

# AN ASSEMBLAGE OF THE 17TH TO 18TH CENTURY COINS FOUND DURING ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE KUPIŠKIS CENTRAL SQUARE

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## Keywords

Kupiškis town, coins, assemblage

## Abstract

In 2018, during reconstruction works at the central square of the town of Kupiškis and the subsequent archaeological investigation, 153 coins dating to the 17th to 20th centuries were found. Usually only coins of the lowest denomination and value are found during such investigations, but most of the coins found at the central square in Kupiškis were attributable to the medium denomination coin type. It has been established that the majority of the 17th-century coins (125 pieces) belonged to a coin assemblage or hoard which was scattered before the reconstruction of the square. Based on the historical and numismatic data, it has been assumed that this set of coins was hidden around 1709 to 1710, when the country was devastated by the plague, and that it would likely have belonged to a keeper of a shop that used to stand at the market square. The composition of the said collection of coins was typical of the monetary circulation of that period, with some unique features as well. Compared to other finds, the assemblage contained a larger number of lower medium denomination coins and considerably fewer higher denomination coins. This suggests that the owner of the money was engaged in retail trade. The assemblage is also characterised by a larger number and diversity of Swedish coins. This unique feature can be explained by the fact that in the 17th and 18th centuries the region of Kupiškis was famous for flax cultivation and trade.

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## Introduction

More frequent references to Kupiškis started appearing in the historical sources from the 16th century, yet the past of the town used to be a blank spot in Lithuanian archaeology. Although archaeological excavations in the neighbouring cities and towns (Biržai, Rokiškis, Anykščiai, Panevėžys, Kamajai, etc.) have been undertaken for some time and have considerably improved the understanding of the early phase of development of the said settlements, almost no archaeological investigation was carried out in Kupiškis until 2018.

The passage of time, natural decay, fires, wars and new construction have radically changed the urbanistic landscape of the town. Also, there was no protection for

the underground historical layers within which debris, waste and spoilage of different periods accumulated and valuables were lost or got hidden. The historical part of Kupiškis is not listed on the Register of Immovable Cultural Property of the Republic of Lithuania and only individual buildings of the 19th and 20th centuries fall under its protection. The territory of the historical part of the town cannot be delineated without the established status of the cultural value and the character of valuable properties and the regime for their protection cannot be set. Archaeological investigation is not mandatory prior to earth moving works and this means that the process of collecting archaeological data systematically has not yet begun. The situation was caught in a vicious circle: as there was no data, there were no grounds to ask for

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research, and without research, new data could not be acquired. This circle was broken when archaeological artefacts (coins, potsherds, fragments of tiles, animal bones, etc.) started popping up during the reconstruction works at the Kupiškis Laurynas Gucevičius Square in June 2018. The artefacts were handed to the Kupiškis Ethnography Museum. Shortly afterwards, an archaeological investigation was carried out which revealed that this central part of Kupiškis preserved an archaeological cultural layer and artefacts bearing witness to the history of the town since the 17th century (Simniškytė 2019a; 2019b).

Most of the better datable artefacts found at the square were attributable to the 17th and 18th centuries. They also facilitated dating of many fragmentary materials (such as sherds of tiles, pottery or glass vessels) and artefacts the appearance and production technology of which hardly changed over the course of time (like kitchen pottery). They also helped to date zoo-archaeological materials. The discovery of over 150 coins<sup>1</sup>, most of which dated to the 17th century, enabled even more precise delineation of the chronological framework.

The goal of this paper is to supplement historical knowledge about the town based on the archaeological and numismatic materials collected during the reconstruction of the Kupiškis Laurynas Gucevičius Square, to assess the potential monetary circulation in Kupiškis during the 17th and 18th centuries, and to discuss the reasons for the circulation pattern.

## 1. The historical context of the town square

The history and urbanistic layout of Kupiškis were mostly researched by Algirdas Baliulis (1997), Algimantas Miškinis (2009) and Alvydas Totoris (2007; 2011; 2012). The town square of Kupiškis is located on an elevation rising for about 3 metres towards the west. The site formed on the route from Vilnius to Livonia, at the crossing of roads leading to the neighbouring towns. It is assumed that this crossroads provided the start to the formation of the layout of Kupiškis.

The town was mentioned for the first time in 1480, but only indirectly: one of the students of Kraków University coming from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania identified himself as Stanislaus Johannis de Cupyschki. The list of war taxes of 1529 already called Kupiškis a town and specified that it was obliged to pay 10 kopas (60 pieces) of groschen along with Užpaliai (Utena and Ukmergė were obliged to pay five groschen each). The first governor of Kupiškis was

Mikołaj Naruszewicz (ca. 1560–1603; in Lithuanian Mikalojus Naruševičius). The plea of the Kupiškis residents and peasants of the Kupiškis Eldership of 1596 mentioned the manor of Kupiškis, the town of Kupiškis, and 40 villages of the Eldership. It also mentioned two streets (those of Skaugaliai and Budrionys), a smithy, four inns, and a market that must have been located at the central square of the town (Baliulis 1997, Miškinis 2009).

The inventory of the Kupiškis Eldership of 1603 listed and described eight streets in the town of Kupiškis: the Streets of Budrionys, Palėvenė, Skaugaliai, Anykščiai, Svėdasai, Ožkų (the Street of Goats), Didžioji (the Great Street), and Karališkoji (the Royal Street), as well as the market square. In 1641, the marketplace was mentioned; Jews began to settle around that from the mid-17th century and they were allowed to build a synagogue in 1682 (Totoris 2007).

During the period of 1636 to 1760, the Kupiškis Eldership was under control of the Tiesenhausen family (Miškinis 2009; Totoris 2012). Although the demographics of the Kupiškis Eldership were strongly affected by the Great Northern War of the early 18th century and the accompanying famine and plague, the initial layout of the town was preserved. The inventory of the Kupiškis Eldership of 1726 noted that the town of Kupiškis had a market square and eight streets: all the same as in the inventory of 1603, except for Didžioji (Great) Street, instead of which Bažnyčios (Church) Street was mentioned. The market square was surrounded by over 80 homesteads: 42 belonged to Christians and 39 to Jews. The inventory also mentioned inns and taverns rented by Jews at the market square and their shops therein.

In 1760, the Kupiškis Eldership was assigned to Michał Kazimierz Ogiński, the Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and it was under the Czartoryski family in 1768 to 1834. At the end of the 18th century, citizens of Kupiškis sought to acquire the Magdeburg rights of self-governance, but remained under the control of the manor. In 1781, the town was devastated by fire. According to the inventory, prior to that there had been a market square called Svėdasai Street, as well as six other streets and 89 households. The market square was surrounded by 25 houses (20 of them belonging to Jews) (Miškinis 2009).

In 1843, the layout reflecting the actual situation of the town was drawn up (Miškinis 2009). So far, it is the earliest known authentic document of such character. The layout depicted nine streets, the market square, and 229 dwelling houses and plots. The market square was trapezoid, two rows of retail shops and a small group of other buildings were marked to be there. The square was surrounded by small plots with wooden houses (Fig. 1).

In 1868, the central part of the town burned down again, and after the fire of 1876 many residents of the town

<sup>1</sup> Coin assemblage — a portion of hidden or lost coins that are related to each other in certain aspects; coin hoard — coins purposefully hidden at one time, in one place, usually in one container.



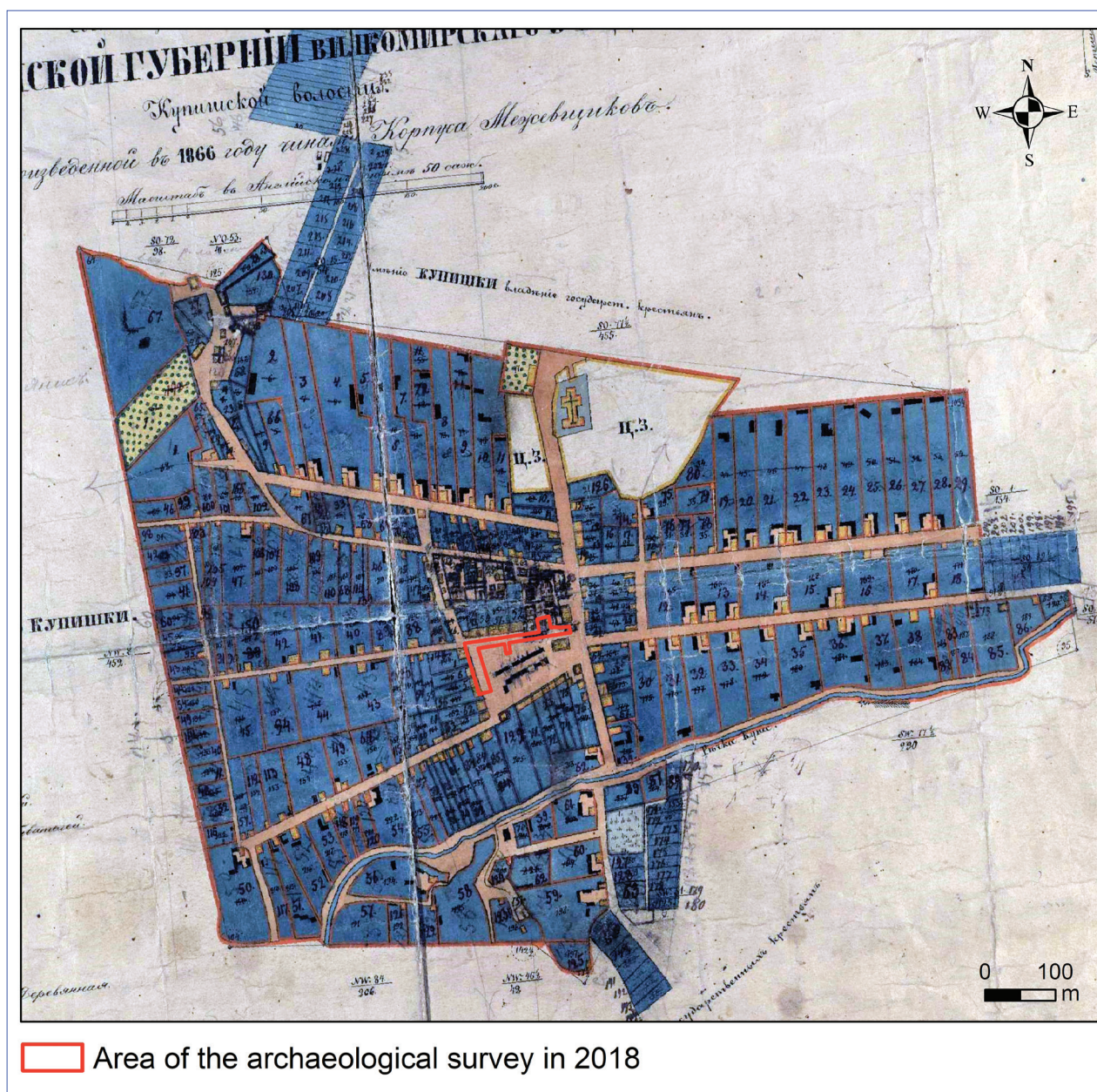


Figure 1. Situation plan showing the location of the archaeological investigation. The plan is based on an actual map of Kupiškis town, 1866 (Lithuanian State Historical Archives, F.525, ap.2, b. 810), adjusted to LKS'94 system (map prepared by A. Simniškytė).

moved to the nearby villages of Aukštupėnai, Račiupėnai and Smilgiai.

By the early 20th century, only a few of the streets were paved with stone and none of them had pavements. The central square of the town, known as Čirvų kalnelis (the Hill of Hearts), was surrounded by numerous wooden houses and shacks with extensions, many of which protruded into the road. During the interwar period, clearing of the wooden buildings began; they were replaced with masonry houses. After the Second World War, the square underwent massive reconstructions in 1947 to 1949 and 1984 to 1985 (Miškinis 2009).

## 2. Archaeological investigations, their scale and methods

As no archaeological properties were registered in Kupiškis town, there was no requirement to perform any archaeological investigation prior to the reconstruction works at the square. The information about the cultural layer and the artefacts found at the square came late, when the reconstruction works had already reached the planned project level. The eastern and southern parts of the square were already equipped with stairs and paved with slabs, the basement for the fountain was already built in the central area, and piles of moved earth were all around.





Figure 2. Kupiškis. The Laurynas Gucevičius Square reconstruction works in 2018 and the location of the archaeological investigation (map prepared by A. Simniškytė).

Only the northern outskirts of the square were still fit for archaeological assessment. After finding some artefacts, the reconstruction works were stopped and archaeological prospection and survey were performed (Simniškytė 2019a; 2019b).

The investigation was undertaken at the northern and northwestern edges of the square: the uncovered trench was approximately 0.5 to 0.6 m deep, 150 to 200 m long and 6 to 8 m wide (Fig. 2). The southern edge of the trench was unearthed prior to the survey preparing to install the rainwater drainage during the square reconstruction works. According to the finders of the artefacts, most were discovered when the trench for the said rainwater drainage was dug.

During the archaeological survey, seven test pits were investigated (a total area of 11.4 m<sup>2</sup>). During the archaeological prospection, an area of 1,700 m<sup>2</sup> was explored: accessible parts of the trench were inspected in order to establish the proliferation of the cultural layer; its stratigraphy visible on the profiles of the trench was recorded (six sections with a total length of 38 m); and scattered artefacts (sherds of tiles and pottery) were collected. Members of the Metal Detectors Users Club (MINK) helped

to perform the survey with metal detectors (all metallic artefacts of potential archaeological value found in the trench were recorded individually with precision to within a centimetre).

### 3. Results of the investigations

In the uncovered trench, the archaeological layer was distinguished horizontally by a contour of greyish and blackish sediments with insets of clay and sand. The contour was about 100–120 m long and narrowing from the east to the west (Fig. 2). The most distinct archaeological layer was recorded at the eastern end of the trench by the building at the address No. 2 Laurynas Gucevičius Square (section a-a1). The blackish-grey sandy layer with artefacts including many secondary burnt potsherds, as well as tiles and animal bones, appeared at a depth of 55–80 cm. In the central section of the trench (section d-d1), the blackish-grey cultural layer was established under the layer with the early 20th-century pavement fragments; the 5–20 cm thick upper part of the cultural layer was truncated during the reconstruction of the square. Further westwards, there was a 10–20 cm thick greyish layer under the levelling



layer of sand that could have been the cultural layer also (section c-c1). No traces of the cultural layer were found at section b-b1 and sections e-e1 and f-f1 at the western edge of the square.

After performing the archaeological survey, it was established that the cultural layer in the central and eastern part of the trench was up to 100 cm thick. The cultural layer in test pit 1 featured several blackish turfy horizons and was about 70 cm thick. It contained an extremely large number of animal bones; there were also sherds of household pottery and leather and wooden footwear fragments. Under the cultural layer, there was a stone pavement with several vertical wooden poles. In test pit 2, the black layer with charcoal at the bottom part was about 30 cm thick. Among the finds, sherds of glazed pottery prevailed and there was also a fragment of a frying pan with its handle, as well as a fragment of a 17th-century crown-like tile (Simniškytė 2019b, Fig. 4). Test pit 3 was excavated in the square in front of the synagogue. At a depth of 80–110 cm, there was a construction made of 30 x 15 cm and 34 x 22 cm large stones; among the stones, there was a broken millstone with a hole (Simniškytė 2019b, Fig. 2). Below, at a depth of 105 to 120 cm, another row of stones was uncovered, though only its very edge entered the test pit. Most probably, these constructions used to serve as a basement of a building that would have stood on this spot. The finds discovered at different depths included sherds of wheel-made glazed and traditional pottery, several fragments of tiles, several animal bones, and the bottom part of a glass vessel decorated with a wavy glass ribbon, dating to the 17th century through the first half of the 18th century (Simniškytė 2019b, Fig. 3). Some of the finds discovered at different levels were fragments of the same item. This implies that the layer at this location formed in a short time and that it must have been related to one of the fires that devastated Kupiškis. Under the anthropogenic sediments with finds, the test pit featured a 5–20 cm thick layer of greyish sand without finds. Its origins and chronology remained unclear; stratigraphically, it could have been a trace of one of the earliest settlements at and around the square. Deeper, there were only geological sediments (silty sand and loam). Test pit 4 revealed a layer of loose stones at a depth of 120 cm mixed with finds (animal bones and potsherds). Test pit 6 was excavated at the western end of the trench. It included an indistinct 20 cm thick layer without finds. Test pits 5 and 7 featured no cultural layer and the sterile soil was reached at a depth of only a few to a few dozen centimetres.

During the course of the archaeological survey and prospection, 8 kg of household pottery sherds, 2.5 kg of fragments of construction ceramics (tiles) and approximately 6 kg of animal bones were collected. Ceramic sherds and bones were collected mostly from the test pits, whereas metallic finds were mostly collected using metal

detectors. Among the metallic artefacts, coins were the most numerous: 42 pieces were found. Other metallic artefacts included nine lead seals or their fragments, five musket and shrapnel bullets, several buttons, a ring with three sockets and fragments of unidentified metallic items (Simniškytė 2019a). When the prospection with metal detectors was performed, the find spot of every artefact was recorded precisely and, in general, the proliferation of the artefacts matched the pattern of the cultural layer in the eastern and central part of the trench.

Many of the finds had been sent to the museum before the archaeological investigation began, immediately after receiving the notification about random archaeological artefacts appearing in the square (Simniškytė 2019a). The exact find spots of these artefacts were not recorded; however, repetitive patterns and reports of eye-witnesses proved that those artefacts undoubtedly came from the same archaeological context.

### 3.1. Coin finds

During the reconstruction of the central square of Kupiškis, 153 coins were discovered. Most of the coins (111 pieces) were collected by workers carrying out the said reconstruction works. Thanks to the honesty of the contractor, the coins were handed to the Kupiškis Ethnography Museum, with the specification that the coins had been found in the trench dug out for the rainwater drain in the northern part of the square. The remaining 42 coins were found during the archaeological investigation with the help of metal detectors. The coins were found covered with oxidation compounds, some of them were stuck together in sets of two to five. After the coins were cleaned, it was established that 149 of them dated to the 17th century (a few dating to the early 18th century were attributed to the same assemblage), two coins came from the mid-18th century (these were dengas (1/2-kopeck coins) of the Russian Empire of 1737 and 1746), one coin dated to the first half of the 19th century (groschen coin of the Kingdom of Poland produced between 1816 and 1832), one coin came from the first half of the 20th century (a 5-cent coin from the USA called a Buffalo nickel, produced between 1913 and 1938), and two coins could not be identified.

The coins of the 17th century were of different denominations and originated from different countries: there were 23 shillings, two pieces of 1.5-groschen coins, 23 pieces of 3-groschen coins, 71 pieces of 6-groschen coins, seven pieces of orts (18-groschen coins), 3 pieces of zloty (30-groschen coins), 12 pieces of 5-øre coins, two pieces of 2-øre coins, and 3 pieces of 1-øre coins. A 2-mark coin, a 2-groschen coin and a taler (patagon) coin were also found.



Figure 3. The coin finds of the central square of Kupiškis.

1. Spanish Netherlands. Brabant. Philip IV. Patagon, 1635; 2. Poland. Sigismund III Vasa. 1.5-groschen, 1623; 3. Poland. Sigismund III Vasa. 6-groschen, 1626; 4. Poland. John Casimir. 6-groschen, 1661; 5. Poland. John Casimir. Ort, 1659; 6. Poland. John Casimir. Zloty, 1663; 7. Poland. John III Sobieski. 6-groschen, 1681, Kraków; 8. Poland. John III Sobieski. Ort, 1677; 9. GDL. John Casimir. 6-groschen, 1665; *Figure 3. Continuation*





10. Prussia. Frederick Wilhelm. 6-groschen, 1686; 11. Prussia. Frederick III. 3-groschen, 1696; 12. Prussia. Frederick III. 6-groschen, 1698; 13. Prussia. Frederick III. Ort, 1699; 14. Prussia. Frederick I. 2-groschen, 1703; 15. Sweden. Christine. 1-öre, 1633; 16. Sweden. Charles XI. 1-öre, 1673; 17. Sweden. Charles XI. 2-öre, 1665; 18. Sweden. Charles XI. 5-öre, 1694; 19. Sweden. Charles XI. 2-mark, 1671; 20. Sweden. Charles XII. 5-öre, 1702 (photograph by A. Simniškytė, compiled by E. Remecas).

Usually, copper shillings of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (henceforth GDL) coined around 1659 to 1666 during the reign of King John Casimir (1648–1668) prevail among all kinds of numismatic finds collected during archaeological excavations. These were the coins of the lowest denomination and at least 1.5 billion of them were made. Because of this enormous amount, the circulation of these coins continued up to the mid-18th century and, as their value was low, they were treated negligently. However, only 21 shillings of John Casimir were found at the central square of Kupiškis and they made up only 16% of the overall numismatic material (there were five Polish shillings, nine shillings of the GDL and seven of unidentified origin). They were especially rare in the collection handed to the museum before the archaeological investigation: only four shillings (4% of the total number of finds) fell into that category. Most likely, when the coins got scattered, the workers just tried to collect them and their attention was concentrated on the easiest to spot and the silver coins. Meanwhile, copper shillings made up as much as 38% of the coins collected during the archaeological survey with the help of metal detectors. This implies that the number of shillings (and coins overall) could have been much larger.

However, there was a considerable number of silver coins of medium value, some of which were stuck together or bore traces of having been stuck together previously. Therefore, in addition to random coins, there was a specific assemblage of coins: a hidden hoard or a lost or hidden purse. Due to the unfortunate circumstances of the discovery, the research of the assemblage of coins can no longer guarantee precision, but we will try to reconstruct the potential sequence of events and the composition of the array.

### 3.2. Assemblage of 17th-century and early 18th-century coins

As has been mentioned, most of the coins were found by the workers undertaking reconstruction works at the square. The coins got scattered in the process of digging the trench for the rainwater drain. Some of them were collected immediately, while others were found later using metal detectors. Usually, coin hoards are found in ceramic or metal vessels or near building walls. Yet there was no such evidence in the case of the assemblage of coins found at the Kupiškis square.

During the archaeological prospection, the coins which were stuck together were mostly found by the building at the address No. 4 Laurynas Gucevičius Square (see Fig. 2). So this must have been the original location of the coin set discovery. Before the coins were cleaned, it was obvious that the coating on them was not uniform. Some of the

stuck together coins bore traces of it, implying more intensive sticking, whereas others had none. This implies that some of the stuck together coins got separated when they were scattered at the moment of discovery, whereas other coins had been separated much earlier. Therefore, it seems the set of coins discovered during the reconstruction of the square was an assemblage or a hoard of coins that was already dispersed. The coins belonging to the assemblage could be identified based on a few features: firstly, these were the coins which were stuck together or bore traces of sticking; secondly, they were of the similar value and period as other coins of the assemblage.

After the investigation of all the coins found, 125 were attributed to one assemblage (see Appendix 1). These were coins of five different states (the Spanish Netherlands, the Kingdom of Poland, the GDL, the Duchy and Kingdom of Prussia, and the Kingdom of Sweden) and of nine different denominations. The earliest coins of the set were made in 1623 (Polish 1.5-groschen coins) and the latest in 1703 (Prussian 2-groschen coin).

### Appendix 1. The Coin Assemblage of the Central Square of Kupiškis (1703/2018)

Spanish Netherlands. Brabant. Philip IV (1621 to 1665). Patagon, 1635.

Poland. Sigismund III Vasa (1587 to 1632). 1.5-groschen, 1623(2); 6-groschen, 1626.

John Casimir (1648 to 1668). 6-groschen, 1661(3), 1662(5), 1663(8), 1664(4), 1665, 1666(9), 1667(6), 166(3), without date; ort, 1659, 1668; zloty, 1663, 1664, 166...

John III Sobieski (1674 to 1696). 6-groschen, 1678, 1681(2, 1 – Cracow), 1682(6), 1683, 1684; ort, 1677.

GDL. John Casimir. 6-groschen, 1665.

Prussia. Frederick Wilhelm (1640 to 1688). 6-groschen, 1681(2), 1682(4), 1683(3), 1684(3), 1686(2).

Frederick III (1688 to 1701). 3-groschen: 1695, 1696(13), 1697(5), 169...(4); 6-groschen, 1698(3), 1699; ort, 1698, 1699(3).

Frederick I (1701 to 1713). 2-groschen, 1703.

Sweden. Christine (1632 to 1654). 1-öre, 1633.

Charles XI (1660 to 1697). 1-öre, 1671, 1673; 2-öre, 1665; 5-öre, 1690(2), 1691(2), 1693, 1694(4); 2-mark, 1671.

Charles XII (1697 to 1718). 5-öre, 1700(2), 1702.

The composition of the coin assemblage was similar to other coin hoards found in Lithuania and dating to the same period. The circulation of the medium-value coins



still included coins dating to the reign of Sigismund III Vasa (1587–1632), however, most of the coins were made during the reign of John Casimir and these were the 6-groschen coins. Based on the data from hoards found in Lithuania from the last quarter of the 17th century, Polish 6-groschen coins of John Casimir made up about 60% of the coin circulation, whereas 6-groschen coins of John Sobieski made up about 40% (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, p. 244). The coin assemblage of Kupiškis included 40 6-groschen coins of John Casimir and only 11 6-groschen coins of John Sobieski, producing the rate of 78.5% vs. 21.5%. The coin set also included one coin of the GDL: a 6-groschen coin of John Casimir dating to 1665. Almost all silver coins dating to the reign of John Casimir (except for shillings) are very rare. The 6-groschen coins produced by the Vilnius mint during the period of 1664 to 1666 were found in 17 Lithuanian hoards. They included 38 such coins altogether, but only 15 of them were produced in 1665. As for the territories of modern Belarus, Poland and Ukraine, over 110 GDL 6-groschen coins of John Casimir have been found there (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, pp. 230–231).

The coin assemblage included considerably fewer Polish higher denomination coins: only two orts and three zloty of John Casimir, and one ort of John Sobieski. According to the data from the Lithuanian hoards from the last quarter of the 17th century, orts of John Casimir were six times less frequent than his 6-groschen coins and the number of zloty in circulation was similar to that of 6-groschen coins (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, p. 244). The assemblage of Kupiškis included a considerably smaller number of these coins than their represented amount in the circulation. The ort of John Sobieski of 1677 is another very unusual element of this assemblage. So far, orts of John Sobieski have been found in only two hoards: one ort of 1679 was found in the hoard of Altoniškiiai (Kaunas district) and one of 1677 was found in the hoard of Žemalė (Mažeikiai district) (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, p. 244).

Coins of the Duchy of Prussia were found in the assemblage of Kupiškis along with the local ones. These coins followed coin standards of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The assemblage included 23 pieces of 3-groschen coins (51%), 18 pieces of 6-groschen coins (40%) and four orts (9%). Such an amount of Prussian coins is very unusual for Lithuanian hoards dating to the last quarter of the 17th century. Usually, orts make up about 48%, 6-groschen coins around 42%, and 3-groschen coins only 10% therein. Very few 3-groschen coins of Frederick III, specifically only 25 pieces of them, have been found in Lithuanian hoards so far. The number of 6-groschen coins of Frederick Wilhelm (1640–1688) within the Lithuanian monetary circulation was three times less than the number of 6-groschen coins of John Casimir, and the number

of 6-groschen coins Frederick III (1688–1701) was five times less (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, p. 244). In the coin assemblage of Kupiškis, the number of 6-groschen coins of Frederick Wilhelm was in line with the Lithuanian average (14 pieces), but the number of coins of Frederick III was two times less (four pieces). There were more Prussian orts in circulation than Polish ones. The number of orts of Frederick III was 2.3 times greater than that of the orts of John Casimir. In the assemblage of Kupiškis, their number was also twice as large. Therefore, the coin assemblage of Kupiškis stands out due to the number of 3-groschen Prussian coins and the lack of orts is characteristic of its composition in general.

The latest coin of the assemblage, namely the 2-groschen coin of the Kingdom of Prussia from 1703, deserves a separate discussion. So far, a coin of such denomination has only previously been found in the hoard of Šiliškiai (Akmenė district), which was dated to 1716. Its rarity was caused by the fact that such coins were produced for only two years: in 1700 and 1703 (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, p. 255).

Swedish coins were also found in the assemblage along with the local and Prussian coins: three pieces of 1-øre coins, 12 pieces of 5-øre coins, one 2-øre coin and one 2-mark coin. These coins entered Lithuania in two ways: some were brought in during the Great Northern War, others came through trade with Riga. Distribution of Swedish coins in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was complicated, because these coins had no analogues among the local coins but Swedish coins were used in Lithuania. Swedish øres were a rarity in the hoards hidden in Lithuania before the Great Northern War. The øres were equalised to 1.5-groschen coins. A considerably larger number of coins of such denomination entered the local circulation in the 18th century. The find of the Swedish 2-mark coin was no surprise either. Such coins were equalised to 1/3 of a taller or four orts and they were found in six Lithuanian hoards dating to the last quarter of the 17th century, though their numbers were small (seven pieces altogether) (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, p. 249). The 2-øre coin can be deemed to be very rare. In Lithuania, coins of such denomination were found only in the hoard of Šiliškės, Akmenė district (Ivanauskas 1995, p. 256). The assemblage of Kupiškis is also unusual due to the abundance of 5-øre coins. Coins of such denomination were mostly found in the mid-18th-century hoards, and only two pieces were found in the hoards dating to the early 18th century: namely the hoard of Leilėnai, Telšiai district, and the above-mentioned hoard of Šiliškės (Ivanauskas 1995, p. 254, 257). The 2-øre coins were equalised to 3-groschen coins and 5-øre coins were equalised to 6-groschen coins based on their size and weight, though they had a larger amount of silver and were valued more.

Speaking of the coins of the highest denomination, the assemblage contained only one, a patagon, but there is nothing special about that. Most of the patagons found in Lithuania are patagons of Brabant produced during the reign of Philip IV (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, p. 247).

In general, if we look at the overall composition of the assemblage, we can conclude that the coins of different states found therein were in line with the monetary circulation of the northern part of the GDL in the respective period. However, it is also obvious that the assemblage had some unique features. First of all, it contained a considerably larger share of lower-value 3-groschen coins and fewer higher-value coins like ort, zloty or mark than is usual. This implies that the owner of the coins was engaged in retail trade. Secondly, the assemblage contained a rather large number of Swedish coins: 17 pieces (13.6%), and that was more than usual for hoards dating to the last quarter of the 17th century. This can be explained by intensive trade between Kupiškis and Riga. In the 17th and 18th centuries, peasants living in the countryside around Kupiškis were famous for flax cultivation: flax and its seeds grown by them were transported to the port of Riga even during the Great Northern War (Žiemelis 2011, p. 375). So, these peasants were bringing back Swedish coins from Riga, which was under Swedish control in that period. The hoards found in Latvia imply that such coins were present there. For instance, 2-øre and 5-øre coins were found in two hoards discovered in the vicinity of Riga and they dated to 1694 and 1706 (Ducmane and Ozoliņa, 2009, p. 182, No. 289; p. 195, No. 335). Swedish coins of other denominations are found in Latvian hoards even more frequently.

The latest coin of the assemblage implies that the hoard of Kupiškis was hidden no earlier than 1703. This was the period of the Great Northern War. The territory of Lithuania was occupied by the Swedish army from 1701. In 1705, the Russian army invaded, but later the Swedes returned and held the country till 1709. The war devastated Lithuania. In 1708, the famine began and it was followed by the plague, which continued till 1710. During that period, Kupiškis and the surrounding area suffered a great deal.

It was common to hide accumulated wealth during turbulent times. There were many hoards hidden in Lithuania during the Great Northern War — over 60 can be counted (Ivanauskas 1995, pp. 192–199, 218–251). However, although treasure was hidden due to wars, the failure to extract it was usually caused by the death of the owner. Therefore, most of the hoards found in Lithuania date to the period when the country was in the grip of the plague pandemic. The plague of 1709–1710, called the Great Plague, was especially painful for Lithuania as it lost one-third of its population. The region of Kupiškis also suffered many losses. According to the inventory of

the Kupiškis Eldership of 1726, as many as 19 out of 40 former villages of the Eldership became completely depopulated (Totoris 2012, p. 10). Kupiškis itself was badly hit too. Although the revision act of 1711 accounted only for the Jewish population of the town of Kupiškis (there were 20 Jewish households there), it also mentioned six households of Catholics who died from the plague (Totoris 2011, p. 17). The inventory of the Kupiškis Eldership of 1726 reveals that there were many more deaths among the citizens of Kupiškis. It recounts that Kupiškis already had 42 Christian homesteads and 39 Jewish homesteads at that moment, mentioning that there were still empty homesteads of the people who had died from the plague (Totoris 2012, pp. 11–12). Although the latest coin in the assemblage of Kupiškis dated to 1703, it is still credible that the hoard was hidden during the plague pandemic. The absence of coins dating to the later years is typical of the hoards of that period. This was caused by the drop in or even complete termination of coin minting.

The discovered coin assemblage and the available historical sources allow some light to be shed on the identity of the potential owner of the hoard. Based on the composition, coin hoards and assemblages can be divided into three groups. The first group represents assemblages composed only of the lowest denomination coins (like the denarius, shilling, groschen, etc.). Such collections belonged to poor people and were mostly found in rural areas. The second group represents assemblages dominated by high denomination coins (like the half-taller, taller, ducat, etc.). These collections belonged to wealthy and influential individuals or communities: clergymen, churches, merchants, etc. There is also the third group of assemblage type, which includes coins of different denominations. Such sets must have belonged to middle-class men, most of whom were urban citizens or small landlords. The coin assemblage discussed here falls into the third category.

The act of the Kupiškis Eldership revision of 1711 stated that the Kupiškis market fee was paid by 13 Jews (Totoris 2011, pp. 26–27). The inventory of 1726 stated that Christians owned 9 households at the market square of Kupiškis, but it failed to mention how many households were owned by Jews (Totoris 2012, p. 11). However, knowing that the number of Jewish households in Kupiškis doubled during the period from 1711 to 1726, we can assume that the number of Jews living at the market square also doubled. Therefore, there would have been twice as many Jewish households as Catholic households at the Kupiškis market square. Another important account of the inventory of 1726 is also worth mentioning: it stated that various Jews paid 100 zloty for their shops built at the market of Kupiškis following the old tradition and provisions (Totoris 2012, p. 16). Therefore, it can be assumed that the assemblage of coins was hidden (?) in one of the Jewish shops that stood at the market square. As the mentioned



sources imply, these shops used to sell cured vegetables and beer (Totoris 2011, pp. 17, 26–27).

There is no way to establish the overall monetary value of the coin assemblage but the value of the 125 collected coins was approximately equal to 985 groschen or 33 zloty. This was a large sum. Its purchase capacity was approximately 25 calves or approximately 240 kg of pork meat or 130 l of honey or approximately 50 kg of butter (Grimalauskaitė and Remecas 2020, p. 252). In that period, an unqualified worker could earn 15 groschen a day, so one would have worked for two to three months to accumulate the said sum.

### 3.3. Other finds of coins

Besides the above-mentioned shillings of John Casimir and the coin assemblage, three more 17th-century coins were found. They have not been attributed to the assemblage. These were the shilling of Sigismund III Vasa minted in Riga in 1615, the shilling of Gustav II Adolph (1611–1632) with an unidentified year of production, and the 2-øre copper coin of Charles XI of Sweden (1660–1697) minted in 1664. The shillings are common random finds. The largest amount of them circulated until the mid-17th century. Therefore, it can be assumed that the said coins were lost during that period. The find of the Swedish copper coin was exceptional as these coins were not used in the monetary circulation of the GDL. During the Great Northern War, Sweden tried to introduce its monetary system in the occupied territories, and Swedish coins were used in Latvia. They were found there in more than one hidden hoard. But in Lithuania, Swedish copper coins were not hidden in hoards; only random finds are discovered sometimes. Swedish copper coins came to the country not as a result of trade relations but rather due to military activities. After the Swedish troops left the country, copper coins brought by them lost their value. In Lithuania, we mostly find the copper coins of Christine (1632–1654); the coins of Charles XI are rarer. It is notable that, so far, only the low-denomination copper coins of Charles XI are known and that the 2-øre copper coin was a first-time find.

### Conclusions

Various archaeological and numismatic materials were collected during the reconstruction works and archaeological investigation undertaken at the Laurynas Gucevičius Square in Kupiškis in 2018. This allowed for the enhancement of historical knowledge about the town, the assessment of local monetary circulation in the 17th and 18th centuries and the examination of the causes of such circulation.

During the archaeological survey, seven test pits were examined at the northern edge of the square (with a total area of 11.40 m<sup>2</sup>). During the archaeological prospection, a total area of 1700 m<sup>2</sup> was inspected. It has been established that there was an up to 1 m thick cultural layer with archaeological artefacts. The earliest finds dated to the 17th century. Up to 8 kg of household pottery sherds, 2.5 kg of constructional ceramic (tile) sherds, about 6 kg of animal bones, fragments of glass vessels, and over 60 metallic items were collected during the archaeological survey and prospection. Many finds were sent to the museum before the start of the archaeological investigation. In this way, the museum of Kupiškis received 153 coins dating to the 17th to 20th centuries.

A scattered hoard of coins hidden around 1709 to 1710 was discovered. It included not less than 125 coins of different denominations and most of them dated to the second half of the 17th century. The hidden hoard or the purse would likely have belonged to the keeper of a shop at the market square who might have died during the plague pandemic that devastated the country.

The composition of the discovered coin assemblage was representative of the monetary circulation in the northern parts of the GDL, but it had some unique features as well. The assemblage contained an unusually large number of coins of lower medium value (3-groschen coins) but considerably fewer coins of higher value (zloty). This suggests that the owner had been engaged in retail trade. The assemblage also stands out due to the amount and diversity of Swedish coins. This feature is explained by the fact that, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the countryside around Kupiškis was famous for flax cultivation and its export to Riga, which was under Swedish control in that period.

### Abbreviations

ATL – Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje .... metais / Archaeological Investigations in Lithuania in ..., Vilnius

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roma prielaida, kad šis monetų kompleksas buvo paslėptas apie 1709–1710 m., kai šalyje siautė maro epidemija, ir galėjo priklausyti turgaus aikštėje stovėjusios krautuvės savininkui. Rasto monetų komplekso sudėtis būdinga to laiko pinigų apyvartai, bet pasižymi ir savitumu. Komplekse neįprastai daug mažesnės bei vidutinės vertės monetų ir gerokai mažiau nei įprasta didesnės vertės monetų. Tai rodo, kad pinigų savininkas vertėsi smulkesne prekyba. Kompleksas iš kitų išsiskiria ir didesniu švedišku monetų kiekiu bei jų įvairove. Šis išskirtinumas aiškinamas tuo, kad Kupiškio apylinkės XVII–XVIII a. garsėjo linų auginimu ir jų eksportu.

## XVII–XVIII A. MONETŲ KOMPLEKSAS, APTIKTAS KUPIŠKIO MIESTO CENTRINĖS AIKŠTĖS ARCHEOLOGINIŲ TYRIMŲ METU

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### Santrauka

Nuo XVI a. istoriniuose šaltiniuose dažniau pradedamo minėti Kupiškio miestelio praeitis buvo balta dėmė Lietuvos archeologijoje. Iki pat 2018 m. Kupiškio mieste faktiškai jokių archeologinių tyrimų nebuvo atlikta, neturėta jokių duomenų apie archeologines vertingąsias savybes.

2018 m. vykdant Lauryno Gucevičiaus aikštės rekonstrukcijos darbus, statybų aikštelėje pažiuro archeologinių radinių (monetų, koklių fragmentų, keramikos ir stiklo indų duženų, gyvulių kaulų), kurie buvo pristatyti į Kupiškio etnografijos muziejų. Netrukus atlikti archeologiniai žvalgymai ir žvalgomieji tyrimai (1, 2 pav.) parodė, jog centrinės Kupiškio aikštės šiauriniame pakraštyje dar esama išlikusio archeologinio sluoksnio ir radinių, miesto istoriją menančių nuo XVII a. Surinkta įvairios archeologinės ir numizmatinės medžiagos. Tai leido papildyti miesto istorines žinias ir pažvelgti į galimą pinigų apyvartą Kupiškyje XVII–XVIII a. bei panagrinti tokios apyvartos priežastis.

Kupiškio miesto centrinės aikštės tvarkybos darbų ir vėliau atliktų archeologinių tyrimų metu buvo rastos 153 monetos, apimančios XVII–XX a. Paprastai tyrimų metu daugiausia randama smulkesnių nominalų, mažiausios vertės monetų. Kupiškio aikštėje didžioji dalis rastų monetų priiskirtinos vidutinės vertės monetų grupei. Nustatyta, kad didžioji dalis XVII a. nukaldintų monetų (125 vnt.) galėjo priklausyti dar iki aikštės rekonstrukcijos pradžios išskaldytam monetų kompleksui ar lobiui (1 priedas, 3 pav.). Remiantis istoriniais ir numizmatiniais duomenimis, da-