Some Notes on the Issue of
the Development of Balt
Society in the Ninth to the 13th
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the Baltic Region

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SOME NOTES ON THE ISSUE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF BALT SOCIETY IN THE NINTH TO THE 13TH CENTURIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUCTURES OF THE BALTIC REGION

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Abstract

The article discusses questions pertaining to the development of the socio-political structures of the West Balts. On the basis of archaeological studies and scarce historical sources, the conclusion is drawn that the first shoots of statehood might have emerged during the Viking era. It seems that the fortification of hill-forts, the emergence of castles, the increasing differentiation of material wealth, the emergence of proto-towns, and the formation of the stratum of warriors should allow us to talk of the emergence of chiefdoms in the land of the West Balts. However, all these attributes rather demonstrate the development of social structures. The question is put whether the social elite that stood out during the Viking era was at the same time the political elite. Thus, the main question is, what kind of chiefdoms can we talk about, and from when and how did the political elite emerge, which predetermined the emergence of a state in the lands of the East Balts, but which nevertheless did not lead the society of the West Balts to statehood?

Key words: chiefdom, the institution of chieftain, tribes of the West Balts, structures of societies, social and political relations, the Viking era, the Baltic region.

Introduction

At the end of the last century, in the course of discussions on questions of the formation of the Lithuanian state in the 13th century, the question arose as to why the West Balts, who at first glance seem to have been richer and closer to maritime trading routes, nevertheless failed to create a state of their own, whereas the East Balts (the Lithuanians) did manage to (Žulkus 1997; Mickevičius 1997). Along with all the other reasons advanced for the West Balts' road towards statehood, it was emphasised that one of the indicators of statehood was the obvious development of the structures of a society during the Viking era, with attention being focused on the exclusive character of social strata, such as merchants and warriors, and the emergence of the first proto-towns and territorial communities (Mickevičius 1997, pp.238-244). For example, researchers talk about the emergence of the territorial communities, or lands, of the Curonian and Semigallian tribes, and the formation of the centres (political?) of such lands and their interaction (Žulkus 2004, pp.21-28). These territorial communities and their mutual relations, as well as the rise of some centres and the decline of others, are issues that were touched upon during discussions on the territorial structure and hierarchy of other Baltic tribes, such as the Selonians (Simniškytė 2005, p.35ff). Analogies can also be found in works by foreign researchers, first and foremost Scandinavian, which reveal how some large centres associated with political power arose, while others declined (Sannmark 2009, pp.230-235; Winroth 2012, p.17ff). On the other hand, researchers noticed another interesting trend. East of the River Elbe and in Scandinavia, the formation of states in the tenth and 11th centuries was accompanied by the process of Christianisation. Therefore, it is not accidental that the talk is about two parallel processes, the formation of states and the Christianisation of these states (Berend 2007). Christianisation itself fits the context of Europeanisation, so all the more important it is to get to know the societies as they were before Christianisation and during the process.

More than one term is used in historiography when the structures of a tribal society and territorial structures are being discussed. Some of the more popular terms that have caused numerous discussions are 'chiefdom' and 'polity'. The latter reflects more the realities of the city-states of ancient Greece, whereas a chiefdom is

associated more with the emergence of the institution of the chieftain. Definitions of the term 'chiefdom' are still an object of discussion (Gibson 2011, p.216ff; Grinin, Korotayev 2011, p.279ff). Researchers argue as to how the very chiefdoms can be classified (Earle 1987, pp.279-281; Grinin, Korotayev 2011, pp.304-308). The one obvious thing is that when researchers began discerning chiefdoms in the expanses of Mesoamerica or the islands of the Pacific Ocean in their attempts to trace some kind of similarities and regularities between these regions, and, quite often, between different periods, the very notion of chiefdom became devalued. Different geographical and climatic conditions, different chronologies, and, last but not least, the different development processes of the societies do not allow us to compare the power of a chieftain of African or Polynesian natives with the European institution of chieftain in the Viking era, although such attempts to present European chiefdoms within the general global context do exist (Creveld 2004, pp.15-17). This has been assessed in the works of Lithuanian archaeologists, too (Kurila 2009, pp.135-136). Consequently, in this case we should talk of the limits of correctness in the application of the comparativistic method, too. In this case, such an attempt to discern chiefdoms (it is not clear what kind) in different regions of the world recall similar attempts by 20th-century researchers to discern feudalism from Europe as far as Australia. Therefore, this article will discuss the development of the structure of the society of the West Balts in the Baltic region in the Viking era, with a special emphasis on the formation of the institution of chieftain and the factors that predetermined this formation.

In Lithuanian historiography, the very notion of chiefdom was presented not so long ago (Bumblauskas 1999, p.358). During the interwar period and Soviet times, a different terminology was normally used to describe socio-territorial changes in the development of the structures of the Viking era. During Soviet times, the emergence of feudalism was actually associated with the emergence of statehood and the further development of the state. Here, one of the most important emphases was placed on the emergence of private property, in an attempt to answer the question how the differentiation of material wealth emerged, and how it predetermined the emergence of the very state at a later time. If we reject the entire ideological superstructure of Soviet research into feudalism (the class struggle, and so on) and apprehend that in works by foreign researchers (such as those of the Annales School), Marxism as a method for the perception of social reality is not to be associated with ideology, we must admit that

the emergence of private property and the concentration of most of the land in the hands of a small group of people (the nobility), and the entire economic development of the Baltic tribes in general, constitute a highly important factor for the interpretation of the formation of the Lithuanian state, as well as for attempts to explain why no state was created in the lands of the West Balts. Therefore, it would be short-sighted to reject all the earlier research into the development of the social structures of society done mostly during Soviet times, especially since after E. Gudavičius' work, no Lithuanian historians have tried to continue the research into the Baltic *allod* (*odal*) and its influence on the formation of the state.

In such a short article as this, we will not attempt to answer the question about the development of the society of the Balts during the Viking era, or to analyse the question of statehood in the territories of the West Balts. We should bear in mind that the Curonians and the Prussians, the tribes of West Balts which have been studied most thoroughly, were not societies at an identical level of development. It has not yet been discussed in Lithuanian historiography what kind of chiefdoms (if we want to use this term) or pre-state formation we can talk of when discussing the societies of West Balts in the Viking era. In an attempt to ascertain what kind of chiefdoms they were, the historiographical contexts pertaining to the interpretation of a chiefdom in researchers' works should first be discussed. When the nature of chiefdoms is clear, we can get closer to the answer why the West Balts failed to create a state of their own. In this clarification process, the general context of the development of the societies of the Baltic region should not be overlooked.

Sources and historiography on the issues of social and political structures

When discussing eventual pre-state formations in the lands of the Balts, the latest archaeological and historical literature emphasises three important criteria that allow us to talk of a certain 'maturity' for the formation of a state: tribal territorial hierarchisation (the emergence of castle districts), the distinction of a stratum of warriors, and the emergence of proto-towns associated with the differentiation of crafts. Others single out the formation of a tribal religion as a fourth important criterion (Bertašius 2002, p.215; Žulkus 2004, p.93). Earlier researchers (Ivinskis 1978, p.133) did not ignore the influence of religion (in this case, paganism) on the development of the institution of chieftain ei-

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ther. Researchers who discern all these criteria for the social development of society generally acknowledge that during the Viking era, in the case of certain Baltic tribes, we can talk of a pre-state or even close-to-state formation which meets three or four of the aforementioned main criteria.

Tribal territorial hierarchisation is associated with social differentiation and territorial differentiation, based on the conjecture that in the Viking era small castle districts emerged in the Baltic lands, over which even stronger centres emerged (Zabiela 1995, pp.163-171; Bertašius 2002, p.64; Žulkus 2004, pp.66-69; Simniškytė 2005, p.34). This conclusion is drawn on the localisation of complexes of archaeological monuments (late-period hill-forts, or, to be more precise, castles, the adjacent burial sites, and so on). Other researchers add, without any hesitation, that in the Viking era 'individual lands are seen as independent political structures' (Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 2001, pp.383, 386). Based on this, the far-fetched conclusion was formulated that 'in the 11th to 13th centuries, at the predawn of the state, ethnographic Lithuania was a solid homogeneous unit' (Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 2001, p.398). Maybe we can talk of a certain homogeneity with reference to the 13th century, but it is a pure misunderstanding to extend it as far back as the 11th century, all the more so that researchers clearly talk of differences typical of the Baltic tribes which most likely predetermined the creation of the state of the East Balts (Lithuanians), unlike the West Balts who failed to do so (Žulkus 1997, p.20ff). Some archaeologists use exactly the term 'chiefdom' instead of the notion 'tribal territorial hierarchisation/organisation', and see a chiefdom as a transitional political organisation. L. Kurila, who divided chiefdoms into simple ones, characterised by a single-stage social hierarchy, and complex ones, with a several-stage social hierarchy, acknowledged that from the very beginning, from the fifth century, simple chiefdoms emerged which at a later time, in the 11th century, were already complex ones (Kurila 2009, pp.136ff). True enough, this classification of chiefdoms sounds paradoxical, in view of the fact that archaeological material cannot tell anything about the relationships of subordination between these hierarchies (Kurila 2009, p.139). Consequently, it is evident that this classification of chiefdoms is inappropriate here. Other archaeologists mention the stratum of dukes which began emerging during the Migration Period (Jovaiša 2006, pp.6, 7). Other historians claim that a chiefdom was a 'permanent regional political organisation which operated in times of peace, too' (Baranauskas 2000, p.109). It is highly questionable as

to what extent a chiefdom is permanent, and this issue will be touched upon later. Quite often, the formation of chiefdoms is dated, based on archaeological material, to comparatively early times, between the second and the sixth century AD (Baranauskas 2000, pp.114-115; Kurila 2009, p.136), although other researchers believe that territorial hierarchy emerged later, namely, in the Viking era (Žulkus 2004, pp.9, 80).

Along with archaeological data obtained in the course of the analysis of castles, their distribution and the topography of adjacent burial sites and settlements, historical sources are used to support the fact of the existence of the hierarchisation of lands in the territories of the West Balts during the Viking era. Usually, researchers mean the earliest sources: the biography of St Ansgar written by Rimbert in the 11th century, and Wulfstan's account. Therefore, these sources deserve a closer look.

In both sources, the notion of a 'land' is different. For example, Wulfstan uses it only once when talking of the lands of Êstum in general, where, according to him, there was a large number of castles ruled by different 'kings' (BRMŠ 1999, pp.166, 168). Meanwhile, St Ansgar's hagiography mentions not a land in general, but the notion of '*regnum*' (Ansgari, 30), although it is obvious that the hagiographer meant the territory inhabited by the Curonians, and not a political organisation, a kingdom (Mickevičius 2004, p.81). This is implied by Rimbert's statement that the territory of the Curonian '*gens*' had once allegedly belonged to the Swedes, whereas the Curonians as such were identified as '*populi*' (Ansgari, 30). Furthermore, Rimbert claimed that the Curonians had five towns ('*Regnum vero ipsum quinque habebat civitates*'), which in Lithuanian historiography is normally understood as five regions. Rimbert gives definite indications of two of these towns, '*urbem Seeburg*' and '*urbem Apulia*'. At first sight, it looks as if Rimbertus, when using the terms '*civitas*' and '*urbs*', used them to describe the regions of the Curonian 'state' in the first instance, and to indicate definite towns, Seeburg and Apuolė, in the second instance. However, right there, in his account of the siege of Apuolė, Rimbert identifies it as '*civitas*' ('*Cum itaque illo advenissent, conclusis ipsis in civitate*'), although the same sentence is continued with the words '*isti a foris urbem debellare*' (Ansgari, 30). Thus, although Rimbert perceived the Curonians as a tribe, he identified the lands ruled by them as a '*regnum*', and for this reason the towns, too, were identified as '*civitas*', with the aim of emphasising their dependence on a definite territory, that of the Curonians, a '*regnum*'. The fact that under the notion
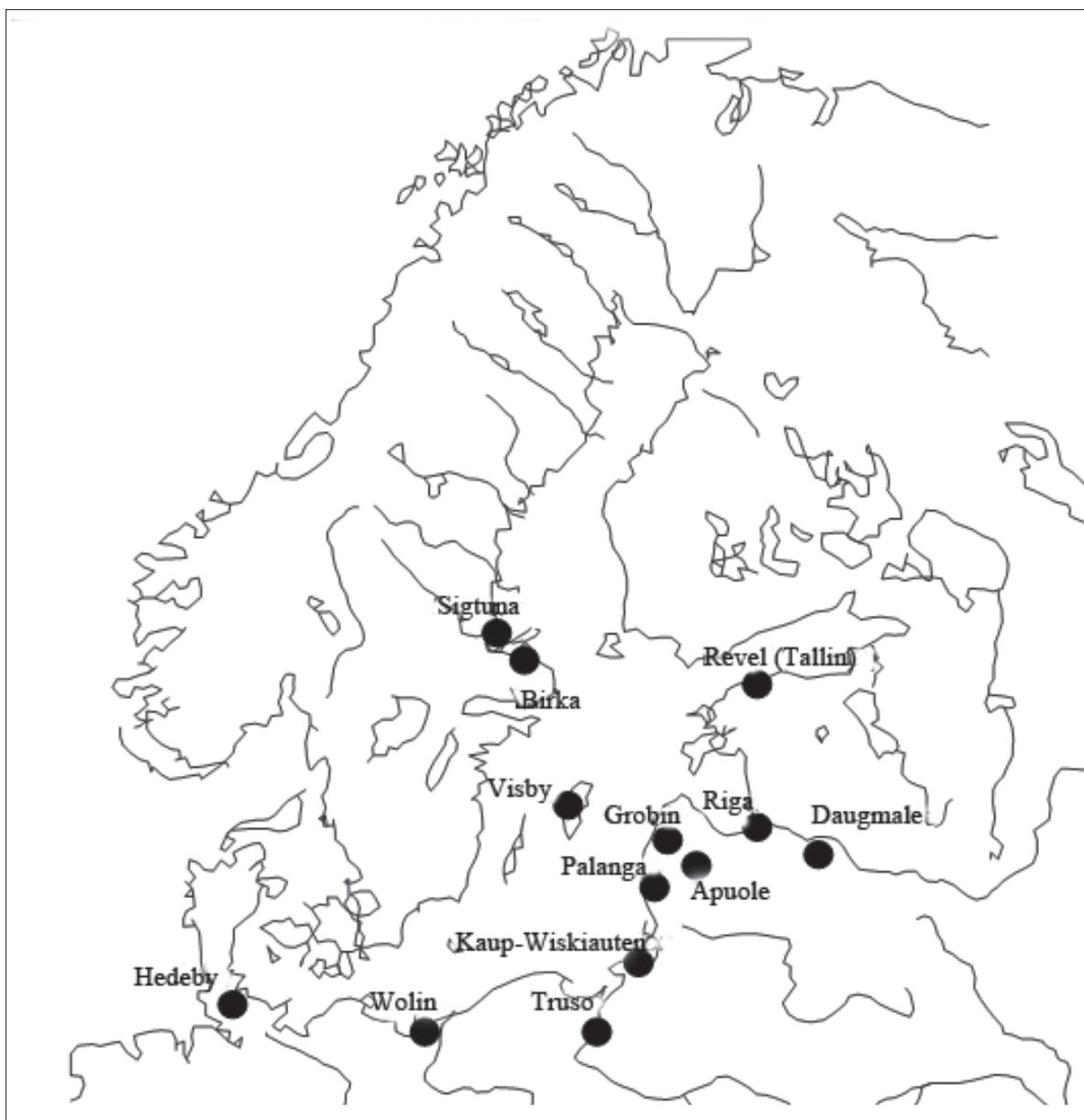
Fig. 1. The situation in the Baltic region between the ninth and the 13th century.

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of '*civitas*', Rimbert meant exactly towns and not regions is supported by the aforementioned identification of Apuolė as '*civitas*', when its defenders shut themselves up within the town.

Attention should be paid to the fact that Rimbert makes a clear distinction between two interrelated but different moments of attack against the Curonians. The first one is the prehistory of the attack of the town of Seeburg and Apuolė, when it was just stated that the Danes attacked the land of the Curonians, and its inhabitants defended it. Rimbert does not mention whether all those defenders came exactly from all five towns. The point is that with the sentence '*Regnum vero ipsum quinque habebat civitates*', Rimbert finishes his account of the land of the Curonians that the Danes intended to plunder. At the beginning of the first account of the attack on the Curonians in which the Danes were defeated, he mentions in general words that the people who lived there rushed to repel the attack, that is, the hagiographer meant the people who lived in the coastal area. This can be judged by the mention of Danish boats destroyed by the Curonians; it indicates that the clash took place on the coast, and not in the Curonian hinterland.

The second attack is associated with the Swedes, who heard of the unsuccessful attack by the Danes. Rimbert's words that the Swedish Vikings attacked the town called Seeburg '*Et primo quidem improvise*' (first of all and unexpectedly) imply that no Curonians 'who had come running together' took part in the defence of the town, because the town was occupied and plundered without the Curonians expecting it. Some researchers associate Seeburg mentioned by Rimbert with the locality of Grobiņa in present-day Latvia, or the neighbouring Jūrpils, although others assume that this was the name for Palanga (Švābe 1938, pp.45-52; Žulkus 2004, p.97). Following the devastation of the town of Seeburg, the Swedes moved on towards Apuolė. According to Rimbertus, the march lasted as many as five days, although it is obvious that if Seeburg should indeed be associated with Grobiņa, the distance between the latter and Apuolė is not actually that large. Five days would hardly be needed to march from Palanga to Apuolė, either. The hagiographer mentions that the Swedes travelled from Seeburg to Apuolė in a hurry (*properabant*); consequently, they intended to attack the town before its defenders could get ready for the attack. If the aforementioned five-day period is indeed precise, then neither Palanga nor Grobiņa could be identified as the town of Seeburg, because the distances between the two towns and Apuolė are too

small for a hasty five-day march. The mention of the larger number of defenders than at Seeburg might illustrate the fact that as the Swedes were on their way to Apuolė, rumours spread in the land of the Curonians about the atrocities by the Swedes; however, it only implies a growing number of defenders, but does not indicate their exact numbers, as A. Mickevičius believes (Mickevičius 2004, p.83). Rimbert obviously hints at the fact that the enemies failed to take Apuolė unawares, unlike the town of Seeburg. Rimbert does not mention whether inhabitants from the five Curonian regions defended Apuolė. It follows that researchers first lumped together two attacks, by the Danes and by the Swedes, which, we might suppose, took place at different moments in time, and associated the dwellers of the five towns in the Curonian lands as mentioned by Rimbert with the defenders of Apuolė; and then they drew the conclusion that, as early as the ninth century, the land of the Curonians allegedly already had five regions, individual territorial units or formations, from which the Curonians rushed to defend Apuolė (Mickevičius 2004, pp.83, 92), although the hagiographer himself wrote not of regions but of towns, that is, most likely fortified castles. This conclusion has allowed some researchers, such as A. Šapoka, to talk even of the possibility of the existence of a Curonian 'state' (Ragauskas 1998, pp.60-63).

It was Wulfstan who affirmed that the West Balts had castles. Just like Rimbertus, he mentions that the Prussians had castles ruled by different 'kings' (*cynings*), who were involved in mutual struggles. Like Rimbert's '*regnum*', Wulfstan's '*cynings*' were the phraseology of the authors applied to societies which were not yet politically united. From the statement that the Prussians had a large number of castles, we certainly cannot draw the conclusion that the hierarchisation of castles existed in the Prussian lands in the ninth century, or that some of the 'kings' had imposed their rule upon others.

A separate note is required concerning the association of the lands described in 13th and 14th-century sources with the ninth and tenth centuries or slightly later times (the 11th to the 13th centuries). It has been noted that some lands, such as Semigallia, mentioned in 13th and 14th-century sources, do not have archaeological monuments (Vasiliauskas 2007, p.40); this indicates that the development of the lands as structural units took place not only up to the 13th century, but later too, that is, in the 13th century and later. For this reason alone, we cannot automatically transfer the lands mentioned in the 13th century to the early times of the tenth to the

12th century. The next sources written after Rimbert and Wulfstan that mention the lands of the West Balts were the early-12th century chroniclers Saxo Grammaticus and Gallus Anonymus. However, the studies that have been carried out show that these chroniclers perceived a land first and foremost in the sense of a definite tribe, and not of political structures (a region ruled by a chieftain or a nobleman) (Długokęcki 2010, p.53). The attempt by the Polish historian D.A. Sikorski to suggest that from the 'kings' mentioned by Wulfstan and Master Wincenty '*Sunt autem Pollexiani Getharum uel Prussorum genus*' (MPH, Vol.11, Lib.4, cap.19,2), as well as from the story of the resettlement of the Saxons in Prussia as mentioned by Gallus Anonymus (Galli Anonymi, Lib.II, cap.42), we can suppose that there were institutions of royal power in Prussia in the heathen and not in the Christian sense ('*nie możemy odrzucić możliwości instnienia królewskich instytucji w Prusach*') is ill-founded (Sikorski 2003, pp.18-19). After all, Rimbert mentions the *regnum* of the Curonians, too. Consequently, if we follow D.A. Sikorski, we should talk of the existence of the institution of the royal power of the Curonians in the ninth century, too.

In the context of the 13th-century war against the Teutonic Order (and its branch, from 1237, the Livonian Order), there appear bills and papal bulls in which individual lands ruled by noblemen are mentioned. For example, around 1216, the Prussian nobleman Survabuno and the nobleman Warpoda gave '*terram Lubouie*' and '*terram de Lausania*' as a present to the Prussian Bishop Christian (PUB, I, nr.9-10). Most probably, the locations mentioned here are villages and not lands (regions). More notions can be found in other bulls from the Holy See from the first half of the 13th century, which in this case are related to the Curonian nobility. For example, in connection with the surrender of a Curonian nobleman '*Lammecinus rex, et Pagani de Curonia*' to the Livonian Order, and his accepting baptism, a bull was promulgated by Pope Gregory IX in 1231, which states that '*de terris Esestua, scilicet Durpis, et Saggara, et Kuligundis, quarum hoc nomina, Thargolae, Osua, Langis, Venelis, Normis, Kiemala, Pygawas, Sarnitus, Riwa, Sauge, Edualia, Auswanges, Ardus, Alostanotachos, et de allis Kuligundis villis ex utraque parte Windasitis* [...]' (Akty 1841, nr. XXXI). In another bull promulgated the same year, and dedicated to the same question of baptism, Gregory IX also enumerated the villages which agreed to accept baptism '*Pagani de Curonia, scilecet de Bandowe, de Wanneman, de citra Winda, de villis, quarum nomina sunt hec, Rende, Wasa, Galle, Matichule, Wanne, Pirre, Vgenesse, Cadowe, Angens, Talse, Arowelle, Pope, et*

pluribus aliis fidem susceperint christianam [...]' (Akty 1841, nr. XXXII). In both these bulls, we can see three notions that define a territory without indicating their boundaries: *terra* (land), a district or locality, which in bull no. XXXI is identified by the Estonian notion of *Kichelkonda* (*Kuligundis*) and *villa* (village). In bull no. XXXI, the word 'localities' is followed by their enumeration *Thargolae*, *Osua*, *Langis*, and so on; however, it adds that '*et de allis Kulingundis villis*'. Consequently, in this case, too, we are essentially dealing with villages of the districts. In bull no. XXXII, instead of localities, they write directly about villages (*villis*), which are also enumerated (*Rende*, *Wasa*, *Galle* …). In bull no. XXXI, the lands ruled by the 'king' Lamekin are identified as '*terra Esestua, scilicet Durpis, et Saggara*', with an enumeration of what exactly the noblemen ruled (Durbė and Žagarė?). In this case, we can talk of lands ruled by a definite 'king', that is, a certain structure that existed in the 13th century can be traced.

Other notions that define a territory, the Latin *castellatura* and German *borchsuckunge*, are also mentioned in sources. Both of them meant castle districts. For instance, in the bills of the partition of southern Courland between the Bishop of Courland and the Teutonic Order, there is a mention in Latin and German of *castellatura Poys* and *burchsukunge Proys* (LUB, Vol. I, col. 328, 335). Other sources mention *castellatura Ampilten*, *castellatura Dobene*, and so on (LUB, Vol. I, col. 663). However, it is not very clear whether the aforementioned terminology was used to describe the system of castles being created by the Teutonic Order, or whether these terms describe the castle territories that had been formed earlier. In April 1253 (the exact day is not indicated), the land of the castle of Kretinga (*borchsukunge Cretyn*), together with the castle of Kretinga (*borg to Cretyn*), were divided into three parts (LUB, Vol. I, col. 319). One part, as a feoff, fell to the lot of Velthune and his brothers, people loyal to the Bishop of Courland. One of the brothers, Twertikine, is associated with the locality (village) of the same name situated in the land of Pilsotas. Hence, it was likely that the aforementioned people had resettled in the castle at Kretinga from the neighbouring land of Pilsotas (Zembrickis 2002, pp.27, 37). We should note the meaning of the term *castellatura* in Medieval terminology: it is the territory of a castle, the inhabitants of which were also obliged to maintain the castle. This is exactly the model the Teutonic Order was introducing in the conquered lands, as is illustrated by the example of Twertikine. Furthermore, the Treaty of Christburg contained a special clause by which the Prussians took on the obligation to pay taxes in kind to the castles of

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the Teutonic Order ('*omnes villulas Pruscie cireuire pro suis decimis triturandis et adducendis*'). Even if we agree with the opinion that the aforementioned sources talk of territorial formations which had already existed from earlier times, and which the Teutonic Order included in its military system under construction, we have to acknowledge that the sources from the 13th century reflect, in the best case, the situation that existed in the 13th century, and maybe in the late 12th century, that is, a situation we cannot mechanically transfer to chronologically earlier times.

All the comments given above show that we cannot talk of a territorial hierarchisation of the West Balts between the ninth century and the 12th century on the basis of written sources. However, we can say something else on this issue. The aforementioned sources reveal a certain social differentiation of society (see Wulfstan's account). Consequently, we can also talk of the emergence and existence of the institution of the chieftain. Furthermore, from the 13th-century sources of the Teutonic Order quoted, it becomes clear that the sources record structures of a different kind that are not necessarily shaped on tribal grounds, and the identification of these structures is a separate problem. In any case, the talk is about the emergence of a stratum of warriors and other social strata (first and foremost, merchants and craftsmen). The emergence of the latter strata is associated with the development of proto-towns. Without undertaking to present all the abundant historiography on these questions, we will draw your attention to a couple of aspects only.

When talking of the emergence of proto-towns and their further development, researchers acknowledge that the very first centres (Grobiņa, Apuolė) which emerged in the lands of the tribes of the West Balts should be associated with the Viking factor (Žulkus 2004, p.97). This is proven by numerous archaeological artefacts found both in Grobiņa and Apuolė. True enough, in Grobiņa, the Scandinavian factor was quite early, but it does not change the core of the matter (Virse, Ritums 2012, pp.38-40). It is claimed that a similar situation existed in the lower reaches of the River Nemunas at Kaunas, that is, in central Lithuania (Bertašius 2002, p.211ff). The same should be said of the proto-towns which were emerging in the Prussian lands, such as Truso and Kaup-Viskiautai (Žulkus 2004, p.105ff). This situation should also be noted in Palanga, and maybe Žardė (Žulkus 1997a, pp.290, 294). Hence, it should not be ruled out that the society of the West Balts was influenced by Scandinavian society (another issue is to what extent and during which period it was strongest). The Swedish historian N. Blomkvist

acknowledges that at the time when the Europeanisation of Scandinavian society began (between the late tenth century and the 11th/12th centuries), the 'Viking times' began in the tribes of the West Balts (the 11th and 12th centuries) (Blomkvist 2005, p.133). A similar process can also be observed in the society of the Elbe Slavs. At that time, sources begin mentioning atrocities by the Curonians. However, researchers also point to important differences to be compared between the societies: the main economic, cultural and possibly political centres of the West Balts were hill-forts, whereas in Scandinavia such centres were trading ports oriented towards the sea (Blomkvist 2005, p.199). True enough, the trading centre of Palanga was also oriented towards the sea; however, it is exactly in Palanga that we also see a Scandinavian colony.

The first trading centres of the West Balts, in which abundant Viking archaeological artefacts are found, were also situated very close to the sea or on the banks of large rivers. Consequently, we can presume that the coasts of the West Balts, and possibly centres on the rivers Nemunas and Daugava, experienced a certain Scandinavian influence. Adam of Bremen mentions such a trading post, without identifying it, when writing about a Christian church built in Courland. However, he mentions more such trading posts, situated in the lands of Polish Pomerania adjacent to the Baltic lands, such as the town of Wolin (Magistri Adam Bremensis, Lib. II, cap.22). Another interesting fact is that after the decline of these centres, no local 'Prussian' or 'Curonian' centres (trading ports), or proto-towns, emerged in their place. It was hardly accidental.

There is also another peculiarity worth our attention. The material from the burial sites situated next to the aforementioned trading centres (we can also identify them as trading posts of the Scandinavian Vikings) (Mickevičius 2004, pp.56-58) was also of Scandinavian origin, or was influenced by the Vikings. However, in neighbouring burial sites dated to the same period of the 11th and 12th centuries, the material should be attributed to the West Balts. This is characteristic of Palanga (Žulkus 1997a, pp.290, 294) and Grobiņa (Virse, Ritums 2012, pp.38-40), and it shows that Viking emigres could live next to the Balts without having a significant material impact on them. On the other hand, a certain Scandinavian influence can nevertheless be traced in the artefacts found. Therefore, we cannot overestimate the role of the Vikings in the development of the tribal society of the West Balts, but this role must be assessed.

Finally, we should note the notion of the development of the stratum of warriors in the lands of the Balts as used in historiography. When discussing the social strata in Prussian lands as mentioned by Wulfstan, the German researcher R. Wenskus drew the conclusion that the nobility identified by the author of the account as *rigostan men* were warriors (Wenskus 1968, pp.8-12). Maybe the Prussian 'kings' mentioned by Wulfstan had warriors; however, at this point the question is, what kind of warriors were they? The latest studies show that Prussian warriors evolved from looting warriors into professional warriors, the knights of the 13th century, identified as *antiqui witingi* (Długokęcki 2010, pp.40, 42, 48). However, an important question arises at this point as to when this process commenced, and to what extent the Teutonic Order contributed to the emergence of such professional warriors in the Prussian lands. Another 'eternal' question remains whether the phraseology used in the bills of the Teutonic Order more or less conformed to the terms 'normalised' in the European manner and was understandable to the issuer of the bills, or whether they reflected the actual situation of the noble strata of the Prussians of that time, that is, the 13th century.

The fact that Prussian warriors are nevertheless mentioned by various 12th-century Polish chronicles should be taken into account. The interesting thing is the context in which these warriors were mentioned. The chroniclers recorded joint military actions by Polish dukes and Prussians against other Polish dukes, as well as military actions by Prussian and Pomeranian dukes against Polish dukes, and vice versa. The cooperation between the Prussians (mainly Yotvingians) and the Duke of Galicia is also mentioned by Master Wincenty Kadlubek (MPH, Vol. II, p.421). All this shows that as early as the late 11th or 12th century, at least some Prussian warriors participated as mercenaries hired by Polish (including Pomeranian) dukes in the dukes' mutual struggles. Prussian warriors also took part in the 13th-century Pomeranian Duke Svetopelk's struggles against the Teutonic Order. Konrad, the Duke of Masovia, also hired Prussian warriors to fight against his nephew, Boleslaw the Chaste (Mindaugo knyga 2005, p.138). Consequently, if, following the arrival of the Teutonic Order, the 13th-century Prussian warriors experienced a certain internal transformation of their stratum (as is indicated by the aforementioned *antiqui witingi*), we cannot reject the Polish influence on the formation of Prussian soldiery either. All the more so that another expressive fact should be taken into account: while the Teutonic Order was securing the rights of the Prussian nobility, the latter expressed the wish

to have their freedom, rights and property inheritance governed according to Polish law. Hence, we should agree with Polish researchers who claim that the Prussian nobility felt the influence of the Polish nobility too, and that this influence can be observed from the time when contacts with the Poles increased in the 12th century (Długokęcki 2010, pp.51, 61). Certain archaeological artefacts also indicate the existence of this influence: for instance, in the Semba Peninsula, weapons (bludgeons) dated to between the 11th and 13th century are found; it is most likely that these weapons came from Kievan Rus via Poland (Širouchov 2012, p.77), or via the Yotvingians who maintained direct military relations with Kievan Rus. On the other hand, the custom of placing artefacts symbolising a horse (such as a bridle, or parts of saddles), and also miniature work tools, in men's graves is associated with southeast Scandinavia and Gotland (Žulkus 2004, p.32).

It is extremely doubtful whether professional warriors existed as early as Wulfstan's times, because the emergence of professional warriors is directly associated with the emergence of statehood (Gudavičius 1998, pp.98-105; Leonavičiūtė 1997, pp.475-484). Hence, we come to the most important problem here: if the towns (castles) mentioned by Rimbert and Wulfstan were ruled by a nobility (chieftains), if a village elder (*dominus ville*) is mentioned in the hagiography of St Adalbert-Vojtech written by Iohannes Canaparius in the early 11th century (MPH, Vol. 4, pp.41-42), if the chroniclers of the 11th and 12th centuries also mention the existence of various elders and warriors, and, last but not least, if archaeological material from burial sites indicates that some deceased were buried with many precious grave goods, then what kind of chieftains and what kind of warriors should we talk about?

The social dimension of chiefdoms

If we want to answer the question what kind of chieftains and warriors of the West Balts in the Viking era we can talk about, we need to take into account the development of the social differentiation of society and the economy, and ask whether the changes in society between the 11th century and the 12th century as traced by archaeologists and historians allow us to talk of the roots of political structures, or even their development leading to permanent political pre-state formations. Archaeological literature contains statements that between the fifth and the eighth century, a disintegration of the communal system is seen in the lands of the Balts; graves are found that are identified as 'dukes'

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graves', that is, the graves of evidently richer people, which also differ qualitatively from other graves by their grave goods and burials of horses, something that had not been observed before (Tautavičius 1981, pp.31-32; Kuncevičius, Luchtanas 1997, p.89, Jovaiša 2006, p.6ff). Furthermore, archaeologists point to the fact that imported goods (including weapons and jewellery) were placed in the graves of the West Balts in the Viking era (Žulkus 2004, pp.94-156; Kazakevičius 2007, pp.368-369, 399-400; Bliujienė 2008, p.168ff). Imported goods (especially from Scandinavia) indicate without any doubt that their owners could afford them, and thus reinforced their prestige in the eyes of the rest of the community. It has already been mentioned that some of the imported goods, such as weapons, found their way into Prussian burial sites from Kievan Rus. It should not be ruled out that some Prussian warriors might have served in the retinues of the dukes of Kievan Rus. Some of the Prussians were allies in the mutual struggles between the Polish dukes, as well as in those between the dukes of Kievan Rus (Powierski, Śliwiński, Bruski 1993, p.36; Powierski 1968, pp.101-104, 108-109, 113). It is becoming clear that during the crisis in the Piast dynasty in the fourth and fifth decades of the 11th century, the Prussians supported the rebels, whereas in the early 12th century they supported the Pomeranian dukes (Zielińska-Melkowska 1997, p.181ff). As has already been mentioned, Master Wincent also wrote about military cooperation between the Duke of Galicia and the Yotvingians. The smaller amount of silver jewellery found in graves, and, in general, the non-placing of luxury jewellery in a grave, is interpreted as the emergence of the right to inherit the movable property (in this case, jewellery) of the deceased person (Kuncevičius, Luchtanas 1997, p.89). Wulfstan also mentions the inheritance of some (but not all) movable property in his description of a competition for property (BRMŠ, pp.166-169). True, Wulfstan described the partition of the movable property of the noble/rich. It was more important to possess real estate, that is, land.

Along with the possession of land, the emerging elite had to distance themselves from the creation of the community's added value and the conditions of production that predetermined this added value by acquiring leverage for the manipulation of members of their community. However, this distance did not mean that the emerging elite lived off the products of the community's land and the created added value at the expense of the community's members. Even if there was a possibility to expropriate the added value created by members of the community, this possibility was irregu-

lar, because just after the arrival of the Teutonic Order and the creation of their state by the Lithuanians, a tribute collection system began taking shape in the Baltic tribes.

When trying to understand the development of social and political relations, we should understand that coordinating the work by the members of the community, contributing to or even influencing the distribution of the community's surplus production, is one thing. It is quite a different thing to impose and legitimise one's power with respect to members of the community. Even if the legitimate power that is taking shape is imposed on members of the community, we can hardly talk of the formation of a political organisation. We can explain this by the fact that by the functions and powers entrusted in him, the *dominus ville* was dealing with tribal structures. The backbone of these structures was the meeting of the tribe. It was exactly the meeting and not the *dominus ville* that decided all related matters that were dictated by the rhythm of the community's life. This is perfectly illustrated by one of the hagiographies of St Adalbert-Wojtech, which mentions that the missionary was surrounded by a crowd who decided his fate (MHP, p.42). Meetings existed in neighbouring lands, too, first and foremost in the lands of the West Slavs, and in Scandinavia (Lübke 1997, pp.50-55; Modzelewski 2007, pp.309-356). Consequently, the legitimisation of power was in the hands of the meeting of the tribe, whereas the *dominus ville* and other noble/rich people were merely tools for consolidating this power and not exponents of independent power. True enough, we should not forget the fact that the meeting did not cease to exist following the creation of states in Scandinavia and Kievan Rus; however, in this case we are already dealing with a meeting different to the meeting of the tribe. It is highly doubtful whether the meeting in the Prussian lands was influenced by the stratum of oracles which allegedly predetermined the theocratic character of Prussian power and the domination of the stratum of oracles (Beresnevičius 2001, pp.29-30, 36; Kulakov 2003, pp.195-196, 211-212, 218-219), because in general we can say nothing definite about the religion of the Prussians, or make judgments about the theocratic character of the Prussian oracles. This, however, is a separate problem.

The interesting thing is that such meetings existed as late as the 13th century; they are mentioned during the times of the Prussians' struggles against the Teutonic Order. It goes without saying that we can assume that St Adalbert-Wojtech, who came to the Prussians in the late tenth century, spoke at a community meeting, which did not necessarily remain the

same until the 13th century. For in 1249, the Treaty of Christburg was signed by nobles who had discussed it among themselves. Similarly, it was a meeting of nobles that elected Świętopełk, the Duke of Pomerania, their military commander in 1242, when a rebellion against the Teutonic Order began (Powierski 2004, p.403; Petri Dusburg Chronicon, III, cap.34). From St Adalbert-Wojtech's hagiography, we can conjecture that all the free members of the community could attend a meeting. This fact might be supported by the hagiographer's words '*Congregat se undique inhers vulgus*' (MHP, p.190). Meanwhile, in the 13th century, meetings were attended solely by the nobility, and not just by any free people (Łowmianski 1931, p.367). It is evident that in the 13th century, the importance and the functions of the community's meeting were different to those of a late-tenth century meeting, at which St Adalbert-Wojtech made a speech. With reference to the 13th century, we should talk not of a meeting of the tribal community, but of the existence of a *different* community's (community not in the tribal sense) meeting.

Everything that has been said before may naturally lead to another important question, as to when and how it happened that conditions developed for a small group within the community to impose their power or influence on other members of the community. It should be taken into account that in the so-called barbarian societies, power was normally imposed upon people. Here, we are talking about imposing power upon free people, and not captives or the unfree. That is to say, a mechanism had to take shape that would 'bind' a person to another person who had initiated this 'binding'. This 'binding' is the first step towards occupancy (but not taking possession of) the land owned by the 'bound' person. This way, one person could expand his influence over other people, and lay the foundations for the second step, taking formal (but not final) possession of the land owned by the 'bound' person.

This is one side of the coin. The other is the chieftain's ability to gather such a group of people around him who, together with the chieftain, were involved in the distribution or expropriation of the added value without generating personally the added value of the community. All this must have happened alongside the weakening of the power of the community's meeting. It is quite possible that such people emerged when they had been 'bound' to a certain leader. Such people contributed indirectly to an increase in the material resources of the community, that is, by the forced expropriation and/or distribution of the material resources of other communities, but more often than not those of

the same tribe. Consequently, the very 'binding' of a person did not mean that the 'bound' person was taken possession of by another person. It was exactly from among such people who were free but 'bound' by certain ties that the nobility could form their retinue, identified as *amici* in early sources. Such a retinue would exist for as long as the chieftain was alive: the death of the chieftain also meant the dissolution of such warriors. For this sole reason, a chiefdom could not be a permanent regional political organisation. That is to say, two important things should be distinguished: one thing is to 'bind' a free person with the aim of taking possession of the land owned by that person; quite a different thing is to 'bind' a free person and turn him into a friend, or *amici*. To be more precise, some became members of the household, and others became warriors. Most likely, it was exactly from members of the household that the so-called *familia* took shape at a later time, as mentioned by historical sources which say that some Prussian noblemen would surrender to the Teutonic Order together with their family (*domus*) and *familia* ('*cum omni domo et familia sua*') (Petri Dusburg Chronicon, III, cap.188).

Without any doubt, it was exactly such *amici*, just like the chieftain himself, who would become the elite of the community. But what kind of elite was it? The differences between those who drank milk or mead, the castles, the competition for the movable property of the deceased, and so on, mentioned by Wulfstan, indicate that in this case we are dealing with a social elite. We should not forget the fact that in general Wulfstan mentions two categories of noble, the 'kings' and the 'elders', although he does not point to any hierarchical ties between these groups (Powierski 2004, p.402). The competition for the movable property of a deceased noble/rich Prussian also indicates that these 'kings' and the nobility managed to increase their riches by employing 'non-traditional' methods, too; that is, probably through plunder. Furthermore, only those who were capable of maintaining a good horse could take part in the competition. It is exactly the increasing number of horse burials in Prussia between the ninth and the 11th century that serves as an indication of an increase in the number of armed clashes and the people who could get involved in the clashes. On the other hand, archaeological material indicates that far from all the burials with horses contained abundant weaponry grave goods; consequently, there must have existed an 'internal' differentiation among the so-called warriors' graves, or far from all the burials with horses should be automatically attributed to warriors' burials. This is also indicated by the number of grave goods in

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the graves: in terms of 'military' grave-goods, some graves were richer, while others were less rich. On the other hand, attention should be paid to the fact that the currently available data indicates the existence of Prussian men's burials with more than one horse, but these graves are not numerous, although there are far more burials with one horse and weapons (Široukov 2012, pp.96-98). Social differentiation and the existence of a social elite among the West Balts in the Viking period are also indicated by the 'non-military' material from the burial sites. From this point of view, the women's graves are the most expressive. The burials of women from the top of the community's social elite are much richer than those of the other 'ordinary' people. A similar situation should also be noted with regard to the burials of the East Balts (Kurila 2009, pp.131-132).

Let us look once again at what Wulfstan writes about the competition for the movable property of a deceased person, which would be placed at a certain distance from the home of the deceased person. Members of the community who had swift-footed horses would take part in the competition. The Treaty of Christburg, concluded between the Prussian nobility and the Teutonic Order a few centuries later, stated that other close relatives, including sisters, were allowed to take part in the partition of movable property together with direct heirs (PUB, Vol. 1, 159). On the basis of the statement that until that time the Prussians had recognised only the sons as the heirs to movable property ('*in paganismo non habuissent, ut dicebant, nisi solos filios successores*'), the conclusion should be drawn that inheritance took place through the male (patrimonial or agnatic) line only (Łowmianski 1931, pp.373-376). On the other hand, this statement allows us to suppose that the people (probably free members of the community) who took part in the competition for movable property as described by Wulfstan were not allowed to take part in the partition of property in the 13th century, and probably even earlier, although it is not known how much earlier. Consequently, the inheritance of movable property had undergone a certain development between the ninth and the 13th century. The question arises how the real estate would normally be dealt with, that is, who, according to Wulfstan, would inherit all those castles of '*cynings*'.

In terms of the inheritance of land and other real estate, researchers have identified three levels of disposition of land: the provisional use of land, land management, and turning such land into the property of a family and not that of the community (Gudavičius 2002, p.101; Gurevič 2007, pp.207, 213). In a tribal society, this refers to the use of land and land management; that is to

say, *dominium utile*, because the emergence of *allod* (*odal*) resulted in *dominium directum* (Gurevič 2007, p.206). To be more precise, the absolute management of the land was in the hands of the tribe (the meeting of the tribal community), and upon the emergence of the state, it was in the hands of the ruler. In the case of *dominium utile*, it belonged to an actual family; whereas the remaining part of the land, *allmende*, belonged to the entire tribe. Existing sources cannot tell us anything about the fact whether the 'kings' described by Wulfstan managed the land on the basis of the right to use it provisionally, or whether they already possessed the right to manage the land. However, something else can be said on this issue. Gallus Anonymus, the Polish chronicler of the early 12th century, mentions in his description of the 'barbarity' of the Prussian tribes that they inherited land by drawing lots and distributing the land among farmers and inhabitants (inhabitants of a castle?) ('*per sortes hereditarias ruricolis et habitatoribus dispartita*') (Galli Anonymi, Lib. III, cap.24). It is obvious that in the early 12th century there already existed *dominium utile* of land, and not of a land plot, which in the past, due to intensive farming, would often 'wander' from one place to another (for example, when forests were felled and plots of land were farmed there for several years until the soil lost its fertility, and the plots were replaced by other felled and prepared plots of land). The 12th century was a time when arable farming, and possibly the three-field system, was spreading. This led to slightly different farming methods; slash-and-burn farming was gradually given up. The fact that this type of farming was given up had to result in a changing attitude towards the land itself, and towards its inheritance. Without any doubt, retrospectively we can only assume, but not insist, that the Prussians described by Wulfstan also had the right to land management, although in the ninth century slash-and-burn farming was also still popular. Probably, the emerging nobility but not the ordinary free, could manage the land. This is already a small step towards the formation of the Baltic *odal* (Gudavičius 2002, pp.121-122). However, this land management was formal, because in a tribal society, the actual land ownership, just like power itself, was in the hands of the tribe. For this reason, Gallus Anonymus mentions community members who divided land among themselves. This fact is supported by the partition of movable property, in which, as has already been mentioned, all the members of the community could take part.

It is no accident that we mentioned the beginning of the formation of the Baltic *odal*. This is one of the keys for answering the question as to what kind of chiefdoms we can talk about between the ninth and the 12th cen-

tury. As is well known, *odal* is a form of land ownership known first and foremost in Norway (Gurevič 2007, p.210ff). This form is special in that *odal* never became the absolute property of a single family (the kin, or the small family). To be exact, *odal* became such a property as the absolute given of the ruler, who was the only person entitled to dispose of land at his own discretion. The same can be said about the formation of the Baltic *allod*. This happened around the 13th century, when the great *allod* was formed (Gudavičius 1998, p.95). Before that, land inheritance had been limited by community members. The community also decided matters pertaining to *dominium utile*. Thus, in a situation like this, the social elite did not essentially have many instruments for gaining land (ploughed fields) for other members of the community by forcing their will upon others, or by 'binding' them. Although this process of the 'binding' of a person might already have started, it was not yet, as has already been mentioned, the seizure of the land of a 'bound' person. Here we have to go back to Wulfstan's account.

After enumerating the strata of 'kings' and noblemen, Wulfstan mentions the existence of the poor (*unspedigan*) and the unfree (*peowan*) in Prussian society. Some researchers believe that the unfree were the same individuals who later evolved into farm labourers (Długokęcki 2010, p.47). That is to say, these *peowan* must have been people who had previously owned land, and then came under another person's guardianship together with their land. However, in Wulfstan's time, we can talk, in the best case, of *dominium utile*, since the formation process of *odal* had only just begun. Therefore, Wulfstan's unfree should rather be interpreted in the literal sense: they were probably captives, or slaves, but not members of the household or farm labourers of the 'kings' (Mickevičius 2004, p.67). It is the aforementioned poor who might have been members of the family, but not in the sense that was already common in later sources. It was exactly their land that a representative of the nobility could 'bind' to himself, because captives and slaves simply did not have any land. That is to say, 'to bind' and not to lay hands on, let alone take possession of. Consequently, only that real estate, or, to be more precise, the very right to land management possessed by the clan of the deceased person, was subject to inheritance.

At that time, there were conditions for increasing one's movable property. This statement is supported not only by the Prussian warriors' service of the dukes of Poland or Kievan Rus as mentioned in written sources, but also by the archaeological material mentioned ear-lier. At this point, we will only add that the treasure troves dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries, and found in the lands of the West Balts, too, indicate the existence of accumulative movable property. On the other hand, the decreasing amount of more luxurious grave goods in Curonian society between the 11th and the 12th century, as has already been mentioned, might have indicated the partition of movable property rather than the 'impoverishment' of Curonian society.

Hence, to summarise what has been said so far, the following working conclusion should be drawn: in the Viking era (at least until the 12th century), we can talk of the existence of a social elite (the noble and the rich). Therefore, we should talk of the formation of chiefdoms with a social character. The emergence of fortified castles was a manifestation of the inner development of the social elite. However, at this level we cannot talk of the creation of a political organisation. The Latvian archaeologist A. Šnē also ascertained that a distinction must be made between the development of social structures and the emergence of political structures (Šnē 2005, p.61). We must perceive that the power of the social elite was based mainly on the work of family members, more distant relatives or members of the noble's household, as well as servants and slaves. A patrimonial domain was ruled on the basis of *dominium utile*. These elites dominated in terms of property; however, power was in the hands of the community's meeting. Consequently, in chiefdoms with a social character, political power simply did not exist yet. Having ascertained this, we can ask the question whether the social elite can be called a political elite, and when the political elite emerges.

The political dimension of chiefdoms

The last question asked above makes us wonder what we can identify as a political elite, and in general whether such an elite had emerged prior to the formation of Lithuanian statehood, or, in the case of the lands of the West Balts, in the absence of a state. The emergence of a political elite might allow us to talk of the emergence of political chiefdoms. When summarising other researchers' data, the Swedish historian N. Blomkvist defined the boundary between chiefdoms and early states as follows. Firstly, a small number of chieftains take a dominant position over all the other chieftains. Secondly, the power of these chieftains is perceived as a given innate to the chieftain, which meant the possibility to inherit power (and not only land). Thirdly, the characteristic features of such a chiefdom are a distinct stratum of warriors and social differentiation.

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Social differentiation must have determined not only the emergence of the free and the unfree, or changes in status (the transition from free to unfree), but also the emergence of individual social groups, such as craftsmen and merchants (or vendors). It is exactly the emergence of a professional stratum of warriors that allows us to talk of chiefdoms as a political, and not only a social, organisation. The characteristic features of states are clear-cut hierarchisation, centralisation, bureaucracy, the emergence of a fiscal policy, and so on. However, the chiefdom was still devoid of all these features (Blomkvist 2005, p.264).

Another researcher, A. Winroth, is of a similar opinion. Winroth singled out, albeit indirectly, three chronological stages in the development of the institution of chieftain in Scandinavia. According to him, one kind of chieftain could be found before the Vikings' first attack on England, that is, before the beginning of the Viking era in Europe (which happened in 793). The Viking chieftains were quite different between the late eighth and the early tenth century, at the peak of their rampaging in Europe. It was at that time that the dominant position was taken by such a chieftain, whom other chieftains in the region and their warriors obeyed (of course, another chieftain dominated in another region). It is exactly these chieftains that were closest to what modern historians identify as 'kings'; in sources and historiography, they are normally identified as *earls* or *konungs*. Finally, the third stage is the situation when chieftains became the subjects of a single chieftain, the king. In Denmark and Norway, this occurred in the tenth century (Winroth 2012, pp.52-60). Without any doubt, the model presented of the evolution of Scandinavian chieftains and warriors is relative, and not necessarily transferable to the society of the Balts. From this point of view, it is more important to know what kind and where the emphases are laid when characterising chiefdoms in the Viking era, and the way they evolved into states.

It should be taken into account that the emergence of distinct social differentiation within a society indicates the existence of social changes in the society. It is not quite clear whether these social changes predetermined the emergence of a political elite. The only thing that is clear is that the change in social structures must have predetermined the emergence of political structures. The power of the political elite that had taken shape extends beyond the boundaries of the household, or the patrimony owned by the elite, and begins dominating among individuals of a similar status in other communities (more often than not, of the same tribe). This domination manifested itself by 'taking possession of'

or 'binding' individuals of a similar status. However, it should be noted at this point that the very process of 'taking hold' in the chiefdoms could not lead to the emergence of subjects loyal to the chieftain.

Loyalty is to be directly related to a certain service. On the basis of the way the duties entrusted in the individual are carried out, and the manner in which the individual presents himself within a group of other individuals, we can make judgments about the individual's loyalty or disloyalty. To be more precise, loyalty is necessary for the emerging or emerged state and its ruler. Early Medieval states were first and foremost states that united individuals. A special term, *Personenverbandstaat*, is used in German historiography, which implies that political leadership was based not solely on military compulsion, but also on close personal relations, which were often based on loyalty, and not solely on the 'just' distribution of gained profits or booty, or the accumulation of acquired property in the hands of one's 'own' family or clan (Gelting 1997, p.48ff).

At that time, a chieftain was dealing not with loyal subjects, but with companions-in-arms or accomplices, that is, *amici*, who at a certain period in time agreed to obey the chieftain. The warriors of chiefdoms, who after all had promoted the chieftain to his position, were first and foremost equal (by their status and liberties) to the chieftain; consequently, partnership, and not loyalty, was of the greatest importance. This means that it was partners or friends who obeyed the chieftain and accompanied him on his military campaigns, and not subjects, as was the case with a ruler. For instance, Henry of Livonia mentions the Lithuanian nobleman (*dives et prepotens*) Žvelgaitis and his warrior friends (*exercitum, socios*); in another instance, '*dux exercitus cum comitibus suis*' (Heinrichs, cap.IX, 1). Caupo, one of the prominent Liv noblemen, had such friends, too: '*Caupo cum omnibus cognatis et amicis suis et Lyvonibus fidelibus*' (Heinrichs, cap.X, 10). We can find more examples of this kind (Gudavičius 1998, p.99). In this case, the chieftain was one among equal partners. On the other hand, we should not forget that these people served the chieftain not for money but for booty, and this is not the same thing. Consequently, to paraphrase the famous phrase by M. Bloch, the life of warriors under the chieftain's roof was nevertheless different from the life of knights under the roof of their seigneur (Urbańczyk 2011, p.275). At that time, the ruler would be surrounded first and foremost by his subjects. It goes without saying that the subjects might also have been friends; however, from a legal point of view, these friends were nevertheless subjects in the first instance. Their maintenance or service for money took place al-

ready within the framework of M. Bloch's understanding of both feudal periods (Bloch 2003, pp.64-76).

Friendship was based not only on common interests, but also on real actions, when courage, ingenuity and ruse were demonstrated. On the other hand, other forms of expression were needed to maintain relations among friends (warriors) during periods of peace. Such forms of expression were common feats and exchanges of gifts. Drinking horns (often decorated with imported mountings) found by archaeologists indicate the tradition of such feasts and/or the exchange of gifts, which was also recorded in Scandinavian written sources (Winroth 2012, pp.17-21, 46-50). Of no less importance was the fact of such friends being related through marriage, or handing over their offspring for upbringing in a friend's home. True enough, it is emphasised in historiography that relations between the chieftain and the warriors were based on loyalty (Leonavičiūtė 1997, p.478ff). Loyalty might have been important, but the question to ask is, to what or whom: had the warriors come together for a common cause, or for the chieftain himself? If partnership and not loyalty was important in relations between the chieftain and the warriors, then in chiefdoms we still cannot see the loyalty that emerged much later, that is, loyalty between the duke and his *familia*.

Another problem arises when discussing political chiefdoms. Here we mean the relation between the chieftain and the community's meeting. Most likely, this problem did not exist in social chiefdoms. Chieftains elected in the event of war were accountable to the community's meeting, because the meeting was the sovereign of the community, which was entitled to resolve all problems. When chiefdoms entered the stage of the formation of political structures, these relations had to change. As has been mentioned briefly, we can see this process in the 13th century, when a meeting of noblemen and not all the members of a community would resolve issues pertaining to relations with the Teutonic Order. At this point, it is worth paying attention to a clause in the Treaty of Christburg which concerns the establishment of churches in Pomesania, Warmia and Natangia. The areas where churches had to be built are identified by the terms *villa* and *loco*. In Pomesania, two larger areas are identified: '*in villa, que vocatur Pozolue*' and '*in villa, que vocatur Pastelina*'. Meanwhile, all other areas are identified as locations: '*in loco, qui vocatur Lingues, in loco, qui vocatur Lingues*', and so on. When the churches that are to be built in Warmia are discussed, only the term *loco* is used, whereas when the churches in Natangia are enumerated, the word *loco* is not mentioned at all.

There is no doubt about the fact that some 13th-century noblemen represented *villa*, while others represented *loco*. Consequently, some were 'more equal among equals'. Despite this, the noblemen of Pomesania, just like the noblemen of Warmia and Natangia, held mutual consultations (*consilium*) before concluding the treaty with representatives of the Teutonic Order (Petri Dusburg Chronicon, Lib. III, cap.66). Hence, if the owners of *villa* in Pomesania were also representatives of political chiefdoms, they had to coordinate their actions with the owners of *loco*, just as in general with all the other Prussian noblemen who negotiated at Christburg. At this point, the important thing is that such mutual consultations were held not with the free members of the community, but with the owners of *villa* and *loco*. Again, it is worth recalling the bulls of Pope Gregory IX of 1231 concerning the baptism of the Curonians (including '*Lammecinus rex, et Pagani de Curonia*'). Bull no. XXXII just states, without making it more specific, that '*pagani de Curonia*' from the enumerated villages '*de villis, quarum nomina sunt hec, Rende, Wasa, Galle*', and so on, expressed their wish to accept baptism from the Diocese of Riga. It goes without saying that an agreement on such a wish had to be reached at meetings of those villages, or the wish had to be expressed by the noblemen of the villages mentioned there. Without any doubt, Lamekin was slightly more important among members of the nobility of the enumerated villages, because he was mentioned by name. However, the phrase '*aliis Kiligundis villis ex utraque parte Windasitis, offerrentse ad fidem Christi suscipiendam*' indicates that Lamekin also had to coordinate his actions with the local nobility.

The fact that the meeting was important to the Prussians and that the chieftains, without any doubt, had not taken over its functions yet is implied by a sentence in the same Treaty of Christburg, which emphasises that meetings in villages must be held next to churches ('*ad quamlibet ecclesiam assignate ad illam conveniant*'). Sure enough, the treaty emphasises that people should get together for Christian reasons; therefore, it is not quite clear whether the people who gathered there also performed the functions of the community's meeting. The custom for community members to gather next to the church to resolve certain local problems survived in Sweden throughout the Middle Ages, too (Sanmark 2009, pp.210-211, 216-217, 219). Permission to gather next to churches as mentioned in the Treaty of Christburg allows us to suppose that it is nevertheless meetings of local communities that is meant here, and not merely church services, which were supposed to be conducted inside the church, and not outside it.

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In more exact terms, the earlier sovereign power which had belonged to the community's meeting was now split into two parts, between the meeting and the chieftain. This might have happened at a certain moment (or there might have been more such points in time): most of the meeting had to be made up of people who were related to the chieftain, being elected by certain relationships (shared matters, kinship). In this case alone, the chieftain had a chance to gain more power. More precisely, it was a chance for the chieftain and the community's meeting to split power between them. This, in its turn, created the conditions for consolidating power and handing it over to a successor. It goes without saying that the inheritance of power did not yet exist at that time; however, we can talk of the formation of a tradition to elect chieftains from among a certain clan. Then it was possible to appeal to the relatives of the former chieftains, and thus create an illusion of the validity of the power. For example, the chronicler Peter von Dusburg mentions the Yotvingian nobleman Skomantas, whereas his father (it is believed) is mentioned in the chronicle of Galicia-Volhynia (PSRL, p.800). They were both identified as noblemen and chieftains. Therefore, we can talk of the formation of clan nests. A similar situation is described in connection with the Pomesanian nobleman Pippinus. His clan owned several small castles. In this case, it is of greater importance that they belonged to people of the same clan. Mention is made of Pippinus' anonymous uncle, who defended a castle against the knights of the Teutonic Order. When the knights seized the castle, as the story goes, he betrayed his nephew Pippinus, who was defending another castle and commanded a party of warriors; the latter, according to Peter von Dusburg, were engaged in plundering the surrounding countryside (Petri Dusburg Chronicon, Lib. III, cap.7). It is thus evident that chieftains were already elected from among a certain clan. It was then that these noblemen began to be related to definite castles or farmsteads, although we should take into account the fact that sources still contained mentions of castles which were probably ruled by communities, such as *castrum Pomesanorum*, *castrum Skalowitorum*, and so on (Petri Dusburg Chronicon, Lib. III, cap.58, 62, 143, 181-182, 187; Długokęcki 2010, pp.44-45). Whatever the case might be, at this point, not only the physical properties of the chieftain being elected, but also his affiliation to a certain clan began playing a decisive role. It was the first step towards the formation of the *stirps regia* notion, and the weakening of the power of community meetings. When the tradition emerged to elect warlords from among certain clans, and the powers of the meeting of the free people of the community

had been taken over by the meeting of noblemen/warriors, which was already made up not of the free of the tribe but of the nobles of the community in the non-tribal sense, we can talk of the emergence of military democracy, but not earlier.

The common assumption in historiography is that military democracy existed in the lands of the Balts from the Migration Period. The arguments produced most often are as follows: around the fifth and sixth centuries, battle-axes intended solely for battle and not for work appeared; and archaeologists discover the rich graves of 'dukes' dated to the fifth to the seventh centuries (Jovaiša 2006, pp.6-7). While making such statements, we should nevertheless pay attention to the fact that horse burials related to the warrior stratum became widespread from the tenth century From the ninth century, castles are recorded in the lands of the West Balts, whereas in the lands of the East Balts the peak of the construction of such castles is attributed to the late tenth and 11th centuries (Zabiela 1995, pp.52-53). The 'group' graves of males attributed to chieftains and their warriors emerged in the lands of the Curonians, in Semigallia and central Lithuania, no earlier than the late tenth or 11th century, too (Bertašius 2002, pp.80-96; Vaškevičiūtė 2010, pp.7-10). We should not forget the fact that even Gallus Anonymus stated in his description of the Yotvingians that they used to seek refuge in bogs and forests, and not in castles (Galli Anonymi, Lib. II, cap.42), although slightly later (chronologically) Wincent Kadlubek pointed out the fact that the Yotvingians had fortified farmsteads (*celsas aedium fabricas*). However, the fortifications that surrounded the farmsteads (Wincent Kadlubek identifies them as *urbs*) were very modest (*eosdem enim urbium habent muros*). Finally, from the early 13th century, we can talk of the establishment of the tradition of campaigns of plunder in the lands of the Balts. True enough, this claim is based mostly on the example of the Lithuanians (Gudavičius 1998, pp.101-106). The aforementioned example of Pippinus shows that there were quite a few such plundering chieftains and their warriors among the West Balts, too. All the more so that in the second half of the 12th century and the early 13th century, more active military clashes between the Prussians and the Poles are recorded (Powierski 1968, pp.110-116, 141-152). All the aforementioned arguments indicate that we cannot talk of the existence of military democracy until around the 12th century, because we encounter social and not political chiefdoms at that time.

As far as the West Balts are concerned, historiography contains statements that military incursions by the Curonians and the Prussians into the neighbouring lands (Poland and Scandinavia) had begun at an earlier time. All this has allowed researchers to claim that the West Balts came closer to statehood at an earlier time than the East Balts. If it really was so, it is strange that the politically more 'mature' societies of West Balts did not nevertheless create any state formations. It is believed that the societies of the West Balts did not create a state of their own, for the reason that from the second half of the 12th century, trade declined in the maritime areas of the Balts (Žulkus 2004, pp.153, 160). It goes without saying that the economic recession might have been one of the reasons why the West Balts did not create a state; however, this explanation is obviously not enough. If, as it is claimed, the elite of Curonian society started leading an active Viking way of life (that is, the 'plunder economy'), and that this mode of life even determined the emergence of the political independence of individual lands and the estate of territorial 'kings' (Žulkus 2004, pp.152, 159), then where did all this disappear when the economic recession began? Maybe it was the other way round: all those chieftains who led the Viking way of life between the 11th and the 13th centuries were representatives of a social and not a political elite, who during the economic recovery made use of the favourable environment for plundering. As the economy declined, the campaigns of plunder, which had not developed as far as the establishment of political structures, also declined. This idea might be supported by the fact that no ports emerged after the decline of the trading ports (trading posts) which had been under Scandinavian influence.

On the other hand, we cannot overestimate the piracy of the West Balts mentioned in Medieval chronicles. Without any doubt, there were cases of plunder. However, we should bear in mind that Medieval authors depicted the West Balts through certain established literary images, the way heathens 'had' to be depicted. The interesting thing is that the piracy and atrocities by the Curonians and the Prussians were depicted similarly to the atrocities committed by the heathen Swedes or the Elbe Slavs (Fraesdorff 2005, pp.256-257, 261-272). This should always be borne in mind, especially with regard to the overestimation of the influence of the 'plunder economy' on the development of political structures.

Hence, the scarce historical sources allow us to assume that military democracy must have emerged in the territory of the West Balts no earlier than the 12th century. This means that it is highly unlikely that a pro-

fessional stratum of warriors among the West Balts had emerged earlier than the stratum of warriors among the East Balts; the emergence of the latter should also be dated to the 12th or the 13th century (Gudavičius 1998, pp.99, 101-102, 104, 106). In this case, 'professionalism' means not only the ability to use weapons masterfully, but also the influence of warriors at the community meeting which elected chieftains. As has already been mentioned on several occasions, the 13th-century sources which talk of the partition of lands between knights of the Teutonic Order, bishops and people loyal to them, and local noblemen, show that a different society and a different community (already non-tribal) was taking shape.

When talking about the East Balts, attention should be paid to hagiographies dedicated to St Bruno of Querfurt. The hagiography of St Romuald written by Petrus Damiani, which also contains a story of the martyrdom of St Bruno of Querfurt, mentions that a tribal chieftain wanted to '*regnum relinquens filio*' (1009 metai, p.198), that is, to leave his power to his son. Furthermore, the same hagiography mentions that one of the chieftain's brothers lived separately, and the other did not live '*Frater cum ipso pariter habitans*' yet (1009 metai, p.198). Consequently, among the East Balts, and probably in the tribe of the Lithuanians, the inheritance of power was taking shape; the large family was being replaced by the small one (Gudavičius 2002, p.51). The sources available pertaining to the West Balts record the formation of 'clan nests' with inherited power only in the 12th century at best. As has already been mentioned, next to it we see, in the 12th century, the inheritance of land by drawing lots (see the example of the inheritance of land between the Yotvingians given by Gallus Anonymus) (Galli Anonymi, Lib. III, cap.24).

Hence, on the basis of the notes set forth above, we can draw the following working conclusions: we can identify as political chiefdoms only those chiefdoms in which the military democracy would take shape, and the chieftains would begin to be elected from among certain clans, which in turn determined the formation of 'clan nests'. In this case, power was split between the chieftain and his partners equal to him – the warriors and the meeting of other noblemen. Hence, the earlier meeting of the entire tribe of free community members lost its power. This allowed the chieftain and the meeting of his supporters, the warriors, to concentrate power in their hands. This predetermined the development of a different (already non-tribal) type of society.

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Conclusions

The classification of chiefdoms into social and political ones is undoubtedly conditional, especially in view of the already large number of classifications of chiefdoms. However, the purpose of such a classification is to emphasise two important points:

1) First, a social elite, the rich, took shape in tribal society. Wealth does not mean nobility, because wealth could be gained as fast as it could be lost. The differentiation of material wealth recorded in burials, and the emergence of well-fortified castles for storing and accumulating wealth – all these indicators reflect more the complexity of social relations; however, they do not allow us to make the distinction as to *when* and *where* political matters begin. When the rich began to perceive themselves as noble, that is to say, special people in the community, and when people from certain clans began to be elected as chieftains, and thus 'clan nests' began to take shape, the social elite, or, to be exact, part of it, but probably not the entire elite, made the transition to the political level.

2) The emerging power should be seen as an indicator of the political level. When power was in the hands of the community meeting, the chieftains it had elected were accountable to the meeting. However, the weight of power was then split between the meeting of the nobles and the chieftains it elected. This determined a different, already non-tribal, kind of relationship within the community. The development of land ownership must have been taking place simultaneously, when during the formation of *odal*, the *allmende* was being appropriated by the emerging political elite. On the other hand, it was exactly the distinction of professional warriors and the formation of their 'military democracy' that marked the emergence of political chiefdoms. It is highly unlikely that among the West Balts this happened earlier than the 12th century. It was exactly then that the conditions for laying the foundations of statehood emerged. However, we should take into account the fact that as late as the 13th century, the meeting of the nobles that the chief had to share his power with still played an important role.

Finally, there is another important point that marks the emergence of the political elite and its specific character as compared to the social elite. What is meant here is the consolidation of the notion of a dynastic clan, which coincided with the masculine notion of the inheritance of the social status and the formation of 'clan nests'. Theories of origin were supposed to instil a certain feeling of community, as well as the rights and duties connected with that feeling. It is exactly the emergence of Scandinavian 'clan sagas' in the 12th and 13th centuries that indicates the search for the historical memory of a clan (dynasty). The authors of these 'clan sagas' aimed at assigning their heroes retrospectively the appearance of that same mythical beginning, which was also declared by the rulers; therefore, it is no accident that the clans of earls and kennings, just like the clans of the rulers, originated from a mythical hero (Steinsland 2011, pp.25-26, 38-39, 57-59). It goes without saying that at this point we should not overestimate the influence of the heathen religion within this process of linking the originator of a clan with mythical time and mythical origin. As a matter of fact, sagas were founded on Medieval Christian literary topoi, and aimed at depicting a clan (just like a royal dynasty) by employing idealistic plots which served the image of *rex iustus* being created (Phelpstead 2005, pp.165ff).

Unfortunately, written sources from the Baltic environment say nothing about the consolidation of this notion of the dynastic clan in the 12th and 13th centuries. On the contrary, along with the emergence of the Lithuanian state and its development, we can see the search for the historical memory of the emerging dynasty and noble clans. From the 13th century, besides the characterisation of Mindaugas' father contained in the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle, we have another record of historical memory. In his account of the destruction of the castle of Vissewalde, the Duke of Jersika, Henry of Livonia presents a small passage on the duke moaning about his parents' inheritance being destroyed (Heinrichs, XIII, 4). True enough, the very words '*o hereditas patrum meorum!*', and so on, were taken from the Bible, the Book of Maccabees (for more on this, see Undusk 2011, p.59), but this does not change the essence of the matter, although it is obvious that Vissewalde might have uttered other words. It goes without saying that we can hardly draw far-reaching conclusions from this. Jersika, as well as Koknese, must have already been dukedoms rather than chiefdoms, and for this reason we can trace here a thread of historical memory, albeit downgraded to the parents' inheritance. At the same time, the dukedoms implied the existence of 'clan nests', for which, also, the historical memory of the clan and not the collective or communal historical memory was of greater importance. It is exactly political chiefdoms that we can link the emergence of 'clan nests' to. This predetermined the beginning of the decline of tribal society, and the formation of a *different* kind of society and a *different* kind of community.

There is another side of the coin, too. Most likely, it was already in political chiefdoms and the emerging Lithuanian state in the 13th century that the nobles perceived

themselves as a common social stratum (Łowmiański, pp.363-370). This perception should also be linked to the emerging historical memory of a *different* kind, a collective memory, but that of the noble.

Acknowledgement

Abbreviations

BRMŠ – *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai*. N. Vėlius, ed. Bd. I, 1996, Vilnius
HRM – Historica Russiae Monimenta ex antiquis exterarum gentium archivis et bibliothecis deprompta
LUB – Liv-, Est- und Curländische Urkundenbuch
MPH – Monumenta Poloniae Historica
PSRL – Polnoye sobraniye Ruskikh Letopisei
PUB – Preußisches Urkundenbuch. Politische Abteilung
SRG – Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
SRP – Scriptores rerum Prusicarum

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KAI KURIOS PASTABOS BALTŲ VISUOMENĖS RAIDOS IX–XIII A. KLAUSIMU BALTIJOS REGIONO SOCIALINIŲ-POLITINIŲ STRUKTŪRŲ KONTEKSTE

MARIUS ŠČIAVINSKAS

Santrauka

Remiantis archeologiniais ir negausiais istoriografijos rašytiniais šaltiniais konstatuota, kad vikingų epochoje galėjo atsirasti pirmosios valstybingumo užuomazgos (1 pav.). Kiti tyrinėtojai teigia, kad pirmųjų politinių visuomeninių struktūrų reikėtų ieškoti dar ankstesniais laikais. Šios ankstyvos politinės valdžios formos įvardijamos vadysčių terminu. Vadysčių klausimas dažniausiai siejamas su kariauninkų sluoksnio išsikristalizavimo klausimu. Pastarasis klausimas glaudžiai susijęs su politinių struktūrų geneze vakarų ir rytų baltuose. Nedidelės apimties straipsnyje, koks yra šis, neįmanoma išnagrinėti visų su politinėmis struktūromis susijusių problemų, todėl didžiausias dėmesys skiriamas vakarų baltų visuomenės raidos klausimams. Straipsnyje keliamas klausimas, ar vikingų epochoje išskiriamas socialinis elitas buvo ir politinis elitas? Taigi pagrindinis klausimas, apie kokio pobūdžio vadystes galime kalbėti ir nuo kada bei kaip atsirado politinis elitas, lėmęs valstybės atsiradimą rytų baltų teritorijoje, taip ir neprivedęs vakarų baltų visuomenės prie valstybingumo.

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kas buvo ankstyvuosiuose IX a. šaltiniuose (Rimberto šv. Ansgaro gyvenime ir Wulfstano vadinamojoje reliacijoje) minimų miestų (pilių) valdytojai, vėlesniuose hagiografiniuose šaltiniuose minimi kaimo vyresnieji (dominus ville), kaip, remiantis archeologine medžiaga, suprasti didėjančią turtinę diferenciaciją, pagal kurią išskirtini tam tikri socialiniai sluoksniai. Daugelis straipsnyje išvardytų požymių rodo, kad tarp IX ir XII a. turime kalbėti apie socialinį elitą. Tačiau konstatuojama, kad socialinis elitas nėra lygus politiniam elitui. Todėl reikėtų kalbėti apie socialinio pobūdžio vadysčių susiformavimą. Įtvirtintų pilių pasirodymas buvo socialinio elito vidinės raidos manifestacija. Tačiau šiame lygmenyje nėra tvirto pagrindo kalbėti apie politinės organizacijos kūrimąsi. Tyrimas rodo, kad elito valdžia dažniausiai remdavosi savo šeimos narių, tolimesnių giminaičių ar namų šeimynykščių, taip pat tarnų, vergų darbu. Patri-

moninė valda buvo valdoma remiantis dominium utile teise. Šis elitas dominavo turtiniu atžvilgiu, tačiau valdžia buvo bendruomenės susirinkimo rankose. Taigi socialinio pobūdžio vadystėse politinė valdžia paprasčiausiai dar neegzistavo. Tai konstatavus galima klausti, ar socialinį elitą galima vadinti politiniu elitu ir kada atsiranda politinis elitas?

Paskutinis užduotas klausimas verčia mąstyti apie tai, ką galime vadinti politiniu elitu ir apskritai ar jis atsirado iki Lietuvos valstybės susiformavimo, vakarų baltų kraštuose taip ir neatsiradus valstybės. Politinio elito atsiradimas gali leisti kalbėti apie politinių vadysčių atsiradimą. Kai atsiranda tradicija rinkti karo vadus iš tam tikrų giminių, o bendruomenės laisvųjų žmonių susirinkimo galias perėmė kilminguju / kariauninkų susirinkimas, kurį sudarė jau ne genties laisvieji, o bendruomenės kilmingieji ne gentine prasme, galima kalbėti apie karinės demokratijos atsiradimą, bet ne anksčiau. Taigi esantys šykštūs istoriniai šaltiniai leidžia spėti, kad karinė demokratija vakarų baltų teritorijoje galėjo atsirasti ne anksčiau kaip XII a. O tai reiškia, kad vargu ar vakarų baltų profesionalus kariauninkų sluoksnis atsirado anksčiau už rytų baltų kariauninkų sluoksnį, kurio atsiradimas taip pat datuotinas XII a. – XIII a. pr. Tai lėmė jau kitokios (ne gentinės) visuomenės vystymąsi.