

PREFACE

This is the 24th volume of *Archaeologia Baltica*, presenting a wide range of case studies from the latest archaeological research into the east Baltic region. The volume is devoted to elucidating issues which have previously been left unanswered, or, as in many cases, issues which have simply been overlooked.

In the first article, Tatjana M. Gusentsova and Petr E. Sorokin write about Okhta 1, a Neolithic and Early Metal Age site, which is significant in that it is the first such well-preserved archaeological object with wooden constructions in the St Petersburg region. The remains of wooden structures include stakes, treated slats and rails, as well as piles. Other archaeological finds include pottery, stone tools, amber ornaments and organic matter. All these finds suggest that people settled at the site twice between the period 7,000 to 3,000 years ago. Through an analysis of the micro-relief and stratigraphic and archaeological features, researchers have also been able to locate an earlier coastal fishing zone situated on the shore of the gulf, and a second fishing and living area connected to river channels.

The next article is by Kristiina Paavel, and examines bronze finds with no apparent archaeological context, in order to decide if they are in fact just random stray finds, or if there is an overlooked pattern. The finds are usually seen as precious prestige items, so their seemingly contextless find situation is more than curious; but surprisingly, up till now they have not been systematically studied. Thirty-two artefacts are presented in the study, and they all date from the Estonian Bronze Age. Special attention is paid to the character of the find locations, in order to infer the environmental conditions at the time of deposition, which is done through an analysis of archival, topographical and geological data. The results indicate site-specific patterns in the distribution of the artefacts, with a preference for wet contexts, especially rivers. So, as the intentionality factor is definitely present, the phenomenon of depositing bronzes in the landscape, as it is also known in other

parts of Europe, must be considered for these supposedly random stray finds.

The third article 'Hill-Forts from the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age in Pomerania. An Overlooked Problem' is by Kamil Niedziółka, and analyses another overlooked problem. In this case, it is the Polish hill-forts associated with Lusatian culture dating from the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. Hill-forts of this type appear in vast areas of modern Poland, but are absent in Pomerania beside the Lower Oder region. This scarcity is surprising, especially when considering the relatively large numbers of hill-forts in Greater Poland, the region directly neighbouring Pomerania to the south. Studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the detection of at least a dozen sites with material from the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, so the information collected during these investigations, as well as new tools available for archaeologists, such as Lidar data, modern geophysics and aerial photography, were used in this case study, in order to clarify the known information and to discover new insights.

The next article is Tatjana Berga's work on trading equipment from Latvia dating from the tenth to the 13th centuries. The equipment under discussion is collapsible scales and weights which have not yet been thoroughly studied, so in this study they were mapped and analysed in order to clarify the chronology. All this information is then taken further to help determine trade routes and the dynamics of trade contacts.

The fifth article in this volume of *Archaeologia Baltica* is by Heidi Luik and Arvi Haak, in which they discuss rare finds of decorated hammers or axes made of elk antler from Estonia. They are likely to date from the end of the Estonian Prehistoric Period or the Middle Ages, i.e. from the 11th to the 15th centuries. Since all known explanations for objects like these are mainly speculative, the aim of this particular research was

to find parallels to help date the Estonian items, and also to ascertain the material and tools used for their production, to examine the find contexts, and to discuss the probable areas of usage and meanings of these items. This study, as is the case with the previous articles, is an attempt to answer questions which until now have not been clarified, or were overlooked.

In the article entitled ‘Gifts of the King. “Hanseatic” Bronze Bowls in 13th Century Estonia: Signs of Danish Crusades?’ Toomas Tamla and Heiki Valk discuss the connection between bronze bowl finds and the Danish Crusades. The bowl find spots are largely concentrated in two areas east of the Baltic Sea, in Estonia and Samland. While in Estonia the bowl finds appear to be deposited artefacts of high symbolic value, in Samland they are grave goods in elite warrior graves, so the different find contexts indicate the different meanings of the bowls in the two societies. In spite of these differences, when considering the broader historical context, both cases are connected by a common factor: the Danish Crusades, which took place in 1219 in Estonia, and 1210 in Samland. The hypothesis presented in this study links the bronze bowls to the practice of gift giving as a reward for the loyalty of newly subjugated territories.

‘Lost and Found: the *Vallum in Lacu* at Ostrowite (Northern Poland). A Multidisciplinary Research Case Study’ was written by Jerzy Sikora, Piotr Kittel and Piotr Wroniecki. With the help of written sources and non-invasive prospecting techniques, such as magnetic gradiometry, earth resistance, aerial photography, intensive field-walking, and geochemical (phosphate) prospection, as well as the analysis of airborne laser scanning, the team identified a previously unknown ring-fort, which for the last 15 years has gone unnoticed by researchers conducting annual excavations in its vicinity. The rediscovery of this very poorly preserved feature would have been impossible without the use of non-invasive methods; therefore, the authors point to prevailing paradigms in archaeological research, in which excavation is held as the most valid method for the study of the past.

Last but not least is the article by Nadezhda I. Platonova, in which studies of the elite culture of Old Rus’ conducted by the IHMC RAS in St Petersburg in Russia between 2015 and 2016 are presented and discussed. This article focuses on a different way of looking at Old Rus’ culture, and the successive connection with authentically Slavic cultures (dating back to 700 to 1000 AD). New information provided by archaeological research presents ninth to 11th-century Rus’ as a heterogeneous conglomerate of different traditions and cultural elements, rather than as a stable structure,

so the project took a new look at studying elite cultures, in order to understand the process of innovation observed over this period, together with their cultural and anthropological mechanisms.

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