

THE SOCIOCULTURAL ORIGIN OF LITHUANIAN BORDERS PROTECTION

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Abstract. *The article examines the sociocultural measures of Lithuanian territory and border protection. The name "Lithuania" encompasses the process of Lithuanian ethnogenesis and state formation. In this process, sociocultural measures of protecting one's own territory were formed and the very concept of borders evolved. The study is based on A. Maslow's statement that security is one of the most important existential needs of a person. It can be satisfied only by other people, and only from the outside. This means people's dependence on the environment. It is in the activity of environmental control that the sociocultural experience of protecting one's own territory is accumulated, which is transformed into knowledge and passed on to the younger generation. The principles of Lithuanian state border protection were formed in the long process of Baltic and Lithuanian ethnogenesis. Archaeological, linguistic, anthropological and other historical sources provide information, the analysis of which reveals the means of protecting their territory and things used by Lithuanian and other Baltic tribes. These could have been markers (dashes, notches) and signs placed on objects of natural and artificial origin; mounds and their communication systems; voids separating tribal territories (inter-tribal wastelands); agreements between tribal leaders regarding the boundaries of the territory. These territorial protection measures were characteristic of the period of Baltic and Lithuanian tribes' ethnogenesis, as their territories were invaded by foreigners. The state adopted and later modified the listed territorial and border protection measures. Before the formation of the state, there were no people specially trained to protect their own territory. Their need arises when other states are formed or exist on the state border, whose hostile intentions need to be noticed in advance and their own people need to be notified of the threats in time. Therefore, the sociocultural elements of state border protection should include border wastelands; scout and guard villages; border rivers and other water bodies; probable enemy movement routes; oral and written border agreements of warlords; mobile border protection units. The study is based on the methods of document analysis and historical comparative analysis. The conclusions of the study are presented at the end of the article.*

Keywords: *tribe, ethnogenesis, territory, mound, castle, state, wasteland, scouts, guards.*

Introduction

Modern state border protection is the military, technical and technological protection of a transboundary line, legalized in accordance with international law and a treaty between neighboring countries and marked with appropriate distinctive signs, which is now carried out by specialists trained for this purpose. When examining the state of state border protection and modeling the possibilities of its improvement, the possibilities provided by technical means and smart technologies are increasingly being relied on. It is very likely that in the near future the protection of state borders from malicious foreign neighbors and other aliens will be entrusted to artificial intelligence. This means that the dominance of AI will condition the formation of a new concept of borders and will limit our understanding of the origins of the protection of one's own territory and state borders and the practice of its formation. We rarely remember that the concept of a border evolved from an intertribal wilderness (Čelkis, 2014, pp. 42-46) to a modern linear border. The formation of such a situation actualizes research into sociocultural measures for the protection of a state's border.

The need for territorial protection is inherent in any community. Part of its daily activities may be aimed at controlling its environment from the invasion of strangers. The activity of controlling one's own territory is formed in the process of natural and cultural selection of human groups, in which the basic existential needs of a person must be satisfied. In this process, the need for security is of particular importance, which can be satisfied only by other people, and only from the outside. This means that people are significantly dependent on the environment (Maslow, 2011, pp. 103-104). In the activity of environmental control, the sociocultural experience of protecting one's own territory is accumulated, which is transformed into knowledge and transmitted to the younger generation.

The tribe is the primary human community that is formed in the process of survival of human groups. In the process of interaction of natural and cultural selection, groups of people absorb the resources of the natural environment, which provide them with opportunities for survival and reproduction. In the processes of organizing joint activities and becoming aware of the norm of prohibiting incest, a new social reality is formed (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, pp. 67-230) - a community with its own territory, common economy, language, self-awareness and culture, e.g., customary law (Berman, 1983, pp. 78-92). The prohibition of incest necessitates the cooperation of tribal families with other tribes and their communities. Therefore, the institution of marriage has become one of the most important mechanisms for establishing communication and cooperation ties between different communities, which leads to the convergence of language and customs.

However, inter-tribal and later inter-state relations can also pose threats to human security. Therefore, socio-cultural measures and their systems for protecting the territory of a tribe and its state from enemies inevitably form. These could be markers (dashes, notches, ornaments) and signs placed on objects of natural and artificial origin (Gudavičius, 1980); mounds and their communication systems (Girdauskas, 2023); voids separating tribal territories (called inter-tribal wastelands); agreements between tribal leaders and village elders regarding territorial boundaries; sound signals in case of danger. Information about these measures is provided by archaeological, linguistic, anthropological and other historical sources.

The object of the research is the historical facts of the protection of the territory formed in the processes of the ethnogenesis of the Lithuanian tribe and the genesis of the Lithuanian state, and their research data documents. **The aim of the research** is to reveal the sociocultural origins of the protection of the territory of the Lithuanian tribe and the borders of the Lithuanian state. **Research methods:** the research is based on the methods of document analysis and historical comparative research.

The relevance of territorial protection and measures in the processes of Lithuanian ethnogenesis

Lithuanians are a Balt tribe, located in the middle between the Western and Eastern Balts. The Balts are a group of Indo-European tribes and peoples, who in the past spoke and now speak related languages or dialects. Their ethnogenesis was determined by the arrival of Indo-European tribes to the Baltic Sea in the 3rd – 2nd millennium BC. and mixing with the old inhabitants. We learn the first information about the Balts from the work of the Roman historian Tacitus “Germania”, in which the Balts are called by the name of the Aisti. He described the life of the Aisti as follows: their weapons are dominated by wooden clubs, they are not interested in Roman money, but they are good farmers. This information was somewhat late, because the rapidly growing Balt agriculture led to the emergence of a relatively abundant metal inventory already at the turn of the 1st – 2nd centuries. The dead began to be buried with

numerous tools, weapons and jewelry, money began to spread in the lands of the Western Baltic, and their treasures soon appeared (Gudavičius, 1999, p. 21).

From the middle of the 1st century AD, the accumulation of silver treasures was widespread. Their ownership was sought to be protected by marking them with appropriate notches on silver spirals and the so-called long ones. Marks are found not only on treasures, but also in later times on various peasant objects, such as spindles and other things, and weathervanes (Gudavičius, 1980, pp. 19-68, 82-83). Thus, a similarity can be traced between the treasures found and the marks common in later centuries. This allows us to state that the marks were formed deep in the past and performed the function of marking important property. They were widespread among the Baltic tribes.

The Baltic tribes were formed surrounded by other tribes and cultures. They experienced their inevitable impact but managed to form their own identity. Ethnogenesis is the process of the formation of an ethnic community, in which foreign groups are assimilated and lose their ethnic specificity or change and partially remain as part of a new ethnic formation. This is a complex and not always peaceful process in which the convergence of different communities takes place. Two types of ethnogenesis are distinguished. The first includes prehistory. In this case, ethnogenesis is considered complete when the ethnic community acquires a distinctive language, culture, ethnonym and ethnic self-consciousness that persists for many centuries, and a permanently inhabited territory. The second type of ethnogenesis includes ethnodynamic processes of modern times, when a new ethnic community is formed from representatives of already existing peoples - diaspora, emigrants who supplement the territory, and over time they mix with the autochthonous population (Etnogenezė, VLE).

Complex studies by archaeologists, linguists, anthropologists, and historians have revealed that from the 6th to the 10th century, the customary order of all the peoples of northern and western Europe was almost independent of each other, but similar. On the one hand, the basic legal unit of the tribe was the extended family, a community of friends and confidants, based partly on kinship ties and partly on an oath of mutual defense and service. If a stranger disturbed the peace of the family, he was threatened with blood feud, or negotiations took place between extended families or clans, the purpose of which was to forestall blood feud or find some kind of compromise. On the other hand, there were territorial legal units, usually consisting of extended families united into villages; villages were united into larger units, often called on hundreds or districts, and hundreds and districts united into very loosely organized duchies or kingdoms. In local territorial communities, the most valuable tool of power and law was the public assembly of extended family elders (Berman, 1983, p.78-79).

Ethnogenesis of the Baltic tribes. Indo-Europeans were people of the Corded Ceramics and the ship-shaped battle-axe culture, warlike livestock breeders and partly farmers. Language data show that they had already domesticated cows, sheep, goats, horses, and dogs, were engaged in beekeeping, and knew how to grow wheat and barley. They came from the south and southwest of Europe to the territory where peaceful previous inhabitants lived sedentary lives, creating the Nemunas and Narva cultures. It is believed that there were at least two waves of people of the Corded Ceramics culture. More Indo-European people came to the lower Nemunas and the Seaside during the second wave of migration - at the end of the third millennium BC and the beginning of the second millennium BC. They mixed with the old inhabitants and overshadowed them linguistically, as Indo-European dialects took hold (Kiaupa et al., 1995, pp. 22-23; Gudavičius, 1999, p. 17).

The interaction between the Alien's culture and the Nemunas culture gave rise to the Pamaris (by the Sea) culture, for which agriculture was the most important aspect. The people of the Pamaris culture grew wheat, barley, and kept domestic animals. The Nemunas culture

seemed to dissolve into the Pamaris culture. The most notable settlements studied from this period are in Western Lithuania (Nida, Šventoji, Šarnelė and the Biržulis Lake basin) and in the lower reaches of Šešupė. There were fewer aliens in Eastern Lithuania, so their influence was much less. In this territory, the late variant of the Narva culture continued to form under the influence of the old inhabitants (Kiaupa et al., 1995, pp. 22-23). It is important to emphasize that the Baltic tribes formed in the basins of large rivers and lakes, where the old inhabitants already lived. The migration of aliens could only take place via rivers because the territory was covered with forests.

The Pamaris and Narva cultures are the initial sign of the distinction between the Western and Eastern Balts, which became even more pronounced in later centuries. For example, at the end of the Bronze Age and the early Iron Age (the first half of the first millennium BC), mounds characteristic of the Balts was established in Eastern Lithuania, Latvia, and Belarus (Baltai, VLE). In the Early Iron Age, the Western and Eastern Balt ethnoses were finally formed in the Pamaris culture area. They are associated with the archaeological cultures of barrows (Western Balts) and mounds (fortified settlements), respectively. In the first centuries AD, the Western Balts established contacts with the provinces of the Roman Empire (Gudavičius, 1999, p. 20).

The emerging Baltic tribes linked the protection of their territory with mounds. Their era began around 1500 BC. Mounds are called hills, on which settlements and later castles were fortified. The slopes of these hills reach as high as thirty meters and are distinguished from others by artificial relief formations that had a defensive purpose. The development of mounds went through several stages: at first, they were fortified settlements (around 1500 BC), later - around 500 AD - they became hiding places where people from the settlements at the foothills took refuge in case of danger. From 1000 AD, mounds-hiding places gradually began to be inhabited again, castles were built - wooden residences of early princes. The late mounds were the largest and best fortified until the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, when the mound era ended. There were about 1,000 hillforts in the territory of Lithuania, and about eight hundred have survived to this day (Bumblauskas, 2005, pp. 30-31).

The Baltic mounds differed from other European mounds in their smaller size and number. European Iron Age mounds were transformed into gigantic fortifications that could occupy hundreds and even thousands of hectares. The Baltic mounds were small and densely distributed in the surrounding areas. In Lithuania, one mound covers 75 km² of Lithuanian territory, and in some places one mound is less than 1 kilometer away from another (Vitkūnas, Zabiela, 2017, p. 11).

The density of the mounds suggests that the tribal communities were small and felt insecure. Since there was a constant threat of attack, a place to hide or defend themselves had to be nearby. In addition, the short distance allowed for effective signaling to nearby neighbors about the danger. The entire mound system consisted of - a) defensive mounds and fortified settlements, b) mounds with built-in fireplaces for transmitting signals, c) mounds with recesses for storing food and livestock, d) mounds for religious ceremonies and sacrifices (Girdauskas, 2023, p. 217).

In the Old Iron Age (1st-4th centuries AD), people abandoned part of the early mounds, some of them were used more as hiding places. Other mounds were gradually rebuilt and became castles. The fortifications of the mounds increased from the 3rd and 4th centuries: defensive earthen ramparts reached a height of 1.5-2.5 meters, and a ditch was dug in front of them. At some mounds there were 2 or even 3 such ramparts, separated by ditches. On the edges of the mound sites stood long, columnar buildings, which were divided into many farm and residential premises with open fireplaces inside. Some of the mounds may have been cult sites, where circular temple buildings stood (Kiaupa et al., 1995, p. 33).

The cultural situation in the Baltic lands began to change in the Middle Iron Age (5th-8th centuries). This was determined not only by internal but also by external reasons. In the 5th century, after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, nomadic tribes roamed across Europe, old agricultural and trade centers collapsed and new ones arose, and some of the usual trade relations were interrupted. Individual groups of Goths, Huns, and other nomads raged in Europe and reached the western Baltic lands. This is confirmed by archaeological research in the lower Nemunas region. External migratory pressure triggered internal migration: a large wave of population movement from the southeast to the north and west arose in the Baltic lands. (Kiaupa et al., 1995, pp. 33-35).

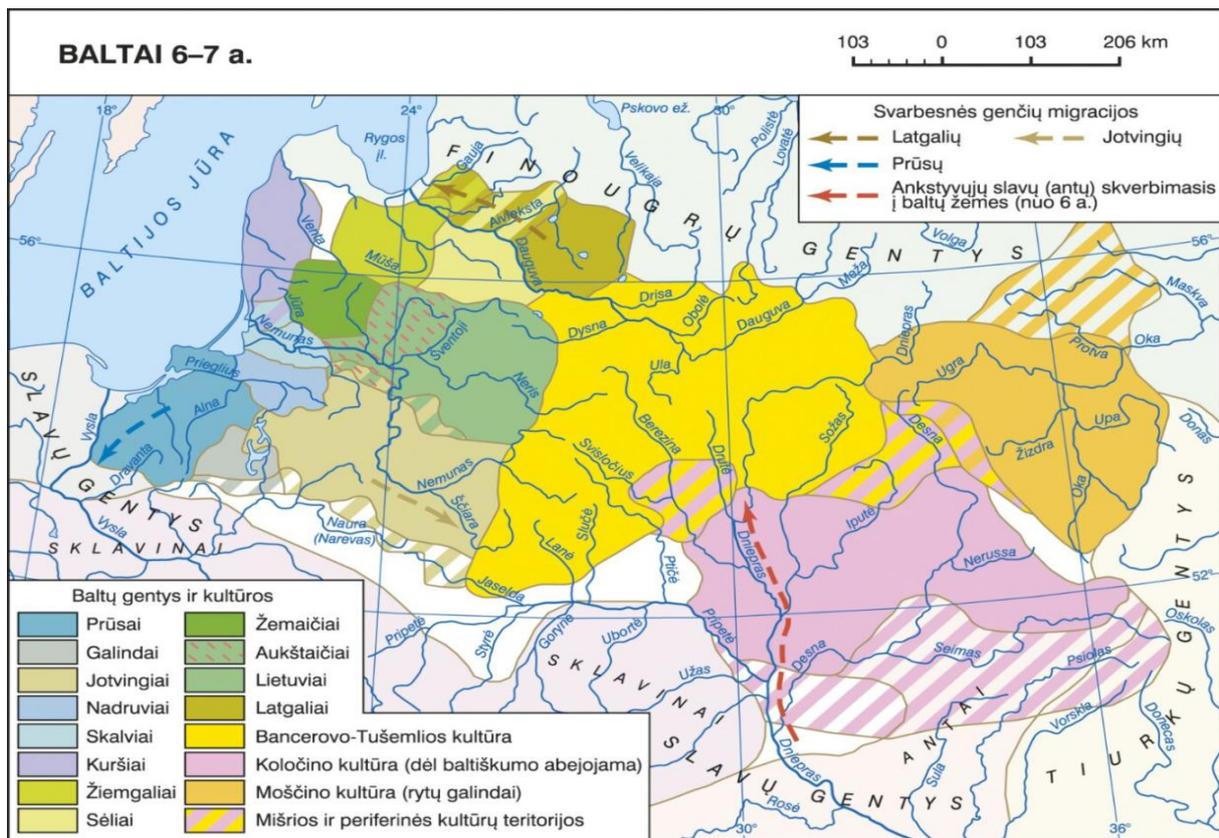


Figure 1. Petras Gaučas, Aleksiejus Luchtanas (Baltai, VLE).

Internal migration is illustrated by the map in Fig. 1. In the 6th-7th centuries, the Baltic tribes consisted of the Prussians, Galinds, Jotvingians, Nadruvians, Skalvians, Curonians, Semigallians, Seljuks, Samogitians, Aukštaitians, Lithuanians, and Latgalians. Thus, during this period, other related Baltic tribes already existed, whose presence around the Lithuanian tribe guaranteed the relative security of its territory.

Lithuanian ethnogenesis. In the middle of the 1st millennium, the Eastern Balts, who are associated with the Striped pottery culture, began to invade present-day Central and later Western Lithuania. They assimilated the local population and expanded the territory of the Lithuanian tribe. Although written sources describe the territorial structure of the Lithuanian ethnos only in the 13th century, they can be used to understand how this ethnos spread from the middle of the 1st millennium. The cradle of the Lithuanian tribe should be recognized as the land of Lithuania in the narrow sense. This is the territory between the middle reaches of the

Nemunas, the Neris and the Merkys rivers. Over time, it expanded: a) to the south to the upper reaches of the Nemunas, assimilating the Yotvingians; b) to the north, covering the right bank of the Neris to its confluence with the Šventoji River and the land of Deltuva; c) to the northeast, covering the land of Nalšia. Quite early, the Lithuanians mastered the area around present-day Kaunas. From this area, the Lithuanians spread north and west. The northern flow reached the borders of the Semigallian lands. The largest territorial formation here was the Upytė lands – the area around Panevėžys. In this way, the Lithuanians came to the lands of the Sėlius and surrounded them from the west, south and east. The western flow from the Kaunas area reached the area inhabited by the present-day Southern Samogitians. After assimilating the Curonians or the western Balts close to them, the Lithuanian Samogitian ethnos was formed here (Gudavičius, 1999, p. 23).

From the process of unification of the Lithuanian tribe, only the names of larger lands have come down to us. However, their boundaries were not clear, because there were smaller lands inside them. In addition, the 13th century sources in Lithuania mention a new type of territorial units, the boundaries of which did not always coincide with the boundaries of tribal lands. The boundaries of lands were not precisely drawn, because uninhabited territories still existed between the lands. They existed, most likely, for two reasons: 1) due to natural conditions: large swamps, vast forests with little suitable soil for farmers to settle; 2) due to tribal differences. For example, in the well-studied western part of present-day Lithuania, it has been revealed that the settlements of Curonians and Samogitians almost connect in some places, while in others there is a large gap between them. There were also uninhabited areas among the Curonians themselves. But with the expansion of agriculture and animal husbandry, demographic crises were avoided (Kiaupa et al., 1995, p. 62).

The expanded territory of the Lithuanian tribe provided greater security for its internal inhabitants. As a result, the population increased, more perfect iron tools were created from the metallurgy of the puddle's water ore, and animal power was used more widely. The horse-drawn plow and hoe allowed the cultivation of land that could provide a small farm with grain. This, in turn, allowed the use of adjacent meadows for summer grazing and haymaking. The farmer could maintain the necessary number of horses, cows and smaller animals, and the time balance required for this work allowed the construction and repair of necessary buildings. People began to settle closer to the fields they worked. New local communities, based not on kinship but on place of residence, and territorial communities were formed (Gudavičius, 1999, p. 33-34).

Therefore, it was necessary for communities to demarcate their territory from others. Farmers used markers and signs to mark the boundaries of their territory. This sociocultural tradition was likely formed in the process of ethnogenesis and was passed on to younger generations. This was later confirmed by the descriptions of land boundaries of the 16th century and the First Statute of Lithuania (1529). An analysis of the descriptions of land boundaries reveals that at that time various methods of marking them were widespread in Lithuania. First of all, land boundary marks were several furrows of deeply plowed land, which denote the boundary of cultivated fields or meadows. In some places, such a land boundary mark was made a long time ago, much so that it is even said “since ages”. In forests and thickets, trees and stumps were used to mark boundaries, by carving markers into them. In the field, where there were no trees or stumps, mounds were made that highlighted the marks. Piles of stones were piled up, especially to mark boundaries in water (or near water). They carved signs and symbols not only in trees, but also in larger stones, especially in thickets (Gudavičius, 1982, p. 91-92).

This sociocultural practice of using signs and symbols was legalized by the First Statute of Lithuania. In its eighth chapter “On land cases, on boundaries and <...>”, the first section states: “<...> if those who <...> have estates and people, and lands, hunting grounds, forests,

lakes, <...>, defined by boundaries, <...> , and having crossed the boundary, or, <...> disregarding it, wish to enter another's land, or people, lands, <...>, forests, lakes and meadows, <...> to deprive him of it, in order to expel him from that estate, then both parties must present eighteen witnesses before the court; <...>.

The fourth section deals with the proof of boundaries: "if any judge or court official is sent to the boundaries, then that judge or official shall be obliged to allow the proof of boundaries to that party who will show better and more important documents and writings, signs or a mound of earth, or also the boundaries. <...> (First Lithuanian Statute, 2001, pp. 208, 210).

The ninth section "About the bordering forest and clearings" of the eighth chapter of the First Statute of Lithuania is very important. Its analysis allows us to state that in the ethnogenesis of the Lithuanians, a custom was formed to share forests between individual tribes and communities. The forest was an essential source of food and security. Clearings marked the boundaries of tribes, communities, and families. "Sacred groves" were formed in some forests, which could be intended not only for cult purposes, but also to perform the function of intertribal wastelands (uninhabited voids).

During the period of Lithuanian ethnogenesis, people lived in villages or growing towns near the hillforts. Hillforts were fortresses intended for the defense of the surrounding area. Their cultural layer is poor. This shows that they were not inhabited, but enough finds have been found to determine the chronology (Gimbutienė, 1985, p. 116). This means that most Lithuanian hillforts were used only as temporary shelters in times of danger. In some of the Lithuanian hillforts studied, there are no or very few finds from the 5th-9th centuries. Only the remains of various fortifications are found. In some hillforts, temples were built in the middle of the 1st millennium, while in others such a temple occupies only part of the inhabited hillfort. Therefore, it is believed that more and more residents lived in settlements located at the foot of the hillforts. The number of settlements located further from the hillfort, which archaeologists call open-type (unfortified) settlements, increased. Also, in the 5th-8th centuries, new, well-fortified mounds were built in Lithuania, which archaeologists call miniature ones. It is believed that they contained small castles, where families distinguished by wealth and position lived. The same process is observed in funerary monuments: from the 5th-6th centuries the number of very rich tombs has increased (Kiaupa et al., 1995, pp. 42-43).

From the material collected from the studied mounds, it can be concluded that fortresses were built in strategic locations – usually at the confluence of rivers on hills or capes. Such places were surrounded on three sides by rivers or dams. A rampart and ditch protected them from the landward side. A rampart was built around a hill that was not blocked by natural obstacles. Some larger mounds had forts on terraces; they were also protected by ramparts and ditches. 3-4-meter wooden defensive walls were built on top of the ramparts. Thus, the fortress wall was often no lower than 20 meters from the bottom of the ditch. The castle defenders fought the enemy from the castle walls. Great efforts were needed to overcome such a height (Gimbutienė, 1985, p. 125).

In the late Iron Age, the environment of the Baltic tribes changed fundamentally, because from the 8th century to the middle of the 11th century, all European tribes, especially those living by the sea, were terrified by the Scandinavian inhabitants, called Vikings and Normans. The richest Prussian land – Semba – was often attacked, and less often – the Curonians. The Curonians and Prussians did not remain "in debt": they reached the Scandinavian coasts by ship, not only plundered them, but also traded with them. They bought weapons – swords, battle axes and spears – from Scandinavia. In the Baltic lands, for example, in Semba, near Trus (near Elbląg, present-day Poland), in the Curonian lands, the Vikings had established their military-

commercial colonies (Kiaupa et al., 1995, pp. 44-45). However, they did not penetrate deeper into the territory of the Lithuanian tribe.

Reasons for the Creation of the Lithuanian State

Political and military processes outside Lithuania. As the Viking attacks weakened, the territory of the Lithuanian tribe was threatened from the east, and later from the south. In the 9th century, the feudal state of Old Rus was formed, whose princes tried to expand their possessions in the lands inhabited by the Balts. Russian chronicles mention more than one such campaign into the lands of the Lithuanian and Jotvingian tribes. After the Old Rus state disintegrated and weakened, from the second half of the 12th century, the Lithuanians themselves began to attack the lands of Old Rus. In the 10th century, the Polish state was formed, which also often attacked its northern neighbors - the Prussians and Jotvingians. Attacks became more frequent and more organized after the baptism of Poland in 966. Missionaries began to be sent to Prussia (Kiaupa et al., 1995, p. 46).

The sending of missionaries performed several functions – baptism and reconnaissance. The first mission arrived in Lithuania in 1009. The Quedlinburg Annals described the event that in 1009, on the Old Rus -Lithuania border, pagans killed Saint Bruno (Boniface) and 18 of his relatives after the pagan “king” Netimeras and his tribesmen were baptized. This was the first mention of Lithuania and the baptism of the previously unknown Netimeras. It is also important that our neighbors knew that Lithuania had a “king” Netimeras. This may mean that the initial formation of Lithuanian statehood was already underway. According to current understanding, Netimeras could have been the leader of a small territory of a Lithuanian tribe, but not a king or a prince. (Bumblauskas, 2005, p. 16-20).

Missionary sending turned into German colonization of neighboring lands at the end of the 12th century. At first, they colonized the Slavic lands of the Elbe and Oder. The German merchant fleet gained a foothold in the Baltic Sea, which opened up new opportunities for colonizing the eastern coast of the Baltic. These developments coincided with the beginning of the period of papal power and the intensification of missionary sending. At the mouth of the Daugava, German monks established a mission diocese in 1186. They called the German colony established in the Livonian land Livonia. The third Livonian bishop Albert (1199-1229) built Riga Castle in 1201 and moved the bishop's residence there. In 1202, he founded the Order of the Knights of the Sword. Livonian became the main political and military force that carried out the Crusades and colonization (Gudavičius, 1999, p. 38-39).

The Order of the Sword conquered the Livonians and Latvians around 1210, the Estonians around 1220, and the Curonians around 1230. It finally became a state. At the same time, the Teutonic Order, or German Order, was established on the southern edge of the Baltic lands near the Vistula in 1230. The Teutonic Order began its military expansion into Prussian lands in 1231 and finally conquered the Prussians, Nadruvians, and Skalvians in 1283. A desperate struggle between Lithuania and the Teutonic Order began, until it was stopped by the Polish and Lithuanian armies at the Battle of Grunwald in 1410 (Bumblauskas, 2005, p. 46).

Thus, the political and military processes taking place around the Lithuanian lands inevitably posed threats of long-term military invasion, which had to be resisted. Lithuanian troops invaded Livonia many times and reached Estonian lands. But this did not stop the establishment of the Swordsmen in Latvian and Estonian lands. Lithuanians helped the Curonians and Semigallians. In response to the Lithuanian attacks, Livonia also organized campaigns into Lithuanian lands. Lithuanians had to help the Jotvingians and Prussians resist

the attacks of the Poles and later the Teutonic Order. But the Prussian tribes did not hold up against the Teutonic Order and there were no obstacles left for it to advance into Lithuania.

Internal reasons for Lithuanian unification. Lithuanian troops, led by dukes, went on military campaigns, which, in case of success, guaranteed the opportunity to steal a lot of wealth and drive home captives. Therefore, several dukes joined larger military campaigns, from which senior military commanders emerged, who concluded peace and truce treaties. The dukes were landowners, owned villages with residents, had accumulated great wealth, and gathered around them the so-called good people, who could soon become nobles. The so-called good people - future nobles - formed the core of the army and were based in the duke's castle. The duke's possessions consisted of his castle and domain; villages and homesteads of future nobles; free farmers who were connected to the duke through a system of obligations; artisans and merchants, who settled at the castle. Internecine battles, kinship ties, or the success of campaigns raised senior princes who were able to unite some of the princes to achieve some goal (Kiaupa et al., 1995, pp. 60-62).

The unification of the princes of the Lithuanian lands was conditioned by the interaction of external and internal factors. In the context of external threats, rapid property differentiation took place within the Lithuanian tribe and wealthy families gained power. According to E. Gudavičius, the formation of Lithuanian statehood became evident at the end of the 12th century - the beginning of the 13th century, because wealthy families, from whom a prince could come, gained power in many Lithuanian lands. Wealthy relatives with real power and considerable property resources competed with each other. Unions of individual princes were formed, strengthened by marriage ties. At the end of the 12th century, one group of princes with two senior princes prevailed throughout Lithuania. Other princes obeyed them. A confederation of Lithuanian lands was formed, which began to expand its political influence into neighboring lands (Gudavičius, 1999, p. 35-36).

The need for the creation of a state was increased by the ongoing changes among its neighbors. The Lithuanian princes were interested in the lands of Old Rus, because its power was weakening due to the Tatar-Mongol invasion. However, in order to take possession of them, a permanent and strong, unified government was needed. They sought to penetrate the lands of their relatives - the Baltic tribes, up to the left bank of the Daugava, but they were stopped by Livonia. During the military campaigns to Livonia in 1213 and 1214, the first senior princes of the Lithuanian Land Confederation died. This loss stopped the campaigns of the Lithuanian princes to Livonia for several years and prompted them to conclude a peace treaty in 1219 (Kiaupa et al., 1995, p. 64).

In 1219, the Lithuanian-Volhynian Peace Treaty was concluded between the envoys of the princes of Lithuania, Deltuva, Samogitia and other Lithuanian lands and Romanova, the widow of the Grand Duke of Galicia-Volhynia, Roman Mstislavich, and her sons. According to the Hypatia Chronicle, the treaty was concluded by envoys of 21 Lithuanian princes. Of these, 5 were the highest princes - Živinbudas, Daujotas and his brother Viligaila, Dausprungas and his brother Mindaugas. The treaty was also concluded by the princes of individual lands - Erdvilas and Vykintas, the princes of Deltuva, as well as the princes of Bulaičiai and Ruškaičiai. The treaty was valid until approximately 1238. This is the first reliable historical fact that a confederation of Lithuanian lands existed at the beginning of the 13th century. The Confederation was able not only to defend itself, organize campaigns to neighboring countries, but also to develop diplomatic activities (Lietuvos-Voluinės sutartis, VLE).

Lithuanian unification into a state. Pope Gregory IX on February 19, 1236, declared a crusade against the Lithuanians in a bull. His legate William of Modena gathered an army of no less than 3,000 men in Livonia, led by the Master of the Order of the Swordsman, Folkvin.

In September, he invaded the Šiauliai land and, devastating it, marched towards the lands of the Duke of Laukuva, Vykintas. Vykintas was unexpectedly attacked, so the Order's army managed to ravage a large area of the Laukuva lands. The experienced Master of the Order, Folkvin, quickly turned back, hoping to successfully return to Livonian with the spoils of war. But during those days of devastating war, the Samogitians managed to gather enough forces and the Dukes of Šiauliai, Bulioniai, blocked the way for the Swordsman. Vykintas' forces arrived overnight. The Battle of Šiauliai (Saulė) took place in a swampy area near Šiauliai on the morning of September 22, in which Master Folkvin, 48 brothers of the Order, and 2,180 swordsmen were killed. The battle ended in a complete victory for the Samogitians (Gudavičius, 1999, pp. 44-45).

The Battle of Šiauliai (Saulė) changed the political situation in Livonian, as the Order of the Swordsmen was crushed and ceased to exist as a political force. However, in the context of the victory, the commanders of the Lithuanian troops did not become active, and the senior princes of Samogitia were not at all interested in the achieved success. Therefore, Lithuania was unable to use this victory to its advantage. All this allowed the remnants of the Order of the Swordsmen to quickly orient themselves and, through the mediation of Pope Gregory IX, in 1237 connect at the Teutonic Order. Thus, the events after the Battle of Šiauliai (Saulė) turned out to be completely unfavorable for Lithuania. The historical victory of Samogitia only accelerated the unification of the German Baltic colonies. In such circumstances, the final process of unification of Lithuania took place (Gudavičius, 1999, p. 45).

The great military victory of Lithuania turned into a great political defeat. After the Battle of Šiauliai (Saulė), the Orders of Teutonic and Livonian did not attack Lithuania for several decades. But their unification put pressure on the process of the formation of the Lithuanian state, so the external military quiet was useful. In the period 1248-1254, a fierce struggle broke out between Mindaugas and his nephew Tautvilas for the throne of the ruler of Lithuania. During this very difficult period, Mindaugas managed to be baptized (1251), overcome resistance militarily and reconcile with his enemies diplomatically. He received the crown of king from the Pope and was crowned the first king of the Lithuanian state in Vilnius on 6 July 1253. Therefore, Mindaugas' victory in creating the Lithuanian state was astonishing (Bumblauskas, 2005, p. 36).

Protection of the borders of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the war with the Teutonic Knights

The greatest and long-term threat to the existence of the newly formed Lithuanian state came from the west and north. The united Teutonic Knights sought to create a common state along the Baltic Sea. If successful, such a state could unite a large coastal area – the entire territory of Prussia and Livonian. These plans were hindered by Samogitia, located between Prussia and Livonian. Therefore, from 1283, the Teutonic Knights, under the pretext of defending Catholicism and fighting pagans, began to intensively attack Lithuania, seeking to establish themselves in the lower reaches of the Nemunas River and occupy Samogitia.

The strongholds of the Teutonic Order's intervention in Lithuania were: Georgenburg - a castle built by the Order in Samogitian lands, on the right bank of the Nemunas River (now Jurbarkas); Ragainė Castle - a castle built by the Order in Skalvių Land, on the left bank of the Nemunas River; Christmemel - a castle built by the Order in Samogitian lands, on the right bank of the Nemunas River at the mouth of the Talkotas Stream (near Skirsnemunė); Bajerburg - a castle built by the Order southwest of Veliuona, on the right bank of the Nemunas River; Marienburg - a 14th-century brick castle built by the Order on the right bank of the Nemunas

River or on a river island near Kaunas. Lithuanian defense centers were Veliuona, Kaunas, Punia, Gardinas. At the end of the 13th century - the beginning of the 14th century, both sides mainly carried out devastating attacks of local significance. The largest battles were the Battle of Medininkai (1320) and the Defense of Pilėnai (1336). The northern and western outskirts of Lithuania, devastated by the Teutonic and Livonian Orders, partially turned into a wasteland. (Teutonic Order, VLE).

Wasteland of border. This is a strip of sparsely populated or completely uninhabited lands formed in the 14th-15th centuries due to the raids of the Teutonic and Livonian Orders in Lithuania Minor, Suvalkija (Užnemunė), in the west and north of Samogitia, and in the north of Aukštaitija. This strip separated the more densely populated and castle-protected areas of Lithuania from Prussia and Livonia. The same strip formed on the border of the Teutonic Order and Livonian lands with Lithuania. The width of the wasteland in Samogitia reached 60 km, in Suvalkija (Užnemunė) - 150 kilometers. They included the former lands of the Sūduvians, Nadruvians, Skalvians, part of the Curonians, Karšuvians, Samogitians, Semigallians, and Sėlius (Dykra, VLE).

The wastelands that formed during the long-term war between the Teutonic Order and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were completely different from inter-tribal wastelands. Therefore, in a 1322 letter to Pope John XXII, the Grand Duke Gediminas of the Grand Duchy complained about the behavior of the Teutonic Order: "They turn lands into wastelands, as can be seen in Zemgale and many other [regions]. However, they explain that they do this to protect Christians" (Gedimino laiškai, 2023, p. 22).

In such wildernesses, people's life possibilities were very complicated due to the threats and isolation brought by war. Therefore, some researchers emphasize the complete emptiness of this zone, while other authors doubt it. The latter claim that the wildernesses were inhabited, but there were very few people, and they sought to avoid being seen by military units. For example, Tomas Čelkis (Čelkis, 2014) relies on the experience of intertribal wildernesses, which were previously known.

Both warring sides were had to place scouts and forest guards in the wilderness. This is determined by the logic of war. The purpose of the scouts was to collect information about the enemy's actions: for example, the construction of castles and other military fortifications, and movement routes. Forest guards had to monitor and control illegal activities in the forest and extinguish fires. Vitas Girdauskas rightly states that an equally important aspect that determined the defense capabilities of medieval tribes was knowledge of the territory, information transmission and feedback, as well as geographical conditions, seasonality and weather. The content of the activities of the security communication service consisted of reports from guards and scouts, security assurance actions - observation, reconnaissance, transmission of messages while moving on foot, on horseback, using birds, such as pigeons. An important part of the security communication system was a set of conventional signs transmitted by gestures, fire or smoke from bonfires, left on the most important roads or at fords (Girdauskas, 2023, pp. 219-220).

Tomas Baranauskas provides historical facts that both Lithuania and the Order tried to enter the wilderness and set up their own strongholds there. Both warring sides tried to build their castles or at least hunting estates there, to draw their own zones of influence there. For example, in Skalva, the Teutonic Order built Ragainė Castle as early as 1289, which became the center of the comturia. From here, deeper into the wilderness along the Nemunas, they built a whole group of castles: in 1293, they built Šalauerburg Castle, in 1360 – Spitrė and Kaustrytė Castles, in 1404 – Tilžė Castle. In Nadruva, the Order built Įsrutis (Insterburg) Castle, which was the center of the comturia for 10 years; Tamava Castle was built as its cover; around 1350,

Georgenburg (Jurbarkas) Castle was built nearby, which was soon transferred to the Bishop of Semba. These examples show that the emptying of the Nadruva and especially the Skalva was not complete. Lithuania also penetrated the wilderness on its part. For example, in 1375, the expedition of the Įsrutis commander Vygand von Baldersheim “to plunder in the wilderness” is mentioned, during which he came across the people of the nobleman Vaidila hunting near Dovydiškiai; in 1380, in the same Dovydiškiai (or Daudiškiai) field, Jogaila, during a hunt, with the participation of the same Vaidila, concluded a separate treaty with the Teutonic Knights (Baranauskas, 2023, 246).

The Crusader routes and their observation. Both warring sides were in a state of prolonged war. Therefore, they sought to avoid unexpected enemy attacks and prepare descriptions of the routes of movement into enemy territory. They could only travel along scouted routes. In 1863, Teodoras Hirsch published “Die littauischen Wegeberichte” – reports of the Crusader scouts about the routes leading to Samogitia and Lithuania, about the possibilities for the Crusader army to operate in those lands, authentic materials about various aspects of Lithuanian life in the 14th century – a description of society and politics (Biržiška, 1930, p. 1).

Edvardas Gudavičius specified that the Lithauische Wegeberichte are a collection of reports from the Teutonic Order's scouts (mostly Prussians) of the late 14th and early 15th centuries. *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum* (volume 2 1863; reprint 1965) was printed. The aim was to indicate more convenient attack routes for the Teutonic Order. The greater part of Užnemunė and Dzūkija, the southern borders of Samogitia and Aukštaitija, and further areas were described, and roads, fords, rivers, swamps, forests, ramparts, castles, gardens, courtyards of the Grand Duke and nobles, and settlements abandoned due to wars were indicated. Although many geographical objects are indicated rather inaccurately and are now difficult to identify, this collection is an important historical source for studying the historical geography, social and economic relations of medieval Lithuania (Gudavičius, *Lithauische Wegeberichte*, VLE).

According to Vaclovas Biržiška, Hirsch submitted separate reports to various parts of Lithuania. Reports “W. 1-18, 20–29, and 51” provide information about the road to Švėkšna; reports “W. 19 and 52” not only describe the road to the Kražiai region, but also provide information about the roads to the Dubysa – Nevėžys – Neris region; reports “W. 30-50” cover the roads to the Kaunas region, between Dubysa and Neris; finally, reports “W. 51-100” provide information about the roads to the Suwalki, Vilnius, and Grodno regions (Biržiška, 1930, p. 2).

In the article “Teutonic Knights’ Roads to Lithuania in the 14th Century,” Vaclovas Biržiška translated descriptions of the Teutonic Knights’ roads to Samogitia from “Die littauischen Wegeberichte” into Lithuanian. He also provided comments on reports on the roads to the Varniai-Kražiai-Viduklė district and a map “Teutonic Knights’ Roads to Samogitia in the 14th Century.” In the appendix to this article, Biržiška provided the original texts of the reports “W.1-18, 20-29, 51.” He distinguished the following roads to Samogitia: 1) the road through Švėkšna; 2) the road through Vainuta; 3) the road through Draudėnai; 4) the road through Greižėnai-Ringiai; 5) the Santakos road; 6) the Šaltona road (Biržiška, 1930, pp. 2-63).

On the one hand, the Teutonic Knights' roads through the wasteland of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were known and the enemy's movements were monitored. But on the other hand, there were many roads and their distances were long, so the enemy's movements could not be monitored by just a few scouts and guards. Therefore, scout and guard villages, called fields, had to be established near the most important roads. A field is a community, a group of homesteads with cultivated fields, where 20-40 or more families could live (Čelkis, 2014, pp. 62-63).

For example, on the wasteland of the Sūduva moor was the already mentioned Dovydiškės field. Tells more about him in the description of the 1384 Teutonic Knights' road from Insterburg (Įsručius) to Darsūniškės (W. 54), which mentions Daudiškės (Dawdisken) between the Liepona and Rausvė rivers. According to the distances indicated in the description, T. Baranauskas localizes this area approximately around Paežeriai and Vilkaviškis. He refuted T. Hirsch, who identifies Dovydiškės with Šiaudiniškiai (Vilkaviškės district). The location of Šiaudiniškiai does not correspond to the distances between the Liepona and Rausvė rivers (Baranauskas, 2023, p. 247). We will give next example from the former wasteland on the fringe of Samogitia. "In our time," writes V. Biržiška, "in the triangle between the Graumėna, Šolpias and Judra [rivers] there is the village of Bareikiai, whose location almost completely corresponds to the W. 1-3 roads. The area of these Bareikiai in older times could have been much larger and reached as far as the Švėkšna-Kvėdarna road. <...> These Bareikiai have been known for a long time. [Reference: Sprogis "Geograf.Slovar p. 27 in the 16th century marks Barejkiany v Šolpinach and Boreikiany podlierieki Grovmieny"] (Biržiška, 1930, p. 5). There could have been more such villages (fields) along the most important Teutonic Knights' roads to Samogitia, Kaunas, Punia, Merkinė and Grodno.

When the Teutonic Order broke the resistance of the Prussian tribes, the Nemunas became a real front line for two centuries. An entire defensive line of fortresses on the Nemunas was formed: Veliuona, Kaunas Punia, Merkinė, Liškiava, Gardinas, etc. In preparation for the campaigns, the Lithuanians learned to scout the roads in the lands of the Order. They organized a border guard spy service, which was not unlike the customs guard service. A very effective warning system was established - bonfires and heralds. Spy sightings had to be transmitted as quickly as possible to the nearest stronghold - a castle, where its garrison was on duty. A lightly armed warrior on a nimble horse could quickly deliver the message (Balaišis et al., 2010, pp. 12-13). Only through the joint and organized efforts of the Lithuanian nation and its state was it possible to resist the attacks of the Teutonic Order and protect the western and northern borders of Lithuania.

Conclusions

In the process of Lithuanian ethnogenesis, the sociocultural role of hillforts became evident and established. Hillforts are hills on which settlements and later castles were fortified. They performed security and defense functions until the formation of the Lithuanian state. The hillforts of Lithuanian and other Baltic tribes were small and densely located in the surrounding areas. This suggests the idea that tribal communities were small and felt insecure. Due to the constant threat of attack, hillforts had to be located closer to populated areas.

The density of mounds ensured the ability of tribal communities to create a network for transmitting alarm signals and storing food supplies. The entire mound system consisted of - a) defensive mounds and fortified settlements, b) mounds with equipped fire pits for transmitting signals, c) mounds with recesses for storing food and livestock, d) mounds for religious ceremonies and sacrifices.

Lithuanians used various signs and symbols to mark the boundaries of their territory. They can be reconstructed from the 16th century descriptions of land boundaries and the First Statute of Lithuania. First of all, land boundary marks were several furrows of deeply plowed land, which denote the boundary of cultivated fields or meadows; marked trees and stumps; poured earthen mounds and piles of stones. All communities used the forest resources, so they marked their boundaries with clearings, warning signs and "sacred groves". "Sacred groves" were probably not only places of sacrifice, but also served the function of inter-tribal wasteland.

During the battles with the Teutonic and Livonian Orders, large border wastelands were formed. They served as a protection for the Lithuanian borders. Scouts and guards were housed in the wastelands. Scouts collected information about the construction of enemy castles and other military fortifications, and military movement routes. Forest guards monitored illegal activities in the forest and extinguished fires. Scouts and guards lived in villages. Therefore, the border wastelands were not empty spaces.

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