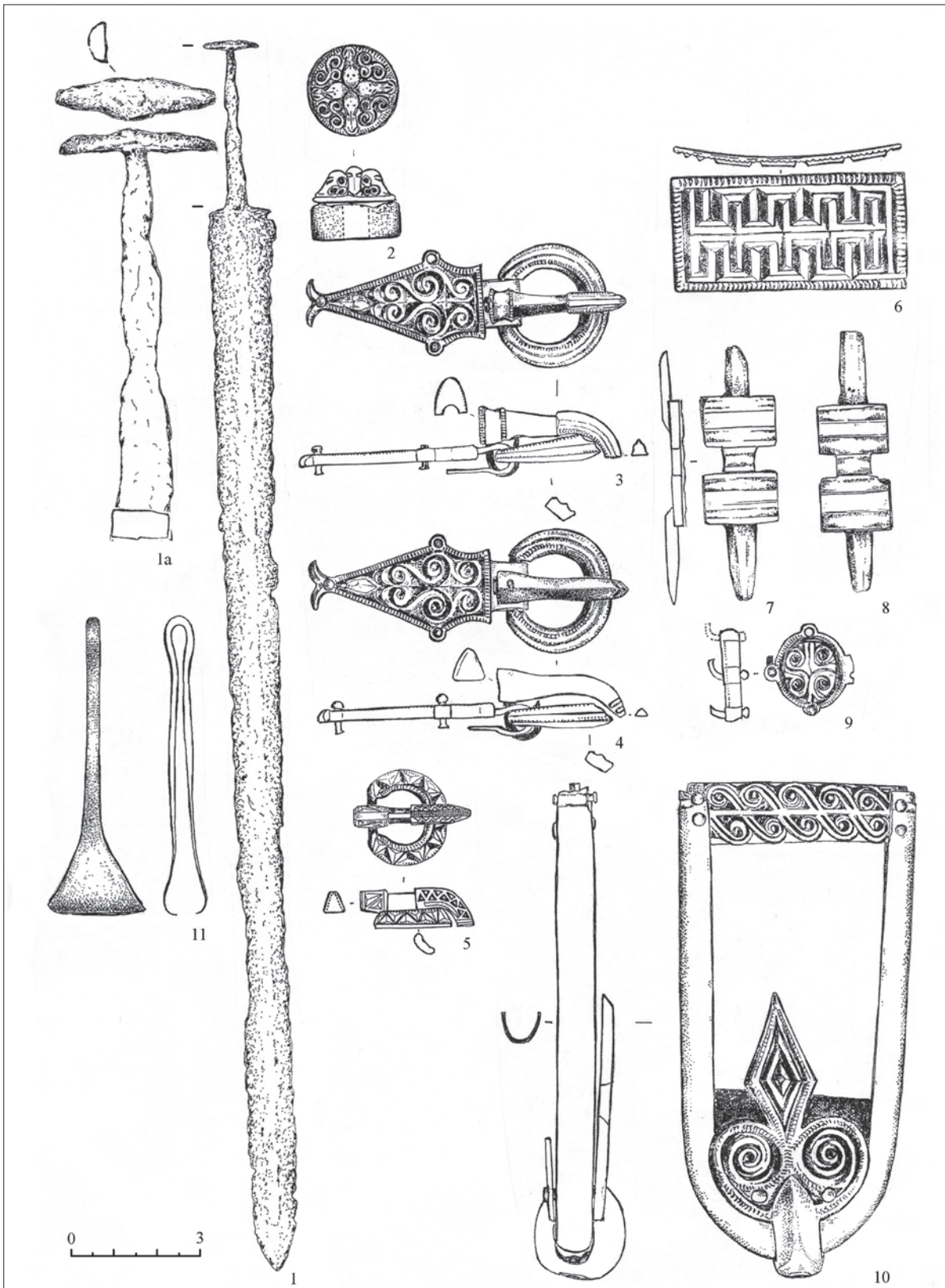


Fig. 8. Taurapilis barrow no. 5, 'duke's' grave goods: 1, 1a sword (iron); 2 sword-pendant (opal mounted with gilded silver plate); 3-5 gilded silver buckles; 6-10 details of scabbard (gilded silver, (7-8) bronze, plated with gilded silver plate; 11 bronze tweezers (curated at the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, AR 540; drawing by A. Ruzienė).

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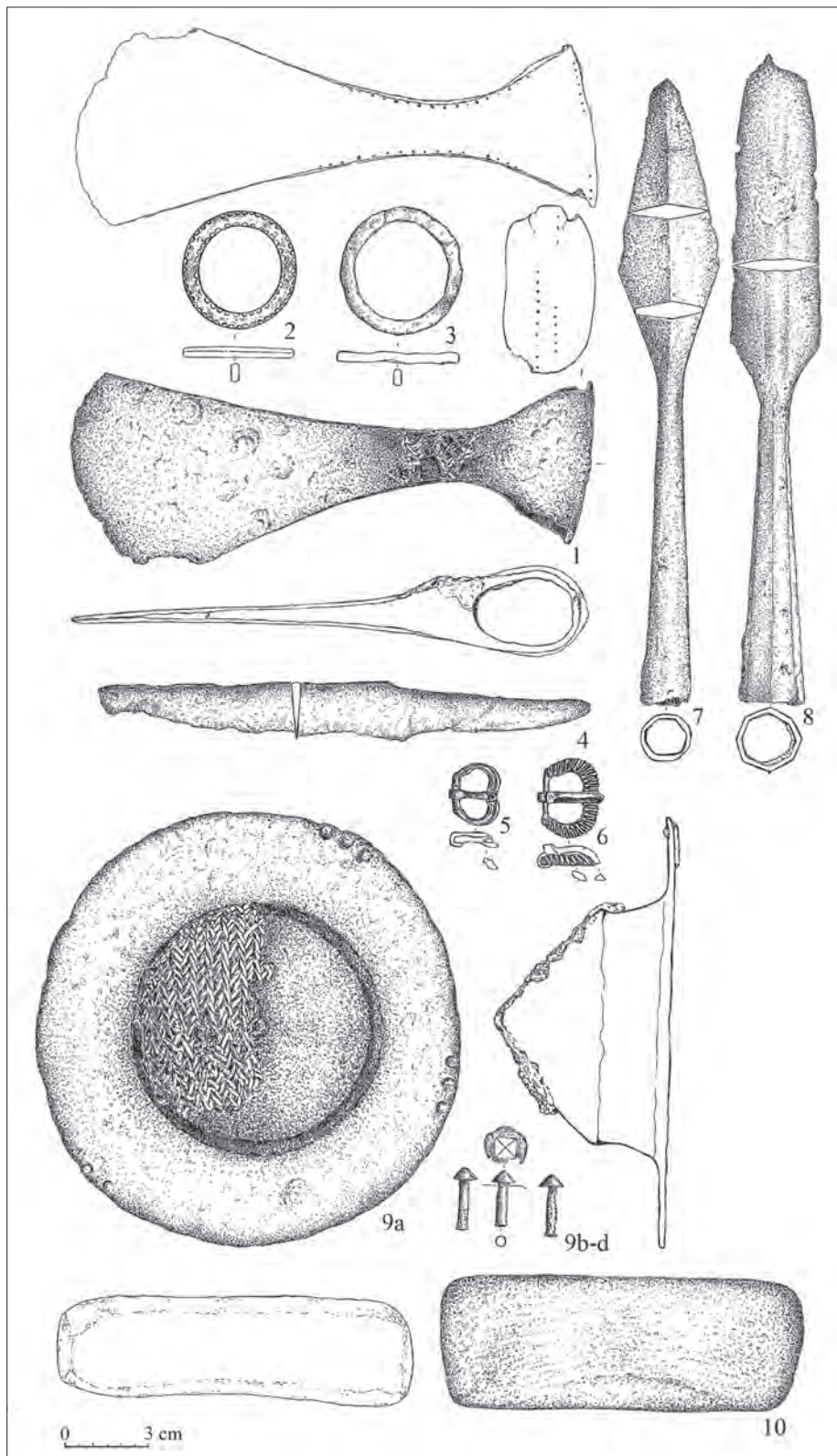


Fig. 9. Taurapilis barrow no. 5, 'duke's' grave goods: weapons and weaponry. 1, 4, 7-9a iron; 2-3, 5-6, 9b-d bronze; 10 sandstone (curated at the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, AR 540; drawing by A. Ruzienė).

the fibula was pinned not in the Germanic custom, with the foot up. In Lithuania, fibulae usually were worn in the fashion that they fastened clothing over the chest; crossbow fibulae were not fastened with the foot up. Prague fibulae were worn by women in the middle Danube and upper Elbe River areas; both women and men wore them among the Sudovians (Schulze-Dörrlamm 1986, p.712 fig.8; Jaskanis 1961, p.184 plate III.6; Kaczyński 1966, p. 204ff table X.6 and fig.14; Dzierżkay-Rogalski, Promińska, 1966, p.218). In the East Lithuanian Barrow Culture area, however, Prague fibulae have been found only in the graves of well-armed men (Bliujienė 2006, p.133).

The Taurapilis 'duke's' grave good assemblage was complemented by a fashionable silver drinking horn, unique in the East Baltic region (Fig. 13). This drinking horn's opening relates the Taurapilis 'duke's' grave good assemblage with the Nydam style (Voss 1954, p.174ff; Bemmann and Bemmann 1998, p.221ff and p.233 with figs. 80 and

86; Bliujienė 2000, p.105ff fig. 5) Notably, some of the Taurapilis's sword scabbard bindings and buckles' gilded silver décor also have analogies in the influence zone of the northern Germanic peoples. The 'duke's' set of grave goods, the weapons that dominate his grave good inventory, the sword, the choice of the barrow at the centre of the little hill, and the size of the barrow all demonstrate the deceased's exceptional status (Fig. 5).

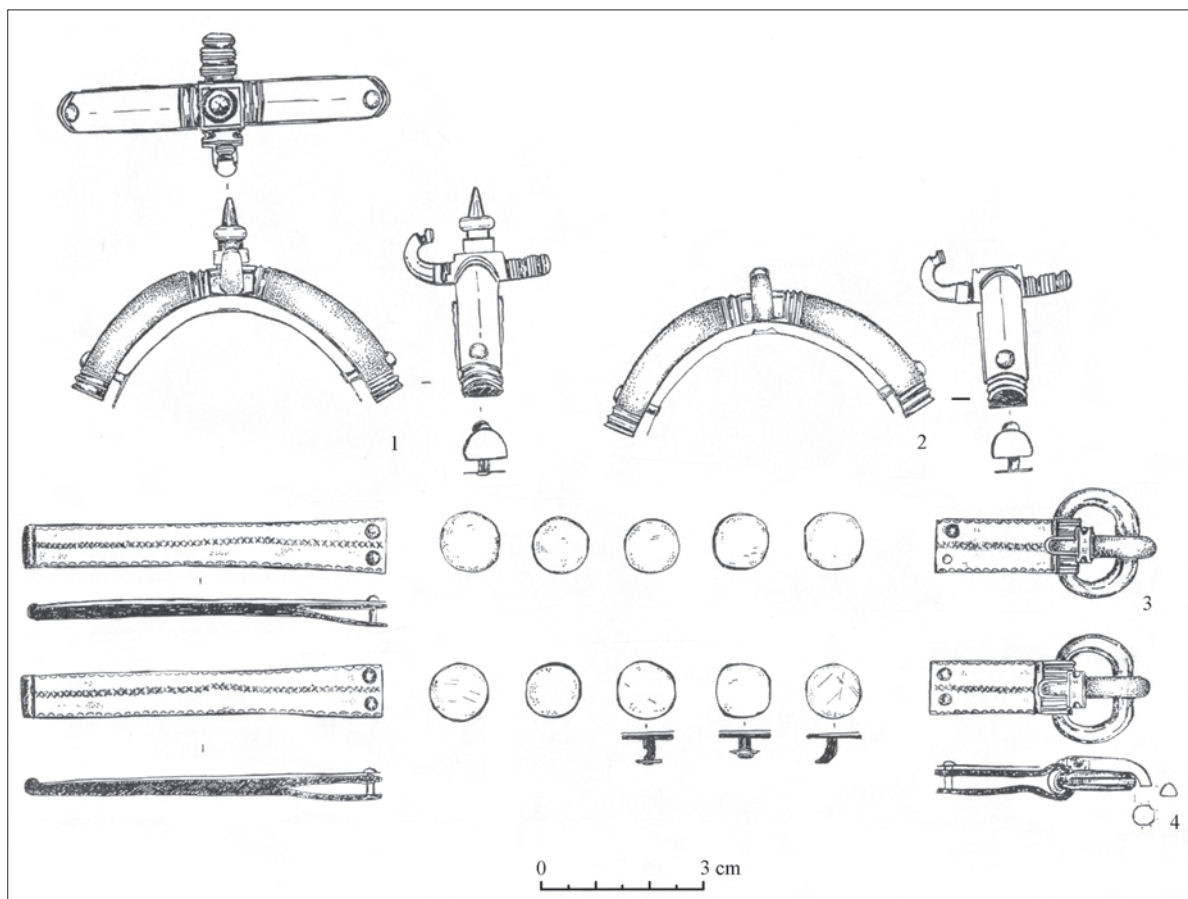


Fig. 10. Taurapolis barrow no. 5, 'duke's' spurs with shoe straps and rivets. 1-2 bronze; 3-4 bronze, silver (curated at the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, AR 540; drawing by A. Ruzienė).

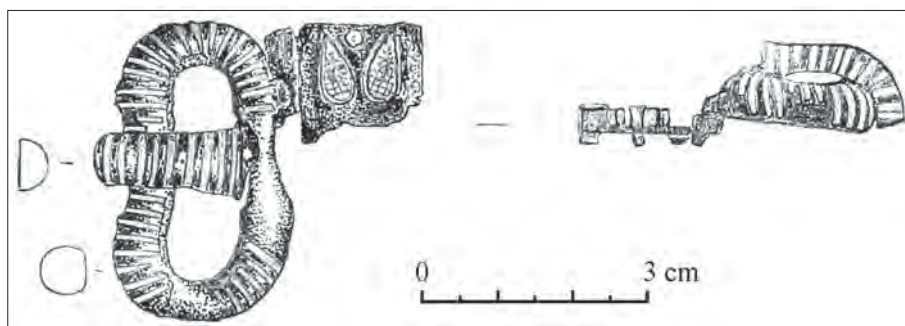


Fig. 11. Taurapolis barrow no. 5, 'duke's' belt buckle with quadrangular belt plate and garnet inlays. Iron, gold, silver, garnets (curated at the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, AR 540; drawing by A. Ruzienė).

The Taurapolis 'duke's' retinue

The so-called duke was surrounded by wealthy inhumation graves of warriors who had silver grave goods (neck-rings and bracelets with thickened terminals, or *Kolben* type bracelets) and iron fibulae, also not typical in Baltic lands (Tautavičius 1981, fig. 36.5). However, as much as can be determined from the preserved material, the soldiery's grave goods did not match their supreme leader's in their wealth and rarity. It is a pity that many of these graves were demolished.

Barrow no. 4, with a horseman's and horse's grave, was the closest to the 'duke's' grave – only 5–6 m south of

it (Fig. 14)¹⁸. The barrow might have been disturbed by an amateur archaeologist in the beginning of the 20th century. The person and horse both faced west and the horse lay to the deceased person's left, but differently than any other horse in this barrow cemetery's graves, this horse¹⁹ lay with its face down and legs under its belly (Tautavičius 1970-1971, p.26).

¹⁸ Barrow no. 4's diameter was 12–13 m and it was encircled by a tall ring of rocks.

¹⁹ The horse was an 8 year old stallion, 1.36–1.37 m tall, and researched by Associate Prof Vytautas Barauskas (Tautavičius 1970–1971, p.67).

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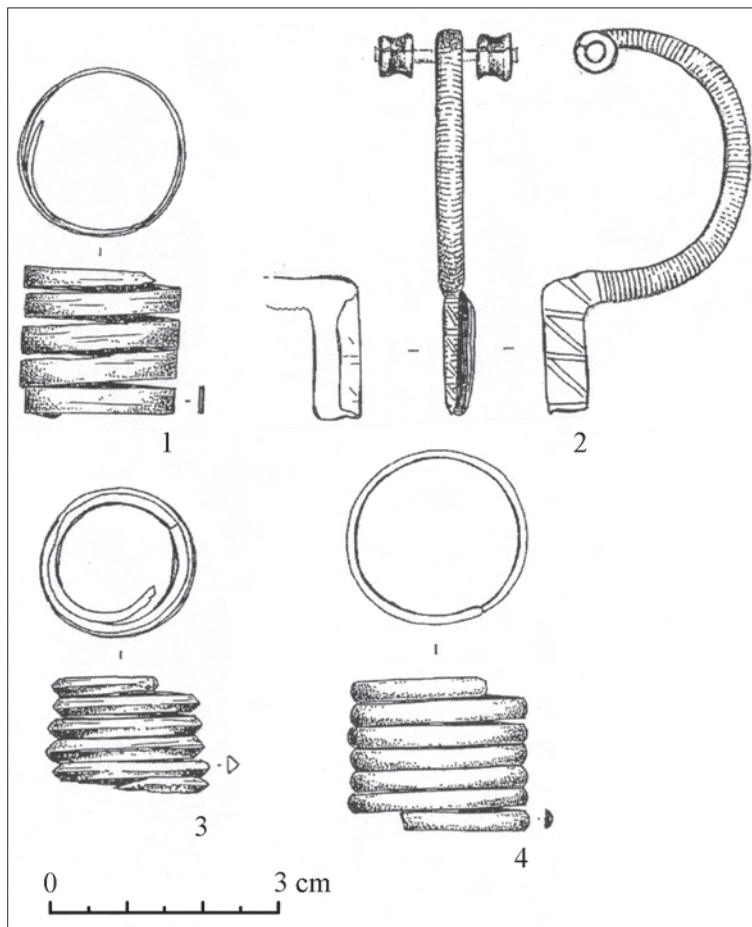


Fig. 12. Taurapolis barrow no. 5, ‘duke’s’ fibula, spiral finger-rings and spiral ornaments. 1 silver; 2-4 bronze (curated at the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, AR 540; drawing by A. Ruzienė).

Another of the ‘duke’s’ retinue’s horsemen is buried in barrow no. 6, with a horse in the same grave pit²⁰, buried to the man’s right (Tautavičius 1981, p.35 fig.39). In this grave, the horse was buried with a bridle (with the bits in its mouth and a small iron clasp under its neck) – the only grave found in the entire Taurapolis barrow cemetery in which this was the case.

A horseman and horse of undetermined age who laid to the horseman’s right in a southwestwardly direction were discovered in partially destroyed barrow no. 1 (Tautavičius 1970–1971, p.67). The deceased was buried with the grave goods characteristic of a warrior: a lance-head of Kazakevičius III type (Kazakevičius 1988, p.4, fig. 15.3 map VII), a knife, a shield boss, and a battle knife (length 32 cm). Also found in the grave were an iron crossbow fibula with a cast bronze plate catch, a bronze spiral finger-ring, and a B-shaped belt buckle (Fig. 15).

²⁰ The horse was 2–2.5 years of age, 1.33–1.34 m tall, and researched by Associate Prof V. Barauskas (Tautavičius 1970–1971, p.67).

The high ranking horseman from the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė 3 barrow cemetery

While excavating the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė 3 barrow cemetery in 2006, one more burial of a supreme ruler or highest ranking military chieftain with a complete horse skeleton in the same grave pit was discovered (barrow no. 17). This burial caused the same archaeological sensation as the 1971 find of the Taurapolis ‘duke’s’ burial. While approximately 36 km separate the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė and Taurapolis barrow cemeteries (Fig. 1), there are visible differences between the two barrow cemeteries. The Taurapolis barrow cemetery is smaller²¹ and it was left behind by a highly socially differentiated community, i.e., one that was divided into the community’s elite and its ordinary members (Fig. 5). The Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė barrow was arranged in a linear scheme²² along a very important ancient road that led northward and connected the Dnieper and Daugava / Western Dvina Rivers²³. Over 60 barrows of various sizes (8–25 m diameters) have been counted in this barrow cemetery, of

which 18 partially destroyed barrows and their remains have been excavated (Fig. 16). Only fifth-eighth century cremation graves have been found in the excavated barrows. The Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė horseman, buried in barrow no. 17, was encircled by smaller, middle of the fifth to seventh century barrows that contained graves with cremated men and women²⁴ who were buried with

²¹ Fourteen remaining barrows were excavated in 1970–1971.

²² The layout of East Lithuanian barrow cemeteries by cluster or linear scheme is proposed by Vaitkevičius. See Vaitkevičius 2007, p.118ff

²³ See Bliujienė 2006, p.138; Girininkas 2007, p.352ff fig.13.

²⁴ A 35–50 year old man’s cremation grave (with two spears, an axe, and a buckle) was found above the barrow’s base in barrow no. 16 (diameter 13 m, height 0.8 m), while a 20–40 year old woman’s grave was dug into the base. Both of the burials belong to the seventh century (Steponaitis 2006a, p.99ff; 2006b). Barrow no. 14 (diameter 8.5–9 m, 14–15 m with the pits, height 0.72 m) and barrow no. 15 (diameter 8.1 m, 13 m with the pits, height 0.4 m) contained cremation graves of men and women with poor grave goods, dated to the middle - second half of the fifth century (Steponaitis 2006, p.88ff; 2006b).

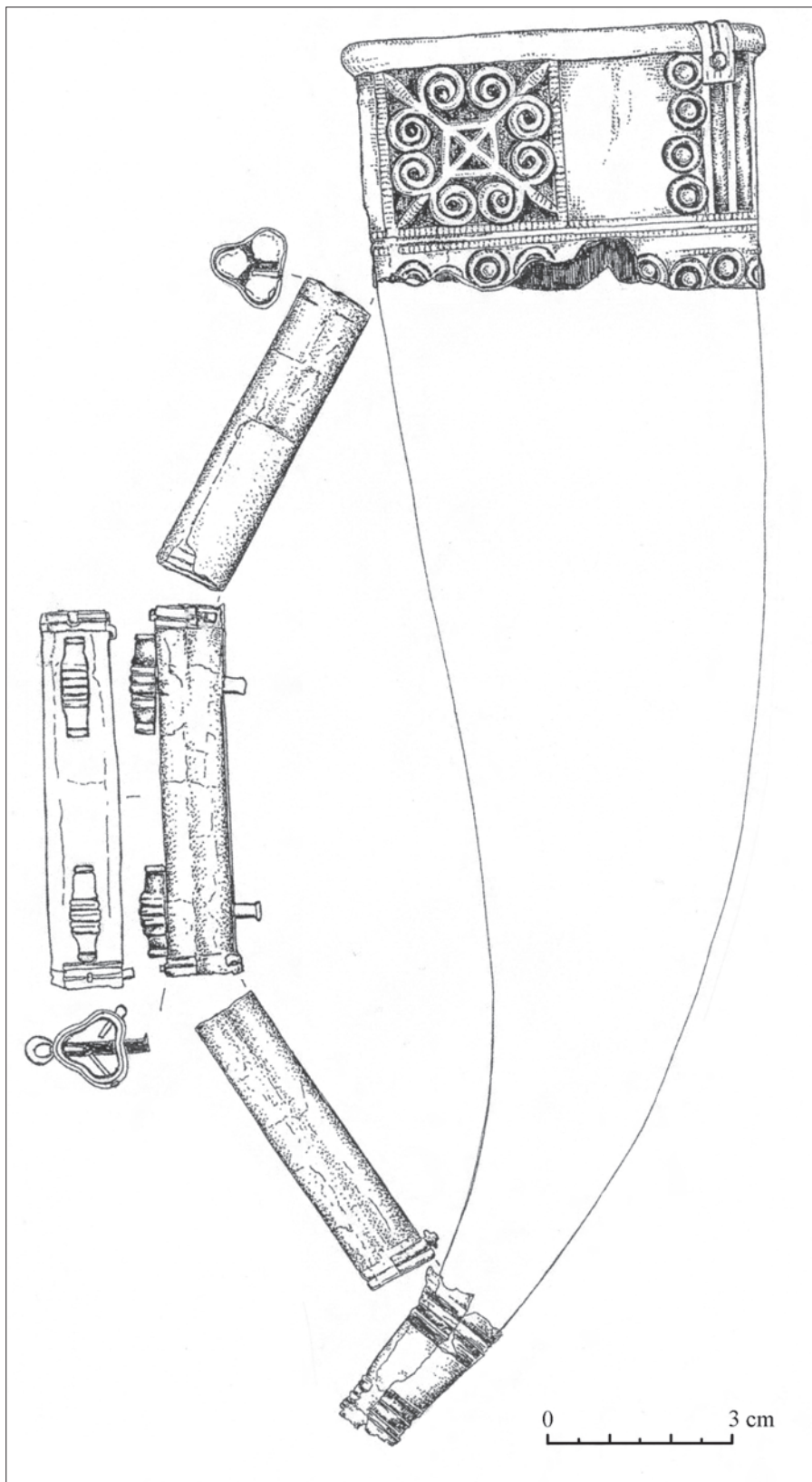


Fig. 13. Taurapolis barrow no. 5, 'duke's' silver drinking horn and handle bindings (curated at the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, AR 540; drawing by A. Ruzienė).

poorer grave goods. However, the strict order evident in the creation of the Taurapolis barrows is not evident in the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė barrow cemetery.

In one of the largest barrow cemetery's barrows, barrow no. 17²⁵, a 25–30 year old man's²⁶ and horse's grave was found in a pit at the base of the barrow. The 3.5–5 year old horse²⁷ was buried to the person's left (Fig. 17; Plate V.2–3). The barrow mound was constructed from the surrounding area's sand and there were remnants of a stone circle. There was no continuous ditch around the barrow; it was formed from crooked and irregularly round 2.3–3.2 m wide pits (Plate V.2). The part of the grave in which the horseman was buried was destroyed, i.e., it was pillaged with knowledge of the exact burial place of the person, even if the five empty pits, perhaps attempting to disorientate robbers, were dug into the barrow mound (Fig. 17; Plate V.2). However, the robbers were not interested in the horse; apparently they knew that in the best case scenario the horse would be buried with a leather bridle

²⁵ The barrow's diameter was 15–17 m, the diameter with the ditches was approximately 23 m, and its height reached 1.1 m. The grave pit was 3.4x2.3 m x 1.2 m deep.

²⁶ Investigated by Prof Dr (HP) Rimantas Jankauskas, Vilnius University, Faculty of Medicine.

²⁷ The bones were researched by Prof Dr (HP) Linas Daugnora (Steponaitis 2007, p.133). In opinion of Dr Giedrė Piličiauskienė of the Lithuanian National Museum, Department of Archaeology horse was 7–8 year old.

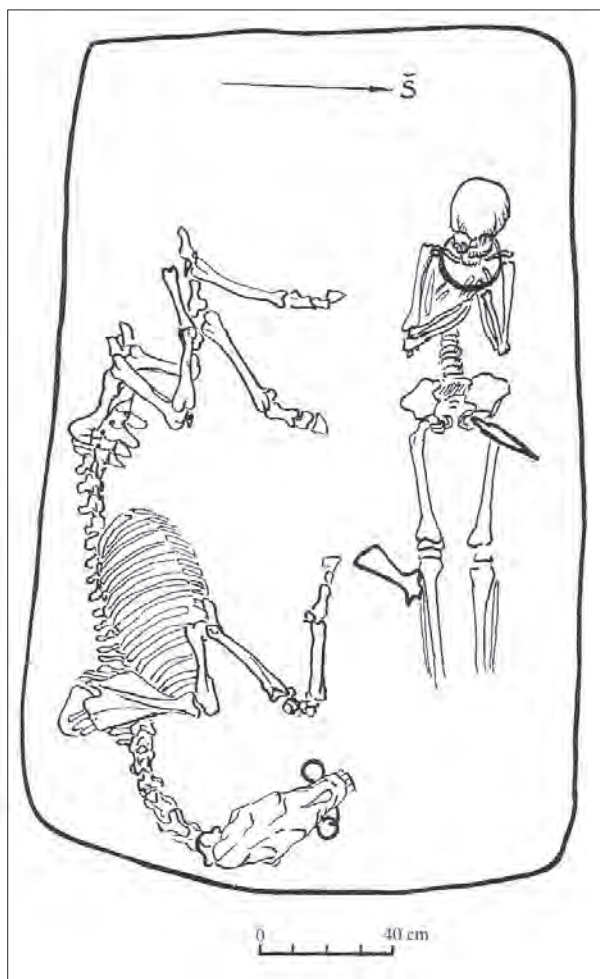


Fig. 14. Taurapilis barrow no. 6's horse and his grave *in situ* (after Tautavičius 1981, fig.39).

and iron bridle bits. Among the remaining things were a fragment of the deceased man skull vault's vertex and scanty skeleton fragments of the deceased which were all heaped together in one corner of the grave pit. Beside the pieces of bone, a fragment of a broken iron battle knife, a bronze spiral, and two links of an iron chain were found (Fig. 18). The massive tongue of a buckle was found at the bottom of the burial pit, probably lost while pillaging the grave. The silver tongue was 7.4 cm long, weighed 42.0 g, was gilded in gold, had a triangular cross-section, and terminated with the ornate head of some kind of creature. Moreover, the tongue was decorated with geometrical designs (triangles, scrolls, volutes) in a chip carving technique, with two relief motifs that resemble two-headed birds with beaks, possibly preyed birds, and elaborate stamped patterns typical of the Migration Period (Fig.18.2; Plate V.1). No other motifs of bird heads of this style were found. However, preyed bird motifs are known from sword scabbard mountings from the second half of the fifth century, as well as from Gepidic women's silver sheet metal bow-brooches décor, and other artefacts (Böhner 1989, figs.22.1 and 23.1-3; Nagy 2005,

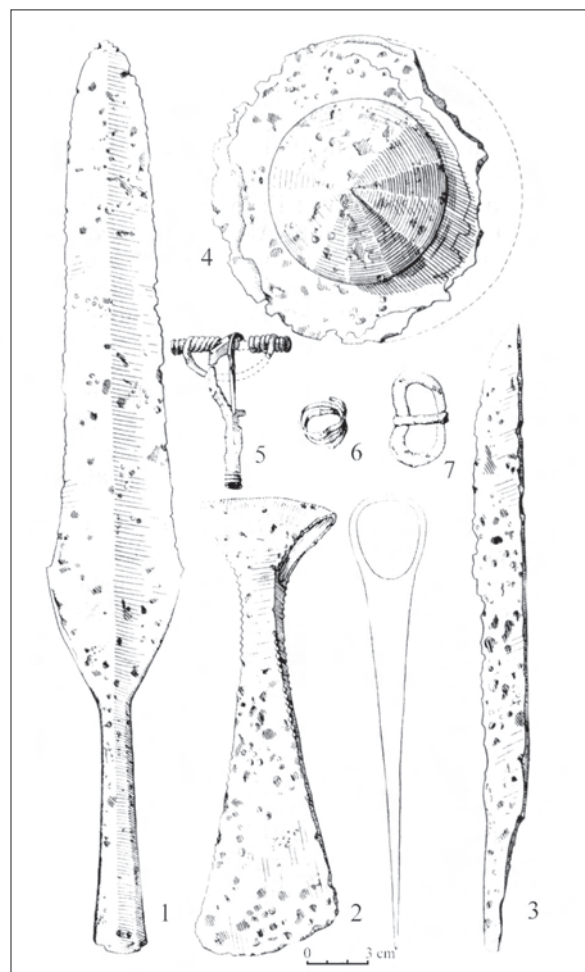


Fig. 15. Taurapilis barrow no. 1's grave goods: 1-5, 7 iron; 6 bronze (after Tautavičius 1981, fig.36).

fig.10). On the other hand, belt buckle tongues of the third quarter of the fifth century ascribed by Bierbrauer to the Gáva Acquisanta type are decorated with the sculptured head of a preyed upon bird (Bierbrauer 1975, p.134ff plate XL.2a). In creating their unique animal style, the Germanic people largely leaned on antique customs, their own artistic traditions, and, in a sense, on mythology²⁸; thus, in their artistic expression, they often united creatures into pairs, just like humans. Various pairs are reflected not only in Germanic art, but also in burial customs, since sometimes their warriors were furnished with a double set of weaponry (Czarnecka 2007, p.50ff figs. 4 and 5; Böhner 1989, p.476ff). Thus, the preyed bird motifs on the tongue of the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė belt buckle corresponds not only to the period's artistic tendencies, but also to the ideological outlook of the time.

The shape of the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė buckle's grip and belt plate (square, rectangular, rhomboid, circular?) is unclear. Belt buckles with tongues that terminated in stylized heads of creatures as well as rhomboid or

²⁸ Tacitus *Germania*, § 43 (Hutton, 1970); Holmqvist 1955, pp.9-33 figs. 6-48.

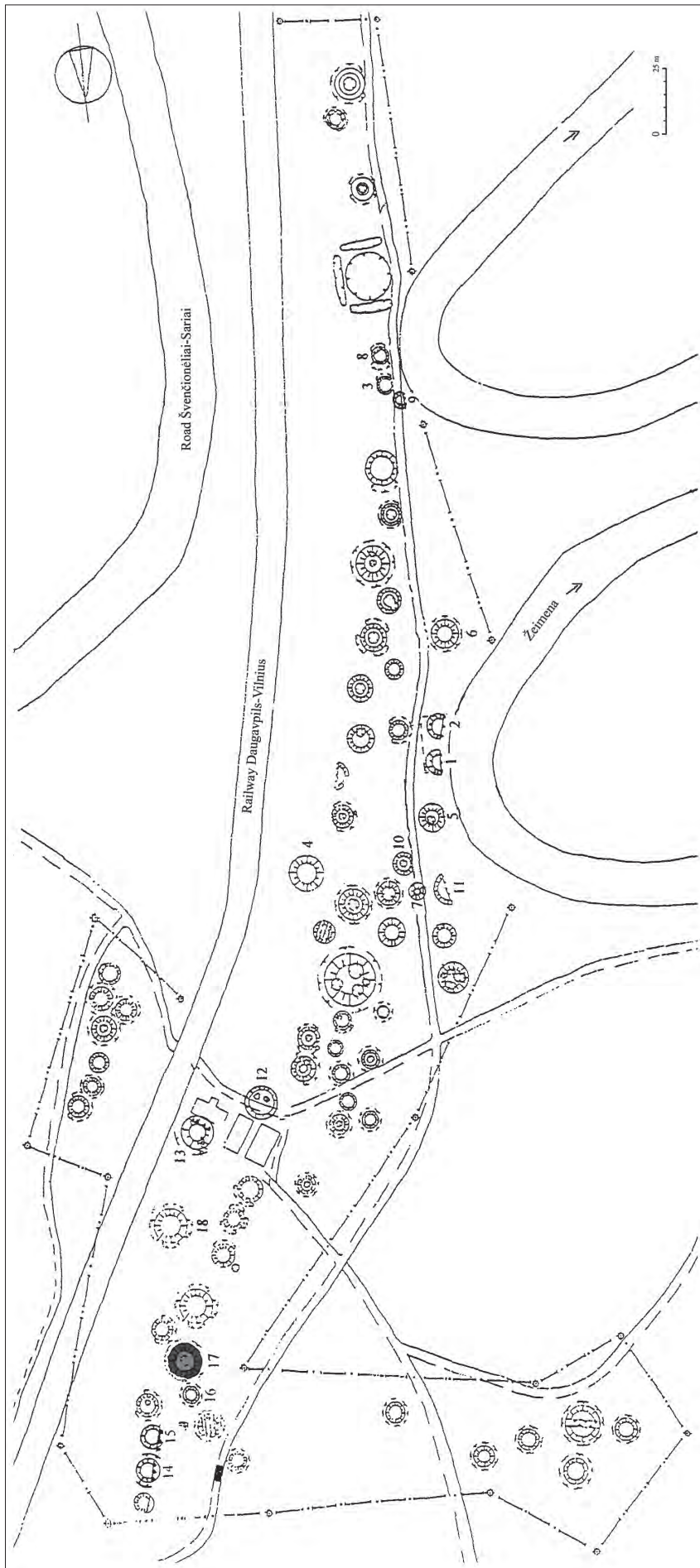


Fig. 16. Paduobė-Šaltaiūnė barrows' distribution. Barrow no. 17 marked in darker shade (map created by T. Šidiškis; map's newest additions by Steponaitis).

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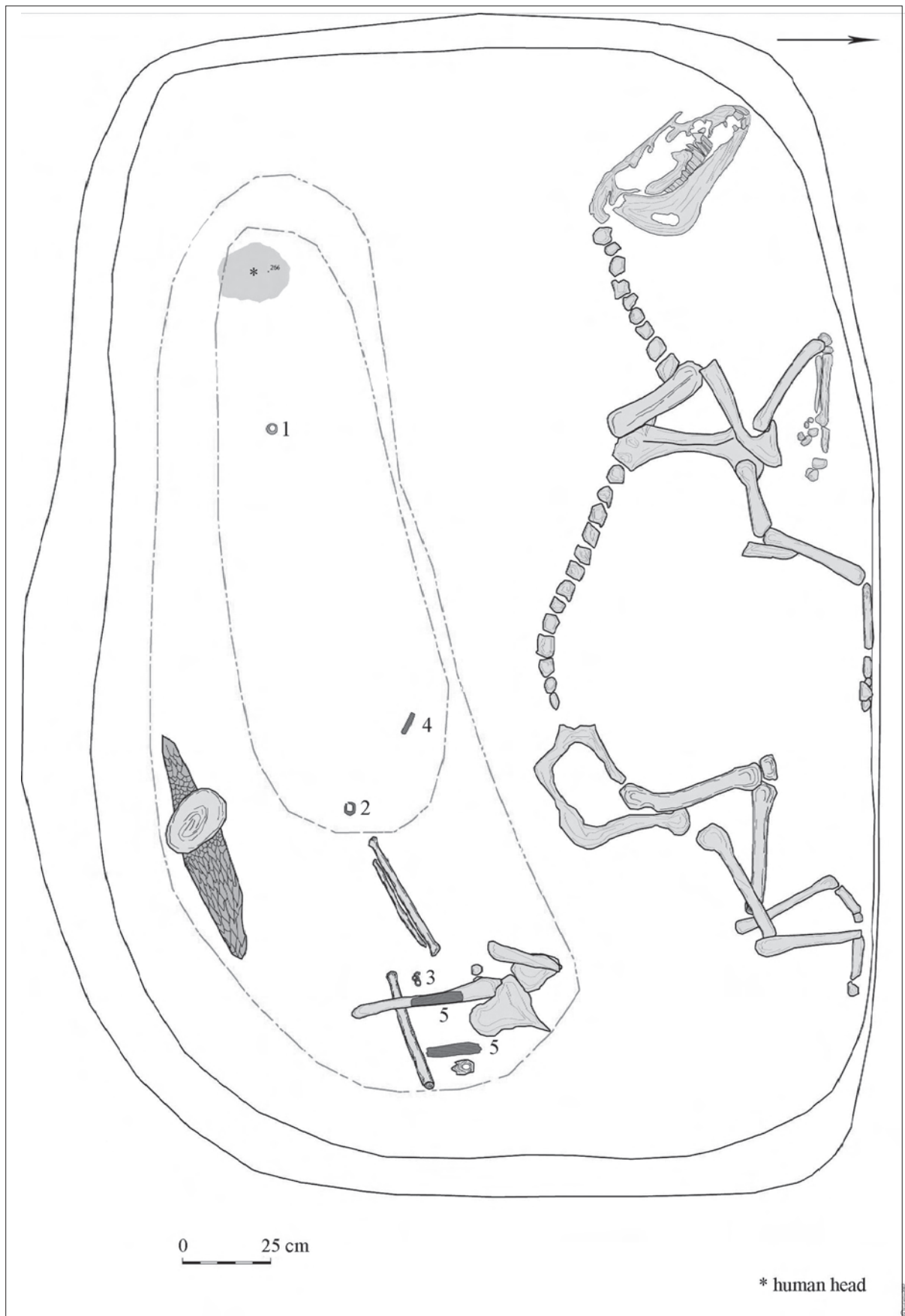
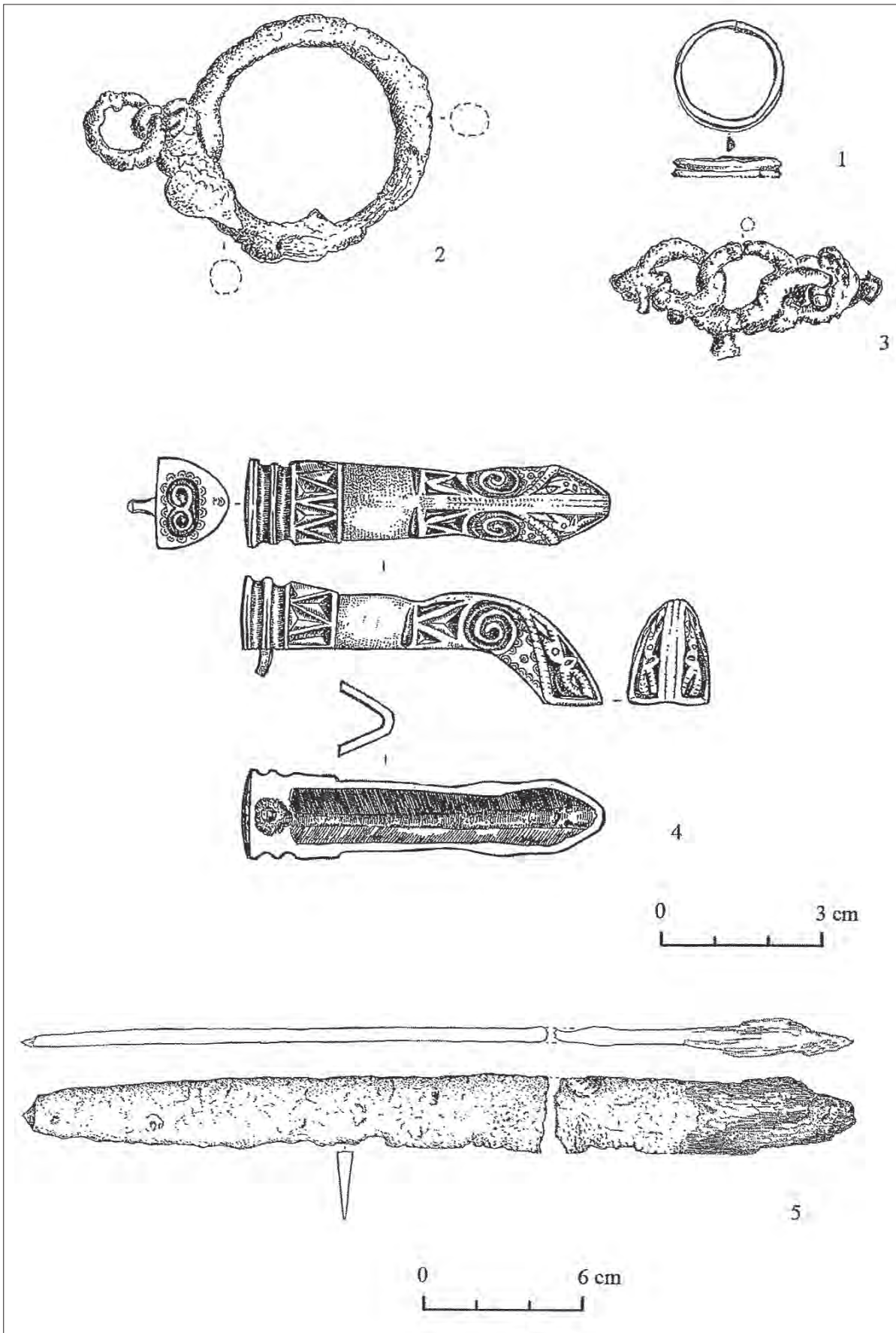


Fig. 17. Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė barrow no. 17, horseman's and his horse grave *in situ*. 1 bronze finger ring; 2 iron ring; 3 piece of iron chain; 4 gild silver belt buckle tongue; 5 knife fragments (drawing by G. Grižas).



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Fig. 18. Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė barrow no. 17, horseman's grave goods: 1 bronze finger ring; 2 iron ring; 3 piece of iron chain; 4 gild silver belt buckle tongue; 5 knife fragments (curated at the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius; drawings by A. Ruzienė).

quadrangular belt plates were a part of the typical costume of aristocratic women of the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Gepids, Franks, and other Germanic peoples (Werner, 1977; Tautavičius 1981; Bierbrauer 1995; Pinar 2005, p.305ff figs.7 and 8; Kazanski, Gavritukhin 2006, p.319ff figs.3; 4; 8). However, as anthropological research data and grave inventories show, luxurious silver buckles worn by women in the European forest belt and in the East Lithuanian barrow area are found in men's graves, except for the massive silver, gold-gilded belt buckle with a rectangular belt plate found in the Ziboliškė 3 barrow cemetery (Kliaugaitė 2000, p.183 fig.15; Bliujienė 2006, p.133ff fig. 9).

The tongue of the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė buckle is dated to the third quarter of the fifth century. While precise analogies to the tongue of the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė buckle have not been found yet, there are known parallels in a large region from the Iberian Peninsula to Merovingian France, including the middle Danube area and Carpathian Basin, the area north of Italy, Crimea, Northern Caucasus, the Don River delta, and the European forest belt (Csallány 1961, figs.CXCII.2; CXCIV.10; Annibaldi, Werner 1963; Aibabin 1990, figs.22 and 23; Bierbrauer 1995, p.577ff figs.19.3; 21.5,6,22; Bezuglov, Tolochko 2002, 46ff fig.3.4; Kazanski, 2000, p.415 figs.2 and 3.6; Pinar 2005, p.309ff figs.7-9; Pinar, Pinopol 2006, p.205 with fig.5; Kazanski, Gavritukhin 2006, p.319ff figs.2; 15-18). All such widespread gilded silver buckles are linked by general stylistics and production technology. This belt buckle (fragment) undoubtedly was a social status marker of the buried person. Such buckles apparently were made in middle Danube jewellery workshops, in the third quarter of the fifth century. On the other hand, buckles usually are individual piece products of general stylistics, thus they could very well have been manufactured according to an individual person's order.

Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė barrow no. 17 was robbed already in antiquity; therefore we have only secondary data to ascertain the horseman's social status. There is no doubt that a high rank military leader or even supreme ruler was buried in this barrow. The high ranking horseman's grave found in barrow no. 17 is not only the sole inhumation grave found in the Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė barrow cemetery, but so far it also is the wealthiest known grave within the barrow cemetery, although in some of the cremation graves, remains of fine pieces of fused silver or gold artefacts, and fragments of bone (or antler) mountings or comb fragments were found (Steponaitis 1991, pp.5 and 7).

The horsemen of East Lithuania during the Migration Period

The horsemen's graves of East Lithuania during the Migration Period are dated to the third quarter of the fifth century or somewhat later. Such graves are known both in that time's Europe and in Scandinavia (Heidegger 1992, pp.287-292; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, p.121ff fig. 33). All the men for whom a horse was buried are interred holding to the inhumation mode of burial, even though at that time (in the third quarter of the fifth century) in East Lithuania the custom of cremation was passed spreading – it already was dominant. In fact, these horsemen are the last people buried in East Lithuania's barrows following the inhumation custom. Only the graves of horsemen and their horses are found in the barrows; these barrows' mounds are only rarely dug into with somewhat later cremation graves (possibly those of family members). Not many horsemen's graves are known, thus, the largest percentage of the warriors of this period appear to be infantrymen, as opposed to the supreme rulers or "dukes" or military leaders and partial retainers that were buried with their riding horses.

Since the barrow is designated as the deceased's dwelling in the Afterlife, the barrow, along with its size and position within the site, constitute a very good means of demonstrating power and wealth. The horseman and his horse were buried in a single grave pit, with the horse to the deceased person's left or right. The Taurapolis 'duke's' horse (barrow no. 5) was buried to the duke's left side, possibly to emphasize his exceptional rank (Fig. 6). While we do not have many researched horse bones, the extant data show that young horses (stallions) were buried; the oldest researched horses were 8 years old. Usually the horses were buried without bridles. This burial rite's feature is in sharp contrast to the costly ornaments, everyday household items, and arms and armament with which the horseman is "seen off." The significance of the horseman's grave goods and peculiar depreciation of the horse is a distinct regional feature because at that time burials with horses harnessed with ornate saddles that corresponded with the rank of their masters were widespread in Europe (Wieczorek, Périn 2001; Quast 2007 pp.35-64 fig.7). On the other hand, spurs are rarely found in East Lithuanian Migration Period barrows (Tautavičius 1996, p.50; Zviaryga 2005, p.51; Akhmedov *et al.* p.345). Only the 'duke' (barrow no. 5) in the Taurapolis barrow cemetery was buried with two spurs (Fig. 10). Thus, the horse, just as the abundant weapons and elements of weaponry, would suggest that warrior horsemen were buried in such graves.

Concentration of wealth and power in East Lithuania

Despite the stylistic variety and wide area in which similar artefacts had spread, the material of Taurapolis and Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė, just as that of the Sudota, Borava, and Ziboliškė barrow cemeteries still has the most analogies in the middle Danube region (Fig. 1). In the middle of the fifth century to first quarter of the sixth century, the territory between Lakes Tauragnas, Kretuonas, and Vajuonis reflects the existence of a large concentration of wealth of non-local origin as well as power maintained by arms. This phenomenon cannot be explained as a consequence of trade or economic ties, cultural influences, ideological changes, or of a different form of communication between elites or other contacts. Thus, it is entirely possible that this small part of East Lithuania was directly affected by several waves of migrations (Zabiela 1995, p.49f with fig.35; Bliujienė 2006). After the year 454, the fall of the Hun Empire had a domino effect that provoked extensive migratory movement of various tribes of Europe, including ones that previously had not been involved in European politics or that had just felt the first waves of migration at the beginning of the fifth century. Regional movements of people are difficult to recognize or positively affirm by archaeological material because they are complex processes that can be comprehensively judged only by comparing regional materials and changes (cf. Burmeister, 2000; Teuws 2009, pp.290-315; Quast 2009, p.8ff with literature references). On the other hand, the appearance of newcomers in East Lithuania was neither massive nor long-term; in fact, the newcomers apparently disappeared after four generations (parents-children-parents-children), possibly even after two generations. Multi-ethnic groups of people who had extensive interregional ties, including ties with the middle Danube, settled in the small region between Lakes Tauragnas, Kretuonas, and Vajuonis (Fig. 1). People with high, but clearly different social status appeared here. Among these people were persons likened to that time's aristocratic elite, i.e., to supreme rulers or to the military leaders who stood in the forefront of their armed retinues, as well as, of course, their standard armed retinues. This period's largest percentage of warriors appears to be the typical infantrymen, as opposed to the supreme rulers or military leaders who were buried with their riding horses.

Persons of the highest social strata or ruling elite were buried by different burial rites – mostly cremation. Only a few inhumations dated to the third quarter of the fifth century have been found; we can assume that differences in burial rites were small, but the chronological differences left in the material record are diffi-

cult to assess. Most likely the supreme rulers or highest military leaders belonged to distinct ethnic groups and their multi-ethnic retinues were related to these rulers or military leaders only by ties of loyalty, i.e., an oath. Be that as it may, the settlement of immigrants was a positive influence on the formation of the East Lithuanian Barrow Culture. The graves of the Taurapolis and Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė highest status persons, as well as the huge wealth and military power concentrated in a small region, suggest that a form of government identical with that of a chiefdom had been created in the region.

Worth emphasizing is that the majority of East Lithuanian horsemen's graves during the Migration Period were pillaged and that the pillagers were well informed about the graves' burial rites: it is the wealthy people's graves that were robbed. The horses, because of their poor accoutrements, did not interest the robbers. Many reasons suggest that local people robbed the graves; they knew the subtleties of how the graves were arranged and possibly the marks that indicated the graves' locations. We can thus assume that the graves were robbed not long after the burials, for their silver, gold, and bronze ornaments. Iron, however, did not interest the robbers (Kurila 2009, p.51 ff fig.7).

One of the time's main stimuli for robbery was that it was the newcomers from the middle Danube who were being robbed. This was after the newcomers' ties with the middle Danube area were discontinued, during the first quarter of the sixth century or somewhat later – even before the Gepid Kingdom's defeat in 567. Since communities need stylish ornaments and personal items, first a portion of the luxurious items that were available would be recycled and refashioned, then re-used (Bliujienė 2006, p.136 fig.9). On the other hand, it is very possible that some of the fashionable silver, gilded silver, or gilded bronze artefacts intentionally would be broken and parts of them given as gifts or payments to retinues, or as gifts to supporters. Another possibility is that some gold and silver items would be distributed as dowry when marrying off daughters to representatives of local elite, hoping to ensure the elite's support, etc. The available material does suggest, however, that East Lithuania's newcomers managed to maintain power and the material culture that reflected their distinctiveness not longer than four generations; by the middle of the sixth century to the eighth century the East Lithuanian Barrow Culture had acquired a different quality – different burial rites and grave goods. Notably, the local communities, just like the newcomers, neither created new ornaments based on the ones they had, nor imitated them. In other words, grandparents, parents, and children laid together with their wealth in East Lithuania's barrows.

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Thus, no one was around to protect their ancestors' graves, to maintain ties with them through rituals. This also could have been a serious reason for those whose imagined ancestors were buried in the barrows to pilage the graves because they supposedly had the right to their ancestors' wealth (even through or tribal legislation) that was necessary to ensure life's plenitude. As well, the robbers of the rich graves could have been those who were not tied in any way to those interred in the barrows.

Conclusions

By 2008 data, eight horsemen buried in grave pits with complete horse skeletons had been discovered in only four of the East Lithuanian barrow cemeteries of the second half of the fifth century. A unified tradition of horse burial is not evident. The horse was buried to the person's left or right, usually without a bridle. The majority of these graves already were robbed in antiquity.

These barrows are concentrated in a small territory between Lakes Tauragnas, Žeimenis, and Vajuonis, in an area of no more than 50–60 sq. km. Exceptionally wealthy graves of warrior horsemen are found in this small region; their graves contain artefacts of silver, gold, or gilded bronze that originated mostly from the middle Danube. Such burials are associated with supreme rulers or leaders with high military status. Also found in the region are groups of well, but standardly armed foot soldiers or infantrymen, probably the rulers' buried retinue members. The concentration of huge wealth and military power as well as clear differences in social structure could be likened to a chiefdom. Multi-ethnic groups of people reached the discussed East Lithuanian micro-region in the Migration Period. However, the newcomers disappeared among the local people over the course of four generations.

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Abbreviations

- AB – Archaeologia Baltica, from 2006 prepared at Klaipėda University's Institute of Baltic Sea
 ATL – Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje ... metais, Vilnius, from 1967
 RB – Rocznik Białostocki, Białystok
 LAA – Lietuvos archeologijos atlasas, 3, Vilnius, 1977
 d. – district

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TURTINGI TAUTŲ KRAUSTYMOŠI LAIKŲ RAITELIAI GŪDŽIUOSE RYTŲ LIETUVOS MIŠKUOSE

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Santrauka

2008 m. duomenimis, tik keturiuose V a. antrosios pusės Rytų Lietuvos pilkapynuose rasti aštuoni raitelių, palaidotų vienoje kapo duobėje su visu žirgu, kapai (1 pav.). Raitelių kapų rasta Antasarės (Laukiai, Sariai) ir Paduobės-Šaltaliūnės III (abu Švenčionių r.) bei Pavajuonio-Rėkučių (Ignalinos r.) ir Taurapilio (Utenos r.) pilkapynuose (2-18 pav.). Žirgai ir raiteliai laidoti duobėse po sampilu. Žirgas laidojamas žmogui

iš kairės ir iš dešinės, beveik visada be kamanų. Visi vyrai, šalia kurių buvo palaidotas žirgas, buvo laidoti laikantis griautinio laidojimo būdo, nors tuo metu, V a. trečiajame ketvirtyje, Rytų Lietuvoje ne plito, bet jau vyravo kūnų deginimo paprotys. Faktiškai šie raiteliai yra paskutiniai žmonės, palaidoti Rytų Lietuvos pilkapiuose, laikantis inhumacijos papročio. Pabrėžtina, kad tokiuose pilkapiuose randamas tik raitelio ir jo žirgo kapas, labai retai į tokių pilkapių sampilus įkasami kiek vėlesni sudegintų mirusiųjų kapai (galbūt šeimos nariai). Daugumas raitelių kapų jau senovėje buvo apiplėšti (2; 3; 17 pav.; V: 3 iliustr.).

Be Antasarės ir Pavajuonio-Rėkučių raitelių kapų (2–4 pav.), straipsnyje aptariamas Taurapilio pilkapyje 5 palaidoto 40–50 metų amžiaus vyro, dėl išskirtinio įkapių komplekto ir laidosenos ypatumų Lietuvos ir kitų šalių istoriografijoje žinomo kaip „Taurapilio kunigaikštis“, kapas. „Kunigaikščio“ įkapių komplektas, kapo inventoriuje vyraujantys ginklai, pilkapio vietos parinkimas kalvelės centre, pilkapio dydis rodo išskirtinę mirusiojo padėtį (6–13 pav.; IV iliustr.). „Kunigaikščio“ kapą supa jo ginkluotos raitelių palydos kapai (5 pav.).

2006 m. tiriant Paduobės-Šaltaliūnės III pilkapyną, rastas dar vieno aukščiausią statusą (galbūt prilygstantį „Taurapilio kunigaikščiui“) turėjusio raitelio ir jo žirgo kapas, deja, apiplėštas (17; 18 pav.; V iliustr.). Viena iš didžiausių pilkapyno pilkapių 17 vienoje duobėje po pilkapio pagrindu rastas 25–30 m. amžiaus vyro ir žirgo kapas. 7–8 m. amžiaus žirgas palaidotas žmogui iš kairės (17 pav.; V: 3 iliustr.). Plėšikų nedomino žirgas, nes, matyt, jie žinojo, kad žirgas geriausiu atveju bus palaidotas su odinėmis kamanomis ir geležiniais žąslais. Iš palaidoto vyro išliko tik kaukolės skliauto viršugalvio fragmentas ir menki skeleto fragmentai, kurie buvo sumesti viename duobės kampe ir šalia kurių rasta sulūžusio ar sulaužyto geležinio kovos peilio dalių, žalvarinė įvija, geležinė grandis ir nedidelis grandinės fragmentas (18 pav.). Kapo duobės dugne rastas, matyt, apiplėšiant kapą pamestas masyvus 7,4 cm ilgio ir 42,0 g svorio sidabrinis paausiuotas trikampio pjūvio sagties liežuvėlis, užsibaigiantis dailia gyvūno galvute, nors kokia buvo sagties lankelio ir diržo apkalto forma, neaišku (18: 4 pav.; V: 1 iliustr.). Paduobės-Šaltaliūnės sagties liežuvėlis datuotinas V a. trečiuoju ketvirčiu. Nors tikslų analogijų Paduobės-Šaltaliūnės diržo sagties liežuvėliui kol kas nerasta, bet paralelių žinoma labai plačiame regione: nuo Pirėnų pusiasalio iki Dunojaus vidurpio, šiaurinės Italijos, Krymo pusiasalio ir Kaukazo, Dono žemupio bei šiaurės rytų Europos miškų juostos paminklų.

Straipsnyje aptariami pilkapynai koncentruojasi nedidelėje teritorijoje tarp Tauragno, Žeimenio ir Vajuonio

ežerų, ši teritorija teuzima kiek daugiau kaip 50–60 km (1 pav.). Šiame nedideliame regione randama ypač turtingų karių raitelių kapų, kuriuose rasta sidabrinų, auksinių ar auksuotos bronzos dirbinių, daugiausia kilusių iš Dunojaus vidurpio. Tokie kapai siejami su kunigaikščiais ar aukštą karinį statusą turėjusiais karo vadais. Regione taip pat rasta gerai, bet standartiškai ginkluotų karių pėstininkų, priklausiusių kunigaikščių kariaunai, kapų grupė. Sutelktas didžiulis turtas ir karinė jėga bei akivaizdūs visuomenės socialinės struktūros skirtumai prilygo vadystei. Aptariamąjį Rytų Lietuvos mikroregioną tautų kraustymosi laikotarpiu pasiekė polietninių žmonių grupės, tačiau ateiviai per keturias ar tris kartas „ištirpo“ tarp vietinių žmonių.

III

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