

# THE FORMATION OF A SAMBIAN-NATANGIAN CULTURE PATRIMONIAL ELITE IN THE ROMAN PERIOD IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AMBER TRADE

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## Abstract

The article presents certain features of Sambian-Natangian culture in the Roman Period. The author directly links characteristics of the social structure of Aestian society, which formed at the turn of the B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>2</sub> periods, to the nature of the amber trade, in which members of Sambian-Natangian culture participated widely. It is possible to draw some conclusions on the basis of the interrelations revealed, and to attempt to give a very general and subjective reconstruction of the Aestian social structure which had developed by the end of the Roman Period.

Key words: Sambian-Natangian culture, Roman Period, amber trade, Aestian society, patrimonial elite.

## Introduction

The question of social differentiation in communities that existed in the *barbaricum* during the Roman Period has attracted the attention of many researchers. To date, there exists a body of research whose authors, frequently basing their work solely on archaeological data, have attempted to reconstruct the social realities of the period of Roman influence. These include works by Heiko Steuer, Volker Bierbrauer, Joachim Werner, Ulla Lund Hansen and Lotte Hedeager (Werner 1980; Bierbrauer 1989; Hedeager 1992b; Steuer 1994; Lund Hansen 1988; Ethelberg 2000). It should be noted that the main attention of these researchers has been focused on studying the social structure of the residents of Germania Libera. In their social interpretations, the authors generally use data collected from archaeological research on burial sites. In their conclusions, they put the main emphasis on factors such as the burial rite and the presence in complexes of certain categories of grave goods.

Some attempts to reconstruct the social structure of Sambian-Natangian<sup>1</sup> society in the Roman Period have been made by Vladimir I. Kulakov. He has published his theses on social differentiation among the Aestii<sup>2</sup> during the Roman Period in several articles (Kulakov 2000; 2003b, pp.71-94; 2003-2004).

If we start an analysis of the social structure of Aestian society based only on data from the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, which

provided much on the burial grounds of Sambia and Natangia (Fig. 1), we will not be able to identify clear criteria for the selection of elite burials. However, in the last few decades, new data has been obtained, which, together with the earlier known data, allows us to raise the issue of the existence of a noble class within Aestian society in the Roman Period.

There is no doubt that research into the social characteristics of ancient Sambian-Natangian culture deserves much closer attention than the brief review that is possible within the limits of this article. Therefore, to keep within the space available, I will focus solely on certain aspects of the subject. Namely, I will try to track the most obvious interrelations between:

- features of the occurrence of Sambian-Natangian and adjacent cultures, and possible scenarios for the development of relations between them
- features of the amber trade, which changed throughout the Roman Period
- features of the funeral stock from Aestian burial grounds during the Roman Period.

As will be shown further, all these aspects are connected. On the basis of the interrelations revealed, it will be possible to draw some conclusions, and attempt to give a very general and subjective reconstruction of the Aestian social structure that had developed by the end of the Roman Period. It should be noted that if we want more coherent and reasoned conclusions, we would have to analyse a much greater quantity of material, which would be difficult to do, not only because of the length of the article, but also because of the small number of published works on sites of Sambian-Natangian culture in the Roman Period.

<sup>1</sup> Sambian-Natangian culture is also known as Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture (Nowakowski 1996).

<sup>2</sup> The Aestii are identified with the inhabitants of the amber coast of the southeast Baltic (for this, see Nowakowski 1996).



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Fig. 1. Sambian-Natangian burial grounds dated to the Roman Period (after K.N. Skvortsov, A.S. Sidorov).

## The beginning of Sambian-Natangian culture

At the turn of the first century BC and the first century AD, the effect of the disintegration of West Baltic Barrow culture was felt by separate cultural groups. The decline of this cultural community is generally fairly connected with the process of the formation of the West Balt tribes (Tautavichius 1980, p.82ff). As a result of the transformation of West Baltic Barrow culture in the Early Roman Period, Sambian-Natangian and Bogaczewo cultures, and also the Lower Nemunas group of sites emerged. The time of the appearance of Sambian-Natangian culture can be related approximately to the boundary of phases B<sub>1</sub>/B<sub>2</sub> (the last quarter of the first century AD). However, until now, the moment of the origin of Sambian-Natangian culture has not been accurately isolated from the context of the latest phase of West Baltic Barrow culture (Okulicz 1973, p.353ff).

A comparative mapping of West Baltic Barrow culture burial sites and burial fields of Sambian-Natangian and Bogaczewo cultures, with all the evidence, shows a territorial continuity. West Baltic Barrow culture burial sites can be divided into three local groups. These are: the territory of Sambia and Natangia, with the coast of the Vistula Lagoon; the valley of the River Pregel (Pregolya); and the Masurian Lakeland and Warmia. The area of the central part of Natangia, which in terms of geology has little use for conducting slash-and-burn agriculture during the period considered, was practically not occupied up to the time of the Teutonic Order.

The Sambian peninsula was undoubtedly the centre of West Baltic Barrow culture. It is hard to overestimate the importance of the coast of the Vistula Lagoon as a major thoroughfare, or its great role from the Stone Age. To an extent, this also applies to the River Pregel. It is clear that the Pregel was the main thread that linked two groups of West Baltic Barrow culture bearers in Sambia and the Masurian Lakeland. The colonisation of Natangia, Warmia and Nadrovia usually took place along small rivers. These small rivers flow into the Vistula Lagoon and the River Pregel, and have their sources in the Warmian hills and within the borders of the Masurian Lakeland. Thus, the location of Bronze Age and Early Iron Age sites indicates the direction of the West Baltic Barrow culture resettlement process from Sambia to the south. The group of sites from that time that have emerged on the boundary of Sambia and Nadrovia, near the confluence of the rivers Lava and Pregel, is certainly connected to these processes.

The turn of phases B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>2</sub> in Sambia and in the mouth of the River Pregel is marked by a sudden tran-

sition from typical West Baltic Barrow culture group cremation, with a small amount of metal stock as burial items, to individual inhumation. As a rule, these individual inhumations have a northern orientation, and contain many bronze and iron products, Roman glass beads, and new types of funeral ceramics which have no counterparts in the local culture of the Early Iron Age. Most of the luxury and metal stock has parallels with Noricum-Pannonian material, as well as with the Germanic cultures of Eastern Europe and Scandinavia (Blume 1912; Brøndsted 1963; Stenberger 1977; Klindt-Jensen 1978; Eggers, Stary 2001; Skvortsov, Radiush 2008, p.130). Almost all inhumations from this period, frequently in pits, are enclosed by a solid stone enclosure (as a rule, of a rectangular shape, and less often rounded) (Gaerte 1929, pp.162-205).

In connection with these changes in the burial rite, researchers have produced a number of contrary hypotheses regarding the ethnic origins of residents in the northern part of the former East Prussia. According to some hypotheses, the local culture was mono-ethnic, and was the direct successor of West Baltic Barrow culture. According to others, the local culture could have been formed on a multi-ethnic basis, and had a social elite that included Germans (Goths) and even Celts (Blume 1926, p.138ff; Gaerte 1928, p.45ff; Engel 1932, p.686; Engel 1933, p.261; Okulicz 1973, p.369; Kulakov 2000, p.380ff; 2004; 2005, p.63; 2007, p.85).

It is amazing how fast and elusive the transition from West Baltic Barrow culture to Sambian-Natangian culture was. We might assume that this sharp change in the burial ceremonies and burial traditions was somehow indirectly connected with the archaeologically fixed resettlement of part of the population from southern Scandinavia to the southern shores of the Baltic Sea. We mean here the appearance of groups of Odra-Wensera sites in adjacent territories in Pomerania (Shchukin 1994, pp.245, 278-279). This migration, which led to the emergence of Wielbark culture, may also have resulted in the appearance of Sambian-Natangian culture. This is why a number of researchers explain the similarity in some elements of the burial ceremony and burial stock between Sambian-Natangian and Wielbark cultures as the influence of bearers of Wielbark culture (Schindler 1940, Table 12.10, 16.6.7; Wołagiewicz 1987, p.197, Fig. 8; 1993, Table 70; Nowakowski 1996, p.59)

Burials with weapons during the early stages of Sambian-Natangian culture are typical neither of the

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preceding West Baltic Barrow culture nor of the adjacent Wielbark culture. However, similar burials with a lot of weaponry and other similar forms of funeral stock existed in the Early Roman Period in Przeworsk culture, on the Baltic Sea islands, and in Scandinavia (Jahn 1914, Taf. I–II; Okulicz 1973, p.373; Mogil'nikov 1974). In this connection, it is possible to assume that the appearance of Sambian-Natangian culture, at least in part, is bound not so much to the influence of Wielbark culture as to the influence from the Baltic Sea islands or from southern Scandinavia. It is notable, however, that at exactly the turn of phases B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>2</sub>, the new cultures of the Roman Period were emerging in neighbouring Lithuania (Michelbertas 1986, pp.30–31, 41; Tautavičius 1996, p.74ff; Žulkus 2004, p.18ff). The fact that their appearance coincides with the time of Wielbark and Sambian-Natangian cultures allows us to assume that it may be for the same reasons.

The fact that, due to its geographical location, the southeast Baltic region is the gateway that leads from the central part of the north of the continent towards Eastern Europe is another argument in favour of the assumption. This area was connected not only with large waterways (the rivers Vistula, Daugava/Western Dvina and Neman/Nemunas, which stretched for hundreds of kilometres from the depths of the continent to the Baltic coast), but also with the east branch of the Gulf Stream.

Thus it may allow us to make the suggestion that a certain group of immigrants arrived from the Baltic Sea islands, and served as a catalyst for the emergence of Sambian-Natangian culture. This group of newcomers was initially in conflict with the 'Goths', on the basis of which Wielbark culture was founded. This fact substantially affected the nature of the relationship between Sambian-Natangian and Wielbark cultures at an early stage. However, without the accumulation of further data and additional research, this assumption can exist only in hypothetical form.<sup>3</sup>

There is no doubt that the development of a culture at the stage of the decline of a tribal community depends on the nature of its relations with neighbouring cultures. We can distinguish different types of interaction: migration, conflict, trade, and so on (Aleksin 1986, pp.4–5, 163). The development of Sambian-Natangian culture was influenced to varying degrees by these factors. However, we tend to assume that one of the main factors that gave a powerful impetus to its development was the amber trade. It should also be

noted that the author of this article directly links the characteristics of the social structure of Aestian society, which formed at the turn of the B<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>1</sub>–C<sub>2</sub> periods, with the nature of the amber trade, in which members of Sambian-Natangian culture participated widely.

It has to be noted that the dominant role in the amber trade was undoubtedly played by members of east Germanic tribes, at first by carriers of Przeworsk and later Wielbark cultures (Skvortsov, Ibsen 2010, p.269). This fact was evidently caused by the geographical location of the German tribes. Attention should be paid to the fact that according to Tacitus, the word for amber used by the Aestii, '*glesum*', is German by origin. In the opinions of some researchers, this word probably testifies to the trading contacts between the Germans and the Aestii/Balts, and amber was undoubtedly the basic product in trade relations between them (Kuz'menko 2011, p.169ff). One more piece of evidence is that the German borrowed word *glesum* previously existed in the languages of the Balts. The Latvian word *glihse*, found in the dictionary of 1777, may have Prussian roots (Kuz'menko 2011, p.170).<sup>4</sup>

#### Sambian-Natangian culture and the amber trade in the Early Roman Period

The absence of sites of the Sambian-Natangian cultural group dated to the B<sub>1</sub> period along the coastline of the Vistula Lagoon, and the possible relocation of its population to the lower reaches of the River Nemunas, suggest that relations between the nascent Wielbark and Sambian-Natangian cultures were hostile for a while. For this reason, during the emergence of Sambian-Natangian culture, the residents of Sambia and Natangia were cut off from the most convenient section of the trade route passing along the coast of the Vistula Lagoon. Thus, their trading contacts were redirected through the territory of the related Bogaczewo culture. It is possible to assume that at the end of phase B<sub>1</sub> (70/80 AD), amber from the Sambian Peninsula could have been taken as a transit commodity along the River Pregel, further over smaller rivers with their sources in the Masurian Lakeland, through the area of Bogaczewo culture, and into the area of Przeworsk culture. The dense network of archaeological monuments which spread to the northeast of the Sambian peninsula and far from the amber production area could testify to

<sup>3</sup> For the connections of the Aestii with the people of the Baltic Sea islands, see also the article by Olga A. Khomiakova in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> However, the etymology of the word *glesum* remains a subject for discussion, even despite the hard work of several generations on the question. The origin of the word cannot be explained in terms of roots from the Balt languages (editorial note).

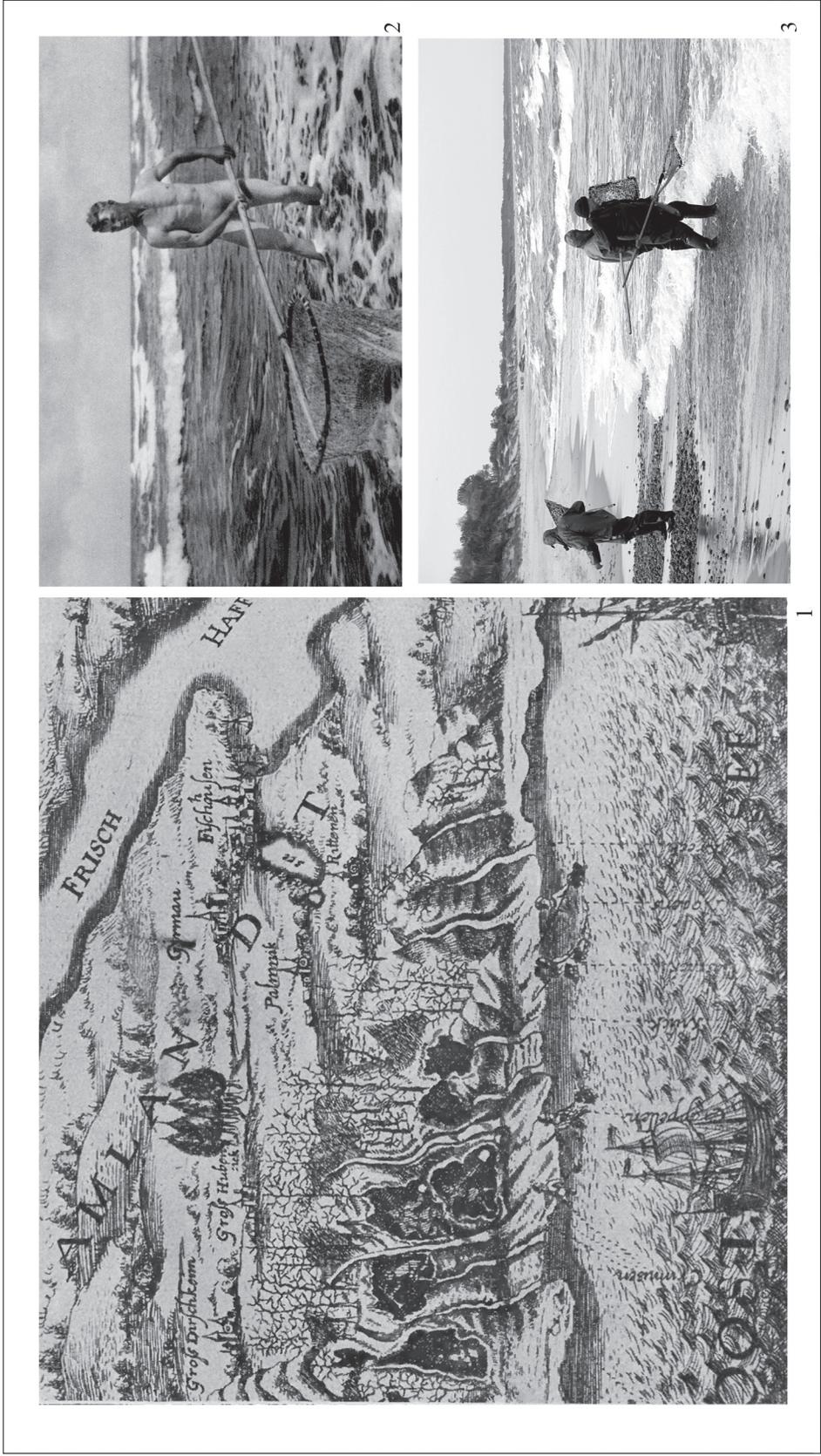


Fig. 2. Amber gathering on the Sambian Peninsula: 1. amber gatherers in the 18th century (Hartmann 1677); 2. amber gathering at the beginning of the 20th century (after Franz, Krause 1936, p.47); 3. contemporary amber gathering (photograph by R. Shirouchov 2009).

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their connection with the Nemunas-Pregel river system in the times when the Nemunas could have run into the present Pregel and into the Vistula Lagoon (Aistmarès/Frisches Haff) (Žulkus 2006, p.17ff).

However, this assumption requires further empirical verification.

As for the character of the amber trade during this period, there are two important features that should be noted:

- Amber ornaments are rather rare in burials of Sambian-Natangian culture (Bliujienė 2007, p.269; Skvortsov 2010, p.91). The exceptions are small bi-conical or round amber beads, rare in necklaces that contain several hundred Roman mosaic beads, glass beads, bronze beads and separation rings, where they often constitute about 10% of the total number of beads (Plate IV.1).

- The main commodities being exchanged for amber were Roman glass beads, a variety of bronze items<sup>5</sup> (mainly fibulae and belt set parts), and possibly some items made from iron. There were almost no luxury items.

Based on these characteristics, we can conclude that in the early stages of the amber trade, amber itself was treated by the Aestii simply as a material without any special value or sacral importance. All the members of tribal groups could have participated in the collection of amber, which made it cheap to collect (Fig. 2). To confirm this, we can turn to the story from Tacitus: 'To themselves it is of no use: they gather it rough, they expose it in pieces coarse and unpolished, and for it receive a price with wonder' (Tacitus, *Germania* § 45).

Analysing the imports coming into the territory of Sambian-Natangian culture in this period, we can characterise them as standard and unified, which fully reflects the colonial<sup>6</sup> nature of the amber trade in the Early Roman Period. The few luxury items, if there were any, were received not by trade but in the form of gifts (cf. Nowakowski 1996, p.69ff). We should also mention the fact that the type of imports in the decline of the Early Roman Period completely coincides with the type of Roman imports on the Danish islands at this time (Lund Hansen 1988, p.155ff). In general, as has been noted by many researchers, the image of Sambian-Natangian culture has much in common with the cultures of Central Europe and Scandinavia.

<sup>5</sup> And huge quantities of raw bronze (editorial note).

<sup>6</sup> In this context, we compare the amber trade of the Roman Period to Modern Age trade between Europeans and less civilised communities in colonised territories, and also to the fact that the goods exchanged with Europeans were items of no special material value (Morgan 1935, p.324; Nowakowski 1996, p.78ff)

## Sambian-Natangian culture and the amber trade in the Late Roman Period

The status of Sambian-Natangian culture in the amber trade begins to change radically starting from the B<sub>2</sub> period. At this point, we can trace the establishment of permanent links with Wielbark culture in its Lubowidz phase, which may have been caused by the relocation of its bearers to the areas of Olsztyn and the Hława Lakeland, or zone D according to R. Wołągiewicz (1981, p.85) and M.B Shchukin (1994, p.247). In my opinion, the numerous burial sites of Sambian-Natangian culture appearing along the shore of the Vistula Lagoon during the B<sub>2</sub> period testify to the normalisation of contacts with the bearers of Wielbark culture.

Some new finds of burial grounds from the Roman Period around the area of the Vistula Lagoon also testify in favour of such an assumption (Skvortsov 2012a). The distance between the sites of two cultures is reduced to approximately ten kilometres, and we can now observe numerous analogies in the burial goods of both cultures (Andrzejowski, Cieśliński 2007, p.281, Fig. 2). Apart from the numerous analogies in the burial goods, there are also some finds of Wielbark culture in West Baltic burial grounds. This fact suggests the normalisation of the relationship between the two cultures (Kawiecka, Stanaszek 2000, p.93ff; Cieśliński 2008, p.96ff).

In the period B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>1</sub>, some pieces of raw amber and some Roman coins start to appear in burials (Nowakowski 1996, pp.74-79) (Fig. 3.2). This should be considered an important sign of variations in the nature of the amber trade, and of the growing importance of amber to the Aestii. During the period B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub>, the character of imports begins to change. Alongside the classic forms presented during the earlier period, some new items of a higher status start to appear in the burials. An example of such a sort of luxury find might be a *pugio* from Ilischken, a fragmented *terra sigillata* from a burial at Klein Fließ, a *tintinnabulum* from Friedrichsthal, and a bronze Roman shield boss from Schackumehlen, which was part of a buried treasure find, together with 32 Roman copper coins (Brinkmann 1900, p.73ff, Fig. 1; Heydeck 1900, p.57ff; Bolin 1926, p.209; Gaerte 1929, p.211, Fig. 159.c.e.f.g; Raddatz 1993, p.141, Fig. 8; Nowakowski 1996, p.68fff, Plates 92.1, 99.8, 102.2) (Fig. 4.7; Plate IV.2.2). It should be noted that from the period B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub> to the fourth century, the Roman coins which appear firstly only in male burials after a while become a typical part of any Aestian burial, regardless of gender or age (Skvortsov 2012b, p.163). It is significant that all the coin hoards uncovered in the Sambian Peninsula date from the beginning of the B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub> period, and that the sites of their finding mark the basic trade routes (Fig. 5; see also catalogue).



Fig. 3. Coins from the Sambian-Natangian burial ground at Lauth: 1 an Emperor Caracalla sestertius (211–217) (Nikeja); 2 an Emperor Antoninus Pius sestertius (138–161) (Rome); 3 an Emperor Antoninus Pius sestertius (138–161) with Olbia supracoinc (photographs by K.N. Skvortsov).

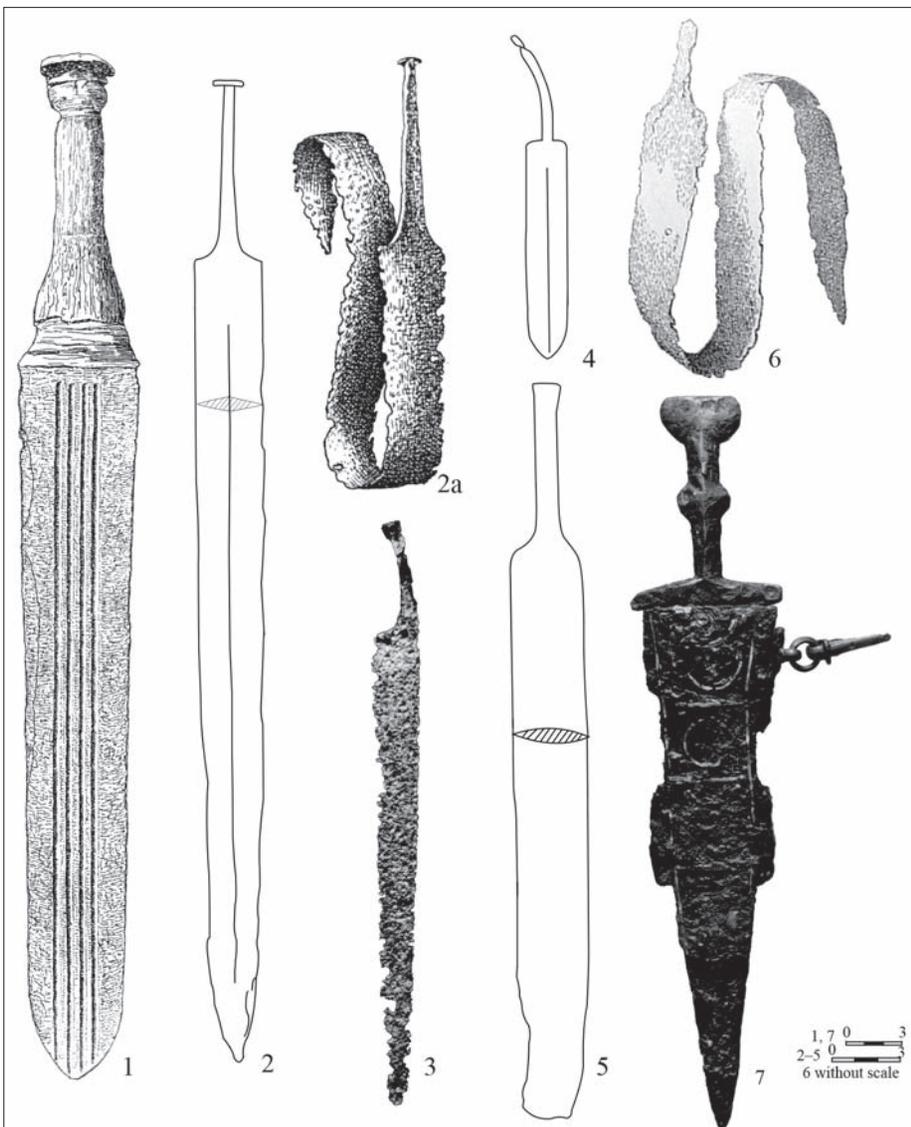


Fig. 4. Swords and daggers from Sambian-Natangian burial grounds dated to the Roman Period: 1 Wiekau, Kr. Fischhausen (Khrustal' noe, Zelenogradsk district), burial 34 (after Raddatz 1993, p.135, Fig. 3.a); 2, 2a Gaffken, Kr. Fischhausen (Parusnoe, Zelenogradsk district) (after Gaerte 1929, p.254, Fig. 197.c); 3 Moritten, Kr. Labiau (Sibirskoe, Polessk district) (Nowakowski 2007, p.87, Fig. 2.1); 4 Plauen, Kr. Wehlau (Fedotovo, Pravdinsk district) (Nowakowski 2007, p.87, Fig. 2.5); 5 Preussisch Bahnau, Kr. Heiligenbeil (western Mamonovo, Bagrationovsk district) (Grenz' archive).

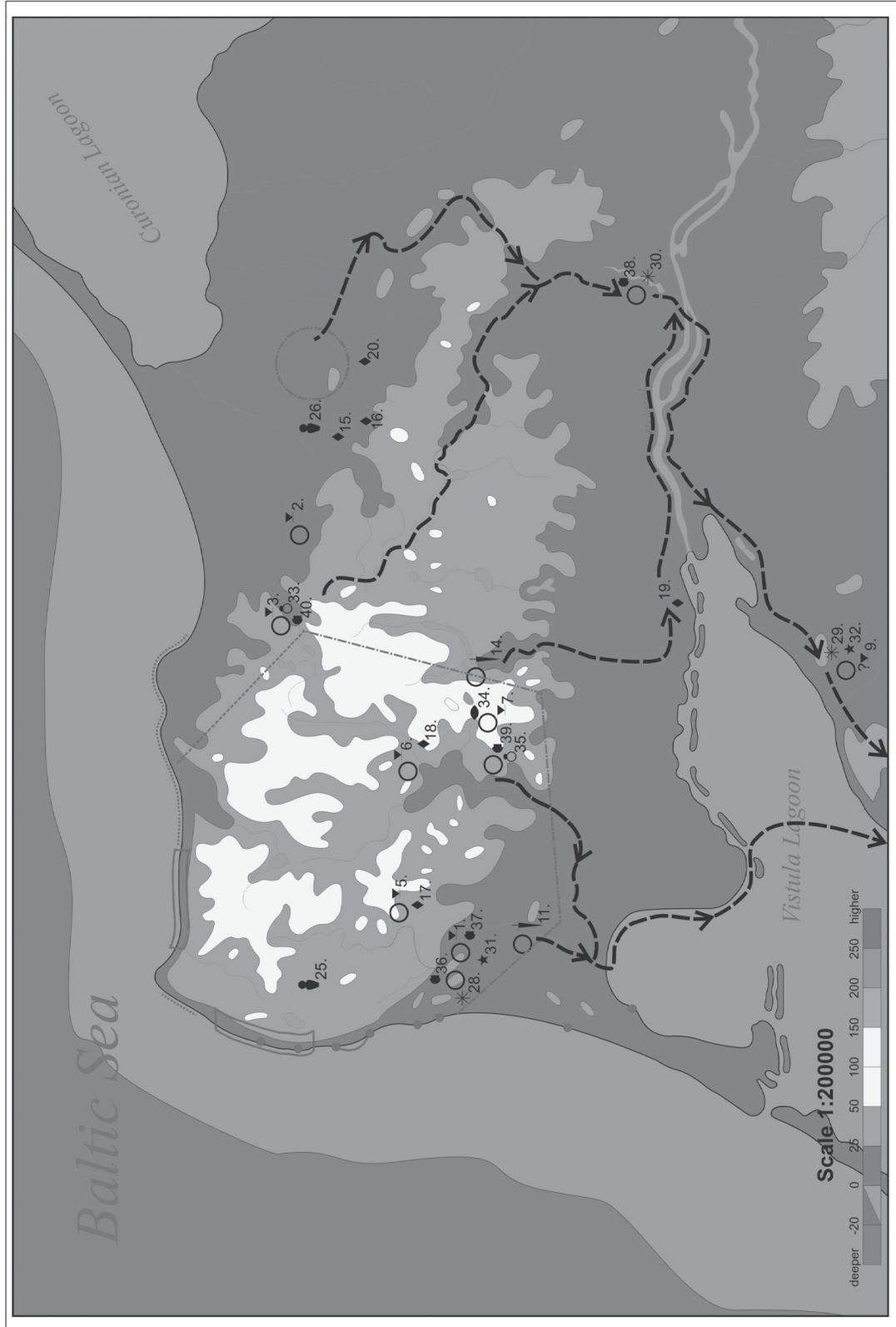


Fig. 5. Amber deposits and Roman imports on Sambia: ● bracelet; \* gold coins; ▼ vessels; ▲ shield boss; ◆ hoards; \* fibulae Almgren VII group; ● payment ingots; † swords and daggers; † statuettes; ◊ gold adornments; [ ] amber deposit area (after Schlicht 1922, p.408 with author's additions); [ ] crops of blue amber-bearing clay (after Schlicht 1922, p.408); [ ] the most important amber deposits (after Schlicht 1922, p.408); [ ] basic bays of amber collection at the end of the 16th century (after Schlicht 1922, p.408, with author's additions); amber roads. The distribution of Roman imports (after K.N. Skvortsov).

From the turn of the second and third centuries, some new Roman imports began to spread throughout Sambian-Natangian culture. These were imported luxuries, such as silver spoons (*ligulae*), numerous finds of Roman handbells (*tintinnabulum*), glass, metal and ceramic dishes, and Roman coins, mostly of Italic coinage, in good condition, which researchers assume arrived via the Rhine-Denmark route (Gaerte 1929, pp.210ff, 159, 161-163; Burche 1992, pp.231-244) (Figs. 3; 6; Plate IV.2).

There are Roman and Germanic imported swords in burials from the given period (Nowakowski 1994, Fig. 2; 2007, Fig. 2) (Fig. 4). A similar situation during this time with variations in the character and type of imports can be observed in neighbouring cultures, Bogaczewo culture and in Scandinavia (Lund Hansen 1988, p.158ff; Nowakowski 2001, p.26ff). We can also see the continuing trend for numerous coincidences between burial goods of Sambian-Natangian culture and the burial goods of cultures of the Germanic circle.

Contacts between Sambian-Natangian and Wielbark cultures most likely became especially close during phases C<sub>1a</sub>–C<sub>2</sub> (200–225 AD to 275–325 AD) (Skvortsov 2012a). Many imports from the area of Wielbark culture testify to this assumption, as well as the minimal distance between the territories of these two cultures, which shortened to five or six kilometres (Cieśliński 2010, Kartes 4, 5; Skvortsov 2012a). It is common knowledge that at the end of the Late Roman Period and at the beginning of the Migration Period, some sites of Wielbark and Sambian-Natangian cultures were located at a distance of about one kilometre from each other (Andrzejowski, Cieśliński 2007, pp.282, 305, Figs. 3; 25). Another obvious piece of evidence of the sharp progress in contacts between Sambian-Natangian and Wielbark cultures during the Late Roman Period is the rich burials of members of Sambian-Natangian culture, with typically Wielbark silver snake-head bracelets, fibulae types A216<sup>7</sup> and A217, and other luxuries that were common for members of the east Germanic elite (Gaerte 1929, p.235, Fig. 179.d; Nowakowski 2000, p.148, Fig. 1.d; Skvortsov 2001, pp.117, 119, Plates.136; 138) (Plate V.1a; 2.h-m).

A clear example of a similar sort of burial could be the finds at the Uschakovo-1 burial ground, located on the shore of the Vistula Lagoon. At this ruined burial site an aureus of the Roman emperor (268–270 AD, Colonia 269 AD, RIC 94; Mattingly *et al.* 1927) that was

<sup>7</sup> The following systems of find typology are used in the article: fibulae, Oscar Almgren (1897); vessels, Hans J. Eggers (1951); finger-rings, Christamaria Beckmann (1969); bracelets, Tadeusz Wójcik (1987); buckles, Renata Madyda-Legutko (1987).

used as a pendant, and a large silver fibula (a derivative of types A216 and A217) with some gilded parts, attributed by E. Straume to the so-called 'Baltic type', were discovered (Almgren 1897, Plate IX, Figs. 216; 217; Straume 1988, p.168) (Plate V.1b; 2.d).

There is no doubt that the majority of innovations and imports from the Wielbark area reached the Sambian Peninsula, the heart of Sambian-Natangian culture, both by sea and via the amber road along the coast of the Vistula Lagoon from Sambia up to the mouth of the Vistula. We also know from the burial ground by the River Vistula about the main Wielbark culture centre that existed at the end of the second century. This site played a huge role in commerce, and in interregional and inter-ethnic contacts between Scandinavia and the Black Sea region (Okulicz-Kozaryn 1992, p.104ff; Lund Hansen 2000, p.81; Natuniewicz-Sekuła, Okulicz-Kozaryn 2008, p.227).

The character of Roman imports in Sambian-Natangian culture remained generally constant up to the end of the C period. All classic types of finds are presented, including luxury items. There are also finds of silver and gold ingots in burials, along with pieces of Roman silver vessels (Ebert 1926, p.74; Skvortsov 2001, p.151; Golubev 2010) (see Plate V and catalogue).

On the whole, the proportion of finds made of precious metals including gold increases, which basically conforms with the trend in imports in the Baltic Sea islands, and in Denmark in particular. It has to be noted that during phase C<sub>1b</sub>, along with coins of Italic coinage, we also see coins from Asia Minor and the Black Sea coast, which arrived via the Danube and the Black Sea (Skvortsov 2007, pp.172, 189, Plates 26.10; 43.4) (Fig. 3.1, 3).

We should examine the changing nature of the amber trade in the Late Roman Period. During this time, the trade, and more precisely the control of it, became a profitable business that had a direct influence on the differentiation of elites within Aestian society. Since the middle of the third century, the Gothic Wars were an important factor that also influenced the amber trade with the Roman provinces. The development of the amber trade undoubtedly did not benefit from these wars (Shchukin 2005, pp.134-151).

The general crisis in the Roman Empire, which began to disintegrate at the end of the third century, and the devastating attacks by the Goths, who swept across the northern shores of the Black Sea in the middle of the third century, led to a weakening of many traditional communications, a reduction in imports, and the economic decline of cities, which in turn was reflected in all areas of economic and cultural life (Mashkin 1956,

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pp.501-515; Alekseeva 1982, p.49; Wolfram 1990, capt.III; Kolendo 1998, p.21ff). The invasions of the Roman Empire by the Goths were frequent and damaging, so the amber trade became very dangerous, and with the devastation of the population of the Roman provinces, it became unprofitable. In this regard, it is possible to assume that at that time, the territories of the *barbaricum* had become the main trading area (Budanova 1990, p.103; 2000, pp.31-42). The new lands were populated first of all by the Goths who came during their movement south, and also by the tribes involved in this resettlement (Shchukin 2005, pp.90-103; Shchukin *et al.* 2011, pp.246-291).

As we can see, the progress of Sambian-Natangian culture in the Roman Period is closely connected with pan-European processes that took place during the period, which is obvious, because this culture was not isolated, and we consider it only in the context of the *barbaricum* as a whole (Andrzejowski, Cieśliński 2007, p.309).

We will now look at some historical aspects of the progress of Sambian-Natangian culture. However, in order to gain a more complete picture of the events of that time, we should focus on certain geographical patterns. Judging by the location of luxury finds, the majority are strongly linked to traditional sites for gathering amber on the Baltic coast, or to the watersheds of numerous rivers connected with the Vistula Lagoon and the River Pregel as important water routes associated with the trade route from the Sambian Peninsula to the mouth of the Vistula (Fig. 5). This is completely consistent with the geomorphology of the Sambian Peninsula. The maximal concentration of Roman Period sites, with a high content of Roman imports, including luxuries, falls on the western part of the Sambian Peninsula, which is bound by moraine heights that stretch from the northwest to the southeast, and where the numerous streams and rivers originate and then flow into the Vistula Lagoon and the River Pregel. Perhaps this is the very site of the ancient trading centres which played an important role in communications between Sambia and the Wielbark culture area (Schlicht 1922) (Fig. 5).

A comparative mapping of Sambian burial sites with luxury finds clearly identifies three groups of burial grounds. These sites skirt from the east and the south all the main area where amber deposits are found. Perhaps these groups of sites may indicate the presence of three local elite groups, each of which controlled a small territory of about ten kilometres in diameter. Similar local groups are on the River Pregel and the coast of the Vistula Lagoon in the direction of the Amber Road (Fig. 5). A similar arrangement of burials that

contain the remains of elites, when they split into local areas of about 15 to 28 kilometres in diameter, is also typical of the Danish peninsula and the islands of the Baltic Sea (Green 2007, p.3)

### The social structure of Aestian society in the C period

In research situations like ours, where reliable documentary records of a community's evolution in earlier times are missing, the most effective way to reconstruct its social structure is to employ archaeological finds. Unfortunately, we do not have any research results related to habitation sites of Sambian-Natangian culture in the Roman Period, so we have to rely entirely on finds from burial sites. However, in my opinion, burial sites are a 'distortion mirror of the reality', and a reconstruction based on them would be very unoriginal. In order to transport the imagination to a social model that is more in line with the real one, we should set the general history of the *barbaricum* in Pax Romana as the background of the reconstruction.

As is customary in contemporary research, the social status of the deceased individual can be most easily identified by the number, richness, rarity and prestige value of the grave goods. Only the most socially *prominent* community members could afford rich funerals and provide the deceased with a sufficient number of mortuary gifts, which show the social status of the deceased (Hedeager 1992a, p.285ff; Green 2007, pp.3, 13; Mastykova 2009, p.159ff).

Researchers of rich burial sites in neighbouring sites contemporary with those of Sambian-Natangian culture put the emphasis on a range of important aspects which must be taken into account within the framework of a social investigation. Volker Bierbrauer, for instance, affirms that the significant inventory of silver and gold artefacts in burial sites, along with imported items from Rome, enormously exceeding the number of the same from similar finds in other burials, are the most characteristic markers of the rich, or so-called 'princely', burials of Wielbark culture in the Late Roman Period (Bierbrauer 1989, p.47ff). Arguing for the high-status burial sites of Chernyakhov culture, Bierbrauer, besides the size of the grave inventory, notes the significant difference in the size of the burial pits, which is much larger with noblemen (Bierbrauer 1989, pp.51-52, 70-76). In the course of studying Scandinavian society in the Roman Period, Lotte Hedeager defined burials containing about 75% of imports found with more than nine other separate artefact types as rich/elite burials. Hedeager affirms that imported luxury goods symbolised the high social status

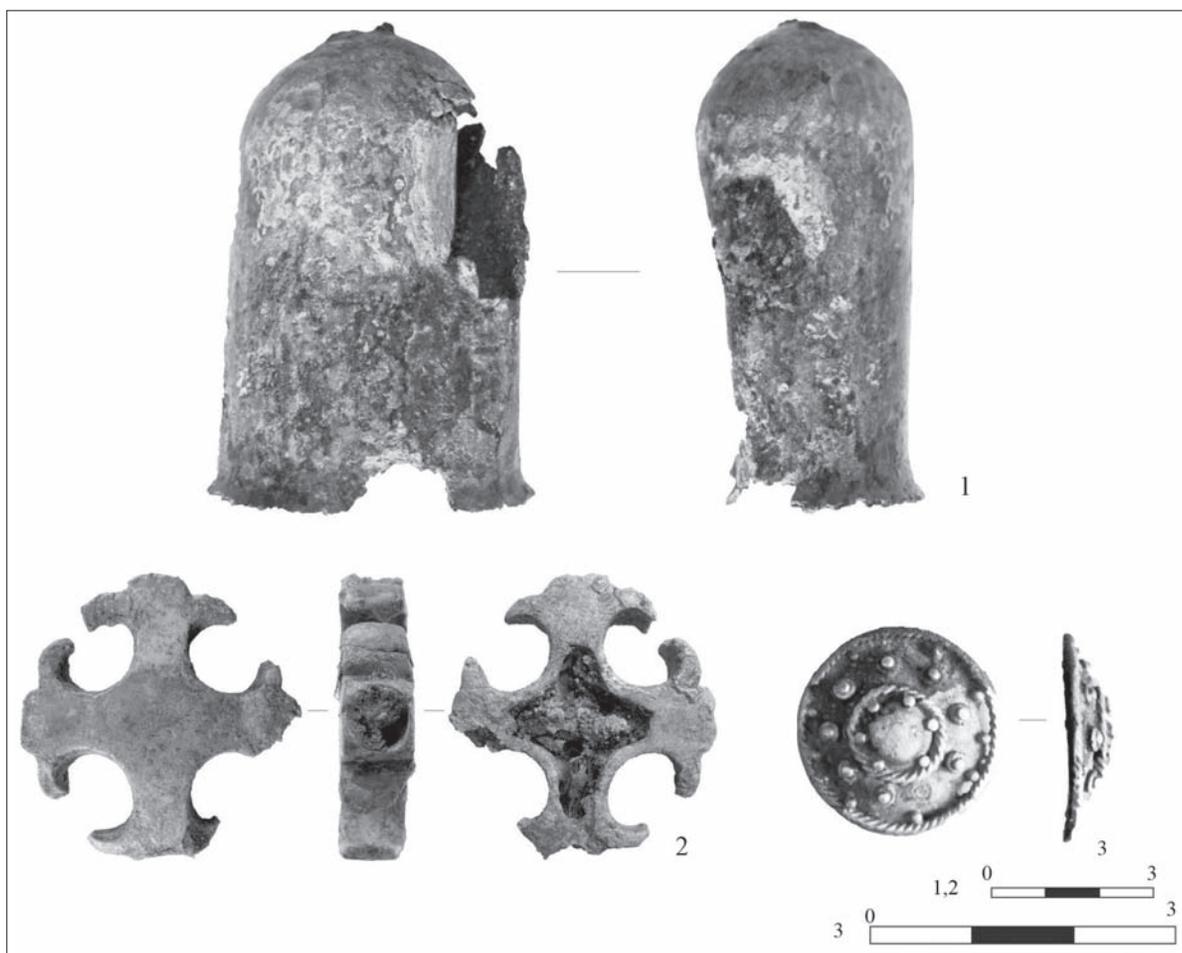


Fig. 6. Elements of Roman horse equipment from Sambia: 1 Roman handbell (*tintinnabula*); 2 cross-form strap distributor from Jugehnen, Kr. Fischhausen (Aleika-3, Zelenogradsk district); 3 silver parts from horse equipment were found near Michelau Kr. Fischhausen (Kamenka, Zelenogradsk district) (photographs by K.N. Skvortsov).

of their owners, and the symbolic value of such goods was more important than their material value (Hedeager 1992a, p.286; Hedeager 1992b, p.169). According to Hedeager, ‘in Denmark the Roman imports became an important “physical part of the language of power” used by the highest elites’ (Hedeager 1992a, p.286). Similar conclusions are drawn by Jari-Matti Kuusela (Kuusela 2009). The author argues that a powerful elite in the course of the Iron Age determined their status by two forms of capital:

- material capital (for example, cattle, land, luxury goods)
- honour capital (the symbolic status of the material capital).

Within this social elite are those who have legitimate authority after their material capital has been used and turned into honour capital (Kuusela 2009, p.45ff)

Comparing trade and gift giving between southern Scandinavia and western Britain under the Roman Empire, Thomas Green affirms that in both regions burials with luxury Roman imports were indicators of local

elites (Green 2007). In his opinion, the top of the leading elites received imports in the course of trading and via elite exchange, and then redistributed some of these goods to other powerful families with a lesser status (Green 2007, p.8). The author connects the symbolic value of Roman imports with the aspiration of local elite residents to imitate ‘the Romans both in life and death’ (Green 2007, p.9).

The material criterion is therefore most convenient for the identification of high-status burial places. Researchers of finds in the Skovgårde burial ground have offered their own reconstruction of the social structure, drawing on the material criterion, that is, on burial finds of certain categories (Ethelberg 2000, p.165, Fig. 133).

According to this reconstruction:

1. burials of the first type with (*reges/kings*) contained *Kolbenarmringen* (gold bracelets with thickened terminals) among the grave goods
2. burials of the second type with (*duces/warlords*) contained *Schlangenkopfarmringen* (gold snake-headed bracelets) among the grave goods

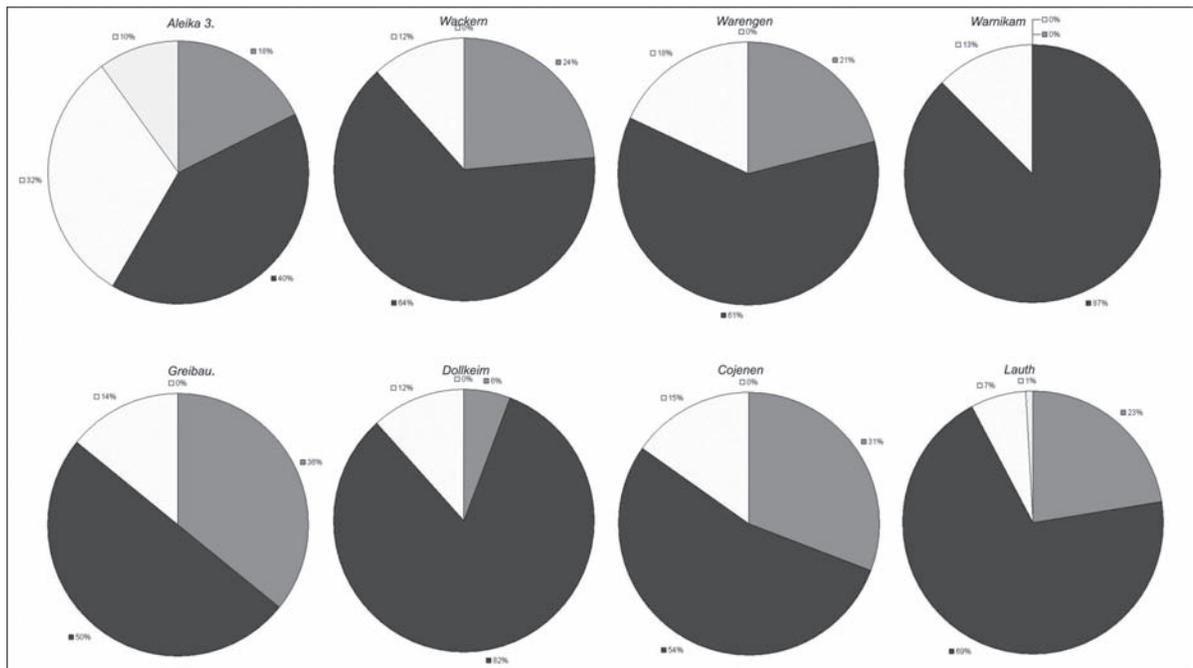


Fig. 7. The distribution of different burial levels from Sambian-Natangian culture burial grounds: blue, level 1; violet, level 2; yellow, level 3; blue, level 4 (after K.N. Skvortsov).

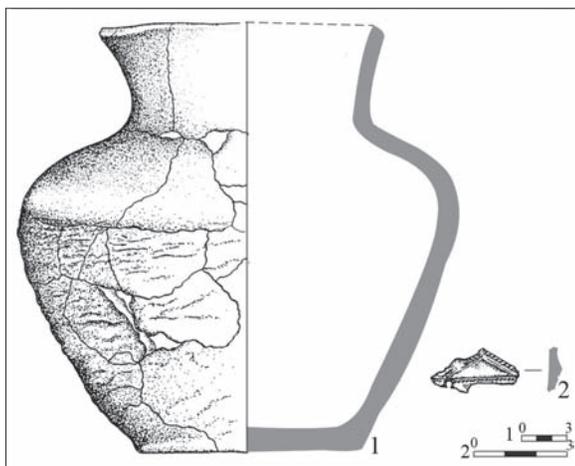


Fig. 8. Burial 7 of the first level at Lauth (Skvortsov 2007b, Plate 7.A).

3. burials of the third type with (*princeps*/dukes) contained *Schlangenkopffingerringen* (gold snake-headed finger-rings) among the grave goods
4. burials of the fourth type with (*comitatus*/comites) contained ordinary gold rings and/or some other Roman imports
5. burials of the fifth type with (*ingenuos*/free folk) contained local items
6. burials of the sixth type (*liberti/servus*, freemen/slaves) contained no mortuary gifts at all.

It should be noted that, in shaping his vision of the social environment, the author refers to both research finds related to the Skovgårde site and the description

of the daily rounds and customs of the Teutons given by Tacitus. An important and telling fact is the researcher's reservation that the terms and notions used by him for the nomination of different social strata are fairly relative, and though they may be applied positively to more advanced societies, they are still limited, while the social glossary has still not been spelt out, so far forcing scholars to rely on existing terminology, with due consideration for today's conventionality of such notions. The author affirms that classes such as kings, warlords, dukes and *comites* should be used with the *proto*-prefix (Ethelberg 2000, p.162).

We would like to express our full agreement with Ethelberg, inasmuch as we ourselves use the *elite* appellation with a touch of conventionality when we speak of elites in Aestii society.

We are inclined to believe that the social framework of the Aestii in its gradual progress in Early Roman times had finally come to the following stratification by the turn of the early and the Late Roman periods:<sup>8</sup>

Level 1: 'Dependent'. Imperfect community members, such as patriarchal slaves, children and elder folk, we presume were deprived of the proper material wealth, and, in the case of children and the old, played no significant role in the provision of the material needs of the community. The burials of people belonging to this social group either lack grave goods completely, or

<sup>8</sup> Our social conclusions are based on the results of our research into about 300 different burials from eight Sambian-Natangian burial grounds (Fig. 7).

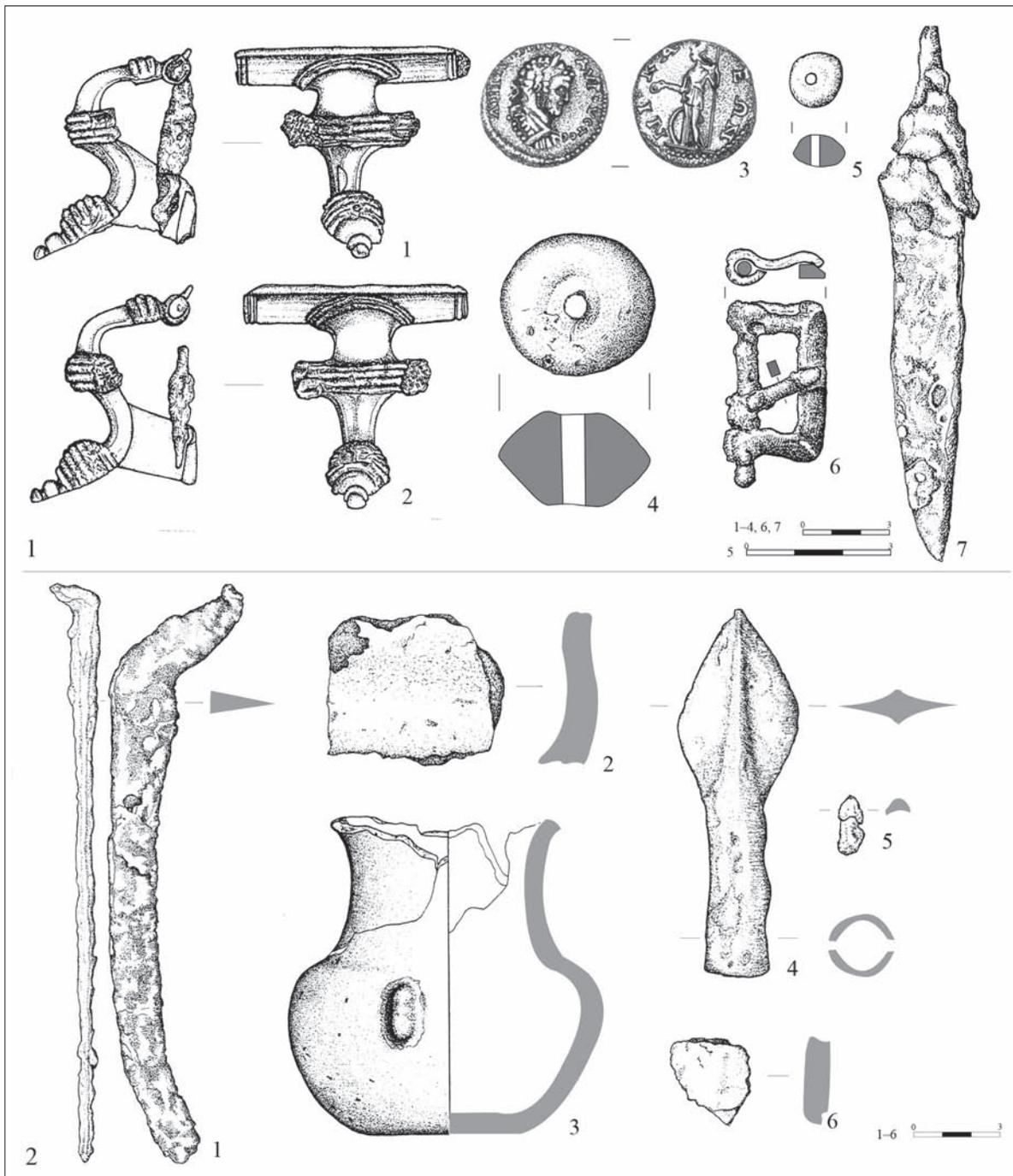


Fig. 9. Burials belonging to the second level: 1 woman's burial 36 at Lauth; 2 man's burial 47 at Lauth (Bol'shoe Isakovo, Gur'evsk district) (Skvortsov 2007b, Plates 47 and 57).

they have only a small amount of artefacts, such as single jars, single bronze and iron ornaments, and sometimes single Roman coins, generally of bronze (Figs. 7; 8). Such burials are widely known to be present en masse in neighbouring contemporary cultures, both in Germanic and Baltic ones. These burials, as far as can be judged by the materials from the most closely researched burials of the Lauth and Aleika-3 cemeteries, as a rule, are scattered in the peripheral zones of their respective necropolises (Skvortsov 1998; 1999; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2006; 2007a; 2007b).

Level 2: 'Commoners'. Into this social category, in our opinion, fall the substantial mass of the free members of the community devoted to various activities specific to such a level of development of an ancient society, such as farming, crafts, fishing and hunting. One of the integral functions of freemen-commoners consisted of participating in various warlike activities. Burials of members of this social category contain several storage jars and sundry Roman coins. In the female burials, one to three fibulae made of bronze and iron with glass Roman beads and amber beads, and bronze ones



of local origin interlaid with other ornaments made of bronze and iron, are usually found. The male burials are found with armament supplies, such as iron spearheads, shaft-hole (socketed) or less frequently eyed axes, knives and shield parts with iron and bronze ornaments and tools for labour and trade. The standard set of commoner's weaponry in such a burial consists overwhelmingly of a spearhead and a knife (Figs. 7; 9).

Level 3: 'Tribal establishment'. From what we can see, the members of this social level would carry out various regulatory functions within each family clan. Burials pertaining to this social level are notable for the same categories of grave goods and to the same extent as seen in the previous groups, but with more ornaments and the occurrence of neck-rings in the female burials. These latter are overwhelmingly silver, along with silver finger-rings similar to Beckmann 40 type (Beckmann 1969, p.47ff, Fig. 18; Banytè-Rowell 2007, pp.17-24, Fig. 4), and more than three local and imported fibulae made of iron, bronze and silver (Figs. 7; 10; 11). The female burials may contain over 50 grams of silver for each buried individual, which is evident from burials at Lauth, Corjeiten, Aleika-3, Partainen, and some others. The female burials have furthermore become places where potsherds of Bernasivka type begin to crop up, which were the most typical for east Germanic people (Fig. 10.17) (Kokowski 2000, pp.65-70). In the male burials, they begin to place horses and items related to riding as an appanage to the usual finds. Such male burials contain a typical set of weaponry of one or more spearheads, an axe, a shield, and a battle knife, with less occurrence of swords (Fig. 11). In both male and female burials, ironwork and casket keys gain still wider prevalence, with rare metal and glassware of Roman origin (Figs. 10; 11). As is exemplified by the Lauth and Aleika-3 cemeteries, the burials of this social layer are concentrated in the northern areas of the necropolis.

Level 4: 'Tribal nobility'. The members of this social group in my opinion would carry out the principal power functions in the tribal collective, and would therefore play an important role in the amber trade. I believe that these burials should be singled out, although our suggestion in itself has a good deal of conventionality, as the majority of these burials were destroyed in the Middle Ages and the modern age. But even the rare finds which have come down to us carry the inference that they still stand out against the background of other ones. This has affected the male complexes to a far greater degree, so that we currently know of no burial of the like that has been preserved. As for female burials, we know of only nine fully preserved complexes of the kind (Fig. 7). For burials of this level, all the aforesaid grave goods are typical. The high social

standing of the deceased in the female burials is characterised firstly by the occurrence of specific forms of burial items, such as silver snaked-headed bracelets of Wójcik type V, and rosette-like A216-217 fibulae. We know of a one-off discovery of a gold *lunula* pendant with the filigree and gold seeded into the enamel, with isolated cases of finds of gold coins and parts of clothing made from noble metals (Figs. 12-13; Plate V.1-2). All these troves are closely related to items from the cultures of the Germanic circle, and have a direct connection with the relevant ones of Wielbark culture. Similar snaked-headed bracelets are characteristic of rich Wielbark burials (Wójcik 1978, p.98; Werner 1980; Tejral 2003, p.262, Fig. 15.1; Natuniewicz-Se-kuła, Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011, Plate CCXXXVIII; Eggers, Stary 2001, Plates 349; 367). The high social status of male burials is evident, as far as we can judge by the surviving finds, from the occurrence in the burials of horses with an ornate harness set with Roman pieces, and jewellery made of noble metals in the granulation technique. Besides, a gold finger-ring of 13 grams is known to have been found once (Plate V.2.2n). For all burials of this category, which are usually destroyed, whereupon gender attribution is challenging and difficult, Roman silver spoons (*ligulae*) occur, which are sorted out reasonably between burials of *barbaricum* nobility of Roman times. Burials of this kind occur along the main trade routes, and are concentrated around the biggest gatherings of rich import items (Fig. 7). Such burials are usually very few. We may come across only one or two burials within one necropolis, with the exception of the Aleika-3 cemetery, which is distinct in the numerous luxury items, and thus characteristic of this social level, which allows us to conclude that this was originally a place for many more burials of tribal nobility. In the Aleika-3 and Lauth cemeteries, these burials are concentrated in the northern part of the necropolis, whereas in Klein Medenau they are concentrated in the southwest.

Level 5: 'Tribal leaders' (?). We suggest that Aestian society, as we can deduce from its level of development, could very likely have produced another social stratum, the so-called tribal leaders, who would exercise power over a large territory which could be home to several clans. Knowing that the use of the notion of chieftain might not quite be appropriate here, we may alternatively nominate this category as a super- or hyper-clan nobility. We infer the existence of this social group, and consequently the burials of its members, only as a hypothesis. Unfortunately, we have no empirical confirmation today of these claims. However, a link of theoretical reasoning leads us to the conclusion that the hypothesis is not so far-fetched, and it should soon be verified.

### III

BALT  
SOCIETIES:  
AN ATTEMPT  
TO PENETRATE  
THE MIST

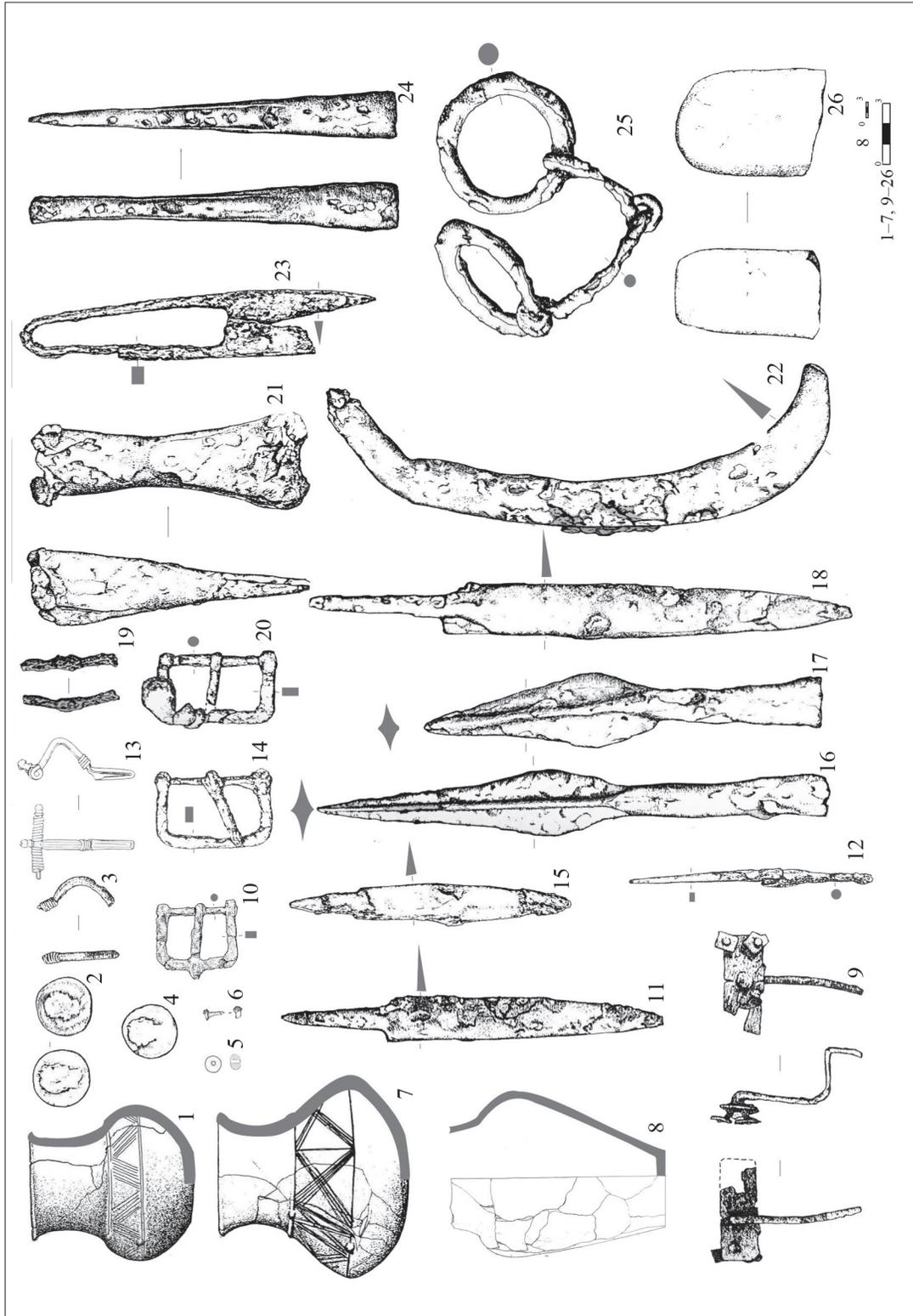


Fig. 11. Man's burial 72 at Lauth (Bol'shoe Isakovo, Gur'evsk district); related to the third level (Skvortsov 2001, pp.87-91).

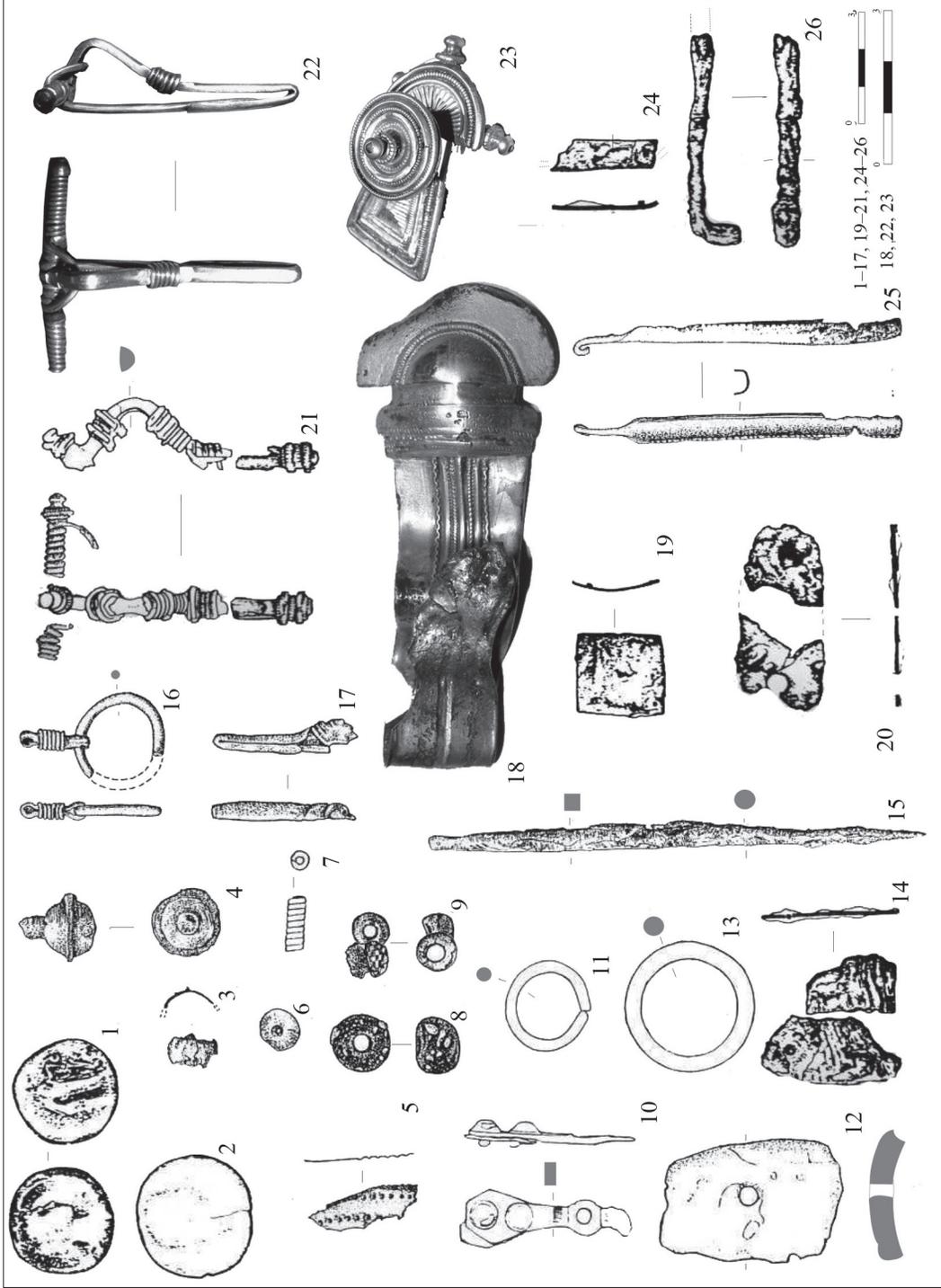


Fig. 12. Woman's burial 78 at Lauth (Bol'shoe Isakovo, Gur'evsk district); related to the fourth level (Skvortsov 2001, p.119, Fig. 138).

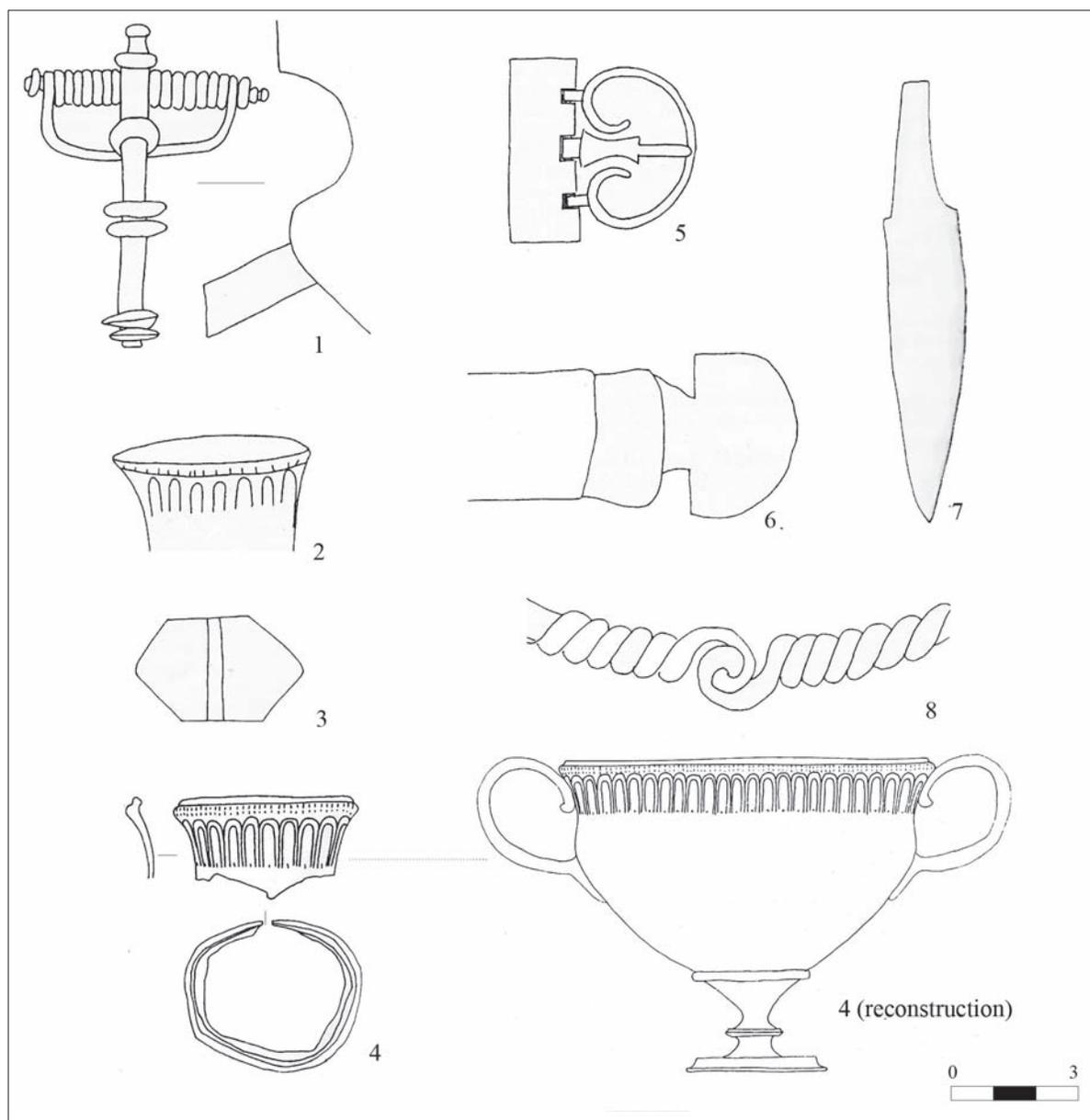


Fig. 13. Finds from Corjeiten, Kr. Fischhausen (Putilovo, Zelenogradsk district); burial 275 related to the fourth level (Nowakowski 2000, p.143ff, Figs. 1, 2).

Therefore, it could be considered that the formation of Sambian-Natangian culture had been taking shape under the definitive influence of Germanic cultures, and that at the moment of its emergence, members of Sambian-Natangian culture and their western neighbours were not in striking developmental contrast to each other. This is shown by the context of archaeological evidence of recent years. It seems to be a valid conclusion that next to concurrent cultural universals, the social structure might also be quite similar, as long as the cultural and social changes are in close interrelation. Considering the fact that in the territories of neighbouring cultures, sites occur which are, by the nature of the grave goods, far richer than the burials of the highlighted fourth stratum, there remains the question: are burials of this level related to the establish-

ment of the early Sambian-Natangian community, or is there still room for one more social stratum?

Besides, we should emphasise the fact that the richest synchronous burial sites of Germanic nobility are represented by two types of burials: single underground burial sites, such as Rudka, in extremely small burial grounds of the Late Roman Period, such as, for example, those at Leuna, Hassleben, Skovgårde, Stráže and Čáčov; and single burials in barrows or small barrow groups, such as those at Mósow, Kommern, Lübsow and Himlingøje (Schulz 1933; 1953; Ondrouch 1957; Kucharenko 1980, p.83ff; Lund Hansen 1995; Peška, Tejral 2002; Schuster 2010).

As a rule, such burials would be found by chance, especially barrows. Therefore, if we continue to make

comparisons with neighbouring Germanic cultures, we have to mention the fact that the majority of burial sites of Sambian-Natangian culture in Roman times are represented by flat cemeteries extending to over 1,000 depositions. All this permits us to suggest that the rich tribal burials of the Sambian-Natangian establishment, similar to those in Germanic cultures, might still potentially exist, although they are as yet unrevealed.

## Conclusions

To sum up, we will generalise a number of theses, which in my opinion are important.

The presence of the largest amber deposits known to date on the Sambian Peninsula, and access to ancient sea, river and overland trading routes, were basic preconditions for the emergence of Sambian-Natangian culture and its further development.

It is quite probable, until the contrary is proven, that during the emergence of Sambian-Natangian culture in an early stage of the Roman Period, it could have been influenced not only by members of West Baltic Barrow culture, but also by members of other cultures of Baltic and German circles which introduced some customs, affected the material culture, shaped the social structure, and assisted the progress of communication, including trade contacts, with the population of adjacent and very remote territories (such as the Baltic Sea islands and the Scandinavian Peninsula or the Roman provinces).

From the Aestii of Tacitus who 'did not know the price of amber', Sambian-Natangian culture eventually underwent considerable changes, including changes in the amber trade. With a consecutive change in basic trading partners (such as Wielbark culture and Przeworsk culture), by the Late Roman Period the character of the amber trade had changed. These changes have led to the appearance of luxury Roman imports in the area of the Aestii. These luxury items were undoubtedly concentrated in the hands of members of the patrimonial elite, and testify not only to their high social status, but also to their leading role in controlling the amber trade and communications connected with it.

Analysing the image of Sambian-Natangian culture based on the study of burial sites in the Late Roman Period, we can observe obvious tendencies towards stratification, judging from the features and degrees of abundance in funeral stock. This fact undoubtedly reflects certain social characteristics of the ancient society of Aestii in the Late Roman Period. In this article, we identify provisionally four basic social groups within Aestii society. In many features, the image of

Sambian-Natangian material culture finds many parallels with cultures of the German circle. In spite of this, we consider it necessary to raise the question of the existence of a higher social group than what is identified by us as tribal nobility, that is, tribal leaders.

In conclusion, the only issue we would like to emphasise is that this article has the general character of a review, and its scope is first to set out the main points related to the social structure of the Aestii in Roman times. The research conducted shows that the theme under discussion is still poorly researched. The material we currently have at our disposal does not allow us to make final conclusions as to the peculiarities of the social structure in the Sambian-Natangian culture community. Therefore, most of the suppositions made in this paper can only exist in a speculative form, until they are corroborated or disproved in a follow-up study.

## Acknowledgements

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## Abbreviations

BAE IA RAN – Baltiiskaia Arkheologicheskaiia Ekspeditsiia  
 Instituta Arkheologii Rossiiskoi akademii Nauk  
 IA RAN – Institut Arkheologii Rossiiskoi akademii Nauk

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## Catalogue of Roman and Germanic imported finds in the Sambian-Natangian culture area

### Roman tableware (metal, glass and clay)

1. Corjeiten, Kr. Fischhausen (Putilovo, Zelenogradsk district), burial 275

Finds: Fragment of silver vessel relating to Eggers 173 type, 2 bronze fibulae relating to A211, silver buckle relating to Madyda-Legutko B8-9 type, 2 bronze neck-rings, fragments of 2 silver bracelets relating to Wójcik V type, etc (Nowakowski 2000, p.143ff, Figs. 1; 2).

2. Dollkeim, Kr. Fischhausen (Kovrovo, Zelenogradsk district), burial Do-6k

Finds: fragment of fritted glass goblet. Found in 1996 in a ruined burial (Kulakov 2004, p.131, Fig. 98.1).

3. Jugehnen, Kr. Fischhausen (Aleika-3, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: fragment of *terra sigillata* bowl, 2 broken silver spoons, fragment of glass goblet. All fragments were found accidentally, not in burials (Smirnova *et al.* 2007, pp.57-73).

4. Klein Fließ, Kr. Labiau (Izobil'noe, Polesk district)

Finds: broken *terra sigillata* bowl (Ebert 1926, p.71).

5. Kirpehnen, Kr. Fischhausen (Povarovka, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: bronze scoop relating to Eggers 203 type, found in burial in burial ground (Ebert 1926, p.75; Nowakowski 1996, p.70).

6. Siegesdicken, Kr. Fischhausen (Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: fragment of glass goblet relating probably to Eggers 199-206 types (Ebert 1926, p.74; Nowakowski 1996, p.72).

7. Warengen, Kr. Fischhausen (Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: a broken glass bowl relating to Eggers 203-206 types was found in an urn burial in the cemetery (Ebert 1926, p.4; Nowakowski 1996, p.72).

8. Partheinen, Kr. Heiligenbeil (Moskovskoe-1, Bagrationovsk district), burial 6

Finds: fragments of split silver vessel, probably used as payment ingots. Total weight 9.4 g. (Golubev 2010).

Brandenburg, Kr. Heiligenbeil (Ushakovo, Gur'evsk district)

Finds: fragment of silver vessel with engraved floral ornamentation (dimensions 15 x 10 cm; lost) (look in detail in 'Fibulae Almgren VII group [*monströse*]' section).

### Swords and daggers

10. Gaffken, Kr. Fischhausen (Parusnoe, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: ritually bent sword in burial ground (Nowakowski 2007, p.87ff, Fig. 2.4).

11. Ilischken, Kr. Wehlau (Divnoe, Slavsk district)

Finds: *Pugio* relating to E. Tomas type Dunaföldvár, found in burial in cemetery (Ebert 1926, p.74ff; Tomas 1971, pp.47ff, 52; Nowakowski 1996, p.69).

12. Plauen, Kr. Wehlau (Fedotovo, Pravdinsk district)

Finds: sword in burial ground (Nowakowski 2007, p.87ff, Fig. 2.5).

13. Preussisch Bahnau, Kr. Heiligenbeil (western s. Mamonovo, Bagrationovsk district)

Finds: Fragment of sword blade in the vicinity of burial ground (Grenz' archive).

14. Wiekau, Kr. Fischhausen (Khrustal'noe, Zelenogradsk district), burial 34

Finds: *Gladius* (Nowakowski 1996, p.70).

### Hoards of Roman coins

15. Backeln, Kr. Fischhausen (Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: hoard of 368 Roman copper coins from Galba up to Commodus (Bolin 1926, p.210).

16. Barsnicken, Kr. Fischhausen (Zelenogradsk district)

## III

BALT SOCIETIES:  
AN ATTEMPT  
TO PENETRATE  
THE MIST

Finds: hoard of 323 Roman bronze coins from Antoninus Pius to Commodus (Hollack 1908, p.12).

17. Kirpehnen, Kr. Fischhausen (Povarovka, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: hoard of 25 to 30 Roman coins found with fibula and other items (burial ground?) (Bolin 1926, p.214).

18. Nautsvinkel', Kr. Fischhausen (Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: 138 Roman coins from Domitian to Septimius Severus (Bolin 1926, p.215).

19. Shreitlacken, Kr. Fischhausen (Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: hoard of 1,477 Roman copper coins from Trajan to Crispina; hoard of 350 Roman copper coins from Nerva to Crispina (Bolin 1926, p.217).

20. Schakumehlen, Kr. Darkehmen (Ozersk district)

Finds: hoard of 32 Roman copper coins from Hadrian to Marcus Aurelius, and bronze shield boss (Bolin 1926, p.209).

21. Skandau, Kr. Gerdauen (Skandawa, Kętrzyn district)

Finds: 21 Roman silver coins, 11 bronze coins from 104 to 223 AD (Hollack 1908, p.150).

22. Samland

Finds: hoard of Roman coins, unknown location (Bolin 1926, p.239).

23. Natangen

Finds: hoard of Roman coins, unknown location (Bolin 1926, p.239).

#### **Roman statuettes**

24. Bieskobnicken, Kr. Fischhausen (Okhotnoe, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: bronze statuette 4 inches long representing a Roman warrior in a helmet with a spear and shield (Hollack 1908, p.15).

25. Laptau, Kr. Fischhausen (Muromskoe, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: a bronze statuette was found in the field towards Rudau (Hollack 1908, p.87).

26. Stockheim, Kr. Friedland (Pravdinsk district)

Finds: a glazed blue clay statuette 3 inches long was found in the 18th century (Hollack 1908, p.158).

#### **Fibulae Almgren VII group (*monströse*)**

27. Grebieten, Kr. Fischhausen (Okunevo district), burial 177

Finds: a silver fibula with gilded parts relating to A217 was found in an urn burial with 2 iron fibulae (Bujack 1888, p.176ff, Plate V. 1a, b).

28. Brandenburg, Kr. Heiligenbeil (Ushakovo, Gur'evsk district)

Finds: a silver fibula with gilded parts relating to the sixth group of rosette-like fibulae by Ulla Lund Hansen and Marzena Przybyła, dated C<sub>1b</sub>-C<sub>2</sub> (Kulakov 2003a; 2009, p.97; Lund Hansen, Przybyła 2010, p.262ff, Figs. 34; 36).

29. Lauth, Kr. Königsberg (Bol'shoe Isakovo, Gur'evsk district)

Finds: silver fibula relating to A216, silver fibula relating to A161-162, bronze fibula relating to A167; fragment of a bronze fibula relating to Almgren group VI; piece of a silver bracelet relating to Wójcik V type; 2 bronze Roman coins (one is Antonius Pius [138-161 AD], the other is unidentifiable); different bronze, iron and amber pendants, bronze belt parts, iron key and cover plates for a small box, bronze binding of a spindle, iron awl (Skvortsov 2001, p.119, Fig. 138).

#### **Roman gold coins from burial grounds dated to the Late Roman Period**

30. Gauten, Kr. Fischhausen (Putilovo, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: a Marcus Aurelius Aureus was accidentally found in the burial ground (Bolin 1926, p.212).

31. Brandenburg, Kr. Heiligenbeil (Ushakovo, Gur'evsk district)

Finds: gold pendant made from an Emperor Victorinus (268-270 AD) aureus. Stray find not in burial (Kulakov 2003a; Kulakov 2009, p.97).

#### **Gold payment ingots and adornments**

32. Jugehnen, Kr. Fischhausen (Aleika-3, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: a gold spiral ring was found in a ruined rider's burial with pieces of an iron shield boss, iron parts of a buckle, etc.

33. Warenden, Kr. Fischhausen (Zelenogradsk district), burial 31

Finds: a gold payment ingot 6.4 cm long was found with a silver crossbow fibula, a bronze Emperor Caracalla from Nikopolis coin, 2 iron shield bosses, a piece of a silver pendant, scissors, 2 spurs, a sickle, iron pincers, an iron spearhead, and others (Heydeck 1909, p.232ff; Ebert 1926, p.74).

34. Klein Medenau, Kr. Fischhausen (Logvinovo, Zelenogradsk district), burial 1

Finds: a gold crescent-shaped filigree pendant was found in a ruined woman's (?) burial with a big silver buckle, silver rivets, a piece of fingering related to Beckmann type 40, and a piece of a bracelet relating to Wójcik V type.

#### Silver snaked-headed bracelets (Type Wójcik V)

35. Grebieten, Kr. Fischhausen (Okunevo district), burial 98

Finds: a piece of a bracelet from a woman's burial (Buck 1888, Plate V.1a, b).

36. Corjeiten, Kr. Fischhausen (Putilovo, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: see 'Roman tableware (metal, glass and clay)'.

37. Lauth, Kr. Königsberg (Bol'shoe Isakovo, Gur'evsk district)

Finds: see 'Fibulae Almgren VII group (monströse)'.

38. Klein Medenau, Kr. Fischhausen (Logvinovo, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: see 'Gold payment ingots and adornments'.

39. Jugehnen, Kr. Fischhausen (Aleika-3, Zelenogradsk district)

Finds: pieces of silver bracelets were found accidentally, not in burials (Smirnova *et al.* 2007, pp.57-73).

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## PATRIMONINIO ELITO FORMAVIMASIS SAMBIJOS– NOTANGIJOS KULTŪROJE ROMĖNIŠKOJO LAIKOTARPIO GINTARO KELIO KONTEKSTE

### KONSTANTIN SKVORTSOV

#### Santrauka

Šis straipsnis skirtas romėniškojo laikotarpio vakarų baltų etnogenezes ir aisčių visuomenės socialinės struktūros rekonstravimo klausimams nagrinėti. Problema mažai tyrinėta, todėl daugelis darbo išvadų yra hipotetiškos. Tačiau per paskutinius dešimtmečius buvo sukaupta naujų duomenų, kuriais remdamiesi mes galime bandyti paaiškinti istorinę situaciją ir kelti

klausimą apie aisčių elito egzistavimą romėniškuoju laikotarpiu (1–13 pav.; IV–V iliustr.).

Sambijos–Notangijos kultūrai atsirasti bent iš dalies turėjo įtakos ne tik kaimyninė Vielbarko (Wielbark) kultūra, bet daugeliu atvejų ir Baltijos jūros salų bei Pietų Skandinavijos regiono kultūriniai impulsai. Sambijos–Notangijos kultūros vystymąsi romėniškuoju laikotarpiu iš dalies veikė skirtingi veiksniai: migracija, kariniai konfliktai, prekyba ir t. t. Vis dėlto galima manyti, kad viena svarbiausių Sambijos–Notangijos kultūros susiformavimo sąlygų, suteikusi didžiulį impulsą jos plėtrai, buvo prekyba gintaru.

Aisčių visuomenės socialinė struktūra šios kultūros ribose galutinai susiformavo tarp B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub> ir C<sub>2</sub> periodų, o genėzė yra susijusi su kintančiu gintaro prekybos, kuriame dalyvavo Sambijos–Notangijos kultūros žmonės, pobūdžiu. Sambijos–Notangijos kultūros vystymosi procesai buvo panašūs į vykstančius Baltijos jūros salose, nes jų pagrindinė prekybos kryptis romėniškuoju laikotarpiu siekė pietryčių Baltijos jūros pakrantes, Jutlandijos pusiasalį, Skandinaviją ir Reiną.

Aisčių visuomenės socialinė struktūra, pamažu besivysčiusi visą romėniškąjį laikotarpį, galutinai susiklostė keliais sluoksniais, kurių žemiausias – priklausomi žmonės, o aukščiausias – gentinė diduomenė ir genties vadai. Pastarųjų egzistavimas yra numanomas tik hipotetiškame rekonstrukcijos lygmenyje, nes tokių kilmingųjų kapų, kokius žinome iš germanų kultūrų, Sambijos–Notangijos kultūroje kol kas nėra aptikta. Taip pat svarbu atsižvelgti į neabejotiną germanų kultūrų įtaką Sambijos–Notangijos kultūros formavimuisi.

Vertė Roman Shiroukhov

### III

BALT  
SOCIETIES:  
AN ATTEMPT  
TO PENETRATE  
THE MIST