

THE ORIGIN OF BURIAL SITES IN EASTERN LATVIA CONSISTING OF TYPICAL STONE GRAVES

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Abstract

This article is dedicated to a chronology of typical stone graves. An attempt is made to date the beginning of these stone graves to a slightly earlier period than was done until now, namely up to the middle of the first century. This date is based on the dating of a few forms of artefacts.

Key words: tarand graves, bracelets, fibulae, neck-rings.

Over the last decade, the Estonian archaeologist Valter Lang has divided burial sites consisting of stone graves, or tarand graves, into two large groups, burial sites of early tarand graves, and burial sites of typical tarand graves (Lang 2007). Burial sites of early tarand graves in Latvia have been found and examined in north Courland, at Laidzes Lazdiņi and Strazde (Šnore 1970, p.189ff; Vasks 2003, p.142ff). Both burial sites can be dated to the mid-first century AD, and they correspond with the chronological ages of early *tarand* graves noted by V. Lang. There are no artefacts that can be dated to the end of period B₁ and period B₂.

The situation in eastern Latvia is unclear. According to the archaeological literature of Latvia, the origin of burial sites in Vidzeme and north Latgale is traditionally dated to the second century AD (LPA 1974, 106ff; Vasks 2001, p.225; Lang 2007, p.203). This dating of burial sites in eastern Latvia has existed since the 1930s, when Harri Moora did a typological analysis of the artefacts, and dated the earliest forms (eye fibulae of the main series, fibulae of the 69th type, noted by O. Almgren, and other similar and strongly profiled fibulae) to the beginning of the second century AD (Moora 1938). However, H. Moora's methodological approach, dating artefacts of a similar form from Latvia later than artefacts from the lower reaches of the River Vistula, was not quite correct. At the beginning of the Early Iron Age, at the end of period B₁ and the beginning of period B₂, on east Baltic territory, from the lower reaches of the River Vistula to the southern part of Finland, types of artefacts characteristic of this region sequentially changed each other without a nota-

ble delay in the northern part of the Baltic region. Also, the local production of artefacts should be dated a couple years, not several decades later. It is most likely that there were water trading routes along the east coast of the Baltic Sea that stimulated the export of the latest forms of artefact to present-day Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

Going through the artefact collections that were found in stone graves in burial sites in north Vidzeme and north Latgale, in the series of typical stone graves, it is possible to detect well-dated finds of artefacts, some of which have been published in H. Moora's work about the Iron Age in Latvia, that link the origin of burial sites to a slightly earlier period, the first century AD, or, more precisely, to the mid-first century AD or the second half of the first century AD (the end of period B₁ and period B_{2a}).

The stone graves artefact complex from this period, collected in burial sites in the east Baltic region, is best characterised by the finds from the Triigi (Otenküll) burial site in Estonia (Fig. 1) (Hausmann 1896, Plate IV). Among the finds from the burial site are serial bracelets with an orthogonal cross-section, knob-ended bracelets, fragmentary neck-rings with a hollow wire and hollow trumpet-shaped ends, bracelets with a hollow cross-section, and tutulus fibulae. Not found among the artefacts from this burial site are eye fibulae of the Prussian series, neck-rings with trumpet-shaped ends of group II (according to the classification of M. Michelbertas) (Michelbertas 1986, p.88) and profiled fibulae, typical of the later part of period B₂. The ar-

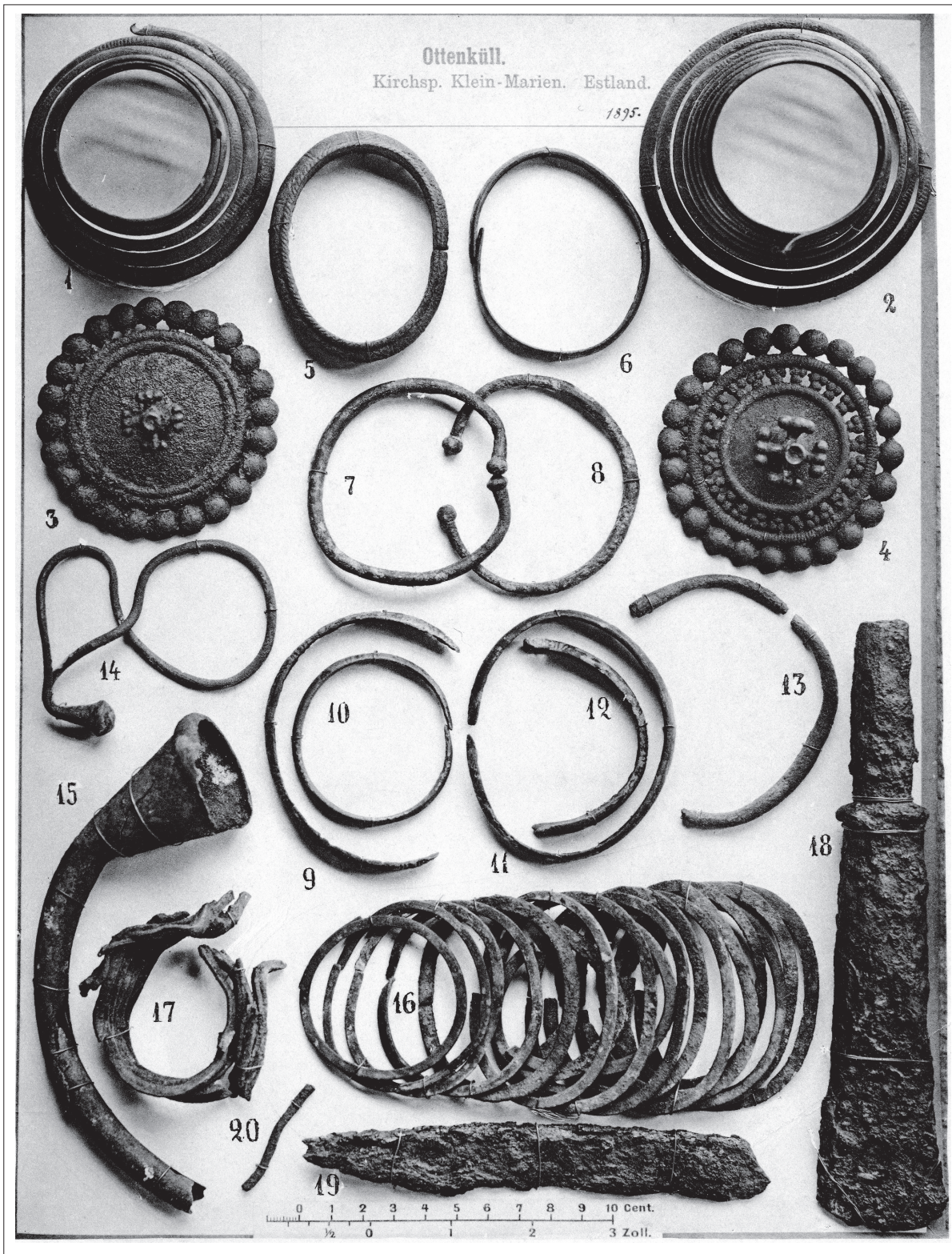


Fig. 1. The finds from Triigi (Otenküll) burial site in Estonia (after Hausmann 1896).

II
SOCIETIES
OF THE PAST:
APPROACHES
TO BURIAL
CUSTOMS
AND GRAVE
GOODS

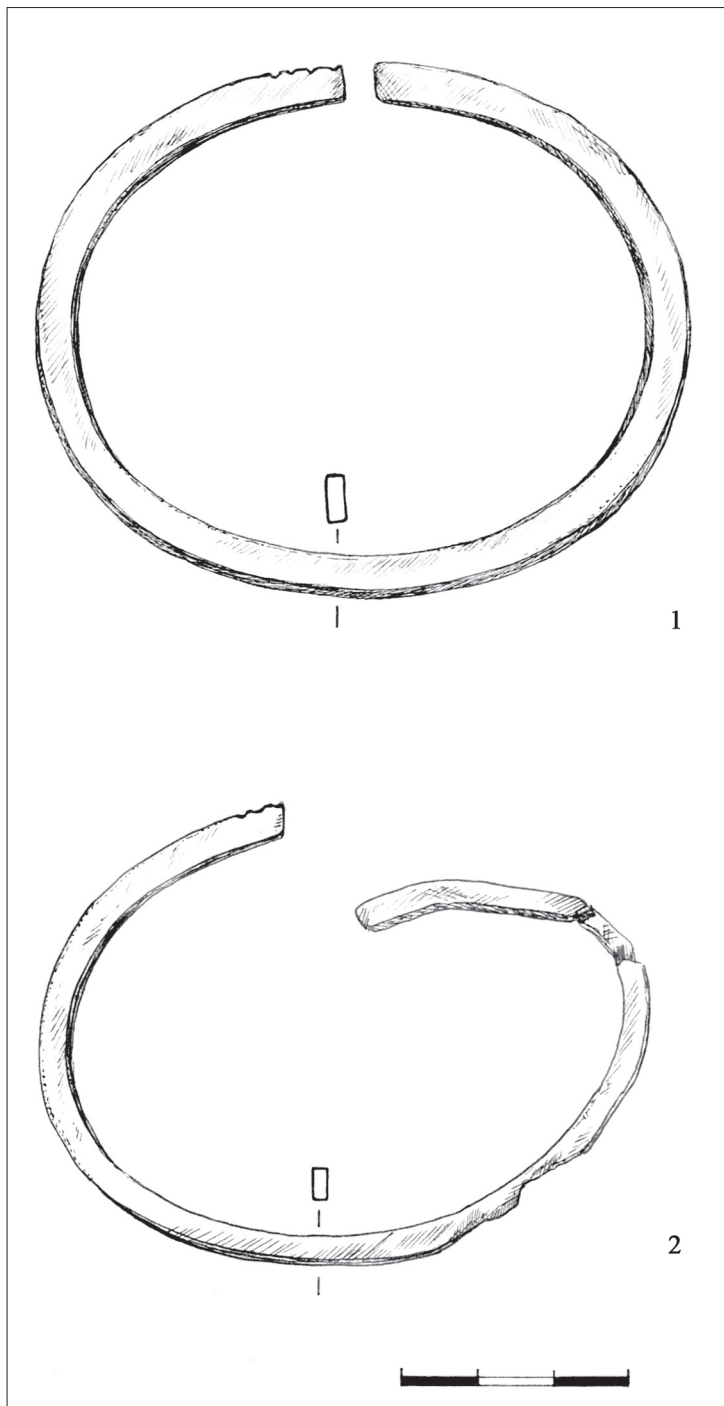


Fig. 2. Serial bracelets from north Vidzeme: 1 Rūjiena; 2 Salenieki.

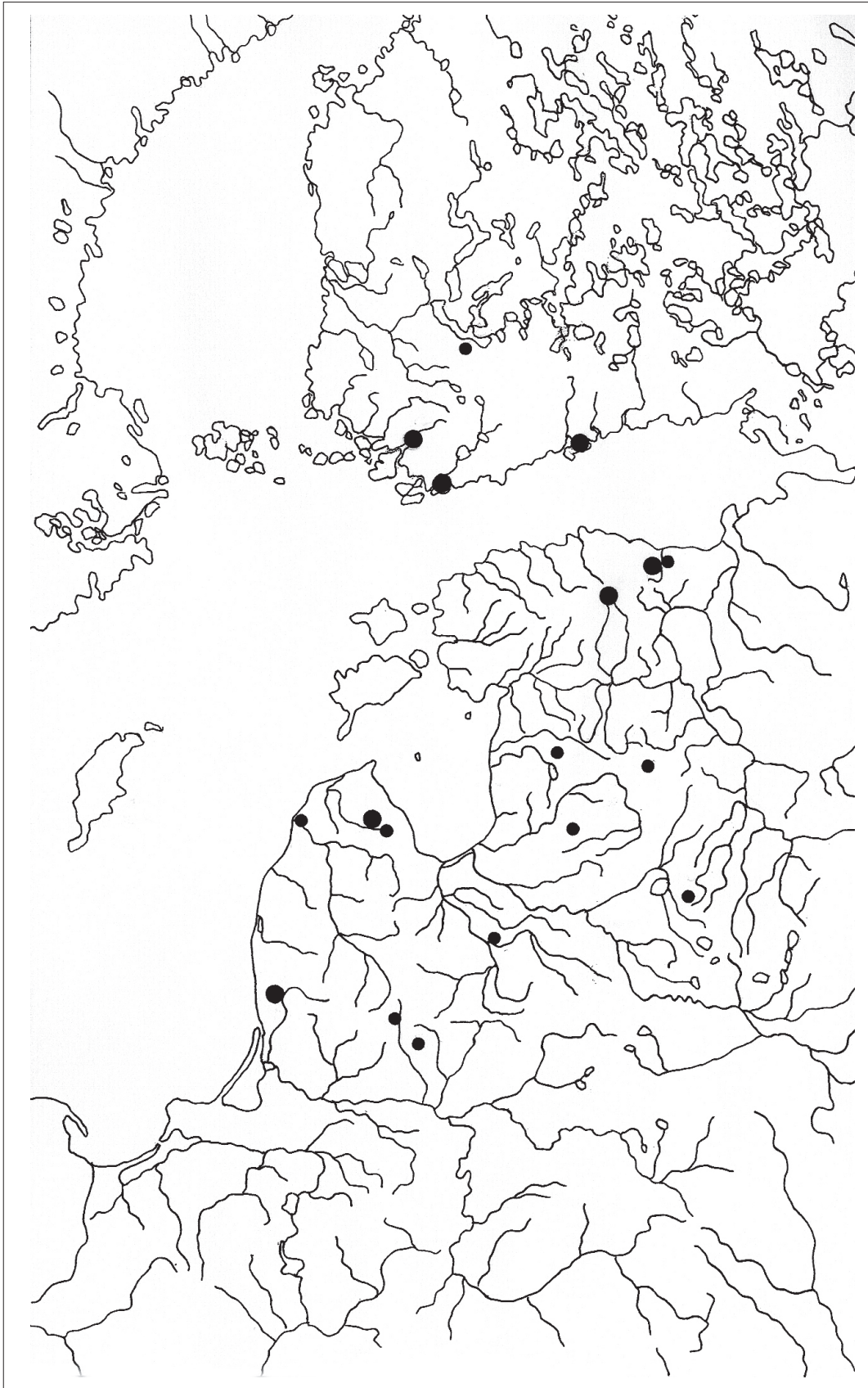


Fig. 3. The incidence of serial bracelets in the east Baltic region.

II
SOCIETIES
OF THE PAST:
APPROACHES
TO BURIAL
CUSTOMS
AND GRAVE
GOODS

tefact material from the Triigi burial site corresponds to the chronological age of the first century AD. It is considered as an etalon, used to characterise the earliest chronological period (the first century AD and the beginning of the second century AD) of burial sites, consisting of typical stone graves.

One of the earliest forms of artefacts found in the stone graves of Vidzeme burial sites and dated to the first century AD are serial bracelets. They can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of thin bracelets with an orthogonal cross-section. The second group consists of chronologically older bracelets from the second century AD with a thicker wire and an almost square cross-section, the wire on the inside is slightly rounded. Most of the first group of serial bracelets with orthogonal cross-sections found in north Latvia have miniature decorations at the ends of the wire. One of each of the early form of serial bracelets has been found at the Slavēkas burial site in Rauna, in the sixth stone grave of the Salenieki burial site in the area of Makašāni and Rūjiena (Fig. 2). These bracelets are mostly typical of the burial sites of the Baltic Finns (Fig. 3). Finds from Estonia and Latvia show that these bracelets were worn as a single ornament. Forty-five bracelets of this type are known in Latvia. Thirty-two bracelets (without the already mentioned ornaments) have been found at the Lazdiņi burial site in Laidze, some have been collected at the Dreņģeri Čunkāni burial site in Bauska as single finds, and in the Ventspils area. Another five bracelets are stored at the National History Museum of Latvia, with a reference to the place of origin as 'Latvia' or 'Vidzeme', but (with the exception of find A 212) they have miniature decorations at the ends of the wire, just like the bracelet from the Salenieki burial site. The bracelet which was found in Rūjiena has a slightly visible decoration only at one end of the wire. It is possible that a similar find was also found at Strazde burial site (state History Museum in Moscow 35564, file 815:11). Thirty-seven finds of this bracelet type have been found in Lithuania: 31 bracelets at the Ēglišķiai burial site (Grigalavičienė 1979, p.12ff); four bracelets at barrow II of the Sandrausiškės burial site (Michelbertas 1986, p.135); and one bracelet each at the Maironiai burial site (LAA, 1978) and the Kareliai hill-fort (Sēliai 2007, p.151). A. Merkevičius notes the find at the Kareliai hill-fort as an ornament from the Early Iron Age (Merkevičius 2011, p.154). M. Michelbertas dates thin serial bracelets to the period B₁–B₂ (Michelbertas, 1986, p...), but it seems that these ornaments are not found in Lithuania in burial sites from the period B₂, because in the Paragaudis

burial site, where period B₂ stone graves are widely represented, bracelets of this type have not been found (Michelbertas 1997). The early dating of the bracelets mentioned is confirmed by materials from the Ēglišķiai burial site: two fragmented iron bracelets that were found in the sixth grave at barrow II and dated to the third century BC by E. Grigalavičienė (Grigalavičienė, Merkevičius, 1980, p.84; Grigalavičienė 1979, p.12ff), and 31 bronze bracelets found in the first inhumation grave of the same barrow. E. Grigalavičienė dates this burial site to the first century, but there are no finds at the Ēglišķiai burial site from period B_{2a}. Consequently, it is possible to date these bracelets in Lithuania to the mid-first century. H. Moora's dating of the mentioned bracelets in Latvia and Estonia is uncertain, he dated most of them to period B (Moora 1938, p.402ff). Marta Schmiedehelm dates early serial bracelets to the second century according to the materials from the Jabara burial site in Estonia (Schmiedehelm 1955, p.199, Fig. 55); however, these bracelets, found in the burial sites at Jabara and Triigi, show that dating them to the second century is too late, because in the actual complexes other artefacts have not been found that can certainly be dated to the second century, except serial bracelets. Also, Silvija Laul dates the bracelet from the Kārdla burial site in southeast Estonia to the second century (Laul 2001, p.151, Figs 60, 80), but it is possible to date these ornaments earlier, although they do not fall within the category of earlier examples of this bracelet type, because they have quite clear decoration at the ends of the wire. The finds in Finland of serial bracelets from Kroggårdsmalmen burial site in Karjaa, Pikkulinanmäki burial site in Poorvoo, Herrankartano burial site in Paimio, and Rönni burial site in Pälkäne, can also be dated to the time of Christ's birth and the first half of the first century, as it shows in the context of the rest of the artefacts (Kivikoski 1973, p.22, Fig. 32; Salo 1968, p.111ff; Hirviluoto 1968, p.12ff). The most complete material, used to date these bracelets, is found in the burial site at Laidzes Lazdiņi. It was found in an inhumation grave that is dated to the time of Christ's birth and the first half of the first century, because in the grave, artefacts were not found that can be dated to the second half of the first century or which are typical of period B_{2a}. The serial bracelets with thin wire and an orthogonal cross-section of the earliest first group in Latvia, as well as in the whole east Baltic region, can be dated to the short period before the time of Christ's birth or to the first half of the first century (period A or B₁). Later examples have small decorations at the ends, they are slightly thicker, and can be dated to the mid-first century, or a little later (the end of period B₁

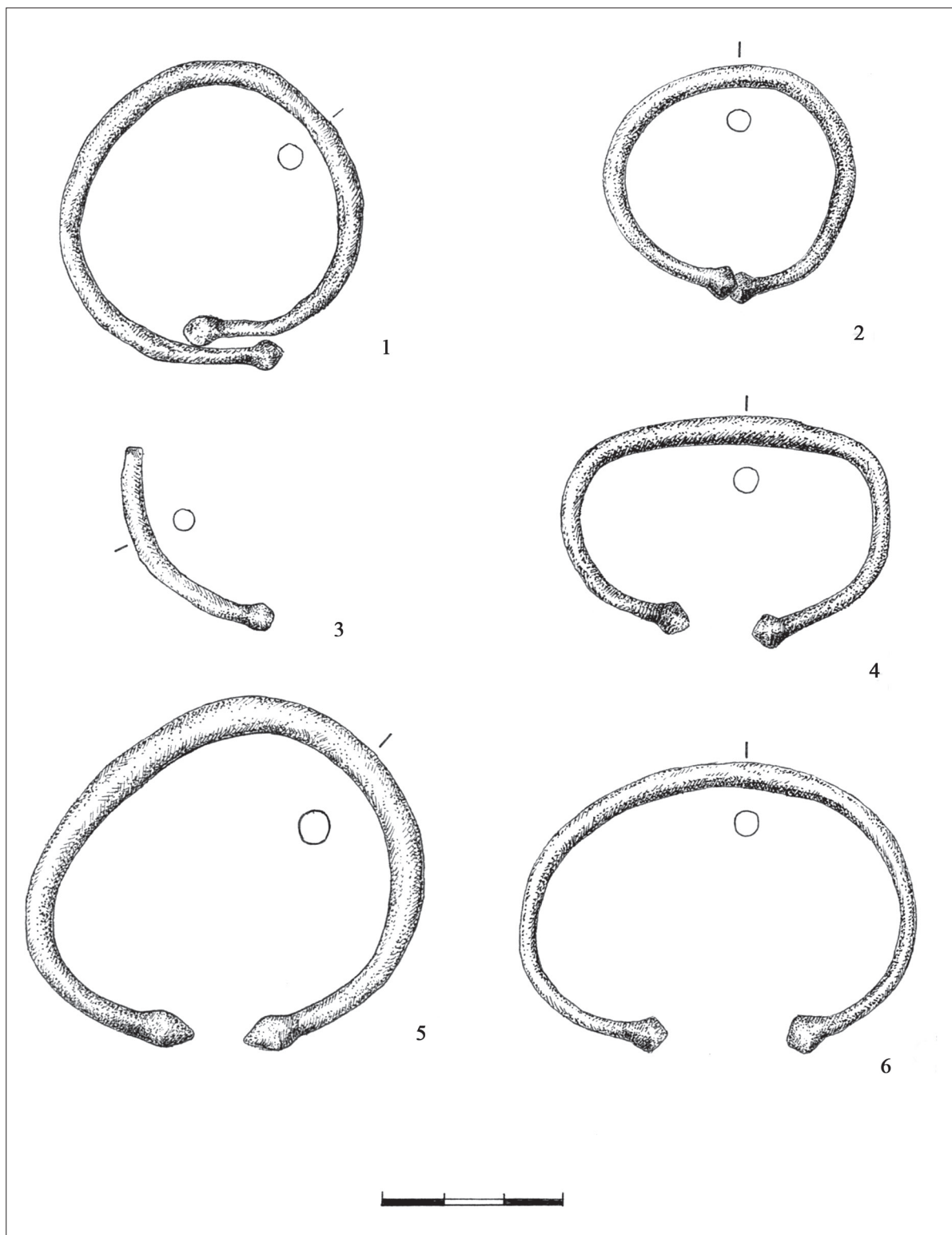


Fig. 4. Knob-ended bracelets in Latvia: 1 Auciems; 2 Smauži; 3 Spietiņi; 4 Kvāpāni; 5 Āraiši; 6 Kalnaķunči.

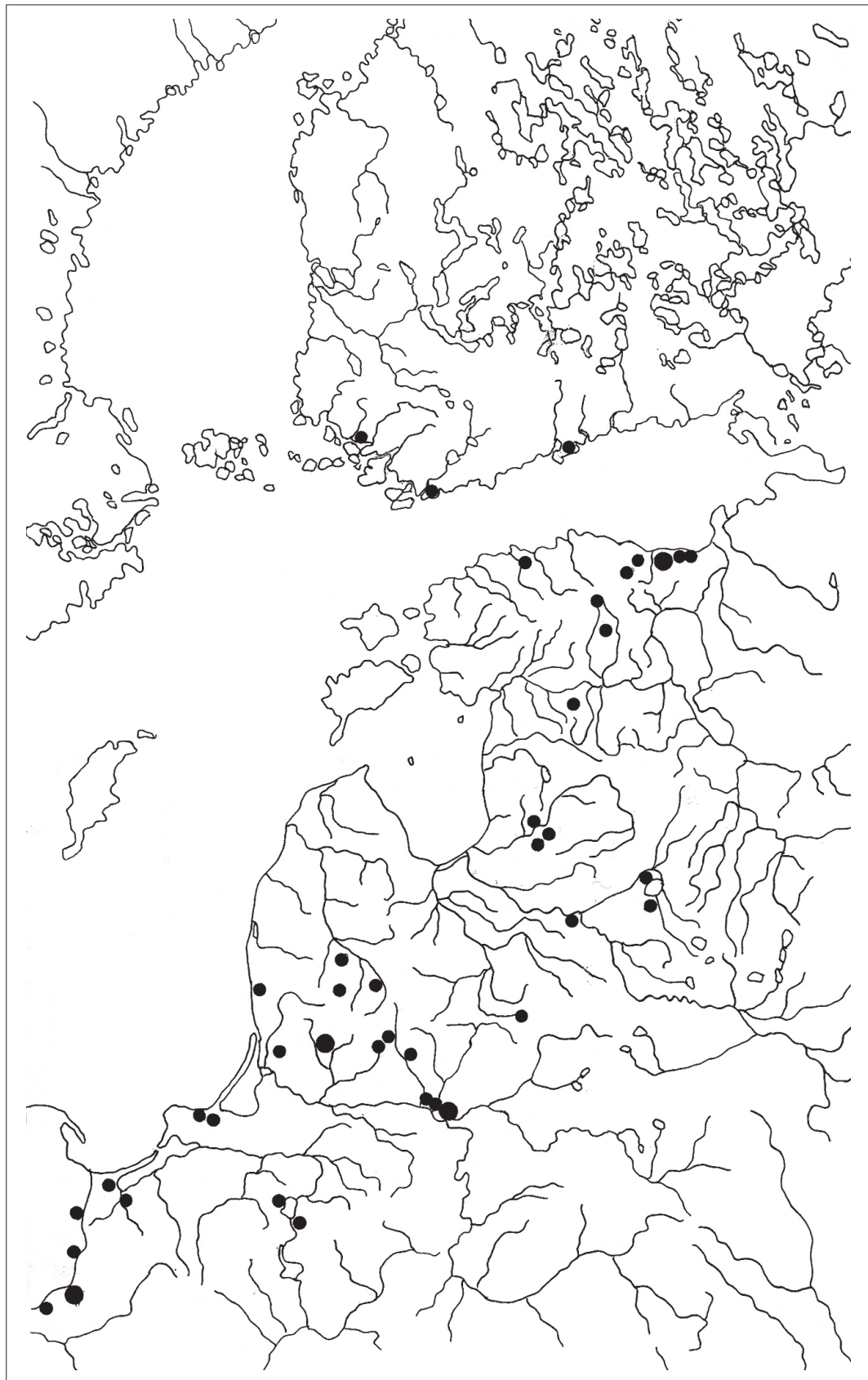


Fig. 5. The incidence of knob-ended bracelets in the east Baltic region.

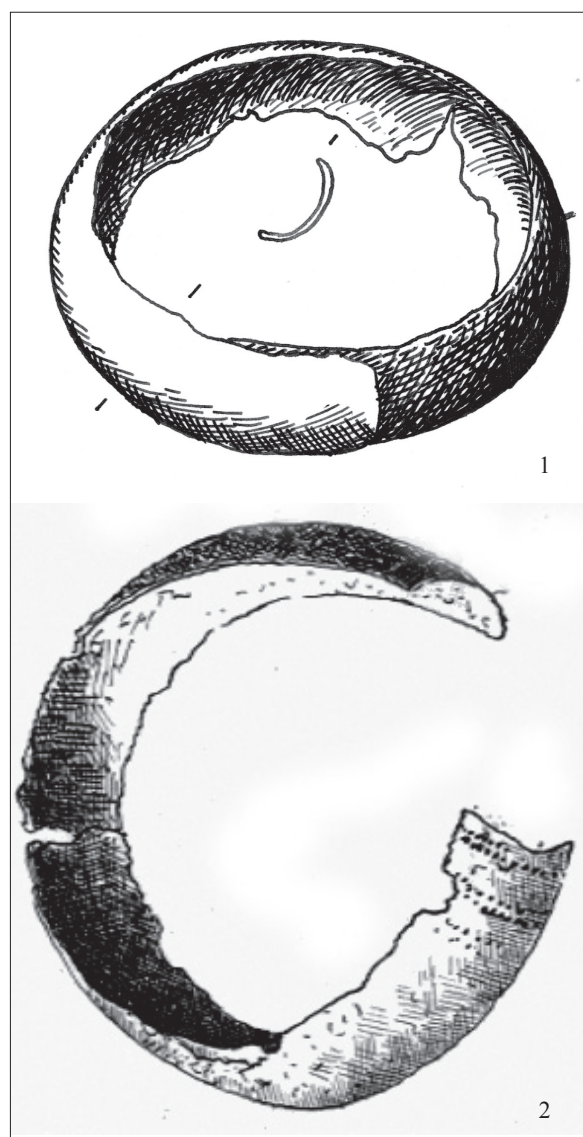


Fig. 6. The ankle bracelets from Viksnas Kapusils and Saulieši burial site in Jaunburtnieki.

and period B_{2a}). The last ones are serial bracelets with an almost square cross-section. These can be dated to the second century (period B_{2b} or period C₁).

The second group of artefacts found in east Latvian stone graves which can be dated to the second half of the first century are knob-ended bracelets. Only two bracelets of this type are found in Latvia, in stone graves at Auciems burial site and Kalna Ķunči burial site in Priekule. Another four bracelets were located at the mound of the Spietiņi burial site, where the occupation layer of the previous settlement is used, at Āraiši rectory, Smaudžu burial site and Kvāpāni (Fig. 4). These bracelets are widespread in the whole east

Baltic region from the lower reaches of the River Vistula to the south of Finland (Fig. 5) (Schmiedehelm 1931, p.399ff). Ernst Blume considers that the oldest bracelets of this type are thin with an evenly thick wire, the later ones with a thickened back of the wire (Blume 1912, p.60ff). E. Blume has mentioned 13 bracelets from six findspots in the lower reaches of the River Vistula (the findspot of one bracelet is unknown) (Blume 1915, p.56). These bracelets are found with fibulae from the late La Tène period, and fibulae of the oldest group (the first century AD). The latest research confirms this chronometric technique: for example, the finds from the Pruszcz Gdański burial site of Oksywie

II

SOCIETIES OF THE PAST: APPROACHES TO BURIAL CUSTOMS AND GRAVE GOODS

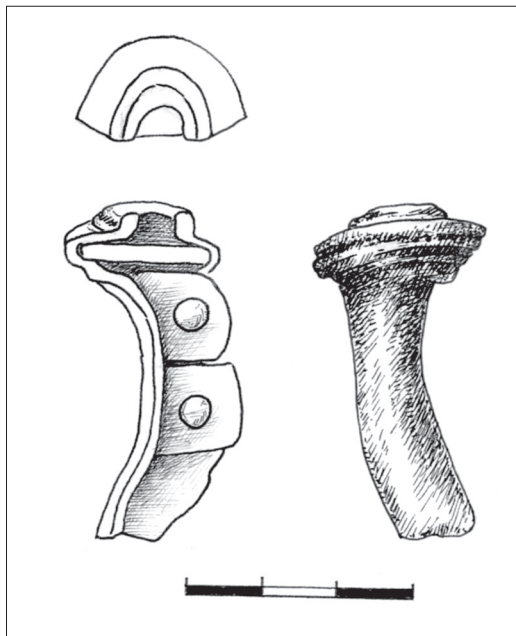


Fig. 7. The piece of a strongly profiled fibula from the Saulieši burial site in Jaunburtnieki.

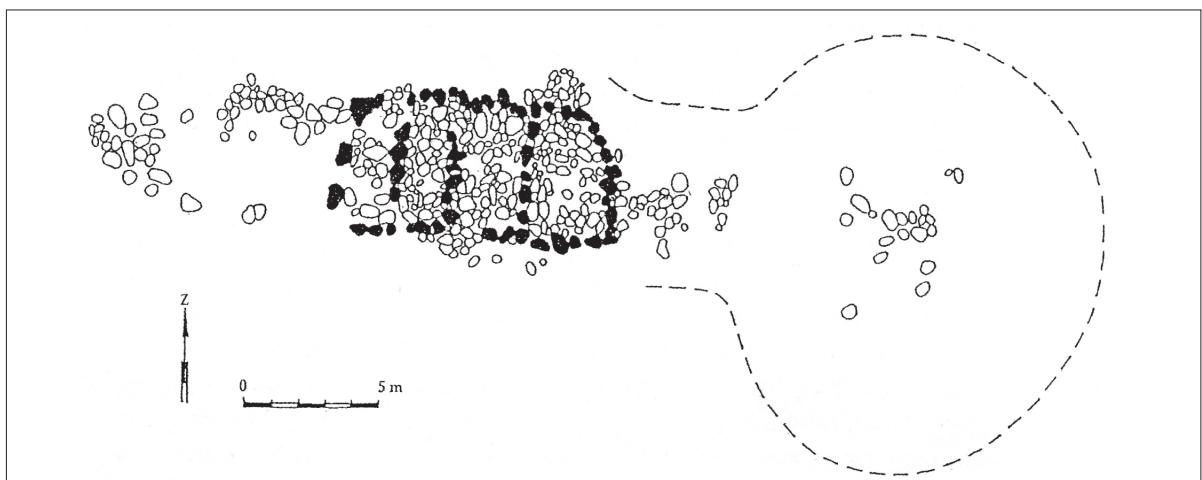


Fig. 8. A plan of the Auciems burial sites (after *Latvijas PSR arheoloģija*, 1974).

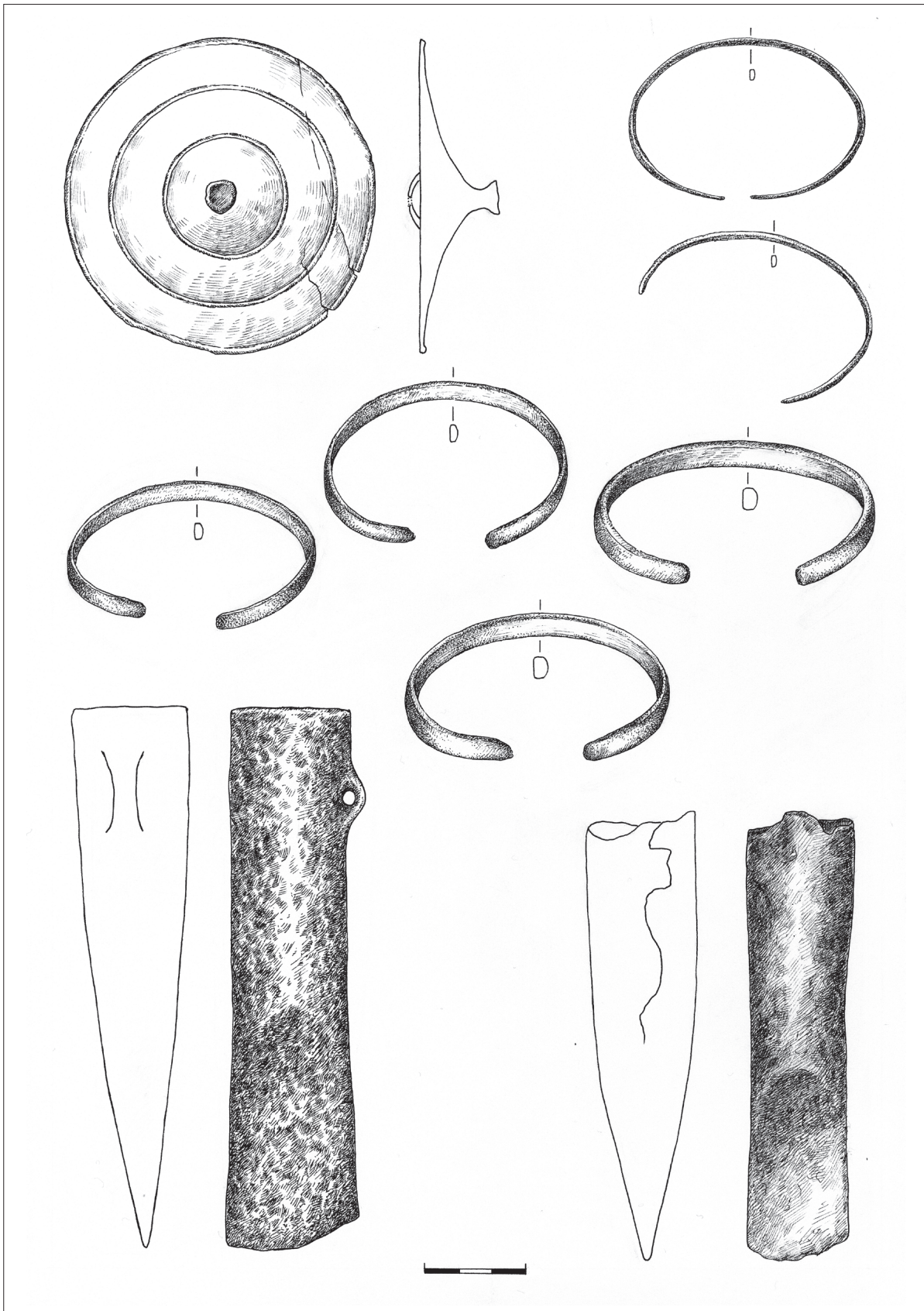


Fig. 9. Artefacts from the Ivaši burial site in Vitrupe.

II

SOCIETIES
OF THE PAST:
APPROACHES
TO BURIAL
CUSTOMS
AND GRAVE
GOODS

and Wielbark cultures. A knob-ended bracelet was found with two eye fibulae from the main series, and an Almgren profiled fibula of the 68th type and a needle in the 262nd grave in this burial site (period B₁). A knob-ended bracelet was found with two wire fibulae from the late La Tène period and a razor in the 365th grave in this burial site (period A₃). A knob-ended bracelet was found with a fibula from the late La Tène period in the 484th grave in this burial site (period A₃ – B₁, a cremation grave) (Pietrzak 1997, p.190). The same chronometric technique for bracelets is used by another Polish archaeologist, Małgorzata Tuszyńska (Tuszyńska 1999, pp.370, 376). A hollow tin neck-ring with trumpet-shaped ends and a knob-ended bracelet were found in grave 27b at the Dollkeim-Kovrovo burial site in East Prussia. Wojciech Nowakowski dates these finds to period B_{2a} and relates them to the first chronological period of East Prussia flat burial fields. These artefacts help us to synchronise finds from East Prussia with artefacts from the east Baltic region (Nowakowski 1996, Fig. 9.1-2). Twenty-seven of this type of bracelet from 13 findspots are known in Lithuania. The best material to date these bracelets was found at the Paragaudis burial site, where it is possible to detect these bracelets with other well-dated artefacts in the series of graves. This type of bracelet was found with an Almgren strongly profiled fibula of the 69th type in the second grave in barrow XXVI in the Paragaudis burial site (Michelbertas 1997, p.119), in the third grave of barrow XXXVI, with an eye fibula of the Prussian series, in the first grave of barrow XXIX, with an iron neck-ring with trumpet-shaped ends, in the second grave of barrow XXXVI, with a group II neck-ring with trumpet-shaped ends, in the third grave of the previous barrow, with an eye fibula of the main series, in the first grave of barrow XX, with an eye fibula (a bastard form, resembling a fibula from the main series and an eye fibula of the Prussian series), an irregular strike-a-light, which is also found at Laidzes Lazdiņi burial site, and an iron awl. It is possible to presume that knob-ended bracelets in Lithuania can be dated to the period B_{2a} (the late first century or early second century). A similar method can also be used to date specimens found in Latvia. The analogy with knob-ended bracelets of similar forms found at Scythian monuments and dated to the sixth to the fourth centuries BC is too far from a chronological point of view (Petrenko 1978, p.49, Plate 38).

The hollow neck-ring with hollow trumpet-shaped ends found in the stone grave at Auciems burial site can be dated to the same period as the neck-ring that

was found in grave 27b at the Dollkeim-Kovrovo burial site (Moora 1938, Fig. 35.1). This find of pieces of a neck-ring is unique in Latvia. Neck-rings with hollow trumpet-shaped ends but with a filled wire from a slightly later period were found in the burial sites at Salenieki in Makašāni and Renģes in Ruba. Two similar neck-rings have been found in Estonia, at Triigi (Otenküll) (Hausmann 1896, Plate IV.15) and Jabara burial sites. This type of neck-ring with a hollow wire have not been discovered in Lithuania; neck-rings with hollow trumpet-shaped ends have been found. The information about neck-rings of this type found in East Prussia and at other locations in the Baltic region is summarised by Aleksandra Rzeszotarska-Nowakiewicz (2010, pp.315-336). She distinguishes them from others as type I neck-rings with trumpet-shaped ends. The specimen from Auciems falls within the I.1 subtype, specified by A. Rzeszotarska-Nowakiewicz, and can be dated to the period B₁ or B_{2a}. It is possible to accept this dating of artefacts, with the objection that the dating of the I.2 subtype neck-rings to the Late Roman Iron Age is too late. They can be dated to the end of period B₁ and to period B_{2a}, which is suggested by M. Michelbertas.

Another category of artefact which can be dated to the end of period B₁ and the period B_{2a} are hollow tin ankle bracelets. Ankle bracelets were found in the series of Baltic Finn stone graves, but usually only in fragments. Intact ankle bracelets were found at barrow I of Kaugars burial site in Rauna, and at Mušiņas (Fig. 6) burial site in Rauna, and fragments of ankle bracelets at Dumpji in Auciems, Vīksnas kapusils burial site, Saulieši burial site in Jaunburtnieki, and barrow II at Kaugars burial site in Rauna. The period B₂ is supported by the finds at barrows in northeast Latvian burial sites that did not exist by the period B₂; for example, hollow tin ankle bracelets and armbands were found at three barrows, but not even one was found in stone graves (tarands) at the Salenieki burial site, where the oldest artefacts can be dated to period B₂ (Ciglis 2007, pp.23-38). The barrows are older and can be dated to period B₂ because in one case the stone grave covers the barrow. A similar dating is supported by the fact that ankle bracelets from the stone graves have very similar decorative motifs and characters to the ankle bracelets from Viļaka and Aizezeri in Sakstagals.

The category analysis of the several artefacts mentioned shows that the oldest burial sites, consisting of typical stone graves (Auciems burial site, Kalnakunči burial site in Priekuļi, Slavēkas burial site, and others)

started to be used in the first century. These artefacts are not the only ones that can be dated to this time. The latest strongly profiled fibulae (the 69th type, noted by O. Almgren) found at the Gailīšu burial site in Taurenēs, and fibulae that are similar to the mentioned ones found at Slavēkas and Gailīši in the Laukalkne burial site, can also be dated from the mid-first century to the second half of the first century. It is possible to presume that a fragment of this kind of fibula was found at the Saulīši burial site in Jaunburtnieki (Fig. 7). H. Moora thinks that they are local products, and can be dated to the beginning of the second century (Moora 1938, p.66ff). O. Almgren dated similar fibulae from the end of the La Tène period to the beginning of the Late Roman Iron Age (Almgren 1923). Taking into consideration the fact that it is a local product, it could have been made later than in Central Europe. The specimens mentioned should be dated to the mid-first century. The several eye fibulae of the main series found in Latvia, at Aunciems and Upmaļi burial site in Baižkalns, which H. Moora dated to the beginning of the second century (Moora 1938, p.57), could be applied to the period from the mid-first century to the second half of the first century. If typological analyses of the bracelets, iron knives, crook-shaped pins, and so on, are carried out, it would be possible to find among the artefacts of the stone graves other ones that can be dated to the first century.

It is possible that in the future it will not be possible to find typical stone graves from a much earlier period by carrying out new excavations in north Vidzeme. Chronologically earlier grave monuments in this area are barrows with different stone constructions. This kind of barrow, where artefacts dated to the time of Christ's birth are found, is examined at Vīlētāji burial site in Sējas (Graudonis 1975, p.43ff). This is why specific interest is caused by stone graves which are located close to chronologically earlier barrows. The best-known is Auciems burial site, examined by R. Hausmanis, G. Leške and L.Šrēders. It is assumed that this burial site shows how the tradition of burying people in barrows changed to a new one, burying them in burial sites of stone graves, because tarands of stone graves lie closer to the barrow (Fig. 8). The numbers of artefacts found at the Auciems burial site is not very large (14), but among the artefacts are the ones described in this article, fragments of a neck-ring with a hollow wire and hollow trumpet-shaped ends (Moora 1938, Fig. 35.1), a knob-ended bracelet and main series eye fibula, fragments of a hollow tin ankle bracelet with well-known and clearly dated analogies.

The latest artefacts, the neck-ring with trumpet-shaped ends, an eye fibula of the Prussian series from group II (by Michelbertas), can be dated from the early to the mid-second century. Artefacts from the first half of the second century found in burial sites of stone graves are already widely represented at the Gaidēni (Strīķi) burial site in Lenči, the Mūsiņa burial site in Rauna, the Āžķipji burial site in Rauna, the Tujāni burial site in Virāne, the Kaugars I and II burial sites in Rauna, etc.

It might be possible to find artefacts dated to the first century at the unexamined Priedkalni burial site in Jaungulbene and the Lāčkalni burial site in Mēri. Earlier artefacts are found in the nearby area of the burial sites mentioned: an iron wedge-shaped axe dated to the period before Christ at Priedkalni (Ciglis 2003), and an early form of shaft-hole axe dated to the time of the birth of Christ. A barrow is known near the stone grave of Priedkalni (Graudonis 1967, p.50). Untypically early artefacts for stone graves of north Vidzeme are found at the Ivaši burial site in Vitrupe (Fig. 9). Two iron celts (one of the specimens has a loop) were found in one of the destroyed barrows with stone constructions, a bronze tutulus and six bracelets. It is possible to date the iron celts with a loop to the Iron Age before Christ, just like the tutulus. This dating is supported by the forms of the bracelets, which have close analogies to those found at Lazdiņi burial site in Laidze and material from early tarand grave burial sites. It is possible that a sickle-knife or a bush-knife was found in the second barrow, but the museum did not receive it. It is traditionally considered to be a burial site consisting of stone graves. The conclusion, after getting to know better the Elvīra Šnore preliminary materials and the statement for excavations published in 1937 (AA 290), is that the Ivaši burial site in Vitrupe does not consist of stone graves or tarand graves. Unfortunately, the excavations were done without the help of an archaeologist, and a certain scientific interpretation of this monument is not possible. The barrow examined by E. Šnore was just a pile of stones collected from the field. The barrows with stone constructions at Ivaši in Vitrupe could be similar to the barrow at Sikšņi in Turaida, or to the early tarand graves that are found in Estonia. A clear interpretation of the Ivaši stone barrow in Vitrupe and the Sišķi (Pūteļi) stone barrow in Turaida will be possible after further research.

II

SOCIETIES
OF THE PAST:
APPROACHES
TO BURIAL
CUSTOMS
AND GRAVE
GOODS

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TIPIŠKŲ RYTŲ LATVIJAI LAIDOJIMO PAMINKLŲ, KRAUTŲ IŠ AKMENŲ, KILMĒ

JĀNIS CIGLIS

Santrauka

Šīame straipsnyje nagrinējama šiaurinės Vidzemės laidojimo paminklų, krautų iš akmenų, kapų medžiaga: stačiakampio skersinio pjūvio apyrankės, apyrankės pumpuriniais galais, išgautos skardinės juostinės apyrankės, antkaklės trimitiniais tuščiaaviduriais galais ir profiliuotos segės. Išanalizavus išvardytus papuošalus, galima drąsiai teigti, kad šiuos radinius galima datuoti I a. viduriu ir antrąja I amžiaus puse (1–7, 9 pav.). Taigi

iš akmenų krauti (akmeniniai) kapai, kitaip vadinami tarandų kapai, yra paminklai, kuriuose rasti šie papuošalai priklauso I a. antrajai pusei, bet ne II a., kaip buvo manyta anksčiau (8 pav.). Prieš tai pilkapiai su įvairiomis skirtingomis akmeninėmis konstrukcijomis buvo paplitę vakarinėje Vidzemės dalyje, o pilkapių su iš žemės supiltais sampilais randama Šiaurės Latgaloje.

Vertė Audronė Bliujienė

II

SOCIETIES
OF THE PAST:
APPROACHES
TO BURIAL
CUSTOMS
AND GRAVE
GOODS