

ARMED PEOPLE OF EAST AND SOUTHEAST LITHUANIA IN THE GEOCULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE MIGRATION PERIOD

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Abstract

The article discusses the rapidly changing geocultural situation from the fifth to the seventh century in east and southeast Lithuania. As chiefdoms with strong leaders were taking shape from the fifth to the seventh centuries, the demonstration of power by means of exceptional weapons and other cultural elements became a highly important factor.

Key words: Migration Period, east Lithuania, southeast Lithuania, weapons, barrows, chiefdom.

Introduction

During the Late Migration Period, there were several ethnocultural areas between the Nemunas (Neman, Memel) and the Daugava (Western Dvina) which were not similar in terms of their geopolitical importance. The people of the highest social standing in these areas perceived themselves and were seen in the geopolitical space of the region differently, first and foremost because they had different material and human resources and possibilities for communication. It is well known that geopolitics analyses the spatial configurations of power: the geographical structure of power and the authority of a region or a micro-region,¹ and the dynamics of its ambitions to achieve political goals (Vyšniauskas 1994, pp.71-82; Statkus, Motieka, 2004, p.11). It is obvious that in the course of an analysis of the structure of authority and power, or its concentration in one or another region, we encounter the phenomenon of the concentration of the cultural-civilisational resources of power and their uneven spatial distribution. These processes create communication barriers; in other words, we are also dealing with geoculture, a sister of geopolitics. Birger Nerman defined the east Baltic Sea region as Ostbalticum, which, in terms of today's categories, consists of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as a significant geopolitical space in the first millennium (Nerman 1929). However, over the course of time, both

the Baltic Sea region and the east Baltic region, due to the notion of changing content, have been perceived differently by specialists in various fields of research (Simanavičius 2010, pp.67-84). From this, it follows that it is not only the notion, but also the reality, that is changing, which at every particular moment of political aspiration forms a different basis for the structure of power and the authority of the geopolitical space of the Baltic Sea region and the east Baltic region. Therefore, it is natural that an actual time should define relations between politically important formations, as well as between political realities, the geographical space and geographical factors. Hence, geopolitics and geoculture, as terms, define political, socio-economic, communication and cultural processes in both modern times and Prehistory.

The geopolitical situation in the east Baltic region from the fifth to the seventh century resembles a mosaic. Therefore, in a short article like this, we have to pick out of this mosaic a mere segment, a micro-region in terms of geopolitics. I find east and southeast Lithuania, with its continental communication corridors, and certain geocultural communication barriers, interesting and not yet analysed from the point of view of the geopolitical situation. From the early fifth century, and especially from the middle of the fifth century, we can see that this micro-region resembles a 'military camp', engulfed in continuous configurations of power (Luchtanas, Ušinskas 1988; Luchtanas 1997; Bliujus 1983; Bliujienė 2006; Bliujienė, Steponaitis 2009; Bliujienė, Curta 2011; Kurila, Kliugaitė 2007). Furthermore, in an attempt to find confirmations of 'armed and very

¹ The most detailed research into micro-regions based on material from Lithuania and methodological characterisation has been carried out by A. Kuncevičius, R. Laužikas, I. Rutkauskienė and R. Šmigelskas (2011, pp.11-38).

II

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

dangerous people' in various groups of sources, it is possible to use folklore data about the hill-fort at Migonys (in the Elektrėnai municipality), in the context of which the chief person in the community is mentioned (Kurila, Vaitkevičius 2011). Although the issue of the correctness of the connections between the folklore of the second half of the 19th century and the Migration Period can be questioned, we can still make the cautious assumption that, even in this group of sources, we can discern the existence of a stratification of society and the institution of chiefdom. Furthermore, the archaeological context of east and southeast Lithuania might attest to the existence of social exclusion and the chiefdom as a form of social structure in the society of the sixth and seventh centuries.

Hence, the region between the Nemunas and the Daugava was under the control of the leaders of chiefdoms, whereas the control over geopolitical spaces that were important to the region was maintained by 'heavily armed' men led by these leaders. More often than not, these men were riders, bearing insignia and amulets that proved their social standing. In fact, the aim was to ensure armed control over the main crossroads leading to one desirable destination or another. However, the chiefdoms that had emerged were not stable and long-lived, because relations between geographical factors (the natural environment, natural resources, roads, and so on) and the newly shaped political situations were continuously changing. The short-lived aspect created conditions for conflicts and the regrouping of forces. In the Migration Period, parallel processes were characteristic of the entire space of the Baltic Sea region.

Configurations of power and authority in east and southeast Lithuania from the second half of the fifth century to the early sixth century

Over recent decades, we have viewed east and southeast Lithuania in the Migration Period as an area in which, for various reasons, the largest amount of imported artefacts in the Nemunas and the Daugava region were amassed. Furthermore, the greatest military force was concentrated there. Both Lithuanian and foreign researchers have noticed these phenomena (Werner 1977; Tautavičius 1981; 1996; Bliujiene 2006; Bliujienė, Curta 2011; Bitner-Wróblewska 2007; Kurila 2007; Kurila, Kliaugaitė 2007; Gavritukhin, Vorontsov 2008). On the other hand, the imported artefacts found in east Lithuania, just like features of burial practices and cultural influences, change rhythmically along with Europe when it was engulfed in the events of the Great Migration Period. This allows us to feel quite well the chronological change in the communi-

ties which had left behind the barrows of east Lithuania from the Early Migration Period to the Late Migration Period, which coincided with the mid-fifth century or a later time. One of the features of this cultural space is, without any doubt, the graves of males armed with standard weaponry (one or two spears, an axe, a knife, a belt, and occasionally a shield and a brooch) (Tautavičius 1996, pp.47-57).

It is in this period that we can see an immense concentration of wealth, power and authority in a small area of a mere 50 to 60 square kilometres between lakes Tauragnas, Žeimenis and Vajuonis (Fig. 1). In Europe, shaken by the events of the Migration Period, there were more micro-regions like the one that emerged in eastern Lithuania. After the collapse of Chernyakhov culture, some of the nobility of the Goths, driven by their thirst for wealth and power, or just seeking survival, migrated together with the Huns, or possibly ran away from them, or followed them. This is how the new cultural contours of the middle reaches of the Danube became distinct, which in the given geopolitical space would soon experience, again and again, new configurations of power and authority. In the upper reaches of the rivers Vistula, Dniester, Pripet and Southern Bug, a mass of people accumulated that had relations with Scandinavia, as a consequence of the events of the Migration Period. An immense concentration of a horizon of Sösdala-style artefacts is found in this area, between the upper reaches of the aforementioned rivers (Levada 2011, p.134). Another region of this kind was located in the forest-steppe, in the basin of the upper and lower reaches of the River Don. It is believed that this region functioned as a hinterland under the influence of the Huns, in which artisans and farmers worked for the Huns (Gavritukhin, Oblomskii 2006, pp.100-106, Fig. 1). It was in such centres that luxurious artefacts which reflected the period might have been produced, or people and the aforementioned artefacts might have then spread from the centres in various directions. Hence, contacts were possible between such micro-regions, where authority, wealth and power were concentrated.

In the small area between lakes Tauragnas, Žeimenis and Vajuonis, as it seems today, a large accumulation of imported artefacts (a double-edged sword, battle-knives and their bindings, drinking horn bindings, brooches, neck-rings, and so on) is known, and each one of the artefacts originates from a different region. Therefore, the artefacts found here have analogies from a very wide area. First of all, we look to the middle reaches of the Danube, Transylvania, northern Italy, the central part of the Iberian Peninsula, and to the southwest part of the Crimean Peninsula, southern



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

Fig. 1. Eastern Lithuania in the second half of the fifth century and the early sixth century, and the directions of contacts: 1 Cegelnė; 2 Borava; 3 Baliuliai; 4 Ziboliškė III; 5 Sudota I-IV; 6 Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė; 7 Antasarė; 8 Pavajuonys-Rėkučiai; 9 Taurapolis; 10 Semėniškės; 11 Lėbėny; 12 Csákvár (Hungary); 13 Budapest (Hungary); 14 Zalaszentgrót (Hungary); 15 Szabadbattyán (Hungary); 16 Domolospuszta (Hungary); 17 Hódmezővásárhely; 18 Ártánd (Hungary); 19 Zalkod (Hungary); 20 Valea lui Mihai (Romania); 21 Valea lui Strâmbă (Romania); 22 Spiczyn (Poland).

and central Scandinavia, the lower reaches of the Don (Tanais), the northern Caucasus, and, finally, to the forest belt of northern Europe (Bemmann, Bemmann 1998, pp.221-233; Gavritukhin, Kazanski 2010, Figs. 4.22; 4.23; Hilberg 2009, pp.140-146, Fig. 5.46-5.48; Kazanski 2001, Figs. 2-3; Levada 2011, pp.115–129, Figs. 1-13; Aibabin 1999, XXIII: 10, XXV: 12; XXVI: 2-4; 106, 3: Figs. 4; 98; p.118). Hence, the artefacts found in this micro-region indicate multi-directional contacts. In an attempt to perceive the nature of the contacts maintained by the communities that lived between lakes Tauragnas, Žeimėnis and Vajuonis, a few basic assumptions can be made (Ušinskas 1988; Tautavičius 1981; Zabiela 1995, pp.47-48; Bliujienė, 2006; Bliujienė, Curta 2011; Bliujienė, Steponaitis 2009). Traditionally, it is believed that the immense amount of imports might be a result of trade relations or cultural influences. Or, imported artefacts, that is to say, plundered wealth, might have been ‘brought together’ to eastern Lithuania by the Balts/the Aesti coming back from the melting pot of the Migration Period. It is also believed that imported artefacts might have been a result of the regional migration of the Aesti, or they might have arrived together with a small, poly-ethnic group of migrants. In Lithuanian historiography, migrations of people other than those of Baltic cultural origin are no longer questioned, but just accepted *a priori*. Recent years have seen the rebirth of the migration paradigms rejected by the most prominent theoreticians in the field of archaeology a few decades ago, because, once again, researchers tend to believe that ‘the baby will be [or already has been] thrown out with the bathwater’ (Anthony 1990). The fact that ‘the baby’ has nevertheless been caught in its fall is attested to by the returns during recent years to both old archaeological material, in search of new possibilities of analysis and interpretation, and the isotopic analysis of the enamel in human teeth (Evans *et al.* 2006; Chenery, Evans 2012, pp.89-96; Ager 2012, p.107ff; Heighway 2012, p.85ff).² These studies not only evidently record the movement of people in the Migration Period, but they also allow us to analyse the question of migra-

² On a review of the material, it turned out that the grave goods and the methods of burial relate the buried individual to the middle reaches of the Danube, because the grave goods placed in grave 1B at Kingsholm, Gloucester (Britain) are identical to items worn by eastern Germanic people and nomads (the Alans and the Huns) (Ager 2012, p.107ff). When tooth enamel oxygen, strontium, carbon and nitrogen isotopic analyses were carried out, it turned out that the individual buried in the grave under discussion had not been born in Britain, but his birthplace had been Central or Eastern Europe (Chenery, Evans 2012, p.89ff). The aforementioned study is one of the many samples analysed over recent years.

tion as a deeper phenomenon that encompasses both the migration processes of tribes and individual movements of individual people and certain social groups, which, again, were determined by the processes of the Great Migration.

On the other hand, artefacts never yet seen in eastern Lithuania appeared there, among other things, by means of the inter-tribal exchange of social character between various geographically distant tribal nobilities. In recent years, this explanation has been discussed as one of the ways of explaining the movement of artefacts and people, and the spread of ideas (Nerman 1929, p.22ff, Figs. 18-19; Quast 2009, p.13ff, Fig. 16; Bliujienė 2011, pp.252-258). All these explanations concerning the impressive wealth (imports) accumulated in the region have advantages and disadvantages. However, all of them are more or less true. Most probably, the character of the contacts is described by the very mosaic of the assumptions of the contacts. At that time, trading and cultural exchanges, as well as exchanges of gifts, were an efficient form of governing social relations. Therefore, gifts as signs of the social standing and prestige of nobilities were highly important. Gifts that were later placed in graves might have accompanied oaths of fidelity, matrimonial alliances, and noble hostages taken after military conflicts or the consolidation of alliances. Hence, whatever the intentions might have been, any exchange of prestigious artefacts was accompanied by a striving for political goals and the desire to change the distribution of power in the area. This statement is supported, first and foremost, by today’s notion of geopolitics formulated by politologists (Vyšniauskas 1994; Statkus, Motieka 2004). However, at first glance, it looks strange that the elites of territories separated by thousands of kilometres can have such far-reaching political interests. However, this strange first impression is eliminated by the existence of the aforementioned multi-ethnic micro-regions in various parts of Europe at that time. Besides, at this point, it is worth recalling not only the contacts with the middle reaches of the Danube so widely discussed in Lithuanian historiography (Tautavičius 1981; Šimėnas 2006; Bliujienė, Steponaitis 2009; Bliujienė, Curta 2011), but also another highly important direction of contacts: eastern Lithuania, the forest zone of northeast Europe; and also the possible contacts of eastern Lithuania in a southeast direction as far as the Crimean Peninsula and the lower reaches of the Don. The barrows of Tanais (the lower reaches of the Don) are known to contain parallels with the buckle found in the barrow burial field of Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė, barrow 17, and with the four iron and silver brooches found in the grave of a male in the barrow burial field at Sudota I, barrow 30



Fig. 2. The grave goods of male cremation grave 1, Sudota I barrow burial field, barrow 30 (grave 4): 1, 7 silver; 2-4, 6 bronze; 5 gilded bronze; 8 pewter; 9, 10, 13-15 iron; 11 iron, bronze (according to Semėnas 2000; Nalšia museum, Švenčionys; photograph by A. Bliujienė).

(Fig. 2. 7) (Bliujienė, Steponaitis 2009, p.194ff, Figs. 17-18; Plate V; Bliujienė, Curta 2011, p.40ff, Figs. 7; 16). The origins of the manufacture and distribution of artefacts found in this grave of a male in the barrow burial field of Sudota I, barrow 30, are very wide. For example, the belt fitting might have been manufactured in a workshop in the middle reaches of the Danube; the spear (angon) and, apparently, the battle-knife, also (although only the handle of the latter has survived) originate from the region of the Franks (Fig. 2. 8, 14) (cf. Legoux *et al.* 2006; Monchin's'ka 2009, pp.226-332, Fig. 74). The cone-shaped shield-boss with a rim decorated with a wide ornament of 'tiny pearls' has widely distributed parallels beyond the boundaries of present-day Lithuania (Fig. 2.10) (Kontny 2004, 249-256, Figs. 1-4; Kiulkys 2010, p.66ff, Figs. 27; 29-31; 63). However, this piece of weaponry must have been manufactured locally, because the findspots of such shield-bosses are concentrated in the barrows of east and southeast Lithuania. In any case, the set of grave goods found in the grave of this cremated male would cover the period from the second half of the fifth century to 520–530, when the artefacts were placed in the grave. It has been noted that spears originating from Western Europe spread throughout the entire region of the Nemunas and the Daugava (and also the basin on the Aiviekste). In Lithuania, the findspots of such spears are concentrated in the barrows of eastern Lithuania. From among the five angon-type spears,³ two were found in the Sudota barrow burial field (Fig. 2.14) (Kaczyński, Fig. 24.n; Kazakevičius 1988, p.60ff, Fig. 32.1; Semėnas 2000). Heavy spears with a sword-shaped blade, one of which was found in the grave of the 'duke' of Taurapilis, are exceptionally common in barrows of eastern Lithuania dated to the Migration Period, whereas analogies of these spearheads are known from the eastern part of the Crimean Peninsula, Kerch (Kazakevičius 1988, Fig. 15; Map VII). An analogy of the battle-knife with a silver handle found in the aforementioned Sudota I barrow burial field might be the battle-knife with a silver handle found in grave 1 of an

individual of exceptionally high social standing in the burial site at Warnikam, Natangia. The knife originates from the middle reaches of the Danube or Transylvania (Fig. 2.8). Furthermore, analogies of this weapon might be present in the area inhabited by the Franks. The exceptional finds from the groups of barrows in the burial field at Sudota are supplemented by small parts of melted gold neck-rings found in the Sudota IV barrow burial field. The artefacts found in the Sudota barrow burial fields testify to the fact that the people who built the barrows there during the Migration Period were rich, and must have enjoyed an exceptional standing within the micro-region of a mere 50 to 60 square kilometres.

Hence, prestigious weapons, elements of weaponry and findspots of personal ornaments are distributed from the Iberian Peninsula in the west and southern Scandinavia in the northwest to the forest zone of northeast Europe in the east; from northern Italy in the south to, according to the present level of knowledge, almost the Daugava in the north. Therefore, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the artefacts found in eastern Lithuania have numerous analogies in the geographical sense of the word, and that they were manufactured in several jewellery or weaponry workshops. The main workshops that mastered the high-level and high-quality processing of metals and semi-precious stones, and sophisticated manufacturing techniques, were concentrated within the boundaries of the former Roman Empire and its nearest provinces (Arrhenius 1985, pp.110-130; Gavritukhin, Kazanski 2010, p.86; Pinar, Ripol, 2006, Fig. 4). Different workshops and highly skilled jewellers produced stylistically similar but not identical artefacts. On the other hand, some such artefacts were undoubtedly custom-made. Due to migration processes, artefacts spread in several different ways: by means of the exchange of luxurious gifts between nobilities; as gifts, the insignia of a person's standing; as a tax on the local nobility; as a bridal dowry; as artefacts manufactured by travelling jewellers; as trading goods; as objects of trade in war booty; or they just travelled further and further with their owners, and thus covered thousands of kilometres, with stops in between. Hence, prestigious weapons, armaments and personal ornaments, that is, the insignia of a person's standing, and in some cases indicators of the ethnos, acquired at different times and in more than one place, would travel for as long as the accumulated wealth was buried together with its male or female owners (Bezuglov, Tolochko 2002; Pinar, Ripol 2006; Bliujienė 2006; Bliujienė, Curta 2011). The group of luxurious and massive silver and even gold personal

³ Two angon-type spearheads were found by accident in Papilė (Akmenė district) (Kazakevičius 1988, pp.60-61). A sixth-century angon-type spearhead with a profiled blade was found in Kereliai (Kupiškis district) hill-fort (Grigalavičienė 1992, p.98ff, Fig. 25.1). An angon-type spearhead was found in grave 54 of an armed male in Kakužėni (Jelgava district) burial site, along with another adze, a spear and a battle-knife, as well as a silver neck-ring with faceted terminals and a crossbow zoomorphic brooch (Graudonis 2003, p.43ff, Figs. 36-37). In Kunai barrow burial field (Jēkabpils district) on the left bank of the Daugava (grave 56), one of the two spears was of the type discussed here (Griciuvienė, Buža 2007, p.34ff).

ornaments, weapons and armaments that finally found its way into the barrows of eastern Lithuania was manufactured in different workshops, whereas the place of its manufacture does not necessarily coincide with the place from which an artefact arrived in eastern Lithuania. This statement is illustrated perfectly by the grave of the 'duke' of Taurapolis, so well known in European historiography, which remains the northernmost place in Europe that reflects both interregional contacts between nobilities and migration processes (Werner 1977; Tautavičius 1981). However, a no lesser number of significant graves of leaders of the nobility of the highest social standing have been found in the barrow burial fields of Sudota, Pavajuonis-Rėkučiai, Borava and Ziboliškė over recent years. The new material widens both the perception and the possibilities for interpretation of the course of the Migration Period in eastern Lithuania and the forest zone of northeast Europe. Therefore, we can assume that some luxurious weapons and artefacts travelled together with their owners, who were penetrating further into the forest zone of northern Europe until the empire of Attila (circa 406–453) finally collapsed after the battle fought in 454 at the River Nedao. Small multi-ethnic groups of newcomers must have reached eastern Lithuania and managed to gain a foothold there, and took control over the main roads leading to the north towards the Daugava, and to the southeast towards the Dnieper (Zabiela, 1995, p.49-50, Fig. 37 Bliujienė 2006, p.137ff, Fig. 7; Bliujienė, Steponaitis 2009, p.201ff). For the newcomers taken by fate so far north, the aspiration to gain a foothold in the newly reached and geopolitically important territory by radically changing the spatial structure of power and authority that existed there, and, without any doubt, by involving the local nobility and their armed people in the process, was an unavoidable necessity. However, judging by the concentration of wealth and weapons, as well as by the number of robbed graves, confrontations between the local communities and their leaders persisted. Nonetheless, the newcomers managed to gain a foothold or to get the upper hand, which we can see today only in a small territory of about 50 to 60 square kilometres (a micro-region). For some time, these people managed to keep in contact with their scattered tribesmen, but relations broke off as early as the first quarter of the sixth century, and the migrants were 'dissolved' among local people within three or four generations (Bliujienė, Steponaitis 2009, p.201ff). Simultaneously, within a few generations, gold and silver artefacts were also dissolved, due to their partition and re-partition. It is obvious that some were buried together with their owners; but, if it was necessary, luxurious artefacts could be

intentionally taken from the temporary custody of an ancestor, or just stolen from graves. On the other hand, during the Migration Period, the large amount of silver, silver-gilt and gold artefacts in graves stimulated robbery from graves and the trade in prestigious metal artefacts, scrap metal, and ingots from scrap metal. The extent of this phenomenon is indicated by the treasure troves of precious metal scrap found in central and northern Europe, which often consist of brooches, belts, horse harnesses or fragments, or silver artefacts already re-melted into ingots (Levada 2011, Figs. 3; 6). Amber beads⁴ occasionally found in such treasure troves once again serve as convincing proof of both the scope of the distribution of amber during the Migration Period and the routes of its distribution, which practically coincide with the distribution of prestigious artefacts. The latter circumstance demonstrates one of the mechanisms of the distribution of amber, and the routes along which amber was brought to eastern Lithuania (Bliujienė 2011, Fig. 72). Anyway, there were no artefacts made from precious metals in the hands of the living any longer, and, of course, nobody knows whether they rest together with the deceased (maybe some of them have not yet been found). However, the crux of the matter is that nobody in eastern Lithuania ever attempted to create derivatives of luxurious artefacts from the past. This fact confirms indirectly that the newcomers to the micro-region discussed here, just like the wealth and the ideas they brought along, were simultaneously 'dissolved'.

The answer to the question why both local people and newcomers erected barrows lies in the very barrow as a monumental overground structure. Even in the presence of an uneven spatial distribution of cultural and civilisational resources, as well as the large variety of communication barriers, the mass erection of barrows intended for burying deceased people of a high social standing began in Europe between 550 and 750. Even barrows that had been erected earlier were used for the purpose. During the Migration Period, barrows were widespread in the region of the upper and middle reaches of the Rhine, in the upper reaches of the Danube, in the south and southwest of Britain, in the western part of the Jutland Peninsula, in central Sweden, between the Elbe and the Rhine, in a large part of the forest belt of northeast Europe, and, finally, in the lower reaches of the Don (Noort 1993, Fig. 2; Müller-Wille 1997; Périn, Kazanski 2007, p.32ff, Fig. 7.1-7.2; Bezuglov, Tolochko 2002, pp.43-49, Figs. 1; 2; Lopatin, Furasev 2007, p.283ff). Moreover, these graves

⁴ Kachino (Świętokrzyskie voivodeship, Poland), mid-fifth century; Goponovskii (Koloczyn culture), seventh century, and so on (Levada 2011, p.117; Gavritukhin, Oblomskii 1996, p.20).

II

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

are accompanied by horse offerings (Müller-Wille 1997, pp.247-256, Figs. 1; 3-6; Périn, Kazanski 2007, p.34ff, Figs. 10-11). Hence, the barrows of eastern Lithuania from the Migration Period fit the European context. At the same time, barrow V at Taurapolis, in terms of its size and position within the barrow burial field, the unique finds and the exclusive social standing of the buried individual, corresponds with the European horizon of such burials (Tautavičius 1981, pp.18-43, Figs. 2-6). Furthermore, it is not surprising that it was exactly such people that were buried together with horses in eastern Lithuania (Bliujienė, Steponaitis 2009). Hence, the custom of erecting barrows corresponds best with the essence of the demonstration of the power of authority. The erection of barrows in eastern Lithuania began as early as the late second century. For this reason, barrows continued to be erected, although gradually they turned into collective family tombs, or the tombs of a certain social group. It is obvious that the erection of barrows was accompanied by long and repeated rites. This fact also serves as a demonstration of authority and power, which directly reflects the ideology of chiefdom created by employing force. Inseparable components of the planigraphy of the barrow burial fields of eastern Lithuania are empty barrows, which, among other important meanings, undoubtedly marked the boundaries of burial fields or their groups (Bliujienė 1992, pp.119, Fig. 1; 4 Table). Apparently, for the purpose of creating the impression of a property managed from old times, such empty barrows might have marked the territory of a community (Kurila 2007). On the other hand, before the custom of cremation took hold, a barrow was, first and foremost, an individual grave, or, apparently, the burial place of closely related people (mother-child, father-child, husband-wife). This fact might once again indicate that the very barrow and its size as a monumental structure⁵ emphasise the social standing of the buried individual.

The heritage of the mid-sixth and seventh centuries in east and southeast Lithuania

The period between the mid-sixth century and the seventh century in Lithuania has long been known as the 'dark times', or 'cultural stagnation' (Puzinas 1938, 100-101), which could be characterised by the short-

⁵ What is meant here are the size of the barrow of the 'duke' of Taurapolis and the exceptional size of barrow 17 of Paduobė-Šaltaliūnė III barrow burial field. An individual of high social standing was buried in the latter barrow. The grave was robbed soon afterwards (Tautavičius 1981, Figs. 2-6; Bliujienė, Steponaitis 2009, Figs. 16-18).

age of archaeological material that does not allow us to fill in the period between the Late Migration Period, especially its final phase, and the Viking Period. The phenomenon of the 'dark times' of the sixth and seventh centuries in Lithuania, just as in the Baltic Sea region, can be explained as a stage in the development of social and economic relations in society; the changes in these relations are reflected first and foremost in the stratification processes and the ideology of society. However, the broken-off relations of the region with Europe changed the geopolitical situation of east and southeast Lithuania, which is reflected in the changing structure of the population. The changing inner and outer structures of barrows indicate changes in ideology. Furthermore, as has already been mentioned, after the emergence and consolidation of the custom of cremation, barrows became the collective burial places of a family or a social group. During the aforementioned period, east Lithuanian barrows 'crossed' the Žeimena in the west. In the east, the boundary of their distribution reached the area around lakes Svyriai and Narutis. Eastern Lithuania's barrows spread to the left bank of the Neris, whereas the northern boundary of their distribution coincides with the sources of the River Žeimena. As early as the sixth and seventh centuries, eastern Lithuania's barrows type are known in the upper reaches of the Merkys and in the vicinity of Dieveniškės (Fig. 3) (Luchtanas, Ušinskas 1988, Fig. 2). The cultural space occupied by east Lithuania's barrows acquires features characteristic of the southeast and east Baltic region; however, the area continues to look very bellicose. This feature survived until as late as the end of the 12th century, when the custom of building barrows died out. Demographic changes during the expansion of the cultural space of eastern Lithuania might have been the essential causes of the demonstration of bellicosity in the mid-sixth and seventh centuries, leading to a new confrontation, which manifested itself through spatial configurations of power aimed at changing the geopolitical structure of authority in the middle reaches of the Nemunas and the interfluvium of the Merkys and the Neris. The consequences of this process are observed as a gradual change of burial monuments in the interfluvium; the territories inhabited by the Yotvingians (in the narrow sense) and the Lithuanians were undergoing changes, too. During this period, people from the late Medieval sources know as the Yotvingians would construct barrows with mounds built from several layers of stones and soil, with stone circles surrounding the mounds. In the times of their expansion, the northern boundary of the distribution of such barrows coincided with the pre-

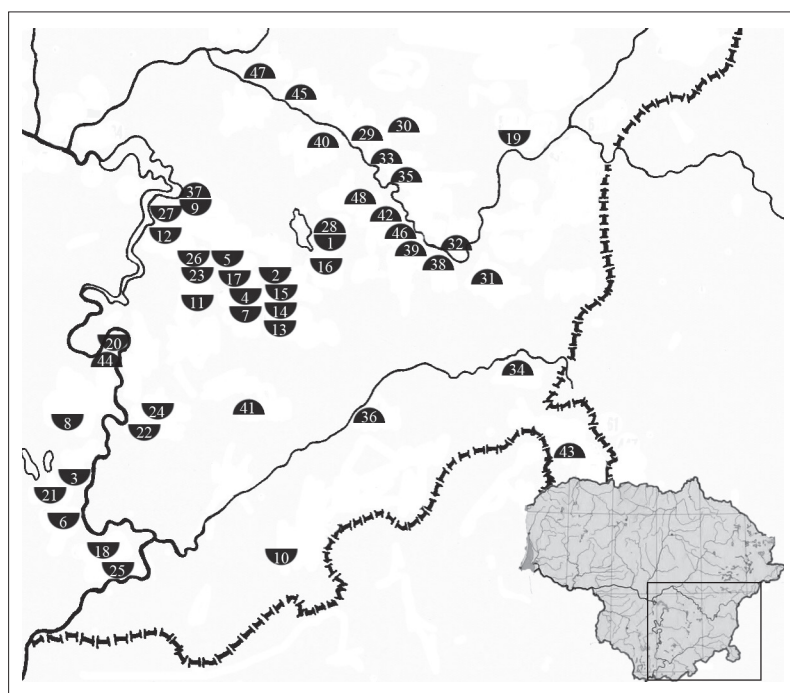


Fig. 3. The distribution of barrow fields and burial sites (?) between the middle reaches of the Nemunas and the interfluvium of the Merkys and the Neris in the Migration Period of the Late Roman Age.

Barrows with mounds built of stones and burial sites (?) from the Migration Period in the Late Roman Age: 1 Alinka (Raistinė, Trakai district); 2 Beizonys (Žydiškės, Trakai district); 3 Dirniškės (Alytus district); 4 Eitulionys (Trakai district); 5 Klėriškės (Elektrėnai district); 6 Krikštonys (Lazdijai district); Lavariškės (Trakai district); 8 Luksnėnai (Alytus district); 9 Maisiejūnai (Kaišiadorys district); 10 Mickonys (Varėna district); 11 Medžionys (Prienai district); 12 Migonys (Kleboniškis, Kaišiadorys district); 13 Moša (Nausodai, Trakai district); 14 Moša (Skrebys forest, Trakai district); 15 Migliniškės (Trakai district); 16 Musteniai (Baubonys, Trakai district); 17 Nemaitonys (Žydiškiai, Kaišiadorys district); 18 Papiškės (Varėna district); 19 Pučkalaukis (Vilnius district); 20 Punios Šilas (Alytus district); 21 Seiliūnai (Lazdijai district); 22 Slabadėlė (Slobotka, Alytus district); 23 Varkaliai (Elektrėnai district); 24 Vieciūnai (Alytus district); 25 Vilkiautinis (Varėna district); 26 Vindžiuliškės (Elektrėnai district); 27 Visginai (Elektrėnai district).

Late Migration Period barrows of the Lithuanians, with mounds built of sand and encircled with stone crowns or pit holes: 28 Alinka (Raistinė, Trakai district); 29 Ardiškis (Širvintos district); 30 Aukštieji Rusokai (Vilnius district); 31 Dusinėnai (Vilnius district); 32 Gudeliai (Lenkiškiai, Vilnius district); 33 Grabijorai (Vilnius district); 34 Jašiūnai, Geložė (Šalčininkai district); 35 Karmazinai (Vilnius district); 36 Kuršiai (Varėna district); 37 Maisiejūnai (Kaišiadorys district); 38 Neravairigiškės (Trakai district); 39 Padvariškės (Trakai district); 40 Pakalniai (Vilnius district); 41 Pamusiai (Varėna district); 42 Popai (Vingeliai, Trakai district); 43 Poškonys (Poškai, Šalčininkai district); 44 Punios Šilas (Alytus district); 45 Rusių Ragas (Širvintos district); 46 Sausiai (Bevandeniškės, Trakai district); 47 Vanagiškis (Jonava district); 48 Varliškės (Orliškės, Trakai district) (based on the 'Atlas of Archaeological Monuments of the Lithuanian SSR' [LAA, 1978], A. Kurilienė, 2009, with annexes by the author).

II

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

sent-day area of the Elektrėnai district (Fig. 3). In the second half of the sixth century, the burial monuments of the Lithuanians, who built soil barrows encircled by stone crowns and pit holes, crossed the Neris and spread further to the south. Although the Yotvingians remain one of the least-studied ethnocultural groups, today we can substantiate the former confrontation and territorial change with material from several excavated

monuments. The examples of Alinka (Raistinė)⁶ and Maisiejūnai barrow burial fields might indicate that barrows built and abandoned by the Yotvingians began to be used by the Lithuanians in the 11th and 12th centuries. Although grave robbery became extremely widespread during the Migration Period, and its causes were various, the robbed barrow burial fields of tribal border areas at Eitulionys and Maisiejūnai might also

⁶ Barrow IX with a mound built of stones and a child's grave (Bliujienė 1992, Figs. 5; 6).

be a consequence of border conflicts (Bliujus 1983; Butėnas 1998; Kurila 2009a).

Is that weapons clanging, or jewellery jingling?

In the course of the analysis of male graves from the mid-sixth and seventh centuries in the middle reaches of the Nemunas and the interfluvium of the Merkys and the Neris, the horizon of cremation graves of well-armed males can be seen. In the graves of males, one or two spearheads, a blunt-ended axe, a battle-knife (knives), a belt (sometimes bound with metal plates), an iron strike-a-light and a whetstone are normally found, and occasionally a shield and a new weapon, a *scramasax*-type single-edged sword, are found, too (Fig. 4). Other items that are occasionally found in the graves of males include a crossbow long-footed brooch, a ladder brooch or a crossbow brooch with an adze-shaped foot, a bracelet with thickened terminals, a ribbon-line bracelet and a neck-ring (Figs. 4-6). Therefore, the men's outfit continues to be uniform, whereas the armaments remain standard (Tautavičius 1996, p.54ff, Fig. 10; Kurila 2009b, Figs. 12; 48-49; 92-95). In the Late Migration Period, too, the belt remains an important element of the armament, and a sign of the social standing. Therefore, at least some belts are decorated with rectangular plates of various sizes. It was exactly such a belt with a quadrangular iron buckle, as well as a plate, that was found in Pamusiai barrow 1, grave 3.⁷ Furthermore, a small whetstone that was also found in this grave at Pamusiai barrow must have been attached to a belt (Fig. 5.8) (Szukiewicz 1900; Kuncienė 1973).⁸

Single-edged swords (single-edged *scramasax*-type swords⁹), which appeared in the sixth century, be-

⁷ In Pamusiai barrow burial field, more than one buckle and a dozen or so belt bindings, as well as a dozen or so parts attributable to belts, were found, but the latter are not ornamented (LNM AR 122: 110-114). Regrettably, the composition of some of the graves excavated by Wandalin Szukiewicz (1889, 1890 and 1893) remains unclear.

⁸ Belt plates with similar decoration were found in the seventh-century grave 1 of Ziedoņskola (Bauska district, Latvia) burial site (Griciuvienė *et al.* 2005, p.44ff). It is difficult to say anything definite about the semi-circular ornamented plate found in grave 5B, barrow 10 of Sudota I barrow burial field, which might be a piece of a pendant (Kaczyński 1963, Fig. 18.o), or about the pieces of a plate found in Pilviškiai barrow I, grave 1, which might be the remains of decayed scabbard bindings (Vaitkevičius 2002).

⁹ Also known as *Langsaxe* (German) (Akhmedov 2010, pp.322-338, Figs. 3-10).

came common in the men's weaponry in the groups of western Lithuania, the lower reaches of the Nemunas, the land of Lamata, Samogitia, central Lithuania, Samland-Natangia, Elbing and Olsztyn, as early as the beginning of the seventh century. They appeared in eastern Lithuania at the same time, too¹⁰. Besides one or two or even four spears, single-edged swords with handles without cross-pieces, as well as knives with metal-plated scabbards, are occasionally found in the graves of well-armed men. The sword becomes important proof of the legitimacy of the right to authority, and a hero's tool in battles for the consolidation of power in geopolitical spaces. Hence, through relations with the ancestors, and a certain authority conferred by the ancestor(s), the sword acquires ritual meanings, too. When performing certain rites, swords (just like some other artefacts) might have been recovered from the graves of not-so-distant ancestors, and returned, or not, or finally returned to another place, and not the one they had been recovered from (Fischer *et al.* 2009; Blijujienė, Steponaitis 2009). Apparently, it was a rare, but not unique, custom during the period discussed here. On the other hand, we know of other instances such as the theft of weapons from a dead enemy; in the case of robbery, it might have had symbolic meanings, too (Kurila 2007; 2009a).

Furthermore, not one but several massive knives (20 to 25 centimetres long) suitable for battle are found in the graves of males of the region under discussion (Fig. 6.1-2) (Kuncienė 1973, p.107ff; Kazakevičius 1981; 1988, pp.82-92). The wooden leather-covered scabbards of swords or battle-knives from the sixth and seventh centuries in eastern Lithuania were secured and decorated with unique metal parts of different sizes. Such scabbard binding plates are rectangular in shape, with tabs intended for securing, or cylindrical (Fig. 7; 8).¹¹ Cylinder-shaped bindings would be secured to the scabbard with two rivets through holes in the back (Fig. 7). The historiography of eastern Lithuania's rectangular plates and cylinder-shaped fittings abounds in

¹⁰ Single-edged swords 54 to 60 centimetres in length without handle cross-pieces are so far known only from Varliškės (the context is not clear) and Pamusiai (barrow 1, grave 1) barrow burial fields (Kuncienė 1973, p.107, Fig. 4.5; Kazakevičius 1981, p.56, Fig. 12).

¹¹ In 1975, during her research into the plates found in the barrows of east and southeast Lithuania, Regina Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė attributed all of them, without any exception, to women's headbands (1975).

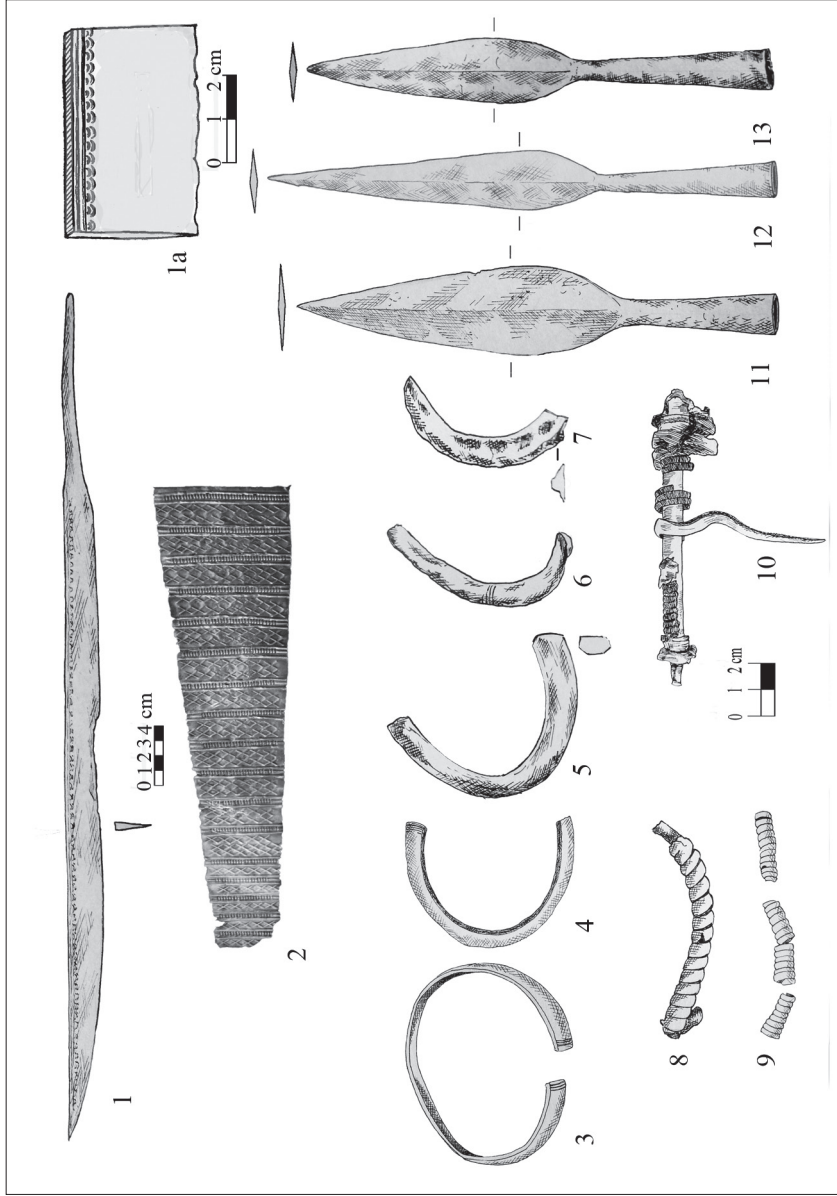


Fig. 4. Finds from the barrow field of Varliškės (Orliškės, Trakai district) from the 1889 excavations by E. Volters: 1, 2, 12-14 iron; 3-11 bronze (LNNM AR 126, museum card index).

II

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

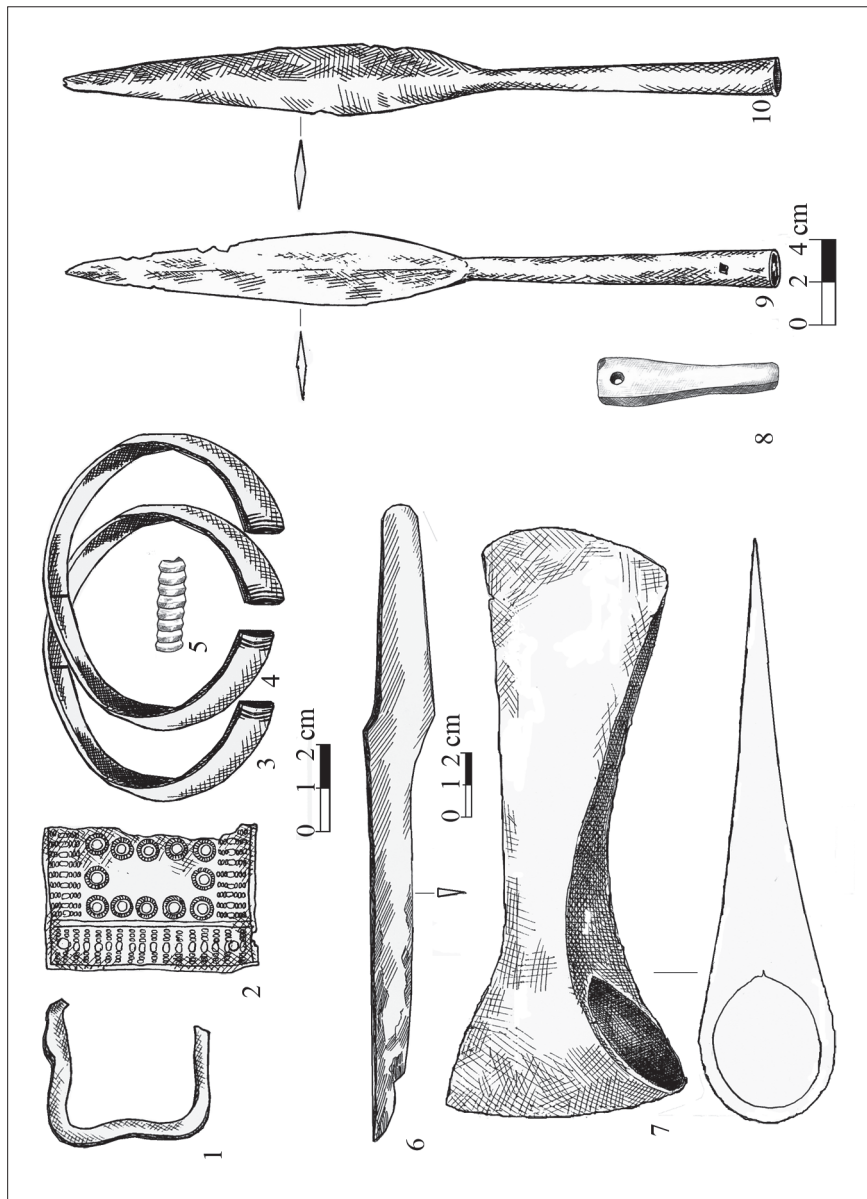


Fig. 5. Pamusiai (Varena district) barrow field, barrow 1, grave 3: 1, 6-7, 9-10 iron; 2-5 bronze; 8 stone (LNM AR 122: 11-20, card index).

the vicissitudes of the development of archaeological science. At some point in time, cylinder-shaped fittings were thought to be amulets, specifically shaped personal ornaments; at a later time, they were attributed to artefacts of a purpose not quite clear; and, finally, they were characterised as parts of metal headbands (Pokrovskii, 1897; Szukiewicz, 1900; Antoniewicz, 1930; Kuncienė 1969; 1973; Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 1975). However, rectangular plates with tabs for securing, as well as a cylinder-shaped bindings, are most probably merely bindings for sword and battle-knife scabbards (Fig. 8). However, rectangular plates with holes in their corners are undoubtedly belt bindings (Fig. 7).

Swords would be put into wooden leather-covered scabbards with loops. The edges of these scabbards would be plated with bronze bands, whereas the ends would terminate in u-shaped or v-shaped bindings (Bertašius 2009, Plates 61-62; Kazakevičius 1981, Fig. 11; 1993, p.40ff; Urbańczyk 1978, Plate II). In the burial monuments of the land of Lamata (Vilkyčiai/Wilkieten), Samland-Natangia, Elbing and Olsztyn groups, single-edged swords were found, the scabbards of which were decorated with bronze plates (Ehrlich 1931 Figs. 2; 3; 7; 10; Kontny 2011, Plates IX; X; LX). In the barrows of east and southeast Lithuania, neither u-shaped nor v-shaped bindings or loops through which the weapon would be attached to the belt have been found. However, in 1889, during the excavation of Varliškės (Orliškės) barrow burial field, Eduards Volters (1856–1941) found a plate that had decorated the scabbard of a single-edged sword, although no fragments of the metal binding that reinforced the edges of the scabbard were found (Fig. 4.2).

In Pučkalaukis barrow burial field (in the Vilnius district), barrow 18, grave 2, a bronze plate 4.8 by 2.3 centimetres in size was found. Judging by its size and construction (there are special tabs at its ends, which can be bent, and thus the plate can be attached to a scabbard), it was the binding of the face of a sword scabbard (Fig. 8.1; LNM AR 123: 10).¹²

Cylinder-shaped scabbard bindings 7.7 to eight centimetres in length and 5.3 to 5.5 centimetres in width, found in the barrows of east and southeast Lithuania, were made of a thicker ornamented plate; that is why

¹² A piece of yet another plate was found in grave 4 of the same barrow, along with a clay spindle and an awl. The piece is small, and it is difficult to make a judgment about its designated purpose (Jankevičienė 1958; LNM AR 123: 13).

they are heavy. Depending on their diameter and size, these bindings have hoop scabbards in several places (Figs. 7; 8).¹³ So far, such cylinder-shaped sleeves have only been found in the barrow burial fields of Pamusiai, Pabarė and Lintupiai.¹⁴ Usually, such sleeve-shaped bindings were decorated on the outside, and visible to bystanders; however, the cylindrical scabbard binding found in Pabarė barrow 10, grave 3, is decorated on both sides. The bronze cylinder-shaped binding found in the aforementioned Pabarė barrow comes from the grave of a female, as can be judged by the grave goods (spindles, awls, and bronze spiral beads)¹⁵ (LNM AR 127: 53¹⁶; Kuncienė 1969, 66, Fig. 10; Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 1975, p.89ff, Figs. 3-4; 7). Two cylindrical bindings of different sizes (approximately seven by 5.5 centimetres, and four by four centimetres) were found in each of the two cremation graves at Lintupiai (Postavy district, western Belarus) barrow burial field, barrow 4 (Pokrovskii 1897, p.143ff, Fig. X.5, 6). The cylinder-shaped bindings were actually found in very rich graves of females, as can be judged by the grave goods. Furthermore, in this barrow, under the turf, in the remains of a fire, a 17.5-centimetre small knife was found in a leather scabbard, the end of which was wound with a bronze wire (Pokrovskii 1897, Fig. X.1). Therefore, it is evident that a u-shaped or v-shaped scabbard end binding could be replaced with a wound wire. Heavy bindings of different sizes might indicate that they conformed to the shape of swords or knives that tapered towards the blade (Fig. 8). On the other hand, the aforementioned small knife was found above

¹³ In Pamusiai barrow burial field, in the graves of males who had lost their 'complexes', there are not only cylinder-shaped scabbard bindings, but also bronze parts, which might have helped to attach the scabbard to the belt.

¹⁴ A few pieces of such cylinder-shaped bindings are still kept at the LNM. They were received from the Museum of Antiquities, but on their way to the LNM they lost their findspots and complexes.

¹⁵ The regular collection and research into cremated bones actually began only a few decades ago. Preliminary studies have shown that the grave goods placed in graves do not give a decisive answer to the question about the gender of the buried individual, or the number of individuals buried in a single grave, or what else, besides humans, is buried there (Kurila 2009b). On the other hand, for various reasons, the cremated bones found in most graves have not provided an answer to the question about the gender of the individual(s) buried in a definite grave.

¹⁶ The other side of the sleeve six by seven centimetres in size is decorated with ornamentation at its rims, too. This might indicate that both sides of the artefact were supposed to be seen. The ornamentation supports the assumption that these heavy bindings were intended for the decoration and attachment of the scabbard of a sword or a battle-knife.

II

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

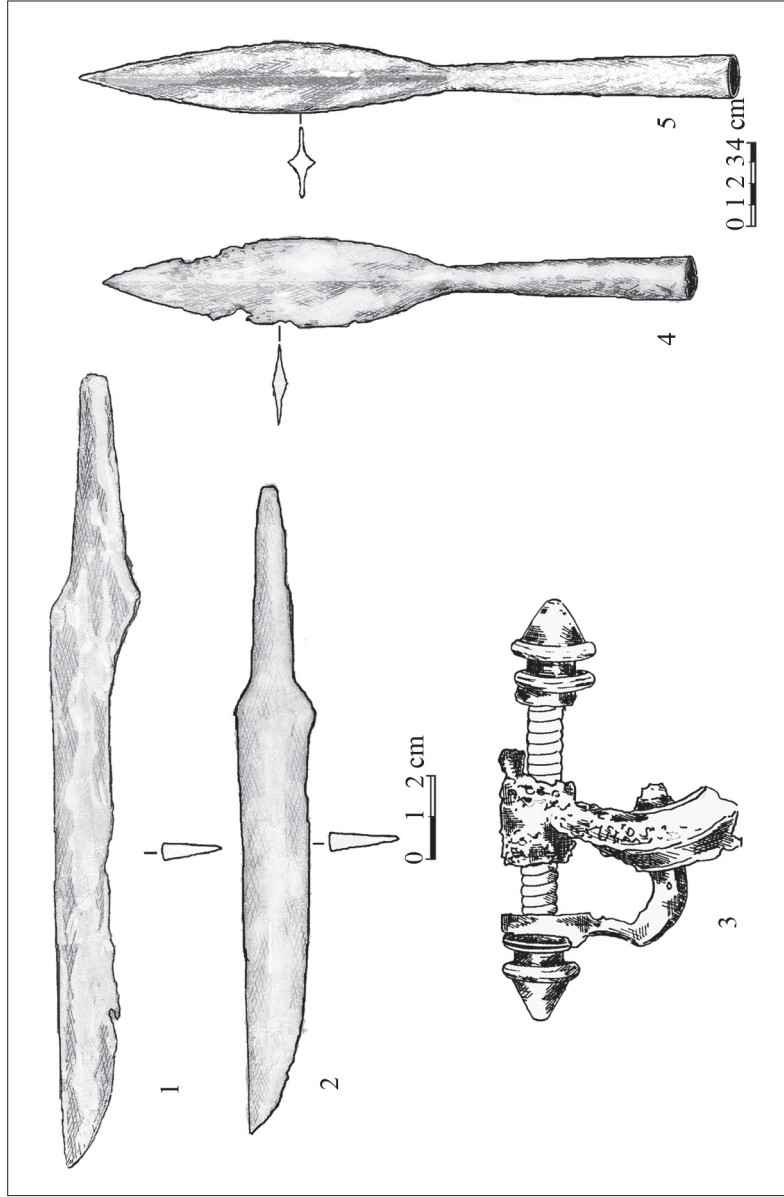
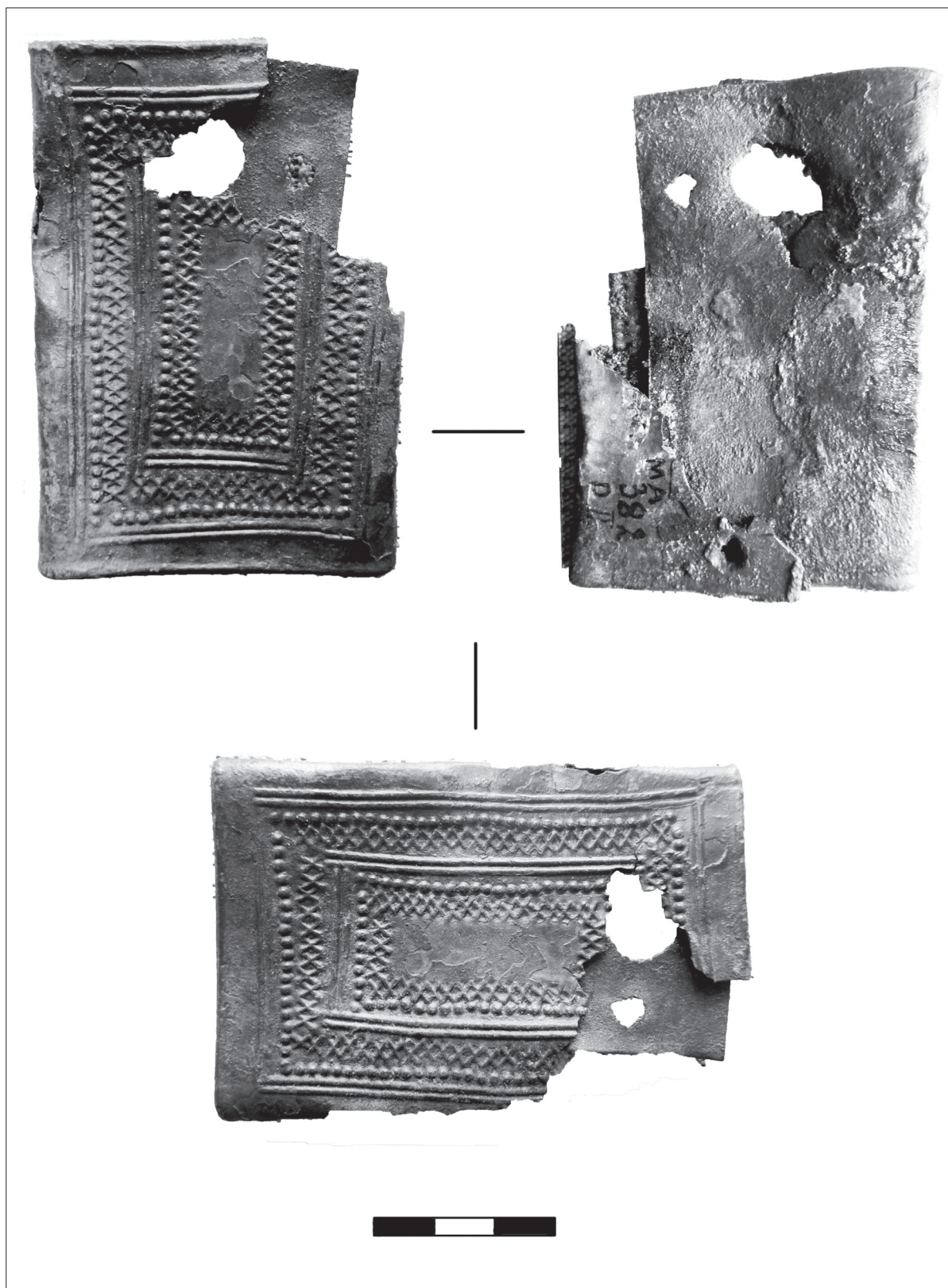


Fig. 6. Pamusiai (Varėna district) barrow field, barrow 1, grave 2: 1-2, 4-5 iron; 3 bronze (LNM AR 122: 6-10, card index).



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

Fig. 7. A cylinder-shaped binding of a scabbard of a single-edged sword or battle-knife found in Pamusiai barrow field. The circumstances of finding are not clear; dimensions seven by 5.3 cm (LNM AR 122: 109) (photograph by A. Bliujienė).

the grave in which the two cylinder-shaped bindings were found. This fact might first and foremost indicate the complexity of the burial rites, and allow us to go back, once again, to the phenomenon of the burial of swords, battle-knives, and, last but not least, even household knives in contemporary or later burial monuments. For example, six knives and an awl were buried in one of the largest barrows at Kapitoniškės (in the Kaišiadorys district), barrow 8, perhaps as part of a burial rite or during later ceremonies. Seven cremation graves were found in this barrow, and in only one of them were fragments of a small spiral found (Tautavičius 1957, p.100).

The ornamentation of the rectangular belt plates and cylinder-shaped bindings found in the east Lithuanian-type barrows of the middle reaches of the Nemunas and the interfluvium of the Merkys and the Neris is similar to the decoration of the scabbards of single-edged swords found in the burial monuments of Samland-Nantanga, Elbing and Olsztyn. Although no comparative analysis of the ornamentation has been carried out, we can identify quite easily a stylistic similarity based on identical geometric motifs. Compositions on the basis of the balustrade, herringbone, small pearls and X motifs, widespread throughout the entire Baltic Sea region during the Migration Period, are the easiest to recognise. On the other hand, the cylinder-shaped bindings found in the region of Lithuania discussed here bear similarities to the cylinder-shaped bindings of single-edged swords and battle-knives from the fifth to the seventh centuries from the middle reaches of the Danube, the north coast of the Black Sea, the coast of the Azov Sea,¹⁷ and the Finns of the Ryazan-Oka group.¹⁸ However, the cylinder-shaped bindings found in Lithuania have neither edge bindings nor holders. The sword had to be attached through the latter to the belt (Ambroz 1989; Limberis, Marchenko 2011, p.11ff, Fig. 10; Monchin's'ka 2009, Fig. 56). It is clear that the missing parts might have been burnt in a bonfire. On the other hand, as has been noted by researchers into weapons from different countries, swords and battle-knives, and especially the construction and the decoration of their scabbards, were developing on the basis of local traditions, by merging traditions of weapon production adopted in different ways, and innovations. Therefore, it is highly likely that cylinder-shaped bindings of a unique construction were a short-lived invention by the

¹⁷ These bindings are made of gold or silver.

¹⁸ The cylindrical scabbard bindings of the single-blade swords of the Finns of the Ryazan-Oka group are made of iron. They are dated to the late fourth to early sixth century (Akhmedov 2010, pp.322-338, Fig. 3).

bladesmiths and jewellers of east and southeast Lithuania.

In the 1970s, all the plates found in the barrows in eastern Lithuania and discussed in this article were attributed to parts of women's headbands,¹⁹ despite the fact that some of them were found in the graves of males (Fig. 5) (Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 1975, pp.85-95). The plates of the headbands are far smaller and narrower, and made of thin tin. Furthermore, this woman's head-covering is chronologically later and attributable to the eighth to the 11th century. On the other hand, the method of burial of the barrows of the middle reaches of the Nemunas and the interfluvium of the Merkys and the Neris, just like that of the barrows of all of eastern Lithuania, is complicated due to the custom of cremation of the body, ceremonies during the burial and at a later time, and exposure to diverse influences. Therefore, rich women in the sixth and seventh centuries must have worn a headband consisting of rows of metal spirals, to which tiny bells made of thin tin were attached. Hence, the material discussed here allows us to claim that when men were travelling to the afterworld, it was their weapons that were clanging; and when women were stepping into the unknown, it was tiny bells that were jingling.

With reference to the geopolitical situation in the middle reaches of the Nemunas and the interfluvium of the Merkys and the Neris in the seventh century, we have to note that the problem of the rapidly changing boundaries of the territories of the Yotvingians and the Lithuanians remains unsolved (Kurila 2005, literature pertaining to this issue is listed). As the distribution of burial monuments attributable to the Yotvingians indicates, the Yotvingians were continuously pushed out by the Lithuanians from the geopolitically favourable territory that allowed for the control of regional sectors of navigation along the Nemunas and the Neris, as well

¹⁹ Beside the belts and cylinder-shaped bindings of the scabbards of swords and battle-knives mentioned in this article, the following items have been attributed to headbands: the pieces of a plate found in Čiobiškis barrow, grave B, of a female (Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 1975, p.88, Fig. 3). In Varliškės barrow 4 (11), grave 2, a small piece of a headband plate, a spiral and a piece of an awl were found (Luchtanas 2000, p.191). This tenth to 11th-century cremation grave belongs to a person of an anthropologically undefined gender, aged 15 to 40 years old. As can be judged by the grave goods, it is the grave of a female (Luchtanas 2000, p.191). Actually, the plate might belong to the late-period women's headbands found in the barrows of eastern Lithuania, which have no connection whatsoever with the larger and heavier cylinder-shaped bindings.

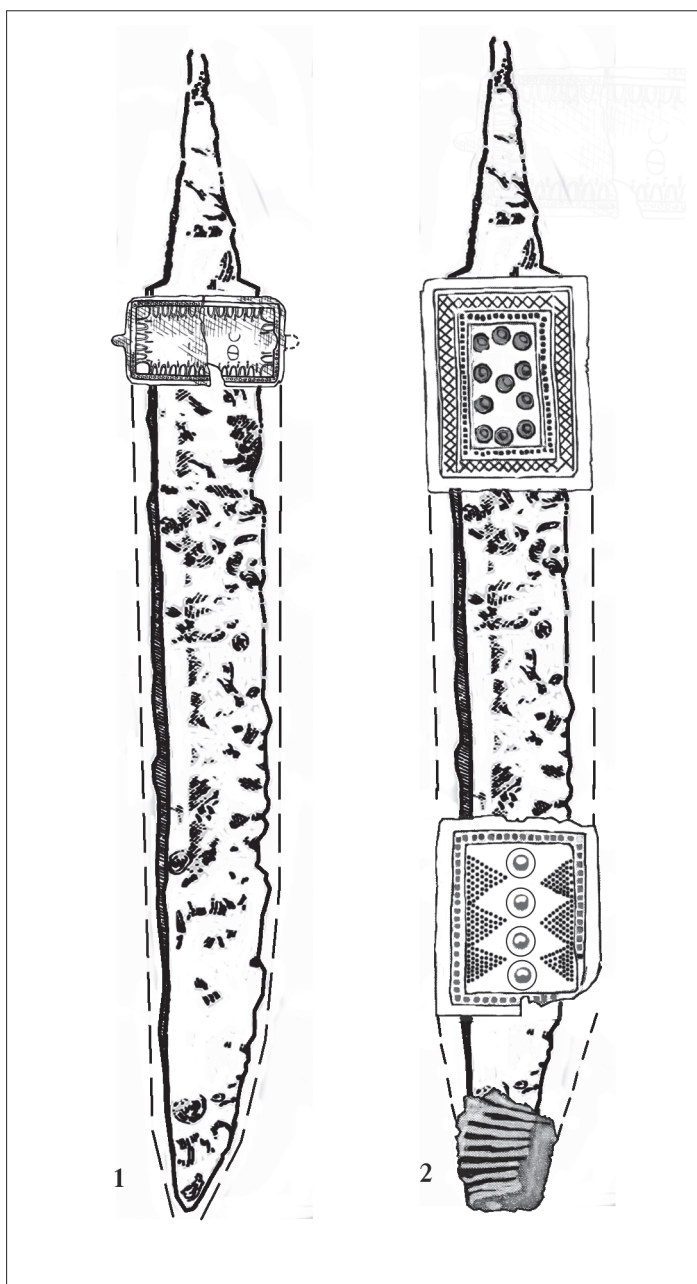


Fig. 8. A schematic reconstruction of scabbards of single-edged swords decorated with a rectangular binding and cylinder-shaped bindings on the basis of: 1 Puškalaukis barrow 18, grave 1; 2 Lintupiai barrow 4 (based on LNM card index AR 123: 10; Pokrovskii 1897).

II

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

the Merkys, an important artery, and access to the Dau-gava. Yet, as far as the left bank of the loop of the Ne-munas at its confluence with the Merkys is concerned, during the Late Migration Period, the Yotvingians were still in control of this important crossroads (Vilkiauti-nis and Papiškės), as can be concluded from material known today. However, the material available does not answer the question as to who inhabited this region in the eighth and ninth centuries. Written sources men-tion that the Lithuanians inhabited the middle reaches of the Nemunas in the late 13th century (Petri de Dus-burg 27, § 260 (253)).

Conclusions

1. Between the second half of the fifth century and the early sixth century in eastern Lithuania, between lakes Tauragnai, Vajuonis and Žeimenis, on the basis of archaeological material, we can single out a micro-region which formed on a polyethnic basis. This was the same basis on which the chiefdom took shape here, too. The development of this micro-region, which co-incides with the second half of the fifth century, can be traced clearly, whereas its decline can be dated to the early sixth century.
2. The sixth and seventh centuries saw the intensive spread of east Lithuanian-type barrows in a southeast direction. The region continued to be well armed, as can be concluded from the burial material.
3. In cremation graves in the middle reaches of the Ne-munas and the interfluvium of the Merkys and the Neris dating from the mid-sixth and seventh centuries, cylinder-shaped and plate-shaped bindings are found, which should be interpreted as unique bindings of scabbards of battle-knives or single-edged swords typical of this region alone.
4. In the mid-sixth and seventh centuries, in the mid-dle reaches of the Nemunas and the interfluvium of the Merkys and the Neris, a confrontation between dif-ferent ethnocultural groups, the Yotvingians and the Lithuanians, can be seen, as can be concluded from the distribution of different burial monuments.

Abbreviations

Arch. Lituana – *Archaeologia Lituana* (Vilnius, since 1999)
 ATL – *Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje metais* (Vil-nius, since 1967)
 Lietuvos arch. – *Lietuvos archeologija* (Vilnius, 1979)

LNM AR – National Museum of Lithuania, Department of
 Archaeology, Vilnius
 MAD, A – *Lietuvos TSR mokslų akademijos darbai, serija A*
 (Vilnius, 1955–1989)

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II

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

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GINKLUOTI RYTŲ IR PIETRYČIŲ LIETUVOS ŽMONĖS GEOKULTŪRINIUIOSE TAUTŲ KRAUSTYMOSE LAIKOTARPIO KONTEKSTUOSE

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama greitai kintanti V a. antrosios pusės – VII a. geopolitinė ir geokultūrinė situacija pietrytinėje ir rytinėje Lietuvos dalyse, nulemta tiek europinių, tiek regioninių žmonių judėjimo procesų (1–3 pav.). Atkreipiamas dėmesys į vykusį galios ir valdžios koncentravimą bei demonstravimą ir nuolatinę konfrontaciją tarp žmonių grupių, gyvenusių pietinėje Užnemunės dalyje ir pietrytinėje Lietuvoje bei Rytų Lietuvoje. Greita geopolitinės situacijos kaita ir žmonių judėjimas skatino V a. antroje pusėje – VII a. formuotis vadystėms su stipriais lyderiais priešakyje. Natūralia laikotarpio raiška tapo ginklo jėga ir jos demonstravimas (4–8 pav.). Be to, VI a. vid. – VII a. Nemuno vidurupio, Merkio ir Nerios tarpupyje, sprendžiant iš skirtingų laidojimo paminklų paplitimo, matoma konfrontacija tarp skirtingų etnokultūrinių grupių: žmonių, kurie mirusiuosius laidojo iš akmenų sukonstruotuose pilkapiuose, ir tų, kurie mirusiuosius laidojo pilkapiuose, supiltuose iš smėlio ir apsuptuose vainikų bei duobių ar griovių.