

AESTIORUM GLADII. SWORDS IN THE WEST BALTIC CIRCLE IN THE ROMAN PERIOD

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Abstract

In the mid-1990s the finds from the West Baltic Circle, whose peoples could be identified as the *Aestii* of Tacitus, included only ten swords dating back to the Roman Period. Excavations conducted in the following years and the retrieved part of the Prussia Museum in Königsberg, as well as numerous other archive materials, have not significantly increased this number. Therefore, it must be assumed that the *Aestii* rarely used this weapon, regardless of its great appreciation by other barbarians. This might be presumed to have been related to the specific techniques of mounted combat, in which, apart from spears, axes and long battle-knives were used.

Key words: swords, *Aestii*, West Baltic Culture Circle.

Introduction

At the 1994 Marburg conference¹, devoted to Roman and barbarian weaponry in the Roman Period (Carnap-Bornheim 1994), a group of archaeologists arrived from the newly independent Lithuania. The main role was played by Vytautas Kazakevičius, a leading expert on Baltic weapons. At this conference, its participants were presented with research findings on swords from the Roman Period in the southwest of the territory then occupied by Balts, the West Baltic Circle, ie in Masuria, on the Samland Peninsula, including Natangia and Nadrovia, in other words in former East Prussia, and also in Suwałkia, in the northeast of Poland. At the conclusion it was asserted that swords, weapons extremely valued by other barbarians as well, were rarely used in the West Baltic Circle, and, apart from spears, long knives and battle axes were the basic weaponry (Nowakowski 1994). Let us note that Vytautas Kazakevičius had come to similar conclusions while investigating finds of weaponry in Lithuania (Kazakevičius 1988, pp.93-104; cf Atgāzis 2002).

¹ I would like to thank all my colleagues who have facilitated these studies, enabled access to their materials and let them be used in the publication: Prof. Dr Wilfried Menghin, Dr Christine Reich and Andrea Becker-Hagen, Horst Junker and Mr Horst Wieder (*Museums für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin*), Anatoly Valuev and Konstantin Skvorcov (Istoriko-Chudozhestvennij Muzej, Kaliningrad), Prof. Dr Claus von Carnap-Bornheim and Dr Volker Hilberg (*Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Schleswig*), Mirja Ots (Ajaloo Institut, Tallinn), Dr Arnis Rādiņš and Jānis Ciglis (Latvijas Nacionālais Vēstures Muzejs, Riga). The materials and data used in this paper were collected during the 2006 research scholarship financed by the Foundation for Polish Science, whose help I am really grateful for.

The spread and value of swords in the West Baltic Culture Circle

A weak point of the aforementioned thesis was its limited source of references. At that time, only ten artefacts found within the discussed area and dated to the Roman Period were known of (Nowakowski 1994, pp.382-386, Fig. 2), only half of which had been published as having been documented. First of all, there was a single-edged D/1-type sword from the cemetery at Mojtyny (formerly Moythienen) in Masuria (Fig. 1: 6), found in a cremation grave along with a pair of spurs and an Almgren 80 fibula from the B_{2b} phase (Hollack, Peiser 1904, pp.47-48, pl. V: 27; cf Biborski 1978, pp.125-128, Fig. 70; Nowakowski 1994, p.383). Likewise, we may date the loose find from the cemetery at Grunajki (formerly Gruneyken) (Tischler 1879, pp.253-255; Stadie 1919) in the northeast of Masuria (Fig. 1: 2). The sword had a narrow and short, only 39-centimetre-long, blade (Stadie 1919, p.415, Fig. 187; Jahn 1916, p.128), which makes it resemble items of Biborski II-type existing in Przeworsk Culture during the B₁ phase and at the beginning of the B₂ phase (Biborski 1978, pp.62-63, Fig. 7-8; Godłowski 1992, p.81). Another completely documented and published find came from the cemetery at Khrustal'noe (formerly Wiekau), on the Sambian Peninsula (Fig. 1: 3), where a Roman *gladius* alongside a decorative harness was discovered in a rich grave. Its blade was short, with deep fullers running to the point (Bujack 1889, p.281; Heydeck 1909, Pl. XXXVIII; Gaerte 1929, Abb. 159: e): a pattern such as this indicates beyond doubt that the blade had originally been longer and that it might have been broken and later repaired by sharpening. The Almgren 129 and 130 fibulae accompanying the sword make the whole grave complex date back to the B₂/C₁ Phase.

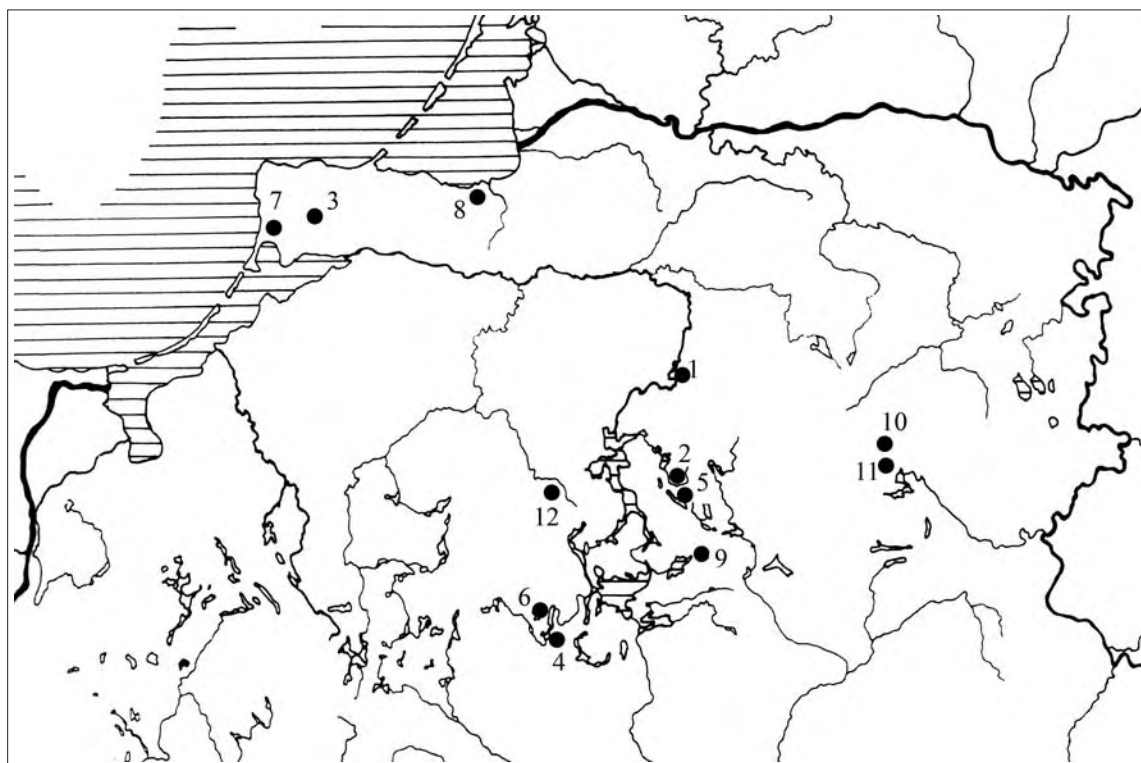


Fig. 1. The archaeological sites of the West Balt Culture Circle with the swords from the Roman Period mentioned in this paper: 1 Fedotovo, Pravdinsk district; formerly Plauen, Kreis Wehlau; 2 Grunajki, Goldap district; formerly Gruneyken (Gruneiken), Kreis Darkehmen; 3 Khrustal'noe, Zelenogradsk district; formerly Wiekau, Kreis Fischhausen; 4 Koczek, Pisz district; formerly Koczek (Kotzeck; Waldersee), Kreis Johannisburg; 5 Łażne, Olecko district; formerly Haasznen, Kreis Oletzko (Marggrabowa); 6 Mojtyny, Mrągowo district, grave 27; formerly Moythienen, Kreis Sensburg; 7 Parusnoje, Zelenogradsk district; formerly Gaffken, Kreis Fischhausen; 8 Sibirskoe, Polessk district; formerly Moritten, Kr. Labiau; 9 Skomack, Elk district; formerly Skomatzko, Kreis Lyck; 10 Szurpiły, Suwałki district; 11 Szwajcaria, Suwałki district; 12 Wólka, Kętrzyn district; formerly Wolka, Kreis Rastenburg.

The last two swords on the list come from the cemetery at Szwajcaria (Fig. 1: 11), in the Suwałki region, the only two artefacts discovered after the Second World War. Both of them were found in rich graves dated to the Late Roman Period. One of the swords, nearly one metre long, came from a grave also containing a pair of Almgren 167-fibulae, a hemispherical Jahn 8-shield boss, two spearheads, including one of *Venolum* type, and two Godłowski VII-spurs, which allows the dating of the whole grave complex to the C_{1b} phase (Szwajcaria, barrow 2; Antoniewicz *et al.* 1958, pp.23-31, Fig. 1-6, pl. I-IX; cf Godłowski 1970, pp.52-54, pl. XI; 1992, p.83). The blade of the other sword bears traces of damascene steel, which enables us to consider it a Roman import. The sword was accompanied by a *balteus* button and a so-called *Bügelknopffibel* of C₃ phase (Szwajcaria barrow 25; Antoniewicz 1961, pp.8-9, pl. V: 7; 1962, pp.191-196, Fig. 3; cf Godłowski 1970, pp. 53-54, pl. XI; 1992, p.85; Biborski 1978, pp.94-95). Information on other swords dated to the Roman Period within the West Balt Circle, which was available in the mid-1990s, comes in the form of short writings

and illustrations without any formal documentation allowing precise classification or dating².

Over a span of 12 years since the conference in Marburg, no new finds of swords have been recorded at the excavated sites; however, revolutionary progress has been made as far as the source of references to the Roman Period in East Prussia is concerned. Namely, archaeologists have been given access to part of the collection and archive materials of the Prussia Museum, found in Berlin and Kaliningrad, and, within the international scientific data exchange, to scientific records of archaeologists investigating Prussian collections in museums before 1945. The enlarged sources have provided information on thousands of grave complexes as well as tens of thousands of finds³. These circumstances cause the necessity for the reinvestigation

² It can be exemplified by finds of a poorly documented discovery in the 19th century, on the drained lake bed in Wólka (formerly Wolka) (Fig. 1:12). Two of the swords found there might come from the Roman Period, the other ones must be classified as Teutonic or even Modern Times: cf Raddatz 1993, p.128 and 131, Fig. 1; Nowakowski 1994, pp.384-386, Fig. 2: 8-10; 2001a, pp.115-116, pl. IX.

³ The exceptional history of collections and archive materials within former East Prussia during and after the Second World War has resulted in the specific state of the source of

of former research findings and opinions. Therefore, it appears indispensable to check whether the thesis on the rare use of swords adhere to pre-historical reality or whether it could have been concluded only on the basis of research data available in the early 1990s. Moreover, it is essential to find whether the description details of particular finds or their initial dating do not need to be changed in the light of new data records.

Swords recently found in the West Balt Culture Circle

The new archive data gained in recent decades has first of all allowed for completing the documentation of the existing finds. This can be exemplified by the case of the sword from Sibirskoe (formerly Moritten), on the River Pregel (Fig. 1: 8). This artefact was originally known exclusively from an illustration in the collection catalogue of the Königsberg Prussia Museum and from short reference notes determining the place of its origin as an inhumation grave (Bezenberger 1897, p.7, Fig. 11);

in this illustration it had an artistically reconstructed hilt. Owing to a sketch which survived the Second World War in Martin Jahn's records, we can recreate the original arrangement of the grave goods – there were two spearheads next to the head of the dead, a fibula was found under the lower jaw, another fibula lay on the chest accompanied by fire steel and a single-edged sword (M. Jahn Archive; cf Nowakowski 1996, pl. 90: 1-6). Drawings in the scientific archives of Herbert Jankuhn and Marta Schmiedehelm allow for determining precisely that the two aforementioned fibulae are of Almgren 60 and Almgren 77 types, dating the whole grave complex to B_{2a} phase (H. Jankuhn Archive and M. Schmiedehelm Archive 7.25). It was also possible to determine the measurements of the discussed sword: its preserved part was 45 centimetres long, which allows us to conclude that its original length might have been 50 centimetres. Finally, a drawing and a photograph from Rudolf Grenz's (1929–2000) legacy (Grenz Archive), determining

references: cf Nowakowski 1986; Kolendo, Nowakowski 2000, pp.5-8; Reich 2003.

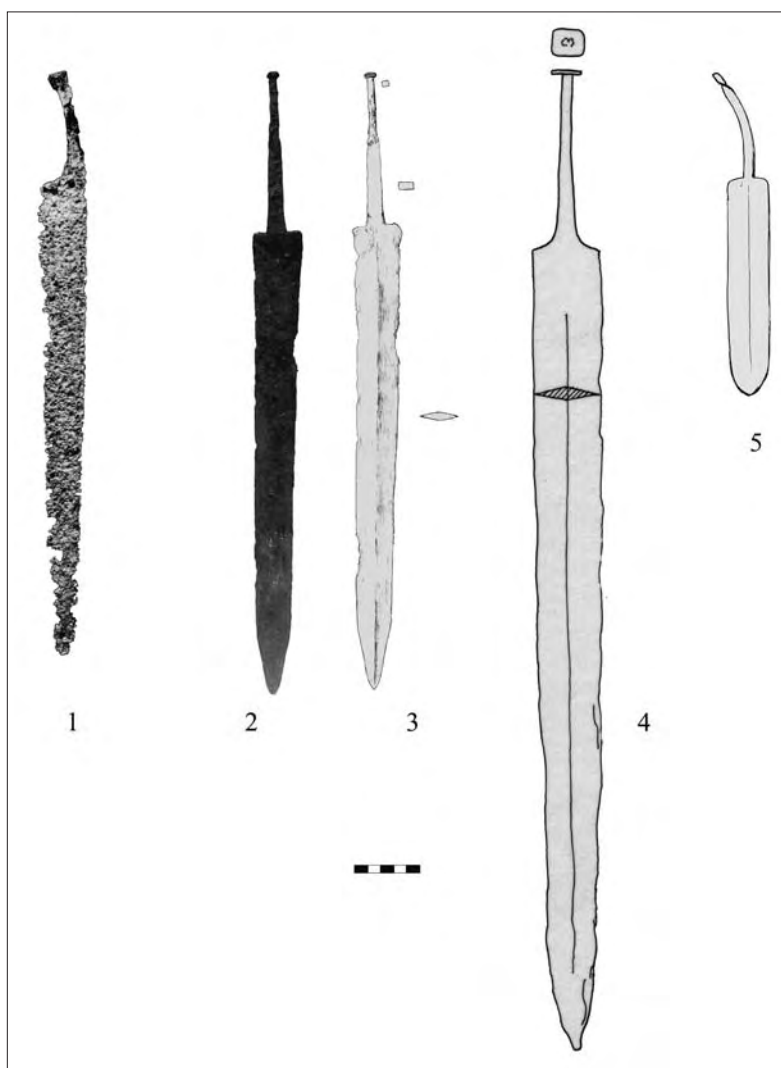


Fig. 2. Swords from the Roman Iron Age: 1 Sibirskoje, Polesk district; 2, 3 Skomack, Elk district, grave 23; 4 Parusnoje, Zelenogradsk district; 5 Fedotovo, Pravdinsk district (1, 2, 4 after R. Grenz Archive; 3 after Prussia-Sammlung, № VIII. 84. 521; 5 after H. Jankuhn Archive).

what the sword of Sibirskoe looked like, its long and narrow blade (Fig. 2: 1), as opposed to its image in the sketch from M. Jahn's records, makes it possible to indicate that it is of the B/1-type existing in Przeworsk Culture during the B₁ phase and at the beginning of the B₂ phase (Biborski 1978, pp.119-122, Fig. 64: a-e), which is in accordance with the dating of the Sibirskoe grave complex.

A lot more can be said on another single-edged sword found at the Koczek cemetery in Masuria (Fig. 1: 4). The find was originally known on the basis of a blurred drawing from M. Jahn's archive (cf Nowakowski 2001b). However, only much better sketches from H. Jankuhn's records made it possible to determine its shape, and on the basis of that to identify it among other nameless objects in the former Prussia Museum (Prussia-Sammlung) collections. The shape and measurements of the sword, which can be reestablished despite the fact that the blade is bent in a U-shape (Fig.

3), indicate that it can be classified under D/2-type, and, what is more, the double-edged foible indicates its usefulness for stabbing. Items of D/2-type occurred in Przeworsk Culture during the B₂ phase and at the beginning of the Late Roman Period (Biborski 1978, pp.125-128, 132, Figs. 71-72). The presence of an Almgren 133-fibula and a Madyda-Legutko G 36-buckle within the Koczek (Pisz district) grave-complex is in accordance with the above way of dating (cf Almgren 1923, pp.68-69, pl. VI:133; Madyda-Legutko 1987, pp.52-53, pl. 16; 1990, p.554, Fig. 2: 2).

Another sword whose documentation has been completed in the last few years was found in the 1930s at the Skomack Wielki (formerly Skomatzko) cemetery in eastern Masuria (Fig. 1: 9). A contemporary report from the excavations was limited to listing the finds in the so-called “horseman’s grave”: in the urn there was a silver pendant with a bronze loop, and a pair of spurs; under the urn lay a bit, a pair of shears, a 48-centimetre-long sword, a knife and two buckles, at a close distance there was the bronze loop of another pendant (Kotzan 1936, p.90). A few years later, already during the war, Wolfgang La Baume published a photograph of a wooden replica of the sword from Skomack Wielki, which was made for educational purposes. In this photograph

we can see fuller-like grooves on the blade (La Baume 1941a, Fig. 6: c-d), which indicate that the blade was made of crucible steel damascene, which in turn became the basis for classifying this sword as a Roman *gladius* (Nowakowski 2001a, pp.97-98, Fig. 10; cf Kaczanowski 1992, pp.24-26, Fig. 1). The same find looks different in a photograph from Rudolf Grenz’s archive (Fig. 2: 2)⁴: we cannot see any grooves on the flat surface of the blade; therefore, the replica published by La Baume does not seem to have been particularly accurate. Any doubts are finally dispelled by the sword from Skomack Wielki itself, which has been luckily discovered in the preserved part of the Prussia Museum collection (Fig. 2: 3). It is very short, its blade is

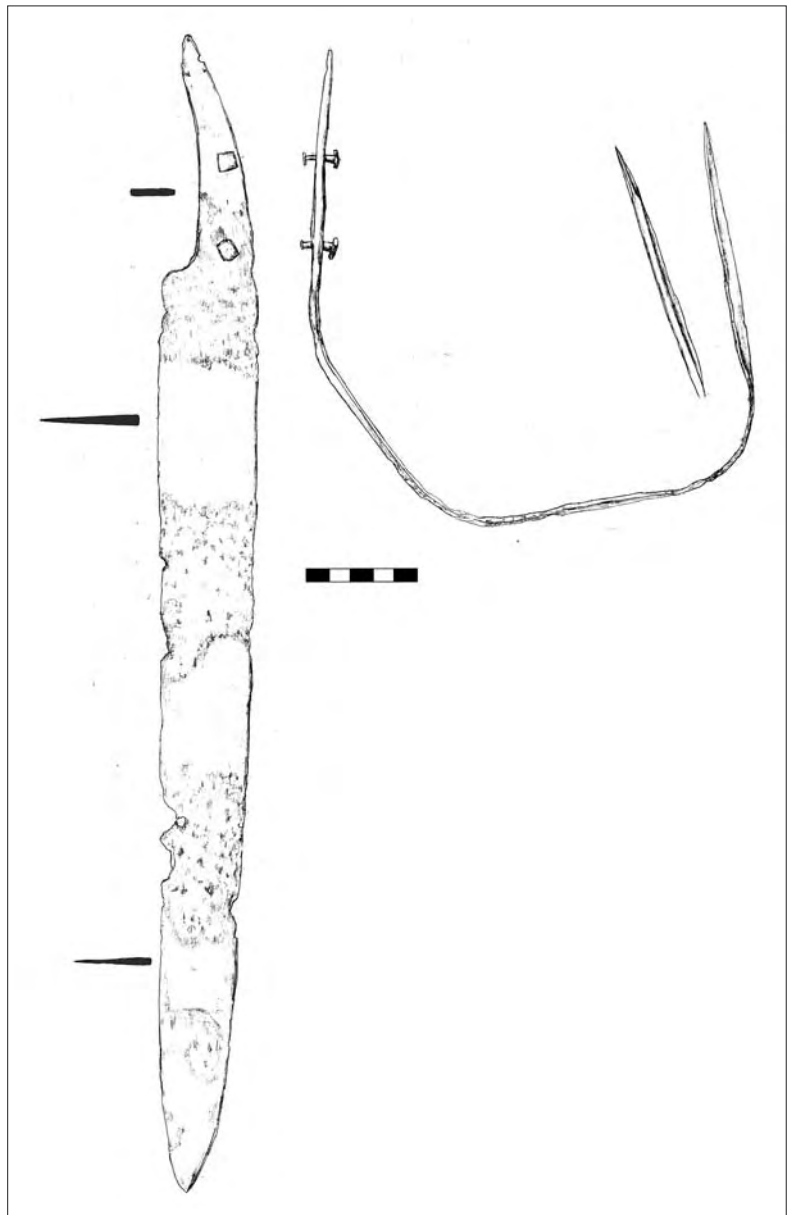


Fig. 3. Koczek, Pisz district, grave 122 (after Prussia-Sammlung).

merely 36 centimetres long and has a rhombus-shaped cross-section, the hilt has an 11.2-centimetre-long tang and a small bronze knob (Prussia-Sammlung, № VIII. 84. 521). The shape of the sword from Skomack Wielki allows us classify it under “group VIII” distinguished by M. Biborski; swords of this group occurred in the Early Roman Period on both sides of the Roman *limes*, although they were markedly more common in the *barbaricum* (Biborski 1994, p.98, Fig. 11).

Interestingly, the interpretation of the find from Skomack Wielki could be enhanced by a photograph taken during the excavations and found at the preserved part of the so-called *Fundarchiv*, of the Königsberg Prussia Museum (Fundarchiv, shelfmark PM-IXd1.802, Bd. 3/5). The photograph depicts an urn with a pair of clearly visible spurs inside (Fig. 4), whose image allows us to classify them under Ginalski C1-type, which

⁴ Grenz Archive. This photograph was originally intended for publication in volume 2 of Carl Engel’s *Vorgeschichte der altpreußischen Stämme* (Engel 1935), as “Abb. 83”



Fig. 4. Skomack, Elk district, grave 23 (after Fundarchiv, shelfmark PM-IXd1.802, Bd. 3/5).

was common in Przeworsk Culture mainly during the B₁ phase (Ginalski 1991, pp.57-58, Fig. 7). Such early dating suggests that the sword from Skomack Wielki might have reached Masuria at the beginning of the Roman Period with the earliest wave of imports, which also embraced items such as fibulae of Jezerine-type or a Raethian hefty bronze bracelet from the nearby cemetery in Romoty (formerly Romotten) (Nowakowski 2006).

The list of swords, knowledge of which was enhanced by the retrieved archive materials, ends with an artefact from Parussnoe (formerly Gaffken), on the Sambian Peninsula (Fig. 1: 7). It was known exclusively on the basis of one drawing, published several times (Gaerte 1929, Abb. 197: c). A drawing and notes from Rudolf Grenz's archive (Fig. 2: 4) enable us to assert that the sword was 75 to 80 centimetres long, with the blade's width less than five centimetres, and that the cross-section of the blade was clearly rhombus-shaped (Grenz Archive). The discussed sword corresponds to V-type, dated to B₂ phase and the beginning of the Late Roman Period (Biborski 1978, pp.72-75, Figs. 22-25). According to vague information contained in Marta Schmiedehelm's records, the sword from Parussnoe might have been accompanied by a Jahn 7a-shieldboss, which would adhere to the general chronology

of V-type specimens (cf Godłowski 1970, p.51, pl. X:16).

The real value of archive material and old archaeological collections

Indeed, the archive materials and archaeological collections which have been retrieved recently have provided new information on the already known finds; however, it must be noted that such a big enlargement of the source of references has not resulted in an equally substantial extension of the list of West Balt swords from the Roman Period. Interestingly, in reports from excavations conducted at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, found in the preserved parts of the Fundarchiv at the Königsberg Prussia Museum, there appear references to the so-called "*Schwert*" finds (cf Doliwy, Olecko district, object A; formerly Doliewen, Kreis Oletzko (Marggrabowa) – Fundarchiv, sygn. PM-IXd1.1559 (Haasznen), Bd. 1/13; Piaski-Onufryjewo, Mrągowo district, grave 220; formerly Onufriogowen, Kreis Sensburg – Fundarchiv, shelfmark PM-IXd1.1162, Bd. 1/16), but the lack of a description of any kind, or a drawing, does not allow us to accept such references uncritically. We should also be distrustful of the fact that the alleged swords, arte-

facts extremely rare and valued in Ostpreußen at that time, are not mentioned in the records of archaeologists researching the collection of the Prussia Museum before 1945; most importantly, no references can be traced in the archive of M. Jahn, whose main interest was weaponry. It can be supposed, then, that these “swords” might have been just big knives or fragments of rusty long objects, erroneously interpreted by not fully professional researchers.

Nevertheless, some errors or ambiguities can also be encountered in archive materials left by renowned archaeologists. This can be exemplified by a record from H. Jankuhn’s files. Jankuhn was a great German archaeologist, and at the beginning of his career he conducted an extremely scrupulous search of finds dating back to the early Roman Period within the former Ostpreußen (Uslar 1990; cf Jankuhn 1933a; 1933b). Among the finds from the multi-phased cemetery in the village of Zelenodol’skoe (formerly Preußisch Bahnau; Zelenodol’skoe, Bagrationovsk district; formerly Preußisch Bahnau, Kreis Heiligenbeil; Hollack 1900; 1908, p. 122) Jankuhn recorded in his files a short, 56-centimetre-long, double-edged sword with a lenticular cross-section of the blade, which had been discovered by the so-called “*beim Steinbrechen*” (H. Jankuhn Archive; cf R. Grenz Archive, № 212). It can be assumed that Jankuhn considered the find a barbarian imitation of a Roman *gladius*. Luckily, the sword from Zelenodol’skoe has been found and identified among the objects that survived at the Prussia Museum (Prussia-Sammlung, № V 144, 7726^b). Therefore, Jankuhn’s interpretation can now be verified and the sword can be dated correctly to the Early Middle Ages, which allows us to link it to the final stage of using the necropolis.

Likewise, difficulties also occur while interpreting finds of swords discovered during excavations conducted in the second half of the 1930s. Apparently, there was not enough time to include the results of these studies in the source of references; they were only mentioned in short notes, often printed in everyday newspapers, they were not used in research study papers or in the record files of scientific research. The retrieved part of the archive of the Prussia Museum provides little information on swords; besides, the data is unclear or simply erroneous. This can be exemplified by a press release on a discovery made at the cemetery in Prigorkino (formerly Karben, in Natangia (Prigorkino, Bagrationovsk district; formerly Karben (Carben), Kreis Heiligenbeil; cf Hollack 1908, p.21; Bezzenberger 1914): according to the finds liaison officer (*Kreispfleger der vorge-schichtlichen Bodentalertümer*), in the late spring of 1937 a destroyed grave was discovered at the local

gravel pit. The grave goods comprised a short single-edged sword, a spearhead, a javelin head with barbs, a knife, a piece of fire steel, a buckle, a spur and a fibula with a high catch-plate (Fundarchiv, № PM-IXd1.1688, Bd. 1/7; cf Guttzeit 1937). The official record of handing the finds down to the Prussia Museum does not mention a sword, whereas two knives, instead of one, are listed (Fundarchiv, № PM-IXd1.1688, Bd. 1/9; cf Bohnsack 1938, p. 26). Thus, it must be assumed that an amateur archaeologist had made an erroneous assessment of the find, which later on was verified by professionals.

Similar ambiguities can also be encountered in texts whose authors were better-qualified researchers. In the introduction to his report of the excavations conducted in 1940 at the burial grounds from the Roman Period in Łabapa (former Labab), in northern Masuria (Węgorzewo district; formerly Kreis Angerburg; La Baume 1939, p.285; 1941b, p.87, pl. 30), Fritz Jaensch, an experienced employee of the Prussia Museum and an active researcher in the second half of the 1930s, mentions a burial ground containing arms such as a spearhead, a short sword and spurs. The subsequent description of the finds discovered within that excavation season does not include a grave with the aforementioned equipment (cf Fundarchiv, № PM-IXd1.1950, Bd. 2/1-9). Thus, it can be supposed that it was also a case of a preliminary assessment verified later on; nevertheless, the documenting records have never been corrected.

Even documents as accurate as inventory books are supposed to turn out not to be reliable enough. In the accession book of the Prussia Museum covering the years 1937 to 1938, kept in **Kaliningrad**, there is an interesting record: at number 1264 the blade of a short single-edged sword from Sosnovka (formerly Bledau; Zelenogradsk district; formerly Kreis Königsberg; Sbornik, № 1264) was registered, which suggests that it was a find discovered during the excavations conducted at this village in the late 1930s (Gaerte 1935, p. 40; Bohnsack 1939, p.28; La Baume 1939, p.286). However, the preserved documents at the Fundarchiv show that within this period the discussed artefact was only recorded in the inventory, whereas it had been donated to the museum by an accidental discoverer as early as in 1897 (Fundarchiv, № PM-IXd1.150, Bd. 1/9). Thus, recording it under the date of 1938 was not a result of a new discovery but an attempt to administer some kind of “*die preußische Ordnung*” at the Prussia Museum. The sword managed to survive the dramatic history of the collection, which allows us to classify it today as the so-called *Dolchschwert* with a characteristic, explicitly thickened back of the blade (Prus-

sia-Sammlung, 1938:1264; cf Gaerte 1929, Abb. 242: b, g), typical of the end of the Migration Period and the beginning of the Early Middle Ages.

Considering all the aforementioned, the latest and most reliable discovery of a **West Balt Circle sword** is a part of a single-edged sword from Szurpily, in Suwalkia (see L. Sawicka's article in this volume)⁵ (Fig. 1: 10). Although this item was "discovered" in 2006 not during excavations but while tidying the rooms of the Institute of Archaeology of Warsaw University, its relation to one of the Roman Period sites at Szurpily should remain beyond doubt. It comes from the collection of Tadeusz Żurowski, who conducted excavations at the place for several years nearly half a century ago (cf Żurowski 1961; 1963). The artefact "discovered" earlier this year is a small piece of the blade with the complete tang and hilt furniture, representing the D-type, dated to the B₂ phase and the beginning of the Late Roman Period (Biborski 1978, pp.125-128).

Conclusion

What has been presented above, despite its anecdotal manner at some points, shows that the previous interpretation of the scarce number of finds of Roman Period swords within the **West Balt Circle is still valid**. It cannot be excluded though, that some of the numerous fragmentary pieces of blades retained in the collection of the Prussia Museum are fragments of Roman Period swords, but this fact does not put a new slant on the matter. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the reasons why the *Aestii* used these weapons so rarely.

A number of swords have been found in graves exceptionally rich in their equipment (Khrustal'noe and Sz wajcaria), which can be interpreted as a basis to formulate the thesis that swords within the **West Balt Circle were first of all used as "parade weapons" or "prestige weapons"**, whose function was an expression of their owner's prestige in society rather than being a tool for fighting. Without negating such claims, it is worth pointing out that at almost every grave complex a find of a sword has been accompanied by pieces of equestrian equipment: spurs or parts of a harness. Obviously, mounting a horse might also have been an indicator of high social rank; this, however, does not exclude the possibility that swords within the **West Balt Circle belonged to the specialised weaponry of cavalry**. Such an interpretation is acceptable in the case of the long Late Roman Period *spathae*, but it does not seem acceptable in the case of short *gladii* and single-

edged swords dated to the first or second century AD; such swords are thought to have been infantry rather than cavalry weapons. Still, we have to bear in mind that ancient horsemen had neither stirrups nor a stable saddle, so the most effective use of a long sword – cutting from above, which had to be performed while standing in stirrups – was impossible. In such cases a more effective weapon could have been a short sword enabling quick forceful thrusts and deep penetration: a characteristically shaped point of a single-edged sword from Mojtyny/Moythienen ("a Finnish knife tip"), indicating its best usefulness for thrusting, was pointed out by Marcin Biborski nearly 30 years ago (Biborski 1978, p.132). Today, we can add to this the similarly shaped single-edged sword from Koczek, or the narrow long-foibled sword from Sibirskoe.

An example of a similar use of the short sword, useful for thrusting, can be found within weaponry and combat ways of the nomadic Scythians (Grekov 1978, pp.81-84, Fig. 20-22), whose invasions terrorised Eastern and Central Europe in the middle of the first millennium BC. The most important weapon for a Scythian horseman was an exquisite bow, but for close-quarter combat he used an *akinakes*, a very short sword, whose length did not exceed the length of long knives found in male graves in the West Balt cemeteries (Nowakowski 1994, pp.386-387).

Accepting the hypothesis that the main and intentionally chosen weapon of the *Aestii* in the first and second century AD was a short sword or a long knife opens up the possibility of further interpretations. Thus, it might well be considered whether the instance of shortening the sword from Khrustal'noe was in fact only the outcome of repairing its broken blade, or whether it might rather have been an intended act in adjusting its length to the requirements of the preferred way of combat. Such an approach could enable us to understand the puzzling presence of a dagger or a short double-edged sword with a mere 25-centimetre-long blade at the burial ground in Łażne/Haasznen (Fig. 1: 5), in the northeast of Masuria (Stadie 1919, 415, described as "*Waffe (Dolch?)*"; Gaerte 1929, Fig. 197: a; cf Fundarchiv PM-IXd1.1559, Bd. 1/9 "*Eisenmesser*"). The list of very short double-edged swords can then be extended by the find from Fedotovo (formerly Plauen), in Nadrowia (Fig. 1: 1; cf Bezenberger 1900), known exclusively from a drawing from H. Jankuhn's record files (Fig. 2: 5). The wide and flat blade of this "sword" was only 26 centimetres long (H. Jankuhn Archive). This sword was purchased in 1891 for the collection of the Prussia Museum (№ IV.447.6297) with other accidentally discovered finds dated to the Roman Period and to the Early Middle Ages (Bezenberger 1892, p.221; 1900, p.124). The difference in size between the

⁵ I would like to thank Ludwika Sawicka, who is researching materials from the settlement of Szurpily-Targowisko, Suwalki district, for this information.

two artefacts and West Balt combat knives, contemporary with them, is not particularly big (Szymański 2005, p. 67–68, pl. XXII: 4, XXIV: 6).

The view of first and second-century AD West Balt cavalry armed mainly with combat knives, similarly shaped single-edged swords, and very short double-edged swords or daggers, is based on weak and scarce premises. It can only be taken into consideration if an explanation is searched for in a particular situation when we can rarely find swords, weapons highly valued by other barbarians, in rich graves of warriors in Masuria, or on the Sambian Peninsula. Taking into account any doubts, we can support this hypothesis by referring to the most spectacular find of weapons within the **West Balt Circle: the famous pugio** in a silver-encrusted scabbard from the cemetery in Divnoe (formerly Ilischken; Gvardejsk district; formerly Kreis Wehlau; Bujack 1891, p. 12; Gaerte 1929, Abb. 159: g). It might well be that the dagger reached so far north because it was only there that it had been a more desired gift than, for example, an equally valuable and effective *gladius* with an ivory pommel on the hilt. Such a *gladius* would probably have had to be shortened, as the sword from Khrustal'noe had been, to fit the method of fighting applied by the *Aestii*. Regrettably, such deliberations, although much more enjoyable than investigating dusty archive materials, belong to fantasy stories.

Translated by Beata Maria Furga

Archive materials and archaeological collections

- Fundarchiv – Archives of archaeological discoveries and finds in the Prussia Museum, Königsberg; currently at the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin, shelfmark PM-IXd1.
- R. Grenz Archive – Scientific archives of Rudolf Grenza, currently stored at the Archäologisches Landesmuseum Schleswig.
- M. Jahn Archive – Scientific archives of Martina Jahna, currently stored at the Instytut Archeologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw.
- F. Jakobson Archive – Scientific archives of Felix Jakobson, currently stored at the Latvijas Nacionālās Vēstures Muzejs, Riga.
- H. Jankuhn Archive – Scientific archives of Herbert Jankuhn, currently stored at the Archäologisches Landesmuseum Schleswig.
- Prussia-Sammlung – Old collections of the Prussia Museum, Königsberg, currently stored at the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin.
- Sbornik – Accession book of the Prussia Museum, Königsberg, covering the years 1937–1938, currently stored at the Istoriko-chudozhestvennyi muzei, Kaliningrad, shelfmark. N 3, 113, Sbornik sluch. nachodok 1937/1938 gg.

M. Schmiedehelm Archive – Scientific archives of Marta Schmiedehelm, currently stored at the Aialoo Institut, Tallinn, Fondi nr 22.

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AESTIORUM GLADII. ROMĒNIŠKOJO LAIKOTARPIO VAKARŲ BALTŲ KULTŪRŲ RATO KALAVIJAI

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Santrauka

Iki XIX a. 10-ojo dešimtmečio vidurio vakarų baltų kultūrų rate (Mozūrija, Sembos pusiasalis, Natangi-ja ir Nadruva, kitaip tariant, buvusi Rytų Prūsija bei

Suvalkijos dalis, esanti Šiaurės rytų Lenkijoje) tebuvo žinoma 10 romėniškojo laikotarpio kalavijų. Tik pusė jų buvo publikuoti pagrindžiant turima medžiaga (Mojtyny, Mrągowo apskritis, kapas 27, buv. Moythienen, Sensburgo apskritis; Grunajki, Gołdap apskritis, buv. Gruneyken, Darkehmen apskritis; Chrystal'noe, Zelenogradsko rajonas, kapas XXXIV, buv. Wiekau, Fischhauseno apskritis; Szwajcaria, Suvalkų apskritis, pilkapiai 2 ir 25) (1 pav.). Net prabėgus 12 metų nuo Marburgo konferencijos, skirtos romėniškojo laikotarpio romėnų ir barbarų ginkluotei, aptariamo regiono paminklų tyrinėjimuose nebuvo rasta nė vieno naujo kalavijo. Proveržis įvyko tuomet, kai archeologai galėjo laisvai prieiti ir naudotis buvusio „Prussia“ muziejaus kolekcijomis ir archyvine medžiaga, rasta Berlyne ir Kaliningrade. Gerokai padidėjusi mokslinių šaltinių bazė suteikė informacijos apie kelis tūkstančius kapų kompleksų ir dešimtis tūkstančių radinių. Prasipletusi šaltinių bazė ir prasidėję tarptautiniai moksliniai tyrimai suteikė galimybę dar kartą peržiūrėti senųjų tyrinėjimų medžiagą ir seniau išsakytas tyrinėtojų nuomones.

Pastaraisiais metais gauti nauji archyviniai duomenys pirmiausia leido surinkti visus įmanomus duomenis apie esamus radinius. Kalaviją rastą Sibirskoje Polesko rajone (buv. Moritten, Labiau apskritis), tapo įmanoma priskirti M. Biborskio B/1 tipui ir visą kompleksą datuoti B2a periodu. Dėl tos pačios priežasties kalaviją iš Koczek (Pisz apskritis, buv. Kotzeck, Johannisburgo apskritis) buvo galima priskirti D/2 tipui ir visą kompleksą datuoti vėlyvuoju B2 periodu. Rasti archyviniai duomenys buvo labai naudingi kalavijui iš Skomack Wielki (Elko apskritis, buv. Skomatzko, Lycko apskritis), Rytų Mozūrų regionas, priskirti VIII grupei pagal M. Biborskio klasifikaciją (2: 2–3 pav.). Tokie kalavijai pasirodo ankstyvuoju romėniškoju laikotarpiu abipus Romos imperijos sienos, šis kalavijų tipas dažnai pasitaikydavo ir barbaricum platybėse. Kalavijas iš Skomack Wielki buvo rastas kartu su pentinų (Ginalska C/1 tipas), būdingų Pševorsko kultūrai ir datuojamų B1 periodu, pora. Kalavijų sąrašą, sudarytą remiantis rasta archyvine medžiaga, baigia kalavijas iš Parusnoje, Zelenogradsko rajonas (buv. Gaffken, Fischhauseno apskritis) (2: 4 pav.). Rastas šio kalavijo piešinys ir aprašas leidžia jį priskirti V tipui ir datuoti B2 periodu.

Rasta archyvinė medžiaga ir archeologiniai muziejų rinkiniai suteikia naujos informacijos apie jau žinomus radinius. Tačiau pabrėžtina, kad gerokai pasipildžiusi duomenų bazė romėniškojo laikotarpio kalavijų paplitimo ribų vakarų baltų kultūrų rate nepraplečia, išskyrus Šurpiluose (Szurpily) rasto vienašmenio kalavijo dalį (1: 10 pav.). Šis kalavijas žinomas iš Tadeuszo Žu-

rowskio, kuris maždaug prieš 50 metų žvalgė Šurpilų apylinkėse, kolekcijos.

Taigi romėniškoju laikotarpiu vakarų baltų kultūrų rate kalavijai buvo naudojami retai, ir šio požiūrio rasti archyvai ir muziejiniai rinkiniai iš esmės nepakeitė, nors gali būti, kad „Prussia“ muziejaus rinkinyje dar yra pavienių neidentifikuotų šio laikotarpio kalavijų geležčių fragmentų. Todėl reikia svarstyti, kodėl *Aestii* kalavijus naudojo taip retai. Reikia pažymėti, kad vos ne visuose šio laikotarpio kapuose randama raiteliams būdingų dirbinių: pentinų ar kamanų dalių. Tai įgalina kelti prielaidą, kad vakarų baltų kultūrų rate kalavijai buvo specialus raitelio ginklas. Tačiau kyla mintis, kad I–II a. trumpas *gladii* tipo ginklas ir vienašmenis kalavijas buvo greičiau pėstininko nei raitelio ginklas. Reikia prisiminti, kad to laikotarpio raiteliai neturėjo balnakilpių ir patvaraus, nejudamai pritvirtinto balno, todėl efektyvus ilgo kalavijo naudojimas kirčiams iš viršaus buvo negalimas. Todėl raiteliams puolant, greitiems stipriems smūgiams priešininkui suduoti buvo daug patogiau naudoti vienašmenį, lenkta rankena kalaviją, panašų į rastąjį Moythienen. Tokią galimybę dar prieš 30 metų yra aptaręs Marcinas Biborskis. Toks kalavijas, esantis „Prussia“ muziejaus kolekcijoje, žinomas iš Koczek kapinyno, kapo 122 (3 pav.). Ilgas siauras kalavijas žinomas iš Morritten.

Iškėlus hipotezę, kad trumpus ginklus (25–26 cm ilgio), skirtus stipriems kirčiams priešininkui suduoti, galima manyti buvus kalavijais, būtent tokiems reikia priskirti kalavijus iš Łažne (Olecko apskritis, buv. Haasznen, Oletzko apskritis), kapo 59, ir Plauen (Wehlau apskritis). Tačiau prielaida, kad I–II a. vakarų baltų kultūrų rato raiteliai daugiausia buvo ginkluoti kovos peiliais, panašios formos kalavijais ir labai trumpais dviašmeniais kalavijais ar kovos peiliais, yra labai menkai paremta medžiaga. Todėl svarstant, kodėl kalavijai, t. y. ginklai, taip vertinami kitų barbarų, vakarų baltų kultūrų rate yra randami retai, atsakymo reiktų ieškoti konkrečiuose turtingų karių iš Sembos pusiasalio ir Mozūrijos kapuose, atsižvelgiant į jų radimo aplinkybes.