

REMARKS ON MALE BURIALS IN THE CEMETERY OF OBERHOF (AUKŠTKIEMIAI)

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Abstract

In Oberhof (Aukštkiemiai, western Lithuania) cemetery, several groups of weapon furnishings can be distinguished. “Sword graves” occupy the central positions when charted on a reconstructed plan of the burial site. Graves are located further away from these centres as the number of weapons contained decreases. Weapon equipment is a key to deciphering the spatial structure of the cemetery.

Key words: male burials, weapon equipment, cemetery structure, Migration Period.

Introduction

The cemetery of Oberhof (nowadays Aukštkiemiai, in the Klaipėda district) is situated today in western Lithuania, northeast of Klaipėda. It was excavated from 1886 to 1888 by Otto Tischler, and in 1894 by Alfred Jentsch, Heinrich Kemke and Kretschmann. They investigated more than 4,225 square metres and 452 graves. The cemetery was used from the Roman Iron Age up to the Early Medieval Period, from the third to the 12th century respectively. Oberhof has always been perceived as one of the reference cemeteries which provide the basis for the chronological phasing of Eastern Prussia by O. Tischler. Nevertheless, apart from short reports by Tischler¹, some illustrations, mentions and references in the literature, the material remained unpublished. Until the Second World War the material and documentation were housed in the *Prussia Museum* in Königsberg. During and after the war the archaeological collection of the *Prussia Museum* in the custody of the *Landesamt für Vorgeschichte* was torn apart and badly damaged. For more than 40 years the whereabouts of the whole collection were unknown. Today, a part of the collection is kept in the *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*².

As no inventory books, especially no catalogue of Oberhof, have survived, the grave units have to be reconstructed. This is possible by means of the preserved objects and the archive material in Berlin, combined with references in literature, old photographs and sketches in other archives.

The reconstruction of grave units

Before entering into the main discussion of this paper, it is worthwhile giving a short overview of the sources and their quality, since these factors naturally affect the derivation of subsequent conclusions.

Originally 3,073 inventory numbers existed, 1,553 of them are kept in Berlin today. In addition, 31 ceramic vessels are in the *Museum Warmii i Mazur* in Olsztyn. Every item originally carried a small label with a consecutive number. The objects were fixed on a cardboard sheet organized by graves (Plate II. 2). Occasionally, inventory numbers are also written directly on the carrier cardboard using a pencil. Only a part of these cardboards have survived, and many objects have fallen off (Plate II. 2). Sometimes the tags were also lost. In the process of reconstruction and re-identification, such objects could be successfully reassigned to the appropriate grave.

Most importantly, the preserved archive material includes descriptions of the graves written by O. Tischler. These were complemented by typed copies made in 1943. Sometimes they are accompanied by little sketches or plans of the graves on graph paper. Such descriptions are provided for 230 graves respectively, 313 graves and findings. In some cases, the original descriptions as well as the typewritten copies are very badly preserved. In addition, the typed copies contain frequent mistakes caused by misinterpretation of the original; in particular the coordinate system Tischler used for his excavation was not understood any more (see below). There are no descriptions for the graves discovered in 1894.

Other important sources which connect inventory numbers with grave numbers are a list of the Roman coins found in Oberhof and small “inventory cards”, which

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¹ Tischler 1887, 1888a; 1888b, 1889, 1891.

² Reich 2003, 2004/05.

were possibly made for storage purposes. Photographs, illustrations in the literature and sketches in archives give further hints. All this information provides a rough framework of association between inventory numbers and graves.

The most important resource concerning the reconstruction is the so-called *Tischlerscher Zettelkatalog*, which is kept today in the *Museum Warmii i Mazur* in Olsztyn. It includes 341 file cards referring to Oberhof. Although its original function is unknown, it seems that it reflects the state of the former inventory. Probably, it was used in order to check the collection. Every card lists the contents of a grave, albeit without inventory numbers. The *Zettelkatalog* hence allows us to determine the range of inventory numbers for one grave by comparison with preserved objects, other sources and counting.

The data given in Tischler's descriptions and those of the *Zettelkatalog* sometimes deviate. The descriptions seem to have been written during the excavations. Some objects were saved en bloc and shown later in the museum. Also, some items were only properly recognized after conservation, as later additions to the descriptions show. Hence, the *Zettelkatalog* is the more reliable source concerning the grave contents, as compared to the original descriptions.

In the following, the procedure used in the reconstruction of the contents of a burial will be explained, using the example of grave 75 (Pl. II. 2): two inventory numbers, 18285 and 18286, are written on the cardboard. Concluding from the shadows, a sickle and a spearhead were mounted on it. A wooden sub-construction for a neck-ring (18277) and the fragment of a snaffle-bit (18281) were still fixed on the cardboard. The filing card from the *Zettelkatalog* for grave 75 records a sword, a socketed axe, a sickle, a whetstone, two spearheads, a snaffle-bit with horsehead-shaped endings, one bracelet, two spiral rings, three amber beads, two bronze fibulae, a silver neck-ring and a small whetstone.

Based on this information, the fragments of two fibulae (18275 and 18276), the bracelet with club-shaped terminals (18278), the flint stone (18287) and the second fragment of the snaffle-bit existing in Berlin could be assigned to this burial. These items are preserved, but had come undone from the cardboard.

As the arm-ring with club-shaped ends was published by Nils Åberg in 1919³, a sketch of one of the fibulae is available in his archive. Sketches and descriptions of the neck-ring and of one spearhead can be found in the archive of Marta Schmiedehelm.

³ Åberg 1919, Fig. 187.

Naturally, this method does not lead to exact results for every grave, since not all file cards of the *Zettelkatalog* are preserved⁴, and other available sources are similarly more or less incomplete. Additional information on objects from Oberhof can be found in the archives of Herbert Jankuhn, Rudolf Grenz, Carl Engel, Bernhard Salin, Carl-Axel Moberg and Fēliks Jākobson.

No complete plan of the cemetery has survived. A fragmented plan is available, which shows the areas excavated by Tischler and their chronological classification. On this plan a coordinate system can be recognized with Arabic numbers on the x- and Roman numbers on the y-axis. Negative numbers are marked by a short horizontal bar above the figure. This corresponds to the method which Tischler described in his preliminary report⁵. Tischler excavated in 10 by 10 metre squares. The lists, in which the corresponding quadrant is recorded for every grave, are completely preserved in the archive of the *Prussia Museum*.

Often precise coordinates are given in the descriptions of the burials. The position within a quadrant is marked by subscript figures. Sometimes it is possible to determine the coordinates using the detailed plan of a grave, but occasionally they are missing entirely. This is especially the case for all burials excavated in 1894, where only the quadrants are known. For around 170 graves and 80 findings, exact coordinates are available or can be reconstructed. By transferring them into a metric system, it was possible to reconstruct a plan of the cemetery (Fig. 1). On this plan, different types as well as equipment patterns can be mapped. If the exact coordinates of a grave are unknown, it is very important to chart the corresponding quadrant nevertheless. Otherwise, the use of this data could result in distorted distribution patterns.

Presents of weapons in the graves and grave categories

The sources, damaged and incomplete as they are, nevertheless offer a sound basis for looking at the combinations of weapons and other grave goods in the male burials of Oberhof. As bones are not preserved, and some of them were already disintegrated when the excavation took place, we can only rely on the gender as determinable by the associated archaeological finds. In the following table (Fig. 2), which shows the

⁴ There is, besides occasionally missing cards, a particularly big gap between grave 304 and 358. Distinctively fewer cards are preserved for graves with higher numbers than that. However, for the burials excavated in 1894, the *Tischlersche Zettelkatalog* is often the only source of information.

⁵ Tischler 1888, p.14 f.

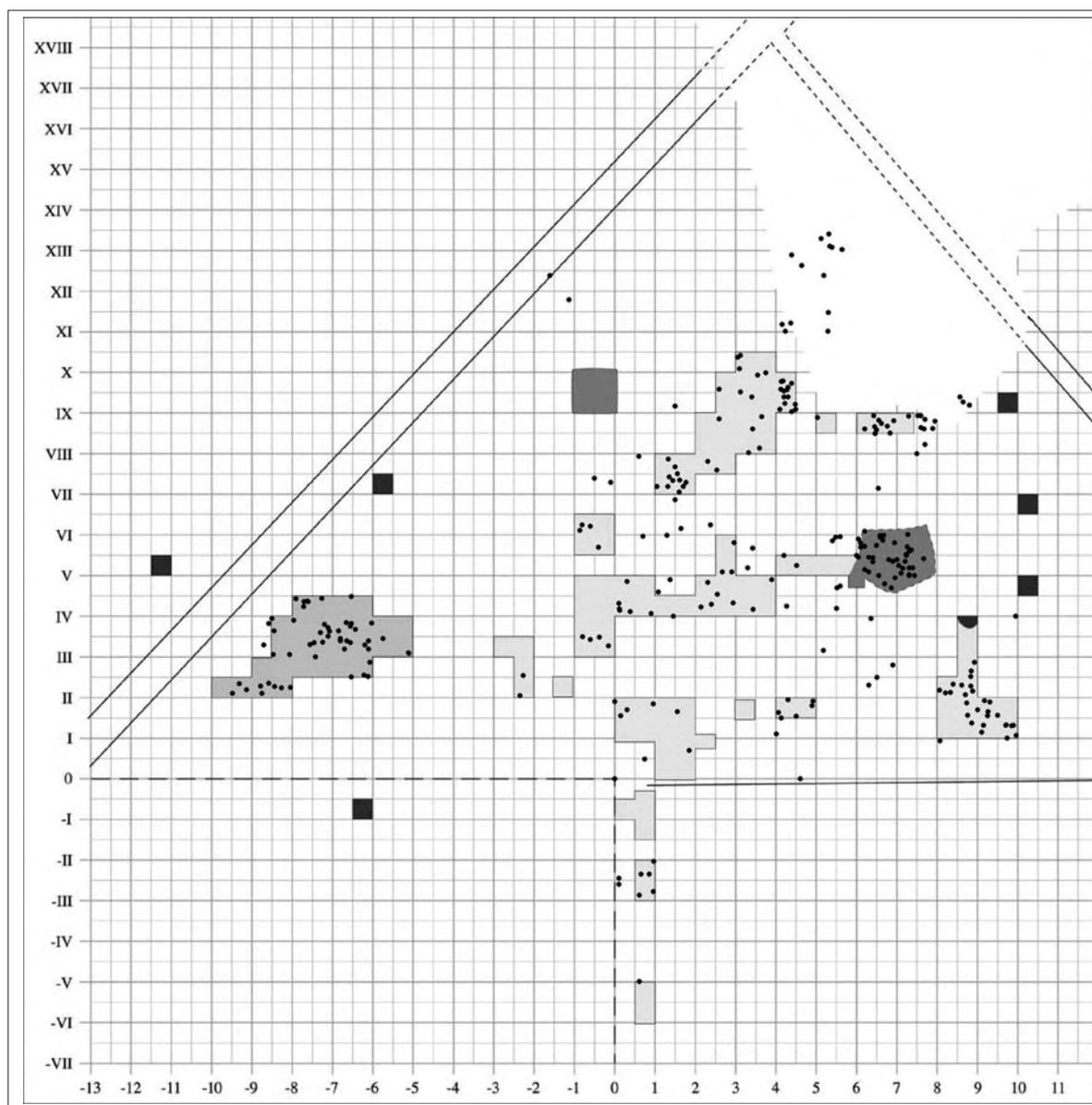


Fig. 1. A reconstructed plan of the cemetery with the digitized version of Otto Tischler's plan mounted underneath.

combinations of grave items, only graves which can be addressed clearly as male burials are taken into consideration. The table includes 156 graves⁶. The graves are arranged independent of their chronological classification. Instead, the number and combination of weapons, swords or battle-knives, spearheads, axes, and tools, that is sickles⁷ and whetstones, were used as clustering factors.

⁶ Graves without weapons or tools are not included in this table. Graves with knives or drinking horn mounts are also missing, if there are no other items to indicate a male burial, although the latter are often regarded to be men's graves. The same applies for graves with horse bones or teeth, snaffle-bits or spurs.

⁷ In the *Zettelkatalog* as well as in the descriptions the term *Sichel* (sickle) is used. Obviously some of those that survived look rather like scythes. But because these are few, I will stick for this study to the term originally used.

Burials of the first group are characterized by containing a sword or a large knife. As none of these swords or knives is preserved completely, we can only rely on the descriptions. It is not sure if a so called "large knife" really had a size to make it suitable to be a battle-knife. Only the length of the knives from graves 132, 399 and 406 can be reconstructed. They are 30 to 37 centimetres long, which makes them, according to Kazakevičius, proper fighting knives⁸. In his descriptions of graves 132, 75, 77, 141, 111 and 68, Tischler talks of swords, only in the *Zettelkatalog* they are called *grosses Messer* (large knife). So it seems that they are at least long enough to be suitable battle-knives. This group also includes graves with two knives, assuming that one of them is significantly larger than a normal knife, even though this is only mentioned explicitly in

⁸ Kazakevičius 1988, p.145 f.

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| grave | brooch | pin | neck ring | arming | fingerring | bead | bronze spiral | miniature comb | miniature spur | buckle | fitting | rivet | strap-distributor | bridle bit | spur | sheaf-fitting | knife | sword | spearhead | socketed axe | miniature axe | axe | shield boss | sickle | whetstone | fire steel | coin | pot | other items | period | remarks |
|-------|---------|-----|-----------|--------|------------|------|---------------|----------------|----------------|--------|---------|-------|-------------------|------------|------|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----|-------------|--------|-----------|------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|
| 108 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1Bz? | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 156 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| 419 | 2+1(Ag) | | 2F | 1SA | 4 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | MA/G | |
| 158 | | | 1 | 1SA | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | KZ | |
| 356 | | | | 2 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 3 | | | | KZ | |
| 232 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1?? | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | Bz | | | |
| 236 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 196 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | KZ | |
| 355 | 1Ag | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | KZ | |
| 231 | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 3 | 2 birch bark | | | KZ | |
| 380 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1SA | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | KZ | |
| 351 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 2 | | | | KZ | |
| 244 | | | | 2SA | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | KZ | |
| 157 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | KZ | |
| 241a | 1? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | stone | | | |
| 39 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 54 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 98 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 101 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 117 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 128 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 230 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 233 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | KZ |
| 252 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 368 | | | | | | | | | | 1Fe | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 224 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1F | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 397 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | D | |
| 400 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | | | | 1Fe | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | textil | | D | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 93 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 113 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 114 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 165 | | | 1F | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 161 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | KZ |
| 49 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 151 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 190 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 191 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 239 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 250 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 436 | 1 | | 2 | 5+1SA | 1 | >1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 3 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | chain | MA | cremation | |
| 440 | 2 | | 1 | 1?+1SA | 1 | 1F | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 2? | | | | | 1 mini-weaving plate, 2 mini-spindles | MA | cremation | |
| 429 | 2 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 strap end, Fe-rings | MA | cremation | | |
| 293 | 3 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1ki | | | | 4 strap ends, leather with Bz | MA | | | |
| 423 | 1 | | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | 1 | | | | MA | | |
| 420 | 2 | | | 6 | 1? | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | MA | | |
| 278 | 1 | | | | 1+1F | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 drinkinghorn mount | F | | |
| 452 | 1 | | | | | 1B | | | | 1Fe | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 Bz-ring | MA | | |
| 290 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | MA | | |
| 288 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | MA | |
| 297 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | MA | |
| 299 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | MA | |
| 411 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1? | | | | | | 1 | | | skullfrag. | MA? | | |
| 344 | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 5 weapons | KZ | | |
| 213 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1F | | | | | | | | Bz | | | |
| 364 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 376 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 225 | 1 | | | | | 1? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | 1F(Ag) | | | | 1F | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 390 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 162 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 209 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 71 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 261 | 1 | | 1 | | | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 369 | 2 | 1 | 1Ag | | 1 | | 1 | | | 1+1Fe | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 21 | 2 Bz-fittings, plane | KZ | | |
| 377 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | | | KZ |
| 109 | 1F | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Fe?, horsebones + teeth? | | |
| 256 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1F | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | VWZ |
| 121 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | E |
| 89 | 1F | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 64 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 187 | 1F | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | KZ |
| 59 | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 366 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | KZ |
| 246 | | | 1F | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 Bz with leather? | | |
| 83 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 204 | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | KZ |
| 106 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | VWZ |

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the case of grave 68. Only for grave 75 is a *Schwert* (sword) recorded in the *Zettelkatalog*. M. Schmiedehelm describes the big knife from grave 399 as a “*Skramasax*”.

The group of graves with swords or battle-knives is very small in number, it contains only 11 graves. It is striking that, except for grave 163⁹, and graves 141, 111 and 133, which cannot be dated, all the graves belong to the Migration Period. The sword or battle-knife is combined with one or two spearheads, a socketed axe and a sickle. Concerning the ornaments, these graves have a tendency to be a bit richer; three burials contain silver objects (brooches, neck-rings or bracelets). However, it is hard to see a distinctive pattern for the costume components.

The knives in all the other groups seem to be smaller, even if we cannot rule out the possibility that there is a larger knife among them. In the *Zettelkatalog* or in the descriptions they are referred to simply as *Messer* (knives). Where knives or fragments of them, as far as they can be determined, are preserved, they represent small or medium-sized knives.

Burials of the second group contain two spearheads. In those with a socketed axe, often a sickle and a whetstone is found too. Knives occur occasionally. The associated ornaments are similar in their composition to the first group, although no striking pattern is discernable. There are also graves without any jewellery¹⁰.

The third and biggest group are graves that contain a single spearhead. In almost half of the cases the spearhead is found in combination with an axe. Sickles with whetstones are found regularly, knives appear less frequently. Whereas ornaments generally occur less often in this first subgroup, they are much more common in several graves with only a spearhead as a weapon. Knives also appear more often. Sickles are found in a third of the graves.

Graves of the next group contain an axe as the only weapon, potentially accompanied by a sickle; other grave items are rare. Only grave 400 is very well furnished with ornaments.

On the other hand, burials with miniature axes are very well equipped with ornaments and belt accessories.

⁹ Grave 15, which can be dated to the Roman Iron Age, may have contained a sword too. But the description by Tischler differs from the entry in the *Zettelkatalog*, where the “sword”, the knife and the snaffle-bit are not mentioned. As the *Zettelkatalog* was the main source for this table, grave 15 was put into the second group.

¹⁰ The suspicion that some of them might be disturbed or incomplete cannot be confirmed, eg the description of grave 174 says clearly that it is “*ungestört*” (undisturbed). Also, the description of grave 45 shows that it is undoubtedly a closed find.

As far as these burials can be dated, they all belong to the Early Medieval Period. It is striking that only three graves of this period are equipped with more weapons: grave 435 with two spearheads, grave 449 with one spearhead and a miniature axe, and grave 419 with one spearhead. None of these graves contains a sword or an axe suitable for combat. Therefore, men appear much less as warriors in the graves of the Early Medieval Period as compared to the burials of the other periods. Maybe their role in life was different, and they engaged more as peasants and merchants than warriors, or weapons were no longer an indicator for the social or military position of the deceased, that it was not important any more to express this position in the grave by adding weapons¹¹.

There are only five graves in Oberhof with shield bosses. Only grave 15 contains rich weapon equipment, and in grave 344 a shield boss occurs with other *Waffen* (weapons). It cannot be explained why there are so few shield bosses in Oberhof. Although the descriptions for four of these graves are very short or non-existent, the inventory seems to be complete. On the other hand, shield bosses are suspiciously absent in nearly all well-equipped and documented male burials.

Graves of the last group contain no weapons but sickles and whetstones. Apart from the missing weapons, they show wealth and equipment similar to that of the weapon graves, especially concerning the ornaments. For example, grave 369 contains, among other things, a splendid silver neck-ring and 21(!) coins, which is the largest amount of Roman coins in a grave in Oberhof. Certainly, the number and assemblage of weapons is not necessarily an indicator of the wealth of the deceased or his family. It seems that in male burials the rules underlying the provision of ornaments differ from those for weapons, that the weapons in a grave might indicate something different to the ornaments. This is further supported by the offering of horses, snaffle-bits and spurs. Although most graves with horse remains, snaffle-bits and spurs belong to the group of graves with one spearhead and an axe, they are present in all kinds of men’s graves. Even among graves without weapons, there are two burials with spurs, one of them with horse remains as well.

Maybe the number and the sort of weapons in a male burial indicate a certain status of the deceased, not nec-

¹¹ Two chapes from the Viking Age were found in Oberhof (inv. no. 7994 and 8108). One is a stray find, the other one is from a feature which was probably a disturbed grave. Both were situated in areas which are at the edge of the distribution of Early Medieval Period burials with miniature axes. So another explanation may be that warriors with swords were buried in other places, perhaps also with different burial rites.

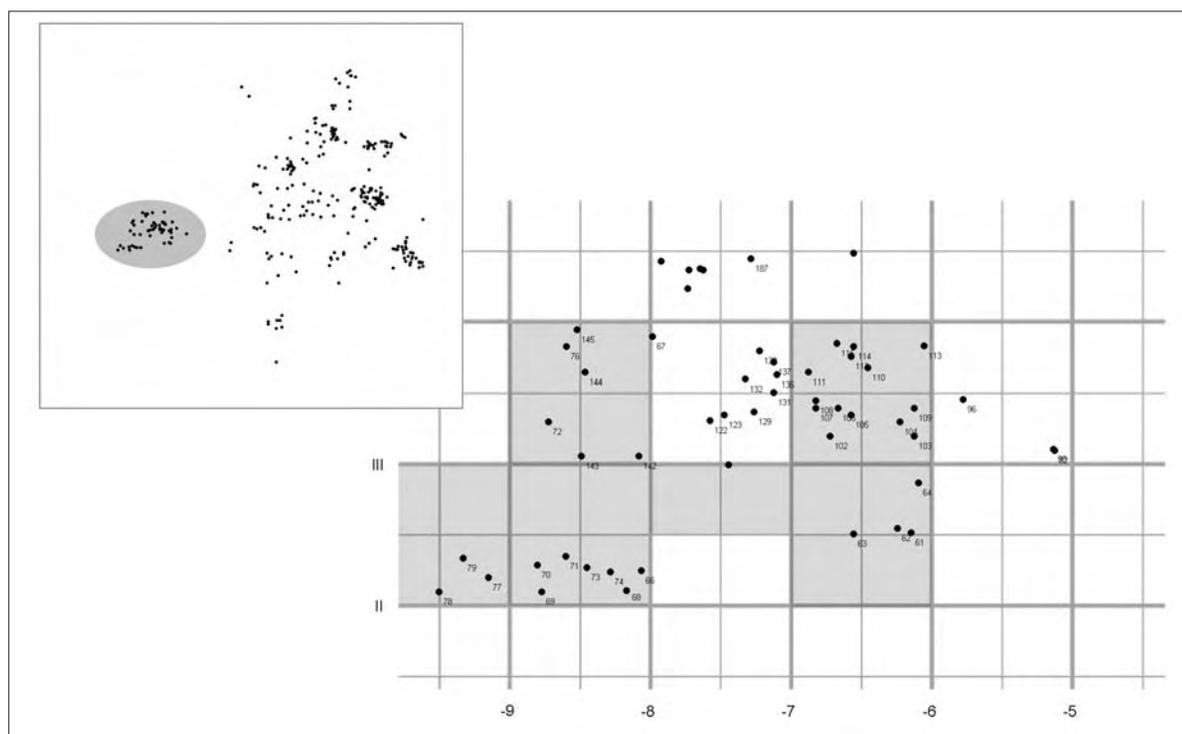


Fig. 3. Southwestern grave group. Quadrants with detailed coordinates for all graves are shaded grey.

essarily a military rank, but his position in society as a man allowed and able to carry arms. This surely was also co-dependent on his age and wealth.

So far, it is not quite clear how big the influence of time on the different groups of weapon assemblies is. As previously stated, most of the graves with swords are from the Migration Period, and male burials of the Early Medieval Period mainly contain only a miniature axe as the only “weapon”. In other grave groups the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period mixed, even if in some groups the burials from the Roman Iron Age seem to predominate. But we have to keep in mind that not all graves are datable.

Distribution of weapon furnishings

The determined groups of male burials can be mapped on a reconstructed plan of the cemetery. The remainder of this discussion will focus on the southwestern part of the cemetery¹² (Fig. 3), which recommends itself for several reasons. To begin with, this area can be viewed as temporally homogeneous, as the spectrum of fibulae found in this area indicates¹³ that it was mainly used in

¹² The following results are also valid for other parts of the cemetery, though they can be pointed out best at this area.

¹³ Especially star-footed brooches, *Armbrustfibeln mit festem Nadelhalter* (crossbow brooches with full catch-plate), *Schlusskreuzfibeln*, the younger form of *Armbrustfibeln mit ungeschlagenem Fuß und Ringarnitur* (crossbow brooches with wire decoration) and the only bow fibula (cf Reich, forthcoming).

the Migration Period. Further, this zone of the cemetery is large enough to allow more extensive conclusions to be drawn. Finally, this area is quite well documented. It includes nine 10 by 10 metre squares. In five of them (-6 III, -8 III, -6 II, -8 II and -9 II¹⁴) the detailed coordinates for all graves are known. We can be certain that areas indicated to be without graves are really vacant of findings. In quadrants -7 III and -5 III detailed coordinates are only known for at most half of the graves, the remaining graves are strewn somewhere within the corresponding square, so that gaps in these quadrants’ maps cannot be reliably interpreted as an absence of graves, but must be viewed as a lack of cartographic information.

At least three subgroups can be distinguished in the southwestern part of the cemetery: one in the southwest from grave 78 to grave 66, a second in the east with graves 113, 109, 104, 103 and 63 at the border, to the big third group in the middle. The middle concentration of burials may originally have consisted of at least two or three groups, but this cannot be verified, due to the lack of data. At least there is an empty space between graves 145 and 144 and the eastern border of quadrant -8III. Therefore, the western part may be separated from the middle group.

¹⁴ It is not entirely clear if the southern part of quadrant -7 II was really vacant of finds. Tischler had, according to his plan of excavated areas and his descriptions, investigated only the upper half of the quadrant. It does not seem that A. Jentzsch, H. Kemke and Kretschman excavated here again; at least there are no graves known from this part of the quadrant.

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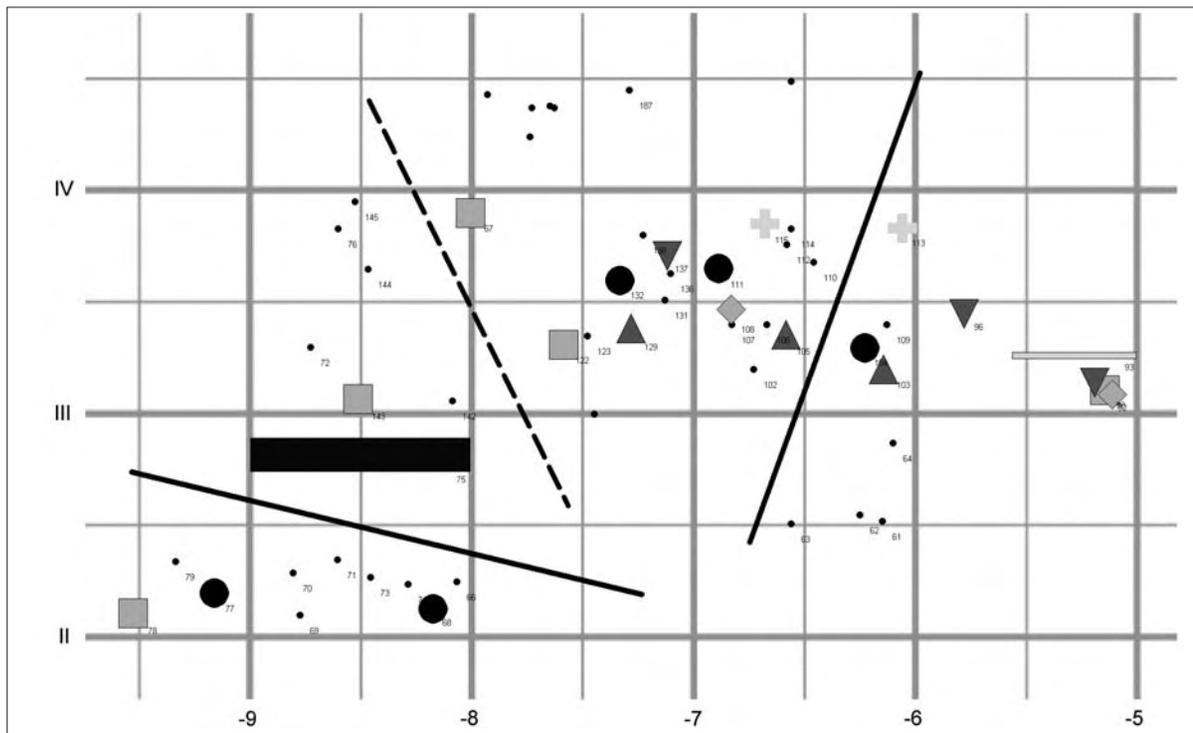


Fig. 4. The distribution of weapon furnishings in the southwestern grave group: burials with a sword or a large knife (●), with two spearheads and an axe (▲), with two spearheads (▼), with one spearhead and an axe (■), with a single spearhead (◇), and with only an axe (⚔).

The observation that the descriptions of the graves as well as of the excavated quadrants are full of gaps applies to the whole cemetery as well as to the grave group under discussion. Stone circles or cells are mentioned for the eastern part of quadrant -5 III, where graves 92, 93, 98 and 99 might be connected with them, and for the southern part of -9 II. Graves 78 and 77 were situated within a stone circle. Remains of stone circles were found near graves 76 and 68. Apart from negative influences on the information due to missing descriptions, Tischler reports that parts of the cemetery were disturbed and that stones had been taken from the stone cells¹⁵. So even if Tischler mentioned, for example, for the northern half of -6 III only “wenige Steine” (few stones), we cannot be sure if this represents the original or is due to the preservation conditions.

Concerning the weapon equipment, the graves connected with stone circles belong to various groups: with a sword or battle knife (graves 68 and 77), with two (grave 99) or one spearhead (graves 78, 92 and 98). Grave 76 is a very well-furnished female burial. There is no observable connection between weapon equipment and grave architecture.

If the weapon equipment of burials as determined from the data is charted on the site plan (Fig. 4)¹⁶, the graves

with swords or battle-knives seem to take a central position, especially within the proposed subgroups. They are surrounded by graves with one or two spearheads. As the number of weapons diminishes, graves are located further away from the “sword grave”¹⁷. Burials containing only an axe are found on the periphery. Men’s graves without weapons, that is with a sickle or a whetstone, are also located on the border¹⁸. Which and how many weapons a man possessed in his lifetime determined the place in which he was buried, as it may have determined his position within the community of Oberhof.

Looking at the proposed subgroups, one “sword grave” is located in the eastern group, two in the southwestern group, four in the middle group and another one in its western part, which may itself form a separate group. In the southwestern group grave 77, which contains a fibula which is described as “Bronzefibel m.[it] Nadelscheide” (a crossbow brooch with full catch-

¹⁷ In order to keep the map readable, graves of which only the quadrant is known are not charted. There are two more graves with battle knives and one with two spearheads and an axe in Quadrant -7III and one burial with two spearheads in -7IV. Additional graves furnished with one spearhead are situated in -7III, -7IV, -6IV and -5III. This distribution confirms the general result.

¹⁸ Graves 187, 71 and 64. Grave 106, situated within the middle group, might be disturbed, as Tischler suggested in his description. The only exception is grave 109, in which, among other things, two spurs and the remains of a horse were found.

¹⁵ Tischler 1888, p.15.

¹⁶ For graves 75 and 93, only a part of the coordinates are known. Therefore, they appear as rectangles in the site plan.

plate)¹⁹, might be dated to phase D, whereas grave 68 with a fibula which shows a little rung at the end of the bow is younger and may be set in phase E₂₀. Grave 104, in the eastern group, is clearly older than grave 75, in the western group, as the first contained a bracelet with thin club-shaped ends, while the second held a bracelet with thick club-shaped ends and a *Schlusskreuzfibel*, which can be dated to phase E. Grave 132, in the middle group, dates from the same period with a late star-footed brooch and a younger variation of a *Armbrustfibel mit umgeschlagenem Fuß und Ringgarnitur* (crossbow brooch with wire decoration) as well as a bracelet with thick club-shaped ends. The other three “sword graves” of the middle group (111, 133 and 141) are unfortunately not precisely datable. It is very tempting to assume that only one man with a sword or battle knife existed in every subgroup at a time, but this cannot be proven due to the situation of the sources.

Conclusion

What do the subgroups represent? One interpretation is families. There are female burials amongst the male graves, especially in the southwestern and middle group, which are comparable with co-located male graves in the richness of their furnishings and which might be connected to them. On the other hand, there are areas where female graves are concentrated, eg in the northwest (graves 72, 76, 144 and 145) and in the southeast (graves 61, 62 and perhaps 63)²¹. Due to these conflicting indicators, it is difficult to find a comprehensive answer at the current stage of research.

The weapon equipment surely is a key to deciphering the spatial structure of the cemetery, but it is not the only one. Certainly age, gender and lineage, as well as the wealth and prestige of the deceased, also influenced the choice of the burial site. However, the investigation of these factors, as well as a detailed analysis of the ornamental equipment of male and female burials, will need to be the subject of further studies.

Translated by the author

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¹⁹ *Zettelkatalog*.

²⁰ Cf. Åberg 1919, p.58 f. Figs. 57 and 61.

²¹ Even considering that the two subgroups (the western part of the middle group and the eastern group) are quite small, it seems that men and women were buried separately.

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PASTABOS APIE OBERHOF (AUKŠTKIEMIAI) KAPINYNO VYRŲ KAPUS

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Santrauka

1886–1888 m. Oberhof (Aukštkiemiai, Klaipėdos r.) kapinyną tyrinėjo Otto Tischler, 1894 m. ši laidojimo paminklą tyrinėjo Alfred Jentsch, Heinrich Kemke ir Kretschmann. Minėti tyrinėtojai ištyrė 452 kapus, pradant romėniškuoju laikotarpiu ir baigiant ankstyvaisiais viduramžiais (III–XII a.). Iki Antrojo pasaulinio karo pabaigos Oberhofo kapinyno medžiaga ir dokumentacija buvo laikoma „Prussia“ muziejuje Koenigsberge (dabar Kaliningradas). Per karą ir tuoj po jo labai nukentėjusi „Prussia“ muziejaus kolekcijos dalis pateko į *Landesamt für Vorgeschichte*. Šiandien „Prussia“ muziejaus medžiagos dalis yra saugoma Berlyno Proistorės muziejuje (*Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*). Inventorinės Oberhof kapinyno knygos ir dirbinių katalogas neišliko, todėl kapų inventoriai rekonstruojami remiantis pačiais įvairiausiais duome-

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nimis: išlikusiais kartono lakštais su pritvirtintais dirbiniais ir be jų, senosiomis etiketėmis, O. Tischlerio kapų aprašais, įvairiausiais šalutiniais archyviniais įrašais ir vadinamuoju *Tischlerscher Zettelkatalog* (saugomas Varmijos ir mozūrų muziejuje Olštynė) (II: 2 iliustr.). Pagrindinis šaltinis kapų inventoriams atkurti yra išlikę 1533 dirbiniai, šiandien saugomi Berlyno Proistorės muziejuje. Rekonstruojant kapų kompleksus buvo panaudotos visos įmanomos literatūros nuorodos, senosios nuotraukos ir piešiniai, saugomi net kelių šalių muziejuose ir kitose institucijose (II: 2 iliustr.). Tačiau reikia pripažinti, kad kapų inventorių ir kapinyno struktūrai analizuoti šaltinių nėra daug, ir tie patys, deja, neišsamūs.

Remiantis išlikusiais dirbiniais ir minėtais šaltiniais, Oberhof kapinyno vyrų kapuose pavyko išskirti ginklų ir kitų įkapių derinius. Buvo išskirtos penkios vyrų su ginklais kapų grupės (2 pav.). Tai vyrų kapai su kalavijais ar kovos peiliais, kapai su dviem ietimis, kapai su viena ietimi, kapai su kirviu kaip pagrindiniu ar vieninteliu ginklu ir beginklų vyrų kapai, kuriuose rasta tik darbo įrankių. Pastebėta tendencija, kad vyrų, palaidotų su kalavijais, kapuose buvo kiek daugiau papuošalų, bet sunku įžvelgti, kokius nors skirtingus jų dėjimo į kapus būdus, nes kiekviena vyrų kapų grupė turi kelis turtingesnius ar mažiau daiktų gausius kapus. Net paskutinės grupės – beginklų vyrų – kapai, ypač tie, kurių įkapių komplektą sudarė ir papuošalai, dirbinių gausa buvo panašūs į vyrų su ginklais kapus (2 pav.). Todėl aišku, kad ginklų kiekis ir aptartos pagal išskirtas vyrų grupes ginkluotės rinkinys nebūtinai priklauso nuo mirusiojo ir jo šeimos klestėjimo. Atrodo, kad taisyklės, pagrindžiančios mirusiojo aprūpimą papuošalais, skyrėsi nuo įpročių dėti į kapus ginklus, atitinkamai ginklai galėjo reikšti kažką kita nei papuošalai. Šią nuostatą palaiko ir žirgų aukos bei žaslai ir pentinai, kurių randama visų išskirtų grupių vyrų kapuose. Tikriausiai ginklų skaičius ir rūšis rodo tam tikrą mirusiojo statusą, bet nebūtinai karinį. Tai greičiau buvo visuomenėje užimama padėtis, leidžianti vyrui turėti ginklą. Be abejo, asmens padėtis visuomenėje priklausė nuo jo amžiaus ir turto.

Išskirtos vyrų su ginklais grupės buvo pažymėtos rekonstruotame kapinyno plane (3 pav.). Dėmesys buvo sutelktas į vienalytę pietvakarinę kapinyno dalį, nes čia rastos segės rodo, kad ši kapinyno vieta buvo naudota tautų kraustymosi laikais, be to, ši vieta gerai dokumentuota turimais šaltiniais (3 pav.). Čia išsiskiria trys ar galbūt keturi kapų potipiai. Kapai su kalavijais ar kovos peiliais koncentruojasi ir užima centrinę vietą tarp kitų vyrų kapų su ginklais grupių (4 pav.). Šie kapai yra apsupti vyrų kapų, kuriuose buvo dvi arba viena ietis. Vyrų kapai su mažesniu ginklų kape skaičiumi yra gerokai toliau nuo kapų „su kalavijais“, kapai su

vienu kirviu yra rasti vyrų kapų su ginklais periferinėje srityje, o beginklų vyrų kapai taip pat yra grupės pakraštyje. Vyro realiame gyvenime turėtas ginklų skaičius ir kokybė lėmė jo vietą kapinyne, o galbūt ginklai lėmė ir individo vietą Oberhofo bendruomenėje. Be abejo, ginklai ir ginkluotė yra raktas dešifruoti erdvinę kapinyno struktūrą, bet ne tik.

Neabejotina, kad mirusiojo padėtį kapinyne lėmė amžius, lytis, turtingumas ir prestižas. Tačiau šių veiksnių tyrinėjimas, taip pat detali ginklų ir papuošalų derinių, vyrų ir moterų aprangos analizė dar laukia papildomų tyrinėjimų.