

CONTINUITY OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH OF CONTINUITY: BASIC RESEARCH ON SETTLEMENT ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE IRON AGE IN THE BALTIC REGION. A NEW LONG-TERM RESEARCH PROJECT BY THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCE AND LITERATURE IN SCHLESWIG AND BERLIN

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After several years of successful investigations in former East Prussia (today the Kaliningradskaya Oblast of the Russian Federation) and investigations in neighbouring countries around the Baltic Sea, the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology in Schleswig (ZBSA) in Germany has expanded its research plans for the next 18 years. The application for the project ‘Forschungskontinuität und Kontinuitätsforschung – Siedlungsarchäologische Grundlagenforschung zur Eisenzeit im Baltikum’ (Continuity of Research and Research of Continuity: Basic Research on Settlement Archaeology of the Iron Age in the Baltic Region), submitted in June 2010, was accepted by the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz in December 2011. The concept was developed by the directors of the two applying institutes, Professor Claus von Carnap-Bornheim, of the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology in Schleswig, and Professor Matthias Wemhoff, of the Museum of Prehistory and Early History in Berlin, in close cooperation with colleagues from Poland, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia (Fig. 1). For the next two decades, the grant will allow three researchers and 18 international doctoral students to examine the Baltic Region with a special focus on settlement archaeology, assisted by an international advisory board consisting of experts from different research areas.

The reciprocal pairs of words ‘continuity of research and research of continuity’ reflect both the potential and the problems of traditional Baltic archaeology in landscapes which played a very important role in the development of present-day Europe, and in particular of the southern shore of the Baltic Sea.

On the one hand, for one and a half centuries researchers from various countries collected a tremendous

pool of archaeological data. Before the Second World War, the ‘Prussia-Sammlung’ collection in the castle of ancient Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), along with several smaller museum and private collections, was the basis for many archaeological investigations in the Baltic region, especially in East Prussia (Nowakowski 2005). Its numerous original finds and documents were lost in the confusing times of the war, but were rediscovered half a century later, mainly in Berlin and Kaliningrad (Junker 2003; Reich 2003; Valujev 2005). Since then, the surviving finds and documents have been sorted over many years of constant labour, and are now available for modern scientific research. The interrupted continuity of research can now finally be restored and renewed through international collaboration.

On the other hand, the second part of the project title, the ‘research of continuity’, refers to the astonishing territorial stability of the Baltic people, especially during the first millennium AD. Settlements, in general less investigated than the thousands of graveyards in the region, seem to reflect an outstanding continuity, nearly untouched by the changes during the Migration Period. The numerous still-preserved hill-forts in the region should be understood as only the tip of the archaeological iceberg. They must have been surrounded by an even larger number of settlements, which for the most part have not yet been discovered.

Hence, the main target of the project is the comprehensive investigation of the complex cultural landscape on the southern Baltic shore in the first millennium AD. All the available archive materials, such as documents and finds from pre-war excavations, as well as the results of current excavations and additional interdisciplinary methods, will be included (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. The project team from Schleswig and Berlin (from left): Heidemarie Eilbracht, Matthias Wemhoff, Claus von Carnap-Bornheim, Jaroslaw Prassolow, Timo Ibsen.

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PEOPLE AT THE CROSSROADS OF SPACE AND TIME: A NEW PROJECTS IN THE BALTIC REGION

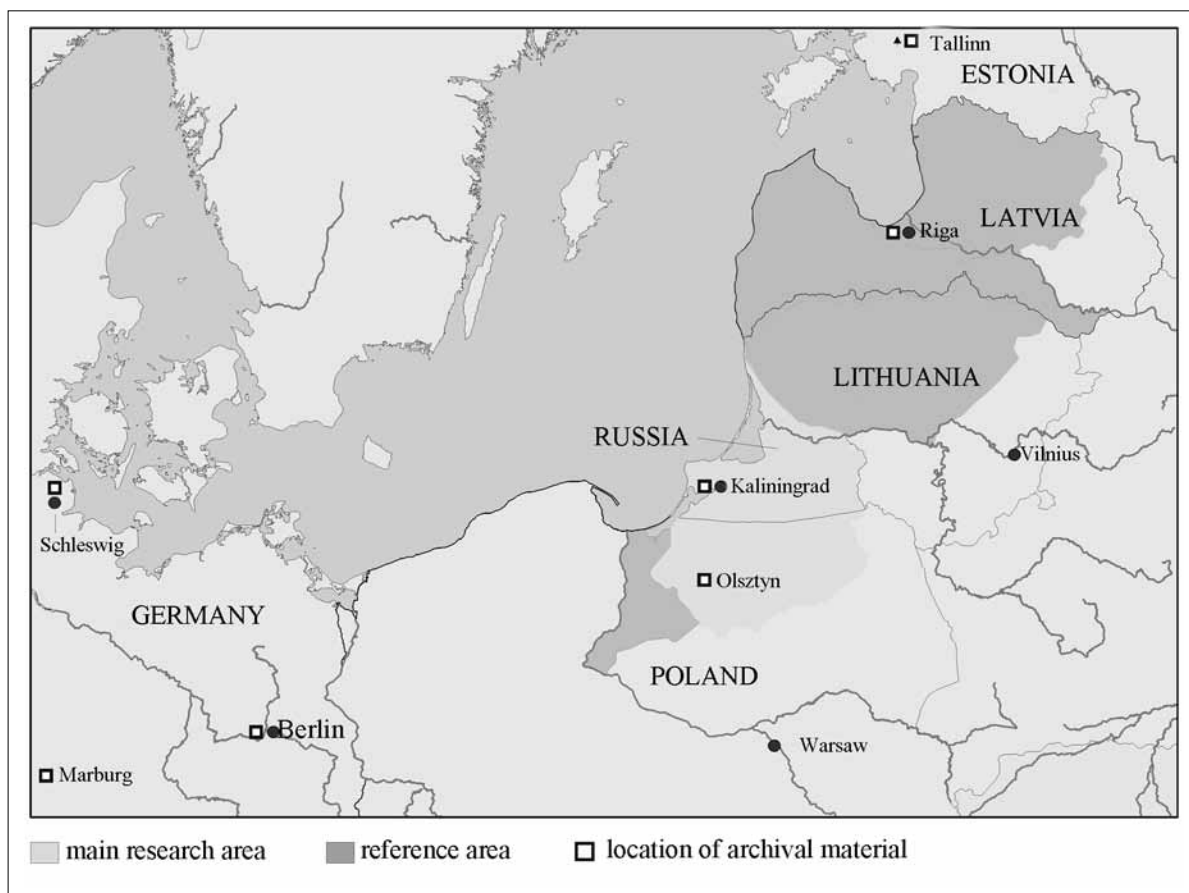


Fig. 2. A map of the main research areas in the project, and the locations of relevant archive material.

The outcome will be summed up in an 'archaeological atlas', presenting and commenting on the concerned sites in catalogue format. Furthermore, the atlas will conserve the archive data as part of a common archaeological and cultural heritage. In addition, a second publication series will discuss recent problems in current Baltic archaeology, and will make the results accessible to the wider public.

The former East Prussia, with its northern part currently belonging to Russia and its southern provinces being part of Poland, is a very specific archaeological landscape. The richest amber reserves in the world, and the strategically perfect location for traffic and trade, both by land and by sea, always integrated East Prussia into long-distance distribution and migration processes. The Baltic tribes absorbed influences, but kept their geographical territories, and moreover their cultural identities. Especially in the first millennium AD, the region stands out for its extraordinary density of archaeological sites. This seems to be an indication of a unique settlement continuity without analogies in other parts of the Baltic Sea region.

The long and fruitful continuity of prewar research in East and West Prussia and neighbouring landscapes was interrupted sharply by the political and territorial changes of the postwar period. The main reason for this broken continuity was the loss of the numerous collections of archaeological finds and the affiliated original documents. Neither the literature published up to 1945, nor the high-quality postwar investigations by Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Russian researchers, could compensate for this break in the research continuity. Furthermore, the diverse scientific interpretation of most of the archaeological research was subjected to specific political intentions, which impaired the overall analysis of settlement dynamics and processes.

At the beginning of the 1990s, large parts of the so-called Prussia Collection, including finds and original excavation reports, were rediscovered in Berlin, Kaliningrad and other places (Junker 2003; Reich 2003; Valujev 2005). Since then, a priceless and so far nearly unexplored archaeological record became available again, and can now be used for a comprehensive reconstruction of an amazing historical landscape. The political changes of the last decade of the 20th century now make it possible to work on this task through international cooperation.

The second important factor for this research project concerns new technology in archaeology. Many new methods, such as geophysics, geographical information systems, and natural science-based analytical tools, offer more flexibility and deeper insights into the formation of archaeological remains. In particular, the

thousands of hill-forts from 500 BC to 1250 AD provide suitable access to investigate settlement dynamics in this extremely interesting part of Europe. These hill-forts (Fig. 3) must be understood as focal points for the development of the social systems and settlement structures which led to the establishment of regional and supra-regional centres of power and rule. Furthermore, they functioned as melting pots for cultural influences from the south and the north, as well as from the east and the west. Later political systems must have evolved on the basis of these centres.

The new project reconnects the interrupted continuity of research by digitising and preserving the archive data of the prewar period, and combines this historical evidence with postwar data. On this basis, it will be possible to examine the settlement dynamics of certain micro-regions using interdisciplinary methods. The main question is: what factors influenced the development of settlement areas over time and space?

The project is divided into three related modules, each one operated by a researcher and supported by doctoral students. The first module focuses on preserving the archive materials, making the more than 50,000 documents stored in the archives of the Museum of Prehistory and Early History in Berlin available to scientists and the public in a web-based and scientifically commented database. In addition, smaller archival units, like the private testimonies of Rudolf Grenz or Herbert Jankuhn in the Archaeological State Museum (Archäologisches Landesmuseum) in Schleswig, and others, will be included in this module.

The second module utilises this information in a geographical information system (GIS) to allow the mapping of archaeological sites through spatial analysis. The aim is to identify and define settlement clusters in selected areas. The results will be verified in the landscape by examining hill-forts and their environments through interdisciplinary surveys.

In the third module, the hypothetical model of colonisation for the first millennium AD, derived from the results of the first two modules, will be checked thoroughly by excavations and extensive field work, to develop a comprehensive understanding of the underlying processes. These paradigmatic studies will be limited to the most interesting and complex settlement 'micro-regions'.

With this new project, the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology in Schleswig, and the Museum of Prehistory and Early History in Berlin, would like to establish the research experiences of the past year and develop them as an integral factor in Baltic Sea archaeology. Over the long term, the project will hopefully



Fig. 3. The Apuolė hill-fort (in the Skuodas district of Lithuania) during a fieldwork survey in 2011 (photograph by Johannes Frenzel).

help to combine past and current scientific traditions in order to investigate the history of this key European region.

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For further information and the entire project overview, please see:

<http://www.akademieprojekt-baltikum.eu>

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„MOKSLO TĘSTINUMAS IR
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FUNDAMENTALŪS BALTIJOS
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GYVENVIEČIŲ TYRIMAI“.
NAUJAS MOKSLO IR
LITERATŪROS AKADEMIJOS
ILGALIAIKIS TYRYMŲ
PROJEKTAS ŠLEZVIGE IR
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Santrauka

Baltijos regionas yra turtingas archeologijos paminklų ir turi labai senas archeologijos mokslo tradicijas. Antrasis pasaulinis karas nutraukė šias tradicijas. Daugybė archeologinių radinių, taip pat archeologinių tyrimų ataskaitų ir dokumentacijos buvo prarasta karo metu, ypač buv. Rytų Prūsijoje. Po politinių pasikeitimų 1990-aisias dalis šios medžiagos iš naujo buvo atrasta ir dabar gali būti naudojama tiriant ilgą regiono apgyvendinimo tęstinumą, nuo ankstyvojo geležies amžiaus iki viduramžių. Tai liudija tūkstančiai kapinynų ir piliakalnių. Tik gyvenviečių iki šiolei yra labai retai ir mažai tyrinėta.

Naują projektą „Mokslo tęstinumas ir mokslas apie tęstinumą – Baltijos regiono geležies amžiaus gyvenviečių archeologijos tyrimai“ (1–3 pav.) finansuoja Mokslo ir literatūros akademija Maince, jį vykdo Baltijos ir Skandinavijos archeologijos centras Šlezvige kartu su Priešistorės ir ankstyvųjų istorinių laikų muziejumi Berlyne. Šio projekto tikslas – trimis etapais surinkti visą buv. Rytų Prūsijos archeologinę medžia-

gą, ją įskaitmeninti ir su komentarais paskelbti, t. y. šią kultūros paveldo dalį padaryti prieinamą mokslinei bendruomenei (1 etapas). Ši duomenų bazė bus interpretuota GIS, tai leis atlikti erdvinę analizę, ypač atkreipiant dėmesį į ryšį tarp įtvirtintų ir atvirojo tipo gyvenviečių bei piliakalnių, siekiant nustatyti jų vietą kultūriniame kraštovaizdyje (2 etapas). Naudojant tarpdalykinius metodus, iš pirmų dviejų tyrimų etapų išplaukiančios mokslinės hipotezės bus patikrintos tarptautinių lauko tyrimų metu. Projektas yra gavęs 18-ai metų finansavimą, jo realizavimas suteiks daugybę galimybių praturtinti Baltijos regiono archeologiją ir sustiprins tarptautinį mokslinį tinklą.

Vertė Romas Jarockis