

DUGOUTS FROM LAKE *PLATELIAI* AND THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THEIR SITES

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the new results of underwater archaeological investigations of dugouts from the Lake Plateliai (Žemaitija, West Lithuania) and the cultural landscape of their sites. In this article we will discuss on three dugouts, found in the surroundings of Pilies Island (Castle Island) and peninsula of Šventorkalnis (Saint Mountain) in the western part of the lake. Dugout Nr. 1 was found not far from the remains of the bridge. Dugouts Nr. 1–2 distinguish for their decorative details – back parts are ‘gracefully’ raised, there are some other decorative as well as practical elements. Dugout Nr. 3 was found not far away from Pilies island, southwards from the remains of the old bridge, which connected the island with the Šventorkalnis peninsula. The absence of the front part of the dugout and the stones inside it give us a hint that the dugout might have been sunk deliberately. Most probably, the dugouts were mainly used for communication between the peninsula (the manor) and the island (the castle). All three dugouts were found in the line, where the distance between the peninsula and the island is the shortest. These coincides with safe sailing manner – to reach land choosing the shortest way.

KEY WORDS: underwater archaeology, Lake Plateliai, dugouts, carbon dating, finding place, cultural environment.

ANOTACIJA

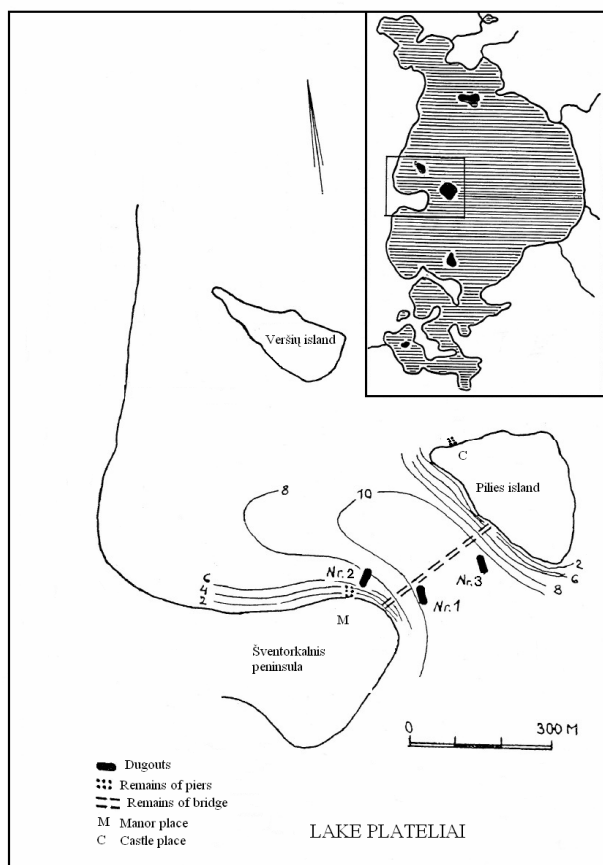
Straipsnyje pateikiami nauji povandeninės archeologijos tyrimų duomenys apie Platelių ežero luotus ir jų radimvietės kultūrinę aplinką. Platelių ežere archeologinių ekspedicijų metu buvo rasti trys luotai. Pirmasis ir antrasis luotai išsiskiria savo dekoratyviniais elementais – pastorintais pertvarų pagrindais, dailiai išskobtais priekiu ir galu, dekoratyvinio pobūdžio briaunomis ir duobelėmis bei rankena galinėje dalyje ir kt. Trečiajame luote (radiokarboninis datavimas 1520 (+/-80) m.) neišliko priekinė dalis, kuri greičiausiai sunyko dar senovėje. Šiame luote buvo prikrauta keliolika stambokų akmenų, todėl galima spėti, jog luotas buvo specialiai paskandintas kaip nebetinkamas naudoti. Luotų radimo vieta (trumpiausia linija tarp pusiasalio ir salos) ir paprastų žvejų naudotiems luotams nebūdingi dekoratyviniai elementai rodo, jog šie luotai priklausė ne paprastiems žvejams, o pilies arba dvaro gyventojams. Pagrindinė luotų funkcija turėjo būti persikėlimas į salą ir atgal. Šią hipotezę patvirtintų keli faktai – luotų dydis, jų datavimas (yra galimybė, jog jais naudotasi, kai tiltas dar nebuvo pastatytas) ir radimvietė – trumpiausias atstumas vandeniu dvaro–salos linijoje.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: povandeninė archeologija, Platelių ežeras, luotai, radiokarboninis datavimas, radimvietė, kultūrinė aplinka.

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Plateliai, the greatest lake (about 1.200 ha) in Žemaitija (Samogitia, the western of Žemaičiai region of Lithuania) and the ninth in Lithuania is situated in the north-western part of the Highlands of Žemaičiai. The lake has many bays, peninsulas, seven islands.

In this article we will discuss on three dugouts, found in the surroundings of Pilies Island (Castle Island) and peninsula of Šventorkalnis (Saint Mountain) in the western part of the lake (Pic. 1).



Pic. 1. Western part of lake Plateliai – the Pilies island, Šventorkalnis peninsula, remains of bridge and piers, dugout finding places, locations of castle and manor. Picture made by V. Žulkus (1987), adjusted by K. Perminas

Dugout Nr. 1 was found during an archaeological expedition in the depth of 10 m, not far from the remains of the bridge. The dugout was intact with the length of 4,5 m, width up to 0,55 m. Both ends have a raised form, reminding these of North American canoes. In the front part there is a hole of a prolonged bean form, most probably made for tying up a rope. The back part of this dugout distinguishes for its decorative details – it is „gracefully“ raised, has some other decorative as well as practical elements. The first ones include a brim surrounding the upper part, a decorative leaf-form hole at the very back of the dugout and two deepenings on both sides of the 8 cm long handle, which protrudes from the back part and had a practical purpose – allowed pushing or pulling the dugout.

The most interesting is the decorative hole. In our opinion it was designed to pass through a tiller. Tillers are absolutely unusual detail in dugouts, but there is another element in this dugout which supports this idea – the bulkhead at the back part of the dugout (another one is in the front part). It is situated half a meter off the dugout's end and has a 5-6 cm cut in the upper middle part. The cut makes a horizontal line with the hole. Sitting on the bulkhead and steering should be quite convenient and easy in this case (Pic. 2).



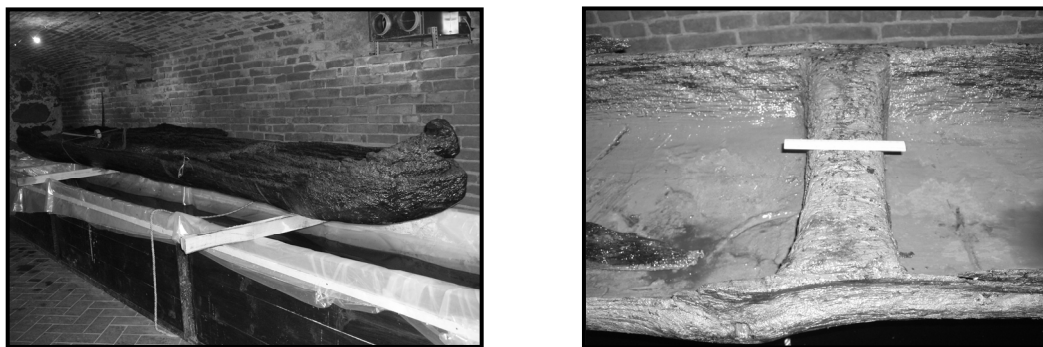
Pic. 2. Log-boat Nr. 1 (left) and its back part (right) – the handle, decorative hole and back bulkhead (photo: K. Perminas)

Unfortunately, there are no analogies known to prove this theory. The front bulkhead also has a decorative element – a widened base at the dugout bottom. Again, such feature does not have any practical sense.

A knife typical for the XVIth – XVIIth c. was found inside the dugout. The carbon dating gave the unconvincing result of 5600 BP, error ± 60 (Davainis, Mažeika, Petrošius, 2007). The dugout has many features of dugout Nr. 2. On this base, the dating of this dugout could at least theoretically be very similar, that is, the first half of the XVth century.

Dugout Nr. 2 was found not far from the remains of a small old pier, close to the Šventorkalnis peninsula, in the depth of 7 m. The dugout was intact, 5 m long, up to 0,7 m wide. There are two bulkheads in the dugout. The bulkheads have some decorative elements – their middle upper parts are narrowed, while the side parts are thicker. This feature does not have any practical use and is not known in other dugouts of any period. The form of the front not so decorative, but also of rounded shape and remains of a handle. The sides at the bulkheads are identical to that of dugout Nr. 1 (even the hole for a rope has the same shape), the back part is re decorated – slightly raised in the form of a wave (Pic. 3). Carbon dating gave the result of 1420 AD, error ± 20 (Mažeika, Petrošius 2006).

Dugout Nr. 3 was found not far away from Pilies island, southwards from the remains of the old bridge, which connected the island with the Šventorkalnis peninsula. The dugout was lying in the depth of 12-13 m. The front part of the dugout most probably had gone in the past, since it was never found by underwater archaeologists or other divers. The remaining part is 4 m long, width – up to 0,55 m, there is one bulkhead left. The back part of the dugout is rounded. There were eight largish (20-30 cm long) stones inside the dugout, a few other stones were lying beside it. The latter must have fallen out when some part of the sides rotted away. The absence of the front part of the dugout and the stones give us a hint that the dugout might have been sunk deliberately – a suitable to use dugout could easily carry such a „load“ of 30-40 kg. The reason of this could be the old, worn and maybe broken-down (the front part) dugout, which, for example, might have been a floating obstacle for fishing nets. In our opinion the dugout must have already been saturated with water, and with the help of the stones this obstacle was eliminated. Another version on the stones – they had been used as ballast before the dugout sank (the front part was missing anyway). Carbon dating gave the result of 1520 AD, error ± 80 (Mažeika, Petrošius 2006).



Pic. 3. Log-boat Nr. 2 (left), decorative front with rope hole and bulkhead (photo K. Perminas)

The length of the dugouts is worth a separate attention – 4-5 meters is an unusual length for dugouts used in lakes. According to the dugout material from Lithuanian museums, the length of lake dugouts in Lithuania is usually 3-4 m.

The surroundings of the finding place of the dugouts are unique in Lithuania in the sense of geographical and historical interconnections of the local landscape.

Pilies island is situated 300 m to the east off the western bank of the lake – the peninsula of Šventorkalnis. The area of the island is 5,5 ha, it is stretched in the direction of northwest-southeast. The latter part of the island is quite low, meanwhile the north-western part of the island is about 10-12 m above the water level. Archaeological finds proved traces of human activity on the island since Neolithic or at least Bronze age (Žulkus 2002:11). In written sources the name of Plateliai is first mentioned in the XVth century – since 1412 members of Kęsgaila family became the owners and rulers of Plateliai. The first written sources about the castle of Plateliai come from 1486. Historical documents show, that in the period of 1483-1521 the owner of Plateliai was Stanislovas Jonavičius Kęsgaila, the ruler of the whole administrative unit of Žemaitija in Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Mickevičius 1937:39). Most probably the castle was built on the island in the beginning or middle of the XVth century. This might be indirectly proved by archaeological finds in the island typical for this period (Žulkus 1986:16). The castle on the island is depicted on some XVIth century maps – in 1526, 1539, 1585 (Misius 1999:39). In 1529 Stanislovas Jonavičius Kęsgaila gave the castle of Plateliai as a present to Žygimantas Augustas (Zygmunt II August) (Mickevičius 1937:39). During 1534-1536 the owner of the castle was Bona Sforza, mother of Žygimantas Augustas. Archaeological excavations showed the possible location of the XVIth century castle – the northern part of the island (Žulkus 1998a:12).

The castle is shortly described in the inventory of 1585. According to it, the castle was wooden, with the roof rotted away, with walls and towers fallen down. So, around 1585 the castle was not suitable for living in it anymore (Misius 1999:61).

Thus, the end of the XVth and the beginning of the XVIth centuries was the most active period of life in the castle.

The state of the castle, mentioned in the inventory, shows the loss of any importance it had before – the castle was abandoned for good. No other later written sources mention the castle. But it is likely that a fortified manor was founded on the bank of the lake – on the Šventorkalnis peninsula. From the defensive point of view the peninsula was convenient – it is surrounded by water from north, east and west, thus the manor being approachable just from one side. The manor itself stood on a hill, which was surrounded by ramparts and moats of natural as well as artificial origin.

The entire manor was surrounded by a wooden fence. It should be mentioned, that people lived here earlier – archaeological finds date back to XIVth – XVth centuries (Žulkus 1998:338).

It is known, that Plateliai (the town, manor and castle) was transferred by Žygimantas Augustas to his mother in 1534, so it is likely, that for some time the castle and the manor existed simultaneously. Archaeological excavations of Šventorkalnis hill in 1996-1997 proved, that the main manor house stood on this hill – foundations and cellar of a big building as well as findings typical for XVIth – XVIIth centuries such as pieces of ceramics, glassware, cannon balls, quern were found here (Žulkus 1998:336-339).

The manor in Šventorkalnis stood until the middle of the XVIIth century. Most probably it was destroyed during the Swede wars, as according to written sources in 1680 the manor is located in a new place (Mickevičius 1937:46) – where the modern town of Plateliai is situated.

The first archaeological investigations of the lake Plateliai started in the end of 1970-ies, when scientists' attention was attracted by huge 10 m high wooden poles stretching up from the bottom of the lake between the Šventorkalnis peninsula and Pilies island. Investigations showed that nearly 200 oak poles, situated straight between the island and peninsula, are the remains of an old bridge. Dendrodating showed that the bridge was built in the beginning of the XVIth century, and in the middle of the XVIIth c. – rebuilt or repaired (Žulkus 2002a:15).

A bit to the north from the remains of the bridge, near the Šventorkalnis peninsula there is a pile of smaller poles – remains of a small pier. Dugout Nr. 2 was found not far from it. Similar remains are in the northern part of the island (pic. 1).

Conclusions

Having in mind the facts listed above, we can try to draw some hypotheses and conclusions.

Dugouts Nr. 1 and Nr. 2 (maybe also Nr. 3) were made by the same master, or at least, keeping to the same local building tradition. This hypothesis could be supported by several facts. Firstly, obvious constructional analogies:

1. The same kind of wood used;
2. Similar size proportions (note also the above mentioned length difference from other lake dugouts);
3. Identical front shapes, similar back shapes, the handles;
4. Identical holes in the front left side;
5. Both dugouts have two bulkheads.

Besides, no analogical dugouts are known in Lithuania and neighbouring countries. Due to the bad state of dugout Nr. 3 it is difficult to compare it to the dugouts 1 and 2.

A suggestion of ownership might be drawn. In our opinion dugouts Nr. 1 and 2 did not belong to an ordinary farmer or fisherman, but they were a property of the manor or castle owners. This opinion could be supported by the following facts:

1. Above described decorative elements are not typical for dugouts of any period used by ordinary fishermen or other „common“ people; the number of such elements is quite high, especially in dugout Nr. 1;
2. The dugouts were found in the manor-castle environment – just in the line between the spots (no dugouts have been found in other parts of the lake yet);
3. The location of the piers indicate the main or usual route of the dugouts – from the manor to the castle and vice versa;

4. The dating of the dugouts coincides with the most active period of life in the peninsula and the island.

Considering the suggestions mentioned, we can make a conclusion on the main purpose of the dugouts. Most probably, the dugouts were mainly used for communication between the peninsula (the manor) and the island (the castle). All three dugouts were found between these settled places. Moreover, the dugouts were found in the line, where the distance between the peninsula and the island is the shortest. These coincides with safe sailing manner – to reach land choosing the shortest way. If necessary, the piers might have been reached by sailing the rest of the way in shallow waters – along the banks. Dugouts of such size could carry up to four persons at the same time. To build such big dugouts just for fishing would have been a luxury. Of course, we cannot categorically eliminate the possibility of the latter (bulkheads are typical for dugouts used for fishing) and other purposes (e.g. pleasure sailing). The dating of the dugouts shows that they might have been used before the bridge was built. As the bridge was built in the beginning of the XVIth century, the dugouts might have been in use as ferries in the middle or end of the XVth century. This corresponds with the dugouts' dating results (1420±20AD and 1520±80AD) and the first mentioning of the castle in 1486.

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PLATELIŲ EŽERO LUOTAI IR JŲ RADIMVIETĖS KULTŪRINĖ APLINKA

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Santrauka

Platelių ežere archeologinių ekspedicijų metu buvo rasti trys luotai. Viename luote (Nr. 3, radiokarboninis datavimas 1520 (+/-80) m.) neišliko priekinė dalis, kuri greičiausiai sunyko dar senovėje. Šiame luote buvo prikrauta keliolika stambokų akmenų, todėl galima spėti, jog luotas buvo specialiai paskandintas kaip nebetinkamas naudoti. Kitas luotas (Nr. 1) išsiskiria dekoratyviniais elementais – pastorintais pertvarų pagrindais, dailiai išskobtais priekiu ir galu, dekoratyvinio pobūdžio briaunomis ir duobelėmis bei rankena galinėje dalyje. Įdomi yra kiaurymė pačiame luoto gale. Ji taip pat turi dekoratyvinių – simetrijos elementų, kas leidžia spėti, jog pro šią kiaurymę galėjo būti prakišamas rumpelis. Rumpeliai ir vairalazdės luotuose yra itin retas dalykas. Tačiau šį spėjimą

mą sutvirtina galinė pertvara, kuri yra vos už pusmetro nuo luoto galo ir viršuje turi išpjovą, į kurią patogų įstatyti rumpelio dydžio rankeną. Deja, neturint analogijų, šią hipotezę sunku įrodyti neginčijamai. Trečiasis luotas (Nr. 2, radiokarboninis datavimas 1420 (+/-20) m.) taip pat turi dekoratyvinių elementų – bortų pakilimai ties pertvaromis, susiaurintos pertvarų vidurinės dalys, taip pat rankena galinėje dalyje. Pirmasis ir antrasis luotai turi daug bendrų konstrukcijos panašumų – jų panašus ilgis (atitinkamai 4,5 m ir 5 m), kuris, beje, nebūdingas ežeruose naudotiems luotams, abu luotai turi po dvi pertvaras, identiškos priekių formos, toje pačioje priekio vietoje padarytos vienos formos skylės virvei pririšti, rankenos. Šie panašumai rodo, jog pirmasis ir antrasis luotai (galbūt ir trečiasis, bet apie šį luotą ką nors tiksliau pasakyti sunku dėl jo didelio sunykimo laipsnio) turėjo būti pagaminti jei ne to paties meistro, tai bent pagal tą pačią statymo tradiciją. Visi trys luotai buvo rasti ruože tarp Pilies salos ir Šventorkalnio pusiasalio. Saloje XV a. pab. – XVI a. yra stovėjusi pilis, kuri tam tikrą laikotarpį buvo ir karališkoji rezidencija. Šventorkalnyje lokalizuojamas pirmasis Platelių miestelis ir dvaras. Šiuos taškus siejo XVI a. pradžioje pastatytas tiltas, šalia kurio buvo rasti pirmasis ir trečiasis luotai. Antrasis luotas rastas ties Šventorkalnio pusiasaliu, netoli senovinės prieplaukėlės liekanų. Panašios prieplaukėlės liekanos yra ir prie Pilies salos, netoli pilia vietės. Luotų datavimas, gana gausūs, analogų neturintys dekoratyviniai elementai, jų radimvietės rodo aiškų ryšį su dvaru ir pilies aplinka. Luotų radimo vieta (trumpiausia linija tarp pusiasalio ir salos) ir paprastų žvejų naudotiems luotams nebūdingi dekoratyviniai elementai rodo, jog šie luotai priklausė ne paprastiems žvejams, o pilies arba dvaro gyventojams. Pagrindinė luotų funkcija turėjo būti persikėlimas į salą ir atgal. Šią hipotezę patvirtintų keli faktai – luotų dydis, jų datavimas (yra tikimybė, kad jais naudotasi, kai tiltas dar nebuvo pastatytas) ir radimvietė – trumpiausias atstumas vandeniui dvaro–salos linijoje.

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