

THE RESURRECTION OF LINKUHNEN (RŽEVSKOE/LINKŪNAI): A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON A ROMAN IRON AGE TO VIKING AGE CEMETERY IN THE LOWER MEMEL (NEMUNAS) REGION

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Abstract

The article summarises new investigations at the famous site of Linkuhnen and its material culture, which was excavated between 1928 and 1939, but never really published. The surviving finds from the cemetery, together with information collected from diverse archival sources, show a picture of a burial ground which was probably used from the second to the 11th century. The richness and the international references of the local material culture during the Viking Age point to an important role of the site in the network of trade and communication between the Baltic Sea, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

Key words: Roman Iron Age, Migration Period, Viking Age, Prussia-Museum, River Nemunas (Memel, Neman).

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Introduction¹

Between 1928 and the beginning of the Second World War, excavations at the cemetery of Linkuhnen, Kr. Niederung (Rževskoe/Linkūnai, Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia) attracted great attention in the archaeological community, and with the German and Lithuanian public, but despite its archaeological importance, it was never published properly. Like many other unpublished East Prussian cemeteries which were excavated by the Prussia-Gesellschaft and the Prussia-Museum in Königsberg, Linkuhnen and its excavators were mostly forgotten after the Second World War. Although the cemetery of Linkuhnen was in use for a period of 1,000 years, from the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period to the Middle Ages, it is mostly linked to its finds from the Viking Age. The archaeological results of the excavations at Linkuhnen became a subject of political interpretation and national concern during the dispute between Germany and Lithuania about the Memel territory after 1923. With its position close to the River Memel, Linkuhnen was misused to put for-

ward archaeological arguments for territorial claims. Within this historical context, it is no surprise that Carl Engel (1895–1947), the excavator of Linkuhnen, always drew attention to the numerous finds from the Viking Age, and emphasised the northern influence on the grave-goods material. The picture of Linkuhnen as a Viking site was presented in many newspaper articles in the 1930s, and to a certain extent can still be found in archaeological literature today (Bertašius 2012, p.15ff.; Bogucki 2012, p.85; Fig. 1). More than 80 years after the first excavations at Linkuhnen, we will try to reevaluate the importance of the site and its grave inventories during its 1,000 years of occupancy.

The reevaluation of Linkuhnen began with the reconstruction and completion of the catalogue of finds from 1928 to 1939. The excavations at Linkuhnen and the remains of its archaeological documentation are good examples of research potential resulting from systematic work with objects and archival remains from the former Prussia collection in Königsberg, which for a long time were thought to have been lost after 1945. This study is part of a project set up in 2011–2014 by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) that aims at the digital registration, scientific interpretation and cultural and historical classification of the material culture (weaponry, riding equipment, costumes, tools etc) in East Prussia from the ninth to the 15th century AD from the collection of the former Prussia-Museum in Königsberg in the inventory of the Museum of Pre- and Protohistory in Berlin (Goßler 2013; Goßler 2014; Goßler, Jahn 2013a; Goßler, Jahn 2013b; Goßler, Jahn 2014). Since early 2014, data sets of 9,080 Medieval

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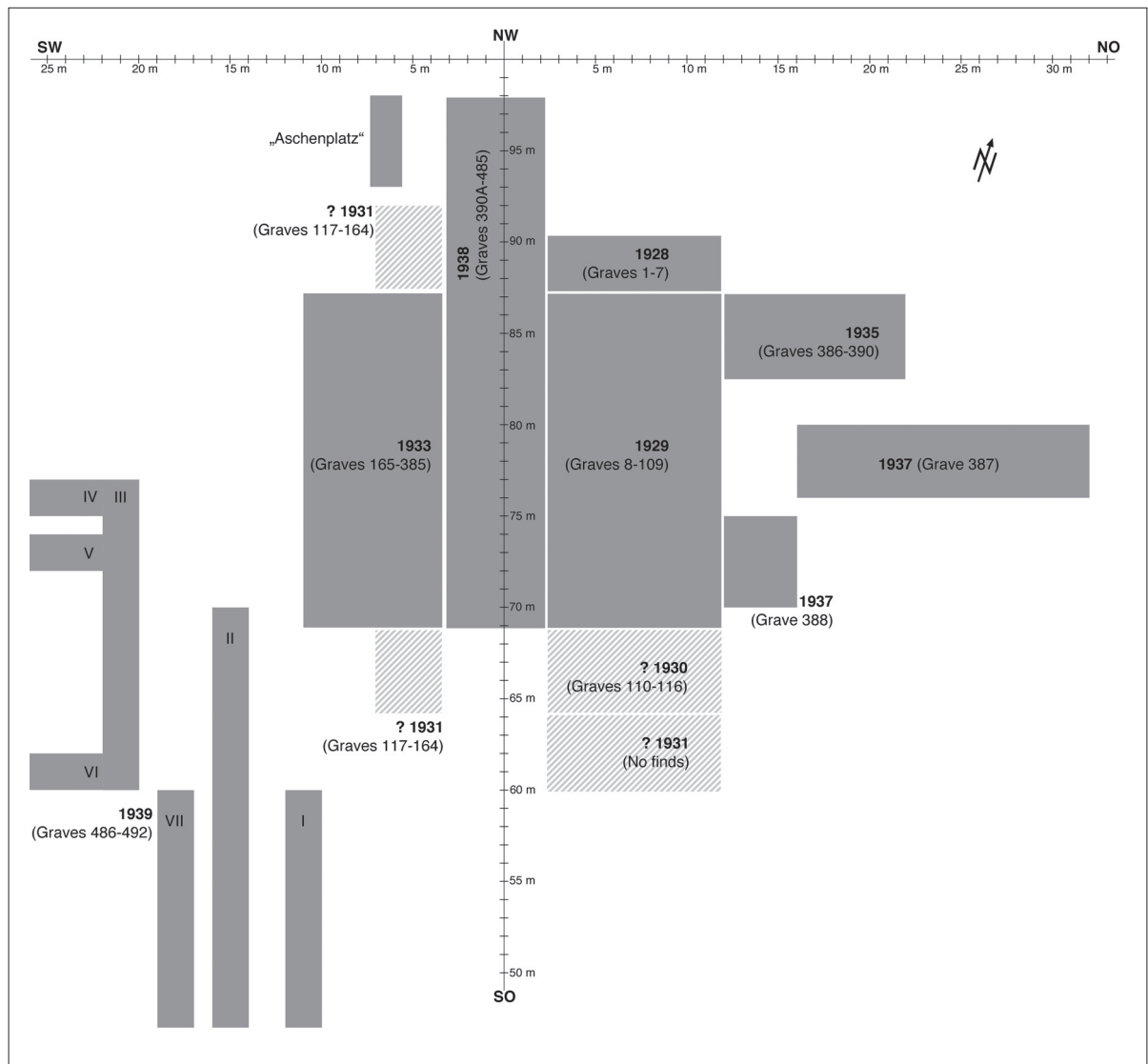


Fig. 1. A plan of the excavation area at Linkuhnen with the original measurement grid (1928-1939).

objects from the Prussia collection have been available online, and are open to our Polish, Russian and Lithuanian colleagues for research².

The site (cemetery and settlement)

The village of Linkuhnen (also Adlig Linkuhnen) is located about ten kilometres west of Tilsit (Sovetsk, Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia), and 4.5 kilometres southwest of the modern course of the River Memel, on a small elongated sandy terrace running from northwest to southeast, a few metres above the marshy plains of the Memel lowlands. To the north, the remains of the former course of the River Memel are still recognisable. The geographical situation of Linkuhnen cemetery, located on a terrace above the former course of the River Memel, was of strategic importance, and rep-

resents a key element in the interpretation of the site. The actual position of the cemetery within the village can be located rather precisely, on the basis of archival information: north of the road to Tilsit, and west and east of a small avenue leading to the house of the farmer Stuhlemmer. The area that was excavated between 1928 and 1939 covered a surface that was only slightly bigger than 50 by 50 metres (Fig. 1). It is obvious that the excavations took place in the centre of the cemetery, but never covered it in its entirety. The cemetery probably expands further to the west and south, and the occurrence of surface finds outside the excavation area led to the presumption by C. Engel that the fieldwork only covered about 25% of the cemetery area (Lemke 1935, p.14; Engel 1933).

Traces of at least two related settlements were also discovered in the proximity of the cemetery. Excavations were conducted by Wilhelm Gaerte (1890–1958) in 1928, and later by C. Engel. The finds from these

² www.smb-digital.de (->Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte->Prussia Sammlung); www.prussia-museum.eu.



Fig. 2. The excavation area at Linkuhnen, October 1930 (Archive MVF Berlin SMB-PK/MVF, PM-A 1472/3, 36).

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areas date from the Neolithic and Viking Age, a few of the Neolithic objects have survived in Berlin. Gaerte mentioned a large number of pits, and also Viking Age post-holes, which could be connected with architectural structures (Gaerte 1929, p.352).

Excavations and excavators

Between 1928 and 1939, a total of 492 inhumation and cremation burials, with approximately 5,500 grave goods, were excavated at Linkuhnen cemetery by Herbert Jankuhn, C. Engel, Kurt Voigtmann, Paul Lemke and Fritz Jaensch. The chronological range of the grave goods indicates the continuous use of the cemetery from the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period to the Middle Ages (second to 11th century).

Today, we have information about 348 graves, with details regarding the burial rites, grave construction, and, most importantly, the grave goods. A total of 144 graves lack information entirely. The precise location of 175 graves can be determined within the cemetery. The timing of archaeological events at Linkuhnen can be reconstructed on the basis of this information: the 1929-1930 excavations took place to the east of the avenue leading to the Stuhlemmer farm. In combination with photographic documentation, it is apparent that the 1930 excavation continued south of the 1929 excavation (Fig. 2), and in 1931, C. Engel worked in the north and southwest part of the cemetery. In the

following years, the excavation area was extended to the western part, and also included the avenue leading to the Stuhlemmer farm (1938). With the reconstruction of the excavation plan, we have probably covered the maximum extent of the excavation activities, even though the cemetery itself continued to the west and the south.

The first excavation at the cemetery was undertaken by H. Jankuhn in October 1928, together with the local museum in Tilsit. In two days, he excavated graves 1 to 7, with more than 100 iron and bronze objects. The archaeological work in Linkuhnen is first and foremost related to C. Engel, who worked from 1929 to 1934 as a member of the staff of the Prussia-Museum in Königsberg. Engel excavated graves 8 to 109 in 1929, graves 110 to 116 in 1930, graves 117 to 164 in 1931, and graves 165 to 385 in 1933. He published several scientific articles about the cemetery (Engel 1930; 1931a; 1931b; 1932; 1935), and initiated extensive press and public relations work to present Linkuhnen to the German public as a Viking-related graveyard. He made Linkuhnen a well-known archaeological site in East Prussia and other parts of Germany with a series of newspaper articles. After he left Königsberg for Riga in 1934, K. Voigtmann took over the excavations in 1935, and documented graves 386 to 390. The two last rounds of excavations were undertaken by F. Jaensch (graves 390A to 492) in 1938 and 1939. The very last round at Linkuhnen ended on 1 September due to the

outbreak of the Second World War. To put the excavations at Linkuhnen into perspective, it is worth remembering that the activities there were only a small part of the enormous work of the Prussia-Museum in Königsberg. When Engel was excavating graves 165 to 385 in 1933, the Prussia-Museum was performing 253 other excavations and surveys in East Prussia the same year (Gaerte 1937, p.70; Fig. 1). Therefore, it is no surprise that most of the excavations in Linkuhnen lasted only a few days, and were always short of time.

Compared to the huge amount of archaeological material that came to light between 1928 and 1939, the results published by Engel only show a tiny fraction of the complex structure of this important site. Moreover, his descriptions and conclusions are based on the limited results of the operations in 1929, 1930 and 1931: by that time, only 164 of the 492 graves had been excavated. Engel's observation of multiphase usage and a stratigraphic layering with older inhumations on the lower 'floor', and younger cremation burials on at least two upper 'floors', is represented in archaeological material, but can be complemented by additional information today. Also, the interpretations by Engel concerning the Scandinavian influence on the grave goods in Linkuhnen appear in a different light now, even though the representation of Viking Age weapons is impressive.

Objects and archive material

The analysis of the Linkuhnen cemetery is based on the archaeological objects and the archival material, that is, the documentation made between 1929 and 1939. This material is spread across different locations and institutions. Considering the history of the Prussia collection after 1945 (Reich 2004/2005; Junker *et al.* 2007), it is obvious that the information concerning the excavation results from Linkuhnen will be incomplete, and therefore any analysis will be somewhat imprecise. However, it should be possible to reevaluate the chronology of the cemetery and its specific archaeological features. This is the first attempt to present the inventories from Linkuhnen as completely as possible, 80 years after the first excavations. Even though Linkuhnen never really vanished from archaeological discussions completely after 1945, only a few objects are known from archaeological literature (Paulsen 1953, pp.20, 41, 71, 89; Nos 2-4; 11; 13; 14-15; La Baume 1959; Beckmann 1969, p.118; Müller-Wille 1970, p.86, Nos 50-51; von zur Mühlen 1975, p.31ff., p.39ff.; Kulakov 1985, p.61; Fig. 7.1; Žak, Maćkowiak-Kotkowska 1988, p.341ff.; Kazakevičius 1996, p.96; No 108; 1998, p.314ff.; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, p.99; No 166; Wroblewski 2006b; Juga-Szymanska 2007, p.506; Hilberg 2009,

p.429ff.; Nowakiewicz 2011, p.297; Hoffmann, Mackiewicz 2012; Budvydas 2007a, p.205). An overview of the cemetery and the dynamics of its chronological and social patterns allows us to approach the structures of burial rites and cultural interactions between the inhabitants of Linkuhnen and their environment.

Today, 302 objects from Linkuhnen are preserved in the inventory of the Museum of Pre- and Protohistory in Berlin. Most of these objects (202 pieces) have been re-identified through various archival sources, and assigned to their archaeological context. With the photographic documentation of grave 146, for example, it was possible to allocate a neck-ring in the Prussia collection in Berlin to Linkuhnen (Figs. 3; 4). The archives in Berlin contain 583 pages of administrative documentation, with substantial portions of the original excavation documentation. Another 329 pages concerning Linkuhnen are preserved in the Grenz archives, and eight pages have been found in the scientific estate of H. Jankuhn, both located at the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA) in Schleswig.

The Institute of Pre- and Protohistory at the Georg-August-Universität in Göttingen holds a large volume of photographic documentation from C. Engel, of which 150 units show features and finds from Linkuhnen (Heske 2012; Mangelsdorf 2007, p.43ff.). Another 86 pages from Engel's scientific estate at the Herder-Institute in Marburg are related to Linkuhnen. The inventory books at the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz (RGZM) were surprisingly fruitful: in 1930, the RGZM made copies of 117 objects from the excavations of 1928, when H. Jankuhn conducted the first excavations at the cemetery, together with the local museum in Tilsit (Behrens 1931, p.99ff.). Even though the actual copies are lost today, these objects were very well documented in the inventory books of the RGZM. This documentation is especially important, since the campaign of 1928 has left almost no traces in any of the other archive sources, not even in the scientific estate of H. Jankuhn in Schleswig. The finds were transferred from Tilsit to the Prussia-Museum in Königsberg in 1939, and therefore it was possible to re-identify some of these objects in Berlin. The drawings and the related contextual information in the inventory books at the RGZM were of great importance for the reconstruction of the first excavations at Linkuhnen.³

The combination of information from objects in Berlin and various archival material opens up the possibility for a new approach to the archaeological importance of

³ We would like to thank Dr Ute Klatt and Dr habil. Dieter Quast at the Römisch-Germanisches-Zentralmuseum Mainz (RGZM) for their great help and support.



Linkuhnen, Kr. Niederung

Völlig vergangenes Skelettgrab (Nr. 146) aus dem untersten Stockwerk. In dem hellen Sande treten jedoch die einzelnen Körperteile in Form schwarzer Bodenverfärbungen noch deutlich hervor. I=Kopf; II=Rumpf mit Armen; III=Beine. Nur in unmittelbarer Nähe der Bronzebeigaben haben sich Knochenreste erhalten.

Völkerwanderungszeit

Fig. 3. Documentation of inhumation grave 146/1929 with a neck-ring (I) (legacy of Carl Engel at the Institute of Pre- and Early History at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen).

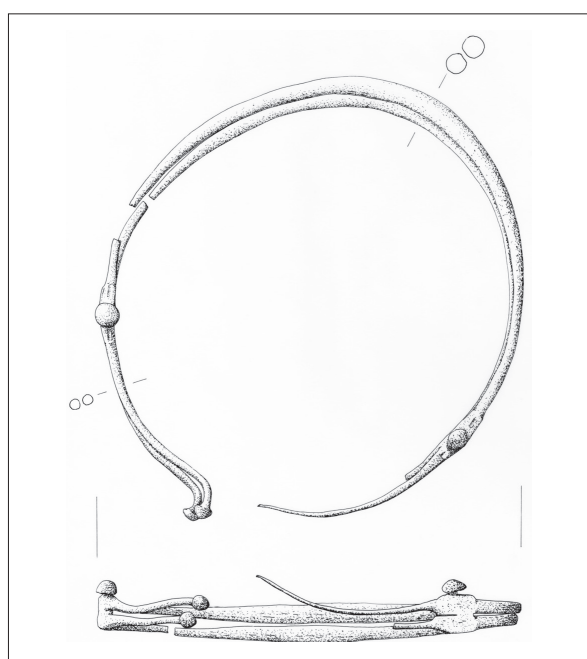


Fig. 4. A re-identified neck-ring from inhumation grave 146/1929 in the inventory of the MVF Berlin (drawing by S. Kuprella; scale 1:3).

the Linkuhnen cemetery: today, the catalogue of finds includes 3,956 objects. A total of 3,784 can be related to their grave context, 129 pieces are single finds, ten objects originate from the settlement area, six objects belong to the Aschenplatz, and 27 pieces lack information altogether. Since the vast majority of finds described in the archival material can be assigned to their context and bear typological information, many objects can be used for a chronological discussion, even if they are lost today. In this way, the grave goods and burial rites during the long duration of use of the Linkuhnen cemetery can be rather comprehensively reconstructed. Based on the excavation reports, the graves contained an average amount of 11.4 grave goods during the 1,000 years of the use of the cemetery. Transposed

to the 144 graves that lack any information at all, we can assume an additional number of 1,600 objects. Therefore, probably about 5,500 artefacts were excavated between 1928 and 1939.

Chronology of occupancy at the Linkuhnen cemetery

C. Engel described the site as a cemetery with four layers or 'floors' of occupancy. He took these floors as successive phases of occupancy, and thought of a model in which these layers represent stratigraphic units on top of each other (Fig. 5). He equated these layers with phases E, F, G and H of Iron Age chronology for the east Baltic according to O. Tischler and A. Bezenberger (Engel 1931b, p.315ff., p.325ff.; 1931c, p.45; 1932, p.168ff.). Engel was right in his assumption that there were different phases of occupancy at Linkuhnen; nevertheless, our new survey of the old finds now allows for a more accurate picture.

Basically, it can be said that there was probably continuous occupancy from the second to the 11th century. If we record all known graves until today with their date range in a chart, the first impression will be of dynamics of occupancy with different peaks (Table 1). We present below a proposal for the division of occupancy into seven exemplary phases. The criteria which were used to separate the different phases were: first, the rite of burial, i.e. the practice of cremation and inhumation, and the proportion of both rites to each other; second, the custom of furnishings for the dead, with typical combinations of material goods, particularly concerning significant chronological groups of grave goods such as ornaments and swords. The appearance of new elements, especially in the dress of men and women, and partly also concerning weaponry, should be a sign for the beginning of a new phase of occupancy.

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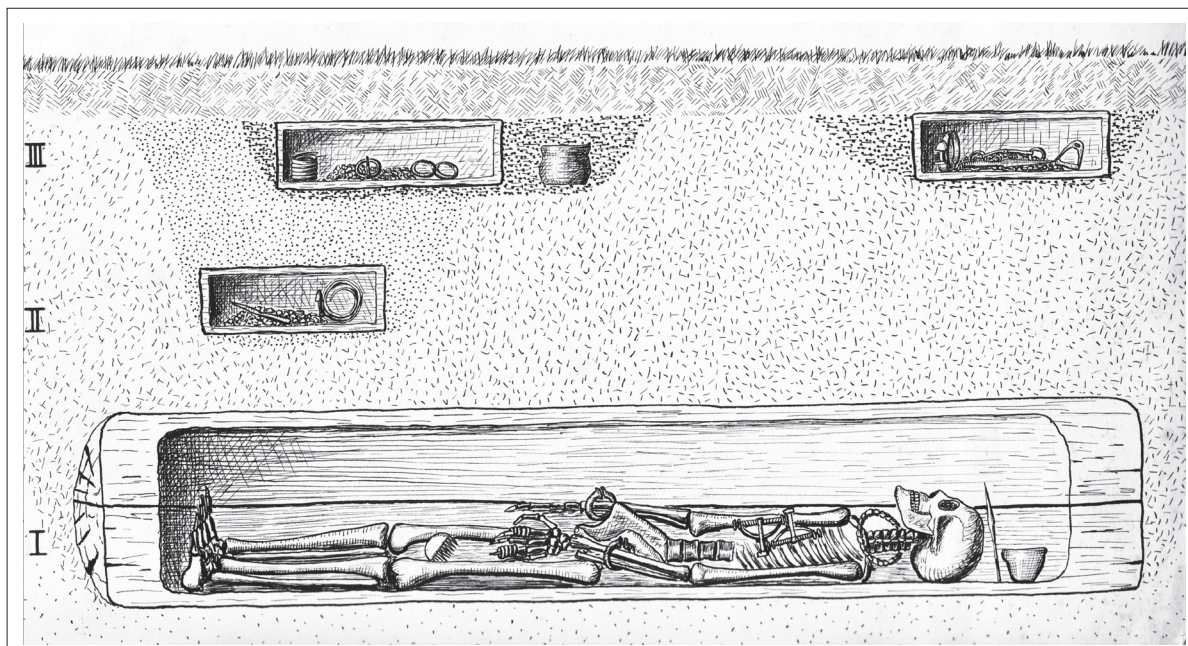


Fig. 5. A schematic illustration of the stratified 'floors' at Linkuhnen (after Carl Engel: legacy of Carl Engel at the Institute of Pre- and Early History at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen).

Table 1. Graves at Linkuhnen with their date range according to Phases 1-7.

Phase	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Number of graves	2	15	58	48	43	65	135
Percentage	0,5 %	4,0 %	15,6 %	13,1 %	11,9 %	17,9 %	37 %

Only two cremation graves with female dress elements can be ascribed to Phase 1. Their dress represents types from the older Roman Iron Age, like fibulae with *zweilappiger Rollenkappe* (Almgren 1923; Pl. II, Fig. 42; Olędzki 1998, p.80ff.), eye fibulae (Almgren 1923, Pl. III; Figs. 57-61; Pfeiffer-Frohnert 1998), and crook-like pins (Nowakowski 2013, p.121). Only inhumation graves are characteristic of the following Phase 2, including at least one inhumation in a coffin. For the first time, there are also male graves with weaponry and riding equipment, such as spearheads, a socketed axe and a horse-bit. The new dress elements are strongly profiled fibulae Almgren group IV (Almgren 1923, Pl. IV), fibulae with high catchplate (Almgren 1923, Pl. IX; Schulte 2011), and fibulae with inverted foot, including Almgren types 161-162 and 167 (Almgren 1923; Pl. VI; Figs. 161-162, 167). In combination with the fibulae, we also find some pins. Female graves contain further bracelets, chain jewellery and pendants (Fig. 6). Neck-rings with thickened and mushroom-shaped terminals were worn by women and men, also spiral finger-rings which occur even in the Viking Age. Two inhumations from Phase 2 had Roman coins dating from the first quarter of the third century AD: a bronze coin of Severus Alexander (AD

222-235), and a bronze provincial coin from the Lower Danube from emperors Macrinus and Diadumenianus (217-218 AD).

A first culmination of occupancy is reached in Phase 3: male and female inhumation graves are dominant, often in a tree-coffin, usually with a southeast-northwest orientation. The head of the buried person is situated at the southeast. Also, at least four cremation graves belong to Phase 3. The composition of their inventory corresponds with that of the cremation burials. Regarding fibulae in female graves, there are normally two in each burial. Typical forms of Phase 3 are cross-bow fibulae of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type (Fig. 7.2), *Schlusskreuzfibeln* (Åberg 1919, p.122; Fig. 176) and fibulae with a star-shaped foot (Fig. 7.3). The last type never occurs together in assemblages with the first brooches mentioned; maybe it stands for an early stage within Phase 3. Very typical of Phase 3 are also long hair-pins, mostly with stretched rhombic head (Fig. 7.1). Bracelets (Fig. 7.4-5) and neck-rings (Fig. 4) complete the female dress. In that phase, there is also extensive chain jewellery, which contains beads made of glass, amber and bronze, and small spiral tubes. At least in one case, we know about small bronze elements of dress belonging to a head-band or a hood (Waetzold 1938/39,

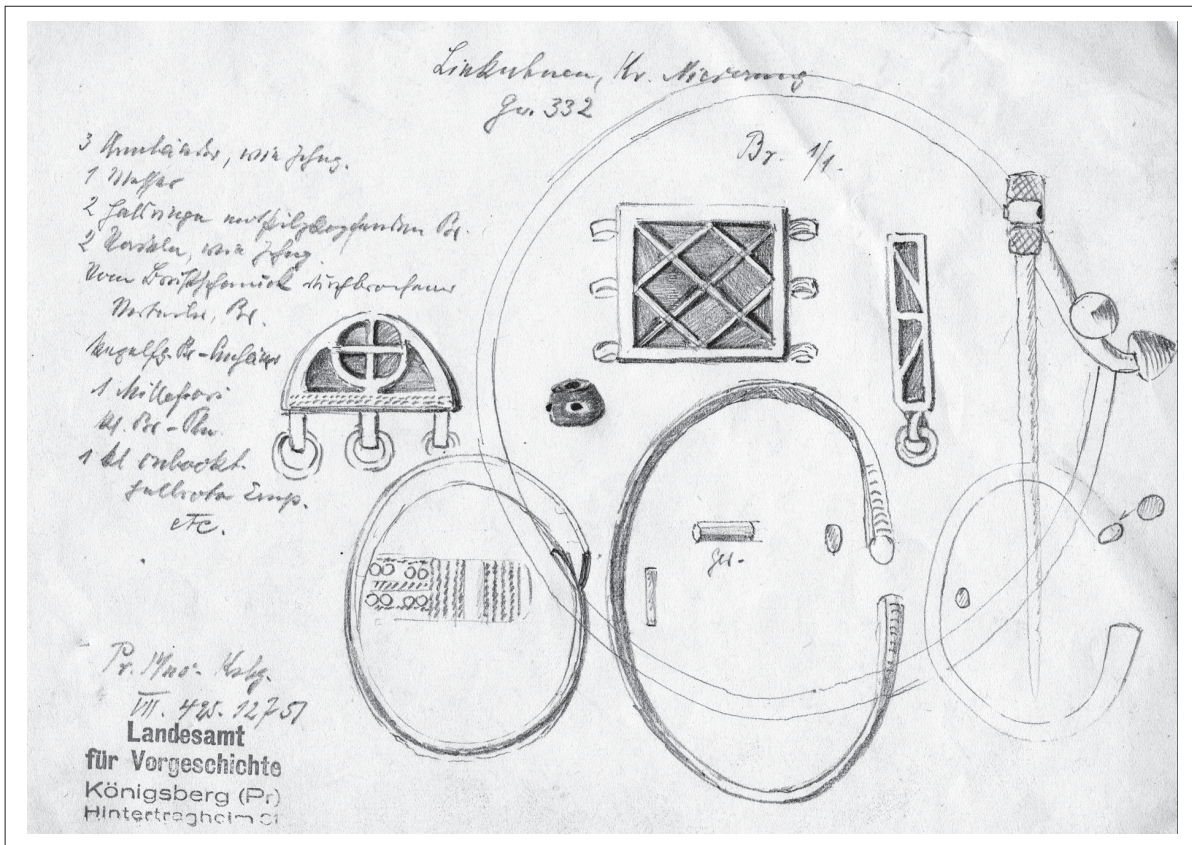


Fig. 6. Linkuhnen phase 2: inventory of inhumation grave 332/1933 (Archive MVF Berlin Voigtmann-files PM-IXc-1; no scale).

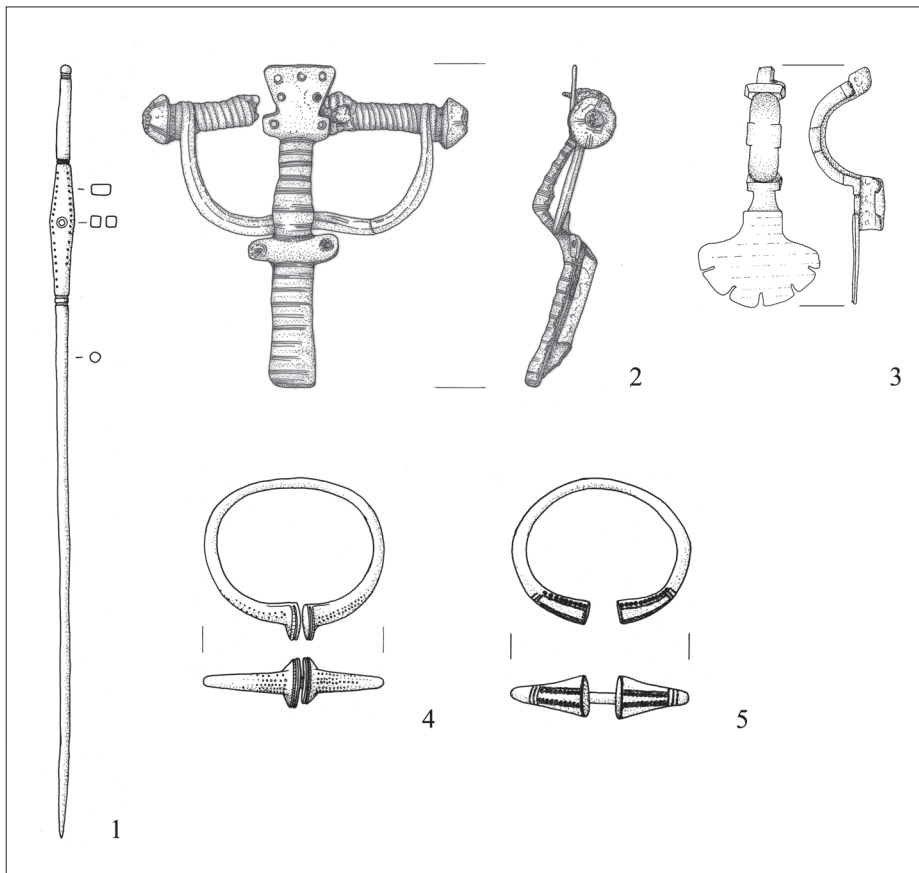


Fig. 7. Finds from Linkuhnen phase 3 (drawings by C. Golze, C. Herghegiu, A. Karlsen; scale 1:3).

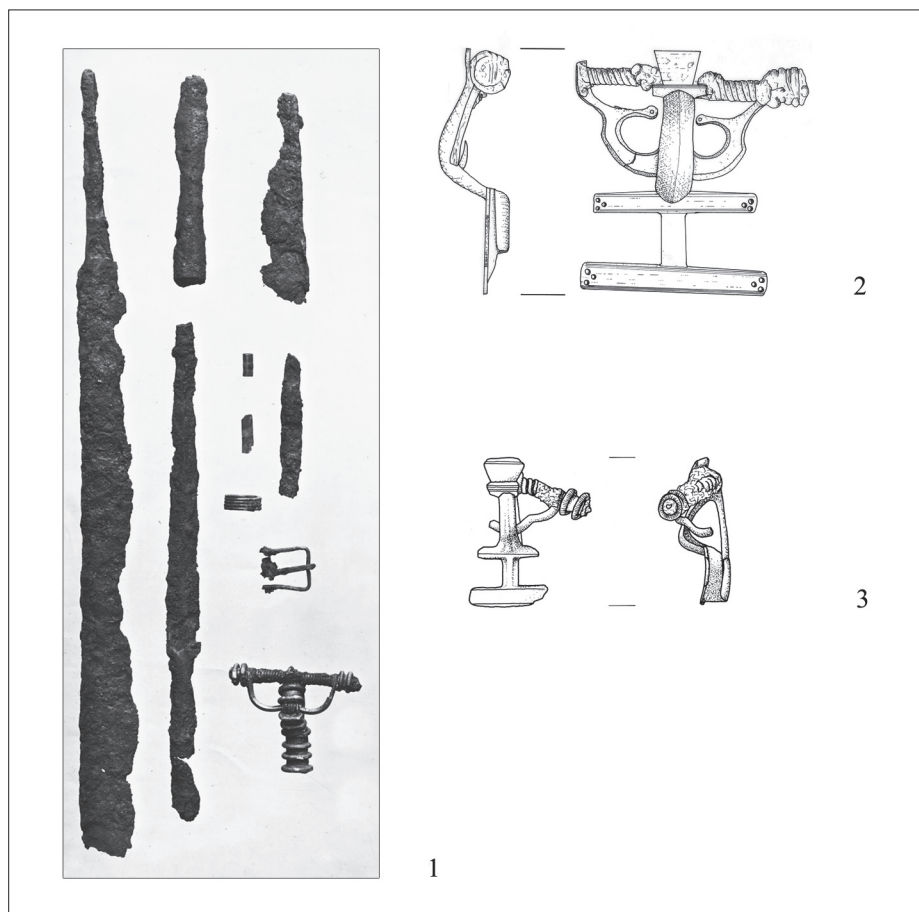


Fig. 8. Finds from Linkuhnen phase 4 (legacy of Carl Engel at the Institute of Pre- and Early History at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen; drawings by C. Golze, C. Hergeligiū; 1 no scale; 2-3 scale 1:3).

p.118ff.; Fig. 4). Single brooches also occur in weapon graves; these burials were furnished with knives-daggers, and one or two spearheads. The next Phase 4 is mostly represented by graves with weaponry (Fig. 8.1) and riding equipment, just as Engel mentioned (Engel 1931b, p.317ff.). In that phase, inhumation graves and cremation graves balance each other. The grave assemblages consist of three-membered horse-bits, one or two spearheads, and single-edged swords (Fig. 8.1). For the first time, we find several swords in one grave. Other new elements of material culture are the mounts of drinking horns (Simniškytė 1998). There are quite a few types of fibulae in Phase 4, like advanced crossbow brooches with ring decoration of type Åberg 4-6 (Fig. 8.1), and three-crossbar fibulae of group III and IV after Rudnicki (Åberg 1919; Rudnicki 2008). (Fig. 8.2-3). A bow fibula of the Slavonic type possibly represents an import form southeast Europe (Voigtmann 1938/39; Hilberg 2009, p.291ff.). Similar influences can also be shown by a derivative of a bow fibula (Hilberg 2009, pp.115ff., 434; No. 187).

In Phase 5, cremations are now the main burial rite, and inhumation graves occur only sporadically. For the first time, we can observe that in some graves the

cremated bones were wrapped together with selected grave goods in woven fabric, and then put into a wooden casket (Engel 1931b, p.317ff.; 1931c, p.56; 1932, p.169). The new range of fibulae from Phase 5 consists of brooches with animal head-shaped feet of types Åberg 198-200, and their derivatives (Åberg 1919) (Fig. 9). Pin jewellery and hair-pins show new forms as well: pins with double-spiral and disc-shaped heads (Gintautaitė-Butėnienė, Butėnas 2002, p.42, 44; Figs. 36.1; 38.2). A hair-pin with a mushroom-shaped head and the upper part of its shaft with rivets on it is a local feature (Fig. 10.2). Sometimes these pins were deformed before they were put into the grave. Maybe they were also used as a tool for weaving. In Phase 5, we also see massive spiral neck-rings made of twisted wire for the first time, as well as larger amounts of massive cast bracelets (Fig. 9). The incidence of chain elements continues to grow, and includes bi-conical beads made of spiral bronze wire as a new element (Fig. 9). Similar beads are widespread in Lithuania, and are known from Curonian cemeteries like Palanga and Pryšmančiai I, and women's graves in east Lithuanian barrows (Tautavičius 1996, p.189; Bliujienė 1999, p.87; Fig. 17.2). The weaponry from the graves consists of single-edged swords with a simple chape,

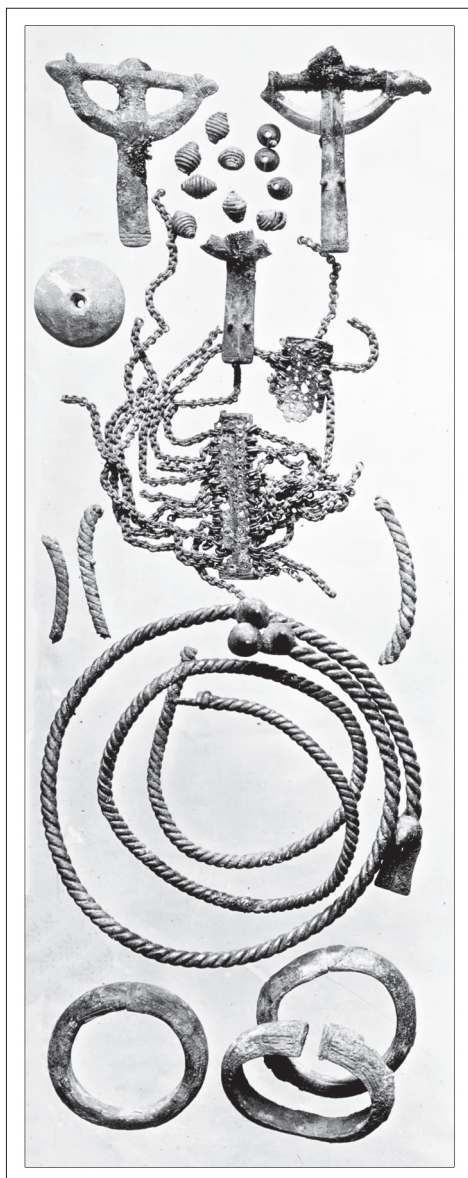


Fig. 9. Linkuhen phase 5: inventory of cremation grave 13/1929 (legacy of Carl Engel at the Institute of Pre- and Early History at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen; no scale).

normally several spearheads, spurs for the first time, as well as horse-bits, such as a bit with cheek-pieces which showed animal-shaped terminals. These cheek-pieces could be the influence of East Slavic or Finno-Ugric culture (Kirpichnikov 1973, p.13; Fig. 5.1-2; Pl. III,1; Sedov 1987, Pl. LIX.16). The next Phase 6 is a hypothetical one, which could be inserted before the main occupancy phase of the cemetery starting in the tenth century. Phase 6 consists of a few cremation graves with weaponry only; no inhumations can be assigned to this phase. The fact that we find swords for the first time, which can be classified according to the typology of Jan Petersen (Petersen 1919; Kazakevičius 1996), is significant for these weapon graves: the weapons show only single-edged blades. From Phase 6 on,

more than one sword, as well as, on average, between three and four spearheads, appears in the graves. New typological elements of weaponry are slim lance heads of type E after Petersen; their socket often shows an ornament in the form of pointed arches (Petersen 1919, p.26ff.; Figs. 12-13; Goßler 2014, p.190ff.). Concerning riding equipment, stirrups are new elements. Even cruciform disc-brooches are new within the dress (Širouchov 2012, p.33; Pl. 27).

The maximum occupancy at Linkuhen clearly occurs in Phase 7, the last stage of the cemetery. The cremation burial rite is dominant, only two inhumation graves are actually known. The cremation graves often contain large concentrations of cremated bones: a quarter of them were wrapped in woven fabric and then put into a wooden casket, together with other selected grave goods (Engel 1931b, p. 317ff.; 1931c, p.56; 1932, p.169). Some of these caskets showed coffin-like dimensions. In the often abundant collections of grave goods, it is difficult to separate female and male outfits, except for the weapons. A few grave features already noticed by C. Engel suggest that complexes with large amounts of cremated bones and abundant grave goods could be taken as collective graves with more than one buried individual (Engel 1931b, p.318; 1932, p.176). The range of costume elements (Fig. 10) includes, along with already-known types, like the large cross-bow fibulae with ring decoration, cruciform disc-brooches, fibulae with animal head-shaped feet, and pins with double-spiral and mushroom-shaped heads (Fig. 10.2). Also, new elements are found, like penannular brooches with rolled-up, animal head-shaped and polyhedral terminals (Fig. 10), more new forms of crossbow ladder fibulae of type Åberg 196-197 (Åberg 1919; Bliujienė 1999, p.96ff.; Figs. 26; 28; Širouchov 2012, p.33ff.; p.244; Figs. 27-28; Spirģis 2002), longer pins with a tetragonal shaft, and glass beads with eye motifs. This set is completed by abundant ring and chain jewellery (Fig. 10). Miniature objects of textile production, like small tablets for weaving, spindles and distaffs, some of them with bird-shaped terminals, are also new elements in Phase 7 (Fig. 10.3-6).

If we take a closer look at the weaponry, there are swords with single or two-edged blades; up to eight swords can be found in one grave (Fig. 10). It is significant that sword types S, T, V, X and Y after Petersen's typology, which were introduced at Linkuhen during the tenth century (Kazakevičius 1996, pp.42-74), apparently show no more single-edged blades. Regarding the older sword types E, H, I and K, which go back to the ninth century (Kazakevičius 1996, pp.26-36), there are single-edged examples and double-edged ones. At least nine examples with a presumed inlay within the blade of ULBERHT-type (Fig. 10) appear within the

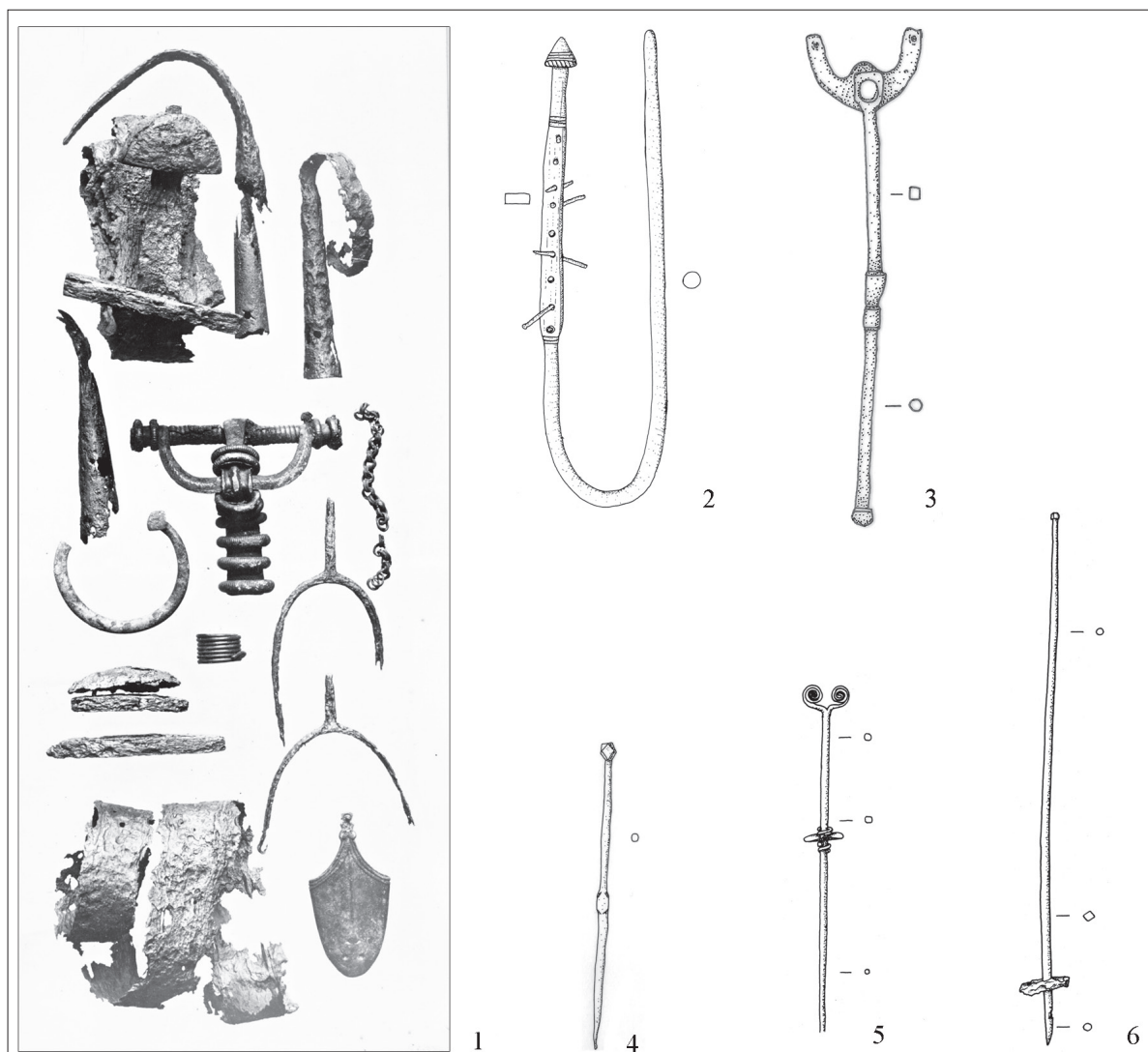


Fig. 10. Finds from Linkuhnen phase 7a (Grenz archive, Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA), Schleswig; drawings by C. Golze, C. Hergheligiū, A. Karlsen; 1 no scale; 2-6 scale 1:3).

younger group of swords; this means that Linkuhnen is the site with the highest number of ULFBERHT-swords in Europe (Geibig 1991, pp.116-123, p.192ff.; Müller-Wille, Stalsberg 2006). Among the spearheads, of which up to 20 examples were found in one grave, type E after Petersen is the dominant form (Petersen 1919, p.26ff.; Figs. 12-13; Göbler 2014, p.190ff.), often with a pointed arch ornament on its socket. Only in one grave was an axe discovered. Riding equipment consists of horse-bits, stirrups and spurs (Fig. 11).

The occupancy of the cemetery ended during the 11th century: only 11 graves can be dated exclusively to the 11th century by their grave goods. Among them are ring brooches with a ribbed frame (Fig. 11.4), penannular brooches with poppy-shaped terminals (Fig. 11.5), certain types of sword chapes (Fig. 11.3), or younger variants of stirrups (Fig. 11.1-2). If we assign most finds from Phase 7 to a sub-Phase 7a, objects

which clearly point to the 11th century could form a hypothetical sub-Phase 7b.

The chart in Fig. 12 summarises the proposed chronological classification of the cemetery of Linkuhnen: if we try to make a synchronisation with the actual chronology of the east Baltic, the beginning of occupancy is still part of the end of the Early Roman Age, i.e. Phase B2. The first peak of occupancy is reached during the Migration Period, between phases C3/D and E1; the maximum occupancy can be clearly noticed in the Viking Age, i.e. Phase G. Following our current investigations, it seems that the occupancy of the cemetery developed continuously over nearly 1,000 years, although with very variable intensity. The presumed continuity, especially between the Late Migration Period and the Early Viking Age, can be based on observations concerning burial rites.

Phases 2-3 at Linkuhnen correlate with the lowest 'chronological' level after Engel, Phase 4 with the

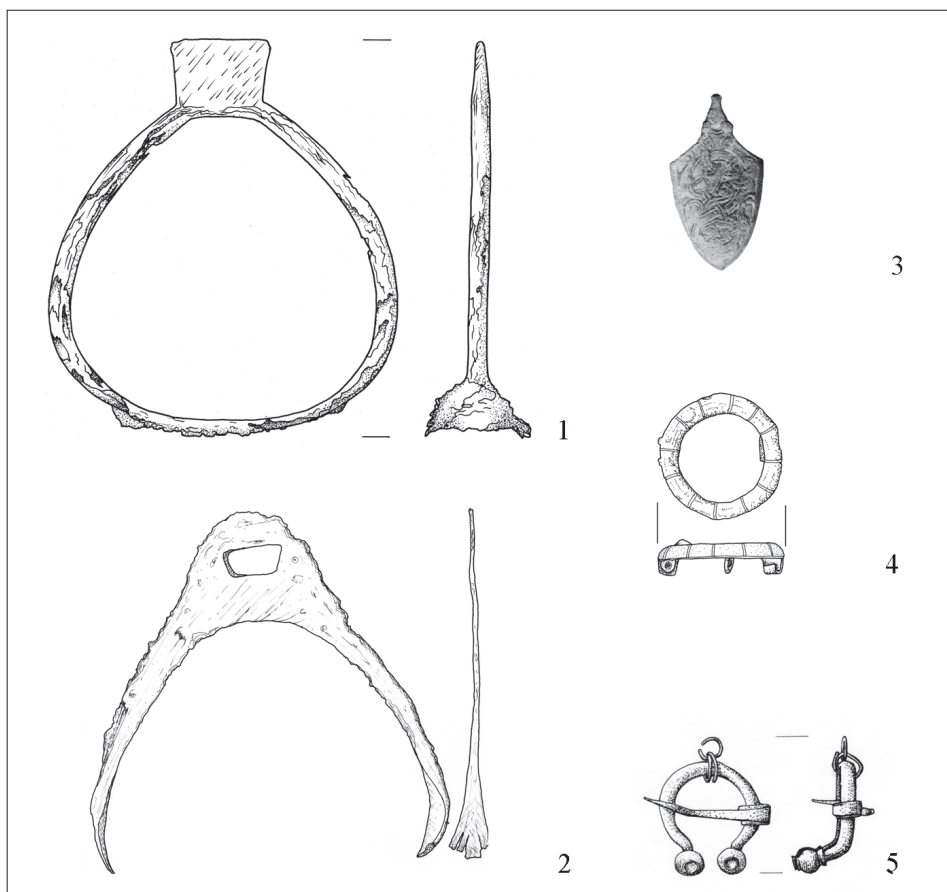


Fig. 11. Finds from Linkuhnen phase 7b (legacy of Herbert Jankuhn, Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA), Schleswig; drawings by C. Golze, C. Hergheligiū, S. Kuprella; 1-2.4 scale 1:3; 3 no scale; 5 scale 1:2).

middle level, and Phases 5-7 with the two upper levels (Engel 1931b, p.315ff., p.325ff.; 1931c, p.45ff.; 1932, p.168ff.). Judging from our investigations, the vertical position of a burial does not offer a definitive attribution of that grave to a chronological position. Indeed, the average depth of a grave is declining with the development of occupancy, but it is not possible to deduce from this observation rules for the exact dating of burials. Not only is there a vertical aspect to the stratigraphy, but also a horizontal one: an analysis of horizontal stratigraphy based on inhumation graves of Phases 2-4 compared to the younger cremation graves of Phases 5-7 with precise coordinates probably shows a slight shift in occupancy from west to east, i.e. the older inhumation graves in the west of the cemetery often lack an 'upper floor', while the younger cremation graves in the east often lack their older 'basement'.

The cultural background of the Linkuhnen cemetery

In his preliminary reports about the excavations at Linkuhnen, C. Engel emphasized again and again the particular position, even the singularity, of the site (En-

gel 1931c, p.44; 1932, pp.168, 172ff.; 1933b, p.167ff.). But we have to ask if Linkuhnen really is such an exception, when looking at Iron Age cemeteries in the Lower Memel region and its surrounding areas. What cultural environment stands behind the burial community of Linkuhnen? We will look at this question below, mainly on the basis of Viking Age occupancy at Linkuhnen; therefore, there are only a few comments about the phases of the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period: Phases 2-4 at Linkuhnen with burial rite and furnishings of the graves (Figs. 4; 6-8) are related to the relevant Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period cultural complexes of Lithuania (Tautavičius 1996, pp.326-334; Banytė-Rowell 2013, pp.67-82; Bliujienė 2013a, pp.94-118; 2013b, pp.462-564); sporadic references also point to the adjacent Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture of Natangia and Sambia (Nowakowski 1996, p.86ff.) to the south. It should also be mentioned that objects like bow fibulae from the late sixth and seventh centuries, including one of the Slavonic type, indicate contacts between the Lower Memel region and south-east Europe (Hilberg 2009, pp.115ff., 291ff.; Bliujienė 2010, p.26ff.; 2013c, pp.145-152; Bliujienė, Curta 2011, p.48ff.). The first peak of occupancy probably

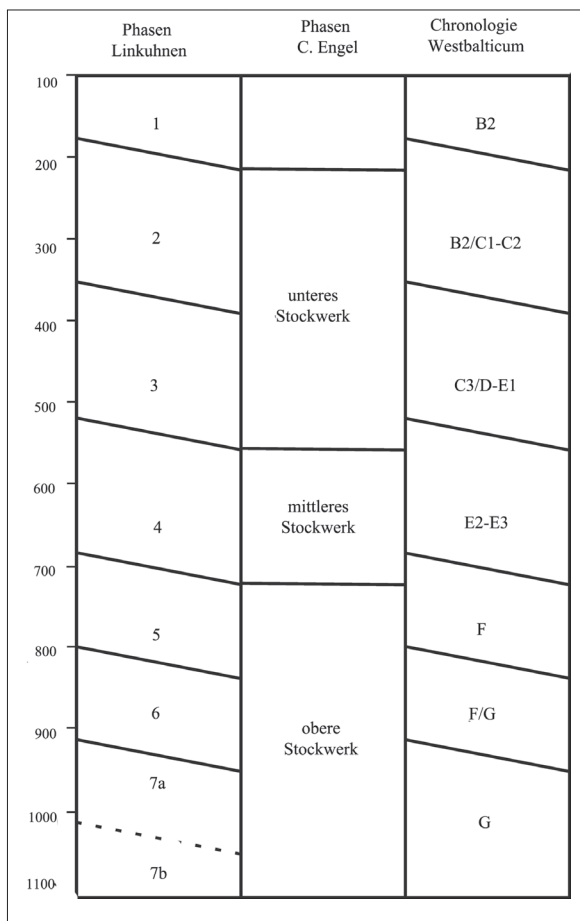


Fig. 12. Chronology of the Linkuhnen cemetery.

testifies to the cultural autonomy of former inhabitants of the Memel region.

Scandinavian influences

Between the two world wars, German archaeological researchers referring to the site of Linkuhnen underlined the references to the Germanic culture of Scandinavia (e.g. Engel 1932, p.169ff.; 1939, p.141ff.; Mortensen, Mortensen 1941). Indeed, this opinion was heavily influenced by the contemporary ideology in connection with the dispute between Germany and Lithuania over the Memel territory after the First World War (Kossert 2007, pp.225-232; Pölking 2011, pp.455-467; 2013, pp.245-252); therefore, East Prussian archaeology tried to prove that the Memel territory belonged culturally and politically to German East Prussia (Engel 1931c, p.62ff.; 1939, pp.135, 142ff.). In fact, Scandinavian influences at Linkuhnen were rather minor: although Medieval swords from the site were very often labelled as 'Viking', most of them represent either typical forms in the whole Baltic region, or imports from Western and Central Europe (Kazakevičius 1996, p.142ff.). Furthermore, there are also local Baltic sword types (Kazakevičius 1996, p.127ff., p.136ff.).

The spearheads of type E after Petersen with ornamented sockets are clearly connected to the typological tradition of Scandinavia, but we cannot say for sure that most of them are Scandinavian imports (Göbler 2014, p.190ff.). There is only one spearhead with metal inlays in the form of rhombs, which could be an import from Gotland (Thunmark-Nylén 2006, p.306ff.; Göbler 2014, p.192). Referring to the costume elements, a single find of a square disc brooch points to Scandinavia too (Nerman 1958, p.95; Figs. 115-116).

Curonian influences

Much more significant at the Linkuhnen site are influences from the neighbouring Curonian region in the north. In this regard, we can point to costume elements like cruciform disc brooches, late crossbow ladder fibulae of type Åberg 196-197, and pins with cruciform heads, or symbolic material culture just like the already-mentioned small tablets for weaving and spindles (Fig. 10,3-6) (Bliujienė 1999, pp.96ff., 149-157; Figs. 26; 28; 80-86; Širouchov 2012, pp.33ff., 244, 248-251; Figs. 27-28; 34-39; Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 2001, p.176ff.; Fig. 55). Also, the specific cremation rite with large concentrations of cremated bones of presumably several individuals (Fig. 13), as well as deposits of cremated bones in wooden caskets or boxes, can be found in Curonian cremation graves (Fig. 14) (Bliujienė 2013a, p.98; Gričiuvienė 2009, p.233ff.). Just as at Linkuhnen, these features can be observed from the eighth century on. In a different way from the Curonians, the weapon graves at Linkuhnen lack sickles or symbolic equipment like miniature axes or spurs (Bliujienė 2013a, p.97; Gričiuvienė 2009, p.235). Additionally, there are no weights or scales among the grave goods, while these objects occur sometimes with the Curonian neighbours (Bliujienė 2013a, p.97; Gričiuvienė 2009, p.235).

Prussian influences

If we compare Linkuhnen to the Prussian region to the south, it is notable that horse graves are absolutely underrepresented: only 2% of the documented burials were associated with a horse grave. In contrast, some cemeteries in Prussian Sambia are full of equestrian graves with horses (Kulakov 1990, pp.73-81; Pronin *et al.* 2006). However, at least 69 graves in Linkuhnen contained riding equipment (Figs. 10.1; 11.1-2), but only a small portion of them can be connected to a horse grave. Among the burials from the ninth to the 11th century, these equestrian graves amount to more than a third, though in only very few cases can complete equipment for a rider and horse be observed,

unlike on the Sambian Peninsula (Kulakov 1990, Pl. XXXIII-LXXII). Furthermore, there is information from C. Engel that there was at least one *Aschenplatz* at Linkuhnen, which could represent another parallel with late pagan Prussian culture (Wróblewski 2006a). The *Aschenplatz* feature at Linkuhnen consists of an area at least four metres long and 1.5 to 1.75 metres wide (Fig. 1), which contains cremated residues with scattered finds; based on these finds, it should be dated to the tenth or 11th century.

The Viešvilė/Wischwill site compared to Linkuhnen

The Lithuanian site of Viešvilė/Wischwill, situated about 40 kilometres east of Linkuhnen on the bank of the River Memel, is crucial to an interpretation of the whole Linkuhnen complex. The site has been excavated in the last ten years by the Trakai Historical Museum.⁴ At the moment, we know of two Viking Age cemeteries at that site (Viešvilė I and III), with associated settlements, and another burial ground from the Middle Iron Age (Viešvilė II) (Budvydas 2007a; 2007b; 2012; 2013). The cremation graves at Viešvilė in burial ground I, which is situated on a hill on the bank of the River Memel, just like Linkuhnen, show a lot of good parallels with Linkuhnen: larger pits with concentrations of cremated bones (Fig. 13), wrapped in woven fabric and deposited in a casket, grave goods with up to six swords and five spearheads, mostly of Petersen type E, in one burial, normally heavily deformed (Budvydas 2012, p.133ff.; 2007a, p.205ff.). Some of the weapon graves at Viešvilė also include the remains of women and children, in addition to cremated bones of male individuals (Budvydas 2012, p.133ff.; 2007a, p.205ff.). Inhumation graves of children can also be found at Viešvilė. In contrast, the supposed synchronous cemetery III at Viešvilė consisted only of inhumation graves of women and children, and a few cremation graves. The connected dress assemblages show references to the whole Baltic region (Budvydas 2013).

The richness of the grave goods at Linkuhnen, like the weapons, is therefore not unique, but still very impressive if you look at Prussian or Curonian regions (Fig. 14). This is maybe briefly exemplified on the basis of weapon finds: we know of originally about 89 graves with at least 149 swords from the ninth to the 11th century, and fragments of swords, as grave goods; among

⁴ We would like to say many thanks to Ugnius Budvydas, of the Trakai Historical Museum, who gave us a lot of information about the complex at Viešvilė. He also willingly gave us access to find materials which have not been published yet.



Fig. 13. Linkuhnen cremation grave 126/1931 (legacy of Carl Engel at the Institute of Pre- and Early History at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen).

them are nine presumed blades of ULFBERHT-type (Fig. 10.1). This means that Linkuhnen is the site with the most swords of that type ever discovered (Geibig 1991, pp.116-123, 192ff.; Müller-Wille, Stalsberg 2006). Inventories with one or two swords make up 84% of all burials with swords, while the rest contain three to eight swords. Looking at the spearheads, we can see a similar picture: 371 are documented from 108 graves from the ninth to the 11th century, on average more than three spearheads per grave. We have to ask what phenomena lie behind these impressive figures.

Linkuhnen and Viešvilė: Scalvian burial grounds?

If we try to classify cemeteries such as Linkuhnen and Viešvilė I/III, there is no question that the burial and settlement communities behind these complexes required cultural autonomy. Written sources from the period of the Teutonic Order ascribe the region along the River Memel to the Scalvians (Weise 1981, p.202; Bliujienė 2013a, p.103ff.). The centre of the corresponding countryside was near Tilsit and Ragnit, from where we also know of Viking Age weaponry finds (von zur Mühlen 1975, Pl. 11.3; Prasolov 2009). The burial grounds at Linkuhnen and Viešvilė I/III can probably be connected with this Scalvian complex: burial rites and grave furniture show many specific patterns (Wróblewski 2006b, p.110); at the same time, these communities were involved in a supra-regional network which included the whole Baltic region, and

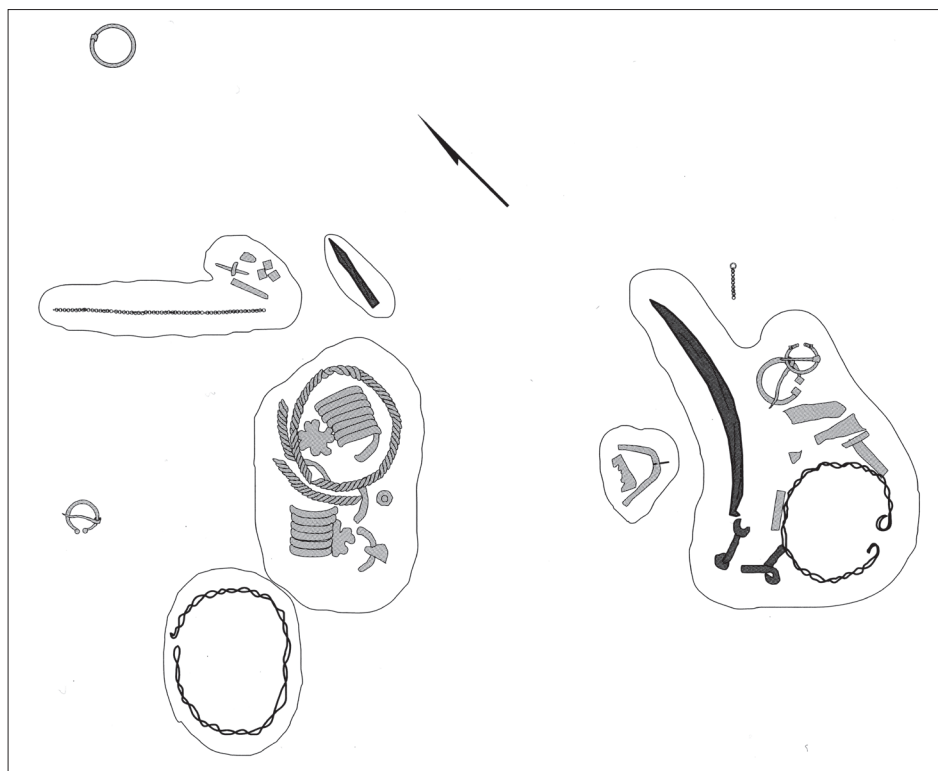


Fig. 14. Double cremation grave 363/363a at Laivai/Lithuania (Griciuvienė 2009, p.251).

also western and northern Europe. The position of Linkuhnen is really just like a junction between Prussian and Curonian settlement regions.

The richness of grave goods

It seems that the richness of the grave goods at Linkuhnen does have social and economic reasons. Meanwhile, it seems that the extraordinary furniture of graves with weaponry (Figs. 10.1; 13) is a symbol of whole groups of families, not only of individuals (Budvydas 2012, p.137; Bliujienė 2013a, p.105). These families used this particular burial rite to distinguish themselves from others. The very rich furniture with weapons (Abb. 10.1; 13) seems to indicate that these competing collectives saw themselves as an elite of warriors (Budvydas 2007a, p.210ff.; 2012, p.137). The struggle for a higher status and a leading position within the social group apparently resulted in sumptuous and thereby expensive grave furniture with contemporary status symbols. It seems that some of the burials wanted to rival each other by the grave goods displayed. The question still remains, on what economic basis was the immense effort of display of material

culture based? Apparently, people could afford to dispose of complete sets of expensive weapons and numerous bronze objects, by their intentional destruction and deposition in a grave (Engel 1932, p.175).

Conclusions: the importance of the Linkuhnen cemetery

Researchers before 1945 believed that the cemetery at Linkuhnen, just like the famous barrows of Wiskiauten, suggests the existence of a location for Scandinavian trade nearby (Engel 1932, p.172ff.). What we can say today is that the Scandinavian connections of the Wiskiauten cemetery (von zur Mühlen 1975; Wróblewski 2006b, p.110ff.; 2006c; Ibsen 2009, pp.81-144) cannot be compared to the burial rites and the material culture found at Linkuhnen: the burial ground in the Lower Memel region indicates an indigenous Baltic population (Nerman 1934, p.374; Wróblewski 2006b, p.110). Direct indications of trade activities, and integration in supra-regional trade, are missing from the material culture of the burial ground at Linkuhnen: while we know about weights and scales from Curonian and Prussian burials (Bliujienė 2013a, p.97; Griciuvienė 2009, p.235), they are missing at

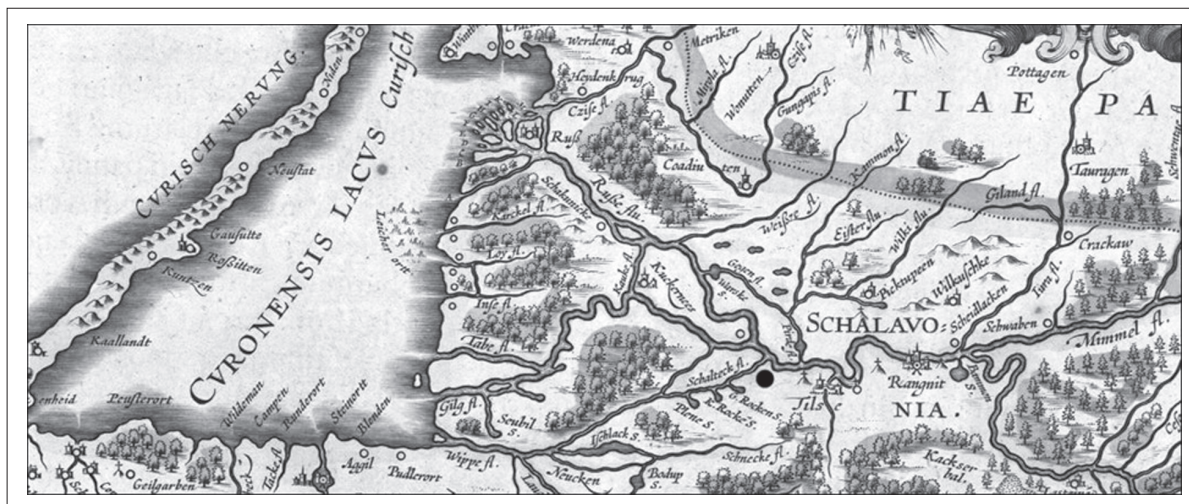


Fig. 15. A map of the Memel delta (●=Linkuhnen) (after Jean Blaeu, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, sive Atlas Novus in quo Tabulae et Descriptiones Omnium Regionum* 1645; source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blaeu_1645_-_Prussia.jpg).

Linkuhnen. Nevertheless, by its topographical position on a terrace near the River Memel, close to a backwater, Linkuhnen occupies a strategically very favourable position. This becomes very clear if we look at an old map of East Prussia from a 1645 atlas by the Dutch cartographer Joan Blaeu (Fig. 15). It shows, in addition to the main branches of the River Memel delta which still exist today, the Rusnė stream in the north and the Gilgė stream in the south, and also some former courses of the River Memel. All these different branches unite shortly before the former Tilsit, approximately where the site of Linkuhnen is. This means that early shipping traffic from the Curonian Lagoon had to pass Linkuhnen, regardless of which delta tributary was chosen to get into the Memel river system. There is no question that during the Viking Age, the Memel route was one of the main passages for trade and transit between Viking Scandinavia and the East Slavic Empire of Kievan Rus' (Kulakov 2011; Kulakov 2012, pp.5ff., 38ff.; Širouchov 2012, pp.126-133, 330ff.; Figs. 146-151). There is no doubt that the elite of the Scalvian tribe would have tried to participate in the flow of trade goods via the River Memel (Wróblewski 2006b, p.110; Budvydas 2007a, p.212; 2012, p.137). Possibly, the Scalvians granted an escort. The richness of burial grounds like Linkuhnen or Viešvilė I/III is the result of fees and tributes which the local tribal elite collected from supra-regional transit passing through their territory. The steady contact with travellers from quite different ethnic groups also explains many of the international parallels with the local material culture.

Future research will show what the ruling structures in Scalvian territory during the ninth to the 11th centuries can be ascribed to: concerning the existence of two cemeteries with elaborate collective burials of warrior

elites, at a distance of about 40 kilometres from each other, as well as the remains of a contemporary warrior's grave at Tilsit (von zur Mühlen 1975, Pl. 1.3), we can assume that there could have been rather small-scale ruling structures. Also, the existence of numerous fortifications alongside the River Memel supports that argument (Bliujienė 2013a, p.93; Map 2). However, our attempt to reconstruct a Totenstadt at Linkuhnen essentially completes current Lithuanian excavations in the Lower Memel region: they prove again that the recontextualisation of old finds by using the most diverse sources is indispensable (Goßler, Jahn 2013a, pp.218-224; Goßler, Jahn 2013b, p.23ff.).

Abbreviations

Acta Praehist. et Arch – Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica (Berlin, since 1970)

Arch. Baltica – Archaeologia Baltica, from 1995 (Vilnius since 1995; since 2006 Klaipėda)

Lietuvos arch. – Lietuvos Archeologija (Vilnius since 1979)

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LINKUHNEN (RŽEVSKOE / LINKŪNAI) ATGAIVINIMAS – NAUJA KLAIPĖDOS KRAŠTO ROMĖNIŠKOJO GELEŽIES AMŽIAUS – VIKINGŲ LAIKŲ KAPINYNŲ PERSPEKTYVA

**NORBERT GOBLER,
 CHRISTOPH JAHN**

Santrauka

Iki 1945 m. *Linkuhnen* (Rževskoe / Linkūnai) kapinynas buvo vienas iš didžiausių laidojimo paminklų, tyrinėtų ne tik Klaipėdos krašte, bet ir Rytų Prūsijoje (1–3 pav.). Karlas Engelis (Carl Engel, 1895–1947) buvo vienas iš pagrindinių šio kapinyno tyrėjų. Nuo pirmųjų tyrimo metų jis suprato šio laidojimo paminklo chronologinę reikšmę jam virstant iš vidurinio į vėlyvąjį geležies amžių Rytų Pabaltijyje. Nepaisant to, labai nedidelė šio kapinyno medžiagos dalis buvo publikuota iki 1945 metų (12 pav.). Didelė radinių ir dokumentacijos apie tyrimus dalis buvo prarasta Antrojo pasaulinio karo pabaigoje. Taigi dėl šių praradimų *Linkuhnen* kapinynas buvo labiau paslaptis nei archeologinių tyrinėjimų objektas. Todėl šio straipsnio autoriai, remdamiesi išlikusia *Linkuhnen* kapinyno medžiaga ir dokumentacija, prieškariniu saugota „Prussia“ muziejuje, pradėjo šio laidojimo paminklo tyrimus (3–11; 13 pav.). Šiuo metu *Linkuhnen* kapinyno medžiaga saugoma Berlyno priešistorės ir ankstyvosios istorijos valstybiniame muziejuje, Prūsijos paveldas (MVF). Panašiai, kaip spręsdami mįslę, mes bandomė surinkti visą įmanomą informaciją apie *Linkuhnen* kapinyną, išlikusią skirtinguose archyvuose, ir mėginame rekonstruoti šio laidojimo paminklo tyrinėjimų istoriją. Taigi mums pavyko rekonstruoti daugiau kaip 200 objektų (kapų⁵), kurie, manyta, buvo prarasti. Šiuo metu daugeliu atžvilgių mes turime tikslesnę kapinyno vaizdą. Tačiau mes taip pat aiškiai suvokiame, kad išlikusi medžiaga, įskaitant radinius ir dokumentaciją, yra tik nedidelė buvusios šio kapinyno tyrimų medžiagos dalis.

Kapinyno chronologija yra skirstoma į septynias raidos fazes, kurios padeda suprasti kultūrinių procesų kaitą. Sinchronizuojant *Linkuhnen* kapinyno ir Rytų Pabaltijo chronologiją, pirmieji kapai kapinyne skirtini ankstyvojo geležies amžiaus pabaigai (tarpsniui B2). Pirmasis demografinis pikas apima ankstyvojo tautų kraustymosi laikotarpio pradžią (tarpsnis C3/D) ir vė-

⁵ Vertėjos pastaba.

lyvojo tautų kraustymosi laikotarpio pradžią (tarpsnis E1). Tačiau didžiausia kapinyno raida matoma vikingų laikotarpiu (tarpsnis G). Mūsų tyrinėjimai aiškiai rodo, kad kapinyne nepertraukiamai, bet labai skirtingu intensyvumu buvo laidojama daugiau kaip 1 000 metų. Prielaida apie kapinyno naudojimo tęstinumą tarp vėlyvojo tautų kraustymosi laikotarpio ir vikingų laikų yra padaryta remiantis laidojimo papročių analize.

Mėginant kapinyno medžiagą ir kultūrinę priklausomybę analizuoti tarsi per didinamąjį stiklą ir ieškant kultūrinių prekybinių kontaktų Rytų Pabaltijyje, žvilgsnis krypta (ypač vikingų laikais) į kuršių gyventą teritoriją, taip pat į Natangą ir Sembos pusiasalį bei tolimesnius kraštus – Skandinaviją ir net Vakarų bei Vidurio Europą (14 pav.). Atrodytų, kad *Linkuhnen* kapinynas buvo įkurtas geroje geografinėje padėtyje: ant žemos kalvos, šalia Nemuno (Memel / Neman) deltos. Netoli kapinyno viena iš Nemuno deltos atšakų tampa atskira tėkme (15 pav.). Kapinyno medžiaga rodo, kad jo apylinkėse gyvenę žmonės sugebėjo kontroliuoti laivybą ir prekių tranzitą. Faktiškai kapinynas tampa jungtimi tarp šiaurės, vakarų ir rytų komunikacinių kryptų. Šių kryptų ryšiai atsiskleidžia įvairiapusėje turtingų kapų medžiagoje, kuri rodo, kad kapinyne palaidotos šeimos konkuravo viena su kita. Mes manome, kad *Linkuhnen* bendruomenė ir jos elitas buvo Nemuno žemupio regione gyvenusios vietinės skalvių [genties] dalis.

Vertė Audronė Bliujiene



ARCHIVAL
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