

A NEW TYPE OF BRONZE PIN IN THE EASTERN BALTIC

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Abstract

This article introduces rosette-headed pins found at Pavirvytė cemetery (in the Akmenė district) in the rich female grave 138. Rosette-headed pins were quite well known in Semigallia. However, most of the ornaments in this grave are more typical of Curonian culture than of the Semigallians. Some decorative elements or ideas probably penetrated from Curonia to Semigallia at the end of the 11th century.

Key words: rosette-headed pins, grave goods, relationships, Semigallians.

Introduction

Pins used to be among the favourite Baltic ornaments. They were popular from the end of the second millennium BC till the end of the 13th century AD. However, only from the first centuries AD did multiple pins as ornaments and various shaped pins start to spread. In the first centuries AD, pins were in use by almost all the Baltic tribes, but from the second half of the first millennium they were worn by the Samogitians, Semigallians, Curonians, Lettigallians and Selonians only.

Pins of different shapes were worn: crook-like, with flask-shaped heads, with triangular and ringed heads, cruciform pins, and pins with rounded openwork heads, etc. Men wore only certain types, mostly crook-like, and pins with flask-shaped heads, and, more rarely, pins with triangular and ringed heads. Some pins used by men were made from iron; bronze pins for men were less ornamented. Women wore more sophisticated pins. The custom was to button clothes with a pair of pins which were connected by long chains. Sometimes pendants were attached to the pins' eyelets. Pairs of pins with pendants and chains formed an integral ornament. An ordinary pair consisted of two identically shaped pins, though two different-shaped pins were also composed into integral breast ornaments. Most pins were made of bronze, but some of them have silver-plated heads.

Only very seldom are two pairs of pins found in a grave. One such grave was found in Pavirvytė cemetery (in the Akmenė district) in grave 138. In this grave a woman was buried whose clothes were decorated with two pairs of pins. One pair consisted of cruciform pins with flattened plates at the ends of the terminals, the other pair constituted very rare rosette-headed pins

(Fig. 1: 2). The main attention in this article is given to this particular type of pin.

Although rosette-headed pins are very rare, they have not received enough attention from archaeologists. Fēliks Jākobsons, in 1930, mentions them in his article "Divas retas rotas adatas" (Jakobsons 1999: 55–57), about pins found in the graves at Tūraida Puteļi (in the Riga district) and Ciernalde Jaunsvirlaukas (in the Jelgavas district). An article by Ilona Vaškevičiūtė (Vaškevičiūtė 2000: 25–27) deals with the pins from Pavirvytė; and a reconstruction of clothes from the same grave has been performed by R. Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė (Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 1987: 195, Fig. 34). Other rosette-headed pins have found their way into the list of archaeological references only in a general context (Latvijas 1974: 213–214, Fig. 57: 5).

Finding places

Rosette-headed pins have been found in only a few sites in Lithuania. Two of them, making an integral breast ornament, were found in the Pavirvytė cemetery mentioned above, in grave 138; another one (in a pair with a pin of another type) in the Jakštaičiai-Meškiai (Šiauliai district) cemetery (Fig. 1: 1). Two other pins of this type were found accidentally in the Biržai district, the exact finding place is unknown (now in the custody of the Biržai area Sēla museum) (Fig. 1: 3). A few more rosette-headed pins are known from Latvia. Two of them, making an integral breast ornament, were found in the Semigallian cemetery of Mežotne Centre (in the Bauska district); (Fig. 1:4) two more pins were excavated in the Semigallian cemetery at Salgales Lieldālūži (Jelgava district). One rosette-headed pin was found in the Ciernalde Jaunsvirlaukas, Tura-

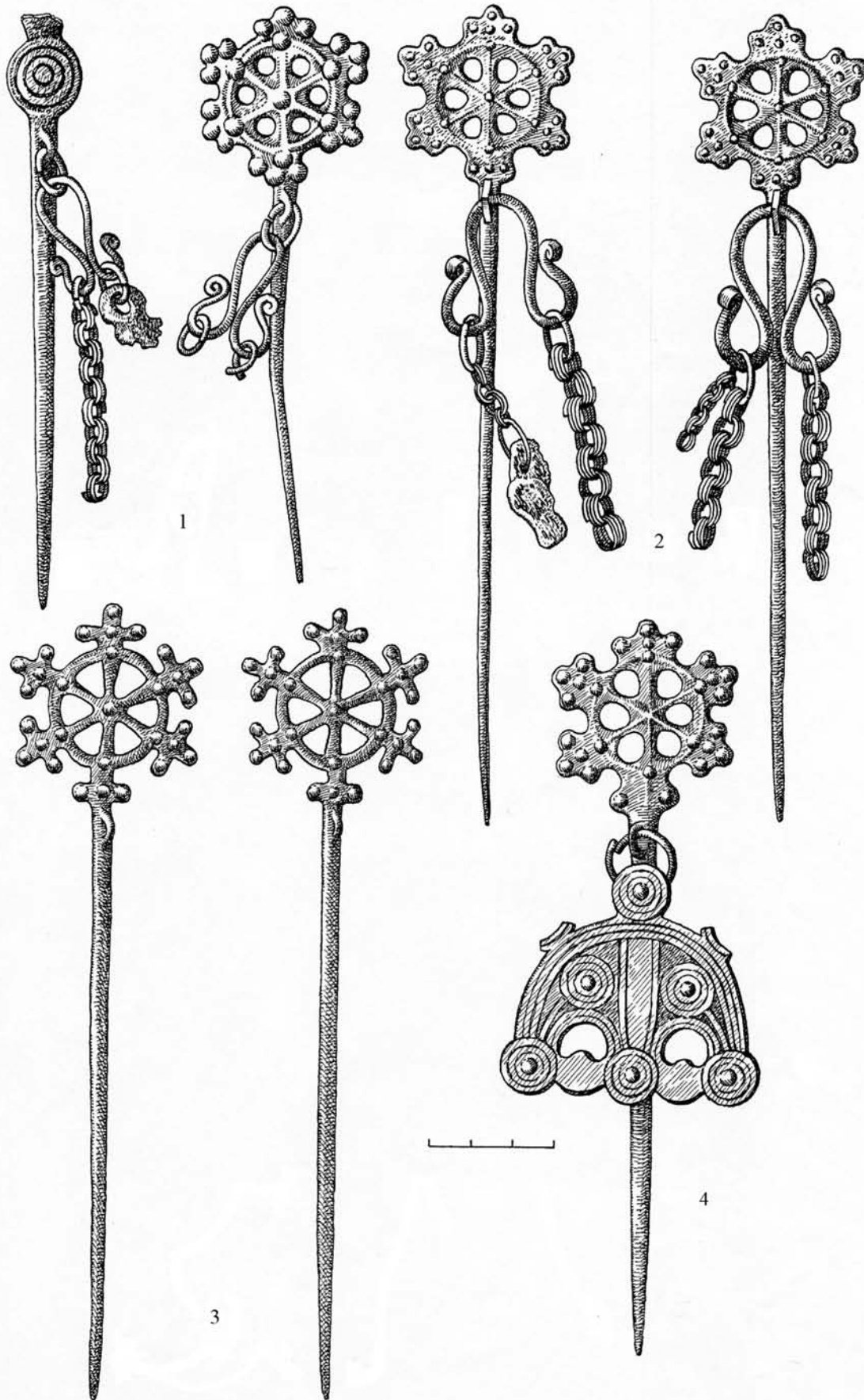


Fig. 1. Rosette-headed pins. 1 Jakštaičiai-Meškiai cemetery; 2 Pavirvytė cemetery; 3 Biržai strayfind; 4 cemetery at Mežotne Centre (drawings by Ilona Keršulytė)

ida Pūteļi (Jakobsons 1999: 56) and Kerklini (Saldus district) cemeteries. A rosette-headed pin from Kerklini is a stray find (Engel 1933: 76, Figs. 14: 12).

Rosette-headed pins

The pins are 14.5 to 19 centimetres long, with heads (terminals) of four to five centimetres in width. A pin head is an openwork ringlet with six relief outgrowths, ending in three knobles. Six concurrent spokes divide the ringlet into six symmetrical parts, and in every one of them a hole in a round or an oval shape is formed. Pins from the Biržai region are slightly different. Outgrowths decorating the pins seem not to be interrelated; therefore, the pin heads seem to be visually lighter and more graceful (Fig. 1: 3).

As has been mentioned, most rosette-headed pins were found in Semigallia. In grave 138 in the Pavirvytė cemetery, a woman whose grave goods consisted of over 30 items was buried. The grave was discovered 55 centimetres deep, in a 220 by 70-centimetre pit. The deceased woman was buried lying on her back with her legs extended and arms folded. The head was orientated at 310 degrees northwest (Fig. 2). The head was covered with a cloth headdress whose edges were decorated with bronze loops, clamped close to each other with no gaps in between. On the cloth headdress was a simple headband consisting of a bronze chain with plenty of maple seed-shape pendants attached. On the right side of the cranium two amber beads, probably hooked into the headdress, were found. Two neck-rings were found on the neck of the deceased woman. One of the neck-rings integrates four tugs, and was similar to a collar; the second neck-ring was plaited from wire, terminating with loops. Apart from the neck-rings, the neck of the deceased woman was decorated with two rows of a necklace, consisting of 68 ribbed blue glass beads. Two pairs of pins were found in the breast area. The first pair comprised two cruciform pins with flattened terminals, connected by an iron chain, made of 7.5-centimetre-long sticks, muffled in bronze wire. The second pair consisted of rosette-headed pins linked by a bronze chain. This chain was 170 centimetres long and was plaited out of four loops. When the chain was attached to the rosette-headed pins, the completed ornament might have reached the woman's waist. The wrists of the deceased woman were decorated with

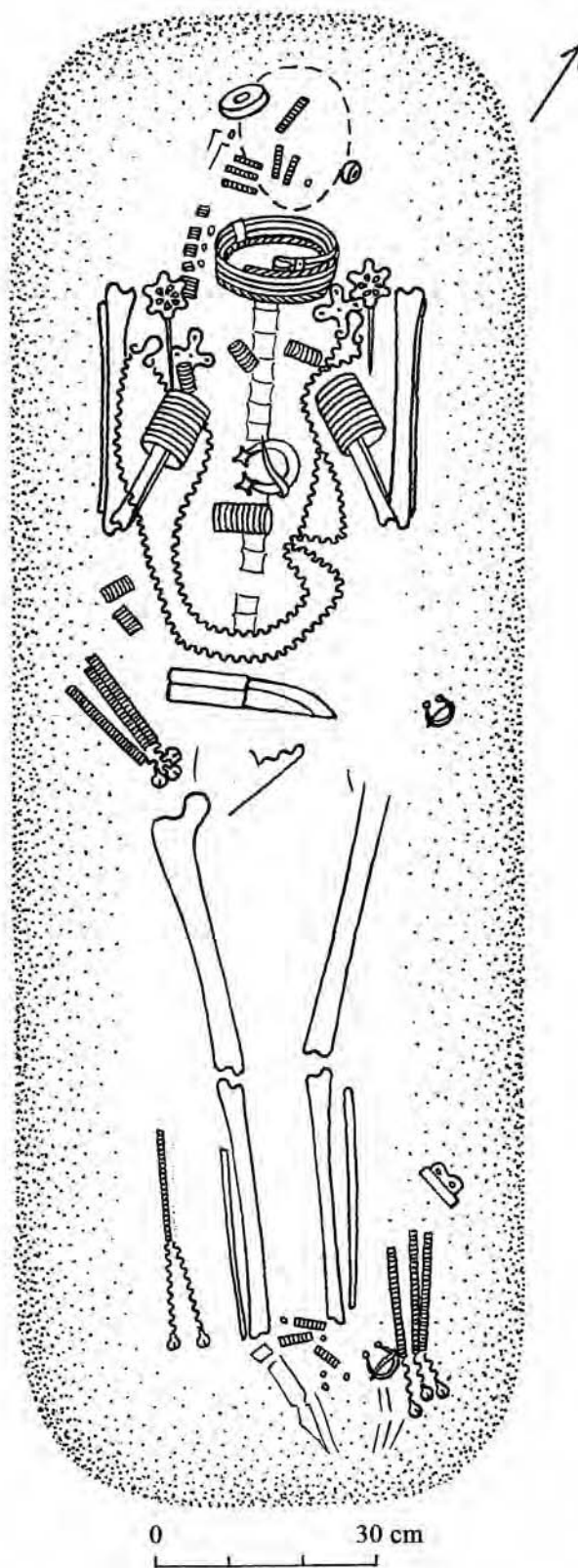


Fig. 2. Pavirvytė cemetery grave 138 (drawing by Ilona Keršulytė)

bronze spiral bracelets; the fingers were adorned with three spiral finger rings. The breast area of the lady in grave 138 was decorated with an ornate bronze silver-plated penannular star-shaped brooch. Two other



Fig. 3. Find from Pavirvytė grave 138 (photograph by V. Urbanavičius)

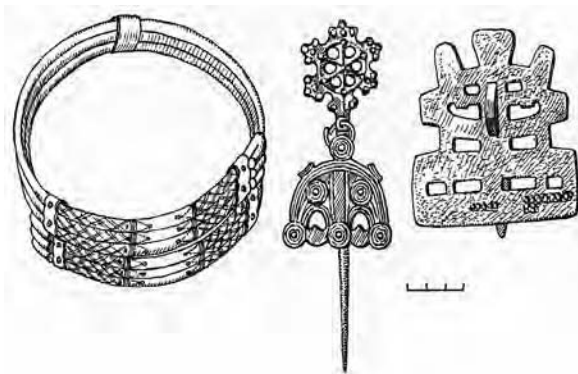


Fig. 4. Cemetery at Mežotne Centre, grave goods of grave 9 (drawings by Ilona Keršulytė)

smaller penannular brooches, with poppy seed-shaped and star-shaped terminals, were lying alongside the left pelvic bone and the right foot bones. Outside the pelvic bones and alongside both foot bones were ornaments. Each of them was made of three spirals, linked by a connecting plate with a chain and bells at the terminals. These types of ornaments decorated the edges of a cloth wrap, skirt or apron. Alongside the head, on the right side of it, a spindle whorl was found, and an awl

was found between the foot bones. On the right side of the waist was a knife with an exceptionally ornate scabbard with bronze bindings (Fig. 3).

While observing the rich and rare set of grave goods, our attention is firstly attracted by the rosette-headed pins. These pins are equipped with eyeholes, to which were threaded V-shaped pendants, terminating with a chain. The pendant which was put on the right side of the deceased woman was attached to a bone amulet.

It is interesting to note that an identical bone amulet was attached to the pendant of a pin discovered in the Jakštaičiai-Meškiai cemetery. This cemetery undoubtedly belongs to the Samogitian ethno-cultural sphere. However, some of the burials at least (including all the inhumation graves) are attributed by researchers to the Semigallians (Urbanavičius 1977: 13). The pin found in the Jakštaičiai-Meškiai cemetery is from disturbed woman's grave 71. The rosette-headed pin was connected to the pair with a broken cruciform pin (only part of this pin survives). The burial was disturbed, discovered at 25 centimetres depth, and in a 220 by 60-centimetre pit, with the head orientated at 325 degrees northwest. In this grave, together with the above-mentioned pins, only an iron awl survived. It is possible that a "broken pin", trying to equalise the length of both pins, was intentionally broken and attached to the Jakštaičiai-Meškiai breast ornament. The length of the rosette-headed pin is 14.5 centimetres; the so-called "broken pin" is the same length. The part of the broken cruciform pin needle over the eyehook is nicely ornamented with concentric circlets. Therefore, the broken pin was readjusting the rosette-headed pin (Fig. 1).

The pins found in grave 9 in the Mežotne Centre cemetery also belong to a rich woman's grave. A pair of rosette-headed pins was discovered here in one set, with an integrated four-piece neck-ring, similar to that found at Pavirvytė in grave 138. In Mežotne Centre grave 9 more grave goods were discovered: one of them was a crossbow fibula with ladders, covered with white metal plate and adornments with spiral ringlets (Fig. 4). Crescent-shaped pendants with three outgrowths were attached to the rosette-headed pin from the grave at Mežotne Centre.

Chronology and distribution of rosette-headed pins

The grave with the rosette-headed pin from the cemetery at Mežotne Centre dates from the 11th century. At the Turaida Pūteļi cemetery, a rosette-headed pin was found in grave 23, together with a Cnut (1016–1035) silver denar and Arabic dirhems. At the Ciemal-

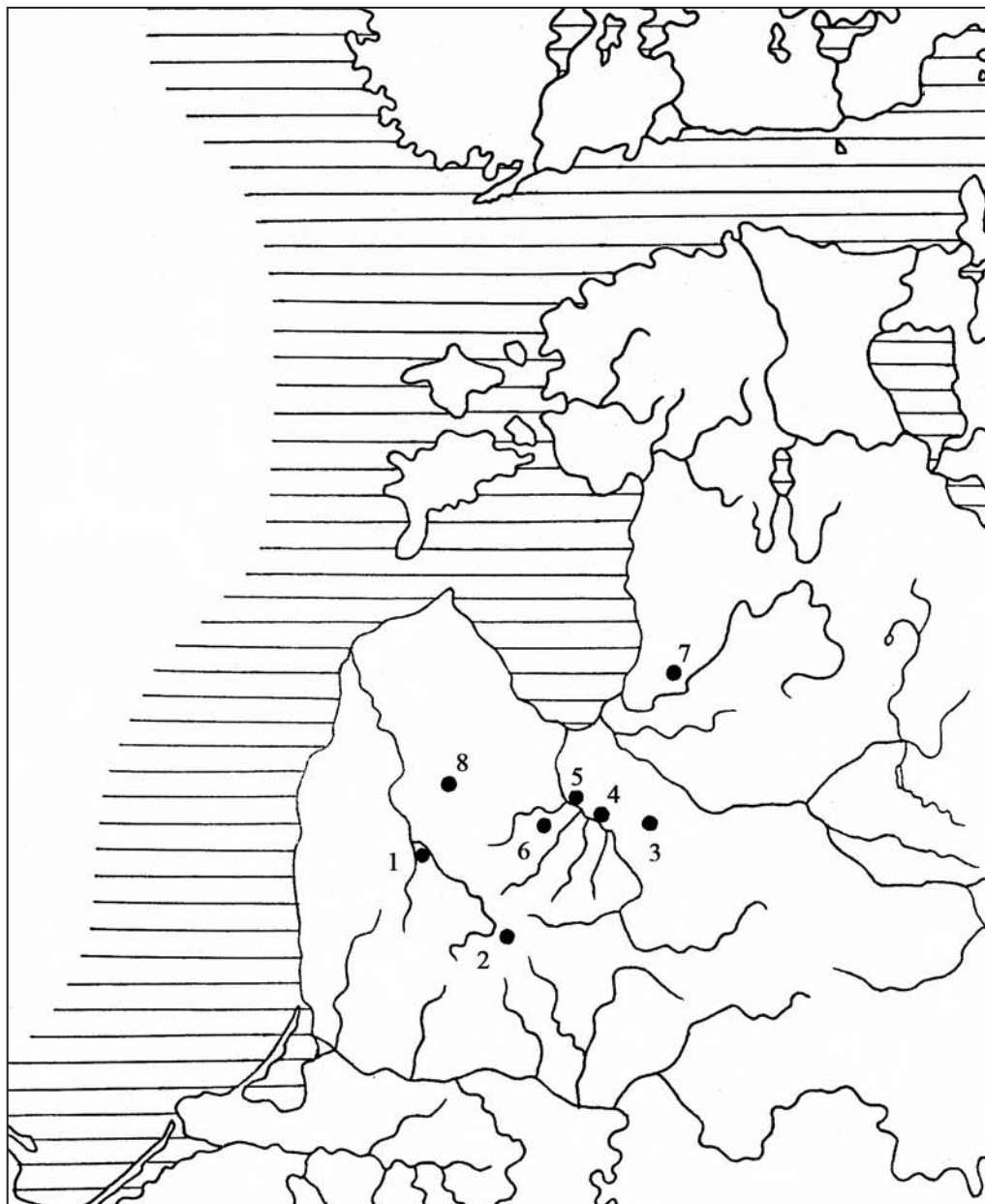


Fig. 5. Distribution of rosette-headed pins: 1 Pavirvytė; 2 Jakštaičiai-Meškiai; 3 Biržai; 4 Mežotne Centre; 5 Salgales-Lieldlūži; 6 Ciemalde Jaunsvirlaukas; 7 Tūraida Pūteļi; 8 Kerklini (drawing by Ilona Keršulytė)

de Jaunsvirlaukas cemetery, rosette-headed pins were found together with a small penannular brooch dating from the 11th/12th centuries (Jakobsons 1999: 56). Other pins found in the Jakštaičiai-Meškiai, Salgales Lieldālūži and Kerklini cemeteries, as well as those known from the Biržai museum, are hardly datable, due to the finding circumstances (no other datable grave goods). Specifying the chronology of rosette-headed pins allows us to correct the complex of grave goods found at Pavirvytė cemetery in grave 138 (neck-rings, a penannular brooch with a star-shaped foot, cruciform pins with flattened terminals, etc).

Integrated neck-rings are rare in Lithuania. Alongside the Pavirvytė neck-rings, others are known from Ringuvėnai (Šauliai district) and Šaukėnai (Radviliškis district) (Kuncienė 1978: 27). Integrated neck-rings

in Latvia are discovered mainly in Semigallian sites. Only nine neck-rings of this type have been discovered in Latvia. A few integrated neck-rings have been found in Lettigallian, Estonian and Livian lands, where these ornaments are dated to the tenth/11th centuries (Latvijas 1974: 214, taf. 56: 4). Plated neck-rings terminating with loops are more typical of Curonian materials from the tenth to the 12th centuries (Kuncienė 1978b: 29).

Penannular brooches with star-shaped terminals were also more popular with the Curonians than with the Semigallians, and were worn from the tenth to the 12th century (Vaitkunskienė 1978: 54). Cruciform pins with flattened terminals were liked both by the Semigallians and the Curonians. These pins were particularly popular from the ninth to the 12th century (Tautavičius 1996: 237–238). The set of grave goods allows us to

date the Pavirvytė grave to the 11th century. Such dating does not contradict the grave complex with rosette-headed pins found in the cemetery at Mežotne Centre (Latvijas 1974: 216), and the pin found in the Turaida Pūtelji cemetery.

The distribution of rosette-headed pins testifies that pins of this type were popular in Semigallia (Fig. 5). The question is: where does the Semigallian tradition of such pins come from? If we look over all Semigallian ornamentation, we will see that openwork and the rosette motif were never popular. In Semigallian sites neither pins with openwork heads, nor flat openwork brooches (Vaitkunskienė 1978a: 68) were found. Actually, only some flat and not openwork brooches are known (Degėšiai) (Vaitkunskienė 1978a: 68), or a flat brooch like a four-leaved clover (Linkuva), and one or two pins with openwork heads (Vaškevičiūtė 1987: 33, Fig. 4; 12).

However, the rosette motif is not extraneous to the Baltic ornamentation tradition, and has been known since the Roman Iron Age (Michelbertas 1986: 122, Fig. 41). In the Middle and Late Iron Age this motif spread rather widely. The rosette motif was particularly popular among the Curonians, and was used in the decoration of pins with triangular heads (Tautavičius 1996: 232) and pins used to attach headdresses (Kuncienė 1978a: 9–10, Map 4).

Some ornaments found in Pavirvytė grave 138 were more typical of the Curonians than the Semigallians. Probably single ornaments and some decorative elements or ideas penetrated from Curonia to Semigallia at the end of the 11th century.

Translated by Algimantas Dautaras

Abbreviations

LA – *Lietuvos TSR archeologijos atlasas*, Vilnius, t. IV, 1978

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NAUJAS SMEIGTUKŲ TIPAS RYTŲ PABALTIJY

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Santrauka

Smeigtukai – vieni iš labiausiai mėgtų baltų papuošalų, tačiau nuo I tūkstantmečio antrosios pusės po Kr. jie nešioti tik žemaičių, žiemgalių, kuršių, latgalių bei sėlių gentyse.

Labai retais atvejais kape randame po dvi smeigtukų poras. Toks palaidojimas aptiktas Pavirvytės (Akmenės raj.) kapinyne. Čia kape Nr. 138 palaidota moteris, kurios drabužius puošė dvi smeigtukų poros – vieną sudarė kryžiniai smeigtukai suplotomis plokštelėmis kryžmų galuose, kitą ypač reti smeigtukai rozetine galvute (1: 2 pav.).

Lietuvos teritorijoje tokie smeigtukai žinomi tik iš keilių radimo vietų. Du, sudarantys vientisą krūtinės papuošalą, rasti jau minėtame Pavirvytės kapinyne, dar vienas (kartu su kitos formos smeigtuku) rastas Jakštaičių-Meškių kapinyne (1: 1 pav.) bei dar du smeigtukai, priskirtini šiam tipui, rasti atsitiktinai (radimo vieta – Biržų apskritis) ir yra Biržų kraštotyros muziejuje (1: 3 pav.).

Keletas smeigtukų rozetine galvute žinomi iš Latvijos. Du, sudarantys vieną krūtinės papuošalą, rasti žiemgališkame Mežuotnės centro kapinyne (1: 4 pav.) ir dar

du – taip pat žiemgališkame Salgalės Lieldalūžių kapinyne. Po vieną rasta Ciemaldų Jaunsvirlaukių (Jelgavos r.), Turaidos Pūces (Rygos r.) ir Kerlinių kapinyuose.

Smeigtukai yra 14,5–19 cm ilgio, 4–5 cm pločio galvutėmis. Smeigtukų galvutė – tai kiauraraštis žiedelis su 6 reljefinėmis ataugėlėmis, užsibaigiančiomis trimis gumbeliais. Kiek kitokie yra Biržų smeigtukai. Smeigtukus puošiančios ataugėlės tarsi nesujungtos tarpusavyje, taigi smeigtukų galvutės vizualiai atrodo lengvesnės ir dar grakštesnės (1: 3 pav.)

Kaip minėta, dauguma šių smeigtukų rasti žiemgalių kapuose.

Mežuotnės centro kapas datuojamas XI amžiumi. Smeigtukai, rasti Jakštaičių-Meškių, Lieldalūžių, Kerlinių kapinyuose ir esantys Biržų kraštotyros muziejuje, dėl radimo aplinkybių (nėra kitų datuotinių įkapių) yra sunkiai datuojami. Turaidos Pūces kapinyne kape Nr. 23 smeigtukas rastas viename komplekte su Kanuto (1016–1035 m.) sidabrinio denaru ir arabų dirhemu, o Ciemaldų Jaunsvirlaukių kapinyne – kartu su nedidele pasagine segute (XI–XII a.?). Patikslinti rozetinių smeigtukų nešiojimo laiką gali Pavirvytės kape kartu su rozetinėmis smeigtukais rastos kitos įkapės – sudėtinė ir vytinė kilpiniais galais antkaklės, pasaginė segė žvaigždiniais galais, kryžiniai smeigtukai suplotomis plokštelėmis kryžmų galuose. Minėtos įkapės rodo, jog smeigtukai rozetine galvute buvo nešioti XI a. Tokiam datavimui neprieštarauja Mežuotnės centro bei Turaidos Pūces kapinyne rasti minėtieji smeigtukai.

Rozetine galvute smeigtukai paplitę Žiemgaloje (5 pav.). Jeigu peržvelgtume visą žiemgalių papuošalų ornamentiką, pamatytume, kad čia niekada nebuvo populiarus ažuuro ar rozetės motyvas. Tačiau šis motyvas nesvetimas kitų baltų genčių ornamentikai, ypač mėgstamas kuršių. Matyt, iš Kuršo į Žiemgalą XI a. pabaigoje plito ne tik pavieniai papuošalai, bet ir kai kurie puošybos elementai ar idėjos.

