

Prussian Romuva Decoded

VYKINTAS VAITKEVIČIUS

The description of Romuva¹ in the Chronicle of the Prussian Land (*Chronicon Terræ Prussiæ*) written by Peter of Dusburg in 1326 has been the subject of debate by scholars for decades. There is hardly any work on Baltic religion without at least a reference to the sacred site called Romuva.

Researchers have usually focused on one aspect of Romuva, that is, whether it was a real or fictitious temple or what the competence of the chief priest Krivis was, etc. This article probably for the first time presents parallels to Romuva in the region of the Baltic Sea and draws the conclusion that the subject-matter of the Romuva legend cannot have been invented. The institution of assembly (in modern Lithuanian called *sueiga*) was very well known in the lands of the Prussians and other Balts. There is a strong presumption that the Prussian Romuva actually existed in the thirteenth century.

INTRODUCTION

The Chronicle of the Prussian Land is indisputably considered to be a reliable source for Prussian history. Peter of Dusburg already referred to some earlier sources (Labuda 1982: 161-4; Batūra 1985: 36-49; Matuzova 1997: 231-40), but both they and his own chronicle drew on oral tradition for material on the Prussians, their character and religion (Mannhardt ed. 1936: 90-1; Matuzova 1997: 239). Actually it is not quite clear whether the legend about Romuva was first recorded by Peter of Dusburg or by the chroniclers before him (cf. Friederici 1876: 251).

The legend about Romuva and Krivis is differently regarded by different researchers. It is thought to be either an invention of the author or a legend based on true facts. Within recent years the priest Peter of Dusburg has been represented as an ideologist and the creator of a twisted image of Prussian religion (and hence of Romuva as well) (Rowell 1994: 38-9). This view is discussed at the end of the article.

Nicolaus of Jeroschin in his Chronicle of the Prussian Land (*Kronike von Pruzinlant*) written in 1335 repeated the major part of what had been written by Peter of Dusburg (Vélius ed. 1996: 358-60). He also reiterated the story about Romuva without any significant changes or supplements. The Prussian Chronicle (*Preussische Chronik*) written in 1529 by Simon Grunau is quite another matter. The theme of Romuva and Krivis is very significant here. The chronicle provides plenty of new data from other sources and minute details of the legend about Romuva. The chronicle of Simon Grunau calls for exhaustive study, but work on this is only in its early stages (cf. Šimėnas 1994: 42-56), and so this article refers only to Peter of Dusburg.

Let us read again very closely:

In the middle (of the populated lands) of this perverse [Prussian] nation – in Nadrovia – there was a place which was called Romuva (*Romow*) which was named after Rome. A person lived there who was called Krivis (*Criwe*). He was respected as a Pope because in the same way as his Holiness manages the Church, Krivis has power not only among the tribes already mentioned but also among Lithuanians and other nations living in Livonia-lands. His authority was so great that not only he himself, and his kin, but also his messenger with a staff or other well-known sign when travelling . . . received the greatest respect from the dukes, nobles and populace.²

Another paragraph of the same chapter reads as follows:

The illusion of the devil with regard to the dead was such that, when relatives of those who had died went to the aforementioned Pope-*Criwe* and asked whether he had seen anyone going to their house on such a day and such a night, he would answer without doubt what were the clothes, weapons, horses and relatives of the dead After a victory they sacrifice to their gods an offering of gratitude from all the spoils that were won during the war; one third of it was given to the already mentioned Krivis which he would burn.

Scholars differ in their interpretations of this legend, some basing their conclusions on a literal reading of the text, and others on a

critical reading. If Peter of Dusburg recorded only a historical legend with some features of myth, his account cannot be expected to have the accuracy which is mandatory for historical sources. However, it is important that Romuva is located in Nadrovia (Lith. *Nadruva*) “in the middle” of the Prussian lands. Both the name of Romuva and its meaning were reminiscent of Rome as Krivis who lived there was said to be as highly esteemed as the Pope. The Prussian and Lithuanian tribes and also other tribes of “Livonia-lands” obeyed Krivis’ will. His token was a “travelling” staff. Krivis showed extraordinary knowledge and he was entitled to one third of the war spoils, which he would sacrifice by burning.

The name Romuva

The name Romuva is said to have originated from the Prussian **rāmā* “serenity”, **rāman* “serene”, Lithuanian *rōmus* or *romūs*, *romà* “serene”, “serenity”, “to calm down” (Fraenkel 1955: 695-6; Mažiulis 1997: 32; Péteraitis 1997: 335). According to K. Būga (1959: 33), the Prussians would pronounce this name as **Rōmavō* and V. Mažiulis claims (1997: 32) that **Rāmāvā* “was the place of serenity, calmness”. There are more toponyms and hydronyms of the same root (Būga 1958: 169; Vanagas 1981: 272, 280).

The location of Romuva

The opinions regarding this issue differ widely. Some of them are based on general assumptions, which are not exposed to a more thorough discussion, and others refer to place-names, well-known archaeological monuments or sacred places which have the root *ram-*, *rom-* in their names. Various regions of East Prussia were searched for Romuva with the results listed below and shown in Figure 1.

1) Warmien (otherwise Ermland), in the neighbourhood of Heiligenbeil (Mamonovo). A huge hill fort in Grünwald (Lipovka) has been associated with Romuva (cf. Kulakov 1994: 23; Šimėnas 2000).

2) Natangen, Romitten (Slavianovka) area. Romuva has been localised in the area called Patollen (Groß Waldeck, Osokino) where the Teutonic Order established the St Trinity monastery (cf. Vėlius ed. 2001: 335-7).

3) Barta, Romsdorf (Romankowo) area (cf. Mierzyński 1900:

112).

4) Samland, Romehnen area. The village and the sacred place in it were mentioned in several sources of the fourteenth century (see Vėlius ed. 1996: 323-4).

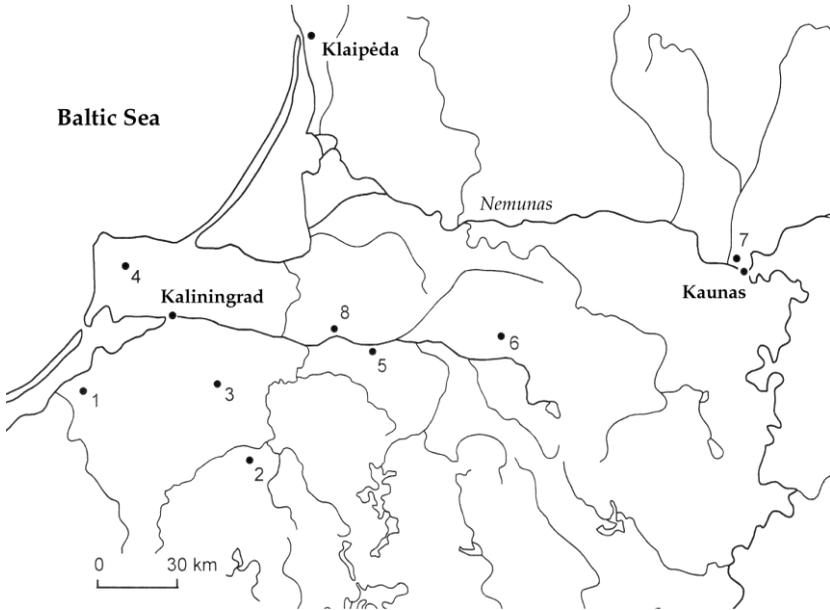


Fig. 1. The sites where Prussian Romuva has been placed since the sixteenth century: 1) Šventapilė (otherwise – Heiligenbeil, Mamonovo); 2) Rohmsdorf (Romankowo); 3) Romyčiai (Romitten, Slavianovka); 4) Romainis (Romehnen); 5) Ramonupiai (Romanuppen, Savino); 6) Ramonupiai (Romanuppen); 7) Romainiai; 8) Romava (Romau, Rovnoye). Drawn by the author.

There are certainly more places in which place-names with the root *ram-* or *rom-* can be detected but few of them have received attention from researchers. Several such places can be found in the territory of the Kaliningrad Region and in the northwest of Poland.

In Nadrovia, which is the area indicated by Peter of Dusburg, there are three regions that have place-names with *ram-* or *rom-*, namely: Rominten woods, the Stallupönen (Nesterov) area and the region between Insterburg (Chernekhovsk) and Wehlau (Znamensk).

Scholars long ago drew attention to the region around the Auksinė (Goldfließ) River (which flows into the River Pregel) and the Dittowa River (which flows into the Goldfließ). This region is situated to the west of Insterburg and to the east of Wehlau. Having found the only pair of toponyms with *rom-* and *kriv-* in Nadrovia (namely Romanuppen and Kreywutschen), Friederici assumed that Romuva had been located in this area (1876: 249-50).

Notice should also be taken of Romaw (otherwise Romau or Rovnoye) Village, which was situated in this area, though a little further to the northwest on the right bank of the Pregel in the vicinity of Kaukelawke (otherwise Kuglacken or Kudrevcevo) (see Pēteraitis 1997: 334). To the south-west of Romanuppen village in the upper reaches of the Bundsze River (a tributary of the Goldfließ) there is also the Romehlis rivulet (Froelich 1930: 46), the diminutive name of which can be associated with the still undiscovered place *Roma or *Romė.

The prevailing opinion in the historiography of Lithuania is that Romuva should be localised in the Insterburg area. This region can be described as densely forested but situated near the river Pregel as well as near an important overland route from Königsberg to Insterburg and further on to Tilsit (Sovetsk), Gumbinnen (Gusev) and Gołdap. Batūra noticed in the legends of the sixteenth century that the bank of the river Goldfließ near Norkitten was once under the patronage of the high priest Vaidila (Batūra 1985: 357). Schlossberg hill fort which is situated to the south of Norkitten near the Goldfließ is estimated to be the largest hill fort in East Prussia (and even in the Baltic Region provided that no mistakes occurred in its measurements) and it is distinguished by the nature of its fortifications as well as the size of protected territory. Its plateau is estimated to be 250x350 m in extent; besides, there are two ramparts 5 and 12 m high and a two-metre deep moat behind them (see Kulakov and Šimėnas 1999: 341-2).

At first sight, the localisation of Romuva in Nadrovia is quite unexpected. The life of Prussian tribes was associated with the Baltic Sea for many centuries (cf. Kulakov 1994: 19-23). Nadrovia, as can be seen from the current level of information about this territory, was a sparsely inhabited area. Actually only hill forts with settlements which lie along the Pregel, Goldfließ and Angerapp rivers show that the Nadrovians lived there at the end of the first millennium and the beginning of the second millennium AD. Linguistic and historical data demonstrate close relations between Nadrovia and Lithuania.

The presence of traces of the Lithuanian language in the linguistic materials from Nadrovia (as well as those from Scalovia) has long been discussed. From the linguistic point of view, it is quite possible that these regions already before the war with the crusaders (which ended c. 1277) and the subsequent Lithuanian colonisation had been closer to Lithuania than to the rest of the Prussian lands (cf. Zinkevičius 1987: 220-4). In the 40s of the thirteenth century, King Mindaugas of Lithuania already had suzerain rights over Nadrovia as well as over Scalovia and part of Sudovia (Gudavičius 1998: 203-4). In 1253 and 1257 when transferring these lands to the Livonian Order, Mindaugas called them lands adjacent to the Kingdom of Lithuania (Gudavičius 1989: 78-9). It is possible that Peter of Dusburg found a particular Lithuanian territory (*territorium Lethowi*) in the Nadrovia area back in 1274 (see Hirsch et al. 1861: 131-2). It should be mentioned that the nobility of Nadrovia did not surrender to the crusaders and was totally defeated by 1277 (Gudavičius 1989: 162-3).

The era of Romuva

In historiography several approaches to the question of the period when Romuva was active can be observed. Different opinions could partially co-exist on the assumption made here that, when Romuva was destroyed at one location, the centre and its name were transferred to another (the wide distribution of place names with *ram-*, *rom-* supports this assumption). Thus, the Romuva which was established at the beginning of the sixth century AD by the legendary knights Vidowut and Bruten in Warmien, near Heiligenbeil (Kulakov and Šimėnas 1999: 327-8), was destroyed by King Boleslav III of Poland c. 1110 (see Vėlius ed. 2001: 68-9). Then Romuva was moved to Samland, from there to Nadrovia, and finally to the territory of Lithuania, to a location in the lower reaches of the Nevėžis River (Mierzyński 1900: 104). Here, however, it was also destroyed in 1294 and was moved to several other places until it is said to have been demolished near the Dubysa River in 1413 when the Christianisation of Samogitia began. By an alternative interpretation made by Voigt (1827: 597), different Romuvos that are “found” in different places should be viewed as separate temples, forming a kind of network.

Friederici (1876) and Mannhardt (1936) were the first to dwell more upon the period at which Romuva could have been in operation.

Reasonably, they drew attention to the collective military action of the Nadroviaans, Scalovians and Sudovians in 1255 against the crusaders that occupied Samland and to the construction of Wehlau Castle near the Pregel river that followed – both these facts can serve as evidence that the religious centre was still active in Nadrovia and that consolidated force sought to defend its approaches from the west, which was already under the control of the crusaders (Friederic 1876: 248-9).

Mannhardt considered the period of the unification of the Baltic tribes to be around 1260 (Mannhardt, ed., 1936: 93-4); according to this author, in localising Romuva “in the middle of Prussian lands”, the period between 1260 and 1274 should be the focus since by that time, in terms of political geography, Nadrovia had turned from periphery into the centre. Furthermore, Mannhardt argued that the respect shown by the kings (*reges*) to Krivis, which was mentioned in the Chronicle by Peter of Dusburg, could be explained by the fact that at that time the Lithuanian State was already situated to the east of Nadrovia (the author of the Chronicle did not use this term in other places; he only mentioned Samogitian *regulos* (Mannhardt, ed., 1936: 93-4).

In the second half of the twentieth century the problem of Romuva was not discussed further but researchers were more or less agreed that in the thirteenth century in Nadrovia there was an intertribal religious centre which, when under threat by the crusaders, was moved into Lithuania, to Romainiai near Kaunas (Łowmiański 1932: 195-7; Gudavičius 1983: 63; 1999: 179).

The functions and status of Romuva

The comparison of Romuva to the capital of the Pope’s empire Rome (which undoubtedly belongs to Peter of Dusburg) first of all implies the general view of Romuva as the central temple of the Balts. Further descriptions present more detailed information: spells were cast and the future was predicted, the sacred fire was guarded and part of the spoils of war was sacrificed to the gods (cf. Gaerte 1959: 639). These features are typical of the Baltic sacred places at various religious and social levels.

Quite another matter is the second function of Romuva, that is its function as the place of meetings. This is obvious from the name Krivis (*Criwe*), attributed to the person who lived in Romuva and

whom Peter of Dusburg compared to the Pope, and from his messengers who travelled with staffs (Łowmiański 1932: 196; 1989: 91). The pre-eminent status of Romuva as the place of meetings can be seen from the universal respect from knights, nobility and populace to his person, will and token (the staff) manifested in all surrounding regions.

The religious side of Romuva has received sufficient attention from scholars (cf. Batūra 1985: 358; Vėlius 1996: 331). Besides, the features of the temple listed above are not specifically Baltic (cf. Huth 1939: 108-34) and in any case do not account for the particular status of Romuva. Analysing the story of Peter of Dusburg, it becomes obvious that the pre-eminence of Romuva is primarily attributable to its second function, that of being the place of general assembly, and to the fact that the organiser of the religious activities, Krivis, resided in Romuva.

ASSEMBLIES

Lithuanian *Krìvis,-ė* (Prussian **krivīs, *krivē* < Balto-Slavic **kri-/*krei-* “to turn”, **kreivas* “rolled up, curved”) (Mažiulis 1993: 283), undoubtedly deserves separate discussion. The fact that the same word means the person, his token (a staff), an assembly summoned with the help of the staff and even going to the bearer of the staff (verb *kriwulaut*) (Mierzyński 1895: 363-5; Mažiulis 1993: 282-4), can be “a perfect example of degraded and syncretic religious forms” (Greimas 1990: 407).

A semantic relationship can also be observed between Lithuanian *krivė*, Prussian **krivē* “the one which is involute, curved” and the assembly under the same name; a staff with curved roots towards the top (Fig. 2) handed around is a call for people to gather into a circle. It seems that the Baltic stick *krivė* is a variety of a European tradition of summoning people to meetings by means of a stick handed around. In comparison, a straight stick with engraved signs or a club-shaped (knobstick-shaped) stick is more typical of the old Scandinavian regions (cf. Mierzyński 1895: 378-80; Stender-Petersen 1932/1933: 188-91). Such names of these sticks as old Scandinavian *klubba, kolfr*, German *Keule* and others reveal a different aspect of semantic relationship between stick and assembly; a stick with a thick end up handed around is a call for people to gather into a swarm, into a “fist”

(cf. de Vries 1977: 318, 324).

In fact, *krivė* is not the only Baltic name for an assembly that has been established. In the Prussian region of Pomesania the assembly was called **vaitjan* (**vaitjā*) “conversation; counsel; assembly” (< Prussian **waitiāt* “to speak”) (Mažiulis 1993: 124).

Shortage of data hinders a more exact definition of the relationship between *Krivė* and *Vaitė* (the two names for assemblies). Is it possible that *Vaitė* was typical only of Pomesania where its function was to solve the most important social problems (cf. Wenskus 1984: 446; 1986b: 424-5). Assuming that *Krivė* and *Vaitė* are chronologically identical and comparable, there still might be differences in their functions.

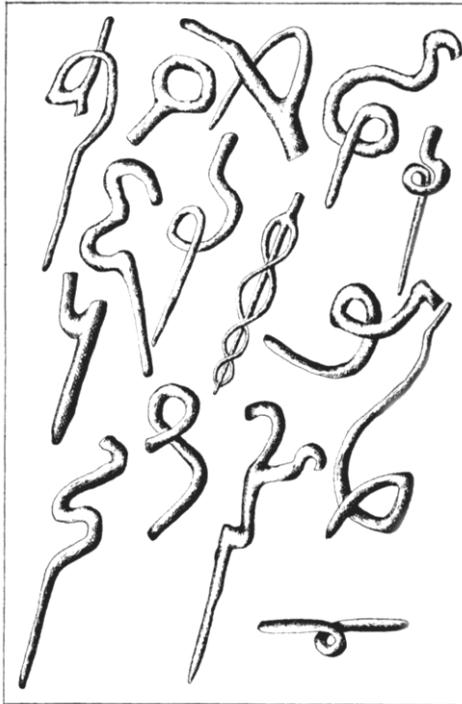


Fig. 2. *Krivės* from Prussia and Lithuania dated back to the 17th-19th centuries (after Baldauskas 1935: 204, fig. 1).

Reverting to Romuva and Krivis (who is responsible for the fact that all Baltic assemblies as a generalisation will be called *Krivės*), it can be said that there are no substantial obstacles to the verification of assemblies in Romuva because: 1) Prussian social relations were a favourable environment for their activities; 2) assemblies were a well-known institution in ancient Greece and Rome as well as among barbarians later in Europe; 3) written sources prove the existence of various assemblies organised by the Balts; 4) the tradition of assemblies of various forms in Prussia, Poland and Lithuania lasted up until the nineteenth or even the twentieth century.

Features of Prussian society

In the first half of the thirteenth century, the Teutonic Order found plenty of freemen and few representatives of an aristocracy in Prussia (see Łowmański 1989: 75-7). Wenskus (1986a: 267-7; 1986b: 419-20) rightly considered this period transitional in terms of Prussian social relations. The inner consolidation of the nobility actually had not started; at that time, Adam of Bremen wrote (c. 1075) that Prussians did not want to tolerate any master (*dominus*) (Vélius ed. 1996: 190-1). The Prussian political system indeed had some evident forms of a democratic republic. The highest institution of territorial community was the assembly where questions of war and peace, relations with neighbours, construction of castles and other important issues were discussed (Łowmiański 1989: 65-8). When necessary, the same assembly would elect military commanders and people to take charge of rituals. A classic example is considered to be the election of the leaders for the Prussian uprising in 1260. Less notable is Hennenberger's story about six villages in Pobethen parish the people of which gathered in 1531 and elected a priest (*Weydelotten*), who sacrificed a pig to the gods to ensure success in fishing (see Wenskus 1986b: 276).

The situation of the Prussians at the beginning of the second millennium was a little unexpected if viewed from the south (the Polish kingdom) but not at all so if viewed from the north (the neighbouring Baltic tribes). It seems that at that time the Curonians lived under similar conditions (cf. Žulkus 1997: 22), and the political system of the Samogitians, as shown by the 13th-15th century sources, was especially reminiscent of that of the Prussians. Back in 1413 Samogitian noblemen stated that for a hundred years "in the

land of Samogitia there had been no lord or king but there had been one community that lived under certain laws, way of governing and the right of nations” (see Almonaitis 1998: 59-72, 84, 85). The population of Samogitia was dominated by freemen who lived in steadings. There was almost no centralised government there.

Assemblies in Indo-European lands

The institution of assembly was so widespread in the past that it would be interesting to find out where and for what reasons it was rejected. Speaking about the fate of assemblies, one general tendency can be observed: with the development of feudal relations and with the centralisation of power, the importance of assemblies decreased whereas the significance of small nobility councils increased. The principle of representation was introduced for the commoners. Traditionally assemblies still maintained a certain importance for a while (usually to approve the decisions made by the leaders) but later they were deprived of it (cf. Wenskus 1984: 444-7; Stefánsson 1984: 463).

The connection of assemblies with pre-Christian religion is particularly close. The fact that places used for the summoning of assemblies often coincided with religious centres, that religious rituals were usually held simultaneously and that the meetings were often presided over by people who had religious authority make the relationship obvious. Besides, assemblies were accompanied by a strong belief that gods guarded them and that the institution is a part of the mythical organisation of the world (Wenskus 1984: 451-3; Fabeck 2000: 458). The whole process of arranging meetings was highly ritualised (cf. Sawyer B. and P. 1993: 82). The periodicity of assemblies depended on the number of participants and on the significance of the meeting; smaller assemblies used to take place more often. Bigger ones were held only a few times a year or once a year or even once in several years (Wenskus 1984: 452).

Quite a few details about old Scandinavian assemblies can be found in Icelandic sources that date back to the 10th-12th centuries. At the end of the ninth century, immigrants from Norway reconstructed in Iceland the exact order of assemblies as they were organised in their homeland. The assemblies had their organisers and leaders called *goðar* (singular *goði*). All freemen had the right to participate in them. A *goði* could request the participation of every

ninth farmer in the general assembly (*Alþing*). Like all other assemblies, this one had a regular place to meet, which was in this case a valley with perfect acoustics. The assembly would start on the Thursday of the ninth week of summer (between the 18th and the 24th of June) and it would last for two weeks. Apart from the rites that were organised there (the sagas mention sacrifice and the collective eating of horseflesh; Baetke 1950: 7) these meetings were aimed at the speaking of the laws that were already in force (until the twelfth century none of these laws were written down) as well as at the passing of new ones. Initially the law-making function was performed by 36 *goðar* from all over the island who would sit in a circle or in a square on a platform in the centre. The rest by means of a simple majority of votes would approve or reject decisions. Goods were traded during the meetings and, generally, the Althing can be defined as a legal, religious and economic assembly (Foote and Wilson 1970: 56-61; Stefánsson 1984: 462-3; Schroeter 1994: 31-5). In July, after the general assembly, local meetings, that lasted for one or two days were held. During these meetings everyone who had not had the chance to participate in the general assembly was informed about the issues discussed and the laws passed.

An interesting institution is that of the leaders of the assemblies – the *goðar*. The name is related to the old Scandinavian *gub*: *gop* “God” (cf. Gothic *gudja* “priest”), and is known in other Scandinavian lands, too (Ebel 1998: 260). This post was hereditary but it could also be transferred, given as a present or shared with another person. The *goði* would represent the people who elected him (usually from about a hundred steadings and who had the right to replace him with another. Their electors, who had to pay taxes similar to tithes, supported the *goði*. Furthermore, the *goði* and frequently his large escort received full sustenance when travelling around his electors. Thus, before the loss of independence in 1264 in Iceland a few *goðar* had concentrated power in their own hands. They can be justly treated as leaders. Their power was not territorial – it was directed only towards people; besides, from their own means they had to maintain the temples and organise sacrifices there (Sawyer 1989; 3-4; Miller 1990: 22-6; Sawyer B. and P. 1993: 87; Ebel 1998: 260-3).

Sources about Baltic assemblies

The information on Baltic assemblies (which were called in German and Latin, in the singular, *rât*, *colloquia*, *placita*, *parlamento*) dating back to the 13th-15th centuries is generalised (Łowmański 1932: 191-204). It points at several sorts of assemblies: councils of free adult men and the councils of noble (*nobiles*). The former were widely spread at the domestic level but the chroniclers obtained more information about noble councils which were aimed at the discussion of political problems. The distribution of assemblies from the point of view of territorial and representational principles is not exactly clear. Nonetheless there are some data on large, national assemblies. For example, in 1409 the Samogitians reported to the Teutonic Order that they had decided to resist the crusaders in their assembly where “the whole Samogitian land was present” (Almonaitis 1998: 172).

It is known that only the most noble of all the participants spoke at the assemblies and put forward their proposals (Łowmański 1932: 198). It is mentioned that in 1259 there were three thousand men present at the assembly of Samogitians who took an oath to attack Curonia. It is important to note that their priest (*blutekirl*) sacrificed animals and ordered the sacrifice of one third of the spoils of the war to the gods, thus trying to ensure the success of this campaign (Vêlius ed. 1996: 298-9). It can be assumed that Baltic assemblies had fixed places. For example, documents show that such places were in Samland and Natangia. In eastern Lithuania place-names with *kreiv-* and *kriv-* can be found near the old administrative centres.³

The sources give the most thorough coverage of the general assembly of the people of Samland in 1255 at which the plan for a military action was discussed. Three scouts elected in the previous assembly returned home and informed the participants of the assembly that there were “angry guests” in Klaipėda (Memel) who had built a castle which would need to be destroyed. The elders (*dy wisten*; *dy besten*) had a separate meeting. The oldest of them suggested a way out which was approved by the others. They returned to the rest of the participants and sat down among them. One of the elders addressed the assembly asking for the approval of their decision and proposed the death penalty for those who could fight but would not go to Klaipėda (Memel) on the day stated. The participants cheered and said that they were all ready to go there (Ditleb von Alnpeke 1853: 587-8).

Thus, the sources indicate the importance of assemblies in the organisation of defence from, and attack on, enemies as well as in tackling other important problems (Łowmański 1932: 202). There is no doubt that assemblies also had certain legal functions and dealt with criminals. This can be seen from the information about Pomesanian *vaidės* as well as from Lithuanian *kuopas* (another name of *krivės*) dating back to the 16th-17th centuries where trials were arranged alongside the discussion of economic and administrative problems (Jurginis 1962: 172-3).

Until the nineteenth century in Prussia, a staff (*krivė*, *der Schulzenstab*; in East Prussia – *Kriwa*, *Kriwule*, *Kreiwa lazda*) was the token and attribute of the elder who was appointed by the villagers. Its form ranged from an absolutely straight stick to a stick with curved roots. The most important news was transmitted by sending such a stick around (Mierzyński 1895: 363-77; Paulsen 1941: 56; Toporov 1984: 203). The tradition of the elder's staff dates back to ancient times; it is believed that such a staff is in the hands of the person standing in front of the squad of Prussians depicted on the bronze door of Gnezno Cathedral in Poland. He speaks to Bishop Adalbert who also has a staff in his hands (Paulsen 1941: 56; Gaerte 1959: 640-1). It is worth noting that in the first account of the life of St Adalbert it is mentioned that the Bishop was guided into the village by the *dominus villæ* (Vėlius, ed., 1996: 172).

The situation of the assemblies documented in the 19th-20th centuries in Prussia, Poland, Lithuania, and episodically in Latvia (see Mierzyński 1895: 373-4), was indeed different but their common features had changed little. The curved staff existed (“a simple stick can be made by everyone”). This staff and its bearer were treated with appropriate respect. The importance of the village assemblies held several times a year and the necessity of participating in them were generally understood. Assemblies were usually held in bigger steadings near the centre of the village so that those who came to the meeting would have to travel more or less the same distance. Assemblies were aimed at the election of elders and at the discussion of such questions as the construction and maintenance of bridges and fences, assistance to beggars, etc. During the discussion each rightful participant in the meeting had the right to speak. When the housefather could not participate in the *Krivė* of the village, his adult son was sent there; if there was no son the family would be represented by the mother (neither the son, nor the mother, however,

acquired the vote). The execution of resolutions approved by the assembly was obligatory (Baldauskas 1935; Vyšniauskaitė 1964: 528-9; Mačiekus 1996: 238-62).

CENTRES IN THE REGION OF THE BALTIC SEA SIMILAR TO ROMUVA

Prussian Romuva, which functioned in the middle of the Prussian lands and which obviously had the highest rank as a place for religious rites and assemblies, was not unique in the region of the Baltic Sea or elsewhere in Northwest Europe.

There is information about several centres of political-administrative and/or religious importance which were in operation in the 8th-13th centuries, and until the introduction of Christianity performed functions similar to those of Prussian Romuva. Places of general assemblies in Gotland (*Roma*), Estonia (*Raikküla*), Saxony (*Marklô*), Denmark (*Ringsted*, *Odense* and *Viborg*), Sweden (*Linköping*, *Lund*, *Skara* and *Strängnäs*), as well as *Lejre* (Denmark) and *Uppsala* (Sweden), and finally the West-Slavonic centre *Rethra* in Polabia, are discussed below (Fig. 3)

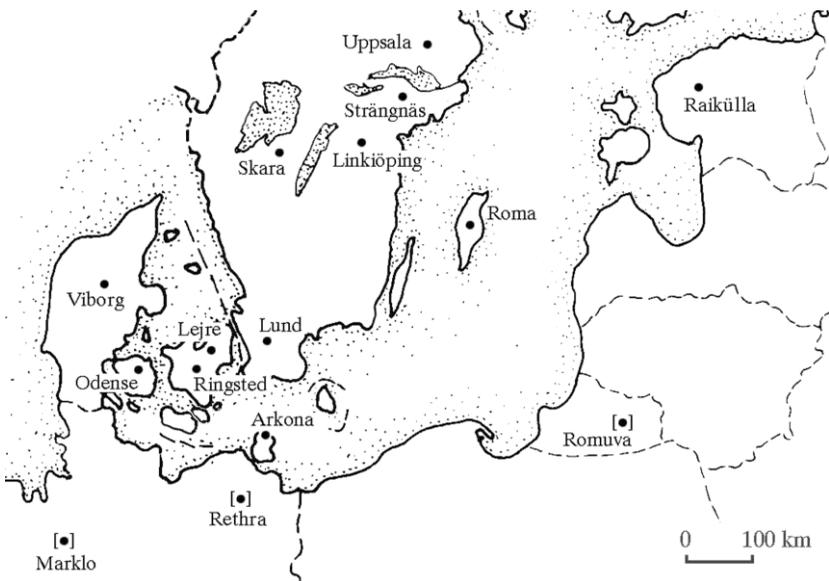


Fig. 3. The sites of centres around the Baltic Sea mentioned in the article.

Gotland

Until the twelfth century the nearest “relative” of Romuva was active at a distance of approximately 400 km from Nadrovia. There still exists a place called *Roma* right in the centre of Gotland. The old recorded form of this place name is *Rumum* (<*rum* “open area; field”); however, it was pronounced as *räume* or *rämme*, i.e. in the same way as Rome (Olsson 1984: 47). This was the place of the most important assembly of the people of Gotland called *Althinget Gutnalia*, or alternatively *Gutnalthinget* (Müller-Wille 1984: 211; Peel ed. 1999: 13, 29). In the 12th-13th centuries, Gotland was the republic of so-called “bonds”, which were free and economically independent farmers lived in steadings scattered around the island. The Althing in Roma was attended by the representatives of the twenty “tings” into which the island was divided. This assembly had the highest authority on the island. It is definitely known that this centre ceased to exist before 1164 when a convent was built on that site. Initially the convent was even called by the Latinised name of the assembly *Guthnalia* (<*Gutnalthinget*) or *Sancta Maria de Guthnalia* (Yrwing 1974: 368-9; Östergren 1992: 58).

A guess can be made that the two places of general assemblies and religious rites called by the similar names, Roma in Gotland and Romuva in Nadrovia, operated according to the same model: both of them were in the “middle” and representatives from neighbouring lands used to gather there. There is no exact information on who was invited to *Althinget Gutnalia* but the excavation reports on the burial grounds around Roma (*Kvietorp* or *Halla-Broe*, *Björke* and others) and the treasure found in them make it obvious that people of very high rank lived near the place in the Viking Age (see Thunmark-Nylén 1995: fig. 127-37; 2000: 313-50, 583-92, 1050-1).

Estonia

Speaking about the military actions of the Livonian Order on the 15th of August 1216, Heinrich of Lettland mentions (1959: 202-3) the invasion into the land in “the centre of Estonia” where there was a village called *Raigele* which was yearly attended by all the tribes of the area. This place is thought to have been near Raikküla, approximately 50 km south of Tallinn. It is possible that this place was the centre of the confederation of Estonian lands at that time.

Saxony

The life of St Lebuin (dating from the middle of the ninth century) contains a description of the Althing of the Saxons and the missionary's participation in it c. 770. Scholars agree that the story, which was heard from a noble family, had a factual basis (cf. Hauck 1964). It also represents the standard of Saxon society. When it is borne in mind that Charlemagne in 782 banned the general assemblies it can be assumed that these meetings were a highly important part of the political life of the Saxons (Hofmeister 1967: 30-1).

Thus, in the life of St Lebuin it is noted that old Saxons did not have a king; their lands were governed by a vicegerent (*satrapus*). It was traditional for them to gather once a year in an assembly held in the centre of Saxony, at a place called Marklô near the Weser River. The assembly was aimed at the revival of laws, the resolution of the most important legal problems and decisions regarding relations of war and peace throughout the year. On the day of the assembly Lebuin and a nobleman arrived in Marklo. When everyone had gathered, the Saxons according to their pagan customs prayed and made sacrifices to their gods; they asked them to protect their homeland and to grant that all the decisions arrived at during the assembly would be beneficial to them and pleasing to the gods (Das alte Leben 1982: 386-9). The site of Marklo has not been identified yet.

Denmark

This example once again shows that every land had assemblies of the highest level which were held in the middle of the region. Centres like the one in Gotland existed on the islands of Zealand and Funen and on the peninsula of Jutland in the 10th-11th centuries. As can be observed from such names as Odense (< *Odin*) and Viborg (< old Scandinavian *wī, *wæ "shrine") these centres had a direct relation to the old religion and cult (Sørensen 1992: 234-5). Viborg at the crossroads of the main overland routes and Odense on the island of Funen also played an important economic role. In the middle of the eleventh century they became the residences of archbishops (Levin Nielsen 1974: 64-81). Elnot gave a vivid description of Viborg as the place of assemblies in the life of St Knut (c. 1120). According to

Enlot there was a very famous place near the centre of Jutland. It was prominent partly because of its position on a hill and partly because sacrifices were frequently made there in ancient times. Huge crowds of people from all around Jutland would often gather there to discuss common problems, to get acquainted with new laws, and to reinforce established ones. What was decided with the general approval of all participants could not be violated in any part of Jutland (Levin Nielsen 1974: 64). It is interesting to note that Jutland assemblies for a long time had the decisive vote in electing the king of Denmark and approving laws (Levin Nielsen 1974: 76).

The case of Ringsted is a bit different. Despite the fact that it occupied the centre of the island of Zealand, at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century there appeared Lejre – the legendary centre of political power and the cult of the royal dynasty which was situated near Roskilde about 100 km from Ringsted (Christensen 1991). The Chronicle of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg (c. 1016) states that once in nine years on the 7th of January there were general meetings in Lejre during which plentiful sacrifices of people, horses, dogs and roosters were made (1970: 20-1; also see Müller-Wille 1984: 217).

Sweden

Swedish lands also had their places for assemblies (tings). In Östergötland assemblies were held at a major crossroads, Linköping (Kraft 1965: 603-4), in Skåne they took place at Lund (Randsborg 1980: 78-9), in Västergötland at Skara (Liedgren 1956: 90), in Södermanland at Strängnäs (Modéer 1974: 339) and in Uppland at Uppsala (cf. Calissendorff 1971: 2). In the pre-state period it seems that only the general assemblies of the regions called Götars and Svears were of higher rank than the *landsting*; later, however, meetings summoned by the king or his council acquired the highest rank (Modéer 1974: 339-40; Dahlbäck 1984: 464-5). Tings were mentioned in the eleventh century in inscriptions on runic stones, and more information about them appears in the thirteenth century and at the beginning of the fourteenth century. In Sweden, tings remained an important institution for some time (see Wildte 1926).

As for the largest general assemblies, it should be mentioned that they were attended by the inhabitants of the two main regions of historical Sweden, namely Götars (with the assembly at Skara) and

Svears (with the assembly at Uppsala) (Liedgren 1956: 90). The latter became the focus of state formation, and so Uppsala became the centre of Sweden.

Adam of Bremen (1961: 470-3) noted that Uppsala was a particularly important Swedish temple where the idols (*statuas*) of three Swedish gods – Thor, Odin and Freyr – were worshipped. A priest was assigned to each of the gods. Every nine years at the spring equinox a festival of all Svears was held in Uppsala. No-one was excused from participation in it; “kings” and common people together and separately carried their sacrifices to Uppsala. In the twelfth century an archbishopric was founded, and a cathedral was built at Uppsala in 1138-1150.

The Icelandic author, Snorri Sturluson, remarked (c. 1220) after his visit to Uppsala that it was the capital of pagan Sweden where once a year “all Swedes” would gather in an assembly which lasted for a week and would make substantial sacrifices as well as engage in trade. Such assemblies, called *distingen*, were still held in his time (Calissendorff 1971: 2). In the 12th-13th centuries the king of Sweden was still called “the king of Uppsala”. Assemblies near the royal barrows that date back to the 5th-6th centuries AD and are situated in Gamla Uppsala (Old Uppsala) were held in the modern period as well (Lindqvist 1936: 333).

In the historiography of the second half of the twentieth century quite a few reproaches were directed towards Adam of Bremen who did not actually visit Uppsala. The results of archaeological excavations under the cathedral of Uppsala received critical evaluation and additional explorations were carried out (Olsen 1970: 265-9; Müller-Wille 1999: 75-6; Nordahl, 1996). A new view that the religious centre in Uppsala should be seen in a “royal demesne” context has been forming during the last decade. The existence of a royal demesne was proved by the remains of a wooden building (a hall) dating back to the middle or the second half of the first millennium AD which was found 60 m north of the cathedral (see Brink 1996: 269-71; Nordahl 1996: 72-3).

Thus, both written sources and archaeological data place Uppsala on the same level as Lejre. Both of them are appropriate as comparisons for Romuva although, by contrast with the other places of assemblies and/or religious centres already mentioned, they also were significant centres of political power – this was because active rulers took care of religious centres at their residences. Another

possibility is the case when political power is genetically related to religious power and under certain circumstances a religious centre becomes the political capital. This possibility can be illustrated by an episode in the history of the West Slavonic tribes.

Polabia

If it were not for the (sometimes contradictory) information about this place contained in several chronicles, it could be regarded as mythical, just as Romuva has been. The sources indicate that Rethra was a castle and a town but its exact location is unknown (Schmidt 1974: 366-7, 372).

It is believed that as early as 983 when the Slavonic tribes in Polabia rebelled against the power of the Saxon king and bishops they massed around the religious centre. After these events the union of tribes that called itself Liutici (*Leutici* < old Slavonic *ljut* “ferocious”) was associated with Rethra. Its name can be reconstructed as Slavonic **Redigošč* (German *Redigost*) (Witkowski 1970: 371). It may be associated with the god *Redigost* or *Zuarasici* who was worshipped there (Adam von Bremen 1961: 392; Thietmar von Merseburg 1970: 268). According to Thietmar, Rethra occupied an exceptional place among temples (Thietmar von Merseburg 1970: 268). Adam of Bremen (c. 1075) claimed that it was the place of West Slavonic tribes who lived between the Elbe, Havel and Oder rivers, in the middle (Adam von Bremen 1961: 252).

Generalising the information received from the sources about the functions of Rethra it becomes obvious that it was the place of assemblies of the highest rank – there was a temple with idols of gods in the pantheon, the residence of priests and the place where sacrifices were made, spells cast and the future predicted (Ślupecki 1993: 262-3; 1994: 51-65).

In 1057, during the civil war, the union of Liutici fell apart and around 1068 Rethra was destroyed without leaving a trace. In recent years, scholars have become increasingly confident that among Christian feudal lands there existed an “alternative” union of Polabian tribes, which was based on ethnic or even national self-consciousness and existed for a hundred years (Lübke 1995; 2001: 384, 387-8). There are more examples of this kind and of even more successful unions in the history of Europe but in the 10th-11th centuries the Liutici that lived in central Europe did not have enough time to create

anything more substantial (Ślupecki 1994: 51).

There is evidence which permits the assumption that the functions of Rethra as a centre were taken over by the Ranians that lived on the island of Rügen. Around the same time as the sources cease mentioning Rethra, they point out Arkona (Schmidt 1974: 369; Dralle 1984: 47). This seems to be the only political and religious centre that has been mentioned as a parallel to Romuva (Mannhardt ed. 1936: 92-3). However, the features of the Arkona centre were quite different from those of Romuva: the stories about Arkona in the Danish history by Saxo Grammaticus (written in the thirteenth century) and in the Slavonic Chronicles of the priest Helmold of Bosau (c. 1172) pointed to its religious power being related to political dominance. The Ranians were in the lead as compared to other Slavonians; they had a king and the famous temple. Many other tribes were oppressed by them whereas Ranians were independent because of their well-defended territory which kept them out of anyone's reach. The tribes that were oppressed by the Ranians had to pay tribute to the temple at sword point. The high priests were said to have received more respect than the king. Spells helped them decide in which direction they should send their army. In case of victory, they would bring gold and silver to the treasury of their god; and they would share the remaining part of the treasure among themselves (Helmold von Bosau 1963: 148; Herrmann 1974: 204). In addition to the tribute paid by the oppressed lands, each Ranian man and woman, as well as the merchants that came to Arkona, had to pay a coin to the temple. The temple also received one third of the war spoils, provided the victory had been predicted in it (Helmold von Bosau 1963: 370-4; Saxo Grammaticus 1981: 496-7). According to Saxo, the priests of Arkona who managed the treasure of the temple had three hundred horsemen under their command and possessed land (Saxo Grammaticus 1981: 496-7; Leciejewicz 1998: 318). They could be compared to the Icelandic *goðar*.

Once a year after the harvest time, the inhabitants of the island would gather in Arkona in front of the temple to sacrifice animals and to feast (Saxo Grammaticus 1981: 494-5). These festivals can be compared with general assemblies (Zernack 1967: 225).

At the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century Arkona was destroyed. Rebuilt with fortifications, it survived until 1168 when it was demolished by King Waldemar I of Denmark and Bishop Absalon (Herrmann 1974: 201-7).

ONCE AGAIN ROMUVA: FOR AND AGAINST

Little information about Romuva can be learned from Peter of Dusburg. According to S. C. Rowell (1994: 38, 126), his story is a moral *exemplum* presented from the point of view of an ideologue of the Order, in which he aspired to show the pagans as pious and their religion as anti-church. Naturally, Peter of Dusburg was not the first to act in this way. Various authors, including Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg, Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau and many others presented stories about pagan religious centres. They were also full of fable and various comparisons; for instance, Adam of Bremen called Rethra *metropolis Slavorum* (Schmidt 1974: 393; Dralle 1984: 37) just as he called Magdeburg, that was the main seat of the church in that region, the centre of the archbishopric. The same author covered the temple of Uppsala in gold and begirt it with a golden chain most probably according to the model of the temple of Solomon (Müller-Wille 1999: 75). Nonetheless, this does not make scholars doubt the factual existence of these places (cf. Rosik 2000: 97-134, 191-204, 325-34).

Having completed the account of Romuva and gone on to Prussian religion Peter of Dusburg must really, as Rowell claims, have rewritten the paragraph from the Christburg peace treaty that dwells upon the priests *Tulissones* and *Ligaschones*, calling them by the name of Krivis (Rowell 1994: 126). He may have borrowed the statement about one third of the war spoils being given to the priests from the Chronicle of the Livonian Order (Rowell 1994: 126) although, as has been mentioned, the same was said by Saxo about the Arkona priests. However, what agreements of the Order and prior chronicles could have given Peter of Dusburg the idea of Romuva and Krivis? How could he have made them up and recorded information about them that is in keeping with the broader picture we now have, as discussed at the opening of this article?

Even though there are place-names with *ram-*, *rom-* mentioned in the independent sources of the Order (see the section on the location of Romuva above), there are no data about the Romuva religious centre in them. The question this raises was answered in a general way by the research findings of the linguist Gerullis and the historian Wenskus: there is very little information about the densely forested and sparsely populated region called Nadrovia in the secret archive of the Order.

In Lithuanian annals, the person who allegedly had the greatest power was not described either (Rowell 1994: 126). The author of the *Chronicle of Bikhovets* (written in the early sixteenth century) knew East Lithuania very well, and so pointed out its sacred places and mentioned its chief priest Lizdeika. However, he had little knowledge of the lands lying further to the west (Ochmański 1967). There are quite a few objective reasons that can be offered to explain why Romuva has not yet been found by contemporary archaeologists: the political status of the Kaliningrad Region has up to now been unfavourable for international projects and it has been of little interest to researchers from Moscow.

The fact that the exact location of Romuva has not been found does not diminish its value. Rethra centre has been unsuccessfully searched for since 1378 (i.e. the search was started a few centuries after its destruction) and thirty localisations have been suggested to date (Ślupecki 1994: 57-9, fig. 16). The place of the Saxon assemblies, Marklo, as well as the meeting site near Viborg in Jutland have also been forgotten.

Moreover, it is said that Peter of Dusburg falsely attributed structural form to the religion of the Balts the main feature of which was “decentralized variety” (Rowell 1994: 39, 126). Extensive research in the last decade into landscape and society in early Scandinavia shows that in decentralised pre-Christian space central places (such as Romuva supposedly was) did actually exist. They were not only residences of the elite but also the sites of assemblies of a temporary nature and meetings of the army and fortified places (Fabech 2000). As regards the structure conveyed by Peter of Dusburg, he did not have to create it. At that time, assemblies at various levels were still an integral part of the social life of the Balts (and were also practised in already Christianised lands).

Thus, it would be prudent to take the moderate position between the extreme evaluations of Romuva and to read the story of Peter of Dusburg like many other texts which exist as myths that have an actual basis but are subject to alteration when passed from mouth to mouth depending on the time and circumstances.

KEY TO ROMUVA

Once again the case of Romuva has been examined and the place has been given a look from afar. This perspective, which expanded the discussion of the problem geographically and culturally, showed that there was a suitable environment for the institution of assembly in Prussian lands. It was aimed at the discussion of the most important social issues. The relation of assemblies to religion became obvious from the analogues that pointed at their organisation during festivals. Assemblies were frequently held close to temples. Their proceedings were regulated and, as can be seen from the sacrifices (as well as blessings and spell-casting) made there, were directly related to religion. The oldest and the wisest men were elected as the leaders of the assemblies. Sources present little information on the organisers and/or leaders of the assemblies. The name of Krivis of Romuva can be considered authentic, marked in Prussian anthroponymics (for example, *Herman Krywyen* (= the son, heir of Krivis), recorded in 1419) (Gaerte 1959: 639; Toporov 1984: 205). The significance of the institution of assembly makes it obvious that its leaders had extensive administrative, legal, religious and other authority. All resolutions approved at the assembly by consensus were obligatory on everyone.

It is believed that Romuva was in the region of the confluence of the Pregel and the Goldfließ. The name of *Romaw* was detected to the northwest and the places *Romanuppen* (*Romovuppen*) and *Romehlis* were found to the southeast of the hill fort Norkitten which was of exceptional size. The location was in a convenient geographical location: the Pregel flows through it and there are routes leading from the west (Samland), north (Scalovia), south and southeast (Bartovia, Sudovia, Lithuania). Supposing that Romuva was active in the thirteenth century, it can be seen that the geopolitical situation of Nadrovia at that time was quite strong: Prussian tribes lived to the west and to the south of the alleged Romuva region and the territory to the north and to the west of the place was occupied by Scalovinans, Curonians, Samogitians, Lithuanians, Sudovians and/or Yatvingians. Since the middle of the thirteenth century the regions of Samogitia, Lithuania, Sudovia and Yatvingia had been incorporated into the western part of the Lithuanian state. King Mindaugas, through rights as suzerain, most probably had Nadrovia at his disposition.

In fact, the interrelation of Baltic tribes (later of Lithuanians and

other tribes) in the thirteenth century was weak (Gudavičius 1989: 163, 169) though information provided in some sources allows speaking about concerted military actions, including Livonians, Estonians and Russians (Batūra 1985: 13, 17; Gudavičius 1989: 26). These military movements can hardly be related to Romuva for, as already mentioned, territorial communities and military allies would gather at local assemblies. Another function, however, can be attributed to the Romuva centre: once a year (or once in several years) the representatives of various regions could gather there to revive political and legal agreements and to discuss their amendments or other debatable problems (Łowmiański 1932: 195). In case of necessity extraordinary assemblies to discuss issues of similar character could be summoned at Romuva by means of the “travelling” stick. Even though the apparent significance of this central place undoubtedly was related to religion (maybe there was a temple in its vicinity?), it is difficult to detect it. It seems that the factor of religion was only one of the several factors that would bind the neighbouring tribes together (until the thirteenth century the religious systems of the Baltic tribes had regional varieties – this is obvious from burial monuments). It is also difficult to estimate the circumstances of the foundation of Romuva as well as the term of its operation. This could well be a short episode in the history of the Baltic tribes, a project that failed or that was not implemented because of the shortage of time. This central place in Nadrovia could only have been in operation up until 1274-77 when the region was occupied.

The view that Romuva was transferred into Romainiai, Lithuania, is quite well substantiated. The location of Romainiai in the lower reaches of the Nevėžis River would correspond with the new “middle” of the Baltic lands, having in mind the alteration in the geopolitical situation in the second half of the thirteenth century. According to Peter of Dusburg in c. 1294 crusaders burnt down the village of Romainiai (*Romene*) that, according to pagan tradition, was considered sacred (Vėlius ed. 1996: 339). Nicolaus von Jeroschin added that it was a wealthy and majestic village that according to a silly tradition was considered sacred (Vėlius ed. 1996: 365).

In the second half of the fourteenth century crusaders attacked the village Šatijai (*Sethen*) which was situated to the northeast of Kaunas and which was also considered sacred and captured a priest there (Vėlius ed. 1996: 419). However, it is not clear why the village of

Romainiai was considered sacred. There must have been an important reason (or even several reasons) for that. After 1294 Romainiai most probably was restored; sources of the fourteenth century refer to a land (*terra*) under this name. *Heiligenwalt* (Sacred Wood) in the same region was mentioned as a landmark in an agreement dating back to 1398 (Mannhardt ed. 1936: 127). In 1413 when the Christianisation of Samogitia was begun, Grand Dukes Jogaila and Vytautas also directed their attention to a temple “beyond the Nevėžis” where they burnt a tower on top of the highest hill in which sacred fire was guarded and cut down the woods that were considered sacred (Vėlius ed. 1996: 559). The action, which had the aim of making the Samogitians wish to accept Christianity, was undoubtedly directed against their temples of the highest rank (Vaitkevičienė and Vaitkevičius 2001: 312-3).

The genesis of Romuva can only be guessed at. Such institutional forms in the 3rd-8th centuries could be observed in the societies of various regions in West and North Europe among freemen, warriors and noblemen; in the historical states of Poland and Russia in the twelfth century and later among the inhabitants of towns (Zernack 1967). The circumstances under which the same model was adopted (maybe implemented?) in Prussia are obscure. The period of the 6th-7th centuries was the time of great cultural changes there (Nowakowski 1996: 96-7), so it could hardly have happened before then. The circumstances and the time of the foundation of Romuva can be detected only by means of an extensive research into Prussian political history and culture of the 6th-13th centuries. In the meantime, it is reasonable to think that such a centre existed in the thirteenth century (until 1274-1277). It is possible that later Romuva was transferred into the lower reaches of the Nevėžis River in Lithuania, into the new “middle”

Considering the possibility of Scandinavian influence that manifested itself later, it would be necessary to thoroughly analyse the aspects of social geography in the light of Balto-Scandinavian relations (cf. Šterns 1996), to test the hypotheses of the consecutive series and/or the network of Romuvas and to accurately examine the derivation of the name Romuva.

The institution of assemblies (*krivė, krivūlė*) that tackled the most important social issues was in operation in the Baltic lands. As can be detected from the comparative data, general assemblies of the regional and national representatives usually had a fixed place in the

middle of the region. Subject to the historic period and environment, political, administrative, economic and religious significance was attributed to such places, i.e. they performed the role of the centre. Romuva can be confidently claimed to have been such a central place.⁴

The Institute of Baltic Sea Region History and Archaeology
Klaipėda University
Lithuania
vikivait@takas.lt

Notes

- 1 Since we do not know how Romow and Criwe were written in Prussian I prefer to use one of the Lithuanian transcriptions (also reconstructed) Romuva and Krivis. Other alternatives would be Romovė and Krivė.
- 2 This and the following passage (III.5; Velius ed., 1996: 334, 334-5) have been translated by J. Gordon Howie who has also supplied the following normalised text of the Latin paragraphs. (1) *Fuit autem in medio nationis huius perversae, scilicet in Nadrowia, locus quidam dictus Romow, trahens nomen suum a Roma, in quo habitabat quidam, dictus Criwe, quem colebant pro papa, quia sicut dominus papa regit universalem ecclesiam fidelium, ita ad istius nutum seu mandatum nonsolum gentes praedictae, sed et Lethowini et aliae nationes Lyvoniae terrae regebantur. Tanta fuit auctoritatis, quod non solum ipse vel aliquis de sanguine suo, verum etiam nuntius cum baculo suo vel alio signo noto transiens terminos infidelium praedictorum a regibus et nobilibus, et communi populo in magna reverentia haberetur.* (2) *Circa istos mortuos talis fuit illusio diaboli, quod cum parentes defuncti ad dictum Criwe papam venirent, quaerentes, utrum tali die vel nocte vidisset aliquem domum suam transire, ille Criwe et dispositionem mortui in vestibus, armis, equis et familia <...>. Post victoriam diis suis victimam offerunt, et omnium eorum, que ratione victoriae consecutisunt, tertiam partem dicto Criwe praesentarunt* (alternative form of /praesentaverunt/), *qui combussit talia.*
- 3 It should be kept in mind, however, that “krivė” (crooked one) might in certain cases refer to a natural feature such as a bend in a river.
- 4 This article is an abbreviated and revised form of Vaitkevičius 2003. It has been translated from Lithuanian by Lina Guobienė.

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