

Aschenplätze – the forgotten burial rituals of the Old Prussians

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Just after the World War I, in archaeological periodic „Pussia” was published a short paper, written by eminent German archaeologist, Heinrich Kemke (1919). He continued discussion with Otto Tischler which had been already started before 1914 (cf. Tischler, Kemke, 1902; Kemke, 1914). In his text H. Kemke mentioned excavations on *Aschenplatz* at Schulsteiner Mühle, on Samland [Fig. 1:7]. That site, known also as Schulstein (now Volnoe, Kaliningradskaja Oblast', Russia), is situated less than 4 km to the east of famous cemetery at Kaup by Wiskiauten (now Mochovoe, Russia) [Fig. 1:10]. German archaeologist did not described cemetery at Schulsteiner Mühle in details. He also did not explained the term *Aschenplatz* he used. Heinrich Kemke only pointed out that there was not possible to distinct any single grave complexes at Schulsteiner Mühle. It means no possibility to use O. Tischler method of correspondence analysis, and consequently there was no possibility to establish relative chronology (Kemke, 1919, *passim*).

The basic interpretation of the term *Aschenplatz* used by H. Kemke led to connect it with the place of funerary pyre. Such interpretation could be falsified by the other information given by German scholar – there were many selected artifacts recorded on *Aschenplatz* at Schulsteiner Mühle, among them elements of horse harnesses and weaponry. After excavations they were filled 42 (forty two!) cartoon boxes. It is hard to believe that so many items had been left on the funerary pyre. The question arises – what could be the Prussian *Aschenplätze* dated to early Mjddle Ages (eg. Viking Age)? Were they new (not fully described until now) type of burial practices? In my opinion – yes.

In late phase of Migration Period (mid 7th c. – Phase E; cf. Engel, 1931a) in the Prussian lands disappeared some earlier archaeological cultures and groups, *inter alia* Elbląg Group (Okulicz, 1973, pp. 471–493; Kowalski, 2000), Olsztyn Group (or masurgermanische Kultur; cf. Bitner-

Wróblewska, 2000; Kowalski, 2000; Nowakowski, 2000) and the Sudovian Culture (Kaczyński, 1976; Bitner-Wróblewska, 1994). All those culture units had been established and characterized based on the funerary rites. From 8th c. in this territory there were no archaeologically recognized cemeteries (cf. Wróblewski, 2006). An exception appeared Elbląg Height and Elbląg surrounding (Jagodziński, 1997) as well as Samland (Nowakowski, 1996). The latter had a significant position among Prussian lands because, on one hand, there are archaeologically recognized cemeteries and, on the other hand, there were different kinds of funerary rites. The cemeteries recorded on Samland remained almost exclusively cremation ones (Kulakov, 1990). Inhumation appeared a rare feature, in a few cases there were biritual cemeteries (for example Bludau [now Kostrowo, Russia], site II; cf. Bezenberger, 1914a). Characteristic phenomenon of the Samland cemeteries appeared to be the skeleton horse graves.

Aschenplätze seem to be another, different category of Prussian cemeteries. As far as I know, the term *Aschenplatz* was used first by Otto Tischler in the end of 19th c. (Tischler, 1878 [for Stazten/Stacze]; and especially: 1891, pp. 100–101) to describe the phenomenon from well-known cemetery at Oberhof (now Aukštikiemiai near Klaipėda, west Lithuania) [Fig 1: 6]. Unfortunately, he did not define precisely this term. He did not also mentioned it in his earlier reports concerning excavations at Oberhof (cf. Tischler, 1888a; 1888b; 1889). But O. Tischler pointed out a large amount of artifacts found there (weaponry, spurs, stirrups, ornaments) as well as their chaotic location similar to Iron Age bog finds from Denmark (Tischler, 1891, pp. 100–101). He wrote also about skeleton horse graves recorded below the dispersed artifacts at Oberhof and about the analogies to Oberhof *Aschenplatz* in Lithuania, and Couronia in particular. What is very important this kind of burial rituals were recorded at the cemeteries being in use since the first

centuries after Christ, so they confirmed undisturbed tradition to use the same necropolises over one thousand years (Tischler, 1891, p. 100).

Undoubtedly, Otto Tischler analyzed above all the results of his own excavations at Oberhof in 80. of 19th c. But it is also possible that a part of artifacts and descriptions of *Aschenplatz* remained the results of investigations of William Krenzel-Beyme, the owner of the property, who delivered them to archaeologist from Königsberg. Such possibility might have been confirmed by the note in the paper of the Lithuanian scientist, V. Nagevičius, who mentioned a cemetery at Oberhof and wrote about collective graves discovered there (Nagevičius, 1935). According to his description the deads were fired on one funerary pyre, while the accompanied them artifacts were put into the fire much later while they were not destroyed by flames. It is worth to point out that V. Nagevičius used the old, Lithuanian name of Oberhof, namely Pluciai – it was an official name of the village up to 1873 and then was change into Aukštkiemiai. It might have meant that Lithuanian archaeologist knew about the discoveries on *Aschenplatz* (although he did not use this term) at Oberhof ca 13 years earlier then first excavation season of O. Tischler in 1886 (Nagevičius, 1935, p. 109; cf. LAA, 1977, pp. 23–24)¹.

The scant remarks about this kind of sites concern for example former Linkau (Bezenberger, 1900) [Fig. 1:4], Linkuhnen (now Rževskoe, Russia; cf. Engel, 1931a; 1932; PM-A – files Linkuhnen) [Fig. 1:5] or former Seefeld (cf. Heydeck, 1909; PM-A – files Seefeld) [Fig. 1:8]. O. Tischler (1891) mentioned about another *Aschenplatz* at Dollkeim (now Kovrovo, Russia) [Fig. 1:1] cemetery as well as at Statzen (now Stacze near Gołdap, Poland; cf. Tischler, 1878) [Fig. 1:9].

Aschenplätze were probably known also from the other

¹ Dr Christine Reich from Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin, who based on original field documentation of Otto Tischler survived in the archive of Berlin museum, was able to locate the *Aschenplatz* on the plan of Oberhof cemetery. She presented results of her investigations on the Balt Seminar in Warsaw 25th of January 2006 (cf. Reich, 2004/2005). I am very grateful dr Reich for long personal discussion and all detailed information on this subject. It was dr Rasa Banytė-Rowell from Lithuanian Institute of History in Vilnius, who pointed out my attention to V. Nagevičius paper as well as safety guided me through the Lithuanian text. I would like to thank very much both colleagues for their friendly help and support.

Samland cemeteries as Laptau (now Muromskoe, Russia; cf. Bezenberger, 1914b) [Fig. 1:15] or Bludau/Kostrovo, site II (Bezenberger, 1914a) [Fig. 1:12] as well as from necropolis at Elbing-Benkenstein placed in Elbląg region (now Elbląg-Żytno, Poland; cf. Dorr, 1914; Kulakov, 1990, p. 19; Jagodziński, 1997, pp. 54–55) [Fig. 1:2], where except traditional cremation graves an oval ash layer of diameter 10 x 15 m was recorded. It produced burned human bones and a number of artifacts, among others weaponry and elements of horse harnesses. Robert Dorr who described this discovery interpreted it as collective grave, however he did not use the term *Aschenplatz*.

V. I. Kulakov mentioned these phenomena in one of his works (Kulakov, 1990, pp. 19–20), although he did not understand this unknown form of Prussian funerary rites. Russian scholar described them as *остатки погребального костра* (*ostatki pogriebalnovo kostra*), what means the rest of funerary pyre. But in my opinion, it might have been one possible interpretation, but not the only one. I also suggest that “funerary pyre” found at Klinovka–Irzekapinis (former Wikiau) [Fig. 1:14], or at Dobroe–Gora Velikanov (former Rantau-Hünnenberg) [Fig. 1:13], described by V.I. Kulakov (1990, p. 20), may be treated as either Prussian *Aschenplätze* or collective cremation graves of west Lithuanian type (see remarks below). The complete publication of both cemeteries led us to decide all doubts.

At the beginning of 30-ties of 20th c. Carl Engel (1931b) noted *Aschenplatz* at Kröcken/Kreki near Mohrunen/Morąg (Poland) [Fig. 1:3]. In autumn 1932 this researcher conducted rescue excavations at the next *Aschenplatz*, placed in the eastern part of Kaup cemetery (so-called Kleine Kaup) by Wiskiauten (cf. CEN). Lasonic information about Engel researches was given by Bernt von zur Mühlen, but he only mentioned that it had been the youngest part of the site dated to 12th–13th c. B. von zur Mühlen presumed that Kleine Kaup had functioned after collapse of well-known barrow part of Wiskiauten cemetery. However he did not support his hypothesis by any arguments (von zur Mühlen, 1975; Wróblewski, in print).

The mystery of the origin and chronology of early Middle Ages Prussian *Aschenplätze* might have been, at least partly, solved by the German archive data recently

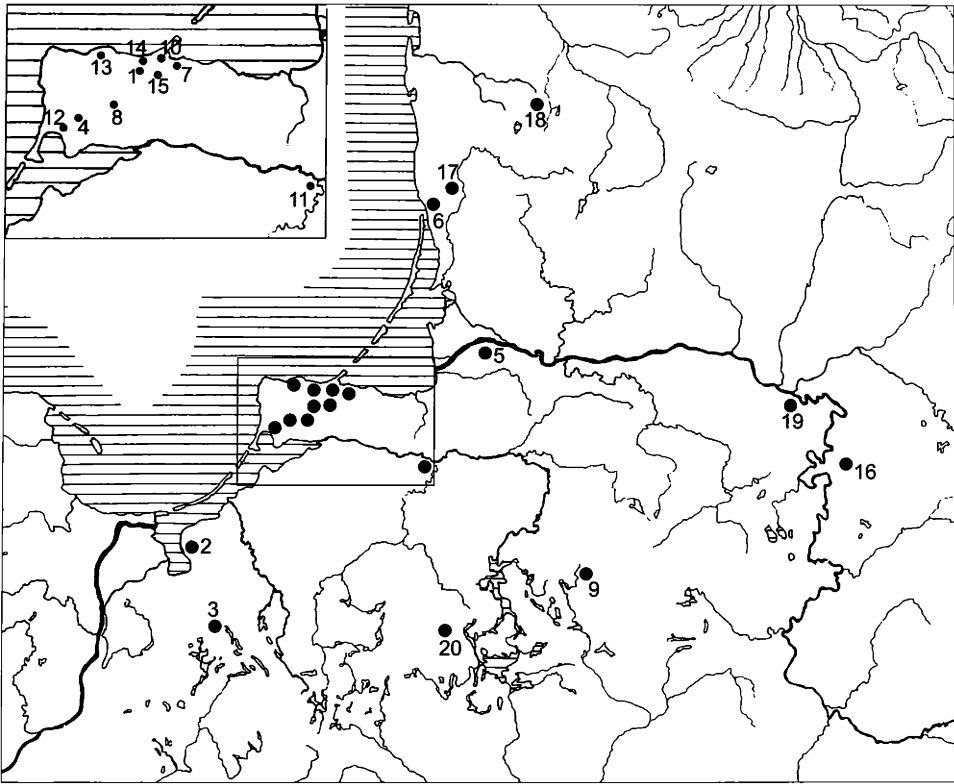


Fig. 1. Localization of the archaeological sites mentioned in paper. **A** – *Aschenplätze*: 1. Dollkeim (now Kovrovo, Russia); 2. Elbing-*Benkenstein* (now Elbląg-*Żytno*, Poland); 3. Kröcken (now Kreki, Poland); 4. former Linkau (now in Russia); 5. Linkuhnen (now Rževskoe, Russia); 6. Oberhof (now Aukštkiemiai [former Pluciai], Lithuania); 7. Schulstein/Schulsteiner Mühle (now Volnoe, Russia); 8. former Seefeld (now in Russia); 9. Statzen (now Stacze, Poland); 10. Wiskiauten (now Mochovoe, Russia); 11. Zophen (now Suvorovo, Russia). **B** – Supposed *Aschenplätze*: 12. Bludau, site II (now Kostrovo, Russia); 13. Dobroe-*Gora Velikanov*, Russia (former Rantau-*Hünenberg*); 14. Klincovka-*Irzekapis*, Russia (former Wikiau); 15. Laptau (now Muromskoe, Russia); 16. Purvyniai, Lithuania; 17. Anduliai-*Ėgliškiai*, Lithuania (former Anduln); 18. Grižė, Lithuania; 19. Marvelė, Lithuania; 20. Szeszno-*Czarny Las*, Poland (former Sehesten-*Schwarzwald*)
l pav. Straipsnyje minimų archeologinių paminklų vieta. A – Aschenplätze

discovered as well as descriptions scant in former and modern archaeological literature.

I would like to start from archive data. I have been interested in Prussian *Aschenplätze* since autumn 2003 when I had found a plan and profile of *Aschenplatz* Kleine Kaup by Wiskiauten [Fig. 2] in Carl Engel Nachlass (cf. CEN; so-called Rudolf Grentz Karteiteil), now kept in Schleswig². The analysis of this drawing done in 1932

allows to point out some significant conclusions. At first that the cemetery consisted of three layers of burials. The

² I would like to thank very much prof. dr hab. Calus von Carnap-Bornheim, director of Museum Schloß Gotorf in Schleswig, for his permission to publish this drawing. I would like also to thank very much dr Volker Hilberg for his kind help in studying those archive materials even before done the inventory.

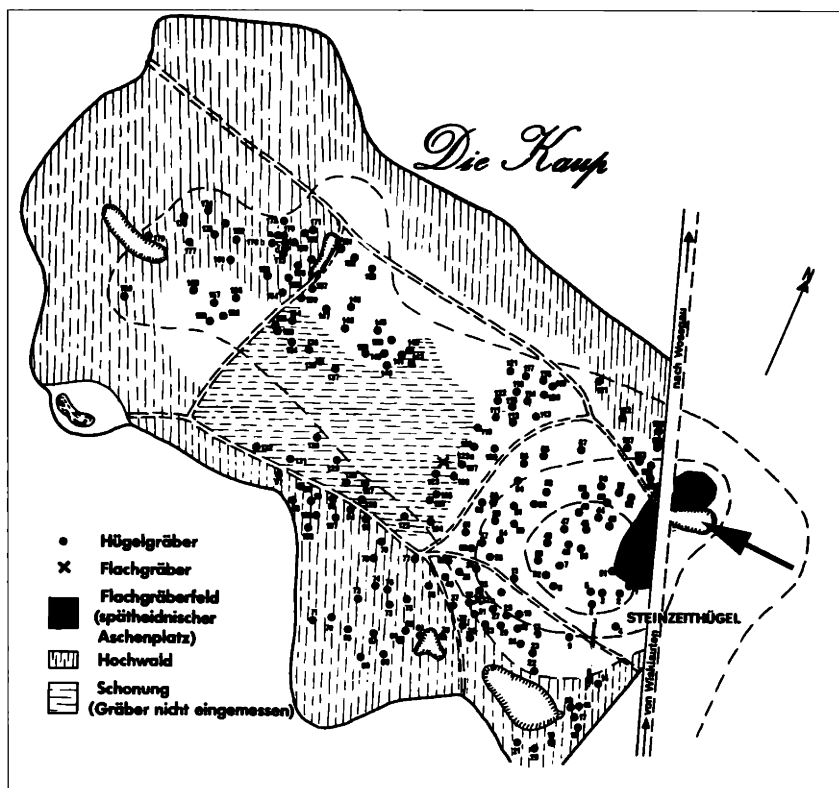


Fig. 2. Localization of *Aschenplatz* at Kaup by Wiskiauten/Mochovoe (signed by arrow); after von zur Mühlen, 1975.
 2 pav. *Aschenplatz Kaupe* prie *Viskiautų / Mochovoje* (*pažymėta strėlyte*); pagal von zur Mühlen, 1975

upper formed 30 cm thickness layer of funerary pyre (*Aschenschnitt*) in which the bridles, spear-heads, spurs and stirrups were scattered. The middle layer produced cremation human pit burials. Below them there were skeleton horse graves. It is worth to point out the tendency to place the particular burial pits very close to each other and the fact that graves did not destroyed each other. On the small trench, ca 35 square meters, 16 cremation graves and 17 skeleton horse graves had been discovered [Fig. 3]. Unfortunately, I have not found any description of this drawing of *Aschenplatz* done by C. Engel. So it is not possible to answer two very important questions:

1. we do not know if three burial layers visible in this drawing concern simultaneously situation or there are three different types of funerary rites dated to different periods;

2. we do not know also how those different burial layers should be dated.

It is possible to answer on the latter question concerning the highest layer, *Aschenschnitt*; it produced artifacts dated surely to early Middle Ages (Viking Age). It could be confirmed by the detail analysis of the original drawing of C. Engel plan found in survived part of the Prussia-Museum Archive, kept now in Berlin (PM-A – file Wiskiauten, no 552/12). The most important argument appears a numerous series of stirrups, found on *Aschenplatz* at Wiskiauten, known in this part of Europe not earlier than 8th–9th c (Świątosławski, 1990, pp. 20–32). Stirrups from Wiskiauten seem to be a little bit later and could be dated to 10th–11th c. (type III/C; cf. Świątosławski, 1990, fig. 18 and Charts 1). It is more difficult to date both pit burials and horse graves. A clear tendency to place the former above the horse burials suggests they are

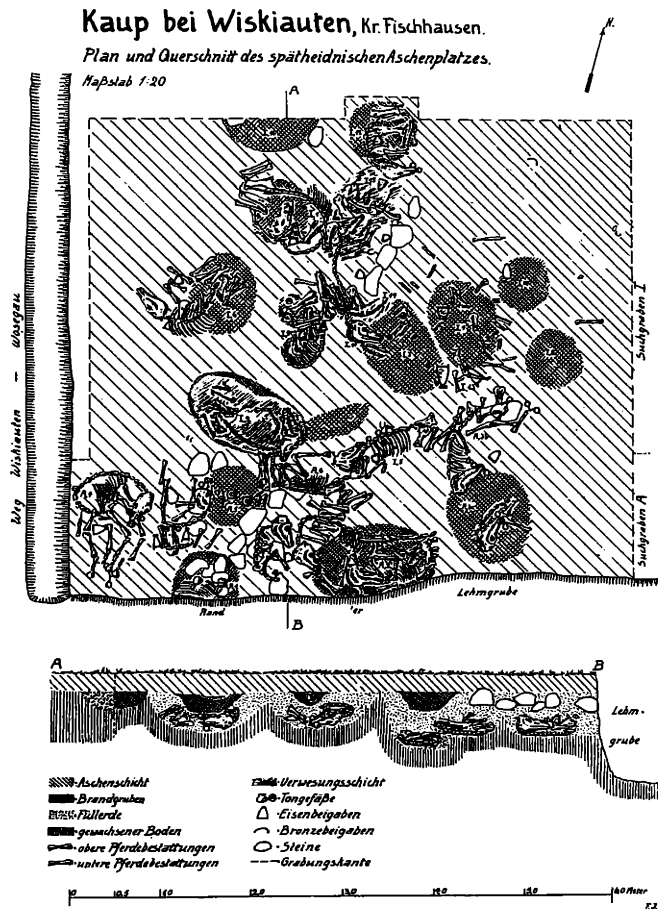


Fig. 3. Plan and profile of the *Aschenplatz* at Kleine Kaup bei Wiskiauten/Mochovoe (excavations 1932); after CEN.
 3 pav. Aschenplatz Kleine Kaup prie Viskiautų / Mochovoje – planas ir skersinis pjūvis (1932 m. tyrinėjimai); pagal CEN

chronologically connected. It is supposed to join all burial levels because in some cases stirrups were found close to the horse trunk. Although we could not be sure that the artifacts drawn in the plan had been originally placed in different layers or they were drawn on one, the same level.

Concluding it is possible to point out two opposite hypothesis concerning the chronology of *Aschenplatz* in Wiskiauten:

1. it was one-phase cemetery, used probably in 10th–11th cc.; in such case we are able to speculate

how looked another Prussian *Aschenplätze* of Early Medieval;

2. it was two-phases cemetery; in those case the older gravefield of Dollkeim/Kovrovo Culture (Nowakowski, 1996) was covered by the Early Medieval cemetery of *Aschenplatz* type.

The latter hypothesis might have been surprised but we should remember that it was already Nils Åberg who mentioned about artifacts dated to the Early Migration Period (phase D = second half of 4th c. – first half of 5th c.) and discovered at Kaup by Wiskiauten (Åberg,

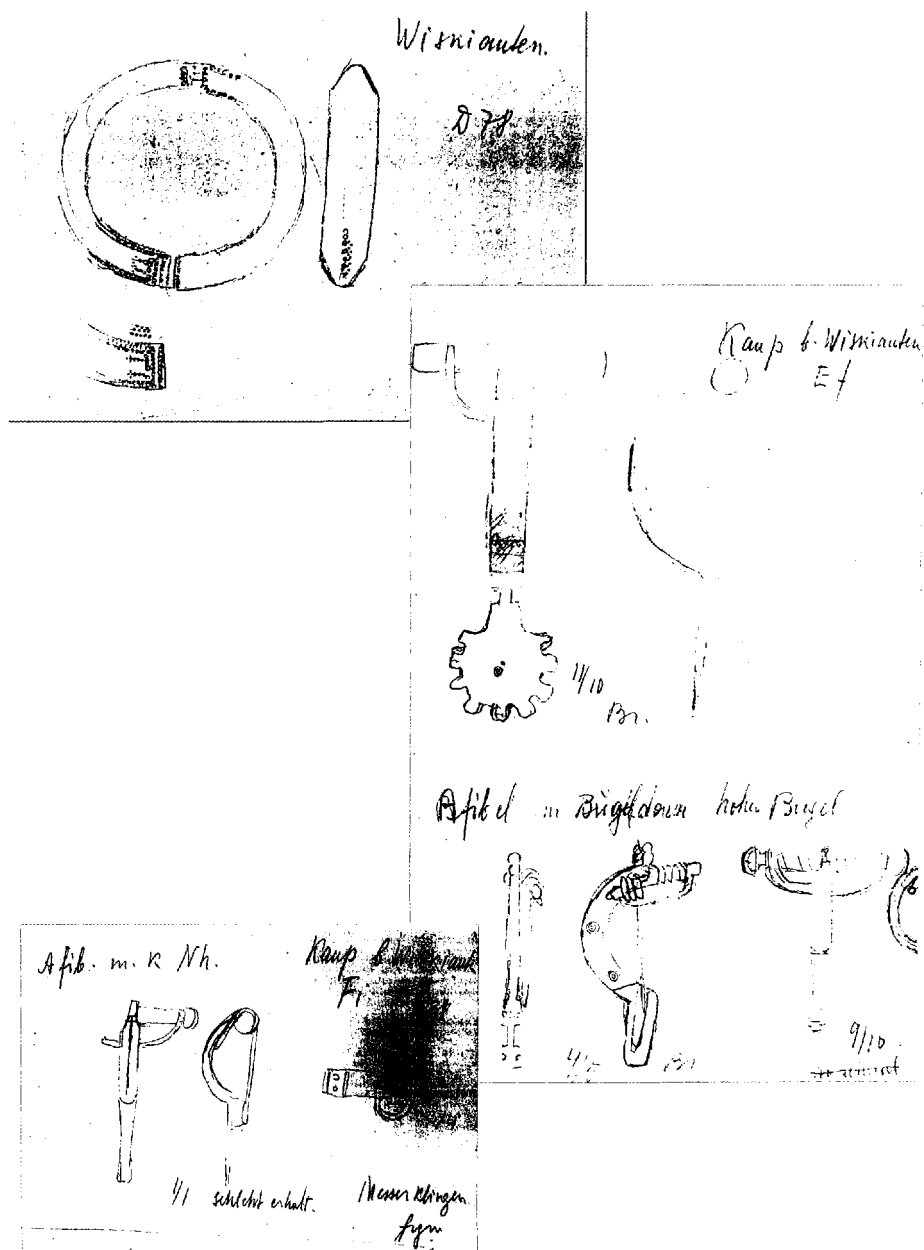


Fig. 4. Kaup bei Wisniauten/Mochovoe: the artifacts of the Late Roman Period (Phase C) and Early Migration Period (Phase D); after FJA.

4 pav. Kaup prie Viskiautų / Mochovoje. Romėniškojo laikotarpio (C periodas) ir tautų kraustymosi laikotarpio (D periodas) radiniai; pagal FJA

1919, p. 159). It finds its confirmation in archive of Latvian archaeologist, Feliks Jakobson, now kept in Riga (cf. FJA). There is a drawing of crossbow star-footed brooch³ belonged in category to classic type II according to A. Bitner-Wróblewska (1991) classification [Fig. 4].

Another site of *Aschenplatz* type, about which we are able to tell more, is mentioned above Schulsteiner Mühle. Some artifacts from this place were published by W. Gaerte (1929). But it has turned out that W. Gaerte published only a selected examples of them [Fig. 5]⁴. In Prussia-Museum Archive, in Berlin, there is almost complete documentation done by H. Kemke (PM-A, files no: 848/1, 848/2, 848/3 and 848/4). In 2004 I had an occasion to study those files. There are both hand-writing notes, sketches of particular specimens with short descriptions and incomplete lists of items packed into those, already mentioned, 42 cartoon boxes. Thanks these data we know that Schulsteiner Mühle produced all together above 200 artifacts. Among them there were swords, battle axes, spear-heads, spurs, horse bridles, different elements of horse harness, for example buckles and also elements of human costume as penannular brooches and belt sets as well as bronze bowls and clay vessels. And last, but not least – the most quantity category of finds, namely stirrups [Fig. 6]⁵.

Survived documentation, even not complete, allows us to recognize the types of most of the finds and date them. So we are able to know the chronological framework of the site. Although I have not yet finished the

analysis of Schulsteiner Mühle, I could say that the chronology of Schulsteiner Mühle is compatible to the dating of *Aschenplatz* at Wiskiauten. However, part of items from Schulsteiner Mühle may be also dated to the 12th or even beginning of 13th c.

In a book published recently by V.I. Kulakov (2004) on Tischler researches at Dollkeim/Kovrovo cemetery in 1879, there are information about several Early Middle Ages artifacts found at the site. There are both specimens published already in 19th c. by A. Jentzsch (1896) and those discovered by Russian archaeologists in the end of 20th c. It seems that at least part of the finds in question did not only come from the destroyed cremation graves, as V.I. Kulakov suggested, but also from the destroyed *Aschenschnitt*. The same situation concerns also *Aschenplatz* at former Seefeld, where J. Heydeck (1909) observed the concentration of finds, although he did not describe them as graves (*Grab*). He used a French term *Depôt* – in the meaning “concentration” or “deposition” [Fig. 7].

The information concerning *Aschenplatz* at Zophen (now Suvorovo, Russia) needs a special attention [Fig. 1:11]. This cemetery was excavated in 1928 and ten years later was worked out by Herbert Heym, although he never published his dissertation. H. Heym mentioned about *Spätheidnische Aschenplatz* at Zophen, placed in central part of the cemetery. V. I. Kulakov (1990, p. 20, 64–71, pl. IX–XXIII) referred to materials from Zophen/Suvorovo in such way that it is hard to recognize the source of information – H. Heym dissertation, papers of W. Gaerte (1931) and W. La Baume (1944) or archive of Museum History and Art in Kaliningrad. The only volume of H. Heym dissertation (Heym, 1938) is kept at the Archaeological Museum in Poznań⁶. It should be under-

³ I would like to thank very much dr Arnis Radoņš, director of National History Museum of Latvia in Riga, for his permission to publish archive data from Wiskiauten and Seefeld (see below: Fig. 7) and Jānis Ciglijs MA, the leader of Archaeological Department in this museum, for his friendly help in studying the Feliks Jakobson archive.

⁴ Cf. Gaerte, 1929, p. 327 (Abb. 263:a–b, d), p. 329 (Abb. 264:d), p. 330 (Abb. 265:g, i), p. 332 (Abb. 267:a, c, h), p. 337 (Abb. 271:f), p. 338 (Abb. 272:a), p. 341 (Abb. 274:a, d), p. 344 (Abb. 277:b–c, e), p. 245 (Abb. 278:b, d–e), p. 346 (Abb. 279:c), p. 347 (Abb. 280:a), p. 382 (Taf. XIV:b–c), p. 383 (Taf. XV:a), p. 384 (Taf. XVI:a).

⁵ I am very grateful prof. dr hab. Wilfried Menghin, director Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin, for his permission to publish archive data from Schulsteiner Mühle. I would like also to thank dr Horst Wieder who assisted me in studying the Prussia archive.

⁶ As far as I know Russian colleague never received a permission to publish drawings, photos and descriptions from H. Heym work – maybe because he never asked for such permission... It is also worth to point out that V.I. Kulakov information about Zophen remains very uncertain. For example he wrote about 289 graves discovered at Zophen/Suvorovo (Kulakov, 1990, p. 20) while according to the inventory book there were 502 graves – among them 296 human graves, 30 graves with both human and horse burials and 57 horse graves (all together 383). It seems to be possible that the rest of inventory numbers – 119 – might have been connected (???) with the concentration of artifacts (*Depôt*) from *Aschenplatz* in the central part of the cemetery.

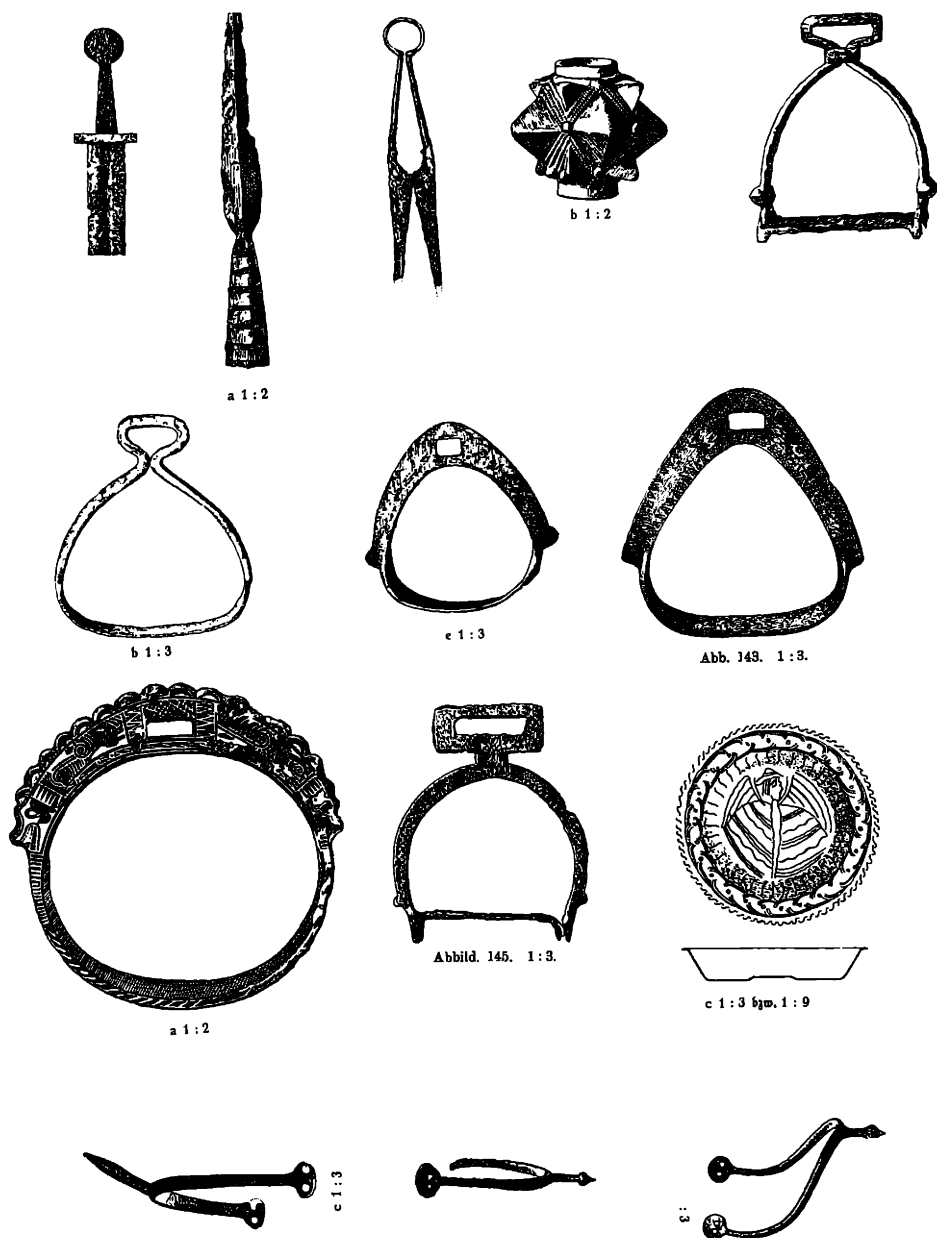


Fig. 5. *Aschenplatz* at *Schulsteiner Mühle/Volnoe*: selected artifacts published by W. Gaerte (1929).
5 pav. *Aschenplatz Schulsteiner Mühle / Volnoje vietovėje*. Dalis W. Gaertės (1929) publikuotų daiktų

lined that V.I. Kulakov did not use the term *Aschenplatz* known from H. Heym monograph. German scientist connected *Aschenplatz* at Zophen/Suvorovo with the latest phase of the cemetery and dated it to decline of 12th c. and to 13th c. He made also an important remark that the biggest concentration of horse graves at Zophen was placed in the area of *Aschenplatz*.

Undoubtedly Prussian *Aschenplätze* dated to the Early Mediaeval are worth to further detailed studies. We may have found the next data about the already known sites as well as information about the other sites of this type in archive sources. After detail analysis it will be possible to recognize the origin and chronology of those impressive burial practices and their connections with the rites in the neighbour areas.

Already in this stage of our knowledge I am able to suggest that *Aschenplätze* were specific kind of cemeteries (10th/11th–13th cc.) where only the warriors had been buried⁷. This feature turns our attention into the territories to the north of Prussian land, namely to Lithuania. I mean so-called collective warrior graves known from central Lithuania (for example Marvelė [Fig. 1:19], cf. M. Bertašius, 2002, 80–96)⁸ and Couronia (for example Anduln/Anduliai-Ėgliškiai [Fig. 1:17]⁹, cf. Bitner-Wróblewska, Bliujienė, Wróblewski, 2003, s. 189; and Griező [Fig. 1:18], cf. Varnas, 1982; 1984).

Another characteristic connected Prussian *Aschenplätze* with Lithuanian graves remains certain features of the way of weapon deposition. According to the information given by E. Hollack (1903, p. 211) about *Aschenplatz*

at Statzen/Stacze the spear-heads had been driven vertically into the soil. Maybe in this way the particular burials were originally marked. V. Kazakevičius and A. Malonaitis (2004) have recently written about the similar custom observed in Lithuania.

Another cemetery connected with Lithuanian collective graves from Early Middle Ages appears to be Purvyniai [Fig. 1:16] near Aukštadvaris (ca 50 km SW from Vilnius). The necropolis was excavated in 1937 by Jonas Puzinas, but it has been recently worked out by G. Zabiela¹⁰. It is also possible – I suppose – that the remains of collective warriors graves at Purvyniai feature more similarities with Prussian *Aschenplätze* than with the other Lithuanian collective graves.

On the margin it is worth to mention another type of Prussian collective graves dated to Early Medieval, namely distinguished by myself recently burials type *Czarny Las* (Wróblewski, 2000). They were first observed during excavations on the Galindian hill-fort at Szestno-Czarny Las [Fig. 1:20] near Mrągowo, Poland (former Seehosten-Schwarzwald near Sensburg). Burials type *Czarny Las* were placed on the functioning hill-fort dated to the turn of 10th and 11th c. (Wróblewski, 2000; 2003) and this feature remains the main difference between the latter and all other mentioned above collective burials. According to the recent, unpublished analysis the burials type *Czarny Las* were placed under the floor of the dwelling house, probably under the special room – so-called “white room”¹¹. It may be treated as “mortuary room” – playing both *sacrum* and *profanum* roles, the former connected with the ancestors worship¹². It is worth to underlined

⁷ The only exception may be *Aschenplatz* at Oberhof where a large amount of ornaments were recorded and only a single finds of weaponry and horse harnesses. I am grateful dr Ch. Reich for the information. It is possible that this untypical situation of *Aschenplatz* in Oberhof, with such set of artifacts, is the result that the archaeological data from there are far from being complete (see above).

⁸ The work of M. Bertašius remains the only such complete presentation of Early Medieval collective graves from Lithuania. He collected the list of above 20 sites with collective graves (Bertašius, 2002, Fig. 30), he also mentioned analogies from *Ostpreußen* and pointed out the probably common idea of origins of Prussian *Aschenplätze* and Lithuanian collective graves.

⁹ Collective graves at Anduln/Anduliai-Ėgliškiai are known from unpublished excavations of J. Kanarskas in 1988. Lithuanian archaeologist dated them to the end of 11th c.

¹⁰ See G. Zabiela article on Purvynai materials in this volume of “Archaeologia Lituana”

¹¹ The term “white room” is known in Slavonic ethnography. The traditional Slavonic dwelling house consisted of three main parts: hall in the center and two rooms situated on both sides of the hall – “white room” and “black room”. The “black room”, with oven or fire place, was used as a kitchen, dining room and sleeping room, its walls were often black because of the smoke. The opposite “white room” with white walls remained the special place in the house for the guests and special meals, also connected with burial practice (cf. Moszyński, 1967, p. 567–568).

¹² The researches on the production and dwellings areas on the hill-fort at Szestno-Czarny Las were carried out by the author with collaboration of T. Nowakiewicz (the planigraphy of the artifacts) and A. Kalinowska (the analysis of the stone pavements).

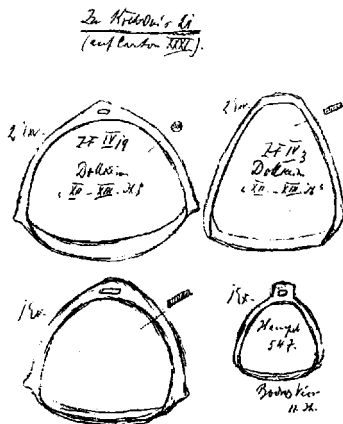
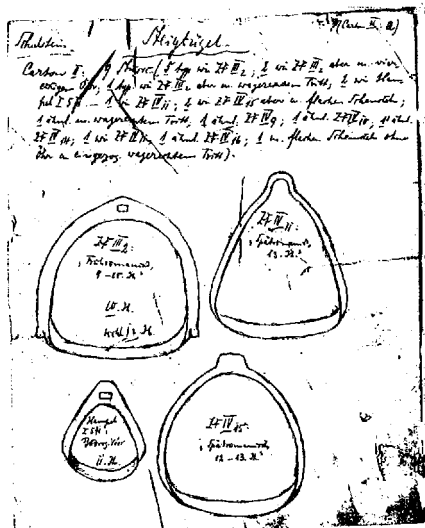
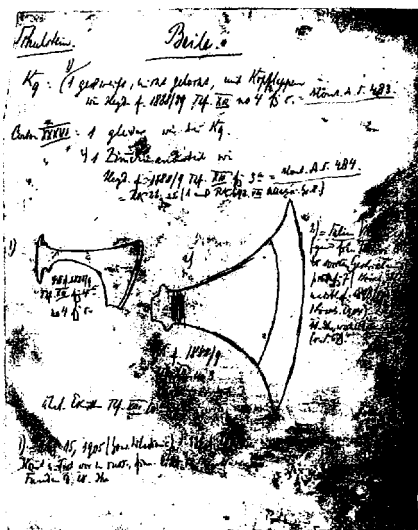
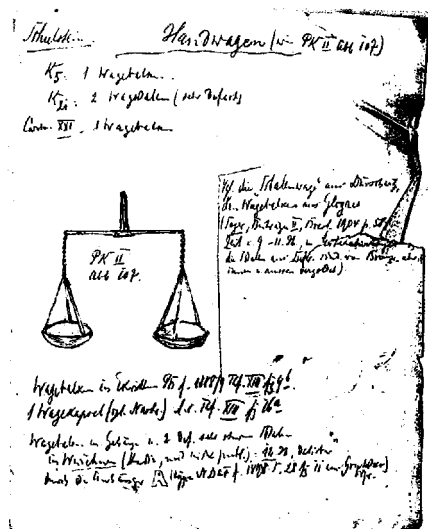


Fig. 6. Aschenplatz at Schulsteiner Mühle/Volnoe: sketches of the selected artifacts done by H. Kemke; after PM-A.
 6 pav. Aschenplatz Schulsteiner Mühle / Volnoje vietovėje. Kai kurių daiktų eskizai; remiantis H. Kemke, PM-A

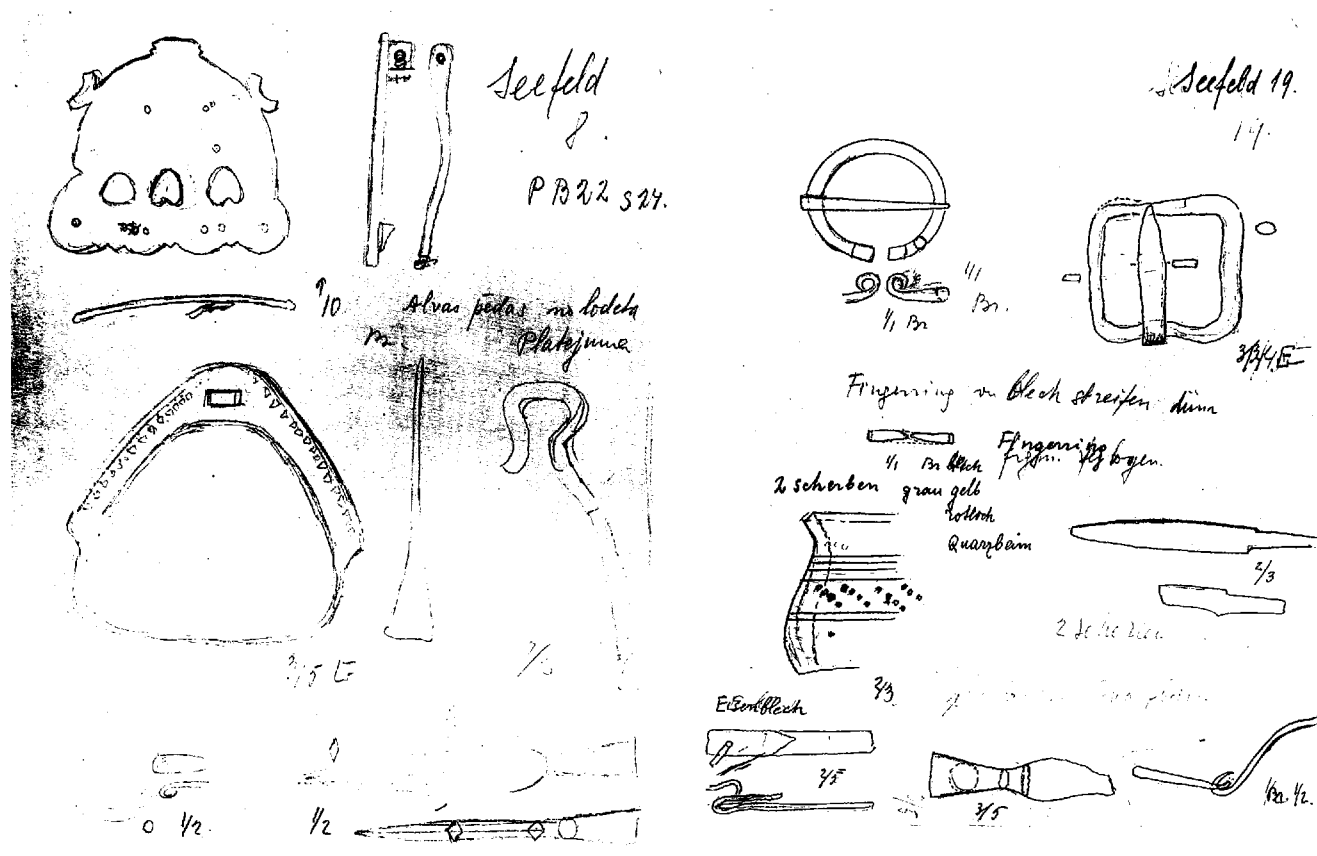


Fig. 7. *Aschenplatz* at former Seefeld: sketches of the selected artifacts done by E. Jakobson; after FJA.

7 pav. *Aschenplatz* buv. Seefeld vietovėje. Kai kurių daiktų eskizai, piešti F. Jakobsono; pagal FJA

that we know special “mortuary houses” recorded in the Finnish environment (cf. Golubieva, 1987, p. 68–70, 80, pl. XXV:3–4; and Mägi, 2004; 2005).

The osteological analysis of burnt human and animal bones found at Szestno-Czarny Las offers insight into unique data concerned cremation and funerary rites of ancient Prussians (Sabaciński, 2002). Some of them were connected with probable cutting the head (?) of dead before cremation. All these observation should be included in further researches on funerary rites of peoples settled the south-eastern Baltic zone – Prussians (*Aschenplätze* and burials of *Czarny Las* type), Couronians and Lithuanians (collective graves) as well as Finnish tribes (cemeteries of *tarand* type).

Literature

Archives

CEN – Carl Engel Nachlass (so-called Rudolf Grenz Karteiteil). In: Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig (Germany).

FJA – Feliks Jakobson Archive. In: National History Museum of Latvia, Riga (Latvia).

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In the end it is worth to remark that the further studies on the mystery of Prussian *Aschenplätze* should be supplemented by the analysis of Mediaeval annalists. Also by the written sources informed us about different burial customs concerning different Balt tribes. I mean the information from Livländische Rhyne Chronic, the Chronicle by Henry of Livonia and “Chronicle of Prussian lands” by Petrus von Dusburg. They described – among others – the custom of cutting the heads of death warriors and burring them later, in their homeland (cf. Sabaciński, 2005). But there is a subject for the quite another paper...

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ASCHENPLÄTZE – PAMIRŠTA VIDURAMŽIŲ PRŪSŲ LAIDOSENA

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Santrauka

Tautų kraustymosi laikotarpio pabaigoje prūsų žemėse įvyko ryškus laidosenos pokytis. Nuo VII a. antrosios pusės didesnėje prūsų žemių dalyje trūksta archeologiškai atsekamų laidojimo vietų. Vėlyvesnių kapinynų (klasikine šio žodžio prasme) yra žinoma tik Sambijoje ir Elbliongo (Elbingo (Elbląg)) aukštumos rajone. Daugiausia tai yra kapinynai, kuriuose kapai – degintiniai, rečiau griautiniai, išimtiniais atvejais aptinkama biritualinių nekropolių. Būtent Sambijoje X amžiuje pasirodo ypatingos mirusiųjų laidojimo vietos, senesnėje vokiškoje archeologinėje literatūroje pavadintos *Aschenplätze* terminu. Šis straipsnis yra po ilgos pertaukos pirmas bandymas apžvelgti šiuos intriguojančius (ir šiek tiek užmirštus) prūsų ankstyvųjų viduramžių kapinynus.

Terminas *Aschenplätze*, pirmą kartą pavartotas O. Tischlerio (1878), niekada nebuvo tiksliau apibrėžtas. Žinome tik tiek, kad vokiečių archeologai jį vartojo vėlyviems pagoniškiems (*Spätheidnische*) bendriems degintiniams kapams įvardyti, kad išbarstytų mirusiųjų degintų kauliukų sluoksnis (*Aschenschnitt*) galėjo būti apie 30 cm storio ir užimti kelis šimtus kvadratinį metrų, kad šiame sluoksnyje tarp aptinkamų radinių daugiausia buvo ginklų (kalavijai, kirviai, ietigaliai) ir žirgo aprangos daiktų (žąslai, pentinai, balno kilpos), kad šie daiktai buvo be deginimo pėdsakų ir būdavo be tvarkos išmėtomi deginimo sluoksnyje ir kartais sudarydavo krūvelės, kurias galima apibūdinti prancūzišku žodžiu *depôt* (Seefeldo atvejis). Taip pat žinome, kad šie neįprasti palaidojimai buvo bendri prūsų karių degintiniai kapai (chronologija nuo X–XI iki XIII amžiaus), labai dažnai įrengiami „normaliuose“, ilgą laiką naudojamuose kapinynuose.

Mes nežinome *Aschenplätze* kilmės, nedaug žinome apie jų išvaizdą, chronologiją ir paplitimo ribas. Daugiausia informacijos galime rasti XIX a. pabaigos – XX a. pradžios vokiškose publikacijose, taip pat išlikusiuose archyvuose, kurie tapo prieinami tik prieš keletą metų. Tai nėra daug. Tačiau ši informacija, nors ir fragmentiška, daugeliu atvejų

yra labai tiksli. Žinome, kaip galėjo atrodyti prūsiški *Aschenplätze* (Kleine Kaup prie Viskiautų / Mochovoje), žinome, kokios įkapės dėtos mirusiesiems (Schulsteiner Mühle / Volnoje), taip pat kad *Aschenplätze* galėjo būti jau naudojamuose kelis šimtmečius kapinynuose (Oberhof / Aukštkiemiai, Linkuhnen / Rževskoje, Elbing-Benkenstein / Elbląg-Žytno, Zohpen / Suvorovo) arba sudaryti atskirus kapinynus (Kröcken / Kreki, Statzen / Stacze, buvę Linkau ir Seefeld).

Taip pat manome, kad ateities studijose šie neįprasti vikingų laikotarpio prūsų kapinynai bus lyginami su kitais grupiniais kapais, žinomais iš prūsų žemių (vadinamieji Czarny Las tipo palaidojimai, įrengti naudojamose gyvenvietėse), taip pat su lietuviškais ir kuršiškais kapais bei su vakarų finougrų *Tarand* tipo kapais. Ateities tyrinėjimuose bus atsižvelgta į bendrą grupinių kapų idėją, atlikta detali palyginamoji įvairių vietų įkapių analizė, tarp jų papročio vertikalčiai smeigti ietigalius į žemę, kuris žinomas iš kai kurių *Aschenplätze* (Statzen / Stacze) ir dalies Lietuvos kapinynų. Labai svarbi bus degintinių žmonių kaulų antropologinė analizė. Antropologiniai tyrinėjimai iš *Szestna – Czarny Las* rodo, kad viena iš ateities tyrinėjimų ir samprotavimų problemų gali būti kaukolės kaulų deginimo laipsnių analizė (mirusiojo dekapitacija prieš paguldant kūną ant laužo?).

Jau dabar nekyla abejonių, kad iki šiol sukaupta informacija apie grupinius degintinius *Aschenplätze* tipo kapus leidžia kitaip pažvelgti į viduramžių kronikininkų pateiktus duomenis apie žuvusius mūšiuose kuršių ir prūsų karius, kurie buvo kartu deginami ant laidotuvių laužo.

Čia paminėti tyrinėjimų duomenys yra tik įžanginio pobūdžio, pirmiausia dėl nepakankamos šaltinių bazės. Vis dėlto atrodo, kad šiame straipsnyje pateikti pastebėjimai tikriausiai leis ateityje išskirti kitus *Aschenplätze* tipo kapinynus, ir ištirti juos šiuolaikiniais archeologinių tyrinėjimų metodais.

Iš lenkų kalbos vertė M. Michelbertas

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