

PEOPLE FROM THE CROSSROADS OF THE MŪŠA-LIELUPE RIVER BASIN IN THE EASTERN BALTIC REGION DURING THE LATE ROMAN AND MIGRATION PERIODS

For a long period of time, it looked as if during the Late Roman and Migration Periods a large part of northern Lithuania and southern Latvia, or the area between the Mūša-Lielupe and Daugava (western Dvina) rivers was sparsely populated, particularly the peripheral regions. This conclusion was based on archaeological evidence that has been acquired from cemeteries, which very often lack artefacts from the Late Roman Period and the transition phase to the Early Migration Period. In the burial sites in this region, a relatively thin layer of material dating from the Late Migration Period is known (Michelbertas 2004, 71-73 figs 3. 5; Zemītis 2004, 184-187 figs 1. 7; Radiņš 2006, 81 fig. 2). However, recently conducted archaeological excavations, extensive field-walking surveys and collections acquired by museums have enabled scholars to reach a new understanding that entirely alters their view of the region's development.

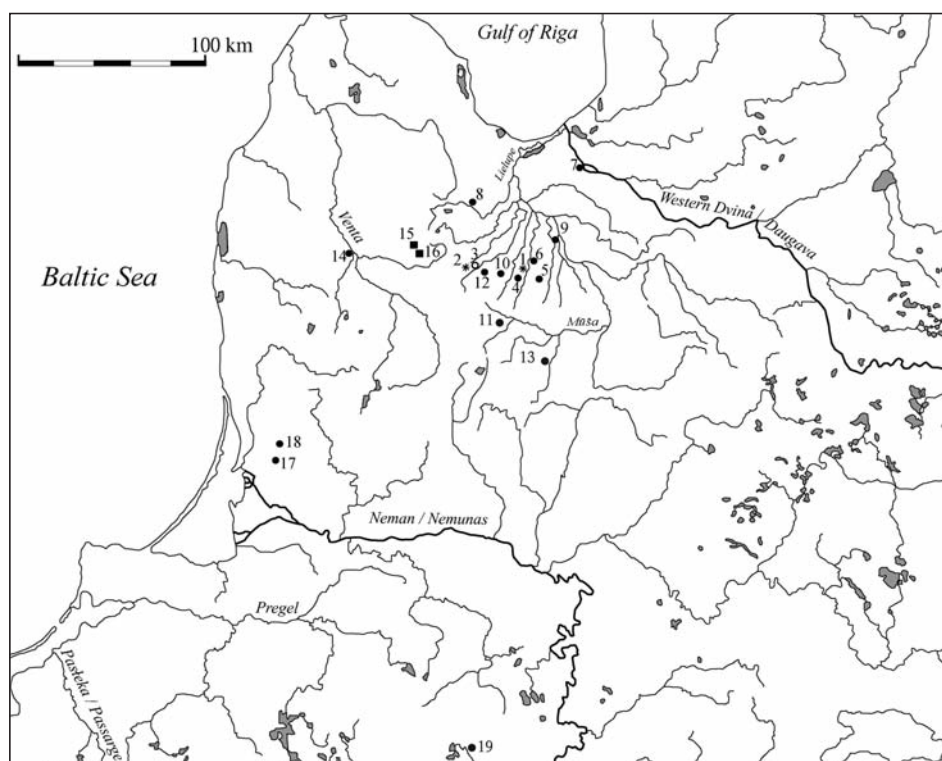


Fig. 1 The Migration Period sites mentioned in the text (from the Mūša-Lielupe in Lithuania up to the western Dvina in Latvia): **1** Drąsutaičiai (distr. Joniškis/LT). – **2** Rengiai (distr. Joniškis/LT). – **3** Žagarė II (distr. Joniškis/LT). – **4** Paudruvė (distr. Joniškis/LT). – **5** Dvareliškiai (Kriukai, distr. Joniškis/LT). – **6** Elejas Kraujas (distr. Jelgava/LV). – **7** Pļavniekkalns (distr. Rīga/LV). – **8** Dobeles Ošu (distr. Dobeles/LV). – **9** Kakužēni (distr. Jelgava/LV). – **10** Spirakiai (distr. Joniškis/LT). – **11** Gibaičiai (distr. Šiauliai/LT). – **12** Petraičiai (distr. Joniškis/LT). – **13** Šukioniai (distr. Pakruojis/LT). – **14** Griezes Dzirnavas (distr. Saldus/LV). – **15** Kokmuiža I (distr. Auce/LV). – **16** Kokmuiža II (Līgotņi, distr. Auce/LV). – **17** Barvai (distr. Šilutė/LT). – **18** Jurgaičiai (distr. Šilutė/LT). – **19** Wólka Prusinowska (woj. warmińsko-mazurskie/PL). – (★ Drąsutaičiai and Rengiai cemeteries; ● cemeteries; ○ hill-fort; □ bog offerings). – (Illustration A. Bluijienė / E. Vasiliauskas).

Undoubtedly, the favourable geographical position of the site contributes largely to the extent of different contacts. The Mūša-Lielupe is one river. In Lithuania, it flows from west to east, and is called the Mūša; whereas in Latvia, it meets the Nemunėlis (in Latvian the Mēmele)¹ at the town of Bauska, and changes its name to the Lielupe, and becomes a river of the Semigallian lowlands, flowing into the Gulf of Rīga. Therefore, the region has good access to the Baltic Sea, although it is far away from the coast (fig. 1). The Mūša-Lielupe embraces the site in a specific half-crook landscaping interfluvia with boundaries, naturally shaped by the flow of the river. The Lielupe is rich in left-hand tributaries, becoming internal routes. The Mūša, meanwhile, has only right-hand tributaries, extending the regional routes southward.

In 2008, the »Aušra« Museum in Šiauliai in Lithuania received a large archaeological collection of 335 artefacts, which originated from the vicinity of the village of Drąsutaičiai (near Joniškis in distr. Joniškis/LT) (fig. 1, 1). The objects date from the late 1st to the 13th centuries (Vasiliauskas 2010, 3-9). Three imported *Zwiebelknopffibeln*, unique to this region, and other rare locally produced artefacts, make the collection significant to the area between the river Mūša-Lielupe and the entire Baltic region. All the objects had been collected by a private person, who discovered them around the 1980s, when the Virčiuvis riverbed was straightened and canalized, and a dam was built close to the village of Drąsutaičiai. The assemblage of archaeological artefacts, most of which were acquired by the museum, consists of bronze ornaments and pieces of bronze ornaments. In addition, some objects from the Early Middle Ages had been affected by fire and melted down slightly. This proves that the latest part of the collection could have belonged to disturbed cremation graves. The general appearance of the entire assemblage indicates that it is not an offering discovered in the Virčiuvis rivulet or its marshy valley. Due to the wide chronological framework, the Drąsutaičiai collection could hardly be treated as a hoard of scrap jewellery, perhaps even hidden in a cemetery. However, this circumstance cannot be totally ignored.

In 2009, Šiauliai University excavated an area of 119 m² in what was presumably the Drąsutaičiai cemetery. However, neither the remains of graves nor artefacts were found. The Drąsutaičiai neighbourhood was densely populated in prehistory. In fact, three cemeteries² are known in a range of 4-8 km from the village of Drąsutaičiai (fig. 1, 4-6).

In 2010, an inhabitant of the town of Žagarė (distr. Joniškis/LT) donated to the Joniškis Museum of History and Culture various artefacts dating from the 7th, 8th and 13th centuries, and even from the 16th and 17th centuries. All the objects originated from the still unknown Rengiai (distr. Joniškis/LT) cemetery, which is on the border with Latvia, close to the Žagarė II hill-fort, also called Žvelgaitis (fig. 1, 3). The *gleicharmige Bügelfibel*, or bow brooch with equal arms, is the most important artefact in this archaeological collection.

The aim of this article is to make a preliminary analysis of the unique imports from the Drąsutaičiai and Rengiai cemeteries in a broader cultural context, and to present the material in a foreign language, thus making it available and usable elsewhere. The authors of the article also seek to demonstrate the far-reaching contacts of communities in this important geopolitical area.

NEW IMPORTS FROM THE DRĄSUTAIČIAI CEMETERY IN THE NORTH OF LITHUANIA

Zwiebelknopffibeln

Zwiebelknopffibeln are so named due to the characteristic bulbous knobs, the terminating brooch bow and axis, and by their shape; using a hinge construction, these brooches are also known as T-shaped (figs 2-3).

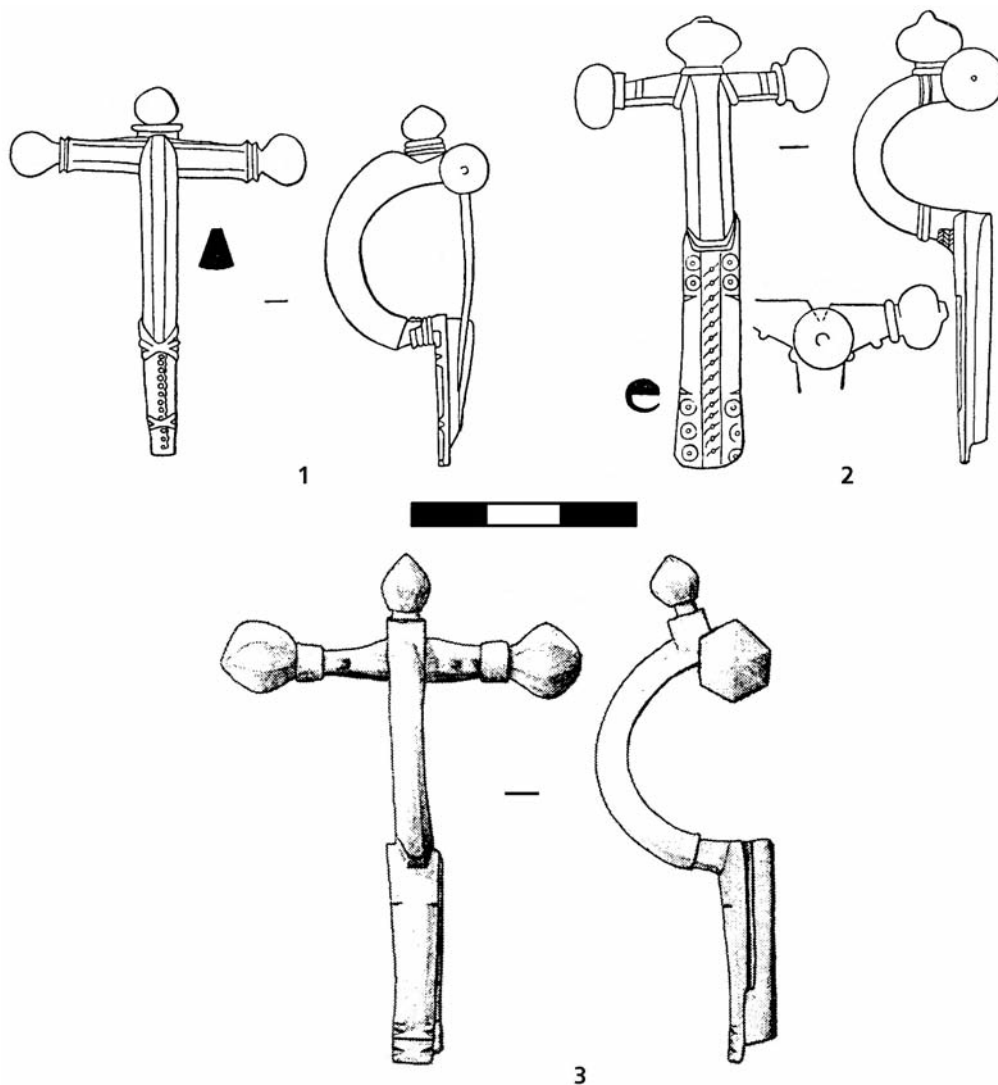


Fig. 2 *Zwiebelknopffibeln* found in: **1** Chersonessos (obl. Sevastopol/UA). – **2** northern Ossetia (beginning of the 4th century). – **3** »Ostpreußen« (exact finding place unknown, end of the 4th-beginning of the 5th century). – (1-2 after Ambroz 1966, pl. 17, 6-7; 3 after Nowakowski 2001, pl. 3, 2; courtesy of Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin [Inv.-No. Ia 46]).

Zwiebelknopffibeln originated in the Roman Empire, and in the 3rd century these brooches spread along the Rhine basin, the Balkans, Southeast Europe, the Crimean Peninsula, coastal sites on the Black Sea, the north Caucasus, Asia Minor, and elsewhere. They are usually discovered abundantly in places where legions of the Roman Empire were deployed, where the Roman civilian administrative authority was strong, and, finally, in regions to which veterans used to return. Depending on the metal, *Zwiebelknopffibeln* were worn by warriors of different ranks and by officials of the Roman Empire to fasten their cloaks on the right shoulder (Werner 1989, 121-128; Pröttel 1991, fig. 9; Sharov 1999, 205 fig. 5, 13-16).

It should be emphasized that the Drąsutaičiai cemetery is the northernmost findspot where these Roman imports have been discovered. The Drąsutaičiai brooches might have been produced somewhere in provinces of the Roman Empire, or in *Imperium Romanum* itself. According to the typology of Oscar Almgren, the Drąsutaičiai brooches belong to type A190 of group VI (Almgren 1897, 89-90 pl. VIII, 190). All the Drąsutaičiai *Zwiebelknopffibeln* divide properly into typological and chronological schemes introduced or

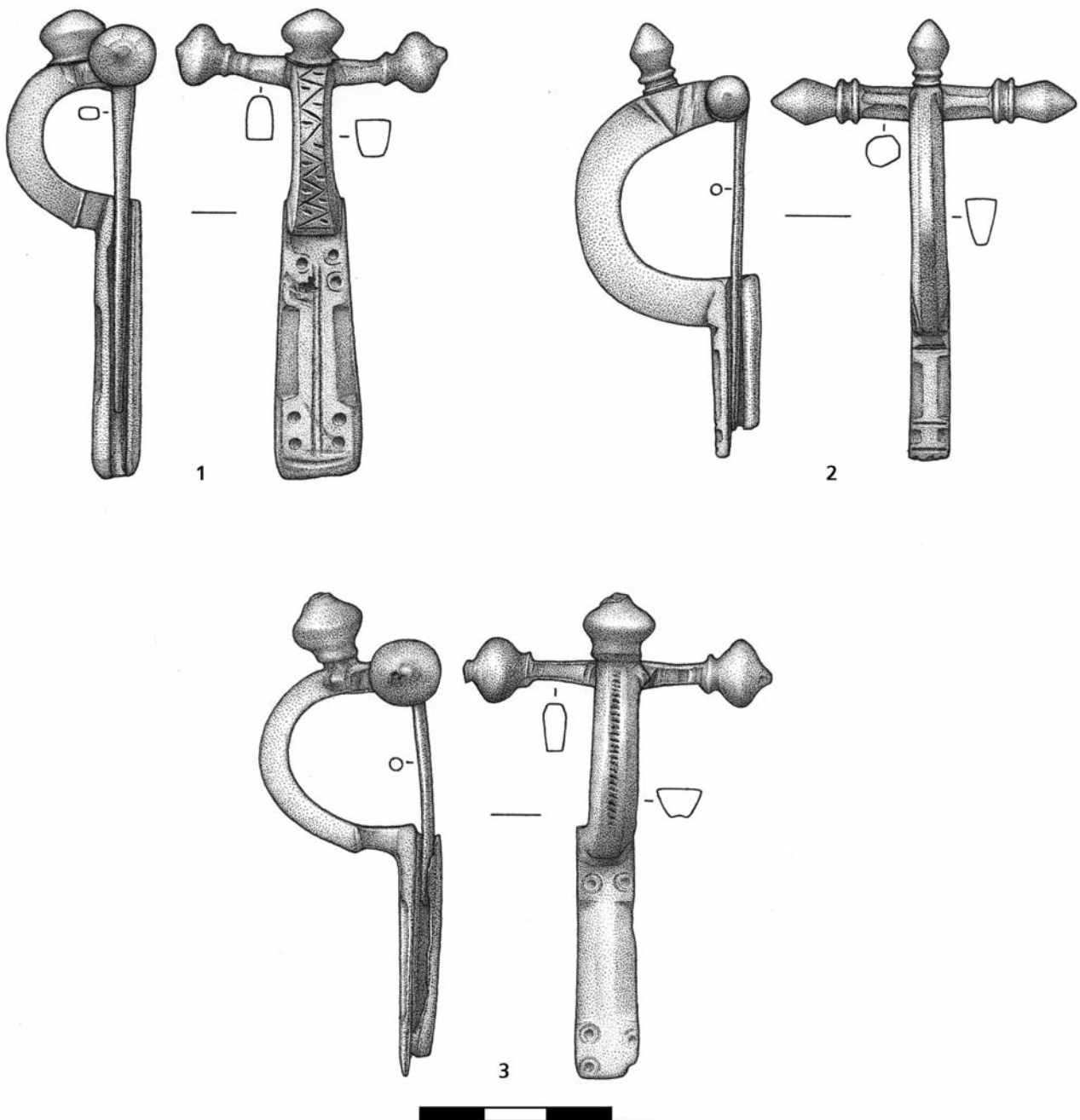


Fig. 3 *Zwiebelknopffibeln* found in Drąsutaičiai (distr. Joniškis/LT) cemetery, stray finds (1 bronze; 2 bronze silvered; 3 brass). – (Drawings I. Maciukaitė; courtesy of Šiaulių »Aušros« muziejus [ŠAM], in Šiauliai [ŠAM GEK Inv.-Nos 122466-122468]).

developed by different authors (Almgren 1897, 88-90 pl. VIII, 190; Ambroz 1966, 74 fig. 13, 7; Riha 1979, 173-175 pls 51, 1450-1456; 52, 1458-1463; 53-54; 78; Werner 1989, 121-132; Sharov 1999, 189-200 fig. 7). In accordance with the classification of these brooches recently suggested by Philipp Mark Pröttel, one of them belongs to type 3/4, variant B (Pröttel 1991, 353-357 fig. 4a, B4) (fig. 3, 1)³. The bronze brooch is massive⁴, its length is 7.4 cm, its width is 4.25 cm, the width of the foot at the end is 1.35 cm, the diameter of the knobs is 10 mm, and the weight is 39.8 g. The brooch is cast, but a geometrical pattern (zigzags with symmetrically arranged hacks) alien to *Zwiebelknopffibeln* was engraved on the bow. The

brooch might be embellished later somewhere in the barbaricum⁵, but the composition of the geometrical motifs points to the cultural environment of the Balts. P. M. Pröttel dated this brooch type to the end of phase C3 to phase D1 (340-410). Emilie Riha, referring to Erwin Keller, dated this *Zwiebelknopffibel* type to 340-360 (Riha 1979, 173-175).

The bronze silver-coated⁶ *Zwiebelknopffibel* has a short slightly flared foot with a surface slightly in relief (fig. 3, 2). According to Pröttel's classification, this Drąsutaičiai brooch is closest to type I, variant B (Pröttel 1991, 353-357 fig. 1, B6). Its length is 6.9 cm, its width is 4.9 cm, the foot is 1 cm in width, the diameter of the terminals is 7 mm, and the weight is 31.29 g. According to Pröttel, this type of brooch belongs to phase C2 to the beginning of phase C3 (260-320), or to 290-320 after Riha (1979, 172-173).

In accordance with Pröttel's classification, the brass⁷ *Zwiebelknopffibel* is closest to type 3/4, variant B (Pröttel 1991, 349-353 fig. 4a, B4) (fig. 3, 3). The brooch is decorated with a geometrical pattern (a bow in a vertical line composed of tiny horizontal hacks; a foot with six tiny deepened »eyes«). The length is 7.4 cm, the width is 4.9 cm, the width of the foot is 1 cm, the diameter of the knobs is 10.5-11.5 mm, and the weight is 36.8 g. The chronology after Pröttel is the end of phase C3 to phase D1 (340-410), or 350-380 after Riha (1979, 175-176).

Some remarks on the discovery of *Zwiebelknopffibeln* in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin

According to Pröttel's classification, type I, variant B belongs to the second half of the 3rd century to the first quarter of the 4th century, and type 3/4, variant B was dated to the middle of the 4th century to the beginning of the 5th century (Pröttel 1991, 372). A slightly different chronology of *Zwiebelknopffibeln* was proposed by E. Riha; nevertheless, this jewellery was in use at the end of the 3rd century to the end of the 4th century (Riha 1979, 172 pl. 780). Therefore, in connection with the *Zwiebelknopffibeln* found in Drąsutaičiai, four main preliminary questions arise. When did these brooches appear in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin? Did they occur here simultaneously? How did these imports appear so far north from their main area of distribution within the barbaricum? And, finally, along which communication routes did this jewellery arrive in this remote region?

To the first question, it is partly possible to get an answer by analyzing the distribution of imports from the Roman Empire and barbaricum between the Daugava and Mūša-Lielupe rivers. In this region, six hoards of Roman *sestertii*, in which only single *denarii* were found, are known. All six hoards belong to the third quarter of the 3rd century to the fourth quarter of the 4th century, or even to the beginning of the 5th century, because the latest coins are from the time of Constantius II (337-361) and Valentinian I (364-375) (Ducmane / Ozoliņa 2009, 70-74). However, so far, very few imported ornaments are known from this region, except a few dozen mostly monochrome enamel beads (Michelbertas 2001). Consequently, after the inconsiderable amount of Late Roman period imports, it is clear enough that relations with a residual part of Europe were not extensive. But, on the other hand, the composition of the mentioned hoards coincides with the time of use of *Zwiebelknopffibeln* in certain regions of the barbaricum (Riha 1979, 172; Pröttel 1991, fig. 11; Sharov 1999, figs 5. 7).

To the question when *Zwiebelknopffibeln* did appear in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin, the composition of the Drąsutaičiai collection, which includes fragments of crossbow brooches of types A161, A162 and A167, and *Kolbenarmringe*, as well as some other artefacts (fig. 4), might partly be an answer. Crossbow brooches of type A167, decorated with coils of notched wire, are among the most popular ornaments of the Balts during the Late Roman and Early Migration Periods (Almgren 1897, pl. VII, 167; Åberg 1919, 12-14 figs 2-3; Moora 1929, pl. 8, 6; Moora 1938, 136-144 fig. 22, 2; Michelbertas 1986, 121; Tautavičius 1996, 195; Bitner-Wróblewska 2007, 48-51; Andrzejowski / Cieśliński 2007, 306 fig. 27). A fragment of a

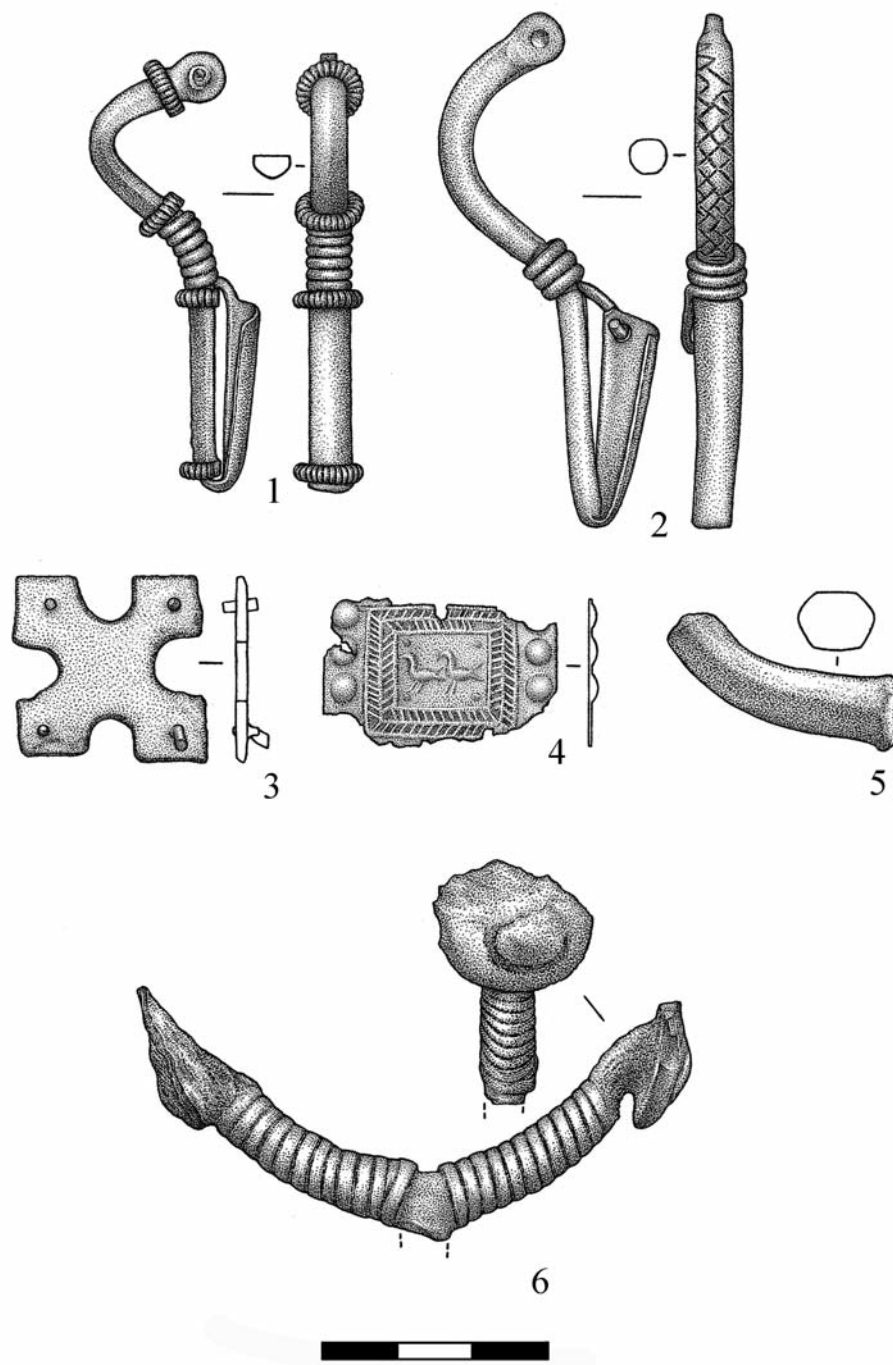


Fig. 4 Crossbow brooches (1-2), mounts (3-4), fragment of a bracelet (5) and a spur (6) found at Drąsutaičiai (distr. Joniškis/LT) cemetery, stray finds (1-5 bronze; 6 iron and bronze). – (Drawings I. Maciukaitė; courtesy of ŠAM in Šiauliai [ŠAM GEK Inv.-Nos 123034-123035. 123042-123043. 123031-123032]).

bronze brooch decorated with four coils of notched wire from the Drąsutaičiai collection fits into the large chronological interval from phase C1a to phase D (fig. 4, 1).

A fragment of a bronze crossbow brooch with a bent foot of types A161 and A162 is one of the other interesting ornaments from the Drąsutaičiai collection. The length of the exemplar is 6.8 cm (fig. 4, 2). The foot of the bent brooch has an unusual attachment and geometrical design on the bow of the ornament.

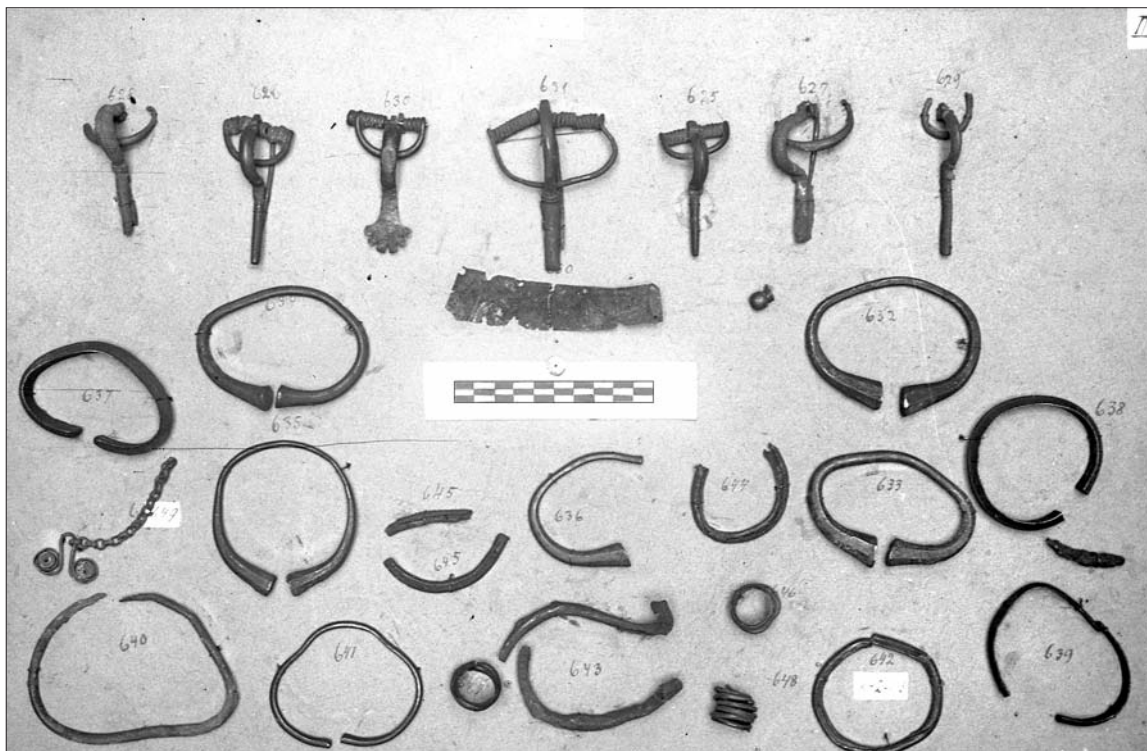


Fig. 5 Ornaments found at Kokmuiža I (distr. Auce/LV) bog offering site. – (Photo R. Šnore ca. 1930; courtesy of Latvian National History Museum [LNVN] [Inv.-No. 6546] in Riga).

X-shaped motifs, making an irregular net, are engraved on the bow of the brooch for its embellishment, which seems left-handed. Besides this, we can say that whatever ornamentation is alien to this crossbow brooch type, at this moment, the exemplar is unique. Both features make the brooch unusual, and point to the latest stage of the group development of this ornament. On the other hand, the time span from the end of the 4th century to the first half of the 5th century is marked by the emergence of fancy geometrical motifs, both stamped and engraved on smooth surfaces of an ornament, as well as cast ornaments with deep-relief geometrical motifs (the chip-carving technique). These new ornamental patterns were intercepted as cultural ideas from northern Germanic styles (Ģinters 1937, 39-56; Bliujienė 2000, 105-106; Bliujienė 2007, 128-132). Crossbow brooches with a bent foot occur in Lithuania and in other territories of the Western Balts in phase C1a and were worn during phase D (Michelbertas 1986, 119-120 fig. 38; Bitner-Wróblewska 2007, 48). These ornaments are rather widespread in present-day Lithuania, but only a few of these brooches have been discovered in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin (Moora 1929, pl. 8, 2-4; Moora 1938, 119-125; Michelbertas 1986, map; Latvijas 1974, pl. 41; Banytė-Rowell et al. 2003, 59). However, due to the huge area of their spread, it is hard to tell at this moment where they were manufactured.

Besides this, a couple of crossbow brooches with a bent foot came from Kokmuiža I (distr. Auce/LV), the largest war booty offering in the east Baltic region, discovered in 1869 and dated to phases D1-D3/E1 (Urtāns 1977, 138-139; Bliujienė 2010, 142-152 figs 5. 7-9). In this offering, among a few ornaments, a bronze crossbow brooch with a bent foot and a crossbow brooch with a star-shaped foot alongside a *Kolbenarmring* were found (fig. 5). Therefore, it might be that the fragment from Drāstaičiai belongs to the later interval of phase D.

Bronze bracelets with thickened terminals are a frequent find from the Migration Period (figs 4, 5; 5). In the Baltic territories, exemplars with slightly thickened terminals are already known from phase C3. In fact, bronze (more frequently) or silver *Kolbenarmringe* in the east Baltic region spread only at the beginning of the 5th century, and were continuously worn in the 6th century (Åberg 1919, 133-134 figs 184-185; Puzinas 1938, 267; Tautavičius 1996, 250 fig. 120; Banytė-Rovell 2001, 77-78).

The spur enlaced with a bronze wire is one more exceptional artefact from the Drąsutaičiai collection. It is made of iron, and its bow is enlaced with bronze wire (fig. 4, 6). A spike and one flattened round button-shaped knob terminating the spur are broken. The spur belongs to the *Knopfsporen* type. It is similar to that of Jerzy Ginalski's A group spurs (Ginalski 1991, fig. 19). However, due to the bronze wire around the bow, no analogous items have been traced so far. This exemplar could be a local type of spur. It might be attached to the large chronological interval from phase B2 to the Early Migration Period.

Therefore, coming back to the *Zwiebelknopffibeln* from the Drąsutaičiai collection chronology, especially to the specimen with an embellished bow, it is possible to assume that this fine piece of jewellery passed some time from hand to hand (fig. 3, 1). If this assumption is correct, the question from which hands to which hands the brooch was passed before it came to Drąsutaičiai is still open.

To the question if the *Zwiebelknopffibeln* appeared in Drąsutaičiai simultaneously, the answer is more complicated. However, on the basis of archaeological evidence, it is possible to posit that the region's communities' contacts with the remaining barbaricum shifted during the Late Roman period. Therefore, it is most probable that all three *Zwiebelknopffibeln* in the region came at the same time during late phase C3 to phase D1 or a later time, i. e. around 350-410/420. This dating might be supported by other events that were going on in the Late Roman Period and the beginning of the Migration Period. Because a lot of changes happened in the Mūša-Lielupe region, it changed dramatically the face of the area, and active communication began (Bliujienė 2007, 128-113 map 1 fig. 2; Bliujienė 2010, 147-153). However, relations between Balt cultures and provinces of the Roman Empire occurred through many intermediaries of Germanic cultures, and were never direct. Therefore, it is more probable that the *Zwiebelknopffibeln* from the barbaricum appeared so far to the north through different intermediaries and transactions of a varied character.

Myth or reality: other *Zwiebelknopffibeln* in the Baltic region

Three or four *Zwiebelknopffibeln* of types A190 and A191 from the southeast Baltic region have been discussed by Wojciech Nowakowski and other authors (cf. Nowakowski 1985, 75; 1995, 61 pl. 17, 10; 2001, 85 pl. 3, 2). Supposedly, three exemplars were found somewhere in »Ostpreußen« (fig. 2, 3). On the basis of inventory records of the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin, W. Nowakowski recently offered the assumption that these brooches originated from the Scheufelsdorf, Kossewen or Jucknaitchen (all woj. warmińsko-mazurskie) cemeteries in the Mazurian Lakeland in Poland (Nowakowski 2001, 85). At the same time, the author does not eliminate the possibility of their originating in sites on the Sambian Peninsula or the *Memelgebiet* (the Klaipėda region). Also, it might be that the brooches from »Ostpreußen« originated either from the Pasłęka/Passarge river basin, which is treated as a traditional border between the Germans and the Balts, or from the Iława river basin (Nowakowski 1995, 75). In any case, by their size, proportion and stylistic features, the bronze *Zwiebelknopffibeln* from »Ostpreußen« are similar to the bronze silver-coated brooch from Drąsutaičiai (figs 2, 3; 3, 2). The bronze silver-coated *Zwiebelknopffibel* from Drąsutaičiai is also quite similar to the silver brooch found in the Schaprode (Lkr. Vorpommern-Rügen) cemetery (Eggers / Stary 2001, 81 pl. 234, 7). On the other hand, the Drąsutaičiai *Zwiebelknopffibel* has something in common with other ones from



Fig. 6 The first half of the 6th century grave assemblage found at Kakužēni (distr. Jelgava/LV) cemetery in man grave 54 (1-2. 4. 7 iron; 3 silver; 5 bronze and iron; 6 bronze). – (After Gričuvienė 2005, 42).

Chersonessos (obl. Sevastopol/UA) and northern Ossetia (Ambroz 1966, pl. 13, 6-7) (fig. 2, 1-2). Therefore, summing up, there is not clear answer if the other *Zwiebelknopffibeln*, except shown on the figure 3, 3 really existed or if it is just scholarly legend.

The wearing of *Zwiebelknopffibeln* by the Balts and their social meaning

Although the circumstances under which the Drāsutaičiai collection was discovered do not allow us to tell how the grave complexes looked like, it is still possible to maintain (on the basis of material from cemeteries of the east Baltic region) that the *Zwiebelknopffibeln* originated from at least three destroyed male inhumations, belonging to the second half of the 4th century to the first quarter of the 5th century. It is most probable that imported *Zwiebelknopffibeln* used to be worn singly as marks of authority and high social status. These brooches within the barbaricum were worn by men, and only a few cases are known when they were enclosed in female graves, but merely as a part of additional grave-goods (Mastykova 2009, 47). A buried person with a bronze silver-coated *Zwiebelknopffibel* could have had a higher social status if we agree that barbarians from the far north followed the same ideological ideas and had similar religious attitudes. Therefore, it might be that these brooches were worn by individuals who occupied a high social position: tribal or military leaders. In the Roman Empire and in the provinces, the metal from which *Zwiebelknopffibeln* were manufactured corresponded with a person's military position or administrative status (Sharov 1999, 205). *Zwiebelknopffibeln* consisted of silver and gold were a symbol of the highest social status. One such brooch was found in the grave of the Frankish king Childerich (457/458-482) (Ambroz 1966, 74-75; Pröttel 1991;

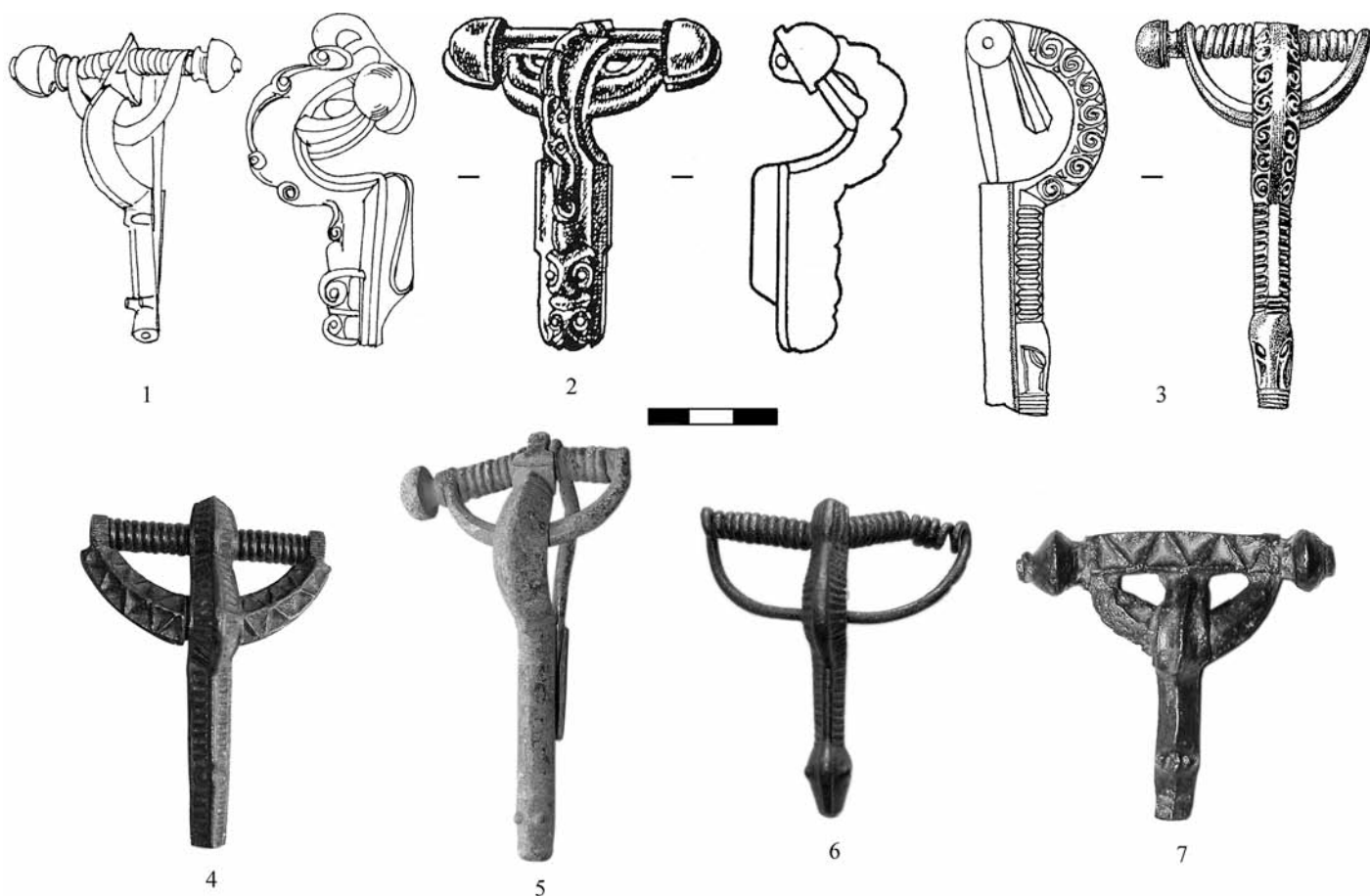


Fig. 7 Crossbow animal-headed brooches from the second half of the 5th century to the first half of the 6th century, found in the interfluvia between the Mūša-Lielupe river: **1** Kakužēni, male grave 54. – **2** Kakužēni, male grave 17. – **3** Griezes Dzirnava (LNVM Inv.-No. 10097). – **4** Šukioniai (ŠAM Inv.-No. 623). – **5** Spirakiai (ŠAM Inv.-No. 95495). – **6** Gibaičiai (ŠAM Inv.-No. 248). – **7** Petraičiai (ŠAM Inv.-No. 695). – (1-7 bronze). – (4-6 photos E. Vasiliauskas; 7 photo J. Mikuckas; courtesy of ŠAM in Šiauliai and LNVM in Rīga).

Nowakowski 1995, 61; Capelle 2001, 137-141; Kulakov 2007, 251-257; Quast 2009, 221-224 fig. 17). On the other hand, the situation in the environment of the Balts, and especially in the area between the Mūša-Lielupe and Daugava rivers, suggests that only men (warriors) wore any fibulae. This is in the Early and Late Migration Period in this region, even a special type of crossbow animal-headed brooch was created, and these exemplars, as insignia of the highest social status and authority, along with silver neck-rings, were worn exclusively by men (figs 6, 3, 5; 7). Always only one brooch used to be enclosed in male graves during the Migration Period (Tarvydas 1933, figs 8-9; Graudonis 2003, figs 23-24. 37).

Gleicharmige Bügelfibeln

An imported bronze-bow equal-armed brooch or *gleicharmige Bügelfibel* was found in the Rengiai cemetery (Vasiliauskas 2011, 17). Its length is 5.9 cm, and its width at the terminals is 3.45 cm (fig. 8, 1). This exemplar, by the characteristic geometric relief design, is different from other specimens known in Lithuania and Latvia. According to Stefan Thörle's typology, a bow equal-armed brooch could be attached to group IA 6, ending in concave semicircular plates (Thörle 2001, pls 8, 10; 60-61).

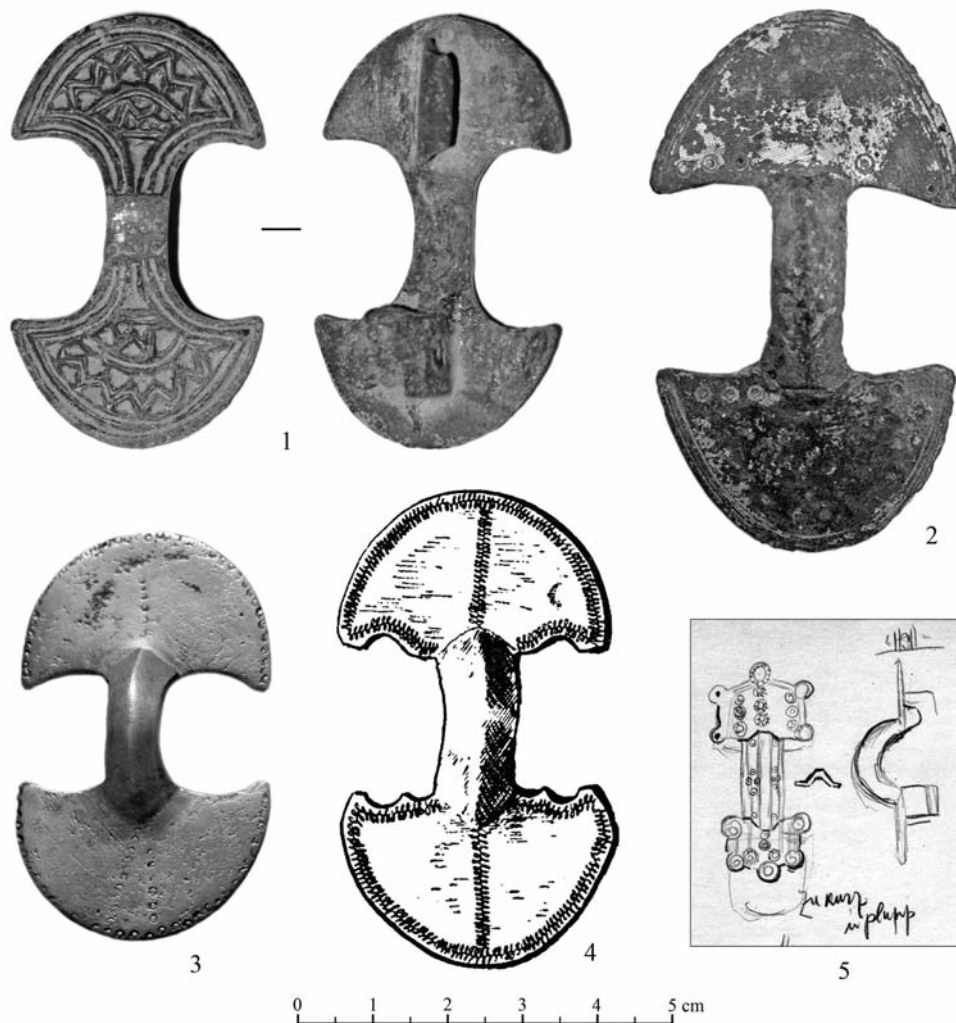


Fig. 8 *Gleicharmige Buegelfibeln* from Lithuania and Latvia: **1** Rengiai cemetery, stray find. – **2** Barvai cemetery, stray find. – **3** Pļavniekkalns cemetery, stray find. – **4** Jurgaičiai cemetery, stray find. – **5** Barvai cemetery, grave 3 (no scale). – (1 photo E. Vasiliauskas; 2 photo L. Tamulynas; 3 photo R. Kaniņš; 4 after Tautavičius 1972, fig. 18; 5 courtesy of LNVM in Rīga, Feliks Jākobsons archive).

At present, only four *gleicharmige Buegelfibeln* are known in Lithuania and Latvia, and they belong to the same group (IA 6) of brooches described by S. Thörle, and they could have been manufactured in the same Frankish region. Two equal-armed *Buegelfibeln*, decorated with simple engraved and stamped geometric decoration (close zigzags, double horizontal lines and circles bordering the decoration and accentuating their vertical axis), were found in the lower Nemunas area in the Jurgaičiai and Barvai (both distr. Šilutė/LT) cemeteries (Tautavičius 1972, 146 fig. 18; Tamulynas 2002, 130) (fig. 8, 2, 4). Another two exemplars of this type are known from the region between the Mūša-Lielupe and Daugava rivers, from the Rengiai and Pļavniekkalns (distr. Rīga/LV) cemeteries (Jākobsons 1999, 22-23 fig. 1; Vasiliauskas 2011, 17) (figs 1; 8, 1, 3). Similar bronze-bow equal-armed brooches were found in burial sites of Dollkeim/Kovrovo culture on Sambian Peninsula (obl. Kaliningrad/RUS; Kulakov 1994, 50). Unfortunately, all *Buegelfibeln* discovered in the east Baltic region are treated as stray finds. The assumption is also probable that in the east Baltic region, bow equal-armed brooches were worn by men. Evidence is provided by comparison with known specimens from the area of the Franks and the Byzantine Empire, where men wore such brooches as fasteners for military cloaks (Thörle 2001, 267-268 map 38; Schulze-Dörrlamm 2003, 440-442 fig. 5).

Two *gleicharmige Bügelfibeln* are known from the Olsztyn group cemetery at Wólka Prusinowska/Pruschnowen Wolka (woj. warmińsko-mazurskie/PL), thanks to the revision of archive material (Nowakowski 2007, 152 fig. 9). It is impossible to classify both these exemplars precisely, because the contexts of the finding of these artefacts are not known. Most probably, the brooches from Wólka Prusinowska might be dated to the late 7th century or even the early 9th century, and these exemplars clearly indicate that contact with the Rhineland area still existed (Thörle 2001, pl. 31, 1-9) (**fig. 1**).

Equal-armed brooches as ornaments of a particular symbolic meaning or marks of a person's social status were worn by the Franks and around Europe as early as the Merovingian period. Initially, brooches were a typical attribute of men's costume. However, gradually, especially in the western Frankish area, a diversity of *gleicharmige Bügelfibeln* came to be characteristic of women's costume of the 7th century to the very beginning of the 8th century (between 600 and 670/678 or 630 and 710) (Böhner 1958, 89-91; Thörle 2001, 267-269 map 1, 38; Lorren 2001, 75-78 pl. 6, 2-11; Schulze-Dörlamm 2003, 437-442).

The occurrence of *gleicharmige Bügelfibeln* in cemeteries around the lower reaches of the river Nemunas stimulated the production of local derivatives. One derivative was discovered in woman's(?) grave 3 at the Barvai cemetery in the Šilutė (formerly Heydekrug) district in Lithuania (the Feliks Jākobsons archive in the Latvian National Museum of History in Rīga; Tamulynas 2008, 154 fig. 3) (**fig. 8, 5**). From the second half of the 7th century to the end of the 8th century, equal-armed brooches, only very marginally resembling *Bügelfibeln*, are known from the lower Nemunas region. It might be that the derivatives were inspired by imported bronze-bow equal-armed brooches. Besides, such artefacts with a surface in relief could have become an impulse for the manufacture of similar local specimens (brooches, pins, pendants, belt buckles and mounts) (Ģinters 1937, 39-54 figs 1-7).

The occurrence of *gleicharmige Bügelfibeln* in cemeteries of the lower Nemunas region and in the area between the Mūša-Lielupe and Daugava rivers indicated that during the 7th century and later, these territories did not lose their strategically important position in the east Baltic region, because rare or unique artefacts, or items produced following foreign prototypes, are still known from this area. From the Drāsutaičiai collection, a bronze cruciform-shaped mount (probably from a belt or a shoulder-belt), originally covered with a white metal plate, is known. The size of the item is 2.5×2.5 cm, and the thickness is 1 mm. It is rivetted at its angles (**fig. 4, 3**). Similar mounts of belts and shoulder-belts were discovered in male and even newborn graves at the Pagrybis cemetery (distr. Šilalė/LT) dated to the second half of the 5th century to the 6th century (Vaitkunsienė 1995, 133 figs 34, 2; 153; 196). The bronze cruciform-shaped mounts from the Kaštaunaliai (distr. Šilalė/LT) cemetery might be dated to the first half of the 7th century (Vaitkunsienė 1984, 85-86 fig. 13). Very close in size (2.4×2.4 cm) and in shape, but a silver belt mount was found in the Daumen (Tumiany, woj. warmińsko-mazurskie/PL) cemetery in grave 52 (Jākobsons 2009, 46 pl. 36, e).

The Drāsutaičiai collection also contains a rectangular (length 3.1 cm, width 1.9 cm) bronze mount with unique decoration (**fig. 4, 4**). In the central part of the mount, two leftwards moving birds(?) are depicted in a generalized but still realistic manner. The item is made using the embossed foil technique from both sides, so its surface is slightly in relief from the frontal side. However, the expression of the moving animals on the Drāsutaičiai mount is presented in a slightly different manner to other previously known examples. The composition of the Drāsutaičiai item is also different: the ornamental design is not arranged in ornamental friezes, but the simple composition is framed with a herringbone motif (**fig. 4, 4**). These discrepancies in the Drāsutaičiai mount are likely to be chronological. The differences mentioned here might indicate that the exemplar was manufactured in a peripheral jewellery workshop, employing craftsmen with poorer skills. In the second half of the 5th century to the beginning of the 6th century, at least one peripheral workshop operated in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin (perhaps there were two). They manufactured arte-

facts both decorated in a generalized realistic manner and imitating Germanic animal styles (Bliujienė 2007, 132 map 1). The Drąsutaičiai mount must have been manufactured in one of these peripheral jewellery workshops.

The Drąsutaičiai exemplar, with a framed animal composition, might be part of a drinking horn mount. Of the large amount of archaeological material from the second half of the 5th century to the beginning of the 6th century, several drinking horn mounts incorporate more or less realistically depicted animals (Simniškytė 1998, 198-200 figs 19-23 with further references).

FROM TRADE TO SOCIAL CHARACTER: THE INTERCHANGE AND EXCHANGE OF CULTURAL IDEAS

Presumably, *Zwiebelknopffibeln* and afterwards bow equal-armed brooches appeared in the region indirectly, through different transactions of an economic character (trading) inside the barbaricum itself, and in the territories inhabited by the Balts. *Ipsa facto* inter-regional contacts had a huge impact on the rapid stratification of society and the formation of the local elite. Interchange of a different social character (alliances, marriages, the exchange of gifts, etc.) was one of the best ways of getting desirable artefacts or insignia that indicated a person's rank. Therefore, it might be that these brooches inherent to their time of use came to the region through this social link. Consequently, exceptional insignia for demonstrating high social position were searched for in the markets. They were copied, and eventually original symbols marking a new reality were specially created and manufactured locally. Certainly, this demand engendered supply, and skilful jewellers and jewellery workshops fabricating desirable insignia appeared in the region. This assumption is supported indirectly by the spread of local crossbow animal-headed brooches in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin (figs 6, 5; 7). Local imitations of such brooches and of *Kragenfibeln* started emerging. In these ornaments or marks of social status, it is possible to distinguish the direct influence of Germanic technical and ornamental innovations. While taking on board Germanic traditions, Balt jewellers were likely to have no opportunity for copying the style, and their works could not reflect an entirely clear concept of Germanic styles. Therefore, Balt jewellers demonstrated their ability at being great impersonators, and even started to cast technically complicated imitations of Germanic brooches, using one or several moulds (Bliujienė 2007, 128-130) (fig. 7, 2. 4. 7). The abundance of unique crossbow animal-headed brooches in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin points to the fact that jewellers had been satisfying the needs and the tastes of the local elite. Such brooches manufactured in regional jewellery workshops apparently even reached Pikkjärve in Estonia (formerly Langensee, distr. Tartu) (Quast 2005, fig. 2, 4). On the other hand, cooperation between several workshops in the east Baltic region is also evident. For example, the construction and decoration of a brooch found in the Griezes Dzirnavas (distr. Saldus) cemetery in Latvia, shows that it must have been manufactured in coastal areas of Lithuania (fig. 7, 3).

MIGRATION PERIOD WARFARE IN THE MŪŠA-LIELUPE RIVER BASIN

Along the Mūša-Lielupe river basin up to the Daugava river, the quick pace of development started as early as the 5th century and accelerated rapidly during the 6th century. The population in the region probably increased. Demographical transformations changed the structure of settlements, and stimulated the constitution of new economic and political centres (Latvijas 1974, fig. 59; Zemītis 2004, 184-187 figs 1. 7). The gradual transition from funeral rites to burying deceased persons in barrows (collective burial custom) to

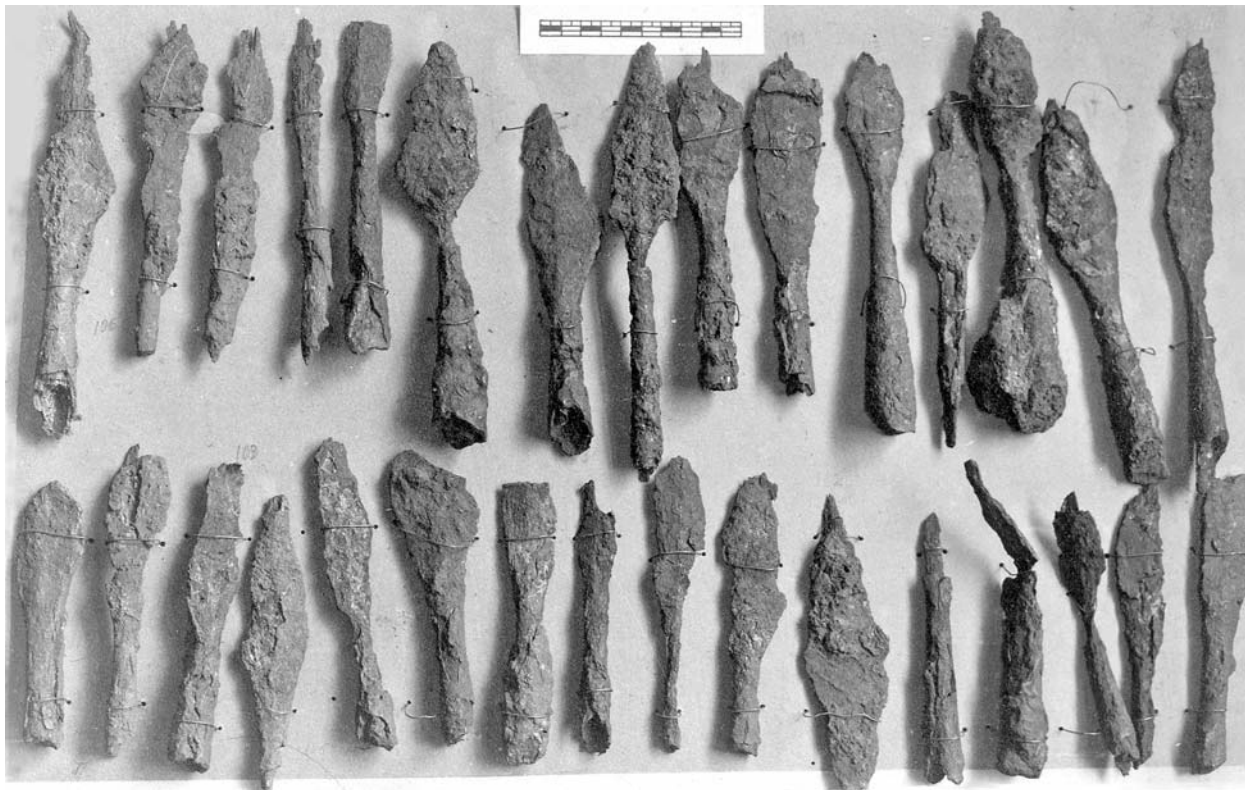


Fig. 9 Spearheads found at the bog offering site Kokmuiža I (distr. Auce/LV). – (Photo R. Šnore ca. 1930; courtesy of LNVM [Inv.-No. 6541] in Rīga).

funerals in flat cemeteries illustrates changes in the ideology and religion. During the Migration Period, regional communities that inhabited the Mūša-Lielupe river basin solved an important geopolitical task, fighting for control over trade routes and crossroads of regional significance and for access to the Baltic Sea at the Gulf of Rīga and the lower reaches of the river Daugava. Therefore, regional conflicts became inevitable. The concentration of different kinds of bog sacrifices in the bogs and wetlands from war booty to valuable heavy silver ornaments, hoarding silver and bronze artefacts in the land and in the cemeteries, and enclosing weapons and created marks of social status in graves all indicates the consolidation of power and authority in the hands of a small group of people (Urtāns 1977; Vaitkunskenė 1981; Aun 1992, 138-140; Atgāzis 2001, 272-274). That the alliances formed to maintain power were most likely not long-lasting, again this is attested to by the large number of bog offerings in the area of the Mūša and the Lielupe. It should be underlined that the biggest war booty offering sites at Kokmuiža I and II (Līgotņi) in Latvia are located in the region, not far from Drāsutaičiai and Rengiai, and presumably both communities were among those that sacrificed war booty in the Kokmuiža wetlands (figs 5. 9). Consequently, large-scale intertribal conflicts once again demonstrate that the leaders of the Mūša-Lielupe river basin communities were trying to concentrate their control over this important crossroads, which ensured their power. It was necessary to form wider inter-regional alliances in order to amass larger detachments of armed men.

Recently, a new idea has come to light: trans-East European trading routes for fur trading, connecting Scandinavia and Byzantium along East European forest zone rivers, already existed during the 5th and 6th centuries (Kazanski 2010, 1-97). It is obvious that trading routes also involved the region between the lower Daugava and the Mūša-Lielupe rivers.

Thus, once again, large intertribal conflicts in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin point to a willingness to purify and concentrate power in the hands of a small group of people. The Kokmuiža I and II bog offerings are typical war booty offering sites, like those in north Germanic territories, offered after important victories and to celebrate triumphs. Although it is in a peripheral region (from the point of view of material), we can still trace a rather large number of imports from the Migration Period, which are reflections of big military ventures, changes in many spheres of life, and, what is most important, of ideology and religion. It is also significant that these inter-regional contacts had a huge impact on the rapid social stratification and the formation of a local military elite, which led to the appearance of a complex chiefdom.

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Notes

- 1) In German, the river is called *Memel*. In principle, the name is the same as that of the biggest river in Lithuania, the Nemunas/Memel/Neman.
- 2) Paudruvė (distr. Joniškis/LT) dates from the 5th to 8th centuries, Dvarelišiai (Kriukai) (distr. Joniškis/LT) has fine material from the 8th to 11th centuries, and Elejas Kraujas (distr. Jelgava/LV) might date from the 11th to 13th centuries.
- 3) The brooches are kept in the »Aušra« Museum in Šiauliai (SAM GEK Inv.-Nos GEK 122466-122468/A-L 127:1-3).
- 4) The preliminary qualitative composition of the basic components of the metal alloys is: Cu, Sn, Zn and Pb. An investigation of the qualitative composition was carried out at the National Museum of Lithuania, employing the microchemical analysis method. The analysis of metal alloys in all the brooches was conducted by Renata Prielgauskienė.
- 5) The same opinion is expressed by Dieter Quast (RGZM, Mainz).
- 6) The composition of the basic components of the metal alloys is: Cu, Sn, Zn and Pb; as coating Ag.
- 7) The qualitative composition of the basic components of the metal alloys is: Cu, Zn and Pb.

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Zusammenfassung / Abstract / Résumé / Santrauka

Menschen der späten Kaiserzeit und der Völkerwanderungszeit im Durchgangsbereich des Flusstales der Mūša-Lielupe im östlichen Baltikum

Dieser Artikel behandelt jüngst in Litauen entdeckte Importfunde besonderer Art. Drei Zwiebelknopffibeln und eine gleicharmige Bügelfibel kamen zusammen mit anderen seltenen Funden im Tal des Flusses Mūša-Lielupe zutage. Diese neuen Entdeckungen helfen, den schnellen Wandel im sozioökonomischen Bereich und kulturellen Leben dieser Region zu erklären, in der das Streben um die Macht gleichbedeutend mit dem Kampf um die Kontrolle über die Binnenwasserwege, wie den Fluss Mūša-Lielupe, war. Gemeinschaften, welche die Mūša-Lielupe beherrschten, besaßen so Zugang zur Ostsee. Archäologische Belege aus der Region geben Hinweise auf ausgedehnte und weitreichende überregionale Kontakte und auf einen hohen Grad an gesellschaftlicher Differenzierung bereits in der frühen Völkerwanderungszeit. In diesem Zusammenhang wurde ein breites Spektrum an symbolhaften Gegenständen importiert und vor Ort weiterentwickelt, um den sozialen Status von höherstehenden Personen zu kennzeichnen.

People from the crossroads of the Mūša-Lielupe river basin in the eastern Baltic region during the Late Roman and Migration Periods

The present paper deals with recently discovered, unique imports from Lithuania. Three *Zwiebelknopffibeln* and a *gleicharmige Bügelfibel*, together with other rare finds, were unearthed in the Mūša-Lielupe river basin. In fact, these recently discovered artefacts evidently point to rapid changes in the socio-economic and cultural life in the region, in which struggles for power equaled those for domination over internal waterways, the Mūša-Lielupe river. Communities which managed to control the Mūša-Lielupe river had access to the Baltic Sea. Archaeological evidence in the region points to broad and far-reaching inter-regional contacts and to a high level of social differentiation even in the Early Migration Period. In this context, a wide range of various insignia were imported and developed locally in order to mark the social status of high ranking individuals.

Populations de l'antiquité tardive et de la période des grandes invasions à la croisée des chemins sur les rives de la Mūša-Lielupe dans l'Est de la Baltique

Cet article traite d'importations d'un nouveau genre qui ont récemment été mises au jour en Lituanie. Trois *Zwiebelknopffibeln* et une *gleicharmige Bügelfibel*, en contexte avec d'autres objets exceptionnels ont été découverts dans le bassin de la rivière Mūša-Lielupe. Ces artefacts récemment découverts pointent de rapides modifications de la structure socio-économique et de la vie culturelle de la région en relation avec des luttes pour le contrôle du pouvoir qui étaient aussi importantes que les luttes pour le contrôle des voies navigables de la rivière Mūša-Lielupe. Les populations qui contrôlaient la Mūša-Lielupe avaient un accès à la mer Baltique. Les découvertes archéologiques dans la région montrent des contacts développés et soutenus à une échelle interrégionale et une forte différenciation sociale dès la période des grandes invasions. C'est dans ce contexte qu'une large variété de marqueurs sociaux a été importée et développée localement afin de marquer le rang social d'un groupe de personnes de haut rang. L. B.

Vėlyvojo romėniškojo laikotarpio ir tautų kraustymosi laikų žmonės iš Rytų Baltijos jūros regiono Mūšos-Lielupės baseino kryžkelės

Šiame straipsnyje yra nagrinėjami unikalūs importiniai dirbiniai pastaraisiais metais rasti Lietuvoje. Tai trys »T« raidės formos ir viena segė vienodai užbaigtais galais bei keliolika kitų rytų dirbinių rastų Mūšos-Lielupės baseine. Šie naujai radiniai, neabejotinai rodo kad regione vyko greiti socialiniai, ekonominiai ir kultūriniai pasikeitimai, o kovos dėl valdžios prilygo pastangoms kontroliuoti vidinius vandens kelius, t. y., Mūšos-Lielupės upę. Bendruomenės kurios sugebėjo kontroliuoti šį strateginį tarpupį valdė ir prieigą prie Baltijos jūros. Aptariamo regiono materialinė kultūra atspindi plačius tarpregionius kontaktus ir rodo, kad jau ankstyvaisiais tautų kraustymosi laikais čia atsiranda aukštą socialinį statusą turėjusių žmonių sluoksnis, kurio poreikiams patenkinti buvo importuojamos ir kuriamos įvairios insiginijos.

Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots clés / Raktiniai žodžiai

Litauen / Baltikum / späte Kaiserzeit / Völkerwanderungszeit / Import / Kontakt / Fibel

Lithuania / Baltic states / Late Roman Period / Migration Period / import / contact / brooch

Lituanie / États Baltes / antiquité tardive / période des grandes invasions / importations / contact / fibule

Lietuva / Baltijos šalys / romėniškasis periodas / tautų kraustymosi laikotarpis / importas / ryšiai / segė

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