

DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE BALTIC DURING THE AGE OF LEARNED SOCIETIES (FROM THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY UNTIL THE FIRST WORLD WAR)

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The territory inhabited by Latvians and Estonians was incorporated by Russia during the course of the 18th century. Estonians lived in the Governorate of Estonia (*Estliandskaia guberniia* in Russian, *Gouvernement Estland* in German), and in the northern part of the Governorate of Livland (*Lifliandskaia guberniia* in Russian, *Gouvernement Livland* in German, *Vidzeme* in Latvian), Latvians inhabited the southern part of the Governorate of Livland and the Governorate of Courland (*Kurlandskaia guberniia* in Russian, *Kurländisches Gouvernement* in German, *Kurzeme* in Latvian). Part of the territory inhabited by Latvians – modern-day Latgale – was included in Belorussia (*Белорусская губерния*), but after its liquidation in 1802 – within the Governorate of Vitebsk (*Витебская губерния*). In 1801, by order of Tsar Alexander I, the Governorates of Estonia, Livland, and Courland were joined forming the province of the Baltic Governor-General (*Остзейские губернии, прибалтийские губернии* in Russian, *Ostseegouvernements, Ostseeprovinzen* in German), with Rīga as its administrative centre. The Baltics enjoyed more or less wide-ranging autonomy in regard to administrative, judicial, and legislative matters, which began to be curtailed during the second half of the 19th century. In 1876, the post of the Baltic Governor General was abolished.

The Baltics were engaged in processes ongoing in Western Europe, which also left an imprint on the

sciences, including the development of archaeology. Throughout the 19th century, German was the language of privileged and educated people in the Baltic. During this time, science in the German lands experienced rapid advance, and this impacted the Baltic as well. It is not for nothing that the first period of archaeological research in Latvia and Estonia is often called the period of German–Baltic investigations.

In like manner as in Western Europe, learned societies were formed in the Baltics during the 19th century. These sought to unite all scientists in the Baltic provinces. In a way, they became the first academies of sciences. One of the tasks of these societies was to investigate the past of their homeland. Ideas of the Enlightenment also attracted the attention of the majority of the public, who at that time was mainly comprised of peasants – Latvians and Estonians.

The first learned society, the Courland Society for Literature and Art (*Kurländische Gesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst*) was founded in Jelgava in 1815. In 1834, the Society for the History and Archaeology of the Baltic Provinces of Russia (*Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Russlands*) was founded in Rīga (later renamed the Rīga Society for Research of History and Antiquities) (*Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Riga*), and on 18 January 1838, the Learned Estonian



The Courland Provincial Museum in Jelgava. Beginning of the 20th century. Author unknown

Society (*Die Gelehrte Estnische Gesellschaft*) was founded in Tartu.

Mindful of their value and of the need for their preservation, a museum, the Courland Provincial Museum and Athenaeum (*Kurländischen Provinzial-Museums und Athenäum* in German) was founded in 1818 by the Courland Society for Literature and Art. Johann Friedrich von Recke (1764–1846) was its first director.

The Rīga Society for Research of History and Antiquities for its part was affiliated with the Rīga Dom Museum (*Das Dommuseum in Riga*); artefacts collected by the Learned Estonian Society came into the possession of Tartu (*Dorpat*) University. Private collections were also formed during the 19th century, and these were made available for scholarly study, later to be donated to museums.

The learned societies regularly published meeting reports, *Sitzungsberichte*, which were compiled in yearbooks. In these one could find information about what items had been discovered, with detailed or brief descriptions of how they were found, together with reports on excavations, longer articles published in separate editions. These societies organised public lectures to which the most prominent specialists were invited as speakers; members of other learned societies often were elected solely as honorary members, or were invited to conduct archaeological excavations. It should be noted that it was only in the 1830s that archaeology became

a science, separate from straightforward collection of antiquities.

A turning point for the development of Baltic archaeology occurred in 1837, when flooding led to uncovering several ancient burial sites in the vicinity of Aizkraukle. Tsar Nicholas I of Russia issued an order “to investigate archaeologically the whole of Livland, Courland and Saaremaa”. This task was undertaken by Friedrich Karl Hermann Kruse (1790–1866), a professor at Tartu. The results of his effort included publication of high-quality images of items discovered at Aizkraukle and elsewhere in the Baltic; these were published in the well-known publication by F. Kruse, *Necrolivonica oder Alterthümer Liv-, Esth- und Curlands* [1]. The conclusions reached and reconstructions of the clothes, however, were incorrect. F. Kruse assumed that the uncovered remains were those of Scandinavians – “the Varangians – the Rus”.

The next significant publication was *Gräber der Liven* [2], by Johann Karl Bähr (1801–1869) which appeared in 1850. In 1850, Bähr carried out excavations in Aizkraukle, Sigulda, and Seces Bajāri. In 1837, J. K. Bähr began to collect such archaeological artefacts and his collection became one of the largest 19th century collections of archaeological relics. In 1852, he sold his collection to the British Museum in London, where it is housed today. A large collection of antiquities comprising some 1200 items was also gathered by Edmund Carl Julius Krüger (1836–1909), member of the Courland Society for Literature and Art, a pedagogue and a state councillor. The Courland Provincial Museum bought his collection in 1901.

The work, *Gräber der Liven* by J. K. Bähr was particularly significant in that there was no attempt to look for traces of the “Varangians – Rus”, instead attributing the burial sites and artefacts found therein to local inhabitants. Excavation methodology had not yet been developed in the 19th century, in particular during the first half of the century. The principal desired result when excavating a grave was to find relic. J. K. Beer’s work already included drawings of graves, showed a burial mound surrounded by a stone fence, as well as the cross-section of a burial pit.

Two professors at the University of Dorpat, Constantin Caspar Andreas von Grewingk (1819–1887) and

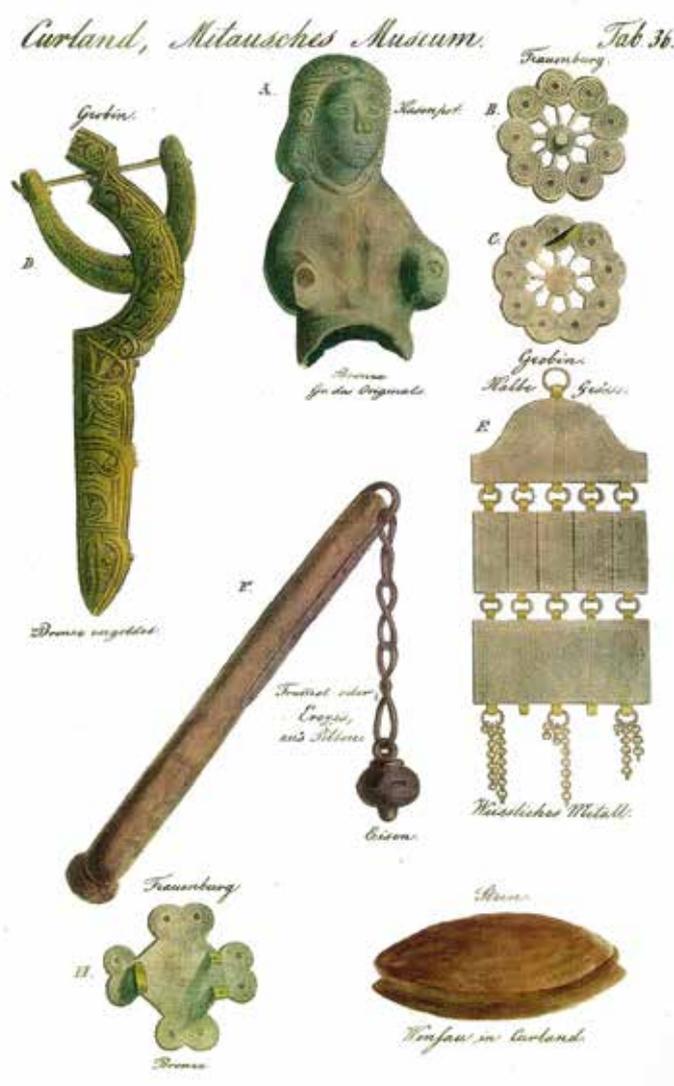
Richard Gustav Gotthard Hausmann (1842–1918) made important contributions to the development of archaeology in the Baltic.

C. Grewingk is considered to be the initiator of scholarly investigations of Baltic prehistory, his work as an archaeologist covered the entire Baltic region – Estonia, Courland, Livland, as well as Lithuania and Russia. C. Grewingk was the first to study the Stone Age in the Baltic. The settlement of Kunda in Estonia was discovered in the 1890s [3]. C. Grewingk correctly considered the site at Kunda to be the oldest then known settlement in the Baltic. It was believed then that the Baltic was not inhabited during the oldest Stone Age period – the Palaeolithic, and that settlers appeared only during the newest Stone Age period – the Neolithic, which persisted until the 6th century; later, the boundary was drawn between the Stone Age and the Iron Age in the Baltic at around 100 CE, while no traces of the Bronze Age have as yet been found in the Baltic.

Richard Hausmann turned to archaeology in the 1890s. Hausmann was the first in the Baltic to carry out systematic excavations and to organise the Learned Estonian Society's collection of antiquities. In 1895, R. Hausmann was elected Honorary Member of the Rīga Society for Research of History and Antiquities. He wrote the important Introduction to the Catalogue of the Exhibition of Antiquities of the 10th All-Russian Archaeological Congress [4].

The 10th All-Russian Archaeological Congress, organised by the Rīga Latvian Society, is considered to have been the main event in Baltic archaeology during the period of the Russian Empire. In his Introduction to the Exhibition Catalogue, R. Hausmann focussed on the Bronze Age, albeit with an indication that it was chiefly represented by artefacts found near the Daugava River, and which had been imported from other regions where bronze processing technology was at a high level – from Scandinavia, or Western Europe. The Iron Age was divided into the oldest period, which lasted until 800 and the newest period until the arrival of Germans at the end of the 12th century.

The Courland Society for Literature and Art took an interest in archaeology from the 1860s onward, at which time a number of personalities, such as the artist Julius Döring (1818–1898), the pastor, eth-



Antiquities at the Courland Provincial Museum. See Kruse, F. K. H. *Necrolivonica oder Alterthümer Liv-, Esth- und Curlands*. Dorpat, 1842

nographer, and linguist August Johann Gottfried Bielenstein (1826–1907), and the senior teacher Carl Boy (1853–?), took part in archaeological excavations of ancient burial sites [5], and also identified (catalogued) the castle mound [6]. Professor Adalbert Bezenberger (1851–1922) published, in 1885, a wide-ranging list of castle mounds, and, influenced by this example, A. Bielenstein developed a standard form for recording archaeological data. In addition to the already mentioned R. Hausmann, other members of the Rīga Society for the Research of History and Antiquities, Anton Buchholz (1848–1901), and Jakob Carl Georg Graf von Sievers (1814–1879), were visibly engaged in archaeology.



Archaeological excavations in 1895 at Jaunsvirlaukas Ciemalde cemetery. Photo: Oscar Emil Schmidt. Negative 37089. Collection at the National History Museum of Latvia.

Whereas Carl Sievers turned to archaeology only at the age of 56, he managed to achieve a lot during the rest of his life. He excavated several Stone Age sites in Vidzeme, uncovered the Stone Age settlement at Riņņukalns. In 1876, C. Sievers excavated the Āraiši Lake Fortress, which at that time was mistakenly identified as a Stone Age settlement. A report on his activities was sent to the *Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, who published it. C. Sievers also submitted a similar report to the Learned Estonian Society, and wrote a letter to Ferdinand Keller (1800–1881) in Zürich, a pioneering investigator of lake dwellings. The pathologist, prehistorian, and biologist Rudolf Ludwig Carl Virchow (1821–1902) arrived in Vidzeme in 1877 at the invitation of C. Sievers. R. Virchow, unlike C. Sievers, identified the Āraiši site to be much more recent, dating from the Iron Age, and perhaps even a witness of the arrival of German knights and priests. The approach followed by Carl Sievers was scientific – archaeological findings were studied using natural science methods. Artefacts unearthed by C. Sievers during excavations

made up a large part of the Collection of Archaeological Artefacts at the University of Tartu.

A lasting picture had already been formed by the end of the 19th century as to what peoples lived within the territory of modern-day Latvia during the Late Iron Age, and which areas they occupied. Characteristics of their culture were determined – burial types, distinctive ornaments, weapons and tools. Ethnic boundaries were defined. A. Bielenstein acknowledged that there existed mixed Baltic and Liv areas from the east of Lielvārde to Aizkraukle, in addition to Idumeja, i.e. regions where Livs and Latvians lived side by side [7]. Latgalian, Selonian and Semigallian were considered to be Latvian peoples. Different opinions existed about the ethnic belonging of Curonians. They were considered to be Finns; alternatively it was held that Curonian referred to both Livs and Latvians.

Interest in Baltic archaeology by the Imperial Society of Naturalists of Moscow (from 1881 onwards, the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society) grew substantially in run-up to the 10th All-Russian Congress of Archaeology held in Rīga in 1896. In 1895,

Vladimir Sizov (1840–1904), member of this society, travelled widely in the area, and, together with local specialists, carried out excavations at several sites in Kurzeme [8]. During preparations for the 10th Congress, excavations at several locations were carried out by Sergei Bogoyavlensky (1871–1947).

The archaeologist Jevdokim Romanov (1855–1922), member of the Imperial Moscow Society, carried out archaeological excavations at several Iron Age sites in Latgale. J. Romanov and V. Sizov oversaw investigation of 388 burial sites at Odukalns near Ludza during the time leading up to the 10th Congress [9]. The first Latvian scholarly organisation, the Science Committee of Rīga Latvian Society, founded in 1869, also played a role in the development of archaeology. The “Latvian Museum”, established in 1869 by the Science Committee of Rīga Latvian Society, started a collection of archaeological, ethnographic and numismatic materials, laying thereby the foundation for the modern-day National History Museum of Latvia.

In the last years before the First World War, Max Ebert (1879–1929), who came to Rīga in 1913 at the invitation of Rīga Society for the Research of History and Antiquities, became a recognised authority in Baltic archaeology. He carried out several excavations in Latvia and in 1913–1914 reorganised the prehistory department of Rīga Dom Museum [10]. The resulting publication, *Die Baltischen Provinzen Kurland, Livland, Estland* [11], which appeared in 1913 on the eve of the outbreak of the First World War, established Baltic archaeology on a solid scientific basis.

Certainly, most investigations of Baltic antiquity were done by residents of German origin who, at least initially, found it difficult to overcome the prejudice about Estonians and Livs, ones particularly deeply held concerning Latvians. At the beginning of the 19th century, individuals of this ethnicity were associated only with peasants, and it was difficult to accept that their material culture and social organisation in antiquity rivalled the culture of the Germanic peoples of that time. Therefore, it could be assumed that the Stone Age in the Baltic lasted up until the 6th century, and evidence was sought for Germanic, and in particular, Gothic influence. This, in turn, led to incisive criticism of the

contribution made by researchers of this period, as expressed in later work by Latvian archaeologists, both during the interwar period of the Republic of Latvia and during the period of Soviet occupation. Objectively speaking, archaeological investigations during the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century corresponded to the development level of science of the time, overcame provincial particularism, and was an integral part of science at Europe.

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