

THE ECONOMY AND SOCIAL POWER IN THE LATE PREHISTORIC CHIEFDOMS OF EASTERN LATVIA

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the economic structure of chiefdoms' socio-political organisation, and the role of the economy in constructing and maintaining social and power relations in Latvia in the middle and late Iron Age.

Key words: economy, chiefdom, production, farming, craft, Middle and Late Iron Age.

Introduction: the economy as a source of power

Both economic and social relations are closely tied in different forms. Production is a social process to satisfy the material needs and wishes of people, but human efforts through production change the environment and transform the natural world into a social construction (Gosden 1989: 355), so economic activities participate in the emerging inequality of society and wealth and power structures. Different views have been expressed concerning the general framework and labelling of the character of the political structure in east Latvian societies during later prehistory. In Marxist historiography, which tended to view the Late Iron Age as the early Middle Ages in Latvia, social organisation was connected with the so-called military democracy and the transitional period to the feudal state (it was considered that, for example, in eastern parts of Latvia, state-like formations had already emerged; Moora 1952: 119; Mugurevich 1965: 122; Tõnisson 1974: 172). Contrary to this, and using anthropological schemes of social evolution, late prehistoric societies have recently been interpreted as chiefdoms (Šnē 1997; 2000; 2002). Actually, the term "chiefdom", since its invention in Western anthropology in the 1950s, has survived many interpretations and attributes, but is nevertheless widely used (especially in evolutionary trajectories of social development) to characterise a very broad range of societies somewhere between segmentary societies and early states. In these evolutionary schemes, chiefdoms are considered to describe complex pre-state and pre-industrial societies that are regional polities with a prestige goods economy, monumental buildings, redistribution, a political hierarchy of sites and persons, and other characteristic features (Service 1962; 1975; Renfrew & Bahn 1996: 166–169). But we have to bear in mind that the development of state societies is not the intentional aim of a human population, and societies

fluctuated all the time in terms of social dynamics. Of course, these very general terms do not describe political and social relations in practice, so they can only be used as a point of departure and a general framework that has to be followed by a study of the way in which different structures of societies existed.

This article deals with the economic structure of chiefdoms' socio-political organisation, the role of the economy in constructing and maintaining social and power relations in present-day Latvia during later Prehistory, that is, the period known in the chronological scheme of Latvian archaeology as the end of the Middle Iron Age (AD 600–800) and the Late Iron Age (AD 800–1200), the end of which saw the start of the Crusades and the introduction of feudalism in the Eastern Baltic region. More extensively excavated are sites in eastern Latvia from this period that allow us to focus attention on this region. From the seventh century, eastern Latvia was populated by the Latgallians; their material culture is evidenced in widely excavated cemeteries such as Odukalns, Kristapiņi (over 300 graves in each were excavated), Nukšas (more than 200 graves), Kivti, Ģūģeri, Liepiņas (with about 150 graves), etc. Selonian culture later developed on the left bank of the River Daugava (where they left Lejasdopeles barrow cemetery, with about 40 excavated graves), and from the tenth century the Livs settled along the lower courses of the rivers Daugava and Gauja. Cemeteries like Liepenes, Pūteļi and Priedes, with large numbers of mounds, are attributed to the Gauja Livs, while in the lower reaches of the Daugava the Livs left Laukskola cemetery (with more than 600 excavated graves) and the complex of three almost simultaneous cemeteries on Dole Island, Vampenieši I and II and Rauši, where almost 500 graves have been excavated. Those mentioned above, of course, are only some, but the more widely archaeologically excavated or researched cemeteries; the number of excavated cemeteries in eastern

Latvia is about two hundred. Alongside the cemeteries of local communities, archaeological excavations on a different scale on a number of habitation sites have been carried out. So among the well-researched hill-forts of the Latgallians are Jersika, Dignāja, Asote, Oliņkalns, Koknese and Madalāni, while in the area of the Selonians excavations took place on sites like Stupeļi and Sēlpils hill-forts and the Krīgāni settlement. Habitation sites of the Livs are mostly studied on the basis of material from the Daugava Livs' settlement sites, like Laukskola, Rauši and Kābeles, but their material culture also dominates in Daugmale hill-fort during the Late Iron Age.

The economy is one of the foundations of human society; it involves different activities of people. It is used to distinguish two groups of goods produced, subsistence goods and wealth. According to Brumfiel and Earle (Brumfiel, Earle 1987: 4), subsistence goods include everything that is necessary to satisfy the everyday survival needs of a household, while wealth is made up of goods and values used in rituals and exchange, as well as specific and rare means of subsistence. The value of these goods is defined through social position and regional or long-distance trade. But both subsistence goods and wealth play some, but a different, role in possessing and defining social status, as well as being concerned with the construction of power relations.

Power relations have only recently been reexamined in archaeological discourse, but it actually also belongs to the other social sciences. It was the studies of Michael Foucault that put questions about power back again into the focus of social theory. Very often, power is defined by the intentions and will of humans, it has been viewed as the ability to achieve the proposed results. Max Weber understood power as the ability that allows some individual to realise his will in social relations independently of the resistance to these intentions (Clegg 1989: 72–73). Some social theorists connect power to capacity and abilities, while others link power to the realisation of power and the act of power. For Giddens (Giddens 1999), power is the ability to get results independently of the interests of particular classes and strata; power is the means to do something, and as such it is directly involved in the action of the human agent. Action and agency are mutually connected to power; without power there is no action, and vice versa. Foucault (Foucault 1980; 2000) characterises power as a particular technique, which, due to its normative features, achieves and realises strategic goals; power is neither institution nor structure. Power and the way it acts are historically specific; as power is created by everything, then power is everywhere. Power can be understood as multiply organised, hierarchical and coordinated relations which are connected and intercon-

nected with other forms of relations, for example, kin, production, etc. Mann (Mann 1986) puts forward his idea about society as a network of organised power. He distinguishes four sources of social power: ideological, economic, military and political power, the last of which was absent in prehistoric pre-state societies. There is no simple and common scheme of sources of power for all societies; there were different sources of power active in different societies and ages. Also, sources of power do not mean the realisation of power; it is necessary to have the presence of both, objective situation (sources of power) and agents, active individuals who attempt to change the situation with the help of sources of power.

The basis of economic power lies in the need to organise access and control over resources, including both those necessary for subsistence and those used for surplus production and exchange. Needs for survival are satisfied with the help of social organisation, through the collection, transformation and redistribution of production. Generally, there are two trends in analyses of the economic basis of political actions. Marxists stress control over the process of production, while followers of Weber emphasise the organisation of economic exchange and trade. The emergence of forms of exchange transforms them into the social fact that contains the potential for the possession of power. So economic organisation involves different stages, like production, redistribution, exchange and consumption (Mann 1986: 24–25).

The maintenance of power is expensive; it demands material input, services and time. In Prehistoric societies, the economy was tied to ideology; according to Bourdieu (1977: 191), economic power also needs symbolic capital and symbolic violence too. Economic sources of power are directly connected with economic specialisation, and its relationships with the subsistence economy. Economic aspects of the institutionalisation of power touch the monopoly of subsistence resources, the production of prestige goods, and their exchange and trade.

The subsistence economy and social relations

Control over economic processes is the way towards the direct material control over people. Earle (Earle 1991) distinguishes ten political strategies of chiefs, and as the first he stresses the control of the elite over the subsistence economy. Land was the basis of the subsistence economy for hundreds of years since the introduction of farming; arable land was still of the greatest importance in medieval Europe. For most so-

cieties in Latvia, farming was the main branch of the subsistence economy, as is evidenced by finds of both seeds of cereals and farming tools in habitation sites, as well as in burials among the grave items. There is hardly any settlement site or hill-fort where during archaeological excavations farming tools such as sickles, scythes, hand millstones and stone querns have not been found; there are also some finds of iron ploughshares (mostly in the basin of the River Daugava) and hoes (a tool more characteristic of the Semigallians). Some buildings of flour-mills were uncovered in some settlements, for example, Mārtiņšala, Kābeles, Laukskola settlements, Sēlpils and Madalāni hill-forts (Daiga 1973: 33; Mugurēvičs 1975: 69; Šnore, Zariņa 1980: 32; Urtāns 1984: 100).

Due to the essential role of farming in the subsistence of local societies, the question about the owners of arable land becomes very important. Soviet historiography (reflecting the political ideology, but without archaeological evidence) suggested that in the Late Iron Age land was inherited, while there were still pastures, forests and waters left under the control of the local community (Moora, Ligi 1969: 29). New aspects of property would show the study of fossil field systems that has also started recently in Latvia (see Ritums 2000 for a contemporary survey of the research). It is too early to speak about the results, but it seems that different forms of property existed during later Prehistory in Latvia. According to the "local laws" codified in the 13th century, a gradual transition from collective property to private in Latvia had started before the Crusades (Blūzma, Lazdiņš 1998), so probably there was a multiplicity also in forms of landowning.

The other important branch of the subsistence economy was stockbreeding. Like farming tools, different artefacts related to stockbreeding are found in almost any excavated habitation living site. So, for example, in the Mārtiņšala settlement, 30 shears were found (Mugurēvičs 1974: 58). Among the most common tools are spindle whorls made from stone, clay, bone and other raw material. So 56 spindle whorls were found in the settlement at Stupeļi hill-fort (Stubavs 1978: 65), 40 were found in Sēlpils hill-fort (Šnore, Zariņa 1980: 34), while in the western part of Jersika hill-fort, more than 90 spindle whorls were found (Mugurēvičs, Vilcāne 2000: 100). The remains of a hearth in the Kābeles settlement preserved a complex of about eight or nine spindle whorls; actually this settlement site was extremely rich in such artefacts (Daiga 1973: 31).

The bones of domesticated animals form the greatest proportion (about 70% to 90%) of osteological evidence found in all habitation sites. So, for example, in the Asote hill-fort, bones of domesticated animals

formed 71.9% of all the bones (Šnore 1961: 93-94). There are different proportions of domesticated animals in different sites. In materials of the late Middle Iron Age, at Ķente hill-fort, with the surrounding settlement, bones of cattle dominated (about 55%; Stubavs 1976: 84); but in Jersika hill-fort, more than half the bones of domesticated animals belonged to pigs (Vilcāne 2001: 68); while in Asote hill-fort they formed 72% of bones (Šnore 1961: 93). Bones of pigs formed about a third of bones in Rēzekne hill-fort (Mugurēvičs 1985: 69); they were also dominant in material from the hill-forts of the Selonians, Sēlpils and Dignāja (Mugurēvičs 1977: 49; Šnore, Zariņa 1980: 168). In some other sites, the proportion of bones of pigs and cattle is similar or close to that of Oliņkalns and Lokstene hill-forts (Mugurēvičs 1977: 43, 89). In the excavated settlements of the Livs, for example, at Laukskola, Rauši and Mārtiņšala, the majority of bones found belonged to cattle and pigs, and it was the bones of pigs that usually formed the greater proportion of the bones of domesticated animals there (Mugurēvičs 1974: 57; Šnore 1991: 77; Zariņa 1973: 84).

Anthropological studies of pre-industrial societies put forward the idea about the political meaning of feasts where the main provision was pork. Feasts were organised by the leading kin or chief, and they served as a means of creating and/or maintaining political alliances, as well as prestige. The amount and proportion of bones of pigs found in archaeological contexts were connected with feasts and socio-political competition in Prehistoric and early medieval Britain also (Bradley 1984: 64). As has already been mentioned, the bones of pigs are very often the greater part of bones of domesticated animals in late Prehistoric sites in eastern Latvia. So probably one way to use the surplus of stockbreeding was competing feasts containing also a socially and politically symbolic meaning.

Agricultural tools are not too common among grave items, but, as well as exchange and trade utensils, they are the only tools found in burials (if we do not consider warfare as a profession in Prehistory represented by weaponry). Craft tools, for example, are always absent in burials. Shears are usually placed in the female graves, but in a couple of burials in the Vampenieši I and II cemeteries their finds are attributed to the male graves (Šnore 1996: 126). Sickles are found already in seventh and eighth-century burials, as is evidenced, for example, in the Kalnieši II and Kalnabrics cemeteries (Šnore 1993: 26; Urtāns 1962: 52-53). There are several late Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age cemeteries of the Latgallians and the Selonians in which female burials contained sickles, for example, Jersika, Beteļi, Skripti, Aizkalne, Ģūģeri and other cemeteries. It is not often that sickles and shears are put in the same

grave, as, for example, in burial 71 of Koknese cemetery. Also, sickles in some cases are found in male burials. In the Nukšas cemetery, sickles were found among the grave items of a (male?) cenotaph from the tenth century (Shnore 1957: 30); the eighth-century male burial 14 of Kivti cemetery also contained sickles (Šnore 1987: 29); and these tools were also put in male burials in Ģūģeri cemetery (Apala 1992: 10). It should be noted that the tradition to put agricultural tools in burials in eastern Latvia was not so common, and developed as it was in the lands of the Curonians (in western Latvia), where, for example, up to five scythes have been found in some male cremation burials in the Late Iron Age cemetery at Sārāji. It is hard to connect the farming tools found in burials with positions of important social status or power, so probably these artefacts were put in graves in favour of the subsistence wealth of the deceased, or due to some personal skills or abilities performed during the lifetime.

The other branches of the subsistence economy, like fishing, hunting, beekeeping and gathering, during later Prehistory had a secondary role. Hunting (usually fur-bearing animals) was closely related to exchange, as furs were among the most important goods of import. Eastern areas of Latvia and Lithuania were the richer fur regions of the Eastern Baltic (Moora, Ligi: 1969: 22–23). In more distant areas, these branches of the economy still had a great importance, for example, the population of the settlement on an island in Lake Krīgāni mostly dealt with fishing (Stubavs 1980: 95–96). Also, in the economy of the Livs, fishing was among the most important economic activities, probably due to their situation close to the Bay of Riga and the rivers Daugava and Gauja.

Economic organisation in chiefdoms is usually characterised by redistribution. Food resources collected by the chiefs could be used in several ways to maintain the social and political positions of the chiefs. Following Dodgshon (1995: 108), it is possible to distinguish four aspects of the political use of the subsistence economy. First, food is given out as a gift, it enabled a feeling of dependency of members of the kin and/or community. Second, if chiefs had control over fertile land, the rent could include cattle that were later used as, for example, dowry wealth, leading to the conducting of political marriage alliances. Third, and very important, was the consumption of food in feasts. Fourth, it was a central element to maintaining the retinue, that would allow the minimalisation of the amount of farming activities among semi-professional warriors.

In the context of redistribution, the presence of the so-called storage pits may reflect the limited influence of the chiefs over the subsistence economy. These pits

served for the storage of food resources (such as grain), drying corn, and other activities. Storage pits are identified in several habitation sites, for example, in the Asote hill-fort (Shnore 1961: 85), but they were very common among the Livs. About 30 such constructions were found in the Rauši settlement (Šnore 1991: 75), while more than 100 storage pits were uncovered in the Laukskola settlement. The largest ones covered an area of up to two by two metres, and reached about 1.5 metres' depth (Zariņa 1973: 82–83). So probably subsistence resources were only partly distributed among members of society with the help of the chief, but the other part of production was left to the disposal of the individual households or kin.

Crafts and craftsmen in social networks

A lot of attention has been paid to different aspects of craft specialisation in Prehistoric societies. Although some craft specialisation could be found already in the Middle Iron Age, it was the later part of the Iron Age when we can distinguish quite clearly different branches of economic specialisation. Almost every excavated site contains some evidence of metallurgy and iron-working, as well as jewellery production. These are traces of workshops, half-made artefacts, tools with a special function and purpose, common features of local artefacts that show and prove the existence of specialised craftsmen.

Special tools, as well as workshops, are evidence of iron-working. Iron-working took place in both settlements and hill-forts, as remains of smithies have been uncovered in Daugmale, Aizkraukle, Oliņkalns, Asote, Dignāja, Jersika, etc, hill-forts, and in Spietīņi, Rauši, Rīga and other settlements (but the number of sites where the tools of smiths have been found is much higher). In the Rauši settlement two deposits of smith's tools that were dated to the second half of the 11th century and the 13th century were found during excavations. One of them consisted of about 40 artefacts, including tools and production (Daiga 1971). There were quite often several smithies identified per site, for example, in Asote hill-fort and the Rauši settlement (Shnore 1961: 97–100; Šnore 1991: 78–79). In Asote hill-fort, three or four workshops of jewellery production were recognised, and part of them goes back to the tenth century (Shnore 1961: 105), while in Oliņkalns hill-fort two such workshops from the second half of the 11th century were found (Mugurēvičs 1977: 44). Six workshops were uncovered in the Rauši settlement (Šnore 1991: 78–79), but there usually the tools or pieces of raw material can be used to show the existence of specialised craftsmen.

It seems that other branches of crafts were usually still organised on the domestic level. But due to the introduction of the potter's wheel in the tenth century, pottery also moved towards a specialised branch of the economy, at least in the areas along the River Daugava. Despite this, as late as the 12th century there was still hand-made pottery in use. Some kilns have been identified in several hill-forts and settlements, for example Asote, Aizkraukle and Daugmale hill-forts and the Rauši settlement (Shnore 1961: 109; Šnore 1991: 83; Urtāns 1967: 42; 1974: 75). In Tanīskalna hill-fort, a footwear-making workshop with an amount of cuttings of shoes was found (Balodis 1928: 37). According to research by Anna Zariņa (Zariņa 1970; 1988; 1999), weaving was done on a domestic level until the 11th century in the area of the Livs, and until the 12th century in the area of the Latgallians. It seems that amber, wood, horn and bone specialists had also emerged in some cases. So nine tools for wood carving were found in the Mārtiņsala settlement within a house's foundations (Mugurēvičs 1974: 56), but a deposit of about 25 kilograms of raw amber was found in the Kābeles settlement in the cellar of a house (Daiga 1973: 33); a raw amber deposit was also found in Daugmale hill-fort (Radiņš, Zemītis 1988: 119).

Some habitations reflect a spatial organisation within the site according to the economic activities of its inhabitants, as particular areas of the sites seem to have a higher concentration of crafts than others. So, in Aizkraukle hill-fort, the workshops for iron and metalworking were located close to the central part of the plateau (Urtāns 1977: 65). The western part of the site can be considered the area of craftsmen in Jersika hill-fort (Mugurēvičs, Vilcāne 2000: 100); but in the Kābeles and Lipši settlements it was the southwest part (Daiga 1973: 33; 1976: 44). In the settlement at the foot of Daugmale hill-fort, a concentration of crafts tools and workshops was found in the eastern part (Zemītis 1998: 83). But it should be noted that craftsmen's workshops are very similar to other buildings in their size and construction, although often workshops consisted of two rooms. So it seems that craftsmen and their social position were not distinguished in some particular way; socially, they were like other members of a community.

Gender archaeology has paid quite a lot of attention to labour specialisation between males and females. Traditionally, some areas of production are regarded as connected with male activities, while others are attributed to females, like the preparation of food, plant gathering, weaving, etc, which can be linked with females generally all over the world (Wright 1991: 198). The tools of these branches are female symbols, and females are identified with these activities. But actu-

ally the division of labour and specialisation according to sex and/or gender is not so easily distinguishable as it is assumed: both males and females participated in most branches of production simultaneously. And it also goes for craft production on both levels connected to the household and/or the market or the political elite. Of course, it is not an easy task (and it is probably impossible) to establish who produced particular tools, jewellery, pots, clothes and other utensils, but anyway the role of females in these activities cannot be reduced to only secondary activities.

According to Brumfiel and Earle (Brumfiel, Earle 1987), approaches to specialisation, exchange and social organisation can be attributed to one of three models: economic development, the adaptional or the political model. The model of economic specialisation (represented by researchers such as Friedrich Engels and Colin Renfrew) considers the specialisation and intensification of exchange as an integral part of economic development. It means that the development of specialisation goes along with an increase in political complexity. The adaptional perspective (which includes a variety of models put forward by researchers like Marshall Sahlins, Elman R. Service and Karl Wittfogel) in the study of specialisation and social complexity stresses either necessity or the profitable character of economic management, so this model proposes the inclusion of the political elite in the development of economic specialisation. It was the political approach to the study of mutual relationships between economic specialisation and socio-political organisation that paid primary attention to the role of the elite in the organisation of production and exchange. According to this model, the political elite used exchange and specialisation to create and maintain social inequality, to form new institutions of control, and to consolidate political alliances. The elite can fulfil these tasks with control over long-distance trade and/or the surplus of production. The inclusion of subsistence products in the relations of exchange meant the creation of some values useful for craftsmen in local exchange to obtain the necessary means of subsistence and production. So then a system of staple finances is replaced by a system of wealth finances, where some production serves as a means of payment. Actually, it is the surplus that characterises the social role of the economy (as Earle calls it, "political economy"; see Earle 1997). If specialisation is absent in the process of production, then power relations emerge on the basis of general production, and the use of the surplus or surplus production is concentrated in the hands of at least partly attached specialists, and the use of the surplus is strictly limited.

So the political elite used economic specialists and their production in the realisation of their interests,

craftsmen and merchants often acted as the political personnel of the elite, especially if personal goods and utensils were used as symbols of status and authority. The possession of particular items as symbols gave the legitimisation of the socio-political status by physically expressing the social position. It is noted that in societies with a higher level of centralisation status symbols also become more complex, their production demands more sophisticated technologies and increasing labour input, so actually there is a necessity for economic specialisation (Peregrine 1991).

It is still a question for debate whether economic specialists were attached to some upper layer, or if they produced their items for the whole community. Soviet historiography considered that craftsmen supplied only the elite with their production, so satisfying their demands, and that some items were also imported outside the region of their production. So in his detailed analyses of craft production from Ķente hill-fort with the surrounding settlement, Stubavs (Stubavs 1976: 97) states that craftsmen (jewellers) worked only according to individual requests, but they were not directed towards the market because there was no indication about serial/mass production and standardisation. As we have seen, it is impossible to deny the presence of craft specialists in societies of later Prehistory, but their attachment to and dependence on the ruling elite would be an overestimated conclusion. It seems that craftsmen usually produced their goods for everybody, including special artefacts of the elite, but mostly (due also to their limited number) they were orientated towards the local community in general. Probably at least some of the specialists were full-time craftsmen, but only in the larger sites of economic centres were they involved in exchange and trading activities.

Exchange and the emergence of early towns

Exchange and trade are transforming factors in societies; in fact, this was the way in which changes were brought to societies. In chiefdoms, the economic value of exchange is subordinate to its political and ideological value (Hedeager 1994). Long-distance trade provided chiefs with prestige goods, used either as status symbols or as gifts. Gifts, due to their dual character (any gift demands return in some form or another), were of great importance, as with them there was a possibility to establish alliances and networks of supporters. Therefore, social research has to pay attention to the meaning and political importance of exchange/trade in the chiefdoms under question.

The study of exchange and trade was among the favourite subjects of processual archaeology, where it was often linked with the study of social processes. The social role and meaning of exchange and trade characterises the finds of imported artefacts and exchange/trade items (represented by weights and balances). As with the development of crafts, a similar tendency of increasing importance can be seen in exchange and trade during later Prehistory in Latvia. Although the interregional and local contacts can be traced since the Stone Age, it was later Prehistory when the character of economic contacts, exchange and trade took new forms.

From the middle of the tenth century, burials of local merchants are found all over Latvia. These are graves that, among other burial items, contain also balances and weights (Berga 1992; 1996). Artefacts connected with exchange and trade are usually found in male burials. More than 160 weights and more than 370 balances are found in present-day Latvia (Berga 1996: 50). There are two regions where the exchange artefacts are concentrated: Kurzeme (western Latvia), and the lower reaches of the Daugava, in the lands of the Livs. For example, in Laukskola cemetery, weights and balances were found in 19 burials (Zariņa 1997), but in cemeteries on Dole Island in ten burials (Šnore 1996: 116). The cemeteries of the Latgallians produced much fewer artefacts of exchange and trade. There are three burials with these items in Ģūģeri cemetery (Apala 1992: 10), two in Jaunākēni cemetery. Single so-called merchant burials are found, for example, in Kivti cemetery (Šnore 1987: 28) and Jaunpiebalga cemetery. In Lejasdopeles cemetery, weights are found in only one burial, but balances in five (Šnore 1997). Of course, not all individuals buried with weights and/or balances were merchants; some of them may be taken as judges or persons with a high social position, but at least some of them dealt with trade.

Late Iron Age graves also show an increasing number of imported artefacts, brought from both east and west, that included weapons and jewellery, as well as everyday utensils. According to the distribution of western imports (these items very often also served as prestige goods), there are some areas with a higher concentration of finds, for example, the lower reaches of the rivers Daugava and Gauja, and the western Baltic coast of Latvia. Imported items from the east that were mostly mass utensils, like glass beads and cowry shells, are concentrated in eastern Latvia, close to the borders of the Russian principalities.

So not all of the sites and areas had the same character, and the proportion of non-agrarian activities within the economies of sites differed greatly. It is also clearly re-

flected in the distribution of coins over Latvia. The first coins appeared in the late ninth century: these were Arabic dirhams which later in the 11th century were replaced by West European coins. The flow of coins into Latvia ended in the second half of the 11th century. In the tenth to 11th centuries, coins, like imported artefacts, are mostly found around the waterways, the rivers Daugava and Gauja, in their lower reaches, so indicating their leading role in exchange and trade (Berga 1988). About 5,000 coins from the Late Iron Age are found in present-day Latvia (Berga 1988: 9). Most of them are found in hoards and deposits (some contained a couple of hundred coins), but among the cemeteries the richest ones are those of the Livs. There have been found 236 coins in the cemeteries of the Daugava Livs, and 26 in the cemeteries of the Gauja Livs (Berga 1988: 70-89). Usually the coins were used as pendants in necklaces, but some were put in burials as part of the ritual activities. The low number of coin finds in the lands of the Latgallians may be partly explained by the absence of the tradition of wearing pendants (this is characteristic of the Balts generally), as well as because only some areas were situated close to waterways and land routes (Berga 1988: 25). But, anyway, the activities of the Latgallians and the Selonians in exchange and trading are not so explicitly reflected in archaeological evidence as in the case of the Livs. Also, among habitation sites, the largest number of coins were at Daugmale hill-fort, where about 190 coins have been collected (Berga 1994: 41).

As it seems, trade, including long-distance trade, played a great role in the Liv chieftoms' economies; moreover, we can speak about trade as the key element of Liv societies which created their character as an "open" society. Possibly, the geographical position of the Liv lands, which was very suitable within Scandinavian trading networks (and trade routes meant also cultural, social and military contacts/activities), was the reason for the development and flourishing of the Livs' culture. Also, the emergence of local merchants reflects this important role of trade in late prehistoric societies of present-day Latvia. But we have to note that the number of merchant burials is very low in the Livs' cemeteries (not to mention the cemeteries of the Latgallians and the Selonians). So in Salaspils Laukskola cemetery, among 609 burials, just 19 are identified as merchants' graves (15 adult male and four boys' graves). All burials of merchants are male graves; which is different from Scandinavia, where female burials are also found. The explanation could probably be some kind of job difference between genders: while male merchants participated in long-distance trade, females took an active part in the local infrastructure of exchange and trading activities.

Obviously, merchants were rich people, but their identification with social and political leaders is not so simple. Among the other symbols of status and power, one of the more common was the sword as a symbol of power, and almost all of the merchants' burials among the other rich grave items contained a sword. But we have to remember that trade went side by side with warfare and plundering, so it was a question of survival to have good equipment. Another aspect of the burials of the Livs' merchants is provided by their chronology. Most of these burials go back to the end of the 11th century and the first half of the 12th century, a time that is characteristic with the total flourishing of the Livs' material culture. An important part of it is also the large amount of West European coins and silver, so we might assume that the previous century was a time of accumulation, while the end of the 11th century and the early 12th century saw a decrease in the value and status of silver. It was not mere a symbol of a rather small elite, but an indicator of the quite high average prosperity in society. Trade that was previously a resource under the control of a limited group of people had now become an activity involving, in some form or another, almost all members of society.

The development of non-agrarian economies (exchange and crafts) and the rise of some central economic regions and sites allow us to put the question about the emergence of early towns in late Prehistoric Latvia. The presence of economically and socially different sites might indicate some complexity of local social structures. In anthropology and archaeology, not to mention the wide range of sociological literature, a lot of studies have questioned the character of the early town, and the criterion that would allow us to call some sites early towns. Around a hundred definitions of "town" and "urbanisation" have been proposed. For example, according to the archaeologist Peter Wells (Wells 1984: 15), who has elaborated the idea of Gordon V. Childe, urban territory and urban society may be connected with a large population and territory, economic specialisation, supported by taxes and tributes, monumental public buildings, writing, sophisticated art, long-distance trade, and the formation of a religious, social or military elite. The American anthropologist Linda Manzanilla (Manzanilla 1997: 5) characterises urban society by the division of labour, it is the existence of specialists dealing with non-subsistence economic activities, institutions coordinating the economy and the existence of social groups or people who participate in decision making and live in urban centres. The archaeologist Georg Woolf (Woolf 1993: 223-224) mentions as criteria of urbanism the settlement hierarchy and the functions of a central site for higher-level sites, as well as an internal structure of

the site divided into large areas of non-agrarian activities. We might also mention the very recent study of the archaeologist Peter Bogucki (Bogucki 1999: 333) who describes urban sites as agglomerations of people, characterised by craft specialisation and long-distance trade, as well as a military defence system. To summarise these partly overlapping definitions (and those mentioned above do not form a complete list of the meanings of urbanism), as characteristic features of early towns, we may propose, first, the structure of the site with regard to its number of inhabitants, and a systematic and intensive regular building structure and non-agrarian functions; and, second, the functions of the site as a socio-economic centre which is clearly separated from its surroundings.

There are some exceptional and widely excavated sites in eastern Latvia that reflect the features mentioned above. Among the most well-known archaeological sites of Latvia is Daugmale hill-fort, situated on the left bank of the River Daugava. The site was excavated several times, in the 1930s by Valdemārs Ģinters (Ģinters 1936a; 1936b), in the 1960s by Vladislavs Urtāns (Urtāns 1967; 1968; 1969; 1970; 1971), and in the 1980s and 1990s by Guntis Zemītis and Arnis Radiņš (Radiņš, Zemītis 1988; 1990; Zemītis 1992; 1994; 1996; 1998). The site was already used in the first millennium BC, and the habitation there lasted until the end of the 12th century, although weak traces of habitation can be seen also from the following centuries. Daugmale hill-fort produced an extremely large amount of artefacts; in the settlement of Daugmale hill-fort, farming tools formed only about 1% of the artefacts found, trading and exchange utensils about 4% (Zemītis 1998: 83). The hill-fort has provided the largest number of coins found in Latvia. Probably the inhabitants of Daugmale in the second half of the 11th century tried to introduce their own currency, as in Daugmale and the surrounding graveyards replicas of West European coins have been found. There are 39 known replicas of West European coins from 13 sites, with the highest concentration in the lower reaches of the rivers Daugava and Gauja. So 12 coins were found in the Laukskola cemetery, eight in Daugmale hill-fort, and four in the Ģūģeri cemetery, while only one or two items have come from the hill-forts of the Latgallians (Koknese, Jersika, Stupeļi). These coins were made from copper covered by a thin layer of silver (Berga 1993). This attempt (probably led by a very ambitious and active chief based in Daugmale) was not successful, because later such local coins did not appear any more. The attempts to establish their own currency (although without their own symbols) may be connected to the sharp decrease in the inflow of foreign coins in Latvia. True, the issue of its own currency is one of the

features of a centralised society; also in Scandinavia, the beginnings of a currency coincide with the emergence of state structures. But the failure of such an attempt indicates the quite strong positions and the influence of ideology of equality that were able to prevent such an attempt. It seems that a settlement was also situated on Daugmale hill-fort, or at least a large workshop of Scandinavians, as among the artefacts found in Daugmale there are a lot of Scandinavian imports (including also some unique items, like a stone with runic inscriptions and a bronze figure of a rider), as well as imitations of Scandinavian artefacts. On the basis of archaeological research, it is stated that the eastern part of the settlement was almost exclusively a crafts area, where a lot of remains of different workshops were found. Like some other hill-forts on the banks of the River Daugava, Daugmale also has its own harbour connected to the settlement. Daugmale is the only widely discussed site in Latvian archaeological literature and in more detail concerning its urban character. Andris Caune (Caune 1992), and later also G. Zemītis (Zemītis 1993), showed the similarities between Daugmale and Scandinavian *vica* settlement sites, putting the site in a wider European context and following Scandinavian examples. It was stressed that in a historical perspective, Daugmale played a role as the forerunner of medieval Riga.

Among the high number of hill-forts located on the banks of the River Daugava, we will also name Aizkraukle and Jersika, sites that are situated on the right bank of the river. Aizkraukle hill-fort, with its large settlement, is one of the largest archaeological sites in Latvia. The plateau of the hill-fort covers half a hectare, while the settlement reaches up to three hectares including the harbour. Archaeological excavations were carried out there in the 1970s by V. Urtāns (Urtāns 1972; 1973; 1974; 1976; 1977; Urtāns, Briede, Urtāns 1975) and the finds include evidence about a lot of crafts and trade activities on the site.

Jersika forms a complex with the Dignāja hill-fort, which lies on the opposite bank of the River Daugava just in front of it. Nearby also lies a cemetery used from the tenth to the 14th centuries. This complex of archaeological monuments was excavated in 1939 by Francis Balodis (1940, the excavations in Jersika) and Elvīra Šnore (1939, the excavations in Dignāja). Jersika hill-fort was also researched during the last decade by Ēvalds Mugurēvičs and Antonija Vilcāne (Mugurēvičs, Vilcāne 1992; 1994; 2000; Vilcāne 1996; 1998; 2002). Dignāja hill-fort was abandoned before the early tenth century when the site of Jersika emerged. The plateau of Jersika is 7,500 square metres, and the hill-fort is surrounded by a ten-hectare settlement. The results of excavations reflected the craft activities of local peo-

ple, and also the contacts with neighbouring areas directed eastwards. Jersika was among the sites where the habitation continued after the Crusades, in the 14th century.

There are a lot of other hill-forts, settlements and complexes of archaeological sites situated close to the course of the River Daugava and in other regions of Latvia as well. But it is hard to judge the urban character of a site only on the basis of its topography and morphology; it is necessary to know what kind of activities were performed there and what the subsistence was of the inhabitants of the particular site. So, concerning the presence of the early town in late prehistoric Latvia, first of all we can accept the concept of the town as an economic centre functioning in Latvia during the 11th to the 12th centuries. As it seems from evidence obtained in archaeological excavations from sites of the tenth to the 12th centuries, urbanisation had begun, towards urban areas in the sense of Viking Age Scandinavia. Such forerunners of towns were trading and craft centres, located mostly around the most important waterways, but we cannot identify a real urban pattern where political power was also involved in the later Prehistory of Latvia. Only in the 13th century is it possible to find the beginnings of medieval towns in Latvia.

So exchange and production underwent deep transformations during the late Middle and the Late Iron Age in eastern Latvia, and the economic transformations also influenced the abilities and possibilities for local chiefs, as well as their political economy. Production and its support, the expense of raids and the organisation of feasts formed a debit to the economic balance of the chiefs, while credit consisted of income from trade and exchange, tributes and captured goods (Gosden 1989: 368-370). And through redistribution, the benefits of local chiefs also reached every member of the community. It seems that societies of eastern Latvia were generally rather prosperous, although, of course, besides the large middle social layer, there were some rich and also some poor members of communities. But it was after the late Middle Iron Age (the eighth and ninth centuries) when the earlier great differences in the amounts of rich and poor burials were reduced, and such extreme cases became quite rare. Economic relations and the economy itself provided opportunities for some agents to increase their wealth, and on the same basis also their power, while at the same time under ideological pressure it also helped to maintain political equality during later Prehistory.

Abbreviations

- AE – Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija, Rīga
 ASM 1990-1997 – Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas materiāli par arheologu 1990.-1997.gada pētījumu rezultātiem. Rīga, 1992-1998
 LVIŽ – Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls
 LZAV – Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis. A daļa. (until 1991 – Latvijas PSR Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis)
 RT 1958-1970 – Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas referātu tēzes par arheologu, antropologu un etnogrāfu 1958.-1970.gada pētījumu rezultātiem. Rīga, 1959-1971. (under little modified titles in some issues)
 ZASM 1971-1989 – Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas materiāli par arheologu un etnogrāfu 1971.-1989. gada pētījumu rezultātiem. Rīga, 1972.-1990

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sustiprinti savo valdžią. Tuo pat metu, veikiant ideologiniam spaudimui, vėlyvaisiais priešistoriniais laikais ji kartu padėjo išlaikyti politinę lygybę.

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ŪKIS IR SOCIALINĒ VALDŽIA VĒLYVUOSIUOSE PRIEŠISTORINIUOSE GENTINIUOSE RYTINĒS LATVIJOS JUNGINIUOSE

Andris Šnē

Santrauka

Mainai ir gamyba vidurinio geležies amžiaus pabaigoje ir vėlyvajame geležies amžiuje rytinėje Latvijoje patyrė didelių pokyčių, o ūkio transformacijos savo ruožtu irgi darė įtaką vietinių vadų gebėjimams ir galimybei vykdyti jų politinę ekonomiką. Gamyba ir jos skatinimas, išlaidos karo žygiams ir švenčių organizavimas formavo pasyvųjį vadų ekonominį salda, tuo tarpu kreditą sudarė pajamos iš prekybos ir mainų, duoklės ir grobio (Gosden 1989: 368–370). Perskirstant vietinių vadų pelno dalis atitekdavo ir kiekvienam bendruomenės nariui. Panašu, kad rytinės Latvijos bendruomenės buvo gana pasiturinčios, nors, suprantama, greta plataus vidurinio socialinio sluoksnio egzistavo ir turtingi jos nariai bei varguomenė. Tačiau tik po vėlyvojo vidurinio geležies amžiaus (VIII–IX a.) ėmė nykti didieji skirtumai tarp turtingų ir skurdžių kapų ir tokie kraštutiniai atvejai tapo labai reti. Ekonominiai santykiai ir pati ekonomika sudarė galimybes kai kuriems bendruomenių nariams pagausinti savo turtus, o kartu ir

