

# THE CEMETERY OF LINKUHNEN/RŽEVSKOJE: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF FIBULAE FROM THE ROMAN AND MIGRATION PERIODS TO THE VIKING AGE

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## Abstract

The grave goods from Linkuhnen (Rževskoje/Linkūnai) indicate continuous usage of the cemetery from the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period to the Viking Age (second to 11th century AD). A closer look at the fibulae from Linkuhnen offers an overview of the changing cultural relationships with the neighbouring areas during the 1,000 years of occupancy of the site. The interpretation of Linkuhnen is closely linked to its topographical position close to the River Nemunas (Neman/Memel). The hypothetical alteration of the course of the River Nemunas, suggested by V. Žulkus, has to be discussed for its potential impact on the site of Linkuhnen and its relations with neighbouring areas at the end of the first millennium.

Key words: Linkuhnen/Rževskoje cemetery, Roman Iron Age, Migration Period, Viking Age, River Nemunas (Neman/Memel).

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## Introduction

When we look at archaeological material from the Prussia Museum in Königsberg (Kaliningrad) in the former East Prussia that was excavated before the Second World War and survived in Berlin and Kaliningrad, then we are dealing almost entirely with a specific aspect of material culture from the last two millennia: grave goods from extensive burial grounds. On one hand, there are large cemeteries which were in use for a relatively short period of time, e.g. Daumen (Tumiany) and Kellaren (Kielary); and on the other hand, cemeteries that existed for over 1,000 years, from the Roman Iron Age to the Middle Ages, sometimes even with roots in Prehistoric times. One of these sites is the cemetery of Linkuhnen, which was in use from the second to the 11th century AD, and excavated between 1928 and 1939, but was never really published (Gossler, Jahn 2015).

From the very beginning of the excavations, Linkuhnen became a famous archaeological site, and was well established in archaeological literature with a wide variety of interpretations. These interpretations by Carl Engel, the excavator of Linkuhnen, were never really backed up by a comprehensive publication of the archaeological material. In the 20th and the 21st centuries, over 80 years after the first excavations, the reconstruction and reevaluation of the site and its finds, a long list of questions and reconsiderations, arose concerning Linkuhnen and its neighbourhood from the second to the 11th century. How did the cultural interaction between the people from Linkuhnen and the surrounding areas change during the 1,000 years of use of

the cemetery? How did the political situation between Germany and Lithuania in the 1920s and 1930s influence the archaeological interpretation of Linkuhnen? And how important are the finds from Linkuhnen and modern excavations in Lithuania to the scientific community of today?

The village of Linkuhnen (Rževskoje/Linkūnai, Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia) is located about ten kilometres west of the former Tilsit (Sovetsk), and 4.5 kilometres southwest of the modern course of the River Nemunas (Fig. 1). The site is first and foremost linked to its cemetery in the eastern part of the village (Findspot 1), but there could also be another cemetery in the western part of Linkuhnen (Findspot 6), where a Roman Iron Age cremation grave with a horse burial was found (Fig. 2). There are also at least three findspots with a settlement character dating from the Neolithic to the Viking Age (Findspots 4-6). Wilhelm Gaerte excavated some Viking Age settlement traces which obviously did not relate to the Vikings but to the local population (Gaerte 1929, 352). Between 1928 and 1939, a total of 492 inhumation and cremation burials, with approximately 5,500 grave goods, were excavated from the Linkuhnen cemetery by Herbert Jankuhn, Carl Engel, Kurt Voigtmann, Paul Lemke and Fritz Jaensch. Even though the chronological spectrum of the grave goods indicates continuous usage of the cemetery from the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period to the Middle Ages (second to 11th century), the cemetery of Linkuhnen is most famous for its finds from the Viking Age, since more than one third of all graves belong to this period (Gossler, Jahn, 2015, 76, Tab. 1).



Fig. 1. Linkuhnen, Kr. Niederung (Rzevskoje) in the former East Prussia and *Memelgebiet* (Klaipėdos kraštas) north of the River Nemunas (based on a map by Timo Ibsen, Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology [ZBSA] in Schleswig).



Fig. 2. Linkuhnen findspots 1-6: 1 cemetery; 2 single find; 3 grave; 4 settlement; 5 settlement; 6 settlement, grave (based on Archive MVF Berlin SMB-PK/MVF, PM-IXg 123).

## Chronology

In the early stages of his excavations, C. Engel developed a model to understand the stratigraphic and chronological situation at Linkuhnen (C. Engel 1930, 1931a, 1931b, 315-325, 1931c, 45, 1932, 168ff.). He described the site as a cemetery with four 'floors' of occupancy. He took these 'floors' as successive phases of occupancy, and thought of a model in which these layers represented stratigraphic units on top of each other. The basic idea of these four layers was that at the lowest level he found inhumation graves from the Early Migration Period, on the second/middle level were cremation graves from the Later Migration Period, and the two top levels were represented by cremation graves from the eighth to the 11th century (Goßler, Jahn 2015, 76, Fig. 5). As with any model, there were some exceptions, and Engel also found a few cremation graves on the lower level, and some inhumation graves on the middle level.

Since 2014, the remaining archaeological objects, field documentation and archival information from Linkuhnen have been extensively reevaluated and reconstructed (Gossler, Jahn 2015, 71-75). The combination of information from objects in Berlin, and various archival material, opens up the possibility for a new approach to the archaeological importance of the Linkuhnen cemetery: today, the catalogue of finds includes 3,956 objects. However, the interpretation and chronological discussion is affected by some serious limitations. We are dealing with four different categories of object information: 1) archaeological objects from Linkuhnen surviving in Berlin (302 pieces); 2) objects known from photographic documentation; 3) objects known from field diaries and other documentation with proper typological descriptions (e.g. Åberg type 196); and 4) objects with only general or imprecise descriptions (e.g. fibula, sword, etc). From 492 documented inhumation and cremation graves, we have only a very limited number of closed assemblages with a complete set of typologically determined objects. This incomplete archaeological record disables any reliable modern statistical analysis like seriation or correspondence analysis. Nevertheless, with the modern reconstruction of the documentation and archival information, it seems possible to differentiate the occupancy of the cemetery at Linkuhnen into seven exemplary phases. The criteria which were used to separate the different phases were: first, the rite of burial, i.e. the practice of cremation and inhumation, and the proportion of both rites to each other; and second, the custom of furnishings for the deceased, with

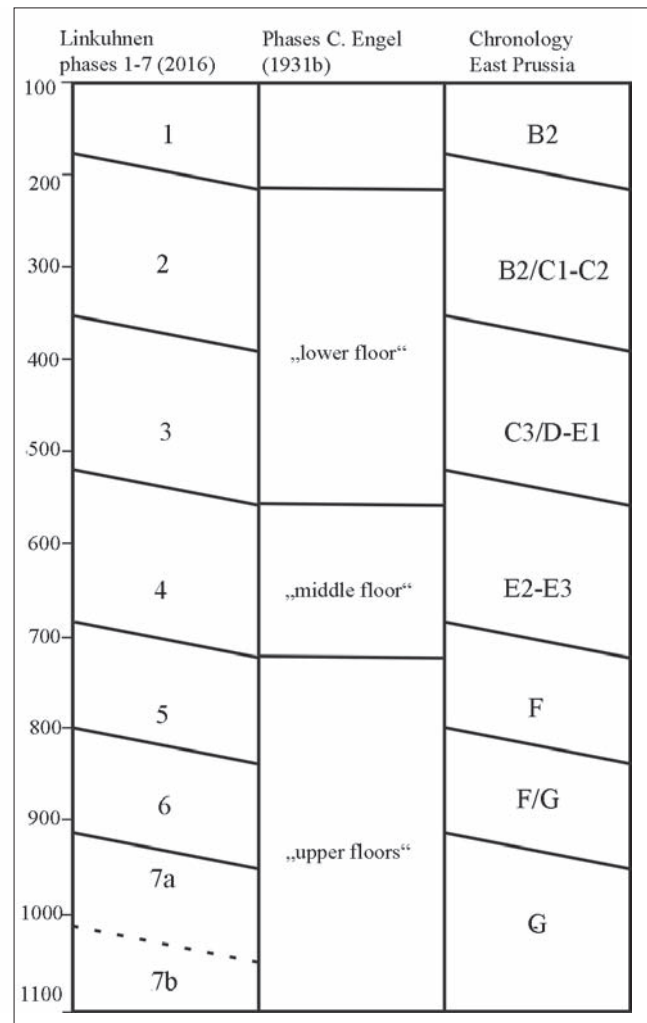


Fig. 3. A chronology of Linkuhnen cemetery in relation to the chronology of East Prussia (based on C. Engel; Nowakowski 1998, 14 Fig. 2; Nowakiewicz 2011, 62, Fig. 1).

typical combinations of material goods, particularly concerning significant chronological groups of grave goods such as ornaments and swords. The appearance of new elements, especially in the dress of men and women, should be a sign of the beginning of a new phase of occupancy.

The beginning of the cemetery can be dated back to the end of the older Roman Period (Period B<sub>2</sub>). The first peak of occupancy is reached during the Migration Period, between the periods C<sub>3</sub>/D and E<sub>1</sub>. The maximum occupancy can be clearly noticed in the Viking Age (Period G). Phases 2 and 3 correlate with the lowest level after C. Engel, phase 4 with the middle level, and phases 5, 6 and 7 with the two upper levels (Fig. 3).

A comprehensive catalogue of the finds, a further chronological discussion, the history of research and the role of C. Engel will be presented in a forthcoming monographic publication. For this article, there is only room for an abridged picture of the archaeological finds from Linkuhnen, with a closer look at the fibula material.

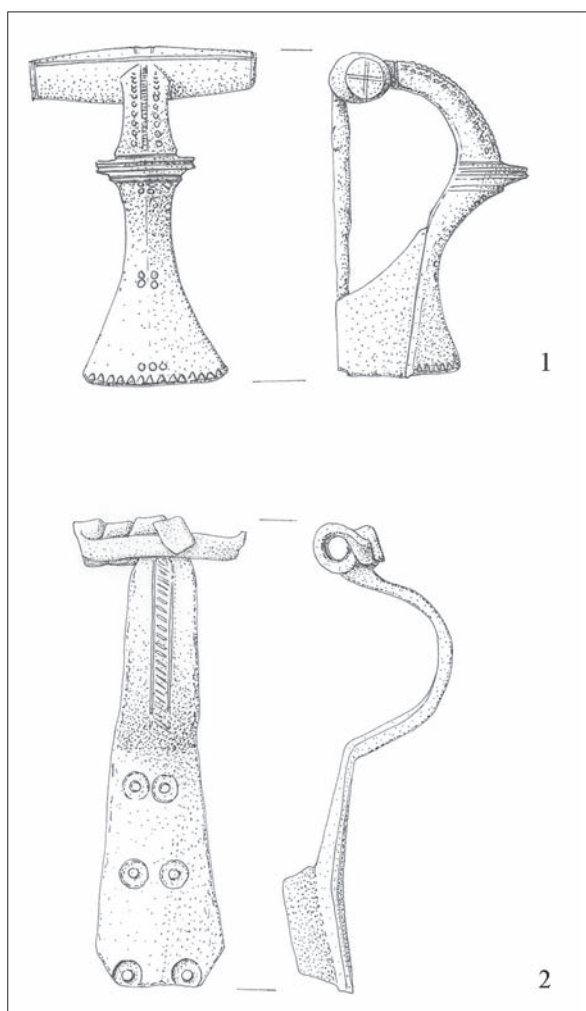


Fig. 4. *Rollenkappenfibel* and eye fibula from Linkuhnen cemetery phase 1: 1-2 grave 354/1933. Phase 1 (drawings by A. Karlsen).

### Phase 1

The chronological situation can be illustrated by fibula material from Linkuhnen that survived in Berlin, as well as objects which are only known from the archival information: cremation grave 354/1933 belongs to phase 1 and contains a *Rollenkappenfibel* (Almgren 42) (Fig. 4.1) and an eye-fibula (Almgren 61) (Fig. 4.2). Fibulae of Almgren type 42 can be found in Wielbark culture and on the Sambian Peninsula (Michelbertas 1978a, 35ff., 153, Map 24; Nowakowski 1996a; Olędzki 1998, 67-84; Cieśliński 2010). Just as in grave 354/1933 in Linkuhnen fibulae of type 42 are often found with eye-fibulae in period B<sub>2</sub>, in western Lithuania they also appear in period B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub> (Bliujienė 2013, 485, 487, Figs. 335, 337). Eye fibulae of type Almgren 61 are prominent costume elements in the West Baltic, in Sambia and Masuria, and Wielbark and Przeworsk culture in period B<sub>2</sub> and B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub> (Michelbertas 1978b, 33ff., 153, Map 22; Pfeiffer-Frohnert 1998, 125-134; Cieśliński 2010; Nowakowski 1996a; Nowakowski 2013; Bliujienė 2013, 489, Fig. 339).

### Phase 2

Phases 2 and 3 are dominated by inhumation graves, some of them with the remains of wooden coffins. Fibulae from phase 2 are only known from the archival material and the descriptions by C. Engel; none of these objects have survived in Berlin. New fibula types are *kräftig profilierte Fibeln* of Almgren group IV (grave 337/1933), *Fibeln mit umgeschlagenen Fuß* of Almgren group VI, types 161/162 and 167

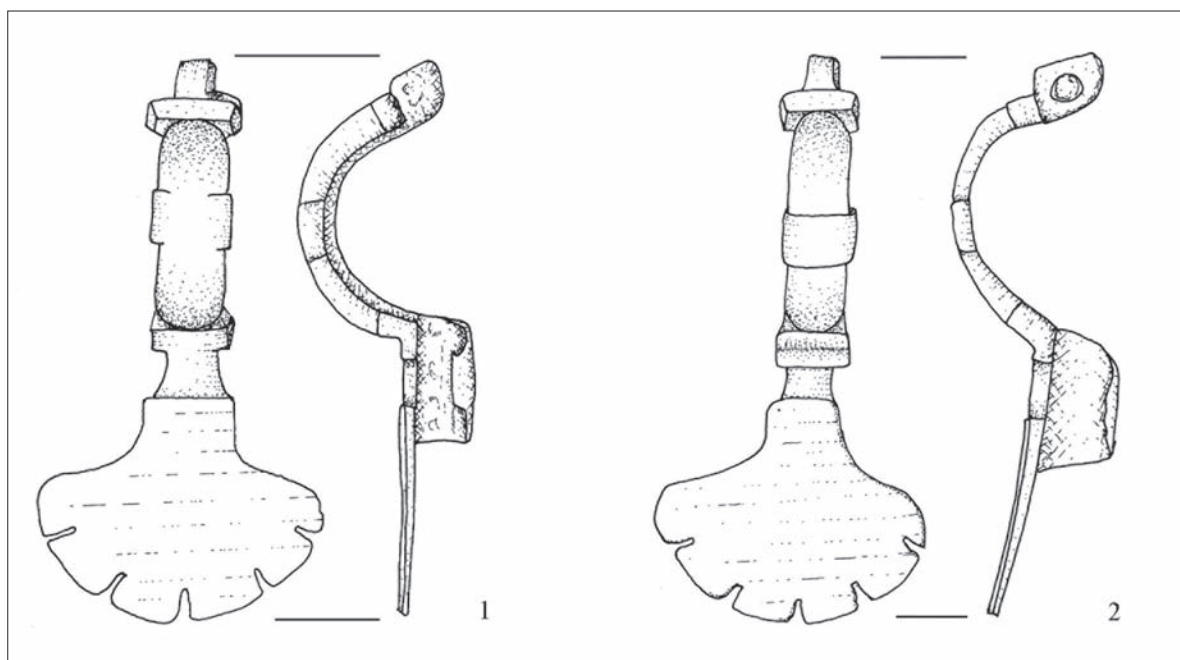


Fig. 5. Fibulae with star-shaped feet from Linkuhnen cemetery phase 3: 1-2 grave 267/1933 (drawings by C. Golze).

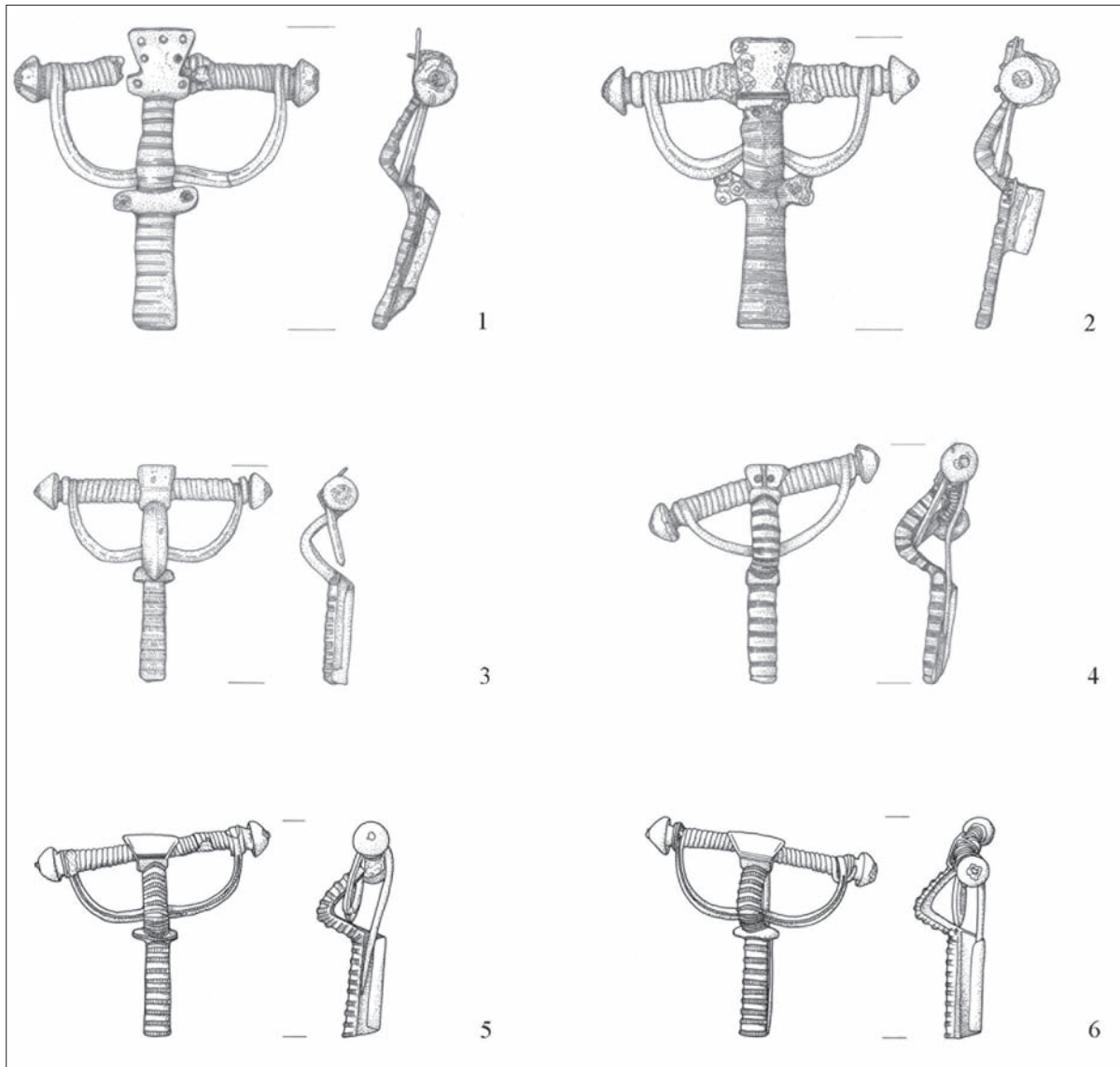


Fig. 6. Cross-bow fibulae of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type from Linkuhnen cemetery phase 3: 1 grave 463/1938; 2 grave 85/1929; 3 grave 69/1929; 4 grave 219/1933; 5-6 grave 66/1929 (drawings by C. Golze and C. Herghelegiu).

(graves No 317/1933, 342/1933 and 357/1933) and *Fibeln mit hohem Nadelhalter* of Almgren group VII (grave 351/1933), and belong to periods B<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>2</sub> (Michelbertas 1978b, 33ff. 153, Map 23 and 26,1; Dąbrowska 1998, 149-156; Budvydas 2002, 246ff.; 260 Fig. 17; Vaitkunskienė 1999, 35ff. Fig. 42,2.8; 57 Fig. 69,7; 85 Fig. 100,1.3-4; 168 Fig. 182; 228; Tischler/Kemke 1902, Pl. III, 2b; M. Engel et al. 2006a, Pl. 16,1; M. Engel et al. 2006b; Bliujienė 2013a, 488 Fig. 338; 490 Fig. 340).

### Phase 3

In phase 3 in Linkuhnen, a pair of cross-bow fibulae with star-shaped feet were found in inhumation grave 267/1933; the feet are decorated with a thin overlay made of silver (Fig. 5.1-2). Both fibulae were placed on the chest of a female burial, together with arm

rings with piston-shaped terminals at the wrists. These fibulae are typical examples of Bitner-Wróblewska type II in west Lithuania (Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture) (Tautavičius 1978a, 42ff., 153, Map 28; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, 60, Fig. 11), and were in use in the Early Migration Period (Period D) in the fourth to fifth centuries, and in Estonia slightly later (Vaitkunskienė 1999, 168, 228, Fig. 183.2; Tvauri 2012, 133).

Cross-bow fibulae of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type were among the most popular costume elements at Linkuhnen during the Migration Period (graves Nos 11 A/1929, 52 B/1929, 66/1929, 76/1929, 69/1929, 75/1929, 76/1929, 85/1929, 116/1930, 146/1931, 204 B/1933, 219/1933, 367/1933, 446/1938, 450/1938, 463/1938, 491/1939, stray find 1928). Fibulae of this type have been described by Bitner-Wróblewska (Bitner-Wróblewska 2001), and it is no surprise that

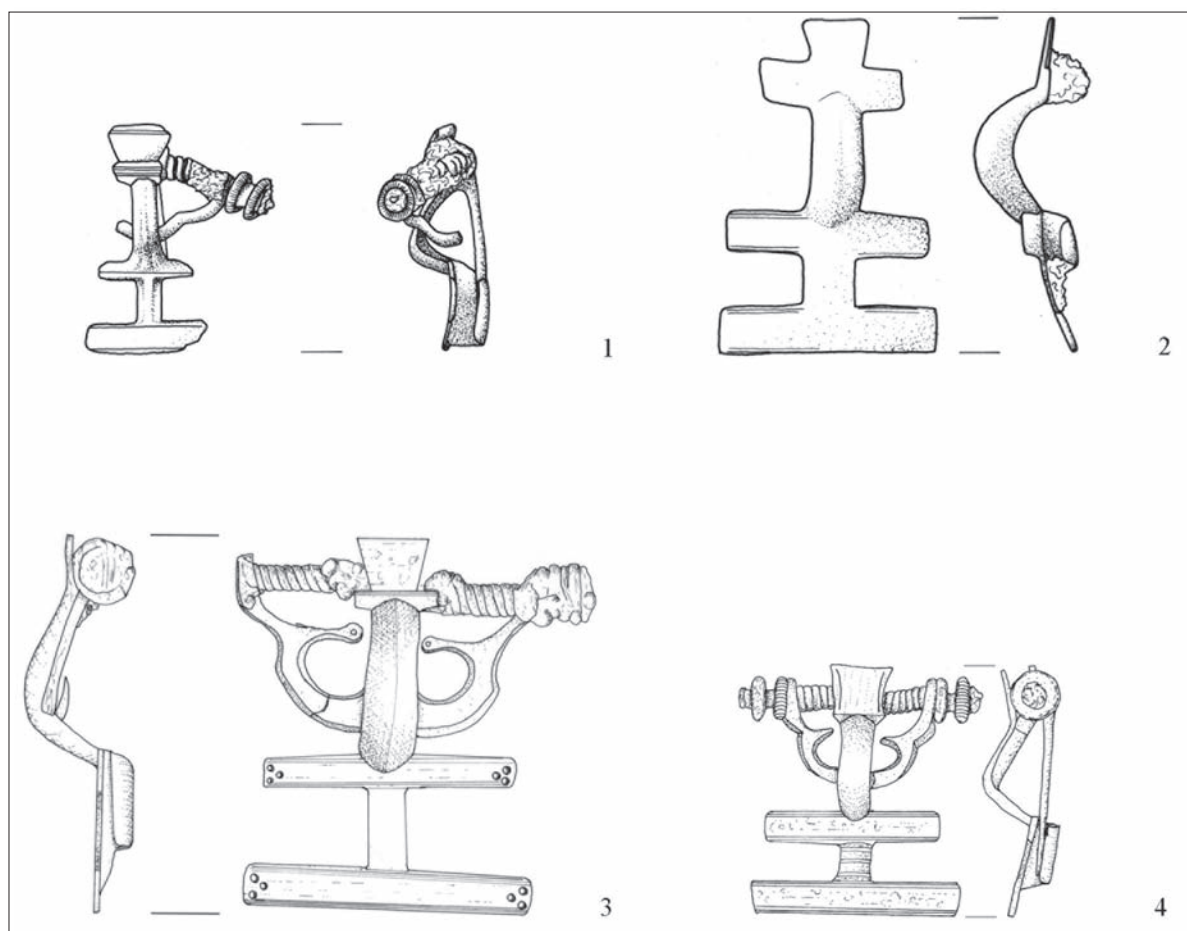


Fig. 7. Cross-bar fibulae from Linkuhen cemetery phase 4: 1 grave 104/1929; 2 grave 417/1938; 3 grave 65/1929; 4 grave 235/1933 (drawings by C. Golze and C. Hergeligiū).

most of the fibulae of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type at Linkuhen belong to the Lithuanian variant (Fig. 6). In Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture, these fibulae appear at the end of the fourth century (early Migration Period, period D), and remain fashionable in Sambia, Lithuania and Estonia during the Late Migration Period (for this, see Pagrybis, Plinkaigalis and Marvelė cemeteries; Kazakevičius 1993, 103ff., Fig. 166, 167; Vaitkunskienė 1995, 42, 83, 131, Figs. 54. 3, 118. 1, 119. 2, 5; Bertašius 2002, 77ff., Fig. 25; Tvauri 2012, 134). In west Lithuania and on the River Nemunas, these fibulae were part of the burial rite during most of the sixth century (Bliujienė 2013, 523, 525, Figs. 359, 361; 2011, 242, Fig. 85). The youngest cross-bow fibulae of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type were found in Linkuhen in combination with *Schlusskreuzfibeln* and arm rings with thickened and faceted terminals, which are hardly found in Lithuania after the first quarter of the sixth century (Bliujienė 2013, 522, 525ff., Figs. 358, 361-363). Most of the fibulae of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type were in use at Linkuhen during the second half of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century. One notable exception was found in cremation grave 69/1929 from the tenth/11th century (phase 7): this fib-

ula of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type was obviously reused, and became part of a burial 400 years after its origin.

#### Phase 4

In phase 4, the main burial custom changes from inhumation back to cremation, and the burials belong to Engels' 'middle floor'.

Costume elements of phase 4 in Linkuhen were cross-bar fibulae of Åberg type 194-195 (graves Nos 15/1929, 65/1929, 104/1929, 228/1933, 235/1933, 312/1933, 405/1938, 417/1938, 420/1938, 457/1938) (Fig. 7). If we follow the classification by Rudnicki, four fibulae from Linkuhen belong to group III, variant A. Fibulae of this type are found in the Masurian Olsztyn group at the beginning of phase E2, i.e. the second and third quarters of the sixth century (Rudnicki 2008, 296ff., Fig. 12). The same dating can be applied to finds from Lithuania (Bliujienė 2013, 30, Fig. 7; Kazakevičius 1993, 89, Fig. 145. 1 – Plinkaigalis, grave 19; Vaitkunskienė 1995, 31, 39 121, Figs. 41. 1, 50. 1; 171. 1-3 – Pagrybis cemetery; Zalepūgienė, Fedajėvas 2009, 146, Fig. 4 – Šereitlaukis, grave 13), even though

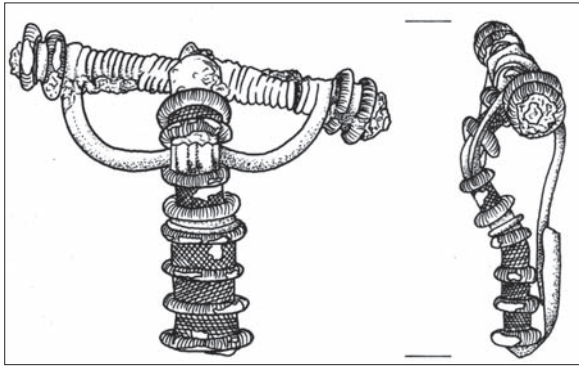


Fig. 8. Cross-bow fibula with ring decoration type Åberg 4-5, from Linkuhnen cemetery grave 81/1929, phase 4 (drawing by C. Golze).

they are sometimes also found in graves from the end of the sixth century (Bliujiene 2013, 522ff., Figs. 358-364). Parallels are also found in Sambian Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture and the Elbing (Elbląg) group during the Migration Period. From a photograph of the 1938 excavations in Linkuhnen, we also know of a cross-bar fibula that belongs to Rudnicki group IV, variant B, and dates from the sixth or seventh century, as finds from cemeteries in Masuria and Lithuania show (Rudnicki 2008, 296ff., Fig. 12; Kazakevičius 1993, 40, 174 Fig. 69 – Plinkaigalis cemetery; Bliujienė 2013, 527, Fig. 363; Kazakevičius 1993, p.112 Fig. 189 – Plinkai-galis, grave 19; Vaitkunskienė 1995, 121, Fig. 171. 3-6 – Pagrybis cemetery). The youngest variant is represented by fibulae with two wide cross-bars, a trapez-shaped top, and a non-functional *pseudosehne*, which date from the seventh and eighth centuries (Gaerte 1929, 274, Fig. 215. g – Weszeiten, Kr. Heydekrug; Bliujienė 2013, 522, Fig. 358; Tautavičius 1996, 194, Fig. 81.2, 1984, 114, Fig. 21.2 – Požerės cemetery; Vaitkunskienė 1984, 87, Fig. 15.3 – Kaštaunaliai cemetery). At Linkuhnen, this youngest variant is found in combination with unimpaired swords and spearheads. The bending and destruction of grave goods is a phenomenon that starts in Linkuhnen in the eighth century. This observation suggests that the youngest cross-bar fibulae of Linkuhnen were buried before the eighth century.

One cross-bow fibula of phase 4 with ring decoration of Åberg type 4-5 survived in Berlin (Fig. 8); another example is described in the field documentation (graves No 81/1929, 451/451 A/1938). The grave inventory of grave 81/1929 is chronologically rather non-specific, so the main indication for the chronological context comes from similar finds in Lithuania from a timespan between the second half of the fifth and the sixth century (Vaitkunskienė 1995, 117, Fig. 164. 13 – Pagrybis cemetery; Budvydas 2002, 257ff., Fig. 17; Michelbertas 2006, 48, Fig. 39 – Akmeniai cemetery, grave 1; Kazakevičius 1993, 57, 66ff., 96, 110ff., Figs. 102,8,

114. 5, 117. 2, 156. 6, 9, 178, 177 – Plinkaigalis cemetery; Stankus 1984, 68ff., Figs. 7.2, 8.5 – Kairėnėliai cemetery; Urbanavičius, Urbanavičienė 1988, 16, Figs. 15.6, 16. 5 – Obeliai cemetery; Tautavičius 1978b, 40ff., 26,3).

Of special interest are the remains of three remarkable bow fibulae from Linkuhnen, which show a new dimension of trans-regional contacts between the Baltic and southeast Europe during the Migration Period (graves 5/1928, 178/1933, 201 A/1933). The bow fibula from grave 178/1933 survived in Berlin in a damaged state (Fig. 9. 1), but the drawing by Kurt Voigtmann from the 1930s shows a bow fibula with two slightly different arms: an almost round top plate and a U-shaped foot. Voigtmann described this find as a fibula with equal arms (*gleicharmige Fibel*) (Voigtmann-Archive SMB-PK/MVF, PM-IXc 1; Hilberg 2009, 434), but it is difficult to find good parallels among ‘real’ equal-armed bow fibulae of the Migration Period, since such differences between the two arms are rather rare (cf. group I A 2 and II A 1a: Thörle 2001; Hübener 1972). Most parallels relate either to the top or the foot of the fibula, but not to this combination (Kühn 1965, Plates 1.1, 61.1.1, 62.1.38 – Krefeld-Gellep type; Kühn 1974, Plate 220.51,22 – Suuk-Su type; Plate 230.51,191 – Breitenfurt type). A more similar fibula comes from a cremation grave in Netta, Poland, with a semi-circular head and a foot like the one from grave 178/1933 in Linkuhnen, and which belongs to the group of *Blechfibeln* from the fourth or fifth centuries (Kokowski 1996; Gauß 2009). Such fibulae are found in the context of Late Roman Iron Age Sântana-de-Mureş-Charniakhov culture in southeast Europe. These influences from southeast Europe evoked Baltic derivatives of the *Blechfibel* model in the sixth/seventh century, as we can see in the cemetery of Nowinka, cremation grave 83. This burial of the Elbing (Elbląg) group contained a bow fibula with a round top plate as in Linkuhnen, and an oval foot, and was laid out in the late sixth or early seventh century (Szymański 2006, 371ff., 377, Fig.1.2). However, the dating of the Linkuhnen find from grave 178/1933 remains difficult, because it was found in a cremation grave of phase 7 (tenth/11th century), and was probably a reused ‘antiquity’ from the sixth/seventh century.

Another ‘antiquity’ comes from the Viking Age grave 5/1928 in Linkuhnen, and represents a bow fibula with semi-circular headplate with originally seven knobs (Fig. 9.2). This fibula probably looked rather similar to the one from grave 201 A/1993, but was modified to be used as a pendant or part of a chain ensemble. The lower part of the fibula is missing, but on the back of the knobs and of the head plate, three additional eye-lets had been added to connect the pendant to a chain

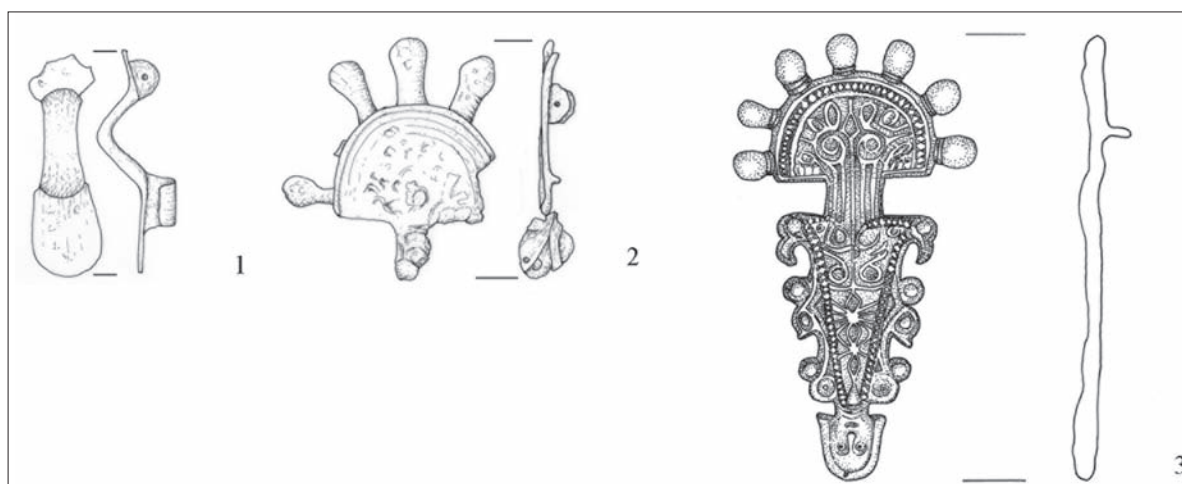


Fig. 9. Bow fibulae from Linkuhen cemetery phase 4: 1 grave 178/1929; 2 grave 5/1928; 3 grave 201 A/1933 (drawings by C. Hergheligi and A. Karlsen).

construction. The rest of the burial can be clearly linked to the tenth century, e.g. two penannular brooches, one with animal head-shaped terminals. It is remarkable that these two ‘antiquities’ are rather rare objects in the Nemunas area, and were treated as ‘exotica’ and specially appreciated. If we look at the stratigraphy of Linkuhen, it is obvious that this is a site with very dense occupancy, vertically and horizontally. Even though the younger graves were put very close to the older ones, they rarely ever destroyed the older burials or removed the old grave goods. It is one of the main characteristics of the Linkuhen cemetery that over a time-span of 1,000 years, new graves were put in place paying attention and respect to the positions of the old graves. The reuse of older grave goods was a rare exception, and can be related to the ‘exotic’ nature of the fibulae.

The third and much-discussed bow fibula came from inhumation grave 201 A/1933 in Linkuhen, and evoked an ongoing discussion about its origin and cultural relations (Fig. 9.3). When K. Voigtmann discussed this fibula, he compared it to a similar piece from Šereitlaukis (Schreitlaucken, Kr. Tilsit), and presumed an origin in the middle Danube region (Voigtmann 1938/39, 114ff., Figs. 2-3). J. Werner defined the bow fibula from Linkuhen as type Sparta-Linkuhen-Coșoveni (type I B), with parallels in Greece, Asia Minor, Hungary, Transylvania, Walachia, Serbia and Bulgaria (Werner 1950, pp.150-172). The closest parallel comes from Vețel in Romania, dated to the seventh century. With a substantial number of new finds, the discussion went on, and the question of origin was linked to the Carpathian basin (Teodor 1992, 137 – type Coșoveni-Vețel; Vagalinski 1994 – type K). However, this never really explained the existence of bow fibulae in East Prussia and the Baltic region, or the possibility of local production (Katsougiannopoulou 1999). The question of the classification, dating and interpretation

of the European distribution of bow fibulae has been much discussed by F. Curta (Curta 2006, 2009, 2011; Bliujienė, Curta 2011; Fiedler 2010). He described the fibula from grave 201 A/1933 in Linkuhen as Vețel-Coșoveni-type, with connections to related finds in the Danube region and Transylvania from the first half of the sixth century. According to his statistical analysis, Curta sees a much greater similarity between bow fibulae of type I D from Romania and the Olsztyń group in Masuria than between bow fibulae from Romania and neighbouring areas in the Carpathian basin. Based on his seriation of the material from Daumen, he considers the Masurian fibulae to be among the oldest examples of type I D and I G. This might be the result of a trans-regional exchange system of prestige goods, or the local production of imitations. The rather flat or only slightly bowed fibulae especially indicate locally produced imitations from Masuria (Hilberg 2009, 332-342). Local series of trans-regional types are mostly linked to small and simple types of bow fibulae, unlike the piece from Linkuhen. However, this fibula from grave 201 A/1933 in Linkuhen should be dated to the late sixth/seventh century.

#### Phase 5

With the beginning of phase 5, the burial custom changes again significantly: Carl Engels’ ‘upper floor’ cremation burials remain dominant, but the individual character of the burials is much more difficult to recognise, and most of the graves become large assemblages of multiple individuals. Male and female grave goods are mixed, and these large collections of objects and cremated bones recall collective family graves. We can observe that in some graves the cremated bones were wrapped together with selected grave goods in woven fabric, and then put into a wooden casket (C. Engel 1931b, 317ff.; 1932, 169). Fibulae with animal head-



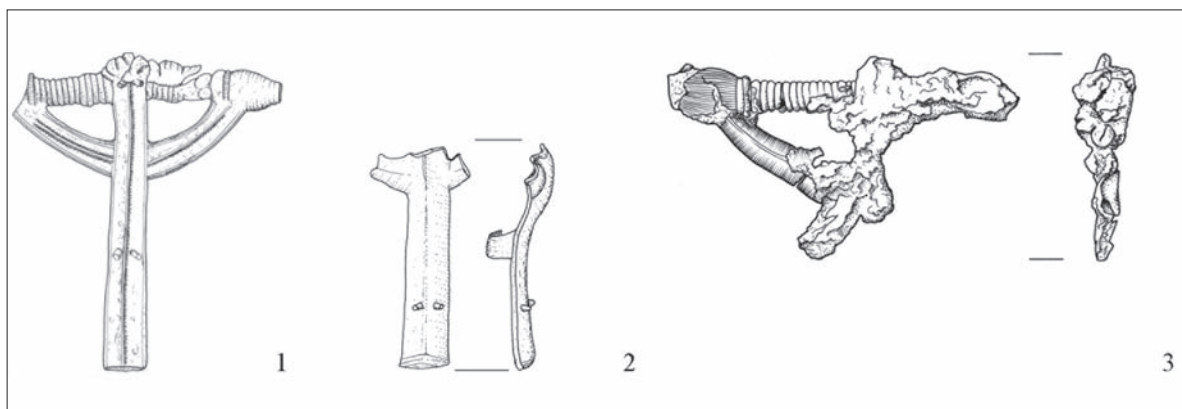


Fig. 10. Fibulae with animal head-shaped feet types Åberg 198-200. Linkuhnen cemetery phase 5: 1-2 grave 13/1929; 3 grave 96/1929 (drawings by C. Hergheligiū and C. Golze).

shaped feet of Åberg types 198-200 (crossbow zoomorphic fibulae) appear in Linkuhnen phase 5 (graves Nos 4 d/1928, 13/1929, 25/1929, 39/1929, 48/1929, 63/1929, 89/1929, 96/1929, 126 A/1931, 134/1931, 152/1931, 140/1931, 163/1931, 208/1933, 211/1933, 223/1933, 229/1933, 230/1933, 394/1938; stray find 1928 and 1928-1939) (Fig. 10). Type 198 is only known from the excavation documentation and other archival material, whereas types 199 and 200 are represented by a small group of originals in Berlin. They are part of the burial inventory from the eighth/ninth century, in combination with massive cross-bow fibulae with ring decoration, but they are also still in use during the tenth/11th century, as their combination with penannular brooches indicates. Older fibulae with animal head-shaped feet are known as cross-bow fibulae of Sensburg/Mraġowo type in the fifth and sixth centuries in Lithuania, Latvia and southern Scandinavia (Kazakevičius 1993, 106ff., Figs. 172, 174 – Plinkaigalis cemetery). The related Daumen/Tumiany type might be seen as a predecessor of Åberg types 198-200, and is found in Masuria, Sambia and the Nemunas region in the sixth century. According to Bliujienė, Åberg type 198 (type I and II of ‘crossbow zoomorphic fibulae’) dates to the eighth and ninth centuries, and is a common form in Curonian cemeteries (Oxenstierna 1940, 238ff., Figs. 29-31; Vaitkunskienė 1978a, 44, Map 30; Bliujienė 1999, 101ff., Figs. 29-36). The same applies to fibulae of type III (*Gabelfibeln*), as the example from Anduln grave 487 indicates (Bitner-Wróblewska, Wróblewski 2001, 22ff.; Bliujienė, Butkus 2006, 16ff.). Åberg type 199 (Type IVa of ‘crossbow zoomorphic fibulae’) is found in Lithuania and Latvia during the eighth to the tenth centuries (Vaitkunskienė 1978b, 45, Map 31.2; Tautavičius 1984, 101, 109, Fig. 8; – Požerės cemetery; Vaitkunskienė 1984, 88, Fig. 17 – Kaštaunaliai cemetery; Salmo 1938, 229, Fig. 58 – Lejas Bitėni cemetery). Fibulae of Åberg type 200 (‘crossbow fibulae with poppy seed-shaped terminals’) can be divided into two subtypes: type I with a rather small

*pseudosehne*, like grave 96/1929 in Linkuhnen, dating from the eighth/ninth century, and type II with a wider *pseudosehne* mainly related to the tenth/11th century (Iršėnas 2009, 140ff., 142ff., Figs. 56-60; – Papilės and Stačiūnai cemeteries; Vaitkunskienė 1978b, 45, Map 31, 1999, 171, Fig. 186.1.3 – Žviliai; Vaškevičiūtė 2004, 33, Fig. 2 – Pavirvytė-Gudai cemetery; Bliujienė 2011, 276, Fig. 105 – Genčiai I, grave 173).

#### Phase 6

Between phases 5 and 7, the intermediate phase 6 can be applied to a small number of graves: swords are found for the first time, which can be related to the typology of J. Petersen (type E in grave 94/1929 and type H in grave 126 B/1931) (Petersen 1919). It is significant that in phase 6 these swords were not found with penannular brooches, which appear for the first time in phase 7 (Gossler, Jahn 2015, 79).

#### Phase 7

In phase 7, the occupancy of Linkuhnen cemetery reaches its peak: 37% of all burials are linked to this phase. This also results in a wide variety of different fibulae. A very common type are massive cross-bow fibulae with ring decoration (Åberg type 6) in the tenth/eleventh century (graves Nos 5/1928, 20/1929, 21/1929, 25/1929, 26/1929, 31/1929, 37/1929, 42/42 A/1929, 43 B/1929, 50/1929, 55/1929, 63/1929, 127/1931, 128/1931, 152/1931, 162/1931, 172/173/1933, 174/1933, 177/1933, 198 B/1933, 203/1933, 230/1933, 389/1935, 401/1938, 468/1938, 474/1938; stray find 1928). These fibulae are almost identical to Åberg types 4-5 from the sixth and seventh century, but generally much bigger and more massive (Fig. 11). At Linkuhnen these fibulae appear for the first time together with animal head-shaped feet fibulae of phase 5 in the eighth/ninth century, but the largest

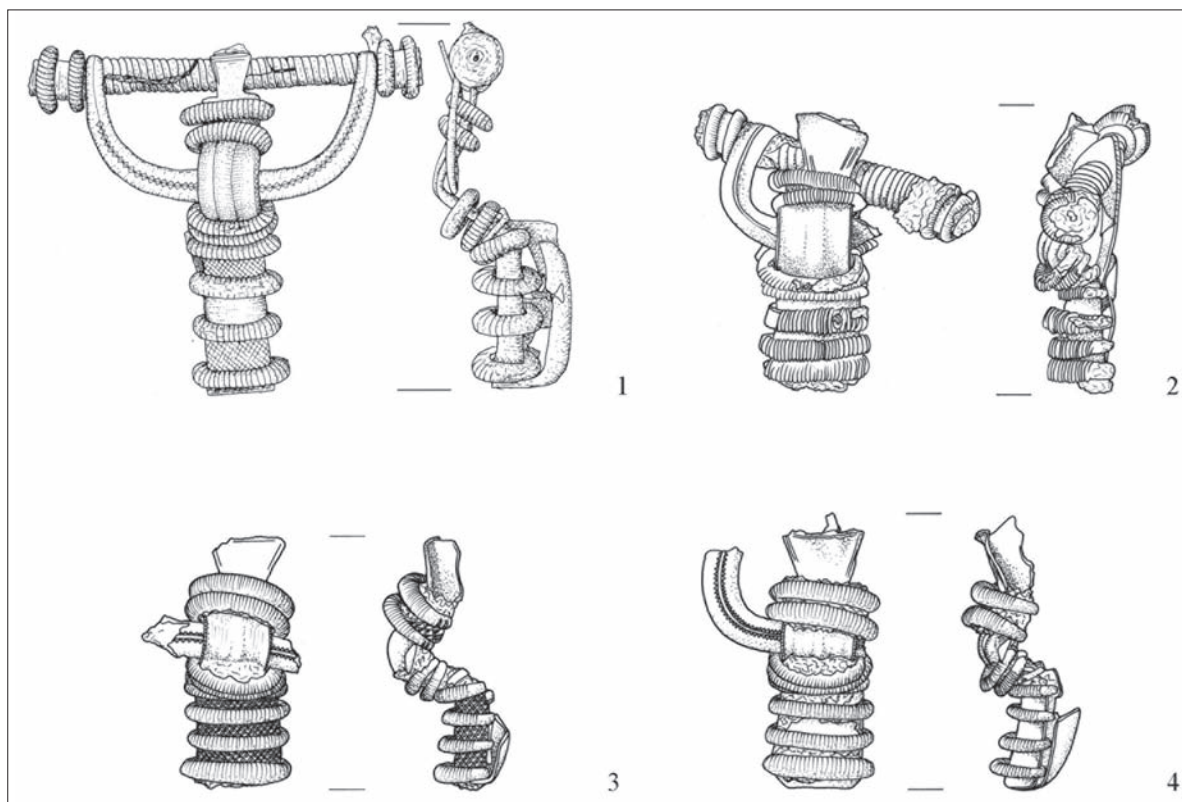


Fig. 11. Massive cross-bow fibulae with ring decoration type Åberg 6, from Linkuhnen cemetery, phase 7: 1 grave 43 B/1929; 2 grave 5/1928; 3-4 grave 63/1929 (drawings by C. Hergeligi and A. Karlsen).



Fig. 12. Cross-bow fibulae with ring decoration from Linkuhnen cemetery: 1 grave 81/1929 (phase 4); 2 grave 43 B/1929 (phase 7) (photograph by C. Jahn).

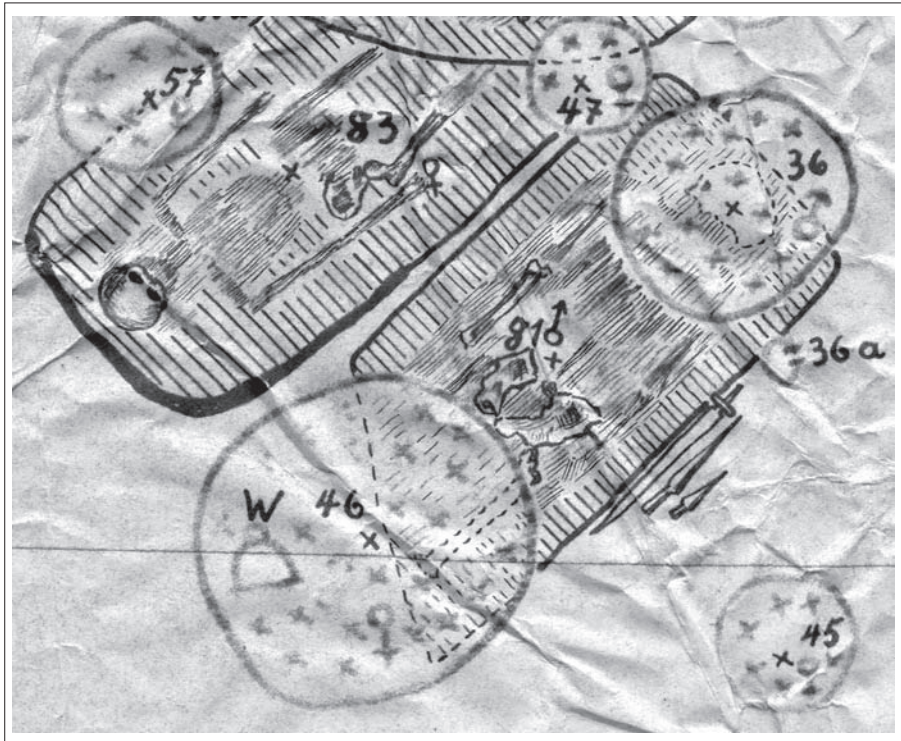


Fig. 13. Linkuhnen grave 81/1929. Original field documentation 1929 (Archive MVF Berlin SMB-PK/MVF, PM-IXg 21).

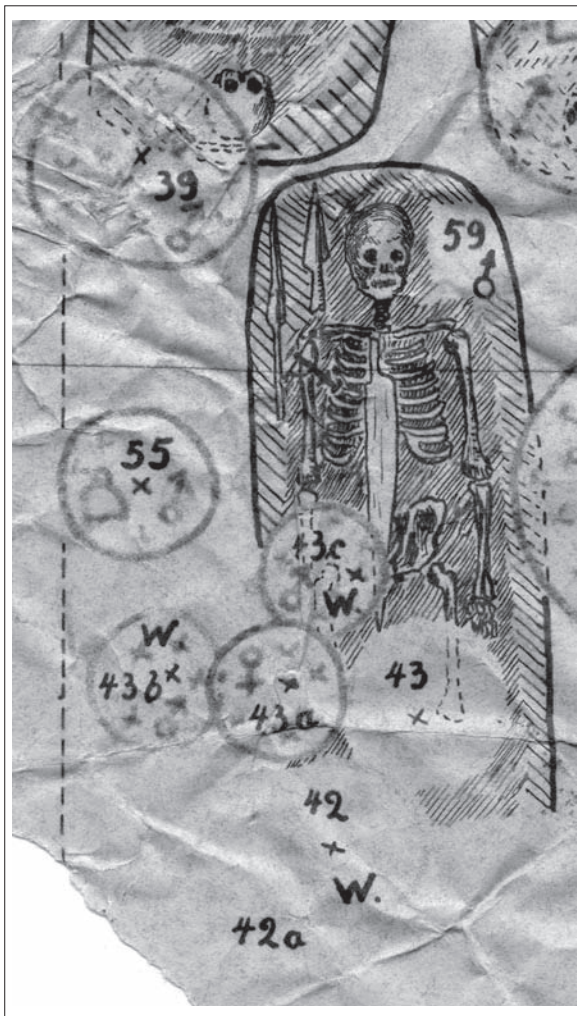


Fig. 14. Linkuhnen grave 43 B/1929. Original field documentation 1929 (Archive MVF Berlin SMB-PK/MVF, PM-IXg 21).

number (16 pieces) was found together with penannular brooches from the tenth/eleventh century. Parallels from Curonian cemeteries north of Linkuhnen can be dated to the seventh and eighth centuries, but lack the massive appearance of the examples from Linkuhnen (Bliujienė 2011, 285, Fig. 111 – Lazdininkai, grave 72/2000; Budvydas 2002, 258ff., 269, Figs. 14, 17). A direct comparison between fibulae from grave 81/1929 (phase 4, sixth/seventh century) and 43 B/1929 (phase 7, tenth/eleventh century) illustrates impressively the increase in size at Linkuhnen (Fig. 12). Both graves can also be described with their stratigraphic setting: inhumation grave 81/1929 belongs to a transitional phase, with the inhumation burial rite of the Early Migration Period (phase 3, lowest level according to Engel), and the grave inventory of the Late Migration Period (phase 4, middle level according to Engel), and is superimposed by Viking Age cremation grave 46/1929 (Fig. 13). Grave 43 B/1929 is part of the Viking Age collective cremation grave 43/1929 from the tenth/eleventh century (phase 7, upper level according to Engel) on top of inhumation grave 59/1929 (phase 3 or 4, lowest or middle level according to Engel) (Fig. 14). The massive cross-bow fibulae with ring decoration from Linkuhnen represent a typological evolution of about 400 years that ends in the eleventh century with variants almost twice the size of their predecessors from the Migration Period.

The cross-bow ladder fibulae of Åberg type 196-197 in phase 7 at Linkuhnen also represent the last stage of the development of Baltic cross-bow ladder fibulae in the ninth/eleventh century (graves Nos 4/1928,

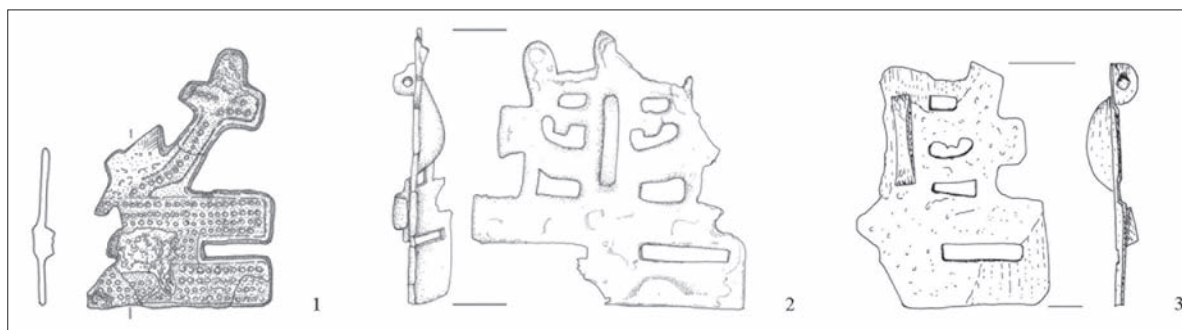


Fig. 15. Cross-bow ladder fibulae of type Åberg 196-197 from Linkuhnen cemetery, phase 7: 1 grave 8/1929; 2 grave 77/1929; 3 stray find 1928 (drawings by A. Karlsen, C. Golze and C. Hergeligiū).

4 d/1928, 8/1929, 42/42 A/1929, 43/1929, 46/1929, 70 A/1929, 74/1929, 77/1929, 106/1929, 122/1931, 124/1931, 129/1931, 148/1931, 178/1933; stray finds 1928 and 1936) (Fig. 15). Åberg types 196 and 197 (type V and IV of 'crossbow ladder fibulae') were found in Curonian and Semigallian cemeteries, as well as in the Nemunas region, but only in small numbers on the Sambian peninsula (Vaitkunsienė 1978c, 46ff., Map 32.4-5; Bliujienė 1999, 97ff., Fig. 25-26, 28; C. Engel 1931b, 320). Åberg type 197 was in use in southern Latvia during the tenth century (Spirģis 2002, 69ff., Figs. 2-3). Grave 32 at Ramutten-Jahn, Kr. Memel, contained a fibula of Åberg type 197, and black eye pearls which indicate a dating to the second half of the tenth century (Callmer 1997, Plates 18.A 7-8; 18.B 12).

Penannular brooches represent the largest group of Viking Age fibulae, and can be divided into penannular brooches with rolled-up terminals (graves Nos 4/1928, 5/1928, 14/1929, 18/1929, 21/1929, 25/1929, 69/1929, 71/1929, 200/1933, 444/1938, 474/1938, stray finds 1928 and 1929) (Fig. 16.1-2), penannular brooches with polyhedral terminals (graves Nos 4 d/1928, 4 h/1928, 18/1929, 25/1929, 43 B/1929, 69/1929, 77/1929, 152/1931, 167/1933, 170/1933, 174/1933, 394/1938, 433 A/1938, stray find 1928) (Fig. 16.3-4), penannular brooches with animal head-shaped terminals (graves Nos 5/1928, 8/1929, 21/1929) (Fig. 16.5), and penannular brooches with poppy-shaped terminals (graves No 105/1929, 393/1938, 453/1938, stray find 1931) (Fig. 16.6). None of the penannular brooches from Linkuhnen can be conclusively related to phase 5 or 6; all seem to belong to phase 7. Even though iron examples of penannular brooches with rolled-up terminals and penannular brooches with polyhedral terminals from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Gotland and Finland can be dated to as early as the ninth century (Vaitkunsienė 1978d, 47ff., 154, Map 34; Carlsson 1988, 104ff.; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982, 100ff.; Tvauri 2012, 135; Širouchov 2012, 28ff.; 188ff., 233, Fig.13), most of the penannular brooches belong to

the tenth/11th century, as a wide variety of finds from Baltic cemeteries show (Vaškevičiūtė 2000, p.180, Fig. 41 – Šukionai, grave 31; Vaškevičiūtė 2005, 106, Fig. 8.4.6 – Pavirvytė, graves 1 and 11; Bertašius 2002, 142ff., Fig. 55; Griciuvienė 2007, 48, 130 No 127, No 528 and 529 – Visėtškės XIII, grave 6 and Visėtškės and Pajuostis; Griciuvienė 2009, 124, 345; Bliujienė 1999, 132, Fig. 63.3 – Grieže, grave V) that these fibulae can also be found in the 12th and 13th centuries (Griciuvienė 2009, 210, 339, 357 – Žemaičių Kalvarija, grave 1, Palanga, grave 340, and Griežė, grave 3).

Ring fibulae were only found in small quantities at Linkuhnen (graves Nos 26/1929, 50/1929, 70 B and 70 C/1929, 125/1931, 127/1931). R. Širouchov sees typological connections between ring fibulae with ripped bow and penannular brooches with star-shaped terminals and ripped bow, which can be dated to between the 11th and 13th centuries. Unlike most of the other types of fibulae discussed, ring fibulae are rather uncommon in Curonian cemeteries, and were more popular in Prussian sites in Sambia and south of the River Nemunas (Vaitkunsienė 1978e, 66, 154, Map 39,1; Urbanavičius, Urbanavičienė 1988, 40, Fig. 64.6; Širouchov 2012, 26ff., 185ff.). The closest site with a relatively large number of ring fibulae is the cemetery of Viešvilė (Wischwill). Ring fibulae from Gotland are considered to be west Baltic imports (Carlsson 1988; 17; 73 ff.; Thunmark-Nylén 1998, Plate 74.6-8, 2006, 92ff.).

#### Archaeology and politics

Most of what has been published so far about Linkuhnen is based on the work of Carl Engel (Engel 1931a, 1931b, 1932, 1933a, von zur Mühlen 1975); only recently, C. Engel and the finds from Linkuhnen were part of a new approach to this important site and its excavator (Mangelsdorf 2007; Hoffmann, Mackiewicz 2012; Göbner, Jahn 2015). This also implies that we have to critically reevaluate the interpretations of C. Engel, since he overemphasised the importance of

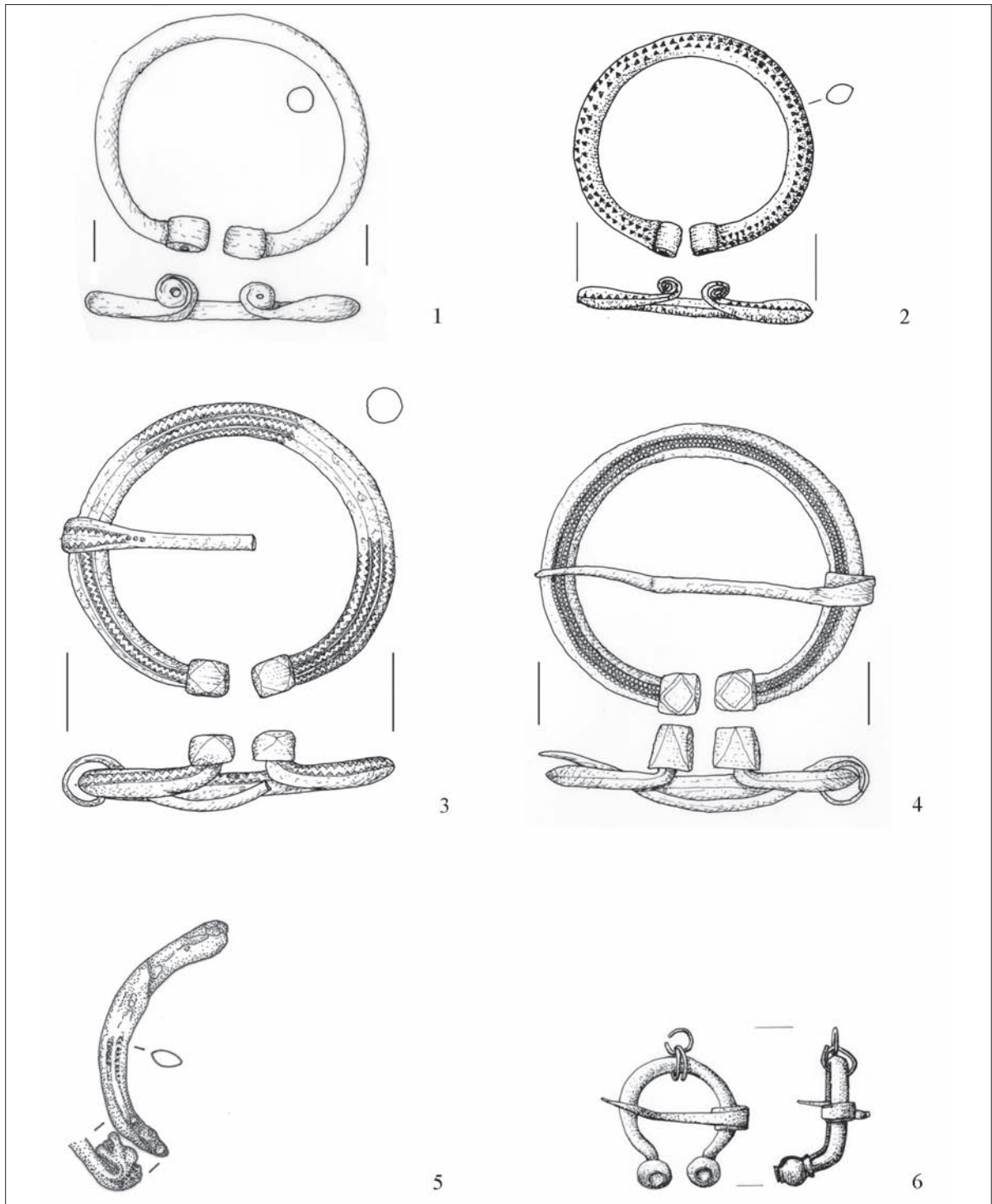


Fig. 16. Penannular brooches from Linkuhnen cemetery, phase 7: 1 stray find 1929; 2 stray find 1928; 3 grave 170/1933; 4 grave 69/1929; 5 grave 5/1928; 6 grave 393/1938 (drawings by C. Herghelgiu, A. Karlsen and C. Golze).

the Scandinavian influence on the grave good material of phases 6 to 7 at Linkuhnen. When we read Engel's interpretation of his excavation results, we have to keep in mind the nature of relations between Germany and Lithuania after the First World War. The archaeological results of the excavations at Linkuhnen became a subject of political interpretation and national concern during the dispute over the Memel territory (*Klaipėdos kraštas*) between Germany and Lithuania after 1924

(the *Klaipėda Convention*). With its position close to the River Nemunas, Linkuhnen was misused to deliver archaeological arguments for territorial claims by Germans and Lithuanians. The political dimension of the excavations can also be seen by the visit of the Lithuanian minister of education Konstantinas Šakenis (1881–1959), and the archaeologist Eduardas Volteris (Eduards Volters, 1856–1941) in September 1931 (Fig. 17). We have to keep this historical context in mind



Fig. 17. Eduardas Volteris (left) and the Lithuanian minister of education Konstantinas Šakenis (right) and his wife visit Carl Engel (front) at Linkuhnen in 1931 (Carl Engel archive at the Institute of Pre- and Early History at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen).

when we read publications about Linkuhnen by C. Engel.

Compared to the huge amount of archaeological material that came to light between 1928 and 1939, the published results by C. Engel only showed a tiny fraction of the complex structure of this important site. Moreover, his descriptions and conclusions are based on the limited results of the excavations in 1929, 1930 and 1931: by that time, only 164 of the 492 graves had been excavated. C. Engel only published a few scientific articles about the Linkuhnen cemetery, but he initiated extensive press and public relations work to present it to the German public as a Viking-related graveyard. Through a series of newspaper articles, Engel made it a well-known archaeological site in East Prussia and other parts of Germany, and added a political dimension to the archaeological material from Linkuhnen, even before 1933. In this way, he not only attracted public attention, but also gained additional public funding for his excavations there.

C. Engel is one of the very few German archaeologists of whom we have very exact information from his personal diaries. His diaries from 1914 to 1945 have survived, and are stored in the archives of the University of Greifswald, where he taught archaeology from 1938, and was dean of the university from 1942 to 1945. After working at the Prussia Museum in Königsberg from

1929 to 1934, he became a professor at the Herder Institute in Riga, until he went back to Germany in 1938. In his diaries, he offers a very personal insight into his life during the Second World War: 'Totally unhappy to be back in Germany! [...] There is nothing, really nothing I like about this country. I hate it and detest it! [...] I can't stand this boring landscape and this small town Greifswald! My heart belongs to the Baltic region. And then there is this propaganda against England in the news, the same old story for four weeks now. It really is disgusting, and makes me sick' (diary of C. Engel, September 1940; from Mangelsdorf 2007, 24ff.).

On the other hand, Engels' publications were totally in line with the political powers of his time: 'Our national revolution strengthened the belief in Germany's mission to the east, and it is of enormous importance to know that the spirit and realisation of Germanic settlement in the east is rooted in the earliest prehistory [...] If the Polish and Lithuanian side tries to dazzle us with the unscientific interpretation of the archaeological facts, and tries to claim that our East Germany, our East Prussia was Slavic, or, in the northeast, Lithuanian, then this is only the miserable and scientifically unproven daydreaming of misguided fantasy, which will be shattered into pieces in the light of the strong principles of East German archaeological research' (Engel 1933b).

C. Engel's argument looked at the Scandinavian influences in Linkuhnen, to prove that the inhabitants were of Germanic origin. However, this opinion was heavily influenced by contemporary ideology, and the dispute between Germany and Lithuania about the Memel territory. That is why East Prussian archaeology tried to prove that the Memel territory belonged culturally and politically to German East Prussia (Engel 1939).

### Strangers on the shore

The most outstanding phenomenon at Linkuhnen is the massive representation of swords in Viking Age phases 6 to 7: at least 162 swords or sword fragments are known. A total of 144 pieces from 70 graves can be connected to their burial context, the others are stray finds. The original number of swords was probably even higher, since the description of the field documentation is often rather vague concerning the precise number of swords in one grave. This indicates that swords can be seen as standard grave goods in male graves of the Viking Age at Linkuhnen: swords were the rule rather than the exception. This amount of swords makes Linkuhnen the biggest site of Viking Age sword weaponry in Scandinavia and the Baltic. Within this group of 162 swords, we know of nine examples with ULFBERHT inlays on the blade (Fig. 18).

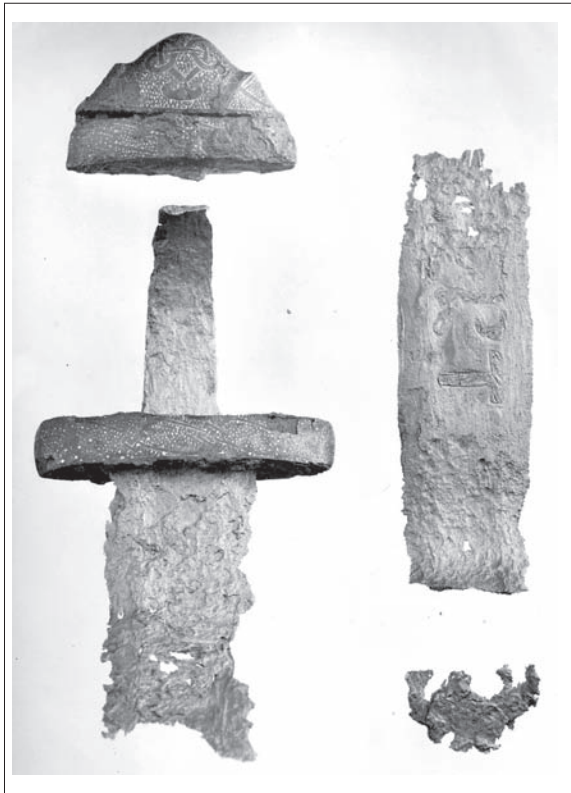


Fig. 18. An ULFBERHT sword from Linkuhnen grave 53/1929 after restoration in 1929 (Archive MVF Berlin SMB-PK/MVF, PM-F 7319).

This makes it the site with the highest number of ULFBERHT blades in Europe.

These weapons were probably brought to Linkuhnen by Viking traders, and even though the numbers look rather impressive, the Scandinavian impact remains somehow superficial. Although the Medieval swords from the site were very often labelled as 'Viking', most of these weapons either represent typical forms in the whole Baltic region, or imports from West and Central Europe (Kucypera, Pudło 2013, 467ff.). Furthermore, there are also local Baltic sword types at Linkuhnen. Except for the weaponry, there is relatively little Scandinavian impact on the material culture. Most of the costume parts, and especially the burial rites, remain in the long-lasting local Baltic tradition. There was also no Scandinavian trade indicator, like balances and weights, found at Linkuhnen.

For an understanding of the importance of sites like Linkuhnen to long-distance Viking Age trade, and communications between the Baltic, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, V. Žulkus offered some remarkable ideas. If we consider the archaeological situation at Linkuhnen, the question remains: what was traded, by whom, and how? Unlike some Curonian sites, Linkuhnen shows no evidence of 'trader graves', the only impact from traders were traded goods, such as iron swords. The significance to the Vikings of the River

Nemunas as a water trading route has been under discussion for a long time (Nerman 1934, 374; Žulkus 2007, 311ff.), and remains to a large extent a hydrological and geological problem. By its topographical position on a terrace near the River Nemunas, Linkuhnen occupies a strategically very favourable position. All the different branches of the River Nemunas unite shortly before the former Tilsit, approximately where the site of Linkuhnen is. This means that early shipping traffic from the Curonian Spit had to pass Linkuhnen, regardless of which way was chosen to get into the Nemunas delta. During the Viking Age, the Nemunas route was one of the possible passages for trade and transit between Viking Scandinavia and the East Slavic Empire of Kievan Rus', and the people of Linkuhnen could participate in the flow of trade goods via the River Nemunas.

This topographical position may explain the massive weaponry depositions in the Viking period phase 7 at Linkuhnen, but it also brings up new questions concerning the long continuity of burials from the Roman Iron Age to the Viking Age, because the topographical situation may have looked completely different in the first millennium, as V. Žulkus suggests: according to the geological data, the connection from the River Nemunas to the Baltic Sea via the Curonian Lagoon developed only 1,000 to 1,100 years ago. In the Roman and the Migration Periods, the River Nemunas reached the Baltic Sea via the River Pregel (Prieglius) into the Aistmares (Frisches Haff), and the area between Tilsit and Viešvilė (Wischwill) formed a junction with the River Jūra in the north and the River Nemunas hypothetically continuing south to the Pregel (Prieglius). At that time, Linkuhnen was part of a cluster of cemeteries and settlements to the west of this junction (Žulkus 2006, 19ff. Fig. 3). Even though the course of the River Nemunas took a different route, Linkuhnen was also in a favourable topographical position in the first millennium, close to the Nemunas-Pregel-Jūra water system as an important link between the cultures of the West and the East Balts (Nowakowski 1996b, 76). The trade along the River Nemunas also remained important in the fifth to the seventh centuries (Žulkus 2006, 19), when the distribution of bow fibulae, cross-bow fibulae with star-shaped feet, and cross-bow fibulae of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type increased and appeared in Linkuhnen in phases 3 and 4 (Fig. 5-6 and 9). With the altered hydrological situation, and the suggested opening of the Nemunas delta to the Curonian Lagoon, the prospects for trade and travel changed for sites like Linkuhnen and Viešvilė (Wischwill) from the west to the north. One remarkable observation at the cemetery of Linkuhnen is the fact that the two peaks of occupancy can be dated to the Migration Period (phase 3) and

the Viking Age (phase 7), and in both periods Linkuhnen was close to the main trading routes, although the topography changed dramatically, as is indicated by V. Žulkus.

It remains unclear how attractive the Nemunas route was to Viking traders, since it is questionable if they were interested in transit to the east or in goods that could be obtained from the Balts. Obviously, the supply of Scandinavian iron was of great importance to the West Balts, since local metallurgy went down dramatically in Viking times (Navasaitis 2004, 130; Žulkus 2007, 316). Traditionally, it is believed that the Scandinavians would take amber, furs and woman slaves in return (Hermann 1982). The Vikings could also have been interested in a special variety of horses bred in the Kaunas area. These horses were relatively small (120 to 136 centimetres in height), but extraordinarily tough and suitable for war and work. A horse bridle found in the cemetery at Björk in Sweden was probably manufactured around Kaunas (Bertašius 2002, 194; Žulkus 2007, 317).

## Conclusions

The reconstruction of the excavations at Linkuhnen offers a new approach to this largely unknown archaeological material and the cultural relations with neighbouring areas along the Baltic Sea. Although the number of finds from the Viking Age at Linkuhnen is indeed impressive, a long-term development of cultural interaction with changing influences can be observed. C. Engel concentrated on finds from the Viking Age for political reasons. Nowadays, we can approach this site with a completely new set of questions. Linkuhnen is not as singular as C. Engel stated, but it shows a lot of similarities with the weapon graves at Viešvilė (Wischwill) (Gossler, Jahn 2015, 83ff.), which is situated about 40 kilometres to the east on the bank of the River Nemunas, and is most important to an interpretation of Linkuhnen, and vice versa.

## Abbreviations

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

LAA, IV - Lietuvos TSR archeologijos atlasas, IV. A. TAUTAVIČIUS (ed.). Vilnius, 1978.

SMB-PK/MVF – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin.

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LINKUHNEN/RŽEVSKOJE  
KAPINYNO  
CHRONOLOGIJS  
RAIDA REMIANTIS  
ROMĖNIŠKOJO IR TAUTŲ  
KRAUSTYMOŠI LAIKOTARPIŲ  
BEI VIKINGŲ AMŽIAUS  
SEGĖMIS

**CHRISTOPH JAHN**

Santrauka

Šalia Nemuno buvusio Linkūnų (Rževskoje) kapiny-  
no radiniai atskleidžia, kad kapinyne buvo laidojama  
beveik 1 000 metų, pradedant nuo ankstyvojo romėniš-  
kojo laikotarpio (periodas B<sub>2</sub>) (2–16, 18 pav.). Palai-  
dojimų daugėja tautų kraustymosi laikotarpiu (periodai  
C<sub>3</sub>/D-E<sub>1</sub>), didžioji kapų dalis yra iš vikingų laikotarpio  
(periodas G). Atidžiau įsižiūrėjus į Linkūnų kapiny-  
no seges galima atsekti besikeičiančius kultūrinius ryšius  
su kaimyninėmis sritimis ir išskirti septynias chronolo-  
gines fazes, apimančias II–XI amžius (3 pav.). Labiau-  
siai išsiskiriantis Linkūnų kapiny-  
no bruožas yra ypač  
didelis vikingų laikotarpio 5–7 fazių kalavijų skaičius:  
rasti 162 kalavijai ar jų fragmentai. 144 fragmentai iš  
70 kapų gali būti sietini su kapų inventoriais, kiti yra  
atsitiktiniai radiniai. Pagal rastų kalavijų skaičių Lin-  
kūnai yra didžiausia vikingų laikų Baltijos regiono ir  
Skandinavijos ginkluotės radavietė. Linkūnų kapiny-  
no topografinė padėtis ant terasos šalia Nemuno buvo la-  
bai patogi (1 pav.). Topografinė padėtis gal ir paaiški-  
na didelę ginkluotės koncentraciją vikingų laikais, bet  
kartu kelia klausimų dėl ilgo kapiny-  
no naudojimo, nes  
I tūkstantmečio Linkūnų topografinė padėtis greičiau-  
siai buvo kitokia.