

WARFARE AND POWER IN LATE PREHISTORIC SOCIETIES IN THE TERRITORY OF LATVIA (TENTH TO 12TH CENTURIES)

ANDRIS ŠNĒ

Abstract

The article is devoted to the role of military activities in socio-political developments in Latvia during the Late Iron Age (tenth to 12th centuries). The topics of weapons as prestige items, warrior burials and their relation to the retinue, as well as military symbolism and warfare as the source of power, are discussed on the basis of archaeological material of the Livs, Curonians*, Semigallians and Latgallians.

Key words: social archaeology, warfare, power, Late Iron Age, Latvia.

Introduction

Societies are constituted of several different relations that at the same time function as sources of social power; there are ideological, economic, political and military relationships. These relations are overlapping networks of social activities that are also organized means to achieve political goals. Pre-industrial societies, where political relations are not institutionalized and are based on personal relationships, are formed by three sources of power related to economic, ideological and military spheres (Mann 1986). The social basis of power was different in different ages and societies, so sometimes it was economic, but sometimes military power, that was in actual use. But anyway, these sources of power are just possible strategies for a social group or elite. The realization of power needs a subject, an active individual or agent, who is ready to use the sources of power in his/her strategies in the quest for power. So the following will be an attempt to discuss military activities in their socio-political context, and to look at warfare as the source of power in Latvia during the Late Iron Age (tenth to 12th centuries), during the centuries that partly overlapped and partly followed the Viking Age, when military activities, plundering and war raids were almost part of everyday life. The discussion about the social and political organisation of late prehistoric societies in Latvia has prompted several interpretations, but we will not go into detail here and will consider these societies as chiefdoms (see Šnē 2002b for detailed discussion, questioning the possibility of the organisation of the state in late prehistoric Latvia) (Fig. 1).

Artefacts of warfare and social prestige in Latvia during the Late Iron Age

It was already in the Bronze Age that weapons, besides their utilitarian function, also performed a symbolic role as symbols of prestige and power (see, eg, the article by Andrejs Vasks in the current volume). In Latvia, the Middle Iron Age was the period in Latvian prehistory that was the richest in finds of the weapons (Mugurēvičs, Vasks 2001, pp.233-289). But still it is necessary to recognise that the forms of weapons commonly encountered in graves do not indicate that they were widely used. So, for example, the bow and arrow, rarely found with burials, would have been the most suitable hunting weapon.

It is the spear that, on the basis of burial finds, can be regarded as the most common weapon that could be used both in hunting and in war. Burials with a single spear are sometimes classified as those of semi-free people, while in Scandinavian sagas spear-bearers are often referred to as poor people, though the spear was also the weapon of Odin (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982, p.48). So, in three cemeteries on Dole Island of about 600 burials of Livs, spears have been found with 40 burials as the only weapon in the grave inventory (Šnore 1996, p.116). Many spearheads also occur in the cemeteries of the Gauja Livs (for example, in Pūteļi about 50 examples; Tōnissōn 1974, p.104).

An early feature of Liv cemeteries is the placement of two socketed spears, or one socketed and one tanged spear, in the grave. In the late 11th century, this practice was replaced by a custom of providing a single spear. In the second half of the Middle Iron Age, spears were placed in pairs in graves also in the lands of the Latgallians, but this tradition ends in the Late Iron Age,

* This publications also uses the terms "Curonian" and "Curonians" (editor's note)

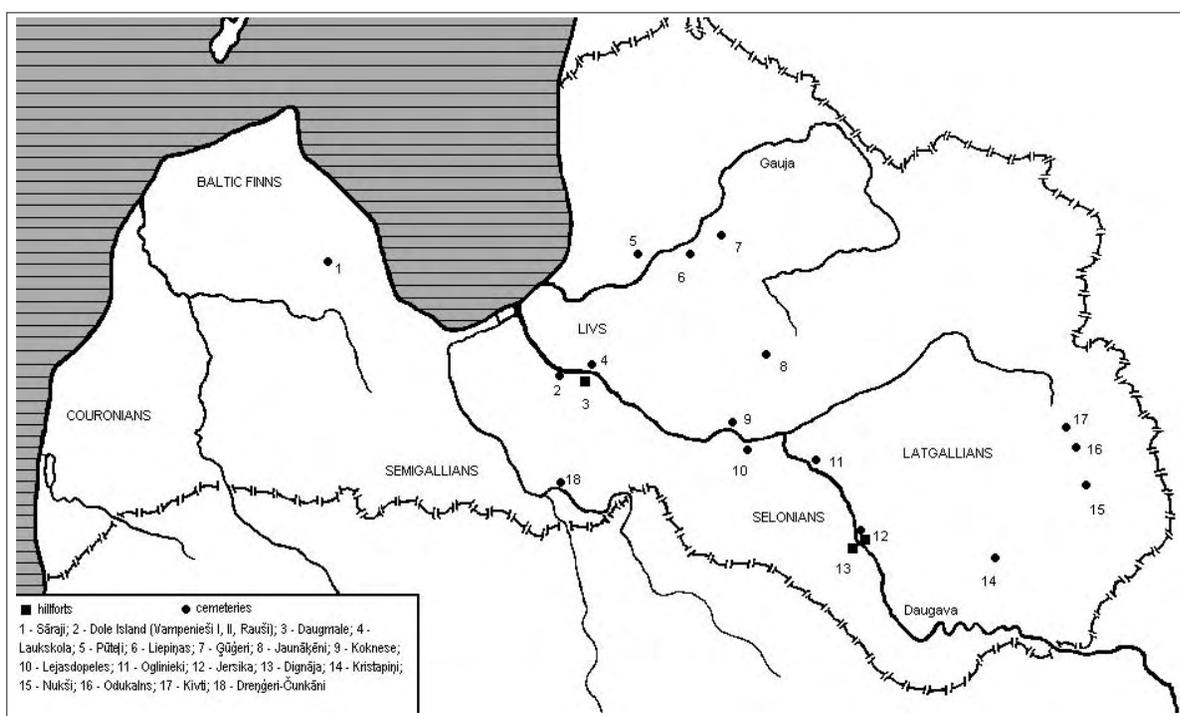


Fig. 1. Sites mentioned in the article.

surviving only in the tenth century (Radiņš 1999, p.107 and 132). However, there is no reason to consider that in the Late Iron Age the tradition of placing a spear in male graves disappeared, although in certain cemeteries the number of spear finds in men's graves from the second half of the Late Iron Age is conspicuously small. At Nukši cemetery, used in the ninth to 11th centuries, single spears were found in only two graves (one ninth and one 11th-century grave), but pairs of spears were found in five symbolic and men's graves at Nukši cemetery, dating from around 800 and from the ninth century (Shnore 1957, p.28). At Kiviti cemetery, spears were found with 24 burials of men, but did not occur with any of the burials of boys during the eighth and ninth centuries (Šnore 1987, p.27). The widely excavated Sāraji cemetery of the Curonians showed a similar situation, for 25 burials (out of 53) contained a spear and even three or four spears per grave were found in some burials (Šnē 2002a, p.140). It was common practice among the Semigallians, too, to put several spears (up to six) in the grave of a dead man (Griciuvienė 2005, p.119). The proportion of burials with more than two spears is the highest in the lands of the Semigallians; so there were three graves with five spears in Dreņģeri-Čunkāni cemetery (Atgāzis 1994).

A widely occurring item of grave furniture is the axe. Narrow-bladed axes were used in the Middle Iron Age. The earliest broad-bladed axes date from the tenth century, and from the 11th century these became the predominant form. Usually, a single axe was placed in each grave. It was calculated that only in 2% of cases was more than one axe placed in a grave in the Lat-

galian gravefields (Radiņš 1999, p.107). Although axes are usually found with men's burials, sometimes they do occur in women's graves as well. At Nukši cemetery, only three men's burials out of 73 had not been provided with an axe, but only one boy's grave contained an axe (Shnore 1957, p.28f.). At Kiviti cemetery, a narrow-bladed axe had been provided among the grave-goods of 78 burials, or 95% of undisturbed graves (Šnore 1987, p.26). Seventy-four undisturbed men's graves at Kristapiņi cemetery contained axes (out of a total of 93; Kuniga 2000, pp.69-71).

It is not possible to unequivocally separate axes used only for work from those serving military needs. For example, the Estonian archaeologist Marika Mägi (2002, p. 89f.) discusses late prehistoric axes from Saaremaa in a chapter on tools, rather than weapons, emphasising that axes do not have a symbolic significance as weapons. In Latvian archaeological research small, highly decorated and light axes, such as, for example, the narrow-bladed axes with a bronze band wound around the haft typical of Latgalian burials, are regarded as battle-axes. Such axes occur in the Latgalian and Selonian area from the eighth century till the turn of the 11th century, and there are 30 such finds in this area (Mugurēvičs, Vasks 2001, p.272). Perhaps also used in battle were small broad-bladed axes of a lighter weight, with a smaller diameter shaft-hole and a thinner blade. In some cases broad-bladed axes have a hole in the blade, evidently used to hang the axe in a sheath. Sometimes these are regarded as axes for horsemen. Ten such "horsemen's" axes, one of which was inlaid with silver, have been found at Gauja Liv

V

THE ROLE OF WEAPONS AND WEAPONRY IN POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP

cemeteries (Tõnisson 1974, p.110). The largest number of battle-axes of all has been found at Odukalns cemetery (12 pieces; Atgāzis 1964, p.122).

A total of 250 broad-axes have been found in Latvia, from 50 sites, making up a fifth of all tenth to 13th-century axes. The largest number of broad-axes comes from Kurzeme (30 sites), and there are no finds from Zemgale (south-central Latvia) or Augšzeme (Atgāzis 1997). In the Latgallian lands, only in some widely researched cemeteries have broad-axes been found. It should be noted that the broad-axe in eastern Latvia has never been found together with the double-bladed sword. The only such case in Latvia is burial 30 at Sarāji cemetery in Kurzeme (Šnē 2002a, p.140). Uncharacteristically, two broad-bladed battle-axes were also placed in grave 95 of Liepiņas cemetery, in addition to a double-bladed sword (Apals, Apala 1973, p.8). It was suggested that the lack of an axe in the grave inventory in cemeteries in Latgale and Augšzeme indicates that the deceased was either an unfree person or an invalid, and that from the 12th century the axe became the weapon of the lower social stratum (Atgāzis 1998, p.18ff.).

But probably the most valuable weapon in late prehistory was the sword. The purchase of a sword was to a large degree dependent on the material means of the potential buyer and the opportunity to purchase it. In the second half of the Middle Iron Age (already from the sixth century) and the Late Iron Age single-bladed swords were used in eastern Latvia. Ģūģeri cemetery has produced five single-bladed swords (Apala 1990, p.21), while only one was found at Koknese cemetery, in grave 83, dated to the tenth century (Žeiere 2002, p.218). At Kristapiņi, single-bladed swords had been placed in the graves of 19 men and three adolescents, dating from around the turn of the tenth century (Kuniga 2000, p.67f.). Kivti cemetery had single-bladed swords in 44 graves, including two graves of boys (Šnore 1987, p.28). There are two regions in Latvia with a large number of double-bladed sword finds: Kurzeme (western Latvia) and the lands of the Gauja Livs. In the 11th century, double-bladed swords began to be made in Kurzeme, and at the close of the century production also began in the lands of the Gauja Livs. Finds of such weapons from Kurzeme number over 120 (Asaris 1994, p.21). In Sārāji cemetery 60% of burials involved a sword. From the Gauja Livs, 24 more or less well-preserved swords are known, as well as around 20 sword blade fragments. But at the same time there are several cemeteries without any finds of either double-bladed or single-bladed swords.

Double-bladed swords are very rare in Latgallian cemeteries, and are usually found in tenth to 11th-century

graves. After the 11th century, double-bladed swords in Latgallian cemeteries occur only as stray finds. Also, only occasional examples of swords are known in the lands of the Semigallians (Griciuvienė 2005, p.119). Three double-bladed swords have been found at Ģūģeri cemetery, and two at Odukalns cemetery (Radiņš 1999, p.134). The double-bladed sword was thus not among the most favoured Latgallian weapons. More common among grave-goods in Latgallian men's graves is the battle-knife, appearing in the second half of the Middle Iron Age and becoming more widespread in the 11th century. At Kristapiņi cemetery, battle-knives come from eight graves of the tenth and 11th century (Kuniga 2000, p.68). Under the influence of the battle-knife, the long single-bladed sword developed in the 11th and 12th century.

Defence weaponry is less known from the burials. So no intact shields have been found in the cemeteries of Latvia. Possible remains of painted shields placed over the coffin have been observed in several graves at Laukskola cemetery (Zariņa 2006). A shield may also have been placed in grave 3 of barrow III at the Selonians' Lejasdopeles cemetery, with a design in black, white, grey and red (Šnore 1997, p.79f.). Double male graves in 17 barrows at Gauja Liv cemeteries had been covered with a common shield, but of this only rivets or nails remain (Tõnisson 1974, p.113).

Iron coats of mail are very rare finds. Several fragments of chain-mail come from burial 40 at Vampenieši I cemetery (a Liv cremation grave). Fragments of chain-mail come from grave 5 at Oglinieki cemetery, a woman's grave, and these may represent an offering. There is a similar find from the grave of a girl at the Latgallian Liepiņas cemetery (Radiņš 1999, p.83). Fragments of chain-mail have been found in two graves at Koknese cemetery, as well as in Sārāji cemetery.

Considered as linked to a higher social status is the so-called warrior's armband, possibly indicating an affiliation to a military retinue. In fact, however, armbands were more widespread, particularly in the tenth century, which is the date for 47% of warriors' armbands in men's graves and 81% of those in children's graves. The number of warriors' armbands differs from cemetery to cemetery: at Kristapiņi cemetery, warriors' armbands occur in 31 men's and nine boys' graves. By contrast, only a single warrior's armband has been found at Lejasdopeles cemetery. The earliest warriors' armbands date from around the year 800 or the early ninth century, and these armbands went out of use in the late 11th and early 12th century (Radiņš 1999, p.132). Burials with warriors' armbands are always also provided with weapons: an axe, dagger and spears, sometimes also a sword. Possibly, the warrior's

armband is an instance of the wider spread in society of what was originally a prestige item (a process that could have taken place in the tenth century), remaining a century later only as a relict of prestige and a status indicator.

The mace is regarded as the insignia of a chief, or baton, evidence of the user's high social status. Maces have only been found in eastern Latvia, and this may be explained in terms of the influence of ancient Rus in this region. Tenth to 11th-century metal maces have not been found in Latvia, so it may be that during these centuries wooden clubs were used as weapons. It should be added that wooden clubs are unlikely to have fulfilled the sociopolitical function of the mace. Maces with a metal head came into use in Latvia around the turn of the 12th century, and a total of 12 maces have been found, dating from the 12th to 14th century (Atgāzis 1999).

Thus, even this very brief overview of the weaponry used in Latvia during the Late Iron Age shows that weapons were an important and meaningful part of life and death; often the weaponry influenced the possibilities to realize different (including social and political) aims. But, at the same time, weapons were not cheap products, and therefore the possession of these items was closely linked with the material positions of the individual, although weaponry was among the most widespread gifts in the lands of northern Europe, too. In Viking Age Scandinavia, to possess power meant the ability to attach and maintain some group of warriors with the help of gifts and raids. Exchange and plunder were the ways to get prestige items, that might include rare and imported items, as well as cattle, jewellery and also weapons, so these items served both military and social functions. Several groups of weapons, probably, might be considered prestige goods and indicators of social rank, like imported silver and gold-plated weapons, and rarely found artefacts, for example, double-bladed swords, maces and battle-axes. The manifestation of weapons in burials is a feature characteristic of societies either with recently established social and political structures or with structures in transformation. So, we have to recognize the different cultural, social and political impulses, traditions and meanings of the weapons found nowadays in burials. So the widespread tradition of putting spears and axes in burials might reflect the Iron Age tradition of burial rites, but at the same time signifying that everybody was very close to warfare and even involved in military activities (so it was the ordinary way of life encountering war raids).

Warfare and social organization: chiefs, commoners and retainers

The anthropologists, archaeologists and sociologists involved in research into prehistoric chiefdoms and early states have often remarked that warriors and other military factors might have a primary importance in the emergence of complex social organisations (like chiefdoms and early states). Warfare forms both territorial structures and the power base; it is a means for assimilation and/or integration of territories, but mostly for people subjected to new forms of domination and governance (Earle 1997, pp.105-110). The basis of military power lies in the need to organise physical defence and its utility for realising aggression. Military organisation mobilises violence, which becomes particularly important and even decisive in times of warfare. The potential of military power is also limited by the spatial factor, since violent coercion on everyday issues requires a presence, and the further away the military force, the weaker its influence and the more negative the result (Mann 1986, p.25f.). Warfare is an attempt control by force the raw material/subsistence bases and the surplus production on which the political economy of chiefdoms is based (but at the same time military power is limited in the spatial aspect). One of the chief's functions and main tasks is to ensure the defence of followers, receiving from them payment of dues in return. Researchers almost show a conformity of opinions that warfare was an essential characteristic of chiefdoms, although there is a remark about the differences between simple (weak institutional power) and complex (structured and institutionalized power) chiefdoms. So if the first involves chaotic military activities and it allows a strong power base for the military leaders, then the latter is connected with warfare as a mean of conquest and subjection of neighbouring lands (Earle 1997, p.108ff.; Mann 1986, p.25f.). Although military forces can create a broad and integrated polity, they can just as well disrupt it, directly or indirectly turning against the chief. Thus, the significance and role of a warrior stratum in the course of social evolution can differ radically. Secondly, warfare does not necessarily ensure the institutionalization of the power hierarchy; it only creates real threats, and acts as a stimulus for particular social and political activities.

Studies of military archaeology use different kinds of evidence, but mostly these are weapon burials, hoards and fortifications (see, for example, Harke 1997). It is not an easy task to determine the character of military organisation or military tactics on the basis of archaeological evidence. It would be too simplified an approach to consider every weapon as an indication

V

THE ROLE OF WEAPONS AND WEAPONRY IN POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP

of professional soldiers, and therefore it looks useful to distinguish warriors and soldiers. If the latter are professional, the first have a potential function to be involved in military activities; it was a necessity or opportunity that let a man become a warrior.

However, for the study of the meaning of military service it would be important to determine the proportion of burials with weapons and those without. In eastern Latvia the traditions regarding the placement of weapons in graves during the course of the study period exhibit both chronological and spatial differences. In the second half of the Middle Iron Age, weapons occur as regular grave-goods in Latgallian men's graves. Significantly fewer weapons occur in Latgallian burials of the Late Iron Age. At Koknese cemetery a set of weapons consisting of a broad-bladed axe and a socketed spear was found in 14 graves, while a set comprising a broad-bladed axe, a socketed spear and a knife occurred in 13 graves. By contrast, at the contemporaneous Jaunākēni cemetery, a set consisting of a broad-bladed axe and a socketed spear was observed in only seven graves (Šnē 2002b). All in all, the number of weapons in Latgallian graves fell during the Late Iron Age, although the overall proportion of burials remains similar. In Liv cemeteries, weapon finds in graves continue right up to the time of the Crusades, and their amount does not decrease sharply at the end of the Iron Age. So items of weaponry (swords, axes, spears) were found in 70% of burials in Laukskola cemetery. Similarly, the graves of Curonians contain an impressive quantity of weaponry: every male was buried with at least some weapon in Sāraji cemetery.

Weapons also frequently occur as grave-goods with child burials. Often the weapons found in the graves of boys are smaller, and, it seems, made specially for immature users. The amount of weaponry in child graves decreased significantly in the course of the Late Iron Age. So weapons were found among the grave goods in 19 boys' burials in Vampenieši I cemetery, and in 17 boys' burials in Kiviti cemetery, while in the cemeteries of the late tenth to 12th centuries there are only a few such burials (for example, four in Koknese cemetery, two in Nukši cemetery). In the Latgallian area, widespread warriors' armbands (a total of around 300) have also been found in about 30 boys' and ten juvenile graves. There are even some cases of such armbands provided for infants (Radiņš 1999). Although often considered an axiomatic truth, the presence of child burials with adult artefacts does not indicate inherited social status. Finds of weapons in child graves show that children and youths were introduced at an early age to (at least) the basics of military activity. It should be noted that such a picture emerges over a large area of Europe in the Merovingian Age, from Scandinavia

to Lombard Italy (Jørgensen et al 1997). However, this by no means indicates that a stratum of warriors had formed in these areas by this time under the influence of the unstable social circumstances.

An interesting feature of Iron Age cemeteries is the symbolic graves without traces of a body but containing several grave goods. Symbolic graves appear in Latvia in the Viking Age, and possibly had a close connection with the heightened level of military activity at this time. For this reason, there is no foundation for regarding them as the graves of people who had died far away. Most likely, these are graves for individuals who had died under circumstances that made the burial of the body an impossibility, for example cases of drowning. The simple burial practices also suggest the possibility that death was accidental, rather than taking place under socially important conditions. Symbolic burials are often explained as those of warriors killed in foreign lands, as additional graves or as means of redemption from guilt or death (Radiņš 1999, p.33). It has also been suggested that they fulfilled a legal obligation of burial with honour, so that the soul of the deceased should find peace (Zemītis 2002, p.28). Of course, it should be borne in mind that soil conditions may cause the bones to disappear without leaving any trace. At none of the cemeteries do symbolic burials occupy a particular area; rather, they are distributed throughout the cemetery. As a rule, symbolic burials exhibit a grave inventory that is traditionally characteristic of male burials: a spear, an axe, sometimes also a sword. Interestingly, such graves at Kristapiņi cemetery date from the late eighth and the turn of the ninth century, the time of the formation of the community.

The number of burials with weapons at the cemeteries of Late Iron Age Latvia is sufficiently great overall to permit the idea that military activities were of major significance in the late prehistoric societies of the study period. As we have seen above, different kinds of weapons were accessible to all the members of society, while some weapons (in limited numbers) reflected either the wealth or the power of their owners. So in particular communities we may expect to find also military formations, retinues constituted by relatives and followers of the chief. Ornate belts with metal mounts often served to distinguish members of the military retinue. These were introduced into ancient Rus along with the development of a professional military stratum (Radiņš 1996, p.37). Belt mounts are a characteristic feature at cemeteries in Kurzeme. The belt mounts appearing in the tenth century include rectangular plaques, and in the 11th and 12th century mounts in the form of hollow buttons and crosses also occur. More common among the Livs than among the other peoples inhabiting Latvia are mounts with zoomorphic designs

of Scandinavian origin, as well as eastern floral motifs (Zariņa 1988, p.52f.). At certain Latgalian cemeteries (Odukalns and Kristapiņi) belts have been obtained with tinned bronze mounts that have parallels with motifs found in the Eurasian steppe, and could have been imported from ancient Rus (Radiņš 1999, p.86).

At Koknese cemetery belts with metal mounts were found on more than 50% of men's burials, while at Jaunākēni cemetery the number of burials with belts with metal mounts does not even reach 20% of men's burials. Leather belts, belt buckles and metal mounts found in boys' graves are similar to those found in men's graves. At Laukskola cemetery leather belts occurred in 30 out of 86 boys' burials, and two thirds of these were decorated with bronze mounts (Zariņa 1988, p.53). Thus it looks as if these belts were rather an element of clothing and there is no reason to relate the ornate belts to the retinue warriors (although some social and material values might be ascribed to these items).

Similarly, the question regarding the existence of a mounted retinue remains open. Although armed riders had held an important social status from around the time of Christ, they became particularly important in the fifth and sixth centuries, when, with the development of professional, full-time fighters, ordinary infantry soldiers began to lose their role (see Vaitkunskienė 1995). But in the Late Iron Age only a small proportion of graves contain horse-trappings (a different situation might be in the western part of Latvia, as these items were found in half of male burials at Sāraji cemetery). At Kristapiņi, horse-trappings occurred with nine burials dating from the tenth or early 11th century (Kuniga 2000, p.72). Few finds of horse-trappings come from the cemeteries of the Gauja Livs, but certain such finds are quite elaborate, for example the silver-plated bridle-bit with a floral design from Pūteļi cemetery (Tõnisson 1974, p.117). At the same time, the symbolism and importance of the horse are reflected in other artefacts, too. So, it is rather this small amount of the horse-trappings that might be related to the formation of a new social group of professional warriors that used different military provisions.

In view of the proportion of burials with weapons in the cemeteries of Latvia, we may assume that some form of military retinue was in existence in the societies of this region. It is doubtful whether military retinues had developed already in the Middle Iron Age: at this time fighting was probably a universal duty and a right, and a precondition for the continued existence of society when its members entered new territories. However, in the Late Iron Age, in any but mostly in the Couronian and Liv communities, a particular section of society

may have separated from the rest, connected with the chief through military activity. However, it seems unlikely that warfare would have been the only activity of this social and quasi-professional group. To meet subsistence needs, it also had to engage in economic activity. Possibly, the military retinue as a military support group for the chief consisted of the chief's relatives and friends, as well as debtors and individual supporters, who formed the society's military elite and in case of need was a rapidly mobilised force. And it may be that this military stratum was, in terms of membership, at least partly separate from the economic and spiritual leadership of society and represented a different ideology with the means of military symbolism.

Warfare and ideology: tracing emerging military symbolism

Already in the Bronze Age (see Kristiansen 1989), chiefs demonstrated their power and superiority in novel ritual spheres which were under their control, and by acting as military leaders, utilising their access to the weapons and military technology that they also controlled. Thus, military activity is closely connected and interwoven with the ideological sphere. In the Late Iron Age horses occupied an important place in the ideological world-view of the inhabitants of the Baltic, too (Zemītis 2004, pp.86-102). Horse burials rarely occur together with human burials in Latvia. An example was found near burial 28 (a cremation grave) at Jersika cemetery (which has, however, been interpreted in terms of the influence from the inhabitants of Lithuania). Thus, the horse burial cannot be directly connected with members of the military retinue (although horse burials in Merovingian Central Europe are explicit indicators of rank, namely, the aristocracy; Jørgensen et al 1997, p.107). However, in the Late Iron Age, figurines of riders used as pendants appear as a new form of artefact. For example, four armed rider pendants have been obtained at Daugmale and in the surrounding area (Radiņš 1992, p.123). The role of the horse is also attested to by metal belt mounts with a representation of a horse (for example, burial 24 at Jersika cemetery; Kalējs 1940, p.28).

It might be suggested that miniature weapons found in burials contained a military meaning, too. They are not usual grave goods, although in Viking Age Scandinavia miniature weapons occurred quite seldom (Zeiten 1997). Such weapons, mainly axes, may have been symbols of social rank, although they could equally have served as amulets. From Daugmale hill-fort there are also 13 miniature amber axes, all except one of which were made according to the form of local metal axes (Radiņš 1992, p.122).

V

THE ROLE
OF WEAPONS
AND
WEAPONRY
IN POLITICAL
AND
MILITARY
LEADERSHIP

Thus, a new ideology was developing in late prehistory (or else the pre-existing perception of the warrior's place in the world was being modified), with new rituals and symbols connected with warfare. It may be that to some extent it was the influence of Scandinavia and the consequences of the Viking Age that caused ideas to change and raised the warrior's position in society (although such features relate more to Couronian and Liv societies, the Latgallians tending to retain the previous views). Just as individual Finns took part in Swedish expeditions to the east (Masonens 1996, p.23), it may be that, for example, Livs and Latgallians also accompanied Scandinavians on distant raids. The experience thus obtained and the power vacuum in the Baltic Sea area in the 11th and 12th century allowed the coastal chiefdoms to go on the offensive against the Scandinavians, and so the direction of their activities in the post-Viking Age was opposite to that of the Viking Age.

A large number of burials with weapons can indicate a degree of aggressiveness in society, although such aggressiveness may be balanced by other social factors. The buildings and construction of space could be a ritual and political activity, too, used as a means to level aggressiveness and at the same time also to ritualise the warfare. For example, we may look at the defence fortifications of the hill-forts. Altogether, over 450 hill-forts are known in Latvia, and about 200 to 250 of these may have been used in late prehistory. Hill-forts became particularly important in the Late Iron Age, when their number increased: new fortified sites were established, and in the early part of the Late Iron Age major reconstruction and fortification work was undertaken at several settlement sites in Latvia, particularly the hill-forts.

Among the well-known hill-forts with a rather typical fortification system is Daugmale hill-fort which was established on a natural promontory where the Varžupīte stream enters the Daugava. The plateau is one of the largest in Latvia, covering 3,800 square metres (105×65m). The defences consisted of a seven-metre-high bank with a covering of clay. On the bank was a double defensive wall, the two separate walls of which were connected by perpendicular walls at two-metre intervals. During the Late Iron Age the defences and buildings of the hill-fort were rebuilt four times. In the Late Iron Age the bank of Daugmale hill-fort was increased in height by more than four metres (Zemītis 1996). A site of great importance in the Late Iron Age was also Jersika. When habitation began at Jersika hill-fort in the ninth century, a bank was thrown up on the western side. In the 11th century the bank was strengthened with a revetment of horizontal logs and chambers, and in the first half of the 12th century a double

palisade was erected on the inside, with a distance of one metre between the two fences (Vilcāne 2004). Possibly, the rise of Jersika is linked to the decline in importance of Dignāja hill-fort (which is located just on the opposite bank of the river) and the assumption of the latter's functions.

Overall, the hill-forts of Latvia that were in use in the second half of the Middle Iron Age and during the Late Iron Age are characterised by major building work, with the establishment of new hill-forts and the adaptation of previously inhabited sites. The creation of hill-forts was not only a military or functional activity with practical consequences: hill-forts were also symbolic sites, and the choice of site and the defences were determined by the topography and geography of the area in question and by the political strategies of the societies, expressing their power and might in the fortifications.

All of the above creates the impression that late prehistoric societies in Latvia were fairly militarised. Sometimes societies are described by the term "militarised society", the main features being as follows: the leaders of the society/state are also the commanders-in-chief of military forces; there is no clear difference between fighters and civilians; all free adult males have the right to bear arms; there is a military element in the education of youth; war and weapon symbolism predominates in social and private life, also involving the glorification of military values and heroes; and warfare is the principal means of obtaining economic values, organised by the ruling strata (James 1997, p.19). Not all of these features apply in full to late prehistoric societies of Latvia, but there is no doubt that warfare held an important place in the everyday life of society, especially in the social and political sphere. Military activities cannot explain competition for social status: warfare was rather an instrument on the route to power, used both by chiefs and by those who aspired to chiefly power.

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KARAS IR VALDŽIA VĒLYVOSIOS PRIEŠISTORĒS (X–XII AMŽIAI) BENDRUOMENĒSE LATVIJOS TERITORIJOJE

Andris Šnē

Santrauka

X–XII a. bendruomenēse tuo pačiu metu egzistavo keletas skirtingos socialinės svarbos šaltinių, pagrįstų skirtingais ryšiais, kurie buvo atpažįstami kaip ideologinių, ekonominių, politinių ir karinių santykių ryšiai. Šie ryšiai pasižymėjo socialiniu aktyvumu, kuris taip pat buvo orientuotas siekti politinių tikslų. Priešindus-

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THE ROLE
OF WEAPONS
AND
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IN POLITICAL
AND
MILITARY
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trinės bendruomenės, kur politiniai ryšiai nėra institucionalizuoti, yra grindžiamos asmeniniais tarpusavio santykiais, suformuotais trijų pagrindinių šaltinių: valdžios, susijusios su ekonomine, ideologine ir karine sferomis.

Straipsnyje nagrinėjami vėlyvajame geležies amžiuje (X–XII a.) Latvijos teritorijoje vykę kariniai veiksmai bei jų socialinis-politinis kontekstas ir karas kaip valdžios šaltinis. Šis laikotarpis iš dalies sutapo, iš dalies truko po vikingų laikų, kai plėšikavimas ir kariniai išpuoliai buvo vos ne kasdienio gyvenimo dalis. Vėlyvajame geležies amžiuje naudotos ginkluotės (randamos Latvijos teritorijoje esančiuose kapuose) nagrinėjimas rodo, kad ginklai buvo svarbi ir reikšminga gyvenimo bei mirties dalis; ginkluotė dažnai turėjo įtakos galimybėms realizuoti įvairius (įskaitant socialinius ir politinius) tikslus. Turima ginkluotė jos savininkus rodė buvus geros materialinės padėties, net jei ji buvo gauta kaip dovana, kas tuo metu buvo labai populiari Šiaurės Europoje. Kelios ginklų grupės, matyt, buvo prestižiniai į kapus dedami daiktai, rodantys asmens socialinę padėtį, panašiai kaip ir importiniai ar sidabruoti bei auksuoti ginklai ir retai randami dirbiniai, pavyzdžiui, dviašmeniai kalavijai, buožės ir kovos kirviai. Aki-vaizdu, kad kapuose randami ginklai yra arba neseniai nusistovėjusių socialinių ir politinių struktūrų, arba pasikeitimus išgyvenančių bendruomenių struktūrų būdingas bruožas. Taigi mes turime suprasti skirtingus šiandien kapuose randamų ginklų kultūrinius, socialinius ir politinius postūmus, tradicijas bei jų reikšmes. Plačiai paplitusi tradicija į kapus dėti ietis ir kirvius gali būti laikoma geležies amžiaus laidojimo papročiu, bet kartu gali reikšti, kad mirusysis buvo labai arti karo įvykių ar net dalyvavo kariniuose veiksmuose. Kai kurie požymiai rodo, kad iš aptariamojo regiono bendruomenės narių būdavo formuojamos kažkokios valdovo ar vado karinės palydos. Abejotina, ar karinės palydos formavosi viduriniame geležies amžiuje. Gali būti, kad tuo metu dalyvavimas kovose buvo pareiga bei teisė ir prielaida bendruomenėms, gyvenusioms aptariamajame regione, išlikti. Vėlyvajame geležies amžiuje tam tikra kuršių ir lyvių bendruomenių – nors ne tik jų – dalis gyveno atsiskyrusi, tačiau dalyvavimu kariniuose veiksmuose palaikė ryšius su vadu. Tikėtina, kad karas šiai socialinei – lyg ir profesionalių karių – grupei buvo vienintelė veiklos sritis, kurioje ji dalyvaudavo.

Pragyvenimui reikia užsiimti tam tikra ekonomine veikla. Gali būti, kad karinė palyda, kaip karinė vado paspartis, susidedanti iš jo giminaičių ir draugų, taip pat skolininkų ar šalininkų, formavo visuomenės karinį elitą, kuris prirėkus tapdavo mobilia karine jėga. Gali būti ir taip, kad šis karinis sluoksnius laikui bėgant iš da-

lies prarado ekonominę bei dvasinę įtaką visuomenei ir įgavo kitokią karinę paskirtį.

Taigi visa nagrinėjama medžiaga kuria išpūdi, kad aptariamojo laikotarpio Latvijos bendruomenės buvo ganėtinai militarizuotos. Kartais tokios bendruomenės apibūdinamos terminu „militarizuotos bendruomenės“, kurių pagrindiniai bruožai yra: bendruomenės/valstybės vadas kartu yra ir kariuomenės vadas; nėra aiškios ribos tarp karių ir civilių gyventojų; visi laisvi suaugę vyrai turi teisę nešioti ginklą; ugdant jaunimą visuomeniniame ir privačiame gyvenime vyrauja karo ir ginklų simboliai; šlovinamos karinės vertybės ir herojai; principinė karo reikšmė: tai yra būdas valdančiajam sluoksniui įgyti ekonominių vertybių. Ne visi šie bruožai buvo būdingi aptariamoms bendruomenėms vėlyvajame geležies amžiuje (X–XII a.), bet nekyla abejonių, kad karas kasdieniame gyvenime užėmė svarbią vietą, ypač socialinėje ir politinėje srityje. Karinis aktyvumas negali būti aiškinamas vien konkurencija dėl socialinio statuso, karas greičiau buvo instrumentas kelyje į valdžią, naudojamas ir vadų, ir tų, kurie labiausiai troško valdžios.