

# WEST LITHUANIA AS A GOLDEN BRIDGE BETWEEN THE SEA AND THE BALTIC HINTERLAND IN NORTHEAST POLAND DURING THE ROMAN AND MIGRATION PERIODS

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## Abstract

The authors discuss archaeological data regarding cultural interactions between west Lithuanian areas and the regions of Masuria and Suwałki during the Roman and Migration Periods. Several categories of finds in west Lithuania can be seen as direct imports or the import of ideas from the West Balt area in Masuria. This communication worked in both directions. Influences from coastal Lithuania may also be detected in the style of jewellery or riding gear. Undoubtedly, the warrior elite played an important role in keeping these connections alive. The west Lithuanian area, like Samland, was a trading centre, working as an intermediary in the dissemination of interregional novelties.

Key words: West Lithuania, Masuria, Suwałki, West Balts, Roman and Migration Periods, interregional contacts.

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## Introduction

Underwater archaeology and research on water connections play an important role in the work of Professor Vladas Žulkus. A good example of this is his article about the lower reaches of the Nemunas/Memel and Pregel rivers, published in the proceedings of the conference 'Transformatio mundi ...', which took place in Kaunas in 2004 (Žulkus 2006). This work draws our attention to the careful study of the landscape in the lower reaches of the River Nemunas and its tributaries, primarily the Szeszupa/Šešupė and Jūra. The Szeszupa/Šešupė rises in the Suwałki region, and enters the Nemunas from the south, almost directly opposite where the Jūra flows into the Nemunas. The topography of these areas offered a very good opportunity for communication between the Baltic hinterland in what is now northeast Poland and the coast of western Lithuania. This convenient route, a kind of bridge joining the hinterland with the sea, may offer insights not only into regional connections, but also far-flung contacts between interregional warrior elites in the northern Barbaricum during the Roman and Migration Periods. The existence of these communication routes may explain phenomena such as the appearance of the splendid chieftain grave at Sz wajcaria, barrow 2, deep in the Baltic hinterland, or the appearance of typical Masurian Olsztyn Group costume elements in grave 73 in Lazdininkai (Kalnalaukis) several centuries later (Fig. 1).

We would like first to discuss briefly the position of west Lithuania in the south Baltic region, and then study its connections with the Baltic hinterland in what is now northeast Poland.

## West Lithuania as an important centre in the southeast Baltic

There is no doubt that their maritime location offered inhabitants of west Lithuania and southwest Latvia perfect possibilities for far-flung connections.<sup>1</sup> There

<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, people in prehistory used natural landscape formations for the safe location of boats on the shore. The estuaries of rivers and various backwaters served as natural harbours (cf. Žaromskis 2008, 59). Ports were important not only for unloading goods from a ship or as a trading port, but also as areas where it was possible to get resources for living in a boat at sea, such as fresh water and food. V. Žulkus suggested that during the Viking Period the hill-fort of Eketė (northern Klaipėda) was accessible by boat from the sea using the River Dangė-Akmena (14 to 15 kilometres inland). The River Smeltalė-Žardė (southern Klaipėda) was also suitable for navigation during this period, and it was a way of reaching the Žardė and Laistai hill-forts and settlements situated four to five kilometres upstream from the estuaries at Smeltalė-Žardė (Žulkus 2004, 89ff.; Masiulienė 2013). Both complexes date from the Roman Period. Excavations of Eketė hill-fort in 1972 proved that it had been used since the Roman Period, and provided two Roman sesterces (one minted under Lucilla) (Merkevičius 1974, 16ff.; Michelbertas 2001, 35). The Oberhof/Aukštkiemiai cemetery belongs to the Eketė hill-fort micro-region. The Palanga (Baltic square/Baltijos

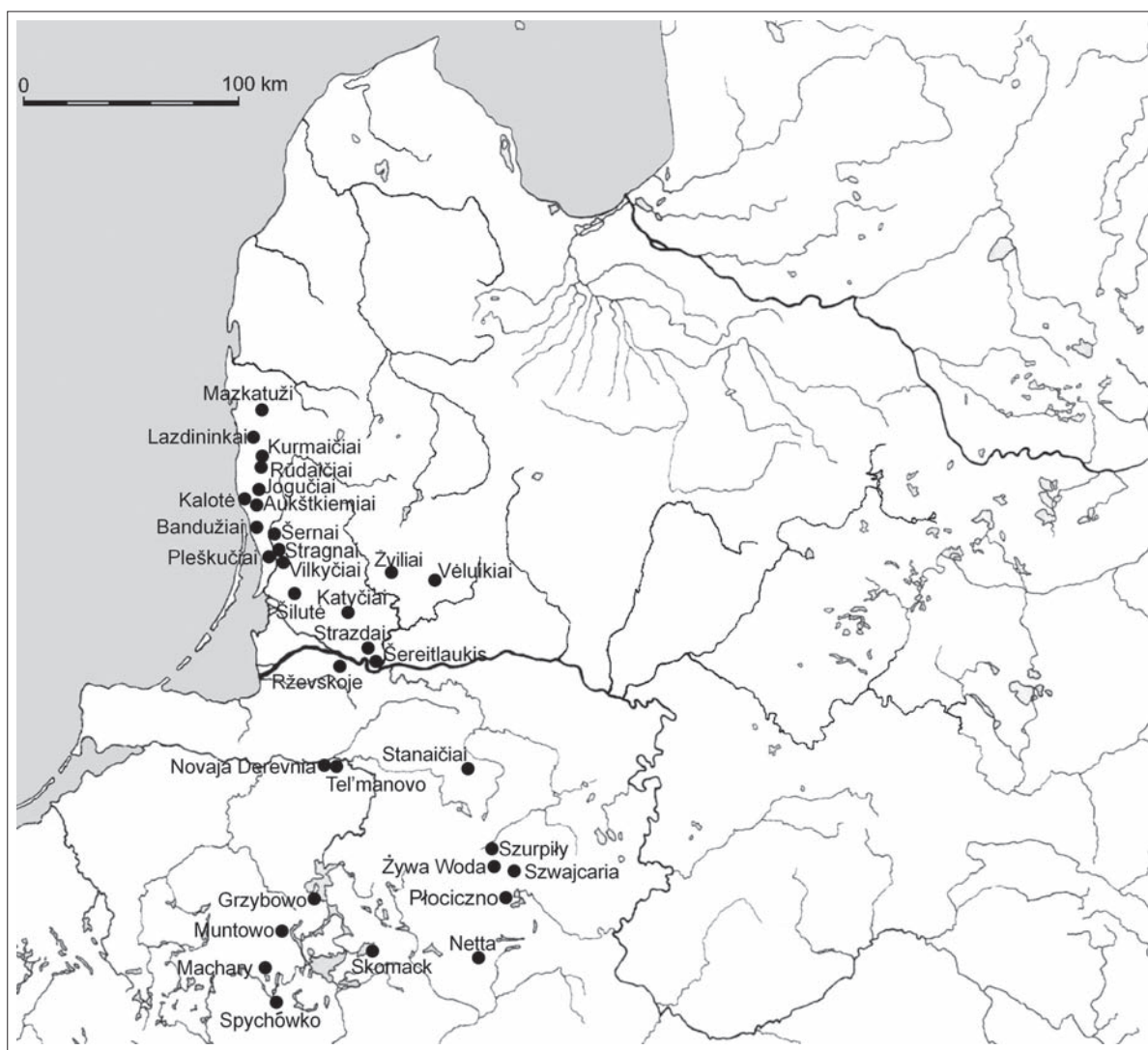


Fig. 1. A map with the West Balt sites discussed in the text.

are many artefacts that could confirm their contact with the western Baltic Sea, with Scandinavia or continental Germanic areas, including the Elbe region. Professor Žulkus has discussed connections between Gotland and west Lithuania, namely the similarities in burial rites, for example, the placing of small containers made of birch bark in graves, as well as common costume elements, such as headdresses decorated with small bronze appliques (Žulkus 1995, 87, 95; Figs. II, III, VII). These contacts appeared already at the end of phase B<sub>2</sub> to the beginning of phase B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub>, according to grave complexes from Kurmaičiai, grave 22 or Rūdaičiai II, grave 14, which contain these types of headdresses (Kulikauskas 1968, 38ff., Fig. 19;

aikštė) cemetery and Kalotė/Collaten cemetery indicate communities on the coast in the area north of Klaipėda during the Roman and Migration Periods (cf. Gričuvienė 2009, 435; Hilberg 2009, 370). Of course, there are many more sites to be mentioned on the coast of Lithuania and southwest Latvia, but the examples presented here may be a starting point when looking for the location of the 'seagates'.

Radzvilovaitė 1967, 3ff., 25; cf. Blumbergs 1982, 14, 23, 26, 29, 41ff., Fig. 7; Kačkutė 1995, 14; Banytė-Rowell 2008, 104ff., 110ff.). However, the intense contacts across the Baltic Sea, which may have had an impact on inhabitants of the west Lithuanian coast, developed at the beginning of the Late Roman Period. One very good example of this is provided by the west Lithuanian ornaments with blue glass inlays, pins, brooches and necklaces, analysed by C. von Carnap-Bornheim in the context of stylistic similarities with Germanic ornaments that were born from contacts along maritime routes (von Carnap-Bornheim 2000, 45-60, Figs. 1, 3; Tabs. 1-2). The same situation applies to the local imitations of Scandinavian gold snake-headed finger-rings discussed by R. Banytė-Rowell. The Balts' spiral finger-rings with broadening terminals, imitations of Beckman 40 snake-head rings, were made of bronze, and more rarely of silver (Banytė-Rowell 2000, 39, Figs. 7, 23; 2015, 49ff., Figs. 10-11; Banytė-Rowell, Bitner-Wróblewska 2005, 113ff., Fig. 7). The latter occurred only in rich burials

like Bandužiai, grave 74 or Šernai, grave 10, and represent one of the local status symbols of Baltic elites (Banytė-Rowell et al. 2012, 209; Figs. 10, 12.1). The bronze neck-rings with key-shaped hole terminals that were widespread in west Lithuania might be cited as another local imitation of western Baltic Sea prestige goods, namely gold or silver *Halsringe mit birnenförmiger Öse* (Tautavičius 1978, 20, Map 11; Michelbertas 1986, 100; Vaitkunsienė 1999, 158; Belâvec, Bitner-Wróblewska 2010, 174; Banytė-Rowell 2011, 46ff., Fig. 5; see also Andersson 1995, 90ff.; von Carnap-Bornheim, Ilkjær 1996, 351-357; Ethelberg 2000, 64ff., Figs. 57-59; Andrzejowski 2014, 98ff., Figs. 4-6).

### Contacts between Masuria and the Suwałki region and west Lithuania

West Lithuania may have been especially attractive as a kind of port for trade in the southeast Baltic Sea for counterparts in the Baltic hinterland, as could be confirmed by the lively mutual contacts between the region in question and the hinterland area, namely Masuria and the Suwałki region in northeast Poland. Already, finds from the very beginning of the Roman Period, such as Jezerine-type brooches, mark in a way the continental route from Przeworsk culture via Masuria (Kruklanki, Grzybowo) and the former Kreis Insterburg (Gaitzuhnen/Novaja Derevnja) to the lower reaches of the Nemunas (Šilutė), and probably also the alternative course to the north via the Angerupp and Inster/Wystruć/Īsrutis rivers (Nowakowski 2000, 212ff., Fig. 1.a-d; 2009, 107, 112, Fig. 5; Juga-Szymańska 2011, 37, 41, Fig. 2; Juga-Szymańska, Szymański 2013, 82ff.).

Particular activity in Masurian Bogaczewo culture towards the east and north could be observed in phase B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub>, including the migration of small groups of people from Masuria. We can find the typical Bogaczewo culture funerary rite, and a characteristic Masurian urn, in grave 2 in Stanaičiai on the River Širvinta, a tributary of the Šešupė. Another grave (this time, destroyed) at Stanaičiai also produced an Almgren 133 brooch: this type of ornament is regarded as an ethnic indicator of woman's costume from the Masurian Lakeland (Grižas, Bitner-Wróblewska 2007, 269ff., Figs. 14-15). It found its way to Stanaičiai and further north to west Lithuania via the Suwałki region, where several specimens were recently recorded at Szurpiły.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> There are three Almgren type 133 brooches found in the settlement complex at Szurpiły: at site 4 (the Targowisko settlement, which means market place), at site 3 (Góra Zamkowa hill-fort, which means Castle Hill), and at an unknown site. All are stray finds. Unpublished material

It is worth adding that imitations of this type of brooch spread up to Estonia, and the west Lithuanian area may have been one of the main intermediate factors in this distribution (Banytė-Rowell, Bitner-Wróblewska 2005, 114ff., Fig. 8).

Another Masurian costume element, triple-crest brooches (Sprossenfibeln) of the Masurian type, is also recorded in west Lithuania (Michelbertas 1986, 117; Reich 2006, 89, Fig. 3). The most impressive example is from grave 5 at Strazdai-Ječiškės on the lower Nemunas, where a Masurian-type Sprossenfibel was found together with a buckle of type G23 according to Madyda-Legutko (Doppeldornschnalle). The grave can be dated to phase B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>1a</sub>. This type of buckle should also be treated as a 'Masurian intermediary' for Germanic, namely Przeworsk culture, fashion (Tamułynas 2004, 21ff., 29, Figs. 8-9; Andrzejowski, Madyda-Legutko 2013).

Recent studies on Bogaczewo culture pins done by A. Juga-Szymańska reveal a number of pin types found in west Lithuania: namely, types Nikutowo (Juga-Szymańska 2014, 166ff., Figs. 65, 111), Szwajcaria (Juga-Szymańska 2014, 161ff., Figs. 58, 60, 107), Jaskowska (Juga-Szymańska 2014, 171ff., Fig. 117), a variant of type L (Juga-Szymańska 2014, 164ff., Fig. 111) or bronze specimens of type A (Juga-Szymańska 2014, 139ff., Figs. 27, 88), that undoubtedly indicate Masurian influences. From the other direction, we can see a group of costume elements of west Lithuanian origin, like H-type pins (Juga-Szymańska 2014, 167ff., Figs. 74, 113), small bronze appliqués decorating head-dresses or pectoral ornaments, which could be recorded in northeast Poland. The fashion for different types of pectorals with chains linking pairs of brooches, pairs of pins, or sets consisting of a brooch and a pin, was especially popular in Lithuania and Latvia (Moora 1938, 232-243, Figs. 30-31; Nowakowski 1996, 84; Bitner-Wróblewska 2002, 77ff., Fig. 6; 2009, 387-394, Figs. 10-17; Banytė-Rowell 2004, 15ff., Fig. 3; Reich 2012, 136, Fig. 4a; Bliujienė 2013, 379-396, 387, Figs. 252-253; Vaska 2013, 8ff., Figs. 2-4). It spread to northeast Poland as a result of Lithuanian, mostly west Lithuanian, influences. Among the pectoral adornments from the Suwałki region, there is a number of splendid ornaments decorated additionally with openwork plates, such as those from Żywa Woda, barrow 14, cremation grave 1 (Ziemlińska-Odojowa 1961, 204ff., Pl. VII, 5, Fig. 8), and Szwajcaria, barrow XX, grave 2, and flat grave S.1 (Jaskanis 2013, 38ff., 65ff., Pls. XXX, XCVI). The openwork plates and separators of these

from surveys by the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw and the Institute of Archaeology, Warsaw University.



pectoral ornaments are inconceivable without a knowledge of west Lithuanian specimens.

Studying the connections between west Lithuania and the Baltic hinterland in northeast Poland, it can be observed that these concern not only regional, local types of artefacts, but also far-flung contacts in which west Lithuania became an intermediate factor. The fashion for blue glass inlays evolved in west Lithuania under west Baltic Sea inspiration, and found imitations in northeast Poland. Neck-rings with wire-coiled terminals fastened with a hook and a decorative disc inlay where a gem of blue glass was replaced by a hemispherical metal disc were recorded at Netta, grave 78 (Bitner-Wróblewska 2007, 25, Pls. XXXVI.3; CXXVII.1), and Żywa Woda, barrow 14, skeleton grave 3 (Ziemlińska-Odojowa 1961, 202, Pl. IX.7).

The openwork belt fittings and bridle ornaments found in the cemetery of Stragnai in west Lithuania should be regarded as the result of foreign influences that came via the sea. These items were produced locally (the decoration for the bridle was decorated with a blue glass inlay), but the idea of the composition of patterns was probably adopted by west Lithuanian craftsmen from examples made in Gotland. This design travelled from west Lithuania to Masuria. We can see similarities of style in openwork belt fittings found in Gotland, west Lithuania and Masuria; in the latter region, examples are provided by finds from Machary/Macharren, and an item from the Pisanski collection (Banytė-Rowell 2007b; cf. Szymański 2005, 36ff., Fig. 6.7-9). Therefore, we may suppose that the Lithuanian coastland was a place where imitations of male ornaments from Gotland were produced during phases C<sub>1b</sub>–C<sub>2</sub> and that west Lithuanian pieces were the inspiration for Masurian artisans.

The ‘double grave’ at Płociczno in the Suwałki region (Nowakowski 2011)<sup>3</sup>, where an openwork belt fitting of the same style was recorded (Nowakowski 2011, 106, Fig. 10.d), requires a special mention. Płociczno cemetery is situated along the route between west Lithuania and Masuria. The foreign, Germanic influences coming probably through the Lithuanian coastland via the sea could also be confirmed by other finds from Płociczno, namely buckles with omega-shaped frame type E13 according to Madyda-Legutko (Nowakowski 2011, 106ff., Fig. 10.a, e). There is no doubt that people who buried their dead in Płociczno cemetery had busy contacts with west Lithuania. Among their costume elements we can find typical Lithuanian ornaments, such as variants of triple-crest brooches

<sup>3</sup> According to a recent analysis by W. Nowakowski (2011), the furnishings of the ‘double grave’ may have been the inventory of several destroyed graves dating from a period from phase B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub> up to phase C<sub>2</sub>.

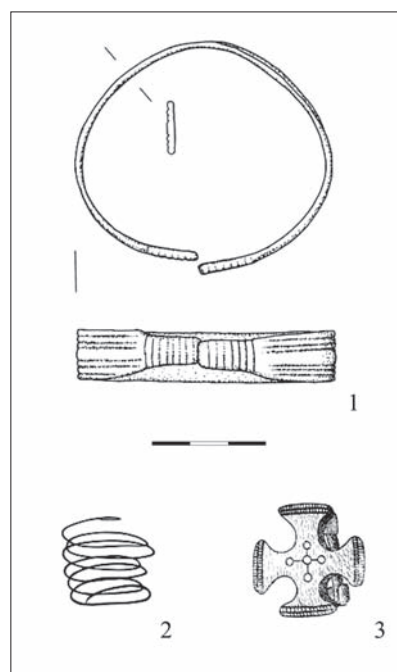


Fig. 2. Finds from Aukštkiemiai/Oberhof, grave 85, west Lithuania: 1 bracelet; 2 spiral finger-ring (after Moberg archive, Göteborg); 3 cruciform-shaped brooch (after Gaerte 1929, Fig. 170.c). A chain and a vessel are missing today (1 drawn by S. Nettekoven).

(Sprossenfibel) or openwork belt mounts with motifs characteristic of pectoral adornments (Nowakowski 2011, 104ff., 107; Figs. 4b; 11a-e).

Another example of how foreign designs brought by sea were accepted and remade by inhabitants of the Lithuanian coastland is represented by a cruciform-shaped, plate brooch found in Aukštkiemiai/Oberhof, grave 85 (Fig. 2.3). Thanks to reconstruction work done by C. Reich on material from the cemetery, it is possible to state that a cruciform-shaped brooch was found with a bracelet which is typical of phase C<sub>1</sub> (Fig. 2.1). The brooch was published by W. Gaerte next to a cruciform-shaped brooch from Machary/Macharren and a similar pin from Spychówko/Kl. Puppen in Masuria. He took them to be imports from southern Russia (Gaerte 1929, 225, Fig. 170.c). M. Michelbertas doubted this conclusion (Michelbertas 1986, 123). Some remarks on the similarity of these finds and ornaments of Tarand culture were presented by R. Banytė-Rowell (Banytė-Rowell 2001, 61ff., Fig. 68.4-8). Searching for analogies in the broader context allows us to state that the Oberhof brooch was created under the influence of shapes produced in the Roman provinces. Cruciform-shaped brooches are known from Britannia and the Saalburg fortress at the limes (Fig. 3.1-4). In Britannia, such brooches are dated mostly from the middle of the first century to the second century AD; some also occurred in layers from the third and fourth century. The Saalburg brooch was associated with the

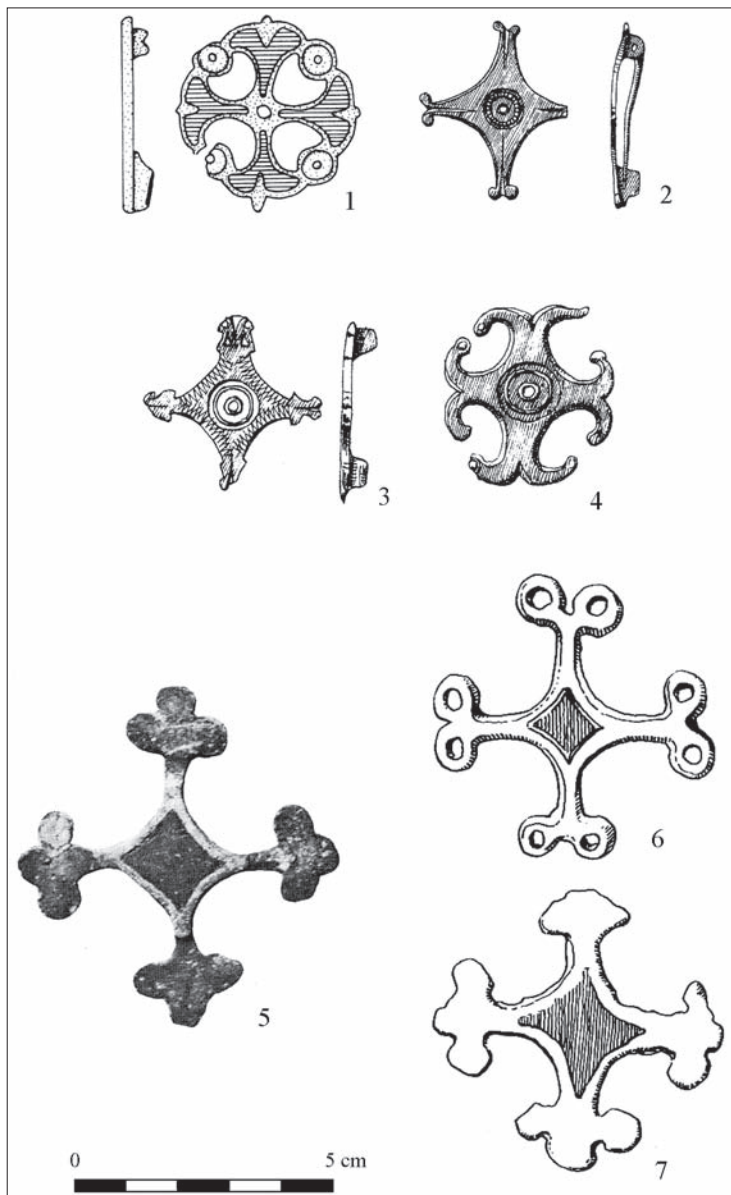


Fig. 3. Cruciform-shaped brooches from Roman provinces and the Tarand cultural area in the east Baltic: 1 Roman brooch from the Roman fortress in Saalburg, Germany (after Böhme 1972, Pl. 25, 979); 2-4 brooches from Roman Britain (2 from Baldock; 3 from Braughing; 4 from Castleford (after Mackreth 2011b, Pl. 118, 11375, 11376, 14730); 5-7 brooches from the area of Tarands (5 from Trikāta, Latvia; 6-7 from Virunuka, Estonia) (after Moora 1929 Pl. VII, 6; Laul 2001, Fig. 41, 4,7).

second century, and partly with the third century AD (Böhme 1972, 38, Pl. 25, 979; Mackreth 2011a, 176; 2011b, Pl. 118, 11368, 11375, 11376, 14730). Once again, we have ‘impressions of the same design’ in Masuria: similar cruciform plate brooches were recorded by M. Schmiedehelm. The Masurian items also originated from graves from the Roman Period, as we can judge by the other finds in the grave complexes, such as an iron finger-ring of Beckmann group I (Muntowo/Alt-Muntowen, grave 38), and a melted brooch with Ringgarnitur, a lunula and a Brillenspiralfinger-ring (Machary/Macharen, grave 12) (Schmiedehelm archive, AI) (Fig. 4.1-2).

Why do we assume that cruciform-shaped plate brooches made in Masuria were a result of influences from the Lithuanian coastland rather than vice versa? It seems that the Roman brooches that served as an inspiration for local jewellers reached the Baltic regions via the sea. This is testified to by the appearance of this type of brooch in Estonia and northern Latvia, in the area of Tarand cemeteries (Katalog 1896, 30ff., No. 367, Pl. 8, 16; Moora 1929, Pl. VII.6; Laul 2001, 113, Fig. 41.4.7) (Fig. 3.5-7). No such brooches are found on continental routes leading from Masuria up to the areas of the Baltic Finns. It seems that the Roman style was ‘planted’ among the Balts and the Baltic Finns independently, and brooches from Jauntēvenēns, Trikāta, Vijciema pagasts in Latvia (the latter cruciform brooch is in the LNVM under inv. No RDM I 2719), or from Virunuka in Estonia, can be explained by the common background of Roman brooches, which were distributed via communication lines via the Baltic Sea. It is worth adding, in passing, that a similar phenomenon can be seen in the distribution of locally made imitations of *Schlangenkopffingerringe* (Quast 2004, 256ff.; Figs. 10-11; Banytė-Rowell, Bitner-Wróblewska 2005, 113ff., Fig. 7; Banytė-Rowell 2007a, 17-24, Figs. 4-6).

#### Far-flung contacts among the elites

As we have seen, lively mutual contacts joined west Lithuania with northeast Poland, but the west Lithuanian area also played an important role as an intermediate factor in far-flung contacts between

the Baltic hinterland and territories overseas. This concerned ‘middle class’ people as well as the elites.

These contacts might be a good explanation for the appearance of the significant chieftain grave in barrow 2, dated to phase C<sub>1b</sub>, in Szwajcaria cemetery (Antoniewicz, et al. 1958, 23-31, Figs. 1-5, Pls. I-IX; Jaskanis 2013, 76ff.; Pls. CXVII-CXXV). There is no doubt that the man buried in this outstanding barrow belonged to the interregional warrior elite. The rich inventory of the grave contains elements of Scandinavian or generally Germanic origin, such as two spearheads, an elaborate, unique nose-band with an anthropomorphic decoration

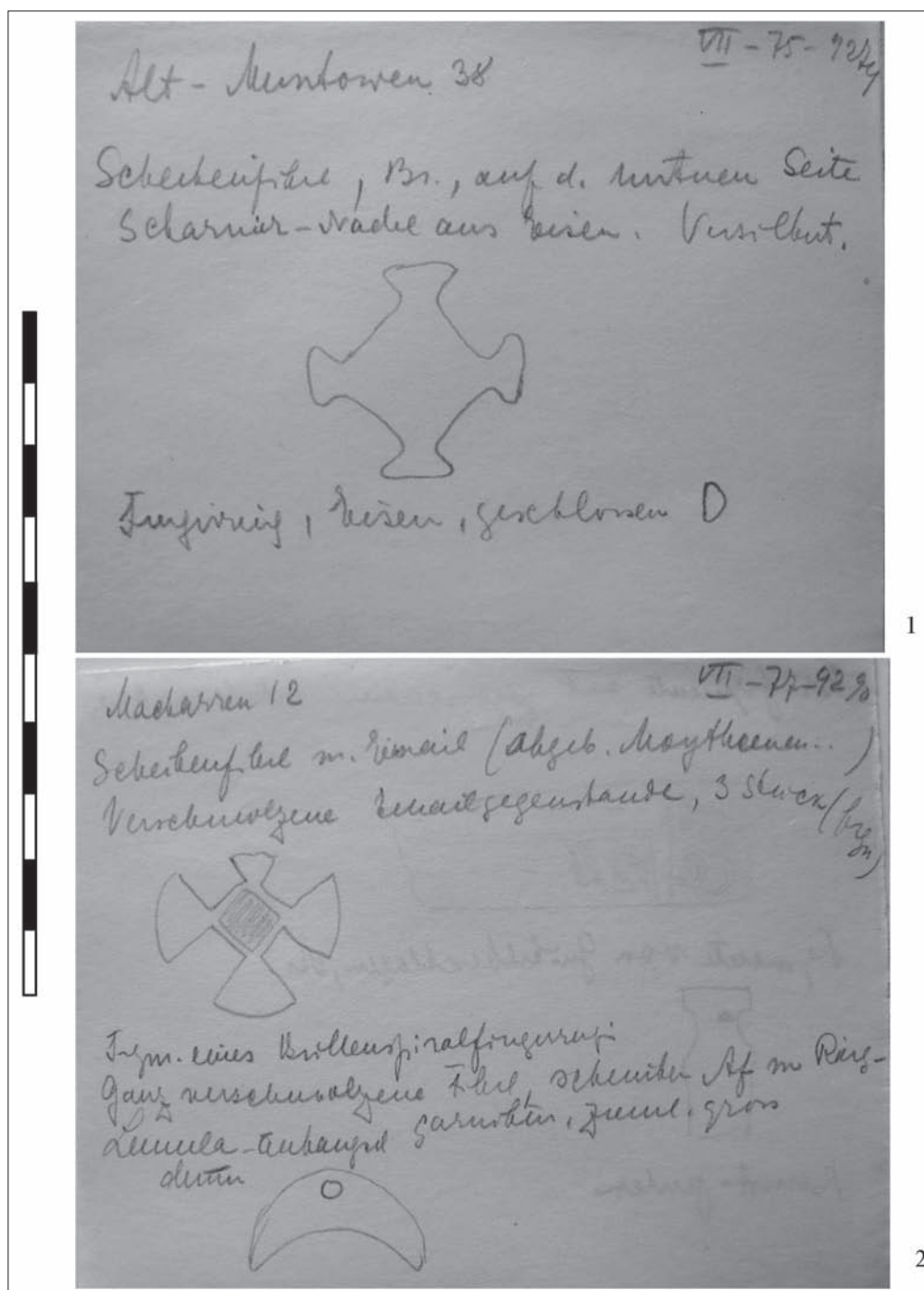


Fig. 4. Cruciform-shaped brooches from Masuria recorded by M. Schmiedehelm: 1 Muntowo/Alt-Muntowen Grave 38; 2 Machary/Macharren Grave 12 (Schmiedehelm Archive, AI). The scale shows the size of the original drawings and notes.

motif (Lau 2014, 54), and saddle fittings (Kontny 2013, 138, Fig. 3). The impressive grave goods include a full set of weapons (spearheads, as well as a sword, an axe, and a shield-boss), elements of two splendid horse harnesses, spurs, shears, toiletry articles, a brooch with silver decoration, and a belt decorated with handsome mounts made of silver, electrum and bronze.

The appearance of such a splendid grave in the Suwałki region, deep in the Baltic hinterland, is not strange, if we remember the good connections this territory had

with the main centre in west Lithuania, maintaining far-flung cultural links via the Szeszupa/Šešupė and Jūra route. The members of the local west Lithuanian elite definitely enjoyed close connections with their counterparts in the western Baltic zone and Scandinavia. This could be confirmed, for example, by grave 1 at Jogučiai-Spirkiai, dated, similarly to the Szwałczaria chieftain grave, to phase C<sub>1b</sub>-C<sub>2</sub> (Tamulynas 2005). Although the grave at Jogučiai-Spirkiai was robbed, probably already in antiquity, the imported bronze



omega-buckle decorated with silver and gold foil, the locally made spearhead inspired by Scandinavian types, the Roman coins, and the equipment of a rider-warrior, leave no doubt that the buried man belonged to an interregional warrior elite.

Communication between the elites of Lithuanian coastal areas that took place in the Late Roman Period is testified to by similarities in riding equipment. It is most obvious when comparing cruciform-shaped mountings-strap separators of bridles, which are numerous in west Lithuania (Mazkatuži, Šilutės dvaras/Adlig Heydekrug, Lazdininkai [Kalnalaukis], Stragnai, Aukštkiemiai/Oberhof, Žviliai, Vėluikiai), and also characteristic of northeast Poland (Netta, Szwajcaria) (Antoniewicz 1963, 168, Fig. 11; Bitner-Wróblewska 2007, 25ff., 81ff., Pl. XXXVIII; Jaskanis 2013, 97, Pl. CLXXV). This type of bridle part has been discussed by C. Reich in the context of various West Balt areas (Reich 2009a, 107ff., Fig. 2.7-10; 3). The ornamental bridles from Vėluikiai cemetery (the lower Nemunas region), as a simplified version of cruciform-shaped strap separators, may be added to this list (Jovaiša 2007, 12ff., Figs. 12.9-10, 17-24; 17). It is interesting that a similar harness set was also found in Tel'manovo/Althof-Insterburg, grave 135, on the communication route between the regions discussed here (Grunert 1939, 38, Fig. 13, Pl. VII). Recently, N. Lau stressed that cruciform-shaped strap distributors were a typical shape among the West Balts, and original in the context of Barbaricum (Lau 2014, 175, Fig. 112). Therefore, we can imagine that riders, as part of the local elite, played an important role in the communication network between the Lithuanian coastland, the Suwalki region and Masuria.

These mutual contacts between peoples of West Balt origin were the basis for the distribution of similar foreign goods. Another confirmation of far-flung elite contacts that took place in phases C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>3</sub> comes from the enamelled disc plates made in the western Roman provinces (the Northern Rhine region) that functioned as elements of the *balteus*. Disc-shaped *balteus* fittings have been discussed recently by M. Przybyła (2010, 93ff., Fig. 2). The distribution map shows that *balteus* fittings of this kind were used mainly in Scandinavia and in the Elbe Germanic cultural sphere. Outside this area, such fittings decorated with enamel were recorded in the West Balt environment, in Aukštkiemiai/Oberhof, grave 242, and in Szwajcaria, barrow 25, grave 2 (Antoniewicz 1961, 16-19, Fig. 11, Pl. V. 1; 1962, 186-191, Figs. 1; 2; Banytė-Rowell 2002; Jaskanis 2013, 93ff., 183ff., Pl. CLXII.2). Another enamelled disc from a *balteus* was found in the cemetery of Pleškučiai-Pangesai/Pleschkutten-Pangessen on the Lithuanian coastland, with red enamel only in the

middle (Madyda-Legutko 1992, 110, Footnote 234). All these analogies testify to the possible directions of routes over the sea from the Lithuanian coastland, and their importance also for the elite in the Suwałki region.

### A continuation of the northeast Poland to west Lithuania route

The continental route along the Szeszupa/Šešupė and Jūra river valleys also functioned later, during the Migration Period. A number of imports from the territory of the Olsztyn Group (Masuria), have been found in west Lithuania. There are bow brooches (*Bügelfibeln*) from Aukštkiemiai/Oberhof and the former Collaten/Kalotė on the coastland and Rževskoe/Linkuhnen, Šereitlaukis/Schreitlaucken in the lower Nemunas region, as well as openwork belt parts from Katyčiai and Vilkyčiai/Wilkieten (Voigtmann 1939, 114ff., Figs. 2-3; Reich 2006, 91, Fig. 6.3; Bliujienė, Bračiulienė 2007, Fig. 1.1; Banytė-Rowell 2009; Hilberg 2009, 121ff., 370, 434, 456ff., 490, Figs. 5.31; 5.49; Reich 2009b, 39ff., Figs. 9-10). The burial of a rich rider-warrior in grave 73 at Lazdininkai is good confirmation of the lively contacts between the areas in question. The costume elements, especially the belt set with openwork mounds and lancet-shaped (*lanzettentförmige*) belt fittings, are typical of the Olsztyn Group (Bliujienė, Butkus 2002, 85-96, Figs. 3-5). However, it should be added that the presence of weaponry, namely a single-edged sword, lance heads and spearheads may connect this grave more with the Elbląg Group than with Masuria, where no weapons were used in the burial inventory during the Migration Period (cf. Jakobson 2009; Kontny et al. 2011). The Scandinavian decoration motifs on belt and bridle mounts draw our attention to something else. It appears that the young man buried at Lazdininkai belonged to an interregional warrior elite, among which elements from different regions were valued and combined. Surely, Masurian rider-warriors played an important role in this interregional community.

Although it is not certain which route these objects took, the find of a *Bügelfibel* from the Suwałki region (Bród Nowy) (The Balts 1981, Fig. 51; Die Balten 1987, 154) may suggest continental connections. Recent discoveries at the settlement in Skomack Wielki,<sup>4</sup> situated about 40 kilometres east of the Great Masurian Lakes, leave us with no doubt that people of the Olsztyn Group penetrated eastwards. Feature 14 in

<sup>4</sup> Unpublished materials from excavations in 2014 by the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw and Antiquarians Associated, within the framework of the project Polish-Norwegian Modern Archaeological Conservation Initiative 'Archaeology of Yatvings'.



Fig. 5. Finds from the Migration Period from the settlement at Skomack Wielki (Ostrów), Poland (photograph by Monika Bajkowska).

Skomack Wielki reveals eight vessels typical of Olsztyn Group pottery. There are also a number of loose finds representing characteristic Masurian costume elements, namely *Schlusskreuzfibeln*, *lanzettförmige* belt fittings, or buckles with a cross on the spike (Fig. 5).

## Conclusions

There is no doubt that the Samland Peninsula played a special role in the southeast Baltic basin as a trading point, working as an intermediary in the dissemination of interregional civilisational and stylistic novelties in the region, and in maintaining far-flung commercial and cultural links. In our opinion, west Lithuania also played such a role for some regions of Baltic territory, and could be regarded as a kind of bridge, gold, silver, iron or whatever, between the sea and the hinterland. The continental route along the Szeszuła/Šešupė and Jūra rivers could be regarded as a good communication route. What is interesting is that this route may also have functioned later during the Early Middle Ages. The significant number of finds that connect the micro-region around Szurpiły<sup>5</sup> and west Lithuania might provide confirmation of this assumption.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. pennisular brooches with star-shaped terminals, a late variant of a brooch with rungs (*Armbrustsprossenfibel*) – unpublished materials from investigations by the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw and the Institute of Archaeology, Warsaw University.

## Abbreviations

Arch. Baltica – Archaeologia Baltica (Vilnius 1995-2002, Klaipėda 2006 –).

Arch. Lituana – Archaeologia Lituana (Vilnius 1999 –).

AI – Tallina Ülikooli Ajaloo Instituut (Institute of History, Tallinn University).

Lietuvos arch. – Lietuvos archeologija (Vilnius 1979 –).

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LNVM – Latvijas Nacionālais vēstures muzejs (National History Museum of Latvia), Riga.

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## VAKARŲ LIETUVA KAIP AUKSINIS TILTAS TARP JŪROS IR BALTŲ GYVENAMO KRAŠTO GILUMOS ŠIAURĖS RYTŲ LENKIJOJE ROMĖNIŠKŲJU IR TAUTŲ KRAUSTYMOŠI LAIKOTARPIAIS

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### Santrauka

Šis straipsnis inspiravo profesoriaus V. Žulkaus įvairiapusės mokslinių tyrimų kryptys, tarp kurių yra darbai, skirti vandens kelių – jūra ir upėmis – svarbai romėniškuoju ir tautų kraustymosi laikotarpiais. Autorės atkreipia dėmesį, kad ypatingą reikšmę ryšiams tarp Vakarų Lietuvos ir Mozūrijos bei Suvalkų regiono (Šiaurės rytų Lenkija) turėjo komunikacinės linijos, besidriekiančios Šešupės (lenk. *Szeszupa*) ir Jūros upėmis. Vakarų Lietuvos ir Pietvakarių Latvijos radiniai liudija, kad šis regionas buvo svarbus, mezgant toliau siekiančius ryšius Baltijos jūra. Taigi šį vakarų baltų arealą pasiekė Skandinavijos ar žemyninių germanų kraštų įtaka. Kaip tokių sąsajų rezultatas gali būti paminėtos moterų žalvurių puoštos kepuraitės / galvos dangos, vietinių juvelyrų pritaikyta papuošalų inkrustavimo stiklo akutėmis technologija, baltiškos iš Pietų Baltijos regiono ir Skandinavijos perimtos gyvatgalvių žiedų ir antkaklių rakto skylutės pavidalo užsegimu vietinės imitacijos.

Vakarų Lietuvos pakrantės buvo patrauklios kitiems, giliau žemyne gyvenusiems, baltams, o būtent Mozūrijos ir Suvalkų regionų gyventojams, dėl savo kaip uosto funkcijos. Tai patvirtina duomenys jau nuo romėniškojo laikotarpio pradžios. Pirmiausia paminėtinos *Jezerine* tipo segės, kurios per Pševorsko kultūrą pasiekė Mozūriją ir galbūt Angerupės ir Įsruties upių keliais pasiekė dabartinės Šilutės apylinkes Nemuno žemupyje. Vėliau galima nurodyti ne vieną aprangos elementą, kilusį iš Mozūrijos Bogačevo kultūros, kuris pasiekė Vakarų Lietuvą. Tai Almgreno 133 segės, vadinamosios Mozūrų tipo laiptelinės segės, Renatos Madydos-Legutko tipo G63 sagtis su dvigubu liežuvėliu, keli „mozūriškųjų“ smeigtukų tipai. Kita vertus, tarp Mozūruose ir Suvalkuose aptiktų radinių galima atpažinti Vakarų Lietuvos formų įtaką. Tai pirmiausia krūtinės juostos iš ažūrinių plokštelių-skirstiklių ir



grandinėlių. Šio stiliaus papuošalų rasta keliuose pilkapynuose Suvalkų regione, Lenkijoje. Kaip Lietuvos pajūrio stiliaus įtaką galima vertinti Suvalkų-Augustavo regione rastas antkakles su mėlyno stiklo akutėmis. Dar vienas Vakarų Lietuvos ir Mozūrijos gyventojų sąveikos pavyzdys – azūriniai diržų apkalai-liežuvėliai, kurie gaminti pagal Gotlando gaminius. Suvalkų regione rasto Płociczno kapinyno radiniai atskleidžia dvejopus santykius: čia rastos laiptelinės segės ir azūriniai diržo apkalai liudija Lietuvos pajūrio stilistines įtakas, o germaniška omegos formos sagtis į Płociczno galėjo patekti iš germaniškų arealų per Lietuvos pajūrį. Aukštikiemių (*Oberhof*) kapinyne rasta kryžinė plokštelinė segė, kuri skirtina  $C_1$  periodui, panaši į tokios formos seges ir smeigtukus iš Mozūrijos. Šie papuošalai buvo kurti pagal romėniškuosius segių pavyzdžius, kurie greičiausiai plito jūros keliu. Tai liudija kryžinės segės, randamos Baltijos regiono finų kapinynuose. Matyt, jūra atkeliavę romėniški pavyzdžiai lėmė savitų vietinių papuošalų atsiradimą keliuose Rytų Baltijos regionuose.

Vakarų Lietuvos ir Pietvakarių Latvijos pajūris tarpininkavo savo kaimynams baltams, gyvenusiems giliau žemyne, mezgant tolimesnius tarpregioninius kontaktus. Tai liudija tokie išskirtiniai elito kapai kaip „vado“ palaidojimas Szwajcaria pilkapyje 2 (Suvalkų regionas), kur tarp įkapių yra skandinaviškos, arba bendrąja prasme – germaniškos, kilmės daiktų. Šis kapas lyginamas su Jogučių-Spirkių kapu 1 (Vakarų Lietuvoje). Raitelių, kaip sluoksnio, tarpusavio komunikaciją liudija kamanų panašių elementų – kryžiaus formos apkalų – paplitimas baltų arealuose nuo pajūrio iki Šiaurės rytų Lenkijos. Dar vienas tolimų karinio elito kontaktų, greičiausiai ėjusių per pajūrį, pavyzdys yra apskriti *balteus* apkalai. Jų vakarų baltų arealuose žinoma trys: iš Aukštikiemių kapo 242 ir Pleškučių-Pangesų kapinyno (Vakarų Lietuva) bei Szwajcaria pilkapio 25 kapo 2. Šie radiniai datuojami  $C_2$ – $C_3$  periodais.

Žemyninis kelias palei Šešupės ir Jūros upes funkcionavo ir tautų kraustymosi laikotarpiu. Vakarų Lietuvos (pajūrio ir Nemuno žemupio) medžiagoje vadinamosios *Bügelfibel* tipo segės ir azūriniai apkalai rodo mozūriškosios Olštyno grupės įtaką. Lazdininkų raitelio kape 73 tarp įkapių rasta ir skandinavišką, ir mozūrišką (Olštyno grupės), ir Elbingo grupės įtaką patyrusių radinių. Olštyno grupės žmonės (Mozūrijos ežerynas) savo ruožtu turėjo įtakos kaimynams rytuose – tą liudija radiniai iš Suvalkų regiono.

Taigi Vakarų Lietuvos regionas, kaip prekių ir idėjų uostas, romėniškuoju ir tautų kraustymosi laikotarpiais tarpininkavo giliau žemyne gyvenantiems baltams. Šiam bendravimui didelę įtaką turėjo Šešupės–Jūros komunikacinės linijos.