

INTRODUCTION

European warfare and warriors in the Middle Ages have attracted and still attract the attention of researchers, due to the demonstrative character of their military power enforced on other groups of people and their specific way of living (military expeditions, permanent military readiness). Researchers have burdened the shoulders of warriors with the creation of political (state) structures, the establishment of military / political unions from the tenth to the beginning of the 12th century in an area starting from the River Elb and extending to the Daugava and even further to the north, into territories inhabited by Slavic, Baltic and Finnish tribes.¹ In historiography about the differentiation of society, the classes of rich noblemen and warriors, who were granted the epithet of military / political / social elite,² have always been separated from the farmers and the poor. In other words, researchers tend to give too much meaning (usually worthy) to the influence the warriors had on social and political, and sometimes even cultural, processes taking place in the geographical space inhabited by the Slavs and the Balts. In order to better understand the processes taking place in the areas inhabited by the Balts in the tenth to the beginning of the 13th centuries, we inevitably need to find support in analogies with neighbouring countries (the West and East Slavs, and partly the Finns), even though the chronology, the events and the measurements have not always been identical. And, on the contrary, in trying to solve the phenomenon of the tribal (?) society of Polabian Slavs in the context of the Christianisation of the West Slavs, which began in the tenth and 11th centuries, researchers not accidentally look at the composition of Baltic society, which was not significantly touched by the influences of Christianisation.³ The possibility for a comparison of these relationships determined the title of this collection of

¹ Cf. LÜBKE, Christian. Forms of Political Organisation of the Polabian Slavs. In *Origins of Central Europe*. Ed. by Przemysław URBAŃCZYK. Warsaw, 1997, pp. 115–124; KURNATOWSKA, Zofia. Formowanie się państw słowiańskich w aspekcie porównawczym. In *Europa barbarica, Europa christiana. Studia mediaevalia Carolo Modzlewski dedicata*. Red. Roman MICHAŁOWSKI et. al. Warszawa, 2008, s. 84–91; KLÁPŠTĚ, Jan. *The Czech lands in Medieval transformations* (East Central and Eastern Europe in Middle Ages 450–1450, vol. 17). Leiden, Boston, 2012, pp. 13–43; KARA, Michał. Początki państwa piastowskiego w świetle nowszych ustaleń archeologii. In *Lietuvos valstybės susikūrimas europiniame kontekste*. Red. Alvydas NIKŽENTAITIS, Rimvydas PETRAUSKAS, Michael BORGOLTE. Vilnius, 2008, p. 280–358; GUDAVIČIUS, Edvardas. *Mindaugas*. Vilnius, 1998, p. 98–106, 111–122.

² WENSKUS Reinhard. Über einige Probleme der Sozialordnung der Preußen. In WENSKUS Reinhard. *Ausgewählte Aufsätze zum frühen und preußischen Mittelalter*. Hrsg. von Hans PATZE. Sigmaringen, 1986, S. 414–417, 422–423. Cf. GUDAVIČIUS, Edvardas. Aukščiausia žemės nuosavybė „barbarinėje“ Lietuvoje. In GUDAVIČIUS, Edvardas. *Lietuvos europėjimo kelias. Istorinės studijos*. Sud. Alfredas BUMBLAUSKAS, Rimvydas PETRAUSKAS. Vilnius, 2002, p. 121–122.

³ LÜBKE, Christian. Ests, Slavs and Saxons: ethnic groups and political structures. In *Wulfstan's voyage. The Baltic Sea region in the early Viking Ages as seen from shipboard*. Ed. by Anton ENGLERT, Athena TRAKADAS. Roskilde, 2009, pp. 50–52.

articles, realising that the living space of the Slavs and the Balts was not homogeneous, and there were other ethnic units communicating closely with each other in this particular area. In the first lines of this contact, we can see the warriors taking part in wars, which impacted the differentiation of property, social possibilities and power with regard to other social groups, and military and cultural innovations.

Despite the great amount of research on different social groups in the society of the Middle Ages living in the spaces inhabited by the Slavs and the Balts, a lot of questions still remain relating to the naming of the separate groups of society (including warriors), and also the role of warriors in social life and in the creation of state structures, which are so far unanswered.⁴

8

For example, all researchers are familiar with the short description of Prussian society left by the Anglo-Saxon traveller Wulfstan at the end of the ninth century. It shows clearly that there were 'kings' in Prussia living in castles, a nobility, a class of poor, and slaves (the latter used to drink mead, while the kings and the nobility would drink the milk of mares).⁵ Undoubtedly, these four categories of people are rather wide, but on the other hand, it is too abstract to say what kind of society existed in Prussia in the ninth century, who these 'kings' and this nobility were, what is hidden behind the name 'the poor', and who the slaves and where the warriors were.

Archaeologists trying to read the social differentiation from material from graveyards can say how many and what kind of things (cerements) have been found in a particular grave, and, if possible, they can identify the sex of the deceased and its age, and present other information, thus allowing us to distinguish the social differentiation of the deceased in a particular graveyard. However, not even archaeologists, with support from archaeological material, can say, for example, who in the Prussian lands was considered to be a warrior, or a person at the top of the social hierarchy in the ninth to the 11th centuries. The reason for this is that the amount of cerements and their character might have depended not on the deceased, but rather on the preferences of the people who buried him, which might not always have matched the 'real' status of the deceased in the particular community. Therefore, it is not surprising that researchers are still arguing how the cerements should be treated in trying to determine their 'uniqueness' and the 'direct' dependence on a particular group of people. Thus, the above-mentioned enumeration of categories of society by Wulfstan is just a reference to the fact that Prussian society at the end of the ninth century was not homogene-

⁴ Cf. ВОЙТОВИЧ, Леонтьй. Проблеми історичної термінології середньовічної Русі: дружинна держава, феодалізм, князівство, волость, лен, кормління, вотчина. In *Середньовічна Русь: проблеми термінології* (Colloquia Russica. Series II, vol. 4). Ред. Мирослав ВОЛОЩУК, Віталій НАГРНИЙ. Івано-Франківськ, Краків, 2018, с. 9–19.

⁵ Wulfstan's Reisebericht über Preußen, um 890–893 = Wulfstano pranešimas apie kelionę per Prūsiją, apie 890–893. In *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai*. T. I: *Nuo seniausių laikų iki XV amžiaus pabaigos*. Sud. Norbertas VĖLIUS. Vilnius, 1996, p. 166–169.

ous, that there existed a social elite ('kings', the nobility), and the rest of society, who could not equal them in power and influence. A similar situation was presented by the 14th-century chronicler Peter of Duisburg, which allows researchers to relate the information from Wulfstan to information about the 13th and 14th centuries, and even later.⁶ However, information about Prussian warriors is scarce. It is worth noting that Wulfstan mentioned 'kings', but he did not mention warriors. This does not mean they did not exist. That is the answer given by the absolute majority of researchers. Is it possible that these warriors were hiding under the name of the nobility? Could the poor become warriors in Prussian society in the ninth century? Did the warrior belong to the social elite? Could a warrior become a chief and a 'king'? And who could be called warriors in the ninth, and more so in the 11th and 12th centuries? Could there be any differences between warriors of the ninth and the 11th and 12th centuries? What kind of daily life did they live? What was the relationship between warriors and other social groups, and how was it manifested? These are just some of the questions that have not received unanimous answers. The Prussian example mentioned by Wulfstan is symptomatic, because the same questions can be raised when speaking about Slav warriors at the end of the ninth century. We cannot say that similar questions have not been answered in historiography so far. However, each research discipline has looked at the class of warriors from a different point of view. For example, archaeologists are concerned, and still are concerned, with the issue of 'warrior' equipment, which is based on graveyard material. Thus, the amount of weapons found, and partly their specifics, has the greatest impact on the perception of professionalism in the works of archaeologists. Meanwhile, Lithuanian historians are interested in military expeditions, going beyond the boundaries of the areas inhabited by the Balts. Similarly, issues about Slavic warriors and issues of the development of the political organisation of Slavic tribes have been analysed from the point of view of the position of military activity.⁷ The intensity and the size of these expeditions provided grounds to speak of a military democracy and the formation of a warrior society, which, in the case of Lithuania, led towards the formation of the Lithuanian state (while the Polabian Slavs did not unfortunately secure the emerging roots of statehood, for various political and social reasons).

Researchers into Baltic religion and mythology have tried to determine the rituals devoted to the 'warrior' gods, to the bonds connecting warriors and priests, and warriors and religion,⁸ as has been done with the Slavs.⁹ But here we encounter

⁶ LÜBKE, C. *Ests, Slavs and Saxons...*, p. 50; WENSKUS, R. *Op. cit.* S. 423–425, 432–434.

⁷ LÜBKE, C. *Forms of Political Organisation...*, pp. 115–124; LÜBKE, C. *Ests, Slavs and Saxons...*, pp. 50–55.

⁸ Cf. the newest historiography: KAWIŃSKI, Paweł. *Sacrum w wyobrażeniach pogańskich Prusów. Próba interpretacji na pograniczu historii i etnologii religii* (Monumenta Literaria Prussiae, Seria C: Monografie, nr. 8). Olsztyn, 2018, s. 78–90; Cf. BERESNEVIČIUS, Gintaras. *Sakralinis karo matmuo*. In *Kultūros istorijos tyrinėjimai*. Sud. Vytautas BERENIS. T. 3. Vilnius, 1997, p. 12–63.

⁹ SŁUPECKI, Leszek Paweł. *Slavonic Pagan Sanctuaries*. Warsaw, 1994.

even bigger problems, which entangle researchers in arguments concerning the 'right' reading of historical sources and their criticism in the first place. Without perceiving the specifics of Medieval sources, the methodology of research into these sources, the mythological information, taken out of context, and rather often relating it to other later sources, even to verbal information from the 19th and 20th centuries, researchers can arrive at a deadlock in their research, or at 'study room' interpretations of something that did not take place at all. This has possibly happened together with the statement that has spread in historiography, and which has no grounds, that Prussian society between the seventh and the 12th centuries was allegedly theocratic, and that warriors only performed a role as guardians of the power of the priests.¹⁰

10

This publication is just one of numerous attempts to help understand the plentiful historical and archaeological material about the formation of the Slavic and Baltic warrior classes in society, as well as the further development of this class already in the background, when the process of Christianisation was under way, when the epoch of the Crusades had begun, and when state structures had been established in the Baltic region and Central Europe in the tenth to the 13th centuries. The collection is not limited just to the formation of the Lithuanian class of warriors, even though there is no shortage of works devoted to the Lithuanian warrior class and warfare in the Middle Ages.¹¹ There is no doubt that issues of the development of warriors in the pre-Christian society of the Baltic tribes should be analysed in the wider context of the Baltic and Central European region. It should be perceived that the specifics of the development of the warrior class in each micro-region were influenced not only, and not so much, by external factors, but rather by processes impacting the internal composition of society. Factors influencing the formation of the warrior class of the Polabian Slavs and Kyivan Rus' cannot always be applied to an interpretation of the formation of the Baltic or / and Finnish classes of warriors. And, on the contrary, if we can speak about the influence of Variagian Christianity on Kyivan Rus', the same direct participation by the Variagian army in events taking place on the eastern and southern shores of the Baltic Sea in the ninth to the 11th centuries did not always

¹⁰ КУЛАКОВ, Владимир. *История Пруссии до 1283 года*. Москва, 2003, с. 209, 211, 214, 218–219. Cf. VĖLIUS, Norbertas. *Senovės baltų pasaulėžiūra. Struktūros bruožai*. Vilnius, 1983, p. 219–224, 228–234, 236–237, 247, 256.

¹¹ Apart from others, works which are outstanding by their conceptuality and wide aspect of comparison should be mentioned: GUDAVIČIUS, Edvardas. *Lietuvių pašauktinės kariuomenės organizacijos bruožai. Karo archyvas*, 1992, t. XIII, p. 43–118 (pp. 43–74 are exceptional relevance); NIKŽENTAITIS, Alvydas. XIII–XV a. lietuvių kariuomenės bruožai (organizacija, taktika, papročiai). *Karo archyvas*, 1992, t. XIII, p. 3–34. For a further discourse about Medieval Lithuanian warfare and the class of warriors, other articles are also worthy of interest: LEONAVIČIŪTĖ, Inga. Kariaunos vaidmuo kuriantis Lietuvos valstybei. In *Lietuvos valstybė XII–XVIII a.* Red. Zigmantas KIAUPA, Arturas MICKEVIČIUS, Jolita SARCEVIČIENĖ. Vilnius, 1997, p. 475–485; BARONAS, Darius. Lietuvos karybos bruožai XIII a. pradžioje. In *Lietuvos valstybė XII–XVIII a....*, p. 487–505.

have a crucial impact on the formation of the warrior class in these micro-regions. However, if we include Christianity in the list of factors influencing the formation of the warrior class,¹² new opportunities open up for an analysis of the development of the warrior class of the Balts (and Polabian Slavs as well¹³). These are the prospects for future work, some guidelines to which are reflected in some articles in this publication.

The publication consists of two chapters. The aim of the first chapter is to present actual issues and problems in the formation of the Slav and Baltic classes of warriors. Jan Tomašek analyses the formation of the political unions of Polabian Slavs in the tenth to the 12th centuries, and the role of the warriors in this process. Marius Ščavinskas deals with the role of property in the formation of the warrior class, the transformation of a tribal society into a non-tribal society in the context of the beginning of Christianisation. Alicija Dobrosielska focuses her attention on the issue of the survival of the Warmian class of warriors in Prussia in the 13th century (and partly in the 14th century), and its adaptation to the new challenges under the rule of the Teutonic Order. The article discusses not only the impact the conquerors had on the old warriors of Warmia, but also how the new military structures (in Latin *equites Prutheni*) were established by applying the models of the old structures. Norbert Mika describes how the conquerors of Livonia and the local people adopted the ritual of kissing the cross, which came from the cultural space of Variagian Kyivan Rus', spreading first of all among the political and military elite of the tenth to the 11th centuries. Undoubtedly, this and other similar rituals formed ways of living together for the 13th-century political and military elites of Livonian lands and the duchies of Rus'. Therefore, the ritual of kissing the cross in Livonia, and/or while signing contracts with Livonia, plays an important role in understanding the mentality of the military aristocracy (and not only them), something that we often hide under the heading of political anthropology.

¹² For more, see: ŠČAVINSKAS, Marius. Baltų kariauninkų kontaktai su Kijevo Rusios ir Lenkijos valstybėmis prasidedančios christianizacijos kontekste (XI–XIII a. pirma pusė). In *Vakarykščio pasaulio atgarsiai. Mokslinių straipsnių rinkinys, skiriamas Lietuvos valstybės atkūrimo 100-osioms metinėms*. Sud. Margarita MATULYTĖ, Romualdas JUZEFOVIČIUS, Rimantas BALSYS. Vilnius, 2018, p. 50–71. The reader should be reminded that the influence of Christianity on Slavic society was analysed by ŁOWMIAŃSKI, Henryk. *Religia słowian i jej upadek (w VI–XII)*. Warszawa, 1979, s. 190–195, 239–263.

¹³ For more about the influence of German and Latin Europe on the development of the society of the Polabian Slavs, see: LÜBKE, Christian. „Germania slavica“ und „Polonia Ruthenica“. Religiöse Divergenz in ethno-kulturellen Grenz- und Kontaktzonen des mittelalterlichen Osteuropa (8.–16. Jahrhundert). In *Grenzüberschreitungen im Vergleich. Der Osten und der Westen des mittelalterlichen Lateineuropas*. Hrsg. von Klaus HERBERS, Nikolas JASPERT. Berlin, 2007, S. 177–182; LÜBKE, Christian. Germania Slavica – Die Entstehung eines historiographischen Konzeptes in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft. In *The Reception of Medieval Europe in the Baltic Sea Region. The papers of the 11th Visby Symposium held at Gotland University, Visby* (Acta Visbyensia, vol. XII). Ed. by Jörn STAECKER. Visby, 2009, pp. 381–396.

In the second chapter, there is a wider presentation of the historiography and the sources devoted to issues of the use of armaments by Baltic warriors, and interpretations of the warriors in historiography. Vyacheslav Baranov and Vsevolod Ivakin provide an analysis and interpretation of the graveyard material from the allegedly Baltic warriors of the 11th century at Ostriv (in the Republic of Ukraine). The presentation of archaeological material from this graveyard allows us to understand better the dynamics of the development of the class of Baltic warriors, and their contacts in the wide space of Variagian Kyivan Rus'. We should understand that it is a publication of primary archaeological material, opening the way for further research. A question which is still unanswered is whether the Balts buried by the River Rosa were transported there by force after the already-completed military expeditions by Duke Yaroslav the Wise against the Galinds, Yotvingians and Lithuanians in the 1030s and 1040s, or if they were Baltic warriors hired by the Kyivan duke to serve him. Paulius Bugys and Ričardas Dediala analyse the 'non-conversation' between the archaeological material and the scarce historic information, one of the problems that needs the solution of numerous issues arising while analysing the development of the class of warriors among the Balts, the armament of warriors, and their tactics, before the formation of the Lithuanian state and during the first decades after its formation in the 13th century. The terminology, and its correct application in historiography, is a rather important problem, which needs a special methodological approach.

The object of this collection is not to provide answers to all questions, or present all possible answers in the wide area of activities of the warrior class on the southeast shore of the Baltic Sea and in the space of Central Europe. It is just a small step allowing us to reflect on the role of the warrior class in different micro-regions of Central Europe, and to outline the present state of research into the warrior class in historiography, at the same time as identifying further research.

Marius Ščavinskas