

# SETTLEMENTS AND PIRACY ON THE EASTERN SHORE OF THE BALTIC SEA: THE MIDDLE AGES TO MODERN TIMES

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## Abstract

In the 12th century, the Curonians dwelt in the east Baltic region between the Rīga area in the north and Klaipėda in the south. They reached the peak of their economic, political and cultural achievements in the 11th century and the first half of the 12th century. The roots of piracy as a phenomenon have a social character. The most active period of the Curonian Vikings begins in around the mid-tenth century, and lasts until the arrival of the Germans in the 13th century. The well-organised piracy of the Curonians became dangerous to navigation on an important maritime trading route along the east Baltic coast. The Curonians attacked traders' boats, robbed coastal churches, devastated Danish and Swedish coastal areas, and even stayed for a while. In the times of the Teutonic Order, in periods of diplomatic and military conflict or trading competition, even officials did not avoid robbery at sea. The Palanga coastal population used to plunder shipwrecked boats, and went marauding in coastal waters until the middle of the 18th century.

Key words: Curonians, Vikings, piracy, Lithuania, Samland, Livonia, Klaipėda, Palanga.

## Introduction

The subject of this research is piracy by one of the Baltic tribes, the Curonians. Piracy in modern times is reviewed in the area of the Curonian cultural legacy, that is, in modern Lithuania. The seventh century is treated as the time of the formation of Curonian territory, when related coastal cultures, which existed between modern Klaipėda (Memel) and Liepāja (Libau), united (Michelbertas 1989, p.18; Tautavičius 1996, pp.77, 85; Atgāzis 2001). Around the tenth century, the northern boundary of Curonian territory lay close to the River Tebra (Mugurēvičs 1987, p.64, Fig. 11; 1997, p.78). From the 11th century, the Curonians started expanding northwards, and finally reached Vendian territories in the lower reaches of the River Venta,<sup>1</sup> penetrating swiftly into Livonian territories up to the Bay of Rīga. The character of Curonian centres, which began to emerge in Livonian territory from the 11th century, was surely a type of colonisation (Asaris 1997; Mugurēvičs 1997, p.78; Žulkus 2004). Around the 12th century, the Curonians lived and controlled the coastal waters along the eastern Baltic for a stretch of almost 500 kilometres.

The roots of piracy are social. A favourable social environment for piracy and marauding was bred by an immature or crisis-ridden society. Marauding on the open seas and in coastal waters (as well as overland) has existed in human society from time immemorial up

to modern times; therefore, looking at piracy in such different periods does not undermine our research. Sometimes piracy was determined more by economic, ideological and confessional factors, sometimes by political factors. The social phenomenon of piracy becomes more distinct in exactly this context. Piracy satisfied the needs of a certain part of society, and these needs were identical in their nature, but different in their content. For some, it was a question of survival; for others it was a chance to make a fortune, to become a person with influence and power.

In the archaeological and historical context, organised marauding among tribal Baltic societies seemed to have no links with territorial expansion, and is traced from the fifth to the sixth centuries. Archaeological data about Baltic societies from the fifth to the sixth centuries enables us to trace a rather influential, rich, well-organised, less dependent on the community and relatively democratic social layer – companionship (in German *Gefolgschaft*) (Žulkus 2004). In Taurapolis, the barrow graves of a 'duke' and his retinue, dating from the second half of the fifth century and the early sixth century, were discovered. They differed significantly from others, as they were buried with horses, and a huge amount of weapons and precious ornaments (Tautavičius 1981). Similar graves of 'dukes' or their companions from the fifth to the sixth centuries were also discovered in other sites (Šimėnas 1992; 1994; 2006, p.110ff; Vaitkunskienė 1995, p.163ff). According to Vladimir I. Kulakov, in Prussia companionship, as an exclusive tribal layer, not bound by tradition with

<sup>1</sup> The Vendians withdrew to the lower reaches of the River Daugava and later, pursued by the Curonians, settled in Latgalia, around modern Cēsis (in Latvian Cēsis, in German Wenden).

other tribesmen, formed in the seventh century (Kulakov 1994, p.148).

This second companionship formation stage in Baltic tribes took place in the tenth to 11th centuries. It then matured to a significantly influential social layer. When speaking about two periods of the formation of companionship, the fifth to the sixth century, and the tenth to the 11th century, an exception is to be made for the Curonians.

Rapidly spreading Viking-type piracy, marauding rather than trading, was copied by the Curonians from the Scandinavians, and it stimulated the existence of companionship oriented towards marauding overland and on the open seas. Most likely, the *longue durée* of companionship in the communities of coastal Curonians and Prussians was established through piracy. In the eighth century, Curonian pirates already used to reach the Swedish coast. They represented a companionship-type social layer. According to Blomkvist, the Curonians could arrange flotillas for their naval campaigns in the way the Scandinavian *ledung* was organised (Blomkvist 2005b, p.85).

The correspondence with Scandinavia is evident: until the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century (before the formation of 'royal companionships') 'Viking companionships' (militaries from small territories, driving the 'plunder economy') were a substantial power (Blomkvist 1998, p.15).

A similar nature of traditional companionship and pirates is illustrated by a passage from a saga about Egil (the son of Ragnar). 'He lived like a grandee. In the summer time he would go marauding and become wealthy, thus subsisting his men.' This important passage is known from the *Knytlinga saga* (2002, p.48).

Like the Scandinavians, the Curonian warriors, rallied by the richer and more influential members of their communities, would operate as pirates in their own and foreign coastal waters. Around the seventh to the eighth centuries, separate, rather independent territories, existing in different economic conditions, formed in the Curonian lands. Five 'Curonian kingdoms' that might have existed in the middle of the ninth century are mentioned by Rimburtus in *Vita Anskarii*. Therefore, the different role of Curonian groups in the Battle of Brávellir around 750 is understandable. *Saxo Gramaticus* wrote that some Curonians were fighting on the Swedish side, whereas others were marauding in Swedish coastal territories at the same time (Mickevičius 2004, pp.107ff, 150).

The Curonians reached the peak of their economic, political and cultural achievements in the 11th century and the first half of the 12th century. A segmentation

of Curonian society and a strengthening of the social identity in the upper social strata became apparent. The conditions that permitted affluent people to be distinguished were the appearance of the institution of private ownership and the tradition of inheriting property and social position. This stratum of medieval *nouveaux riches* was already forming earlier within society. The population increased, and an estate of territorial 'kings' started forming (like in Scandinavia, but a hundred years later). For example, according to *Saxo Gramaticus*, in the ninth century Hading-Hasting wanted to dethrone the Curonian duke Loker, *Kurentyrannus Lokero* (Švābe 1938, p.202). Meanwhile, the opportunity to trade, and especially loot, in neighbouring lands and those across the sea was a guarantee of rapid enrichment and survival. The most active period of the Curonian Vikings begins in around the mid-tenth century, and lasts until the arrival of the Germans in the 13th century.

Due to social peculiarities, showing themselves in the late acceptance of Christianity, piracy was acceptable even after violence and marauding in Christian areas of Scandinavia were already banned. Marauding in one's own territory was treated as wrong, since it was part of pagan traditions as written in the *Knytlinga saga* (KS, 51). One of the ways to win over pagans and stop piracy was by christening them and introducing standards of Christian ethics. Christianity was a good way of protecting Scandinavians from piracy. After 1095, Eirik (Svein's son) started organising campaigns against eastern pagans, allowing all Christians and traders to travel peacefully wherever they wanted. Knut Lavard told the Sambian trader Viðgautr: 'Choose between the following two: either you accept Christianity [...] or you will meet the inevitable' (KS, 91, 113).

Another factor stimulating trading and piracy was the appearance of trading factories (*emporia*) in Curonian (and also in Prussian) coastal areas. Coastal trading centres with the attributes of early urban settlements already existed in the tenth century around the southeast (Wróblewski 2006) and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, and in the territories of the western Baltic tribes. In Prussian territories, this was Kaup-Wiskiauten (now Mochovoe in the Kaliningrad region); whereas in Curonian coastal areas, remote transit and trading centres, like Palanga, Eketė, Imbarė and Zlėkas Priednieki, were emerging (Žulkus 2004, p.100, 107). Some of them were also political and administrative centres of territories ('smaller tribes').

Next to Palanga and Eketė in southern Curonia, the complex of Žardė-Laistai emerges in the neighbourhood of Klaipėda in the 11th to 12th centuries (Genys 1995). The Scalvian trading centre Linkuhen

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(Linkūnai, now Rzeveskoe in the Kaliningrad region) already existed in the lower reaches of the River Nemunas (Memel, Neman) (Mühlen von zur 1975, p.53; Bertašius 2001, p.194). In Semigallian territories, this was Dole-Martinsala and Rīga, which emerged at the end of the period.

Archaeological research and early written sources point to the fact that in 1000–1200, some of the above *emporía* in Baltic and neighbouring territories acquired the attributes of early urban places.<sup>2</sup> We can trace five or six such centres, two or three of which were in northern Curonia, and the rest in Semigallian territories.

The maturity of social structures, the growth of the economy, maritime trading links, and even piracy created the preconditions for the Prussians, Curonians and Semigallians to integrate into the economic region of the Baltic Sea basin already in the tenth and 11th centuries.

The early manifestation of Viking-type features did not promote good relations between the Curonians and their marine neighbours; therefore, in ancient sources Curonian marauders are traditionally juxtaposed with peaceful merchants from Samland. In the 11th and 12th centuries, Prussian traders seemed to be the best maritime traders of all the west Baltic tribes.<sup>3</sup>

The spontaneous at the beginning, and later well-organised piracy of the Curonians became increasingly dangerous for the navigation of the important seaborne trading route along the east Baltic coast. The Curonians were notorious for their ruthless treatment of castaways. Thanks to Curonian and Estonian pirates and dangerous winds, the sea trading route in the east Baltic changed: it no longer stretched consistently along the coast, but went to the west or east of the Curonian territories (Blomkvist 2005, p.292; 2009, p.166). Very often, traders in the 11th and 12th centuries would bypass the Prussian, Curonian and Liv coasts, and chose a safer route along the east coast of Sweden and Finnish waters (Fig. 1). The southern Curonians would pose a danger mostly to traders sailing along the Prussian

coast, while the northern Curonians posed a danger to those sailing in the Bay of Rīga. Besides, up to the 12th century, to the north of the River Venta, the Livs were still living on the coast, whereas the Estonians controlled the areas to the north of the River Daugava (the Western Dvina). Both of them could be the ‘Estonian pirates’ mentioned in Scandinavian sources.

The Curonians attacked lone merchant vessels in an orderly way. The *Knytlinga saga* has a tale about Viðgautr, a trader from Samland, whose boat was attacked in 1113 and 1114 by large numbers of Curonians. They pursued it, cut it off from overland, intending to kill him and take away the contents (KS, p.112ff; Mickevičius 1993, p.137; 2004, p.136).

This very tale testifies to the fact that they voyaged in groups, in flotillas, when passing along the Curonian coast. Viðgautr was attacked, because he sailed alone: ‘It happened so one summer that he was late and sailed alone from the east, wanting to reach home’ (KS, p.112–117). It is hardly possible that the most dangerous places would be guarded by warships, as happened in Danish waters after 1168, when a flotilla of four warships was organised to protect vessels from pirates throughout the entire sailing season (Blomkvist 2005, p.336), but warships could escort traders’ ships in dangerous Curonian waters.

It is difficult to foresee the after-effect of Curonian piracy on the settlement of Prussian coastal territories. The Kaup-Wiskiauten trading centre existed until the beginning (Kulakov 1989) or the second half (Długokęcki 2006, p.41) of the 11th century or from the 11th to the 13th centuries (Ibsen 2009, pp.357–358). At the same time, the Korallen-Berg centre on the Curonian Spit (in the area of Rossitten [Rasytė, now Rybachi] in the Kaliningrad region) was withering away (Kulakov 2002).

Present-day data gives no hint about larger trading centres or the ‘early city’ in Prussian coastal territories from the 11th to the 13th centuries (Žulkus, Bertašius 2009). However, at the beginning of the 13th century, trading centres could exist in the lower reaches of the Pregel and in the area of Medenau (Długokęcki 2006, p.43), although they were far away from the sea. The practical absence of Prussian coastal trading centres in the 11th and 12th centuries could also be predetermined by aggressive Curonian policy. There is no obvious evidence of permanent Curonian settlement in Prussian territories;<sup>4</sup> however, the continuous marauding of coastal areas and the devastation of established

<sup>2</sup> A differentiated concept of an early urban settlement is applied to western and eastern coastal areas of the Baltic Sea. In Baltic settlements of a non-agrarian type, researchers no longer look for the residences of Christian hierarchs, mints and other attributes, typical of mature urban structures (Blomkvist 2001).

<sup>3</sup> The activity of Prussian traders is related to the largest amber resources around the Baltic Sea. As a rule, amber, in the form of raw material, from the very first centuries AD used to be delivered from Samland to all European areas via overland routes, sea lanes and inland waters. In Viking times, the Scandinavians obtained amber from Prussian territories; amber as a raw material was transported to Ladoga and Novgorod area via the Baltic Sea and rivers (Bliujienė 2011, p.323ff).

<sup>4</sup> Vladimir I. Kulakov believes that well-organised Prussian soldiery in the 11th and 12th centuries left Prussia, and they were replaced by Curonian companionship formations (Kulakov 2008, p.11).

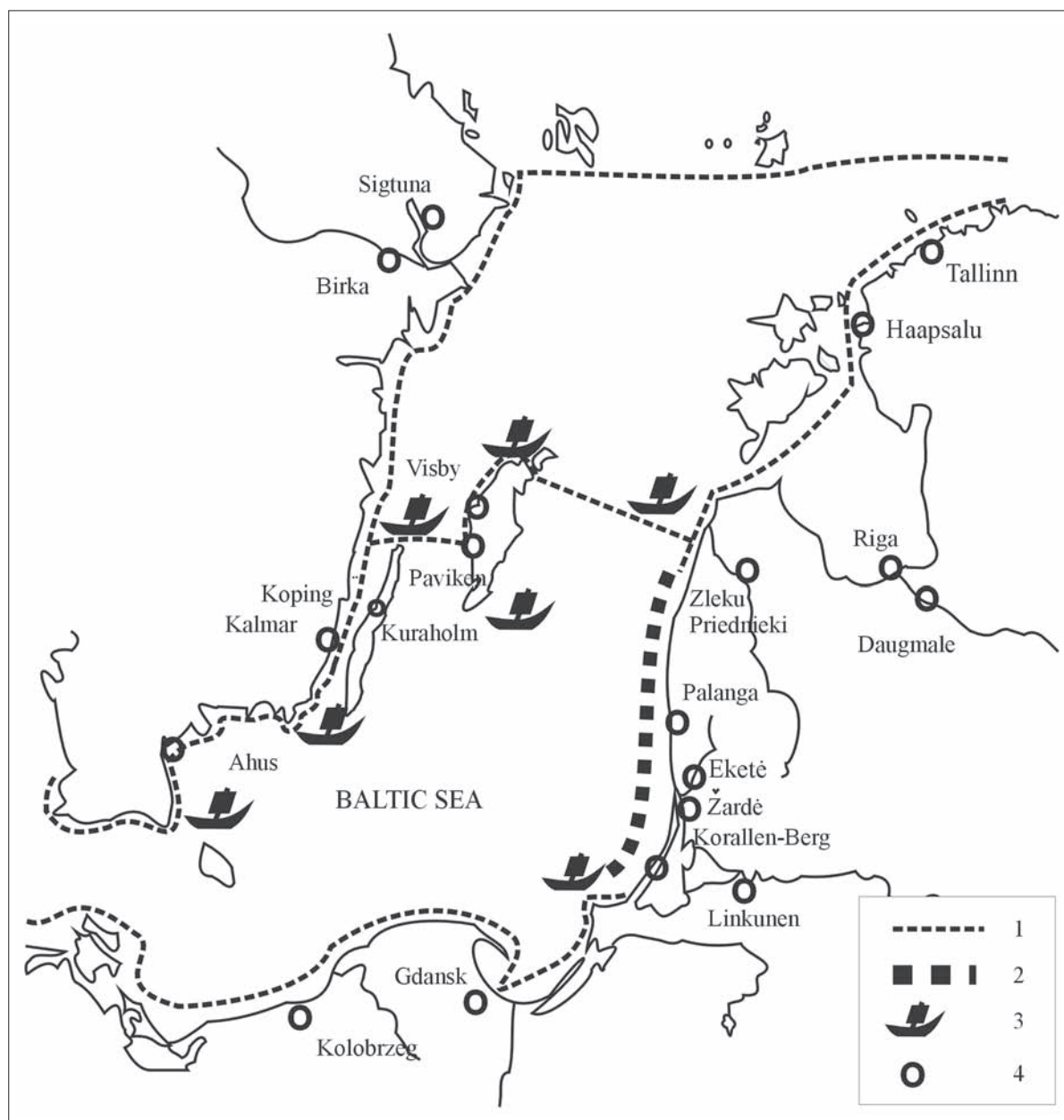


Fig. 1. Curonian pirates on the Baltic Sea: 1 sea routes in the 12th century (after Blomkvist 2005, p.294); 2 the Curonian coast, an area fully controlled by Curonian pirates; 3 Curonian pirate areas (11th to 13th centuries), based on written sources; 4 trading centres in the Baltic Sea (11th to 13th centuries).

settlements could result in a scarce network of settlements there.

The first hints about Curonian marauding in western coastal areas of the Baltic Sea reach us from the middle of the eighth century. Later, in the ninth century and the early tenth century, when the Scandinavians were actively forcing their way to Curonia, there are no messages about marauding Curonians. Starting with the 11th century, at the beginning of the last active period of the Scandinavian and Curonian wars, the Curonian Vikings became more active in Scandinavian coastal areas than the Swedes and Danes in Curonia. After an-

other hundred years, a more explicit trend in Curonian campaigns against the Scandinavians emerged: they attempted to anchor themselves on Scandinavian soil and control the navigation in some straits (around Gotland in 1210) (Chronicon Livoniae Bd. I, XIV. 1, 3). Around 1213, the Curonians once again appeared in Gotland, where they were attacked by the Friesians and lost four vessels, including plunder (Chronicon Livoniae Bd. I, XIV. 1, 3). The Curonian and Scandinavian activity was interrupted after the start of German domination in the territories of the west Balts.

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Curonian pirates were attracted firstly by rich places, in waters that were popular with traders and less well guarded. The voyages of Curonian pirates were likely to take a long period of time, and they went marauding on wide sections of Scandinavian coastal areas. The same piracy tactics had been employed before by the Scandinavian Vikings. When examining the Spillings hoard of bronze articles, the largest ever discovered in Gotland, weighing over 20 kilograms (Thunmark-Nylén 2006, p.701; Östergren 2009, p.18), Audronė Bliujienė found out that it was collected during one raid around 880 or later, marauding initially on Saaremaa island and northwest Estonia, later in the lower reaches of the River Daugava, afterwards in Semigallian territories, and completing the campaign in southern Curonia, in the Palanga-Kretinga area. Some of those items could have originated from a jeweller's workshop, some of them from plundered graves (Bliujienė 2007). The sites in which the hoard was traced and collected coincide with larger trading centres around the eastern coastal areas of the Baltic Sea. Evidently, the Vikings attacked the larger and richer settlements of the Estonians and west Baltic tribes.

The coastal waters of modern Sweden and eastern Denmark used to be targeted most. Before Knut became a Danish *konung* (1076), the Curonians and other inhabitants of eastern lands marauding in Denmark would not be punished severely. Knut drove away all pagans from his territories and coastal waters (KS, 36, 43).

Curonian and Estonian pirates were stimulated by political events in the first half of the 12th century and by new trading interests. In the 12th century, Gotland communities turned into prosperous trading centres. There were also a number of rich coastal settlements at that time in continental Sweden. In the period 1170 to 1230, the Estonians and Curonians were continuously marauding in Swedish and Danish coastal areas (Blomkvist 2005b, p.80).

The Curonians constantly threatened the coastal areas of Gotland and Sweden. They traded on the absence of a central power and security system, and on political feuds between Scandinavian *konungs*. That is why in 1170, they raided and marauded around Blekinge and Kalmar, where the Danes also did the same (KS, p.157ff; Blomkvist 2005a, p.340ff). The Curonians attacked traders' boats, robbed coastal churches, devastated Danish and Swedish coastal areas (HL, 34), and even stayed for a while. When marauding, the Curonians were looking for wealth and slaves. Captives, women and girls from Sweden, used to be a desirable catch, and even Estonian pirates sometimes sold them to the Curonians (HL, 147).

The Curonians operated in flotillas, usually consisting of eight to ten warships. In 1170 they came in ten well-equipped warships to Kalmar in the Swedish province of Blekinge (KS, p.157ff). It is thought about 300 Curonian warriors could take part in a campaign (Asaris *et al.* 2008, p.130).

In the strait between Gotland and the Färösund Islands, Curonian pirates attacked pilgrims in eight ships. They were beaten away from the island by the Friesians, who took four of their ships (Chronicon Livoniae XIV, 1, 3).

Estonian flotillas also consisted of eight, ten or 16 vessels (Henrikas Latvis, 34, 37). Flotillas of west Slavs were similar in size. A Vendian Viking fleet, consisting of 'nine huge ships' was mentioned in 1170 (KS, 160). The Scandinavians were more numerous in numbers. Egil (Ragnar's son) went to Vendland with 18 ships, whereas powerful *konungs* started on their voyages with 200 or 300 (the campaigns of 1069 and 1070 to England) or even more ships (KS, 48, 56).

In the 11th and 12th centuries, Curonian pirates could hardly equip such flotillas alone and attack large and well-fortified Scandinavian trading and administrative centres. Previous historiography would sometimes link the Curonians with big campaigns, but with no grounding based on reliable sources: for example, in 1040, the Curonians purportedly invaded Danish lands. On the other hand, it is confirmed that pagan pirates (these were almost undoubtedly Curonians and Estonians) in 1187 devastated Sigtuna, the largest Swedish trading centre at that time (Blomkvist 2005b, p.80; Asaris *et al.* 2008, pp.130, 132). The Curonians could start their summer campaigns from places in Swedish and Danish coastal areas, where they had been entrenched for a long period of time. The tiny island of Kårholm in the Öland area could have been one such Curonian campsite (Blomkvist, 2005b, p.76). The name of the island could be linked with the Curonians (Cori, Kure). Place-names of Curonian origin are likely to exist in eastern Sweden, Gotland and Bornholm.

The tactics employed by the Curonians are known from a description of 1170. In 1170, the Curonians raided and marauded around Blekinge and Kalmar, where the Danes were also doing the same. They landed at least nine ships in Jarnloka harbour, and started marauding, while one ship, captained by an experienced person, remained on patrol in the open sea. Sensing that the Danes were about to attack them, the Curonians pulled their ships out of the water. The Danes failed to reach the coast together, so the Curonians successfully coped with the crews of the first five ships trying to reach the coast. After the arrival of their flagship, captained by Christopher, Duke of Schleswig, the Curonians met

them with a hail of spears and stones. The battle continued on the coast until night fell, when the Curonians erected a line of fortifications, using their own ships for the purpose. They filled the gaps with tree trunks, leaving just two narrow passages. This construction was covered with sails for protection from arrows. In the morning, the Curonians attacked the Danes from their fortress; however, after a fight the Danes won a victory (KS, 157-158; Blomkvist 2005a, p.340ff; Asaris *et al.* 2008, p.130ff).

The Curonian pirates knew naval battle tactics well. They would attack suddenly, and employed different tricks in naval combat. In 1210, Bishop Albert, sailing together with pilgrims (monks-warriors coming back from the crusade against the Baltic pagans), came within close quarters of eight Curonian pirate ships near Gotland. The pilgrims (probably larger in numbers), who were already proficient in fighting, were the first to attack the Curonians in their boats. The latter arranged their ships in pairs, so that the pilgrims' boats found themselves in between the Curonian ships. The pilgrims from the smaller boats were slaughtered with pikes, and drowned. The rest escaped in their boats. About 30 knights were killed, as well as other warriors. The killed were stripped: the Curonians took their weapons, clothes and personal belongings (Chronicon Livoniae XIV, 1, 3; HL, 65).

No regions or specific terrains where Curonian pirates would organise their campaigns from are named in sources. It could justly be maintained that the Curonians generally used to start their sea raids from southern territories, which were more densely populated and more developed from an economic and social point of view (Žulkus 2004, pp.59-161). That would be the coastal area from Klaipėda in the south and the northern area of Liepāja.

Archaeological data shows that in the 11th and 12th centuries, there were several Curonian centres in their southern coastal areas. These were Palanga, a conglomerate of settlements and an important centre for remote trading, administration and the pagan religion, Eketė and Žardė-Laistai around Klaipėda, close to the Curonian Lagoon. They probably emerged in the 12th century. These centres, particularly Palanga, must have been the organisers of Curonian military campaigns.

Palanga, a settlement of southern Curonians in Megowe (Mėguva) land, has been explored most profoundly. Medieval Palanga has almost all the characteristic attributes of early cities: a non-agrarian economy and a fairly differentiated economic structure, a definite and

fairly large economic base, several settlements with a different economic orientation, well-developed local and remote trading, a multi-ethnic population, crafts, reinforced settlements,<sup>5</sup> a significant place for confessional and social meetings, and more or less probable attempts of early Christian missions.

The fact that the number of tillers decreased sharply after the 11th century (based on an analysis of burial sites from the tenth to the 12th century) is undoubtedly related to the exceptional economic structure of the Palanga community. It means that agriculture was only a secondary occupation. In the 11th century, the number of 'warrior' graves in the above territories increased markedly, which could be related to the military campaigns of the Curonians. At the same time, a relative increase of 'trader' graves is also recorded.

One of the most important imports in Palanga during Viking times was the raw material for metals, primarily brass and metals for its production. (Raw material for brass, in the shape of a crook and a lead plate, was found in the Birutė Hill settlement). Brass came through Palanga to Megowe and more distant lands. It was shipped across the sea and delivered throughout West Slavic centres from Central Europe, or directly from Sweden, where copper and lead had been excavated since olden times. In the cultural layer dated to the end of the 11th to the first half of the 12th century which was next to Birutė Hill, a crook of raw brass and a lead plate were found. The most brass and silver were found in the 11th-century graves of Palanga. From the 11th century, silver and imported glass travelled from Western Europe through Palanga into southern Curonian territories. One fact that was of key importance was that Palanga dwellers possessed a local raw material that was in demand: amber (Žulkus 2007, p.383).

Investigations of graves have shown that Palanga was surrounded by satellite settlements, the economy of which was closely related to it. After an analysis of finds from three of the closest burial grounds (Pryšmančiai, Anduliai and Girkaliai), it was discovered that neighbouring settlements experienced serious influence from Palanga: changes in the numbers of graves, the comparative weight of articles, and quantities of items decorated with silver were similar. The above-mentioned settlements made up the economic hinterland of Palanga, and were interlinked with it. In the tenth to the 12th centuries, this conglomerate went on for about 12 kilometres, and covered an area of 70 square kilometres (Žulkus 2007, p.385).

<sup>5</sup> Recent research shows that the density of Palanga's development in the tenth to the 12th centuries was greater than was previously assumed (Kraniauskas, 2011).

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Another coastal centre from which Curonian military campaigns could be organised was in the Klaipėda area. It was Žardė-Laistai on the banks of the tiny Žardė (Smeltė) rivulet, flowing into the Curonian Lagoon in the southern part of Klaipėda. In Viking times, this stream was suitable for navigation. Žardė hill-fort in those times was surrounded by several settlements, also inhabited by foreign traders. Attempts have been made to search for an embryo of an early city from the tenth to the 11th centuries in this complex (Genys 1995). The rulers of this centre controlled the navigation between the channel at Klaipėda and the mouth of the River Nemunas.

In Viking times, it was possible to reach Eketė by boat, as it was located only 12 kilometres from the mouth of the Dangė. Therefore, the complex of Eketė consisted of a hill-fort, a large six-hectare settlement, a sacrificial offering site, and one or two necropolises. It was the most important centre of the Pilsotas area until the 13th century (Žulkus 2004, p.89ff). It was another possible place for the organisation of Curonian pirate campaigns.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, the economy of some coastal trading centres, particularly those in Curonian coastal territories, was to a certain extent also dependent on the possibility to obtain property by marauding.

Research into burial grounds of the eighth to the 12th centuries around the Palanga conglomerate confirms this assumption. It has been confirmed that in the southern Curonian territories around Palanga and Klaipėda, the population density was at its highest in the 11th century. The largest numbers of brass ornaments and their comparative weight per grave were recorded in the burial grounds of the coastal Curonians from the 11th to the 12th centuries. The numbers of silver ornaments in the burial grounds increased in the 11th century. The considerable increase in bronze ornaments in the Curonian territories could be related to piracy (Žulkus, Klimka 1989, p.11ff). Some of the bronze, necessary for the manufacture of traditional ornaments, found its way to coastal centres of the southern Curonians as plunder from Scandinavian and Prussian coastal areas.

The possibilities for marauding in neighbouring territories of the same tribe presumably decreased after the appearance (though sometimes short-term) of land combinations, administered by 'kings' or 'dukes'. The appearance of the above combinations marauding in neighbouring territories had to be replaced by organised military campaigns to the territories of neighbouring tribes. In coastal lands, this induced pirates to abandon their own coastal waters and expand to neighbouring and remoter territories. Curonian pirates focused their

campaigns on plundering passing traders, on attacking the coastal settlements of neighbouring tribes (Semi-gallians and Prussians), and robbing settlements on the western islands in the Baltic Sea and the coastal areas.

Hoirs of Lithuanian archaeological material full of articles of Scandinavian origin are unknown, except for Scandinavian armaments from the 11th to the 12th centuries, and those manufactured locally and traced abundantly in Curonian lands (Kazakevičius 2000). However, this is no contradiction of written sources about Curonian piracy. The absence of Scandinavian hoards could be predetermined by cultural traditions. Unlike in Prussian lands, Scandinavian traditions in wearing ornaments were not vital among the Curonians, despite their close and long-term contacts with the Scandinavians. Bronze and silver ornaments, abundantly plundered in Danish and Swedish coastal areas, were presumably melted down by the Curonians and used as raw material for the manufacture of their own articles.

In the 13th century, the area north of the River Venta and to the sea was still thinly inhabited by the Curonians. For a long time, the Curonian centres were located in the central part of the territory, whereas the coast was inhabited by Livs (Asaris 1997; Žulkus 2004, p.41ff). Most probably, some Estonian pirates mentioned in Scandinavian sources could have been Livs who lived in the coastal areas of northern Curonia and followed the Curonians.

There are no records about the ships of the Curonian Vikings, as archaeologists have still failed to trace any. Rather frequent findings of marine rivets and nails in the coastal settlements of the Curonians point to the fact that the construction and size of their warships was similar to that of the Scandinavian Vikings. Many iron marine rivets and nails have been traced in layers of Palanga settlements since the tenth century (Žulkus 2007, p.339ff).

In the 13th century, the Livonian and Teutonic Orders started the conquest of the territories of the Curonian, Prussian, Scalvian and other Baltic tribes. This involved land and naval battles. Like the Estonians, who raided with 16 ships (HL, 34) in 1203, the Curonians could also undoubtedly assemble tens and even hundreds of vessels for their naval attacks. In the summer of 1210, the Curonians attacked Rīga from the sea with so many ships that 'the entire sea was covered with a sort of thick cloud' (HL, 66-67). In 1257, the Sambians, who were not considered naval marauders before, attacked the Teutonic Order's recently built castle in Klaipėda (Memel) from their ships. These ships were so numerous that they could form a bridge across the



strait at Klaipėda if they were put alongside each other (Livländische Reimchronik, §3819).

From the second half of the 13th century, Curonia fell into the hands of the Livonian Order (it was later shared with the Teutonic Order), and piracy was once again restricted to the coastal waters and became more connected with political events in the territories of Teutonic Order, Livonia and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. From the middle of the 13th century and almost up to the middle of the 14th century, battles and wars raged between the Teutonic Order on one side and the Curonians, Samogitians and Lithuanians on the other, in which legal privateering and piracy flourished. These phenomena were of a local character.

The Teutonic Order was penetrating further into Lithuania, employing water routes and its superiority in navigation; however, its ships could not sail safely along the Curonian Spit, let alone into the Curonian Lagoon and up the River Nemunas. The Lithuanians attacked the smaller ships, and navigation on the Nemunas remained unsafe for the Teutonic Order for a long period of time. Some of the Order's castles served not only for the protection and control of the territory, but for coastal and inland waters as well. Klaipėda Castle was followed by Windenburg (Ventė) and Rositten (Rasytė) castles, erected in 1360. The first defended the Nemunas delta, the second was on the Curonian Spit and controlled the sea and the lagoon. The historian Matthew Pretorius (Pretorijus 2004, p.701) called the latter 'a robbers' castle' (*Raub-Schloß*).

Piracy in the Curonian Lagoon was repeated periodically. The facts from the first half of the 15th century tell us that the Lithuanians reached the delta of the River Nemunas with three boats; on the River Atmata they murdered eight fishermen of the Teutonic Order, capturing another eight (Willoweit 1969, p.140). From that same period, we have a note about Lithuanian pirates who attacked the best fishermen of the Klaipėda commander (*Komtur*), killing five of them and capturing eight (Rowell 2005, p.57).

Organised privateering and piracy in the Baltic Sea expressed themselves through political battles within the Teutonic Order and the struggle with its rivals for Klaipėda.

In the times of the Teutonic Order, the first records about pirates around Klaipėda appeared in 1402, when 'a robbers' ship' was mentioned (Willoweit 1969, p.127). Presumably, it was one of the ships belonging to the Baltic Sea pirates (Likedeeler) and based from 1396 in Russia or the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland (Pelc 2005, pp.34, 35). In 1422, it was still dangerous to travel overland (because of the Lithuani-

ans) or to sail (because of pirates) to Klaipėda (LEK Abt. 1. Bd. 5, 794, Nr. MMDLXXIX).

In periods of diplomatic and military conflict or trading competition, even officials did not avoid being robbed. During the Thirteen Years War (1454–1466), Klaipėda remained loyal to the Teutonic Order; therefore, the harbour and ships were constantly being attacked by enemies and rivals, in particular from Gdansk. Fourteen ships from Lübeck and Hamburg berthed at Klaipėda in 1457. They were attacked by ships from Gdansk, towing away eight of them and burning the rest (Sembritzki 1926, p.47; Willoweit 1969, p.144). Matthias Schulte, the captain of a Gdansk warship in 1460, was authorised to attack and rob all ships sailing towards Klaipėda and Balga (Willoweit 1969, p.145). The war was over, but privateering traditions, inspired by the Teutonic Order, survived in Klaipėda and continued to stimulate piracy. Despite the peace treaty, traders were also attacked after 1466 and later. These actions were controlled by the Klaipėda commander (*Komtur*). In 1467, the Gdansk burgomaster informed on the Klaipėda commander, as he was suspected of piracy on the open seas. A charge of piracy was levelled, that the commander was still protecting pirates. His behaviour was threatening the peace treaty, and in 1472 a military campaign was organised against Klaipėda. The castle was sieged and taken, and 42 pirates were punished (Akten, Bd.1. N.3, pp.18-19, N.4, p.22ff, N.105, p.277. Bd. 5, N. 74, pp.227, 231ff).

Subsequent privateering served in matters of competition. On 27 May 1520, two Gdansk *holks*, two small cruisers and one *Schmack* captured in Klaipėda one Dutch and one Königsberg ship (Weise 1908, pp.51-53, 79). At the same time, Klaipėda sent two newly designed yachts on to the open seas for privateering (Willoweit 1969, p.56).

One notorious pirate patronised by King Christian II was Marten Pechlin, a trader from Lübeck, who was engaged in trading in grain until 1521. He became a privateer and a pirate after he lost a cargo which was to be delivered to Klaipėda (Pelc 2005, p.57). We have no information about his activities in eastern coastal zones of the Baltic Sea.

In the struggle against Gdansk, in 1523 the commander of Klaipėda gained an unexpectedly an ally, Sören Norby, a famous pirate from the castellan of Visby on Gotland. He acted in the Baltic Sea on behalf of Christian II, capturing and sinking ships from Gdansk and Lübeck. At that time, Visby Castle was once again turned into a pirates' nest. Sören Norby was on friendly terms with the Klaipėda commander Erich von Braunschweig. On 2 July 1524, Christoph Gattenhofer from Königsberg wrote a letter to Grand Duke Albrecht von



Brandenburg-Ansbach. He expressed his deep concern at the fact that the Klaipėda commander Erich von Braunschweig was on too friendly terms with Sören Norby (Seuerin Norbj), to whom he sent horses, armour and people. The Swedes did know about this, and were ready to attack Klaipėda and Samland. They were going to turn towards Klaipėda after they seized Visby and Gothland (Das virtuelle, DH 318; Sören Norbys, p.234).

In 1524, not only the Swedes but also Lübeck, tired of piracy, planned to attack Klaipėda with 18 ships. In 1525, ships from Lübeck chased Sören Norby along the Swedish coast. The commander of Klaipėda was accused the same year of intending to erect a pirates' castle in Klaipėda together with Sören Norby (Weise 1908, pp.65, 143ff, 209). At that time, Duke Albrecht could not guarantee safe navigation in Prussian coastal waters, as his fleet was still in the process of construction; besides, he had to take into account the fleet of Lübeck, controlling the largest part of the western Baltic Sea. He also had to deal with Danish attempts at entrenchment around Saaremaa (Ösel) island (Hartmann 2010, p.51).

Sailing in the eastern Baltic remained dangerous even later, particularly in the times of the Livonian War. In 1566, Franz Frahme, a skipper from Klaipėda, loaded a cargo of salt and wine on to his ship and sailed to Saaremaa (Ösel) island, which belonged at that time to the Danes. The sea was calm, and the ship was soon captured by the Estonians. They towed it to Tallinn, which belonged to the Swedes. The skipper appealed against the pirates, and he was allowed to sell the cargo. He did so, bought iron and other goods, and sailed back to Klaipėda. On the way back, he was captured by a Polish or Gdansk privateers' ship, and was to be towed to Gdansk. On the way there, both ships were attacked and captured by another flotilla of privateers. The slow ship of Franz Frahme lagged behind and escaped from the pirates, but then it was captured again by the Estonians and was once again towed to Tallinn. It is unknown whether the ship returned to Klaipėda or not, but it probably never reached Saaremaa (Willoweit 1969, p.325ff).

Pirates running loose in the Baltic Sea at the beginning of the 16th century were a serious problem for coastal countries, including Lithuania. In accordance with information received from Sigismund Herberstein, the Holy Roman Emperor's envoy, in 1517 and 1526 pirates disrupted the supply of salt to Lithuania and Britain, and the export of tar, timber for shipbuilding, and grain from Lithuania (Baliulis, Meilus 2001, p.516).

There is no information about the building of warships in Klaipėda. The main types of local ships are named

in documents from the 14th and the 15th centuries. They are marine ships, fishermen's boats, and Deima ships (Deimeschiffe), probably for sailing in rivers, ferries and small boats (Willoweit 1969, pp.122, 125, 139-141, 252). In accordance with a 1475 privilege, the citizens of Klaipėda were granted the right to cut wood and use it for shipbuilding (Sembritzki 1926, p.50; Willoweit 1969, p.63). Undoubtedly, they did not hesitate to profit from this.

Sources mention the construction of a specific ship in Klaipėda back in 1517 (Regesta No 21411). A shipbuilding site around the old River Dangė was discovered during archaeological excavations (Sprainaitis 1994). By the look of the remains of a slipway, at least one ship of 20 metres in length could have been built there. Dendrochronological dating dates its cultural horizon to 1519 (Brazauskas 2003). After 1540, this area was no longer used for shipbuilding (Žulkus 2001, p.537).

Intensive shipbuilding in Klaipėda started in the times of Duke Albrecht. Usually Dutchmen worked as shipbuilders, whereas arrivals from Hamburg and locals were employed as carpenters. Between 1562 and 1569, ships of 20 to 70 lasts were built in Klaipėda. They sailed as far as Lisbon (Sembritzki 1926, p.85; Willoweit 1969, p.254). Between 1571 and 1580, Klaipėda built ships of 150 to 250 lasts; however, after 1593 local shipbuilders were permitted to build ships of 20 to 80 lasts only. These were only suitable for sailing in coastal waters. Shipbuilding-related restrictions were only abolished around 1680 (Sembritzki 1926, pp.86ff, 154).

Any locally built ocean-going ships could be supplied with cannons and armoured crew, take part in pirate campaigns, or, on the contrary, protect coastal areas and withstand the attacks of pirates.

From 1422, Lithuania was in possession of a tiny strip of the Curonian coastal area around Palanga and Heiligen Aa (Šventoji). In the middle of the 13th century, the Teutonic Order finally settled in Klaipėda, so Palanga, as an early urban site and a regional centre of the pagan religion (like other centres of the southern Curonians) declined, although until the very beginning of the 15th century a pagan sacrificial offering site was still functioning on Birutė Hill (Žulkus 2007, pp.62-71). From the 15th century, Palanga was a tiny fishermen's settlement, losing its economic, social and political influence in all of west Lithuania.

Heiligen Aa, a fishermen's settlement in the area of Palanga, was first mentioned in 1429 (LEK Abt.1, Bd.8, 393). Some 14th-century coins from Britain, Reval (Tallinn) and Dorpat (Tartu) were traced on the

site of the old settlement (it is now partly under water) (Balčius 1999, p.195). The River Šventoji divided Livonia from Lithuania. In the late Middle Ages on its right bank, in Livonia, there was a classic coastal emporium, with a traders' church (*ecclesia mercatorum*), a marketplace, quays and even fortifications (Žulkus, Springmann 2001). In the 16th century, it was decided to found a city on the left bank (on the Lithuanian side). The new settlement was mentioned for the first time in 1568 (Kiaupa 1999, p.133ff). At the beginning of the 17th century, Lithuania established itself in the port of Heiligen Aa. In the second half of the 17th century, the harbour facilities were improved by English traders who were operating there (Žulkus, Springmann 2001).

Livonian and Prussian laws and regulations granted safe coastal navigation and the protection of shipwrecks and their cargoes. In the tiny coastal strip (about 15 kilometres in length) belonging to Lithuania, there were no navigation-related regulations whatsoever. The local coastal population, barely surviving on fishing and animal husbandry, searched for additional sources of livelihood. One of them was collecting shipwrecked property, another was attacking passing ships. The Lithuanian rulers did not control the coastal areas, and they remained dangerous to seafarers for a long time due to local marauding Curonians. Robbing ships that had run aground in shallow waters in stormy weather was common.

Palanga and its area was a dangerous place, as the coastal population robbed shipwrecked boats and went marauding in neighbouring waters. After disasters, cargo would be saved and sheltered in the part of Šventoji which belonged to Livonia. In 1422, a catastrophe struck a ship from Redin near Palanga (Nikžentaitis 1999, p.114), followed by another in 1431. The ship was sailing from Westerwik to Gdansk. Its cargo was kept in Šventoji and later returned to its owners after the payment of *Bergelohn*, money paid for the salvage of cargo (LEK, Abt.1., Bd.8, 230, Nr. 393).

In the autumn of 1635, a Swedish warship, apparently wrecked near Palanga, was taken and five of its cannons ended up with the mayor of Palanga. In 1695, a ship owned by a British trading company from Heiligen Aa ran aground in shallow waters and was lost near Palanga (Kiaupa 1999a, p.121; 1999b, p.139).

Safe navigation in the stretch could hardly be assured, as Prussia had no naval fleet. It started only in 1655, after two shipwrecks, a Swedish frigate and a Lübeck *Schute* near the Curonian Spit. They were armed with ten and seven cannons respectively, and were named *Der clevische Lindenbaum* and *Der Churfürst von Brandenburg* (An der Kurischen 1988, p.67).

Palanga pirates also marauded in coastal waters. In 1748, a cargo ship owned by a Jew from Klaipėda and sailing between Klaipėda and Curonia (Livonia) was attacked by armed Palanga pirates. They captured the cargo and 400 florins belonging to a Klaipėda trader (Sembritzki 1926, p.235).

There are no written sources about the trials of pirates and sentences: however, unusual graves have been traced in old burial grounds of Palanga and its area. They could be related to people who died a violent death. These graves are usually discovered outside Christian cemeteries. Some graves were dug wherever possible, in a hurry, and without coffins. These could be the graves of unknown men and seafarers, washed ashore, the victims of coastal pirates, or pirates themselves.

Casual graves were discovered in Palanga, on top of Birutė Hill and at its foot, outside a cemetery. One such grave was traced on the platform of the hill (Grave 2). A tibia was found in the sand at a depth of 1.15 metres. A skeleton 2.1 metres long and 0.85 metres wide was found in a pit, narrowing as it descended. The head pointed west. A rather bent skeleton was found lying in a darker stain in which no coffin marks were found. The arms of the deceased were crossed on the chest; the bones of the left arm were at the bottom. The legs were stretched out. A piece of rough cloth survived rather well on the left side of the pelvis. Meanwhile, on the right side of the pelvis, a brass brooch with a tab was found in the cloth. The skull of the deceased had very masculine features. The buried person was about 25 years old. The grave is stratigraphically dated to the 18th century (Žulkus 2007, p.35ff).

Grave 1 was discovered at the base of the hill, at a depth of 1.1 metres, beneath a thin layer of humus from the 17th century. The position of the bones shows that the deceased had been laid or just thrown face down. The bones belong to a 25 to 30-year-old man. There were no traces of a coffin or clothing (Žulkus 2007, p.77).

On the northern outskirts of Palanga is Naglis Hill. The oldest name of this small hill seems to have been Olandų Kepurė (Dutchman's Cap). It was so named because it served as a landmark to guide seafarers. A stream flows into the sea beside the hill, along which there are still traces of an ancient settlement. Palanga residents referred to this settlement as the 'Old Harbour' (Baliński 1846, p.529ff). Long-standing, old residents of Palanga call this sandhill the 'Hill of Graves' or 'Swedish Graves'. Their grandparents said that infants that had not been baptised, suicides and the drowned found along the coast used to be buried on the

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TO TOWNS

northern edge of the hill's platform. Thirty-two graves were discovered on Naglis Hill (Žulkus 1981). The excavation of cemeteries from the 16th to the 17th centuries around Palanga resulted in the discovery of young men's graves (alongside properly arranged Christian graves), buried in an unconventional way. Among them, the headless skeletal remains of a young man from the 16th to the 17th centuries were discovered. They were thrown upside-down into a narrow pit (Žulkus 1978). The remains of seriously guilty and decapitated people are sometimes discovered elsewhere, but the skulls are usually found in the same grave (Vėlius 2005, pp.39ff, 92). The death sentence by decapitation for felony was applied in urban areas in Lithuania until the 18th century (Baliulis, Meilus 2001, pp.398ff, 629). The above grave is very similar to the traditional method of punishing pirates: they used to be decapitated, nailing the heads to poles or gates (Pelc 2005, p.13ff; Rosentreter 2004, p.27). A pirate from Palanga could have been punished in this way.

## Conclusions

Around the 11th century, Curonians living and marauding in coastal waters along the eastern Baltic along a stretch of almost 500 kilometres became very dangerous to navigation, and interrupted the functioning of this maritime trading route.

The roots of piracy, as a social phenomenon, are social. The economies of coastal Curonian communities were to a large extent based on plunder (first among the southern, later among the northern Curonians).

The Curonians gained experience of navigation, shipbuilding and piracy thanks to active ties. Piracy activated shipbuilding, and it improved construction and navigation skills.

In the 12th and the 13th centuries, the Curonians organised attacks and mastered the tactics of naval battles.

Until the middle of the 12th century, the Curonians would attempt short-term voyages, but in the second half of the 12th century and the early 13th century, they were already trying to penetrate the east coast of Sweden.

In the second half of the 13th century, when the Livonian Order founded a castle in Curonian territory and started the conquest of Lithuanian lands, land and sea battles, as well as piracy, became common.

Privateering and piracy in the 14th to the 16th centuries spread mostly around the western part of the Bal-

tic Sea. Pirates caused problems and even interrupted trading links between coastal sites and countries. Pirates were also backed and supported by some Baltic cities. Commanders of Klaipėda in the 15th and 16th centuries were accused several times of piracy and organising it, for aims related to politics and personal gain. Any sea-going ships built in Klaipėda could take part in pirate campaigns or, on the contrary, protect coastal areas from attacks by pirates.

The Curonian coastal strip, controlled by Lithuania since 1422, remained dangerous for ships (local piracy) until the middle of the 18th century.

Some graves from the 15th to the 17th centuries in Lithuanian coastal areas were dug wherever possible. Headless male skeletal remains could belong to victims of coastal pirates, or even to pirates themselves.

## Abbreviations

HL – HENRIKAS LATVIS. *Livonijos kronikos*. Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991.  
 KS – Kniutlingų saga. Vilnius: Vaga, 2002.  
 LA – Lietuvos archeologija, Vilnius (since 1979 –).

LII R – Institute of Lithuanian History, Archive. Vilnius.  
 KMLIM –Lithuanian Minor Museum in Klaipėda.

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## BALTIJOS RYTINIŲ PAKRANČIŲ GYVENVIETĖS IR PIRATAVIMAS: VIDURAMŽIAI– NAUJIEJI LAIKAI

VLADAS ŽULKUS

Santrauka

Kuršiai XII a. gyveno rytinėje Baltijos pakrantėje nuo Rygos apylinkių šiaurėje iki Klaipėdos pietuose. Į pietus nuo kuršių pajūriu driekėsi Prūsų žemės. Vakarinių baltų gentys didžiausią ekonomikos, politikos ir kultūros pažangą pasiekė XI a. – XII a. pirmojoje pusėje. Kuršių ir prūsų visuomenėse atsirado privačios nuosavybės požymių, socialinio išskirtinumo tradicijos, susiformavo teritorinės „karalystės“ ir subrendo draugijos institucija, nukreipta turtui įsigyti prievarta sausumoje ir jūroje. Piratavimo, kaip visuomeninio fenomeno, šaknys yra socialinio pobūdžio.

Bene pirmas kuršių piratų paminėjimas yra iš apie 750 m. Brovalos mūšio aprašymo. Aktyviausias kuršių vikingų laikotarpis prasidėjo apie X a. vidurį ir truko iki ordinų invazijos į vakarinių baltų žemes. Kuršių prekyba su jų jūriniais kaimynais anksti įgijo vikingavimo bruožų. XI–XII a. pirmojoje pusėje Kurše sustiprėjęs teritorinių „karalių“ luomas paskatino piratavimą išplėsti į artimesnių ir tolimesnių kaimynų kraštus.

Tarp 1170 ir 1230 m. kuršiai ir estai nuolat plėšikavo danų ir švedų pakrantėse, grobdami sidabrą, bronzą, kitus turtus ir vergus, ypač verges. Kuršių piratų flotilės dažniausiai sudarydavo 8–10 burinių-irklinių laivų su 20–30 karių kiekviename.

Kuršiai Švedijos ir Danijos pakrantėse įsitvirtindavo ir ilgesniam laikui. Viena iš tokių kuršių vikingų stovyklaviečių galėjo būti nedidelė Kuraholmo (Kårholm) salelė prie Ėlando salos (1 pav.).

Kai kurių pajūrio prekybos centrų, ypač buvusių kuršių pajūryje, ekonomika XI–XII a. didesne ar mažesne dalimi priklausė ir nuo galimybės įgyti turto plėšikaujant. Agresyvi kuršių vikingų veikla galėjo būti reto gyvenviečių tinklo XII a. prūsų pajūryje priežastis.

Dėl kuršių ir estų piratų grėsmės tradiciniu jūrų keliu palei prūsų, kuršių ir lyvių pakrantes XI–XIII a. pirmojoje pusėje pirkliai keliaudavo tik keliais laivais, o dažniausiai pasirinkdavo saugesnį kelią – palei rytinius Švedijos krantus ir Suomijos vandenimis.

Nuo XIII a. Livonijos ir Vokiečių ordinams kariaujant su prūsais ir kuršiais, karas vyko ir vandenyje. Kuršių laivų flotilės 1210 m. puolė Rygą, sembų 1257 m. – Klaipėdą. Lietuviai Kuršių mariose XV a. žudė ir grobė Ordino žvejus.

Karai, maištai, stichinės nelaimės sukdavo prielaidas organizuotam kaperiavimui ir piratiniams išpuoliams. XIV–XV a. riboje masinis piratavimas Baltijos jūroje turėjo atgarsių ir Klaipėdoje (1402 m.). XV–XVI a. pradžioje Vokiečių ordinui įsivėlus į karus, Klaipėdai tekdavo atremti piratiškus antpuolius (1457, 1460, 1520 m.). Neretai piratavimą ir kaperiavimą organizuodavo ir Klaipėdos pareigūnai (1466, 1467, 1520 m.). 1523–1525 m. Klaipėdos komtūras Erichas von Braunschweigas veikė išvien su pagarsėjusiu jūrų piratu iš Gotlando Sörenu Norby. Švedai ir liubekiečiai dėl to ruošėsi pulti Klaipėdą ir Sembą. XVI a. pradžioje Baltijos jūroje siautėję piratai sudarė rimtas kliūtis pajūrio valstybių prekybai, taip pat ir Lietuvos.

Lietuvos pajūriu po 1422 m. buvo pavojinga keliauti į Klaipėdą ir krantu, ir jūra. Plėšti audros metu sekluose įstrigusius laivus buvo įprasta. Palangos kuršiai laivus jūroje puldinėjo dar ir XVIII a. (1748 m.).

Rašytinių žinių apie piratų teismus ir bausmes nėra, tačiau Palangos apylinkėse, Birutės ir Naglio reliktinėse kopose, nešventintose kapinėse rasta neįprastų XVI–XVIII a. jaunų vyrų kapų, kurie galėtų būti siejami su žmonėmis, mirusiais smurtine mirtimi. Galbūt tai kapai pakrančių piratų aukų ar net piratų (griaučiai be karstų, įmesti žemyn galva, jauno vyro griaučiai be galvos).

## III

FROM  
ANCIENT  
SETTLEMENTS  
AND PIRACY  
TO TOWNS