

Vilnius University

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**SOCIAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROMAN IRON AGE SOCIETIES IN
THE BALTIC SEA REGION**

Summary of doctoral dissertation

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**ROMĖNIŠKOJO GELEŽIES AMŽIAUS VISUOMENIŲ SOCIALINĖ
ANALIZĖ BALTIJOS JŪROS REGIONE**

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Introduction

The archaeologists who carried out research into the archaeological material of the Roman period in Scandinavian countries and Lithuania most often aimed to determine cultural groups the archaeological monuments should be attributed to, what time period they should be dated, what their relations with other cultures were, and, in a broad sense, what way of life they represented. Scandinavian researchers have been interested in social archaeology and the analysis of the social structures of the Roman period communities since the 70s, whereas more detailed studies of the social structures, based on the theories and methods of social archaeology, have been undertaken by Lithuanian archaeologists only since Lithuania's independence was restored, and are gaining full speed now.

The contextual analysis of the societies having resided on relatively large territories can help understand the peculiarities of the development of various regions and identify external influences that affected them. Currently several attempts have been made to study the entire Baltic Sea region as a unit, however, most often the focus is on investigating one small region, as a consequence, there are certain difficulties in carrying out the consistent comparative analysis of the societies. Each author sets different goals for himself/herself while investigating the structures of the societies based on archaeological material; each uses different methods of analysis and carries out different studies of the archaeological material available. That is why performing the comparative analysis of changes in the social structures referring to the research by various authors is a complicated task.

The novelty of this research paper is that this is the first comparative analysis, carried out on the basis of the archaeological material and social structures of the Baltic Sea region, their changes and the reasons that caused those changes. To carry out an in-depth comparative analysis of the social structures and the changes therein, one needs to compare the results obtained

from the analysis of all the archaeological material under research with the help of the same theories and methods.

The present paper attempts at reconstructing the societies that existed in the Roman period in the western part of Lithuania, the Lower Nemunas (Lithuania) and on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea – on the Zealand Island (Sjælland) (Denmark), on the Skåne Peninsular (Sweden), on the Bornholm Island (Denmark), and on the Swedish islands of Gotland and Öland and at comparing them after having analysed the burial material on the basis of the theories and research methods of post-processual social archaeology and after having evaluated the research results in the context of other archaeological material available.

The objective is to collect data, to analyse them and to compare the social structures of the societies that were in existence on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea during the Roman period and their development by making use of the archaeological data obtained. The following tasks were set to achieve this objective:

1. Analysis from various angles of all the available Roman period burial data from Western Lithuania, the Lower Nemunas and South Scandinavia in the context of social relationships of the communities.
2. Reconstruction of the degree of stratification of the societies analysed and of their internal organisation with reference to the analysis carried out and the archaeological material available; description of individual society groups and social norms; and identification of the development of communal structures.
3. Comparative analysis of the social structures of and changes in the communities on the Zealand Island, in Western Lithuania and the lower Nemunas, on the islands of Bornholm, Gotland and Öland, and on the Skåne Peninsular.

The following are the main **hypotheses** suggested in this paper:

1. The detailed analysis of the burial customs in Western Lithuania and the Lower Nemunas, which reflect the rituals influenced by ideology, can provide information about the communities of the Roman period.
2. The social structure of Roman Iron Age societies underwent continuous change on the western and eastern coasts of the Baltic Sea during the Roman period; however, there is evident proof that stratification of the communities began in all the areas under investigation in the middle of the period.
3. Social processes that took place in the communities in the areas under consideration were different in character; the processes had both common features and clear differences even in the areas that were relatively close to one another geographically.
4. Both internal and external factors had an impact on the different development of social relationships.

Similar natural (climate, proximity to the Baltic Sea) and economic conditions (traditional agriculture and cattle breeding) are typical of both sides of the Baltic Sea, both regions maintained relations with the Roman Empire. The volume of the present research does not precondition the detailed study of the entire area of the south-eastern, southern and south-western coasts of the Baltic Sea therefore the representative areas on both coasts of the Baltic Sea are selected as a **geographical range for the research**. From the point of view of archaeological material Zealand, Western Lithuania and the Lower Nemunas can be regarded as the areas that represent the regions under investigation best; therefore these areas will be studied most exhaustively. Regional differences on the south-western coast of the Baltic Sea are revealed by comparing the research data from the Zealand Island and from the other Baltic Sea islands. The idea is that the area selected should provide for the processes of the social

development of the communities in the coastal areas of the Baltic Sea and on the islands of the Baltic Sea and their differences to be revealed. Hence, the interest area of the present paper covers the eastern coast (Western Lithuania and the Lower Nemunas) and the western part of the Baltic Sea (Zealand, Bornholm, Gotland, and Öland).

Chronological boundaries – the first four centuries AD – the period referred to as the Roman Iron Age in Scandinavian literature, with its chronological boundaries from 0 to 375 AD¹. This is one of the richest and most interesting periods in the development of the Baltic Sea region, the period of huge changes and of gradual transformation of social structures.

The choice of methods was predetermined by both the archaeological material available and the post-processual theory, which provides a framework for interpreting the research material.

The burial data are considered at three – regional, cemetery and grave – levels. The archaeological material is analysed in terms of both quantity and quality. Socio-economic differentiation is detected by the number of artefact types (NAT) discovered in graves. Quality-wise the main method used is that of grave-good combinations where an attempt is made at identifying grave series in view of different grave-good combinations by means of a correspondence analysis. Where appropriate, the layout of separate grave clusters in a general spatial development of cemeteries is examined. The interpretation of the analysed cemetery evidence is underpinned by the assumption that a dominant group of people used a broadly acceptable ideology for strengthening their domination in society. Rituals are not seen as direct reflections of society,

¹ Lund Hansen, U. Hovedproblemer i romersk og germansk jernalders kronologi i Skandinavien og på Kontinentet. *Jernalderens stammesamfund, Fra Stamme til Stat i Danmark 1*. ed. P. Mortensen & B. Rasmussen. Århus, 1988; The Iron Age and the Viking Period. In S. Hvass, B. Storgaard, eds. *Digging into the Past. 25 Years of Archaeology in Denmark*. Århus, 1993, p. 168–170.

rather as its active factor that is employed by individuals and social groups for establishing and solidifying their power.

Aiming at as precise conclusions as possible, the burial material is seen within the context of archaeological monuments. Therefore the detailed analysis of the graveyard material is followed by the assessment of the material from settlements, defensive fortifications and places of sacrifice.

The archaeological material used in this paper is incomplete because the majority of the graveyards have been partly destroyed or their material has disappeared. However attempts are made to analyse all the currently available archaeological material from graveyards on Zealand, in Western Lithuania and the Lower Nemunas. For that purpose, all the material from the graveyards was collected after having studied the reports on archaeological investigations and the archaeological material available at the Lithuanian National Museum, the Vytautas Magnus War Museum in Kaunas, the National Museum in Copenhagen, and the Roskilde Museum. The material from burial grounds in Bornholm, Gotland, Öland, and the Skåne Peninsular is analysed taking into account previously published material and conducted research.

I. Western Lithuania

Roman period graves can be classified by the abundance and exceptionality of burial items found in them. The graves of women dating to the beginning of the period (AD 70 - 150) are rather poor, the largest number of burial items in a grave totals to eight, therefore even several items of jewellery placed in a grave distinguish the dead from other members of the community. Two rich graves of women in the burial grounds of the Lower Nemunas (Dauglaukis grave 4, which contained brooches, a pin, bracelets, rings, and Barzūnai grave 14 that contained a headband, brooches, bracelets, and a bead) and two graves of men, which were generously supplied with both weapons and men's jewellery (grave 41 of the southern part of Kurmaičiai and Barzūnai grave 16) essentially mark a new custom – some members of society were buried in an especially

luxurious manner, which testifies to the stratification of society. The elite began to shape gradually, while societies were undergoing significant changes.

The wealth index of all graves soared dramatically during period C1a–C1b (AD 150 - 260). At the beginning of the period, it became ideologically important for a small layer of the elite to emphasise, in every possible way, its special position in society with respect to other members of society. That is the period of the appearance of a group of particularly wealthy graves bearing symbols of power (the largest number of burial items totalled 16) alongside graves of average wealth which stood out from the rest. The head of a horse and/or its hooves, riding gear, shields with iron shield bosses, a complete set of “male burial items” are considered to be the symbols of men’s status in their graves. The combination of “weapons + jewellery” as burial items is characteristic of the graves of representatives of the highest layer of society. This is the time when they started the tradition of marking horsemen graves. Luxurious head ornaments decorated with brass, impressive breast ornaments such as pins with pendants connected by chains, and/or neck-rings with openwork pendants (category I and II graves), and many other items of jewellery were regarded as the symbols of status in women’s graves. No status symbols have been uncovered in the graves of lower category people, but that does not mean to say that there are no richly equipped graves. Poor graves are the most numerous group of graves; those also contained several burial items.

During period C2–C3 (AD 250 - 350) the number of items of jewellery, as well as the total number of burial items per grave decreased, grave complexes acquired a clearer and more defined structure, and there was a tendency towards stabilisation of societal relations. Eagerness to bury certain dead in a particularly luxurious manner persisted. During this period too, the same items in the graves of women can be regarded as symbols of power. Their appearance somewhat changed though (head ornaments and a luxurious breast ornament made of pins connected by chains). The graves of elite men stand out for such burial items as a shield and/or a battle knife and an especially luxurious set of

“male burial items”, often the head of a horse or riding gear and jewellery. It is obvious that people who enjoyed a high social and/or military status were buried in such graves.

Period D (AD 350 – 450) is marked by notable simplification of women’s graves even though the status symbols remained whereas the graves of men retained the traditions similar to those of the previous period. One of the possible hypotheses is strengthening of a male’s role in social life, which is likely bearing in mind that the Migration period is considered to be highly troublesome all over Europe. During such periods military force is of decisive significance.

A family (a household, a farmstead) which is to be understood not only as a group of people living together who were related genetically but also as a group of persons related by common life and work on a farm rather than by family relations can be considered to be the main unit of society in Western Lithuania. At the same time, genetic family relations were definitely strong. Up to 8–9 people, excluding small children, could have lived in a wealthy and influential family (household). Wealthier families mobilised people of a lower social status.

The woman played an important role in Western Lithuanian society under consideration starting with the beginning of period C1a (AD 150 – 220) (the end of B2 (AD 70 – 150)). Without doubt, during the earlier periods the woman contributed significantly to the wellbeing of the family by her daily work in the household, by caring for children, etc. In the middle of the Roman period the woman assumed an even more prominent role. At the time, when exceptional graves for women were arranged, there was also a tendency to richly bury one representative of the couple which was the nucleus of the household – either a man or a woman. A transition from ritualised symbolising of a family status through a man’s grave to symbolising a family status by burying any one member of the family started at the end of the early Roman period (rich graves of women: Barzūnai grave 14 and Dauglaukis grave 41) and became the norm in the second half of the Roman period. Due to new challenges related to more

active movement of tribes and smaller units during period D (AD 350 – 450), a symbolic reflection of the role of the man in burials probably because of his more influential role in society, became more pronounced; however, this does not imply the dramatic change of the position of the woman in society. Reflecting family wealth by the richly equipped grave of one member of the family and arranging graves for rich children suggest the existence of some sort of an inheritance system where certain ownership rights and the wealth of a certain economic unit can be regarded as the wealth of an individual economic entity rather than that of the entire community. It is likely that the above-mentioned changes were due to the increasingly stronger ownership rights of a family to the land and animals that used to belong to the whole community before.

Investigations carried out in Western Lithuania revealed that richness of a family (a household, a farmstead) and its status in society with respect to other households was marked not only by an exceptional burial of a representative of the couple that formed the nucleus of that household but also by richness and exceptionality of the graves of other members of the family though the latter factor was of less importance. The Dauglaukis burial ground contains a group of graves where several of them were equipped exceptionally richly from period C1a to the end of the existence of the burial ground (AD 250–300); besides, this group had a large number of relatively rich graves. This can lead to the conclusion that the family buried in that part of the graveyard had sufficient resources to provide other family members with valuable burial items. Inter-relations between members of the family (household, farmstead) predetermined the choice of the members of the family to be buried in a more luxurious grave. Some burial grounds (Žviliai) even show the tendency of equipment of other richer graves next to the richest grave of a family. These burial peculiarities merely confirm that the community's elite were given distinction, and that there was some system of inheritance.

Even though the graves found in Western Lithuania made up a group attributed to the elite, an assumption can be made that the elite were not perceived as one

clearly distinguishable “class” of identical people. Representatives of different sexes had different status symbols, which shows that in burial rituals and most probably in real life too, the community sought to underline differences between sexes and social statuses within the community rather than unite various representatives of the elite into one “class”. Horizontal planigraphy of the burial grounds shows that people were buried in groups where graves were close to one another, and the groups of graves belonged to the families that formed the community. Having tested by horizontal planigraphy and having analysed the structure of the burial grounds one can draw an important conclusion that people wished to underline their belonging to a community through burials and most probably in life, too. Some grave clusters were made of many rich graves – those of wealthy and influential families (farmsteads), some of who became prominent and maintained their exceptionality for as long as several centuries, while others lost their prominence in one or several generations. Society was highly unstable and the position of any one family or individual was constantly changing. No burial ground attributable to the elite only have been found; all the burial grounds under investigation should be treated as communal burials; apparently, communal ties between members of the cells of Roman period societies, i.e. families (households, farmsteads) were especially close.

During the whole period that has been chosen for investigation, burial grounds in Western Lithuania were concentrated in three main clusters, which can be interpreted as three major groups of settlements. Having assessed the distribution of rich graves, we see that there are only several burial grounds from period B1–B2 (AD 10–150). The graves from period C1a–C1b show that the majority of burial grounds contained at least one, often several, graves of categories I or II, though there were burial grounds which contained no burials of wealthier families². The majority of the known burial grounds of period C2–C3 (AD 250–300) contained several very rich graves. This distribution of rich

² No such graves were found in Rūdaičiai and Gintarai burial grounds, but these burial grounds were badly damaged, therefore no generalising conclusions can be drawn.

graves in the burial grounds shows that the community buried in each burial ground had its seniors who headed those communities. It is likely that those communities were fairly independent because there are no clear signs of the existence of a central regional power, that is, there are no cases of one or several particularly richly arranged burial grounds found in the area. It seems likely that there were competitive tensions between rich families as to their burial grounds, but there was cooperation between them, too. The concentration of burial grounds in several regional groups testifies to the fact that in case of need separate small communities led by their seniors could pull together and carry out common actions, which most probably were military actions or more distant military or trade trips; they could also construct objects of common importance to several communities of the region. Relative sameness of weaponry suggests the possibility of common military actions.

Settlements material also points to the formation of regional communities, described above, which started during the Roman period. Individual households settled at the foot of fort-hills or even further off fort-hills, closer to farmland being developed. This process gathered momentum in the middle of the Roman period. Life was becoming more stable; people lived in the same location for longer periods of time. Better fortified and enlarged hill-forts fulfilled the function of a social, economic, and religious centre of the community.

With respect to the tendencies of uniting and forming larger units, one must note organisations and centres on the level of local communities in Western Lithuania. Hill-forts located all over Western Lithuania, or at least some of them, are community centres of a local level joining the space of dozens of square kilometres. Crafts were developed, ritual functions were performed in the centres which most often were located on the hill-forts; the communities gathered in those centres for various purposes, a defensive purpose included. A great concentration of Roman coins found in the Aukštkiemiai burial ground, in use from period C2 (AD 250-300), and the existence of generally rich graves there suggest the existence of a trading centre managed by the Aukštkiemiai

elite in the vicinity of the burial ground, which, according to the classification used in the dissertation, can be referred to as a regional centre. There is no doubt, there had to be a location/locations on the coast of the Baltic Sea and/or in the Lower Nemunas, which functioned as marketplaces and craft centres (Aukštkiemiai, Kurmaičiai, Dauglaukis, etc.) and could be called regional centres because of their functions. Archaeological material does not point to the existence of an interregional type centre in Western Lithuania; that is why most likely there was none there.

The second half of the Roman period saw the appearance of favourable conditions that facilitated centralisation of power in Western Lithuania, however, society was divided into regional and territorial communities that had no single concrete and stable centre of power endowed with authority over wider areas, which is proved by similar richness of graves and a very similar number of graves signifying wealthy families in all regions of Western Lithuania. The regional centre was most probably owned by the whole community; it performed many functions rather than served as a residence for the elite and their entourage where tallage used to be collected. Families of the elite must have enjoyed powerful influence on solving regional community problems. Archaeological material, however, provides no proof of ultimate power exercised by a single family.

Although material culture of the Roman Empire was not wide-spread in local communities, exchanges inspired by the needs of the Roman Empire, which affected Western Lithuania through its relations with immediate neighbours, and a well-known lifestyle of Germanic nations had an impact on the economic growth of Western Lithuania. Inspirations for a new material culture, combined with new ideas, perhaps with those of agriculture and cattle breeding, changed Western Lithuanian society, speeded up its consistent development, but played no decisive role in the development of society.

II. Comparative analysis of the islands of Zealand, Bornholm, Gotland, Öland, Skåne and Western Lithuania

The social analysis of South Scandinavian society, irrespective of the research carried out by various authors and based on somewhat different methodology, show that the communities, residents of South Scandinavia, had many similarities but they were not homogeneous and identical; each investigated area had its own individual way of development. Therefore individual areas of South Scandinavia will be compared with one another and with those of Western Lithuania which is farther geographically but still in the same Baltic Sea region. An attempt will be made to prove the correctness of the main hypothesis of the paper that the processes of social development that took place in the Baltic Sea region were all very similar; however, due to various internal and external factors, in some of the areas, stratification could have been more pronounced, complexity greater and ways of social organisation a bit different. The communities under consideration are compared from various angles with an aim to reveal social relations. Comparative analysis is made using the empirical method of comparative analysis proposed by Robert D. Drennan and Christian E. Peterson³ when a researcher moves from the analysis of the archaeological material available to abstract generalisations. This method will help avoid interpretations of incomparable secondary data, which are encoded in general principles of a certain region. It is not only the interpretations of other archaeologists but also the archaeological material that are compared because such comparisons reduce the probability of wrong interpretations.

1. Size and concentration of communities

A discussion about the degree of concentration of South Scandinavian communities during the Roman period should begin with the statement that the

³ Drennan, R. D., Peterson Christian E. Challenges for Comparative Study of Early Complex Societies. *In: Smith M.E. ed. The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies.* Cambridge University Press, 2012, P. 5 – 30. p. 71.

same tendencies are observed in the whole area – transition from isolated farmsteads to more concentrated settlements, reconstruction of buildings in the same location, new building materials used in several locations (stones used on the islands of Gotland and Öland), although those changes took place at different times. Similar changes in social relations occurred in the entire region. Rural settlements existed in South Scandinavia from the beginning of the Iron Age and were built in the areas where isolated farmsteads existed, too.

People lived collectively in settlements and individually on isolated farmsteads in Zealand. So far no more than five simultaneous buildings were found in rural settlements in Zealand, hence the conclusion that settlements were not large. No larger settlements were found in the eastern and central parts of the island where, as graveyard data suggest, a centre of power and wealth was shaping. In the northern part of the island, people lived in smaller clusters; unfenced farmsteads situated on separate hills can be regarded as rural settlements. Burial material indicates that people lived on isolated farmsteads or in small settlements. During the entire Roman period, the dead were buried both in small burial grounds referable to one farmstead and in large burial grounds, the former being much more popular than the latter. Besides, the so-called larger (settlement) burial grounds in Zealand contained about 100 graves, which translate into the size of a settlement of three to five farmsteads. Burial material also points to the changes in the middle of the Roman period – earlier burial grounds were no longer used and new ones were created, some settlements existed during the entire Roman period and longer, others were established in the middle of the period.

Small settlements of three to five farmsteads were discovered in Southern Sweden and on the islands of Gotland and Öland. There were isolated farmsteads there, too, while, on the island of Öland, fortresses were also used as places of residence. A large cultural layer was uncovered in the fortress of *Hässleby*, which is the proof of people having lived there for some time, maybe long and maybe short. Burial grounds were not very large in Öland, Gotland and South Sweden, but they are clearly the burial grounds of a communal type

and were in use for a long time. The dead were also buried in very small burial grounds or isolated graves. In this case burial material and settlements dovetail, too.

Similarly to Zealand, isolated settlements prevailed on the island of Bornholm. They are in a very strange correlation with large burial grounds of Bornholm, which clearly are of a communal type; the dead were buried there for long periods from several to seven or eight centuries, and the number of graves found there totals to one thousand and five hundred but there were burial grounds that contained only several dozens of graves. Therefore it is likely that those farmsteads were not completely isolated. They may have lived in rural-type organisations together with other rural farmsteads as was the case in Zealand. An isolated farmstead most probably meant that the farmstead used the land, which was not integrated into any common land, but, without doubt, the dwellers of those farmsteads took part in joint social, political or legal activities of the rural community close by. This approach to living together and separately can also explain a relationship between the burial grounds in Bornholm and the prevailing isolated farmsteads.

The rural structure reflects the forms of land ownership, though it is difficult to know precisely how that should be interpreted. Sharing of pastures represents the aspect of sociality, though each house had separate cattle-sheds in Jutland, South Sweden and on the islands. The presence of a common fence surrounding an entire village shows a great degree of sociality or, maybe, family relations among those who lived in the houses of the fenced village. From the middle of the Roman period common fences in villages disappeared, with rare exceptions, while neighbouring farmsteads were fenced in separately. The role stone partitions could have had on the islands of Gotland and Öland was the same that fences played on the territory of Denmark and South Sweden. The new practice of fencing can be interpreted as an expression of greater independence, but perhaps the rules of sharing common land and common pastures continued to exist.

Information about life collectively or separately in Lithuania comes from burial material only. The dead were buried in burial grounds containing 100–200 graves. This suggests that the dead of the community consisting of 4–8 farmsteads could have been buried in one burial ground. It is impossible to answer the question of how the farmsteads were located, whether they formed one village, or whether the ties among isolated farmsteads were of economic and other types, just as the ties in Bornholm. What we know is that isolated farmsteads or villages were located at the foot of hill-forts from the beginning of the Roman period. Most probably settlements of the sizes similar to those in South Scandinavia prevailed in Lithuania. Again, we do not know whether people lived in settlements in Western Lithuania continuously, and what the size of the community they resided in was. Most probably hill-forts were used in cases of danger or as gathering places of the people from the settlements in the vicinity during the Roman period; people could have lived in some of the settlements for a long time.

People lived in long houses in all regions of Scandinavia, with cattle-sheds on one side of the house and a dwelling place on the other. Buildings on the island of Zealand, to be more exact, those in the central and eastern parts of the island, differed in their construction from the buildings of other regions. The main difference is that probably there were no cattle-sheds in those buildings because no remains have been found yet. Cattle-sheds were located in separate buildings situated close to dwelling houses. Apart from this main difference, the development of dwelling houses seems to have been very similar in all the areas: during the whole Roman period, the measurements of the majority of dwelling houses grew bigger, which implies that a larger number of people resided in the house. This means that at least a part of society lived in extended families – the families had helpers, which indicated a higher social status of the farmer⁴. In the middle and in the second half of the Roman period, as an economic capacity of the farms increased, new principles of land management

⁴ Herschend, F. *The Early Iron Age in the South Scandinavia. Social Order in Settlement and Landscape*. Uppsala Universitet, 2009. p. 217

gradually developed due to the efforts of the families of the community, that is how the number of farmsteads went down and they became more stable and long-term. During the whole period, however, there were small farms, too, where only close families used to live. The data about settlements in Lithuania is so scant that it is very difficult to speak about changes in the size of houses and the division of its premises. Scant information as it is, it suggests a conclusion that people lived in long houses in Western Lithuania. Cattle-sheds may have been placed in the same or in different buildings; one thing is clear – animals were kept in cattle-sheds there, too, because judging from the kinds of cereal grown then (rye, oats, barley and millet, even several kinds of wheat, horse beans), there was a need for fertilizers. The most economical way of collecting fertilisers was keeping animals in cattle-sheds.

During the late Roman period, the following trend was observed in South Scandinavia – one farmstead most often stood out from others by its size in a rural settlement. The same refers to isolated farmsteads; there usually was one farmstead among several ones situated close to one another that outdid the others by its size. Larger farms in the settlements of the Iron Age speak of social stratification in local communities. Most likely they reflect a certain manifestation of power. It is only burial material that shows social stratification in Lithuania; however, if one draws parallels, one can expect that further studies will result in singling out larger houses and elite farmsteads in the settlements.

By generalising the situation in the Baltic Sea region, one can say that the majority of people lived in small settlements consisting of 3–6 farmsteads, and there were isolated farmsteads, too. This form of life prevailed on the islands of Zealand, Bornholm, and such isolated farmsteads most probably cooperated with one another, so did the farmsteads located in the same settlement. It was during the Roman period that larger and economically stronger farmsteads developed in the whole Baltic Sea region and most probably in Western Lithuania.

2. Regional and local centres

Without doubt, separate rural communities or isolated farmsteads did not exist by themselves, they united (organised themselves) into larger clusters, which had their own centres. The simplest definition of a centre is as follows: a centre was a settlement that had functions which could be vital not only to the people who resided there but also to the people who lived in a larger area⁵. It's natural that settlements could have been the centres of various levels; this depended on whether a settlement was significant to the residents in close neighbourhood only or in a larger area. Pursuing an aim to determine a degree of social organisation, for simplicity's sake, three different levels of organisation are identified, but that does not mean that they were stable, rigid and unchanging. There were local territorial communities with local centres. These were the communities consisting of farmsteads and rural population living in close neighbourhood, with often one single, shared centre. Regional communities were much larger clusters usually covering a part of the region, with a centre where craftsmen, tradesmen, etc. gathered to engage in their activities. Interregional communities were larger regions, clusters covering the entire region, for example, the whole island or a part of a larger area that stretched from several hundred to several thousand square kilometres. It is possible that the higher the level of the community organisation, the less stable the number of communities there; the nature of the organisation was more flexible then. Taking into consideration Western Lithuania's tendencies for uniting into larger clusters, it can be said that organisations and centres of the first level of local communities are more distinct. Hill-forts situated all over Western Lithuania, at least some of them, were community centres of the local level covering dozens of square kilometres. Three communities of the local level with suppositional centres from the early Roman period have been found in Western Lithuania; unfortunately concrete centres have not been identified

⁵ Skou Hansen, A. Centralpladser i romers jernalder. KULM 2003, Årbog for Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab, 2003, P. 179–211. p. 179.

because of the lack of settlement investigations. Crafts were developed and ritual functions were performed in the centres which most likely were accommodated in hill-forts; those centres were used for a defensive function as the communities gathered there when faced with danger. It is somewhat more difficult to distinguish the centres of the other two levels in Western Lithuania. A large concentration of Roman coins in the Aukštkiemiai burial ground, in use from period C2 (AD 250–300), and generally rich graves there lead to the assumption that a trading centre controlled by the elite of the Aukštkiemiai community, which can be referred to as a regional centre, existed in the vicinity of the burial ground. Another possible regional centre in all probability could have existed in the north-western part of the region under consideration, around the Kurmaičiai hill-fort, because a large number of archaeological monuments were concentrated in that area; besides, religious rites were most likely performed in the Kurmaičiai hill-fort, exceptionally rich graves were found in the burial ground. Without going into detailed speculations, one can state that there was a location (locations) on the Baltic Sea coast or in the Lower Nemunas, which functioned as marketplaces and craft centres. Highly impressive locally-made jewellery items such as woollen caps with bronze fittings, breast ornaments with openwork pendants, etc. were discovered in the exclusive graves of Western Lithuania. Those items could not have been made by an unskilled jeweller; this means that they could not have been made in every village, they had to be made in certain places where highly professional masters worked. The fact that such craft centres are not yet known today, in my opinion, is the result of insufficient research of the settlements in Lithuania, anyway such centres did exist. The archaeological material does not provide any information about the existence of an interregional centre therefore I suppose there was no such centre in Western Lithuania.

There is no doubt, the local centres of the first type existed in South Scandinavia. And there is a link between those and the fortified settlements on the islands of Gotland and Öland; in my opinion, they should be classified as type III centres as determined by Lund Hansen on the basis of the burial ground

material from the island of Zealand⁶. Clusters of burial monuments in Skåne and Bornholm may also be treated as the centres of the local level.

Regional type centres can also be found in all South Scandinavian areas covered in this paper. U. Lund Hansen type II centres, such trading centres as *Hørup* in Zealand, *Sandegård* on the island of Bornholm, the strongholds of *Hässleby* and *Eketorp* on the island of Öland, *Havor* on the island of Gotland, and *Lunderborg* on the island of Funen should be regarded as regional centres; without doubt there were many more of them. The centres were the locations where crafts and trade were developed.

Large centres such as *Gudme*, *Sorte Muld*, *Uppåkra* and the farmsteads of their elite naturally had a decisive impact on southern Funen, eastern Bornholm, and south-western Skåne. The centre that was in the district of *Stevens* (a very rich burial ground in *Himlingøje* points to the existence of the centre) should be regarded as an interregional centre on the island of Zealand. The difference between the *Stevens* centre and the other three centres is that the *Stevens* centre existed for a short time whereas the other centres persisted for a longer time. The inhabitants of the *Stevens* centre probably relied on their influential families on the continent and existed as long as it they could control large volumes of import. All large centres are characterised by luxurious imports and prove that they functioned as the venues of administered exchanges; workshops of craftsmen and large amounts of production point to the existence of craft centres there; exceptional cult buildings testify to religious rites performed there; the places where weapons were excavated are usually qualified as weapon sacrifices. They show that people there needed to ensure their security. The *Gudme*, *Sorte Muld*, *Uppåkra*, and *Stevens* centres were controlled by the elite families or chieftains who influenced both, what was going on in the settlements where people and families represented various social levels, and

⁶ Lund Hansen, U. *Himlingeøje - Seeland – Europa. Ein Gräberfeld der jüngeren Römischen Kaiserzeit auf Seeland, seine Bedeutung und internationalen Beziehungen* (=NF, B. 13), 1995.

what was happening in the villages and farmsteads of the whole district and even in more remote areas. It is noteworthy that attempts were made by the centres of interregional type to influence the elite families in more distant areas by giving them special gifts. For example, richer graves than those discovered in the burial grounds located next to the *Gudme* centre were arranged in the areas located even farther than south-eastern Funen. The *Stevens* centre most likely administered the distribution of Roman imports and snake-head jewellery in period B2/C1a–C1b (AD 150 – 260). Perhaps it was an attempt to maintain influence through rich local families by paying for their loyalty and giving them prestigious things which arrived by way of a marketplace controlled by the elite family. As discussed before, the influence of the *Stevens* and *Gudme* centres in different periods varied, and there is no sense trying to establish which of them was the main, and whether there was any one main centre. It is also noteworthy that these centres could have had different impacts during different periods. The highlight of the *Stevens* centre was period B2/C1a–C2 (AD 150 – 300), the influence of the *Gudme* centre grew stronger from period C2 (AD 250–300), while *Sorte Muld* and *Uppåkra*, as the centres of the first level, stood out only at the end of the Roman period.

The classification of the above-described centres as strictly hierarchical structures should not be understood in a forthright manner. It is probable that the centres of a regional type competed with the centres of an interregional type, and rich families who lived there competed among themselves. Constant tensions most likely built up between the centres of the local level. Unstable and varying unions were created, and the centres of all levels had a huge influence in different situations.

As for centre categories, Western Lithuania, Gotland and Öland shared the largest number of similarities. They all had local territorial communities and one or several more or less active centres of a regional type. There is not enough proof that they controlled or exerted influence over the whole territory. On the other hand, one has to understand that even though the *Uppåkra* centre existed in Skåne and the *Sorte Muld* centre in Bornholm, and they both

acquired prominence at the end of the period only, after the impact of the *Stevens* centre had weakened, the whole territory need not have been controlled from one single centre. The thing is that those centres managed to maintain relations with more distant areas, to control trade, and to raise riches they needed for the maintenance and security of the centres. The greatest manifestation of the central power in the form of an interregional centre is found on the island of Zealand from period C1a–C2 (AD 150 – 300) and *Gudme* from period C2–C3 (AD 250–350).

3. Investment into public works

Investment into public works is evident in large structures as they could not be built by a single family. Large structures were definitely different in different regions. Such structures are known today, to a great extent, thanks to archaeological investigations. Roads, for example, were most probably built in all the regions under investigation and are studied in Lithuania much less than in Scandinavia. When making comparisons, it is important to understand what investments society had to make for those various structures to be built.

Some communities, studied in the present work, focused on building necropolises and made great efforts to equip them. For instance, barrows in *Himlingøje* and graves in Gotland, Öland, Bornholm, and Skåne had large stone structures. In some cases transportation of stone called for a lot of effort and workforce therefore larger communities were rallied for the purpose.

Defensive fortifications are best documented archaeologically; they were discovered in all the regions. Defensive fortifications translate into fortifications of hill-forts in Western Lithuania. Hill-forts, equipped in the earlier period, as well as new defensive fortifications, served the purpose in the Roman period. The site of the Kurmaičiai hill-fort was protected from natural disasters on its several sides and was surrounded by a rampart and a ditch on the southern side. In the second half of the Roman period, ramparts were up to 2 meters high. A hill-fort site was protected with the help of a pole construction

with blind external walls: internal walls were often built into the hill-fort site; external walls rested on a small and low rampart on the edge of the site. Defensive ditches were dug behind ramparts in some hill-forts. There were hill-forts with two ditches 3.5–4 meters wide and one meter deep each. Some defensive fortifications were built on level ground (Jakai, Ersla, Kūliai mound in Auksūdis). Those are round ramparts made of stones with gates and surrounded by ditches. The defensive constructions in Jakai⁷ are in many ways, size including, similar to stage I building in Eketorp on the island of Öland⁸.

The community pulled together for building defensive arrangements on the island of Zealand, too. The best developed roads and fords were most probably situated in the environs of the *Stevens* centre. The largest 8–10 meter wide dam across the *Jungshoved* Cove, in Zealand, was made of oak logs placed horizontally and fastened to the bottom. This dam dates back to the end of the Roman period, but similar installations are believed to have existed earlier. *Borgerring* near *Køge*, in Zealand, is another defensive fortification where the site on the hilltop was surrounded by a low and wide rampart (140 m in diameter) and it encloses an area of 1.5 ha; it is dated to the beginning of the Roman period⁹. There were roads in quite a few areas then. A timber track-way discovered in Pajauta valley, in Kernavė, is the proof of roads having been built on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, too.

There were impressive defensive fortifications on the islands of the Baltic Sea. *Rispebjerg* fortifications in Bornholm are made up of approximately 3-meter high ramparts and 2-meter wide dry ditches. The distance between them was 200 metres. *Rispebjerg* covered the area of 4 ha. This fortress is dated to early centuries of our era – AD 200; at about the same time, fortress *Hässleby* was

⁷Jakai fortifications are dated back to the end of the Roman period, during the Germanic period.

⁸ Bliujienė, A., Romėniškasis ir tautų kraustymosi laikotarpiai. In: *Lietuvos archeologija*, III tomas, Klaipėda. 2013, p. 195 -198.

⁹ Christensen, J. Iron Age fortifications In: Boye L. The Iron Age on Zealand. Status and Perspectives, 2011, p. 93–99.

set up on the island of Öland. The rampart of the fortress was 6 meters wide¹⁰. *Eketorp I* fortress founded on the bank of a lake and dated to AD 300–400 is one more fortified structure from the Roman period in Öland. It is a round structure with stone walls; its diameter is 57 metres. The *Store Havor* fortress is an example on the island of Gotland. The walls of the fortress were one meter high and 8 metres wide. The fortress was used from the early Iron Age. The most impressive structure on the Island of Gotland is the *Torsburgen* fortress. It is a two-kilometre long and 15–20 meter-wide limestone wall that was begun in around AD 200. It is estimated that 3000 people would be needed to build such a wall if its construction took a year. Calculations show that it would take from a week to a month for 50 people to build a small defensive fortification with ramparts. And it would take several months and 200 people to build larger fortifications. The construction of all the above-mentioned defensive installations required great mobilisation of workforce and large resources; that is why regional cooperation was needed for building such defensive installations. Cooperation among the community members of one village might have sufficed to build smaller defensive installations.

Skåne is the only territory where no large defensive structures were discovered from the Roman period. Such structures appeared there during the Germanic period. However, we must admit that the community did gather for common work in Skåne because otherwise no large craft centre such as *Uppåkra* would have been erected there.

All the communities under consideration must have been able to pool large material resources for their construction works. The ability to pool resources in society where the family played the major role was one of the indicators of its influence on the surrounding families in the community. A conclusion can be drawn that there were families which managed to mobilise the community with the help of tallage or work done for others and to raise the necessary resources

¹⁰ Sjöberg, M. B. *Ölands järnåldersgravfält. Vol I.*, 1987. p. 430)

in all the regions. Building of such structures and military operations called for very similar mobilisation and distribution of resources, therefore construction works could have been organised in the same hierarchical manner as military operations were¹¹. Hence, all the communities studied in this paper can be treated as complex socio-political organisations. It was only the size of the communities pulled together for a common purpose that differed.

4. Internal and external conflicts

Weapon sacrifices give a more complete spectrum of weaponry than burials in South Scandinavia. No places of weapon sacrifices are known in Lithuania therefore when comparing the weaponry of South Scandinavia and that of Western Lithuania only information provided by burials with weapons are taken in account; however, it does not mean to say that all the weapons were necessarily used as burial items. Interesting information is received as a result of comparing weapons discovered in the places of sacrifice with the graves which contained only parts of the ammunition used by the warriors buried there. This comparison shows that one must be very careful when judging weaponry obtained from graves. The fact that, for example, spears were not placed in warriors' graves as frequently as before in Gotland starting with the late Roman period does not mean that spears lost their popularity in life. Equally, the absence of arrowheads in graves all over the Baltic Sea region does not mean that this weapon was not used.

The early Roman period. Even though different variations can be observed in the graves containing weapons in South Scandinavia, the above-reviewed material shows that all the richest graves with weapons contained swords, shields and spears. This warrior set is sometimes supplemented with spurs. During that period, the best-armed men were buried with a spear and a battle knife, two brooches, rings and a bracelet, or with a spear, an axe, an ordinary

¹¹ Christensen, J. Iron Age fortifications In: Boye L. The Iron Age on Zealand. Status and Perspectives, 2011, P. 93–99. p. 98

knife, two brass brooches and a ring in Western Lithuania. During that period, the difference between military ammunition in Western Lithuania and in South Scandinavia was very big indeed. Only one kind of weapons – spears – was used in both areas. There are no data on either shields or swords in Western Lithuania during that period. Neither do we know about Roman imports or Germanic drinking horns, which signified great luxury and were discovered in Gotland and Skåne alongside weapons. It would be naïve to think that weapons and items of luxury, even though not discovered in the Western Lithuanian graves of the early Roman period, were used there, which suggests very different weaponry traditions on both coasts of the Baltic Sea. Roman swords found in almost every grave of an armed man clearly show that South Scandinavia followed the example of the Roman Empire in terms of weaponry in the early Roman period. A link between the South Scandinavian armed men and the Roman Empire or its provinces and a warrior status in the local community were underlined by placing imported things in their graves. In general, the number of Roman period graves containing weapons is not very big in South Scandinavia. The customs of placing weapons in graves varied from area to area, which is true about each area under discussion and other territories inhabited by German tribes. For example, a sword was among the weapons discovered in all Gotland graves, spurs were placed in graves in Skåne and Bornholm. Those items were not placed in graves in other places, moreover, customs varied within each territory, too. Excavations reveal that one burial ground or one area with several isolated graves had only one or two simultaneously arranged graves containing weapons. It is noteworthy that the graves containing weapons manifested the establishment of the highest social layers and their position in society. The graves with weapons also show the existence of the hierarchy of several highest social layers, which could have represented military hierarchy, too.

Individual weapon sacrifices (*Vimose*; *Esbøl bog*) and very rich isolated graves from the early Roman period, some of them containing weapons, suggest that unions between the chieftains of different areas were created in South

Scandinavia during military conflicts. The ratio of weapons discovered in the places of weapon sacrifices implies that about nine warriors used to report to one chieftain¹². Creation of unions, their maintenance, dissolution, and creation anew were part and parcel of the military tactics of that period. A relatively heterogeneous arsenal of weapons testifies to the existence of small military groups in South Scandinavia at the beginning of the Roman period. Military activities could have been the main occupation of a few men in South Scandinavia.

The material of the early Roman period in Western Lithuania speaks of some men within the community, who were buried with one weapon, a spear, or with several weapons in exceptional cases; in many cases one or several ornaments were men's burial items besides weapons. This combination of burial items in Western Lithuanian society indicates a higher social layer, which took shape when western Baltic society engaged, to a certain extent, in amber trade. The shared societal wealth which could be used to show, by way of rituals (burials, sacrifices), a changing social position was still negligent. Community members mainly subsisted on agriculture therefore men could not go on distant trips because their help was needed on farms, their task was most probably to defend their village. Therefore it is impossible to speak of well-armed military squads, which could make long-distance trips and plundering expeditions in the early Roman period.

Late Roman period. In the middle of the Roman period, the ammunition of a warrior in Western Lithuania did not basically differ from that of a warrior who lived in South Scandinavia. Spears and shields were the most important interregional weapons for the Baltic Sea region. Bows and arrows were used all over the region¹³, however, the popularity of the weapon could have differed.

¹² Steuer, H. Archäologie der Gefolgschaft. In: Burmeister, S.ed.: 2000 Jahre Varusschlacht-Konflikt Stuttgart: Theiss, 2009, p. 309–419.

¹³These weapons were not used as burial items in either region.

The main difference in weaponry between Scandinavia and Western Lithuania was that swords were used more broadly in the former and by chieftains only in the latter; battle knives were often used instead of swords in the Baltic world. The Balts used axes in battles whereas axes were hardly used by South Scandinavian armies, or not used at all. Scandinavian and Baltic armies consisted of the infantry and a small group of horsemen.

An interesting fact is that very similar indicators of a warrior's significance in the military hierarchy were used all over the Baltic Sea region. These were luxurious belts, bandolier and horse bridles decorated with silver and bronze fittings and belt plates. Some international military similarity is apparent not only in a similar technique of decorating belts, bandolier and bridles. Some forms of belt buckles, for example, omega-shaped belt buckles, indicate contacts between South Scandinavia and the western Balts and the existence of common symbols. Those buckles were the most magnificent Germanic buckles copied from their Roman analogues. Such buckles intended for military clothing were discovered exclusively in the graves of Scandinavian warriors, and they were individually manufactured articles. They were found in the *Störlinge* burial ground on the island of Öland, in the places of weapon sacrifices in the marshes of *Thorsbergo* (North Germany) and *Illerup* (Denmark)¹⁴, as well as in the Jogučiai burial ground where, according to other findings, the grave is attributable to a representative of a local community¹⁵. Well-armed warriors were often provided with the following items of personal use: a pocket knife, a fire striker and tweezers both in South Scandinavia and Western Lithuania. The tendency to indicate an exceptional position in society and most probably that in the army with the help of prestigious things is typical of the whole Baltic Sea region. In Scandinavia they were gold or silver rings,

¹⁴ Ilkjær, J. *Illerup Ådal. Die Gürtel*. Aarhus., 1993. p. 73–75

¹⁵ Tamulynas, L. Apie du išskirtinius romėniškojo laikotarpio radinius iš Jogučių kapinyno. *AL*, 6, 2005, p. 83–93.

brooches, items of Roman import; in Western Lithuania they were Roman coins, a large number of usually brass and sometimes silver-plated jewellery.

Weaponries of the communities under comparison became essentially similar during the Roman period. What about the nature of the armies? Ordinary warriors referred to as *pedites* or *armatores* by Tacitus, who can be regarded as a regular professional army because their weapons, were very homogeneous and constituted the largest part of the armies in South Scandinavia¹⁶. A hypothesis with reference to the archaeological material of the late Roman period can be made: Scandinavian armies consisted of warriors for whom military operations were the only source of livelihood during that period. The studies of the South Scandinavian graves, which contained weapons, note an array of well-armed rich graves with the attributes of a warrior characteristic of the military elite. On the other hand, the number of the graves with weapons is not large. Hence, only a small part of male society was warriors. There is no doubt that the influence of the Roman Empire contributed to the change in the nature of Scandinavian armies. From the beginning of our era, there were Germanic warriors who used to serve in the Roman army or get into contact with Romans while fighting against them on the Germanic side. One shouldn't imagine the Germanic army as a stable uniform organism. The Germanic armies most probably consisted of different groups and formations, which were also of various sizes, pursued various aims, and had tasks varying with different stages of their existence. The armies consisted of ordinary warriors and chieftains from various geographical areas, with different experiences and even different cultures; there were also individuals who did not fight in the army – servants, craftsmen, family members, and veteran warriors¹⁷. There is a possibility of the existence of some collective defensive system in a larger area,

¹⁶ Jørgensen, L. The “Warriors, Soldiers and Conscripts” of the Anthropology in Late Roman and Migration Period Archaeology. In: Storgaard, B., ed. *Military Aspects of the Aristocracy in Barbaricum in the Roman and Early Migration Periods*. Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark, 2001, P. 9–19, p. 11.

¹⁷ Pauli Jensen, X. Friend or foe – alliances and power structures in southern Scandinavia during the Roman Iron Age. *Lund archaeological Review*, 2011, P. 35–47, p. 44.

such as a unit. The aim was to protect the shores of the island of Zealand, which was an exceptional area (the *Jungshoved* dam, graves containing weapons in western Zealand, with hardly a custom to place weapons into graves though). Zealand seems to have paid more attention to its preparedness and non-ritual wars, which shows the existence of a centralised defensive system. In Western Lithuania, where almost all males in society were identified as warriors, and where implements used both for military and other purposes were often discovered in the graves together with real weapons, the dead buried with weapons cannot be considered professional warriors. The community needed these men to work on the farm. If all men of the community had gone to long lasting wars, who would have taken care of the harvest, i.e. the source of livelihood? Those men had, in case of need, to protect their village or even a larger territory around a hill-fort. On the one hand, underlining the military function of each man in his grave testifies to the fact that there were no other larger centrally controlled defensive systems, which could have defended ordinary village dwellers in the cases of external attacks; while on the other hand, this suggests a constant threat to every village most probably due to ritual, small-scale wars fought by the newly born local aristocracy and their loyal entourage (Ringtved 1999, p. 377). A very specific group of graves stands out in the burial material of the late Roman period in Western Lithuania (graves containing knives, shields, spurs, bandolier), which are close to the warrior graves of South Scandinavia. This small group in Western Lithuanians could both launch military operations, or take part as mercenaries in military operations organised by others.

Weaponry found in the places of weapon sacrifices hints about conflicts which took place during the Roman period and which involved large areas and many people. Conflicts spread in several directions: East-West conflicts and North-South conflicts. Directions may have been the same for long periods of time, but historical events that led to those conflicts were far from being the same (Martens 2009, p. 170–171). There is ample proof that some South Scandinavian warriors had links with the Roman army where they served as

mercenaries or the like. It is more difficult to know what military conflicts Western Lithuanian warriors took part in. Hill-forts that were situated close to one another and stronger fortifications of hill-forts erected during the Roman period speak of threat. Most probably there were conflicts between neighbouring tribes or even disagreements within the boundaries of the same tribe. The available archaeological material does not facilitate the discovery of any massive invasions from more distant countries at that time. Similarities in the cultures of Western Lithuania and Sambia-Notangia point to constant Lithuanian conflicts with the Sambia Peninsular. Some of those conflicts were of a military nature. The fact is that, with European tendencies having reached Western Lithuania, it started to see exceptional armed warriors in the second half of the Roman period, which proves that either they participated in military conflicts that took place far from their homes, or the attackers were from more distant lands. Horsemen clothing of Western Lithuania shows that horsemen were perhaps the most cosmopolitan members of the community¹⁸; they also belonged to the highest social layers; sometimes they were chieftains, who were constantly engaged in military operations. There were military clashes between Western Lithuania and the Baltic Sea islands in the late Roman period, which is substantiated by the following facts: bandolier and woollen caps were decorated with very similar bronze fittings, people started to wear buckles used on the island of Öland, long spearheads with a profiled feather appeared at the end of the Roman period and later became wide-spread, weapon sacrifices were started in swamps at the beginning of the Germanic period, and there were weapons originating from the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea in the sacrifices in the swamps dated to the middle of the 3rd century (*Esbjøl, Nydam I, Thorsberg, Kragehus*) both on the island of Gotland and in Western Lithuania.

¹⁸ Banytė-Rowell, R. Romėnų įtakos laikai ir baltų kultūrų klestėjimo laikotarpis. In: G. Zabiela, sud. *Lietuvos istorija*, 2. Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2007, P. 25–172, p. 144)

5. Wealth and social differentiation

Social differentiation must have existed all over the Baltic Sea region. However, currently available archaeological material allows us to speak about a different scale of social differentiation in the communities under investigation. There were different internal and external reasons that caused those differences to emerge. In my opinion, one of them was a general amount of wealth accumulated by society. Archaeologically, this can be seen in big treasures, large buildings, rich graves, and a large amount of precious metals, gold in particular, in the region. The concentration of gold, Roman imports and other prestigious things testify to the economic power of society and to a social status. South Scandinavia was undoubtedly more powerful economically during the Roman period; that is why its society was more mature. This does not mean, however, that accumulated greater wealth determined a more pronounced hierarchal social structure in the whole of South Scandinavia as compared with Western Lithuania. Investigations of the alternative forms of social organisations, which started in the 80s, drew attention to the existence of “the Germanic way of production” and slightly hierarchised, in some cases even almost egalitarian, societies of the Iron Age¹⁹ (Hingley 1984; Ferrell 1992; Hill 1995; Moore 2011). Therefore the structures of the communities that resided in different territories of South Scandinavia should not be understood as identical and unavoidably strongly hierarchised. Economic independence might have been the economic priority, a means of preserving the tradition and the community’s continuity, in some communities, and they were not

¹⁹ Hill, J. D. How Should We Understand Iron Age Societies and Hillforts? A Contextual Study from Southern Britain, in Hill, J. D. and C. Cumberpatch eds., *Different Iron Ages: Studies on the Iron Age in Temperate Europe* (BAR International Series 602, Tempvs Reparatum), 1995, p. 45–66; Hingley, R. Towards Social Analysis in Archaeology: Celtic Society in the Iron Age of the Upper Thames Valley (400-0 BC), in Cunliffe, B. and D. Miles eds., *Aspects of the Iron Age in Central Southern Britain* (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monograph no. 2, Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology), 1984, p. 72–88; Ferrell, G. Settlement and Society in the Later Prehistory of North-East England, (University of Durham), 1992; Moore, T. 2011, Detribalizing the later prehistoric past: Concepts of tribes in Iron Age and Roman studies. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2011, p. 334 – 360.

necessarily in the zone of interest of more hierarchised societies that existed in the vicinity.

Established categories in different territories correlate with one another. Both in the early and late Roman period, the island of Zealand differed from other territories. A strong and most abundant highest social layer is clearly identified as compared with other territories in the early Roman period. Representatives of the highest layer declared their power and position first of all through the right to possess and use drinking horns, which most likely symbolised the drinking ritual that was undoubtedly related to the most important decisions adopted in the community and was performed on special occasions. The representatives of the highest layer had other symbols of power – articles of Roman import. While drinking horns could indicate the role of these individuals as community leaders, Roman imports marked their international career, pointed to the relationships of these exceptional families with the representatives of distant lands. The question of the size of the area that those leaders influenced is especially complicated; what can be said with certainty is that they had expanded their power over a much larger territory than that of a single village. An indirect proof is many exceptionally rich graves of that period – the graves were arranged as individual graves and certain landmarks in the local landscape. The area controlled by a single leader did not cover the whole island.

No representatives of society of this level can be found in any other areas of South Scandinavia. The highest social level in those territories is identified, first and foremost, through the graves of very well-armed men; Roman import articles or drinking horns are not necessarily discovered in the richest graves so their owners cannot be regarded as leaders of larger territories. They should be regarded as leaders of villages situated one next to another; their role was definitely related to defending that small territory. The graves of this category seem very homogeneous if judged on the grave material found on the islands of the Baltic Sea, they fall into the category of very well armed warriors,

described above. The conclusion is that the role of a leader of a small territory and of a chieftain on the islands of the Baltic Sea most probably coincided. This hypothesis is partly substantiated by the fact that little attention was given to the graves of women belonging to the same social layer during this period. Neither were there any other exceptional symbols of power.

The early Roman period graves of the highest category in Western Lithuania seem rather poor. Representatives of this layer could not afford to place all weapons they possessed into graves, or perhaps sets of weapons were considerably poorer. Nonetheless, as compared to the earlier period, the graves of the elite started to stand out in the early Roman period. Social stratification, clearly expressed in that area, was making its first steps therefore it is impossible to state whether the new elite could control large areas. One can claim though that the elite of a single settlement, in rare cases the elite of a larger territory, were buried in those graves.

The greatest and most profound sudden changes took place on the island of Zealand and Western Lithuania towards the second half of the Roman period. Changes recorded in burial material of other areas were much smaller. The appearance of several families capable of accumulating huge wealth and of controlling larger areas is recorded on the island of Zealand. In *Himlingøje*, there was a family that managed to win over several neighbouring wealthy families. Here we speak about the family that managed to exert influence on the whole island of Zealand for a long time. Therefore a comparative table presents *I plus* category in the late Roman period, which is difficult to distinguish in other areas. The first identified category is recognised all over the region, this is the horizon provided with imports, luxurious jewellery and weapons, which, in some cases, implies the first category individuals' control over a rural community larger than that of a single village. The representatives of this category clearly controlled larger territories on the island of Zealand, whereas there were only several graves which can be regarded as the graves of the leaders of larger areas on the islands of the Baltic Sea. For example, one of

such graves is grave 1 in the *Slusegård* burial ground, which, apart from a set of weapons, contained articles of Roman import and a golden ring (Rasmussen 2010, p. 79). Exceptional richness of the burial ground shows that this could have been a very special place on the southern part of Bornholm Island in the second half of the *Slusegård* period. *Störlinge Nöra* grave 1 could have been a similar case on the island of Öland; it contained several articles of Roman import, a brooch, a buckle, and a bear's nail, a burial item, which is usually found in exceptional graves. This is an isolated grave located not far from *Skademåse*, an important site of weapon sacrifice. An assumption can be made that a larger family who had influence over at least a part of the island lived somewhere close to the marsh. A similar grave can be found in the *Simris* burial ground in Skåne (grave 1972:2). The grave contained a complete set of weapons, two Roman brass vessels, two drinking horns, and several other items. However, the majority of the graves (with the exception of Zealand) attributed to category I should be regarded as the graves of the leaders of the local community (a single settlement or several settlements located nearby) in all the territories. In that period, the strong elite that controlled large amounts of bronze, as well as the production and distribution of exceptional items, which are symbols of power, resided in Western Lithuania but had no possibility of obtaining large amounts of gold and silver, which was popular in Germanic areas. This should not have created any problems to the nobility of Western Lithuania since bronze played the same role as precious metals did in South Scandinavia. The yellow metal might have been valued more than the white one in that area; besides, bronze might have been easier to acquire. The same tendencies can be traced in singling out the graves of the highest layer of the elite not only by placing a complete set of weapons but also by putting exceptional jewellery into their graves. Some certain shapes of the burial items suggest that the elite of Western Lithuania knew and followed the fashions of South Scandinavia. Although Roman imports reached Lithuania especially rarely, one cannot neglect the fact that one of the graves contained a fragment of an article of Roman import (Kurmaičiai grave 7).

The second half of the Roman period saw the development of a small layer of well-armed men. On the island of Gotland the warriors tried to demonstrate their prominence and distance from the local community by being buried in other burial grounds than the rest of the community members. This, however, is not true in every case as there were other places where warriors were buried together with the whole community. The earlier chapter of this paper characterises the layer as professional warriors. No clear dividing line can be drawn between local chieftains and high-ranking professional warriors; one thing is clear – a small group of men appeared, who spent the greatest part of their time away from home and profited from engaging in military activities. This group of men, though very small, can be traced in the archaeological material of Western Lithuania; these warriors were undeniably linked to the highest layers of society and their communal functions could have varied depending on circumstances.

When comparing the middle social layer in all the areas, we see that the middle layer of the island of Zealand was the wealthiest during the entire period. During the late period there was a rather wealthy middle layer on the island of Bornholm, which even possessed articles of Roman import but, as we know, their exceptional value in society had already been lost. Small amounts of gold were discovered in the graves of this category on the island of Gotland. This social layer grew dramatically and strengthened economically in Western Lithuania, too. The middle layer of the islands of Öland and Skåne seem to have been weaker. Social relations in these communities are believed to have been quite stable and there was no need for this social layer to strongly emphasise its status. The categories were becoming stronger and more homogeneous in all the areas, which presupposes that a certain balance was achieved. At the end of the Roman period, the tendency to reflect a woman's position in society is clearly observed in Western Lithuania. Somewhat similar tendencies are observed on the islands of Öland and Skåne. Representatives of the lowest layers of society were buried in a similar way in all the areas, with scanty burial items or without any. In some locations (this is most clearly seen

in Öland, but applies to other territories under study, too) the lowest social layers were not given individual burials. Besides, it is understandable that society was divided into other layers by age, motherhood, abilities, disability, and many other things.

This leads to the conclusion that differences can be detected between the highest layers of the elite, the Pyramid Model can be applied to define the general structure of social stratification in all the territories under investigation. Hence, all societies of the Baltic Sea region show clear features of stratification in the Roman period, it is only the degree of stratification that differs. The middle and lowest social layers have more similarities than differences in all the regions.

6. Differences in the economy

Economies were different on an individual level, on a family level and on a level of family groups. One of the most distinct economic differences is specialisation of crafts; also, we can speak about the efficiency of agriculture and cattle breeding because economic welfare of the community partly depended on those things, too.

The communities were very similar in what products they manufactured and what their ways of manufacture were in the Roman period therefore labour division must have also been similar – some people engaged in specific crafts, including trade, on the other hand, there were lots of everyday activities such as caring for animals, land treatment and some of the specific crafts described above which each member of the community had to master. Everyday life was most probably similar in ordinary settlements on both coasts of the Baltic Sea.

7. Intensity of relations with the Roman Empire, cultural and other influences

Relations between the Roman Empire and South Scandinavia were different from those of the Roman Empire and Western Lithuania, so was the Empire's

influence on those territories. Denmark, Sweden and the islands of the Baltic Sea, which maintained direct contacts with the area of current Poland, were engaged in exchanging Roman imports as early as the early Roman period. During the late Roman period, the concentration of imports is recorded in several centres: in southern Jutland, south-eastern Funen, eastern part of Zealand, and partly in Bornholm, however, from the very beginning of the transition period, at least until period C3, the island of Zealand performed the function of a filter with respect to Scandinavia. The island of Zealand and later Funen most probably maintained direct relations with the Roman Empire provinces situated along the Rhine. Those foreign contacts affected relations within the community. Distribution of prestigious articles, when the most valuable and rarest ones were left in the centre and more frequently possessed things were given as presents (given over) to lower-ranking individuals as signs of unity or gratitude for the services rendered, enabled the new elite to highlight and strengthen their position. The might of the elite depended on their ability to maintain international contacts, which guaranteed the supply of prestigious articles, and to keep its position in society. The regions which maintained direct contacts with the Roman Empire (through diplomatic gifts, trade, military service) were strongly affected by the Roman way of life, technological progress, aesthetic taste, but preserved their own culture at the same time. One might say that the influence of the Roman culture enriched rather than changed the culture of those societies, and pushed them towards centralisation. Nonetheless the centralised structures, if we interpret the exceptional role of the island of Zealand as a centralised structure, were very fragile and short-lived. Most probably all depended on agreements between many small territories with local leaders who could unite into sufficiently large formations under certain conditions. Those areas of South Scandinavia which did not maintain any contacts with the residents of the Empire or its provinces were clearly impacted by these contacts. Exchanges that were in full swing changed the social structure of the communities, which lived in those territories, enabled them to become stronger economically, created conditions

for craft and trading centres to be founded, strengthened the local elite, and provided a technological and cultural stimulus. We cannot reject a probability that one or another member of society participated in military conflicts. However, there is no archaeological proof that these territories took a sudden leap in their social development during the Roman period. With more hierarchisation, communal relations remained most important, and economic growth gave an impetus to strengthening individual families but did not destroy strong relations between members of any local community, which were the legacy of the earlier periods. This is proved by the burial customs (the burial grounds which existed in the same place for a long time and collective rather than personal use of some golden articles, other lifestyle and world outlook features, which are typical of the islands of the Baltic Sea).

During the early Roman period, trade routes along which Roman articles reached Western Lithuania ran from the mid-Danube basin along the Morava River to the current region of Silesia and further to the lower reaches of the Vistula to Semba and the Lithuanian seacoast²⁰. The significance of southern roads started to decrease due to the disturbances which the Marcomannic Wars brought to continental Europe in the 2nd century. One can observe the growing importance of western continental roads that ran from the Roman provinces of Gallia and Trans-Rhine as well as the seaway that ran from the Port of Fectio in the lower reaches of the Rhine around the Jutland Peninsula to Scandinavia and the islands of the Baltic Sea from the middle of the 2nd century, through the 3rd century. They could have reached the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. Theoretically Romans could have reached the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea by seaway directly without any intermediaries but there are no data available that can either confirm or deny that. Roman articles could have been brought to the lands of the western Balts through intermediaries, the inhabitants of the

²⁰ Michelbertas, M. Prekybiniai ryšiai su Romos Imperija. In: Michelbertas, M., ats. ed. *Lietuvos gyventojų prekybiniai ryšiai I–XIII a.* Vilnius: Mokslas, 1972, P. 5 – 125, p. 65–69; Banytė-Rowell, R. Romėnų įtakos laikai ir baltų kultūrų klestėjimo laikotarpis. In: G. Zabiela, sud. *Lietuvos istorija, 2.* Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2007, P. 25–172, p. 102–103.

Baltic Sea islands and Jutland. Prosperity in the centres on the island of Zealand is responsible for higher significance of the seaway from the middle of the 3rd century. The imported artefacts that came from Scandinavia and local articles made according to the example of Scandinavian articles prove that contacts between the western Balts and South Scandinavia did exist. Western roads made relations between the western Balts and the inhabitants of the Wielbark culture possible. R. Banytė-Rowell states that features of the archaeological culture of Western Lithuania and Masury and the Suwałki-Augustów area lead to the hypothesis about the increased role of the Lithuanian seacoast as an intermediary in relations with the Baltic Sea Germanic people from the middle of the 3rd century and through the first half of the 4th century²¹. In the second half of the 3rd century, great changes in the political and cultural life of Europe happened in relation to turning Byzantium into Constantinople in 330. These changes took place in both the Germanic world and the Roman Empire²². It was during that period that glass vessels and beads made on the northern coast of the Black Sea reached Scandinavia. Contacts between the southern coast of the Baltic Sea and South Scandinavia are witnessed not only by some types of brooches but also by other findings such as a neck-ring with a box-shaped clasp found in grave 1060 in the *Kong Svends Park* burial ground on the island of Zealand²³, an exceptional type of glass vessels (*Eggers 189* type), and some peculiarities of elite burial (for instance, *Himlingøje* burial 1980 and *Wecklice* burial 208), *Pruszcz Gdański* example²⁴. Intensive usage of

²¹ Banytė-Rowell, R. Romėnų įtakos laikai ir baltų kultūrų klestėjimo laikotarpis. In: G. Zabiela, sud. *Lietuvos istorija*, 2. Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2007, P. 25–172, p. 112.

²² Grane, T. Varpelev — Carsium — Constantinople. Contacts across the Barbaricum In: *Abstracts of presentations in the International conference „Northern Barbarians from Scandinavia towards the Black Sea“*, Simferopol, 2012.

²³ Ciešliński, A. Artefacts from the Cemetery at Kong Svends Park with Southern Baltic Connections In: Boye L., Lund Hansen, U., eds. 2009. *Wealth and Prestige: an analysis of rich graves from Late Roman Iron Age on Eastern Zealand, Denmark*. Studier i astronomi, nyere tid, arkæologi; vol. 2. Tåstrup, Kroppedal Museum, 2009.

²⁴ Lund Hansen, U. What about Beads? Glass and Amber Beads in the Late Roman Iron Age – Relations between Scandinavia and the Black Sea? Thoughts about Production and Trade. In: *Abstracts of presentations in the International conference „Northern Barbarians from Scandinavia towards the*

the eastern road that stretched from the coasts of the Black Sea to the Baltic region was driven by the wish of the economic centres of South Scandinavia to maintain relations with the geographical range of Chernyakhov culture in the 3rd century. The late Roman period coins and a part of glass and enamel beads must have reached Lithuania by this road. A comprehensive analysis of glass and enamel beads could help confirm or deny the hypothesis put forward by R. Banytė-Rowell that the Balts could have served as intermediaries in the contacts between the Black Sea and Scandinavia, with the population of the Lithuanian seacoast engaged in this deal²⁵. One might state that the residents of Western Lithuania took part in the exchange process between the Black Sea and Scandinavia and were affected by it.

Western Lithuania either had no or had very rare and casual relationships with the Roman Empire, all information about the lifestyle, military operations, technological achievements there reached the western Balts through various intermediaries, or perhaps even through intermediaries of intermediaries therefore influences in society were not so evident. This does not mean, however, that the exchange system between the barbarians and the Roman Empire had no effect on the inhabitants of the Lithuanian seashore. There is no doubt that they took part in this system as suppliers of amber and other necessary raw materials, which stimulated the economy in a positive way. Moreover, participation in this system ensured constant supply of brass as raw material. However, societies in the European region developed without a strong external impact, which was observed in South Scandinavia.

A different nature of contacts with the Roman Empire and a different effect these contacts had on societies determined a different assortment of Roman

Black Sea". Simferopol, 2013.

²⁵ Banytė-Rowell, R. Dar kartą apie Šernų kapinyną A. Bezenbergerio publikacijos ir užrašų duomenimis. *LA*, t. 32, 2007, p. 9–30.

articles in the areas under investigations. It was important for Scandinavian societies to underline their relations with more distant territories, the Roman Empire and its provinces, by means of the rituals because this was a direct factor of social relations. The society of Western Lithuania had no such necessity. The situation of the elite, particularly on the island of Zealand in Scandinavia, directly depended on their relations with the Empire, while the impact of these contacts was clearly less important on the islands and in Western Lithuania. On the other hand, there are neither Roman vessels that performed a ritual function nor gold and hardly any silver in Lithuania. Were the western Balts really so insignificant, backward simpletons who did not understand the value of items of luxury? The reason might have been quite different. The comparative analysis of the societies presented earlier revealed more similarities than differences in the societies of Western Lithuania and South Scandinavia, the Baltic Sea islands in particular. In my opinion, in the first half and in the middle of the Roman period, the western Balts did not need very many symbols of prestige, which were used in more remote territories. The position of the nobility in Lithuania might have been ensured by their ability to control or guarantee in any other way the import of raw brass. Therefore it was brass and its articles that were most important and in demand in the eastern Baltic region. Attention should be paid to the fact that even during the period when the number of glass and enamel beads that got into Lithuania from the West was really small the wealthiest women used to wear jewellery such as brass necklaces with pendants or brass breast jewellery with brooches, pendants and chains. There are shapes of the jewellery borrowed from Germanic tribes, which is particularly true about the manufacture of the copies of snake-head rings, caps decorated with bronze fittings, symbolism, which show that western Baltic society knew and understood Germanic traditions and customs very well; most probably they knew about the Roman lifestyle too and did not try to transfer the traditions of other nations to all walks of their life and to adapt them in their social lifestyle.

The wide-spread attitude to Roman import in barbarian lands was that Roman articles were “better”, exclusive and exotic, technologically more advanced or pointing to a higher social status of their owner. Did all the communities have this attitude to Roman import? Perhaps not. We should take into account economic independence of the communities of Western Lithuania from trade with the provinces of the Roman Empire due to their geographical position. However, one should understand that free social networks existed in Western Lithuanian society. They were broad enough to ensure the possibility of exchanges with distant as well as close communities. There might have been conscious determination not to intensify the contacts, which shows that, in terms of distribution of resources, the local community and the internally created economic benefit was more important and had more sense to them than strengthening relations between communities.

III. Conclusions

1. Having analysed the burial material of Western Lithuania and the Lower Nemunas and having compared it with other available information about the archaeological monuments of Western Lithuania and the Lower Nemunas, the following conclusions are drawn.

At the beginning of the Roman period, with the elite starting to grow rapidly and important changes taking place in society, in the middle of the 2nd century, it became ideologically very important to emphasise one’s special position in society with respect to other members of society in all possible ways. A group of especially rich graves that bore symbols of power appeared, and moderately rich graves stood out among the rest. It is likely that during period C2–C3 (AD 260–350) relations in society stabilised, grave complexes acquired a clearer, more defined structure, stabilisation of social relations settled in. In period D (AD 350–450) males acquired a more pronounced role in society, which is related to the disturbances that occurred all over Europe during the Migration period.

Judging from the fact that such items as caps decorated with brass, breast jewellery with openwork pendants and chains, the manufacturing of which was time and work consuming, needed skilled labour and was produced from imported metal were placed into the graves of women, the role of a female in society became important in the middle of the 2nd century. When exceptional graves of women appeared, there was a tendency to bury one representative of a couple, the nucleus of the household – either a man or a woman – in a luxurious manner. Hence, the transition from the system where a male's grave was a symbol of a family status to the system where the burial of any family member could be a status symbol, began at the end of the early Roman period (rich graves of women: Barzūnai grave 14 and Dauglaukis grave 41) and became the norm in the second half of the Roman period.

The investigations show that richness of a family/household and its position in society with respect to other households is reflected not only in an exceptional way of burying a representative of a couple that formed the nucleus of a household but also by richness and exceptionality of the graves of other family members, it is also true that less attention was paid to this secondary factor (groups of graves in Dauglaukis, Žviliai burial grounds with exceptionally rich graves next to which there were many other rich graves).

The family's wealth represented by a rich grave of a family member and rich graves of children pointing to the existence of the system of inheritance suggest that certain ownership rights and assets of an economic unit can be regarded as the ownership of an individual economic unit rather than that of the whole community.

Representatives of different sexes had different symbols of their status, which does not mean that representatives of the elite were seen as one "class". Probably it was to underline differences between sexes and different positions in society.

The burial material shows that some families became prominent and retained their exceptionality in the course of several centuries, while others persisted in

one or several generations only. Society was very unstable, and the position of a separate family or of an individual changed constantly.

During the entire period graves were concentrated into three main clusters of burial grounds. Having assessed the distribution of rich graves (as well as the graves of category I and II), we can assume that, during period B1–B2 (AD 10–150), they were typical of several burial grounds only; the graves of period C1a–C1b (AD 150–260) show that the majority of burial grounds contained at least one or several graves of these categories, although there were burial grounds which contained no graves of wealthier families. The majority of the known burial grounds of period C2–C3 (AD 260–350) also contained graves of category I or II, which shows that the community buried in each burial ground had its chiefs who were leaders in those communities. There possibly were competitive tensions between wealthy families, so were between their burial grounds. It is likely that those communities were quite independent because there are no clear signs of the existence of central regional power; there are not any particularly rich burials and burial grounds. No burial ground attributable exclusively to the elite has been found yet, all the burial grounds studied are to be treated as communal burials. The concentration of burial grounds to form several regional groups points to the fact that, if necessary, those separate small communities headed by their chieftains used to unite and carry out joint actions, which most probably were military actions or more distant military-commercial trips. As the weaponry they used was rather unified, they could have engaged in joint military actions.

2. When comparing societies of South Scandinavia and those of Western Lithuania by several chosen criteria, one can see quite a few similarities and some essential differences.

What one can state with certainty is that most often people lived in small settlements consisting of 3 to 6 farmsteads in the Baltic Sea region and Western Lithuania covered in the dissertation; however, there were isolated houses (farms, farmsteads), too. The same pattern of larger and economically stronger

farmsteads coming into prominence is observed in South Scandinavia and Western Lithuania. People lived in long houses one part of which, most probably, served as cattle-sheds in the whole Baltic Sea region. The burial material from the Baltic Sea region suggests the conclusion that the role of a woman in society, the significance of a family (household) and the family's right to ownership were becoming stronger across the region during the whole Roman period.

All Baltic Sea societies exhibited clear signs of stratification during the Roman period; it was only a degree of hierarchisation that differed. The middle and lowest layers of society had more similarities than differences in all the regions. The highest layers of society were the most different. The highest degree of hierarchisation is typical of the island of Zealand, while Western Lithuanian societies were organised in the least hierarchical manner. The Pyramid Model can be applied to define a general structure of stratification in all the areas under study. The Pyramid Model shows that the largest number of society members belonged to the lowest layers of society, consequently, the smallest number of people belonged to the highest levels. South Scandinavian societies most likely perceived the elite as one "class", it was very important to demonstrate belonging to one wealthy family (household, farmstead), which was done by using common *insignia*. In Western Lithuania even the highest layers of society had no such common *insignia*, which means that there was no need to demonstrate the integrity of the elite as a class in society; it was much more important to express wealth that they had and sex differences, which is emphasised in burials.

The communities being compared were very similar as to the products manufactured and the modes of production during the Roman period, therefore it is probable that the division of labour was also similar, there were people who engaged in crafts but there was plenty of everyday work to be done such as taking care of animals and working land; there were some specific crafts which each member of the community had to master, too. It is likely that

everyday life in ordinary settlements slightly differed on the two sides of the Baltic Sea.

The assortment of Roman articles, which reached South Scandinavia and Western Lithuania, varied. Its differences were determined by a different nature of contacts with the Roman Empire and a different impact those contacts had on societies. It was important for Scandinavian societies to underline their relationship with more distant lands, the Roman Empire and its provinces, because that was a direct factor of social relations in those societies. There was no such necessity for Western Lithuanian society. Even though the communities in Western Lithuania had knowledge of the world surrounding them, they did not make much effort to intensify contacts with the distant territories because local communities and the economic benefit created there were more important and had more sense to them in terms of distribution of resources than strengthening of relations between different communities.

During the Roman period both the Scandinavian and the Baltic armies consisted of infantry men and a small group of horsemen. Ammunition of a warrior who lived in Western Lithuania did not essentially differ from that of a warrior who lived in South Scandinavia. The main difference in armament was swords which were widely used in Scandinavia; they were most probably used only by high-ranking individuals (chieftains) in Western Lithuania; battle knives were usually used instead of swords in the Baltic world. The western Balts used axes in battles, whereas axes were hardly or not at all used in the South Scandinavian armies. There were considerable differences between both armies, the very nature of the army differed. One can speak about large, well-organised armies (powerful chieftains who possessed wealth and power and were capable of gathering even a thousand-strong army from surrounding territories) in South Scandinavia, and we see Lithuanian communities that were well-armed most often for the purpose of defending their villages or surrounding areas and a small highest layer of societies which could take part in larger military conflicts that took place in distant lands or in plundering operations.

All the communities under consideration had to accumulate large material resources for carrying out large-scale construction works. Those equalled the amount of resources needed for large military operations. Therefore all the communities under consideration can be regarded as complex socio-political organisations; the only difference between the communities assembled for a common purpose was their size.

By categories of centres, Western Lithuania and the islands of Gotland and Öland had the largest number of similarities. There were local territorial communities with their centres; there was one or were several more or less active centres of a regional type, however, this does not imply that they controlled the territory or had an impact on it. Skåne and Bornholm centres started most probably in the middle of the Roman period and strengthened at the end of the period. This being said, it does not mean that all the territory of the peninsula (island) was controlled from those single centres, rather, these centres managed to maintain relations with more distant territories and to control trade in, accumulate wealth that was necessary for maintaining the centres from, and ensure security for relatively large areas. They can be regarded as strong and influential regional centres. The greatest manifestation of central power is seen on the island of Zealand during period C1a–C2 (150–300) and in *Gudme* in period C2–C3 (250–350). Both were interregional centres.

3. After the comparative analysis of South Scandinavian and Western Lithuanian societies was made, the following generalising conclusions are drawn.

One can hardly find identifications of large centralised social units in Western Lithuania from the Roman period. A place of residence, family, sex, and social position must have been the most common expressions of identity. Burial customs, jewellery and the like should most probably be understood as identifiers of the communities that made up networks of relations. The networks were purposeful: land management, exchanges, a segmented or hierarchal social structure, and identity expressed on a local rather than global

levels. Prestigious articles (more advanced weapons, more beautiful jewellery) were intended for emphasising the status of a leader in Western Lithuanian societies. The status was determined by customs rather than economic relations, which was characteristic of the island of Zealand. During the period under consideration, Western Lithuania witnessed increasingly higher hierarchisation, the processes of redistribution and transition of land from communal to family ownership were gradually taking place, but customary law was still very strongly rooted. Small rural communities had their own leaders, they clustered into local communities linked by hill-forts, cooperated in cases of threats and united for various common purposes, but had no any centralised structures covering larger territories.

The societies of the Baltic Sea islands and Skåne Peninsular can be analysed as the societies at the stage of transition from tribal to new-type regional and territorial communities underpinned by economic relations. New relations manifested themselves clearly in these communities. The elite were taking shape, and even though they controlled bigger riches accumulated from trade, the elite was still very fragile, its positions were weak and wavering. The greatest part of the population was concentrated in small rural communities, which cooperated with one another within the radius of about five kilometres and had one leader. The communities were clustered around the centres controlled by the elite, the latter had sometimes larger and sometimes smaller influence and was able to mobilise large armies and cooperate in building large communal structures. However, there were no centralised hierarchal structures there as the ones that existed in Zealand.

The elite of the island of Zealand can be treated as the one undergoing the process of formation in the early Roman period and as a strengthened elite of a new nature in the middle of the period. The latter had the monopoly of imported prestigious articles and sought to change the earlier model of the community life based on family relations and to create a new system of hierarchy based on economic strength. Prestigious articles were used to create unions and a system of dependence by way of rituals and to legitimise the new

system by transferring it to religion. One of the manifestations of this system in the archaeological material is the arrangement of new burial grounds for the elite separating them from the remaining community. It was close relations rather than competition that were most likely of importance to ordinary members of society in everyday life. Burials in communal burial grounds where households were only insignificantly singled out, hardly singled out indeed, is the best proof of the statement.

The communities that lived in the Baltic Sea region were characterised by a number of similarities; the life of ordinary members of communities did not differ much therefore when considering the aspects of everyday life of the communities, parallels can be easily drawn and conclusions applied to the life of the communities that resided in other regions.

4. Differences in social development which were revealed by way of the comparative analysis of the societies of South Scandinavia and Western Lithuania were predetermined by both internal and external factors.

Hierarchisation of society should be regarded as the main internal factor. The external factors also had a profound impact on these differences. Various impulses from more distant lands that were affected by more intense activities of the Roman Empire reached Western Lithuania across the neighbouring areas since the start of the 2nd century. The inhabitants of Western Lithuania moved to neighbouring and even more distant lands sometimes more and sometimes less actively. The archaeological material does not give any ground for suggesting intensive or permanent contacts among the inhabitants of Western Lithuania and the people who lived on the Baltic Sea islands and/or the island of Zealand, however, we can guess only about the very beginning of such contacts. The spread of the ideas which reached Western Lithuania should be regarded as the beginning of those contacts. The ideas that came from the other side of the Baltic Sea can be seen in the shapes of items of jewellery, in their use, the custom of placing Roman coins into graves, in weaponry, etc. At the end of the 4th century, the situation changed, and more intensive contacts were

maintained since the beginning of the period. The Roman period was the time when the foundations for those contacts were being laid, that was the time when Western Lithuania was gradually moving towards the common space of Northern Europe.

SANTRAUKA

Santykinai didelių teritorijų visuomenių kompleksinė analizė gali padėti suprasti skirtingų regionų vystymosi ypatumus ir nusakyti jų patirtas išorines įtakas. Šiuo metu yra keletas bandymų studijuoti visą Baltijos jūros regioną kaip vienetą, tačiau dažniausiai susitelkiama ties vieno nedidelio regiono tyrinėjimu.

Darbo naujoviškumas yra tame, kad jame remiantis archeologine medžiaga atlikta pirmoji Baltijos jūros regiono visuomenių struktūrų, jų pokyčių bei tuos pokyčius lėmusių priežasčių lyginamoji analizė. Norint atlikti išsamią lyginamąją visuomenės struktūrų ir pokyčių juose analizę, reikia lyginti rezultatus, gautus visą analizuojamą archeologinę medžiagą nagrinėjant pasitelkus tas pačias teorijas ir metodus. Šiame darbe siekiama, išanalizavus kapinynų medžiagą remiantis postprocesinės socialinės archeologijos teorijomis ir tyrimų metodais, įvertinus tyrimų rezultatus kitos turimos archeologinės medžiagos kontekste, rekonstruoti vakarinėje Lietuvos dalyje ir Nemuno žemupyje (Lietuva) bei Baltijos jūros pietinėje pakrantėje – Zelandijos (*Sjælland*) saloje (Danija), Skonės (*Skåne*) pusiasalyje (Švedija), Bornhomo (*Bornholm*) (Danija), Gotlando (*Gotland*) ir Elando (*Öland*) salose egzistavusias romėniškojo laikotarpio visuomenes ir jas palyginti.

Darbo tikslas – surinkti duomenis, juos išanalizuoti ir palyginti rytinėje ir vakarinėje Baltijos jūros pakrantėje romėniškajame laikotarpyje gyvavusių visuomenių socialines struktūras ir jų raidą, remiantis archeologiniais duomenimis. Šiam tikslui pasiekti numatyti tokie uždaviniai: išanalizuoti visą prieinamą Vakarų Lietuvos bei Nemuno žemupio ir Pietų Skandinavijos romėniškojo laikotarpio laidojimo paminklų medžiagą bendruomenių socialinių santykių kontekste; rekonstruoti ištirtų visuomenių stratifikacijos laipsnį, vidinę organizaciją, aptarti atskiras visuomenės grupes ir socialines normas, nustatyti

bendruomenių struktūrų raidą; atlikti lyginamąją nagrinėjamo regiono bendruomenių socialinių struktūrų ir jų kaitos analizę.

Darbe keliamos šios pagrindinės hipotezės:

1. Detali Vakarų Lietuvos ir Nemuno žemupio laidojimo papročių, atspindinčių ideologijos veikiamą ritualą, analizė gali suteikti informacijos apie romėniškojo laikotarpio bendruomenes.
2. Vakarinėje ir rytinėje Baltijos jūros pakrantėje romėniškojo geležies amžiaus visuomenių socialinė struktūra romėniškuoju laikotarpiu nuolat kito, bet visose nagrinėjamosiose teritorijose nuo laikotarpio vidurio matyti aiški bendruomenių stratifikacija.
3. Nagrinjamų teritorijų bendruomenėse vykę socialiniai procesai nebuvo vienodi, net geografiškai netoli nutolusiose teritorijose jie turėjo tiek bendrų bruožų, tiek ir aiškių skirtumų.
4. Skirtingai socialinių santykių raidai įtakos turėjo tiek vidiniai, tiek ir išoriniai veiksniai.

Darbo chronologinės ribos – pirmieji 400 m. po Kr. Tai vienas turtingiausių ir savo raida įdomiausių Baltijos jūros regiono vystymosi laikotarpių, metas, kai baltų ir germanų visuomenėse prasidėjo dideli pokyčiai, kai vienos visuomeninės struktūros palaipsniui virto kitomis.

Metodų pasirinkimą lėmė tiek turima archeologinė medžiaga, tiek postprocesualizmo teorija, kuria bus remiamasi interpretuojant tyrimų medžiagą. Laidojimo duomenys įvertinami trijuose lygmenyse: regioniniame, kapinyno ir kapo. Archeologinė medžiaga analizuojama tiek kiekybinių, tiek kokybinių tyrimų pagalba. Socialiniai turtinei diferenciacijai nustatyti naudojamas vadinamasis radinių tipų skaičiaus (RTS) kape metodas. Pagrindinis darbe naudojamas kokybinis metodas – įkapių kombinacijų metodas, korespondencinės analizės pagalba siekiama nustatyti skirtingas įkapių kombinacijas turinčių kapų serijas. Esant galimybei analizuojamas atskirų kapų grupių išsidėstymas bendroje kapinyno schemeje. Siekiant padaryti kuo tikslesnes išvadas, kapinynų medžiaga įvertinama kitų

archeologinių paminklų kontekste. Todėl detaliai išanalizavus kapinynų medžiagą darbe yra aptariama gyvenviečių, gynybinių įtvirtinimų, aukų vietų medžiaga.

Kiekybiniais ir kokybiniais metodais išanalizavus Vakarų Lietuvos ir Nemuno žemupio kapinynų medžiagą ir palyginus ją su kita prieinama informacija apie Vakarų Lietuvos ir Nemuno žemupio archeologinius paminklus, prieita išvadų, kad Romėniškojo periodo pradžioje pradėjusiam sparčiai augti elitui, vykstant svarbiems pasikeitimams visuomenėje, nuo C1a periodo pradžios pasidarė ideologiškai labai svarbu visais galimais būdais pabrėžti savo ypatingą padėtį visuomenėje kitų visuomenės narių atžvilgiu. Atsirado ypatingai turtingų, valdžios simbolių turinčių kapų grupė, ryškiai išsiskyrė ir vidutinio turtingumo kapai. Panašu, kad C2–C3 periode, santyčiai visuomenėje nusistovi, kapų kompleksai įgauna aiškesnę, labiau apibrėžtą struktūrą, galima pastebėti visuomeninių santykių stabilizaciją. D periode aiškiai išauga vyro vaidmuo visuomenėje, kas sietina su Tautų kraustymosi laikotarpio neramumais visoje Europoje.

Sprendžiant pagal tai, kad moterims į kapus buvo dedami tokie daug darbo, sugebėjimų ir importuoto metalo reikalaujantys papuošalai kaip kepuraitės, puoštos žalvariu, krūtinės papuošalai su kiauraraščiais kabučiais ir grandinėlėmis, nuo C1a periodo pradžios (B2 pabaigos) moters vaidmuo visuomenėje buvo svarbus. Nuo tada, kai atsiranda išskirtiniai moterų kapai, išryškėja ir tendencija prabangiai laidoti vieną iš namų ūkio branduolį sudarančios poros atstovų – arba vyrą, arba moterį. Taigi perėjimas iš sistemos, kai vyro kapas buvo šeimos statuso simbolis, į sistemą, kai statuso simboliu galėjo būti vieno kurio nors šeimos nario palaidojimas, prasidėjo ankstyvojo Romėniškojo periodo pabaigoje (turtingi moterų kapai: Barzūnų k. 14 ir Dauglaukio k. 41) ir tapo norma Romėniškojo periodo 2-ojoje pusėje.

Tyrimai parodė, kad šeimos/namų ūkio turtingumą ir padėtį visuomenėje kitų namų ūkių atžvilgiu atspindi ne tik šio ūkio branduolį sudarančios poros atstovo palaidojimo išskirtinumas, bet ir kitų šeimos narių kapų turtingumas bei išskirtinumas, nors šiam antrajam faktoriui dėmesio buvo skiriama mažiau

(Dauglaukio, Žvilių kapinynų kapų grupės su išskirtinai turtingais kapais šalia kurių yra nemažai kitų turtingesnių kapų).

Šeimos turtas, atspindimas turtingai įrengtu vieno šeimos nario kapu, ir turtingi vaikų kapai, suponuojantys paveldėjimo sistemos egzistavimą, leidžia tam tikras nuosavybės teises ir tam tikro ekonominio vieneto turtą laikyti ne visos bendruomenės, bet individualaus ūkinio vieneto nuosavybe.

Skirtingų lyčių atstovai turėjo skirtingus padėties simbolius, kas nerodo, kad elito atstovai buvo suprantami kaip viena „klasė“. Veikiau buvo siekiama pabrėžti lyčių skirtumus ir skirtingas pozicijas visuomenėje.

Kapinynų medžiaga rodo, kad kai kurios šeimos iškyla ir išlaiko savo išskirtinumą per kelis šimtus metų, kitos – tik vienoje ar keliuose kartose. Visuomenė buvo labai nestabili, ir atskiros šeimos ar individo padėtis joje nuolat kito.

Visame periode kapai telkėsi į tris pagrindines kapinynų sankaupas. Įvertinus turtingų (I ir II kategorijos) kapų pasiskirstymą, matome, kad B1–B2 periode jie yra tik keliuose kapinynuose, C1a–C1b periodo kapuose matosi, kad daugumoje kapinynų yra bent po vieną ar kelis šių kategorijų kapus, nors buvo ir turtingesnių šeimų neturinčių kapinynų. Daugumoje žinomų C2–C3 periodo kapinynų irgi yra I arba II kategorijos kapų, tai rodo, kad kiekviename kapinyne palaidota bendruomenė turėjo savo vyresnius, kurie toms bendruomenėms vadovavo. Galimas daiktas, kad buvo konkurencinių įtampų tarp atskirų kapinynų turtingųjų šeimų. Tikėtina, kad tos bendruomenės buvo pakankamai savarankiškos, nes aiškių centrinės regioninės valdžios egzistavimo požymių, kaip vienas ar keli ypatingai turtingais palaidojimais išsiskiriantys kapinynai, nėra. Nerandame ir tik elitui priskirtinų kapinynų, visus tyrinėtus kapinynus reikia traktuoti kaip bendruomeninius palaidojimus. Kapinynų susitelkimas į kelias regionines grupes liudytų, kad reikalui esant tos atskiros nedidelės bendruomenės, vadovaujamos savo vyresniųjų galėjo susivienyti ir vykdyti bendrus veiksmus, tai greičiausiai buvo kariniai veiksmai ar tolimesnės karinės-

prekybinės kelionės. Bendrų karinių veiksmų galimybę suponuoti ir gana unifikuota ginkluotė.

Lyginant Pietų Skandinavijos ir Vakarų Lietuvos visuomenes pagal pasirinktus kriterijus išryškėja daug tarpusavio panašumų ir keli esminiai skirtumai. Galima konstatuoti, kad disertacijoje nagrinėjamame Baltijos jūros regione, taip pat ir Vakarų Lietuvoje, dažniausiai buvo gyvenama nedidelėse 3–6 sodybų gyvenvietėse, bet būta ir pavienių namų (ūkių, sodybų). Kaip ir Pietų Skandinavijoje, Vakarų Lietuvoje išsiskyrė didesnės, ekonomiškai pajėgesnės sodybos. Gyventa ilguosiuose pastatuose, greičiausiai visame Baltijos jūros regione dalis gyvulių buvo laikoma tvartuose. Baltijos jūros regiono kapinynų medžiaga leidžia daryti išvadą, kad visame regione romėniškuoju laikotarpiu sustiprėja moters vaidmuo visuomenėje, šeimos (namų ūkio) reikšmė ir šeimos teisė į nuosavybę visu laikotarpiu tvirtėja.

Visos Baltijos jūros visuomenės romėniškajame periode rodo ryškius stratifikacijos požymius, skiriasi tik hierarchizacijos laipsnis. Vidurinis ir žemiausias visuomenės sluoksniai visuose regionuose turi daugiau panašumų nei skirtumų. Didžiausi skirtumai gali būti išvelgti tarp pačių aukščiausių visuomenės sluoksnių, neabejotinai Zelandijos saloje atitinkamai matome aukščiausią hierarchizacijos laipsnį, o Vakarų Lietuvoje žemiausią. Visose nagrinėjamose teritorijose bendrai visuomenės stratifikacijos struktūrai apibrėžti gali būti taikomas piramidės modelis, pagal kurį daugiausia visuomenės narių priklauso žemiausiems visuomenės sluoksniams, o mažiausiai – aukščiausiems. Pietų Skandinavijos visuomenės elitą greičiausiai suvokė kaip vieną „klasę“, buvo labai svarbu parodyti priklausymą vienai turtingai šeimai (namų ūkiui, sodybai), kas ir buvo daroma naudojant bendras *insignia*. Vakarų Lietuvoje net aukščiausi visuomenės sluoksniai tokių bendrų *insignia* neturi ir tai galėtų reikšti, kad visuomenė neturėjo poreikio deklaruoti elito kaip klasės vientisumo, daug svarbiau buvo išreikšti turimą turtą ir lyties skirtumus, kurie pabrėžiami laidojimo medžiagoje.

Lyginamos bendruomenės romėniškuoju laikotarpiu pagal gaminamą produkciją, jos gamybos būdus yra labai panašios, todėl tikėtina, kad panašus

buvo ir darbo pasidalijimas, kai kurie žmonės užsiėmė tam tikru amatu, bet vyravo labai daug kasdienių darbų, tokių kaip gyvulių priežiūra, žemės apdirbimas, ir dalis specifinių amatų, kuriuos atlikti turėjo mokėti kiekvienas bendruomenės narys. Tikėtina, kad paprastoje gyvenvietėje tiek vienoje, tiek kitoje Baltijos jūros pusėje kasdienis gyvenimas nedaug kuo skyrėsi.

Romėniškų daiktų, patenkančių į Pietų Skandinaviją ir Vakarų Lietuvą, asortimentas buvo labai įvairus. Jo skirtumus lėmė skirtingas kontaktų su Romos imperija pobūdis ir skirtingas tų kontaktų poveikis visuomenėms. Skandinavijos visuomenėms buvo svarbu apeigomis pabrėžti savo ryšį su tolimesnėmis teritorijomis, Romos imperija ir jos provincijomis, nes tai buvo tiesioginis socialinių santykių veiksnys tose visuomenėse. Vakarų Lietuvos visuomenei tokios būtinybės nebuvo. Tikėtina, kad Vakarų Lietuvoje matome bendruomenes, kurios, nors ir turėjo žinių apie jas supantį pasaulį, nedėjo ypatingų pastangų intensyvinti kontaktų su tolimesnėmis teritorijomis, nes vietinė bendruomenė ir joje sukuriama ekonominė nauda buvo joms svarbesnė ir reikšmingesnė išteklių paskirstymo požiūriu nei ryšių tarp skirtingų bendruomenių stiprinimas.

Tiek skandinavų, tiek baltų kariuomenę romėniškojo laikotarpio viduryje sudarė pėstininkai ir nedidelė grupė raitelių. Vakarų Lietuvoje gyvenusio kario amunicija iš esmės ne daug kuo skyrėsi nuo Pietų Skandinavijoje gyvenusiojo. Pagrindinis ginkluotės skirtumas yra Skandinavijoje plačiai naudoti kalavijai, Vakarų Lietuvoje juos greičiausiai naudojo tik aukštą padėtį užimantys asmenys (vadai), kalavijai baltų pasaulyje buvo dažnai pakeičiami kovos peiliais. Vakarų baltai kovoje naudojo kirvius, o pietų skandinavų kariuomenėse kirviai beveik arba visai nenaudoti. Abi kariuomenės turėjo ir reikšmingų skirtumų, skyrėsi pats kariuomenės pobūdis. Jeigu Pietų Skandinavijoje galima kalbėti apie dideles, gerai organizuotas kariuomenes (labai galingi karo vadai, turintys turtą, galios ir sugebantys iš aplinkinių teritorijų sutelkti net tūkstančio asmenų kariuomenę), tai Lietuvoje matome gerai ginkluotą, dažniausiai savo kaimo ar aplinkinės teritorijos gynybos tikslais, bendruomenę ir nedidelį, patį aukščiausią visuomenės sluoksnį, kuris

galėjo dalyvauti didesniuose, tolimuose kraštuose vykstančiuose kariniuose konfliktuose ar grobstymo operacijose.

Visos nagrinėjamos bendruomenės, vykdydamos didelės apimties statybas, tikrai turėjo gebėti sutelkti nemažus materialinius išteklius, prilygstančius išteklių sutelkimui nemažoms karinėms operacijoms. Todėl visas nagrinėjamas bendruomenes galima laikyti kompleksinėmis sociopolitinėmis organizacijomis, skyrėsi tik bendram tikslui sutelkiamų bendruomenių dydis.

Pagal centrų kategorijas Vakarų Lietuva, Gotlando ir Elando salos turi daugiausia tarpusavio panašumų, čia egzistavo vietinės teritorinės bendruomenės su savo centrais, aktyviai ar mažiau aktyviai veikė vienas ar keli regioninio tipo centrai, bet negalima sakyti, kad jie valdė teritoriją ar darė jai įtaką. Skonės ir Bornholmo centrai formavosi greičiausiai jau nuo romėniškojo laikotarpio vidurio ir sustiprėjo šio laikotarpio pabaigoje, bet tai nereiškia, kad visa atitinkamai pusiasalio (salos) teritorija buvo valdoma iš to vieno centro, tiesiog tie centrai sugebėdavo palaikyti santykius su tolimesnėmis teritorijomis ir valdyti prekybą, susirinkti tokiam centrui išlaikyti reikalingą turtą ir apsaugą iš pakankamai didelės teritorijos. Juos galima laikyti stipriais ir įtakingais regioniniais centrais. Didžiausią centrinės valdžios išraišką matome Zelandijos saloje C1a–C2 periode (150–300 m.) ir *Gudme* C2–C3 periode (250–350 m.), kur egzistavo tarpregininiai centrai.

Atlikus Pietų Skandinavijos ir Vakarų Lietuvos visuomenių lyginamąją analizę, prieita prie apibendrinamųjų išvadų. Vakarų Lietuvoje romėniškuoju periodu sunku įžvelgti didelių centralizuotų socialinių vienetų identifikacijų. Gyvenamoji vieta, giminė, šeima, lytis, visuomeninė padėtis greičiausiai buvo labiau paplitusi tapatybės išraiška. Laidojimo papročiai, papuošalai ir pan. greičiau turėtų būti suprantami kaip apibrėžiantys bendruomenes, esančias santykių tinkle, pasireiškiančiame per žemės valdymą, mainus, segmentuotą ar hierarchinę socialinę struktūrą ir identitetą, išreikštą daugiau vietiniu nei globalesniu lygiu. Prestižiniai daiktai (geresni ginklai, gražesni papuošalai) Vakarų Lietuvos visuomenėje buvo skirti patvirtinti lyderio statusui, kuris buvo nulemtas labiau paprotiniais, o ne ekonominiais santykiais, kaip tai matome

Zelandijos saloje. Nors Vakarų Lietuvoje nagrinėjamu laikotarpiu aiškiai didėjo hierarchizacija, išsiskyrė elitas, formavosi regioninės ir teritorinės bendruomenės, palaipsniui vyko žemės perskirstymo iš bendruomeninės į šeimos nuosavybę procesai, bet paprotinė teisė dar buvo labai stipri. Nedidelės kaimo bendruomenės turėjo savo vadus, būrėsi į vietines bendruomenes, jungiamas piliakalnių, bendradarbiavo iškilus grėsmei ar atsiradus kitiems bendriems tikslams, bet neturėjo jokių didesnes teritorijas apimančių centralizuotų struktūrų.

Baltijos jūros salų visuomenės galima analizuoti kaip visuomenės, esančias pereinamojo etapo iš gentinės į naujo tipo, ekonominius santykius pagrįstas regionines ir teritorines bendruomenes. Šiose bendruomenėse jau aiškiai reiškiasi nauji santykiai, iškyla elitas, dėl prekybos valdantis nemažus turtus, bet jis dar yra labai trapus, jo pozicijos netvirtos, gali lengvai susvyruoti. Didžioji gyventojų dalis telkiasi į nedideles kaimų bendruomenes, kurios tarpusavyje bendradarbiauja maždaug 5 km spinduliu ir turi vieną vadą. Bendruomenės buriasi apie didesnę ar mažesnę įtaką turinčius, elito valdomus centrus, yra pajėgios mobilizuoti nemažas kariuomenes ir bendradarbiauti statant dideles bendruomenines konstrukcijas, tačiau tokių centralizuotų hierarchinių struktūrų kaip Zelandijoje čia dar nematoma.

Zelandijos salos elitą galime traktuoti kaip ankstyvuojančią romėniškuoju laikotarpiu besiformuojantį, o laikotarpio viduryje jau sustiprėjusį naujo pobūdžio elitą, kuris, turėdamas importuotų prestižinių daiktų monopolį, siekė pakeisti ankstesnę su gimininiais santykiais susijusį bendruomenės gyvenimo modelį ir kurti naują, ekonominiu pajėgumu pagrįstą hierarchizacijos sistemą. Prestižiniai daiktai buvo pasitelkti apeigų pagalba kurti sąjungas ir priklausomybės sistemą, naują sistemą mėginama legitimuoti perkeliant ją į religiją. Vienas šio proceso atspindžių archeologinėje medžiagoje yra naujų, elitui skirtų kapinynų steigimas, atsiribojant nuo likusios bendruomenės. O štai eiliniams visuomenės nariams kasdieniame gyvenime greičiausiai svarbiausia buvo ne konkurencija, o glaudūs tarpusavio santykiai. Tai rodo laidojimas

bendruomeniniuose kapinyuose, kur namų ūkiai yra labai nežymiai išskirti, jeigu išskirti apskritai.

Nagrinėjant Baltijos jūros regione gyvenusias bendruomenės turėjo nemažai panašumų, mažiausiai skyrėsi eilinių bendruomenės narių gyvenimas, todėl, nagrinėjant daugelį kasdienio bendruomenių gyvenimo aspektų, galima pasitelkti žinomas paraleles iš kitų šiame regione gyvenusių bendruomenių gyvenimo.

Socialinės raidos skirtumus, kuriuos leido išryškinti lyginamoji Pietų Skandinavijos ir Vakarų Lietuvos visuomenių analizė, lėmė tiek vidiniai, tiek išoriniai veiksniai. Pagrindiniu vidiniu veiksniumi derėtų laikyti visuomenės hierarchizaciją. Ne ką mažiau šiuos skirtumus įtakoję ir išoriniai veiksniai. Nuo 2a. pastebime, kad Vakarų Lietuvos pakrantę per netoliese esančias teritorijas pasiekia įvairūs impulsai iš atokiau nutolusio pasaulio, daug intensyviau veikiamo Romos imperijos. Neabejotinai galima kalbėti ir apie tai, kad Vakarų Lietuvos gyventojai intensyviau, ar mažiau intensyviai judėjo į kaimyninius ir dar tolesnius kraštus. Archeologinė medžiaga neduoda pagrindo kalbėti apie intensyvius ar nuolatinis Vakarų Lietuvos gyventojų ir Baltijos jūros salose ir/ar Zelandijoje gyvenusių žmonių kontaktus, tačiau galime kalbėti apie tokių kontaktų užuomazgas. Tomis užuomazgomis reikėtų laikyti idėjų, kurios pasiekė Vakarų Lietuvą, sklaidą. Iš kitos Baltijos jūros pusės atkeliavusias idėjas galime apčiuopti papuošalų formose, jų naudosenoje, romėniškų monetų dėjimo į kapus paprotyje, ginkluotėje ir pan. 4a pab. situacija iš esmės pakinta, nuo šio laikotarpio jau galima kalbėti apie intensyvesnius kontaktus, o Romėniškasis laikotarpis, tai laikas, kai tiems kontaktams buvo dedamas pagrindas, tai laikas, kai Vakarų Lietuva po truputį judėjo link bendros Šiaurės Europos erdvės.

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