

= Poland in Antiquity =

Poland in Antiquity is characterized by peoples belonging to numerous archeological cultures living in and migrating through various parts of the territory that now constitutes Poland in an era that dates from about 400 BC to 450 ? 500 AD . These people are identified as Celtic , Germanic , Baltic and Thracian tribes . Other groups , difficult to identify , were most likely also present , as ethnic composition of archeological cultures is often poorly recognized . While lacking use of a written language to any appreciable degree , many of them developed relatively advanced material culture and social organization , as evidenced by the archeological record , for example judged by the presence of richly furnished , dynastic " princely " graves . Characteristic of the period was high geographical migration rate of large groups of people , even equivalents of today 's nations . This article covers the continuation of the Iron Age (see Bronze and Iron Age Poland) , the La Tène and Roman influence and Migration periods . La Tène period is subdivided into La Tène A , 450 to 400 BC ; La Tène B , 400 to 250 BC ; La Tène C , 250 to 150 BC ; La Tène D , 150 to 0 BC . 400 to 200 BC is also considered the early pre @-@ Roman period and 200 to 0 BC the younger pre @-@ Roman period (A) . It was followed by the period of Roman influence , of which the early stage had lasted from 0 to 150 AD (0 ? 80 B1 , 80 ? 150 B2) , and the late stage from 150 to 375 AD (150 ? 250 C1 , 250 ? 300 C2 , 300 ? 375 C3) . 375 to 500 AD constituted the (pre @-@ Slavic) Migration Period (D and E) .

The Celtic peoples established a number of settlement centers , beginning in the early 4th century BC , mostly in southern Poland , which was at the outer edge of their expansion . Through their highly developed economy and crafts , they exerted lasting cultural influence disproportional to their small numbers in the region .

Expanding and moving out of their homeland in Scandinavia and northern Germany , the Germanic peoples had lived in today 's Poland for several centuries , during which period many of their tribes also migrated out in the southern and eastern directions (see Wielbark culture) . With the expansion of the Roman Empire , the Germanic tribes came under the Roman cultural influence . Some written remarks by Roman authors that are relevant to the developments on Polish lands have been preserved ; they provide additional insight when compared with the archeological record . In the end , as the Roman Empire was nearing its collapse and the nomadic peoples invading from the east destroyed , damaged or destabilized the various Germanic cultures and societies , the Germanic people left eastern and central Europe for the safer and wealthier southern and western parts of the European continent .

The northeast corner of contemporary Poland 's territory was and remained populated by Baltic tribes . They were at the outer limits of significant cultural influence of the Roman Empire .

= = Celtic peoples = =

= = = Archeological cultures and groups = = =

The first Celtic people arrived in Poland , coming from Bohemia and Moravia , around or after 400 BC , just a few decades after their La Tène culture was born . They formed several enclaves mostly in the southern part of the country , within the Pomeranian or Lusatian populations or in areas abandoned by those people . The cultures or groups that were Celtic , or had a Celtic element in them (mixed Celtic and autochthonous) , lasted at their furthest extent to 170 AD (the Púchov culture) . After the Celts moved in , and during their tenure (they had always remained only a small minority) , the bulk of the population had begun acquiring the traits of archaeological cultures with a dominant Proto @-@ Germanic or Germanic component . In Europe the expansion of Rome and the Germanic pressure checked and reversed the Celtic expansion .

At first two groups established themselves on fertile grounds in Silesia : One on the left bank of the Oder River south of Wrocław , in the area that included Mount ?l??a , and one around the G?ubczyce highlands ; both stayed in their respective regions during the 400 ? 120 BC period .

Burial and other significant Celtic sites in Góubczyce County were investigated in Kietrz and nearby Nowa Cerekiew . The ?l??a group disintegrated eventually within the local population , while the one at Góubczyce Upland apparently migrated out in the southern direction . More recent discoveries include Celtic settlements in Wrocław County , where in Wojkowice a well @-@ preserved 3rd century BC grave of a woman with bronze and iron bracelets , brooches , rings and chains was found .

In another hundred years or more two groups arrived and settled the upper San River basin (270 ? 170 BC) and the Kraków area respectively . This last one , together with the local population developing at about that time the Przeworsk culture characteristics (see the next section) , formed the mixed Tyniec group , in existence 270 ? 30 BC . The rise of the Tyniec group took place in particular about 80 ? 70 BC , when the existing settlements received Celtic reinforcements from the more southern populations being displaced from Slovakia by the Dacians . In the 1st century BC another small group settled probably much further north , in Kujawy . And finally there was the long @-@ lasting (270 BC - 170 AD) mixed Púchov culture , associated based on Roman sources with the Celtic Cotini , whose northern reaches included parts of the Beskids mountain range and even the Kraków area .

= = = Economy and crafts , trade and contacts , art = = =

The Celts practiced advanced agriculture and favored fertile lands ; they brought with them and disseminated the inventions , including a variety of tools , and other achievements of La Tène culture . Celtic farmers used plows with iron shares and fertilized fields with animal manure . Their livestock consisted of selected breeds , especially sheep and large cattle . The rotational querns that they invented had a stationary lower stone and an upper one rotated by a lever . Iron was obtained in greater quantities from locally available turf ores ; its metallurgy and processing were improved , resulting in the manufacturing of stronger and more resistant tools and weapons . The ceramic shops used the potter 's wheel and produced with great precision (especially the Tyniec group) baked , thin walled , painted vessels , one of the best in Europe . Domed bilevel furnaces were used , the pots being placed on a perforated clay shelf , with the hearth underneath . Glass and enamel were produced , gold and semi @-@ precious stones were processed for jewelry .

The Celtic communities kept extensive trade contacts with the Greek cities , Etruria and then Rome . They were involved in the amber trade , whose route ran between the Baltic and Adriatic seas , but amber was also worked on in local shops . Metal coins were used and minted (made of gold and silver in addition to the more common metals) around Kraków in the 1st century BC and elsewhere . In Gorzów near O?wi?cim a whole treasure of Celtic coins was discovered . Original Celtic art found its expression in numerous decorations , where plant , animal and anthropomorphic motifs were used . The various Celtic achievements were adopted by the native populations , but usually with considerable delay .

= = = Prominent settlements and burial sites = = =

The settlement in Nowa Cerekiew functioned from the beginning of 4th to the end of the 2nd century BC . One hundred people lived in over twenty houses supported by pillars , with walls made of beams , finished with clay and painted . They were positioned on an elevated area , but the Celtic settlements in Poland had no defensive reinforcements . After the Celts evacuated the area the Nowa Cerekiew settlement remained uninhabited for 150 years , before being reoccupied by the Przeworsk culture people and later the Slavs . Objects recently found at Nowa Cerekiew include a collection of gold and silver coins minted by the Boii tribe (3rd - 2nd century BC) , Greek coins from Sicily and other colonies , and various metal decorative items . Clay containers , jewelry and tools were recovered in the past . Nowa Cerekiew was a major Celtic trade and political centre , one of the very few in central Europe , a source of great profits and northernmost of their Amber Road stations .

Among the most significant Celtic finds in Lesser Poland are the extensive and wealthy settlement

in Podgórze and its associated cemetery in Zakrzowiec , both in Wieliczka County , and a multi @-@ period settlement complex in Aleksandrowice , Kraków County . The Podgórze site was occupied from the mid @-@ 3rd century BC on and yielded many metal objects , coins and coin blank molds , large collection of glass bracelets . The Zakrzowiec Celtic graves have the form of large (several metres long) dugout rectangular enclosures containing the ashes and grave offerings , such as pottery and personal ornaments . Graves of the same type but of a later period , 1st to 2nd century AD , are also found around Kraków , which demonstrates continuation of the Celtic tradition even after the arrival of Germanic tribes in the area . The Celtic burial site investigated in Aleksandrowice contains a rich 2nd century BC assemblage of funerary gifts including iron weapons and decorative elements . The unique fancy decorations , including a sheath with a recurring dragon motif , relate the findings only to the Celtic settlement area in Slovenia and western Croatia .

= = = Spiritual life and cult sites = = =

Within the Celtic spiritual sphere there is considerable variation . The 4th and early 3rd century BC burials in Wrocław and Łódź region are skeletal . Sometimes a man and a woman were buried together , suggesting the known Celtic practice of killing the wife during her husband 's funeral , but women were usually buried separately , with their jewelry . Some of the dead were given meat and a knife for cutting it . From the 3rd century on the bodies were cremated , which was also the case in all of the Lesser Poland burials . There in Iwanowice the graves of Celtic warriors (3rd century BC) contain a very rich assortment of weapons and decorations .

Mount Łódź formation is believed by many to have been a place of exceptional cult significance , over many centuries , possibly going back all the way to the Lusatian times , but especially for the Celts . Chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg mentions in the early 11th century the mountain as a place surrounded by adoration because of its size and the " cursed " pagan ceremonies carried out there . The summits of this and of the neighboring mountains are circled by stone rings and monumental sculptures . Diagonalized cross signs found on many of the stone objects may have had their origin in the Hallstatt - Lusatian solar cult . Such signs can also be seen on the massive " monk " stone sculpture (actually looking more like a simple chess figure or a skittles pin) that was located inside the largest stone ring on Mount Łódź itself and is therefore believed to originate from the Hallstatt cultural circles . The stone rings also contain fragments of Lusatian ceramics . The younger sculptures (" Maiden with a fish " , " Mushroom " and the bear figures) have their distant counterparts in the Iberian Peninsula Celtic art and are thought to be the work of the Celtic people , who developed the Łódź cult center further . After that the Mount Łódź area cult was probably revived by the Slavs , who arrived here in early Middle Ages .

= = Early Germanic peoples = =

= = = La Tène and Jastorf cultures and their role = = =

The Proto @-@ Germanic or Germanic cultures on Polish lands developed gradually and in a diverse way , beginning with the old local Lusatian and Pomeranian stock , influenced and augmented first by La Tène culture and the Celtic people , and then by the Jastorf culture and its tribes , which settled northwestern Poland beginning in the 4th century BC , and later migrated in the southeastern direction through and past the main stretch of Polish lands (mid @-@ 3rd century BC and afterwards) . The disappearing Celtic people made a big impact in central Europe and left a lasting legacy . Their advanced culture catalyzed economic and other progress within the contemporary as well as future populations , which had often had little or no ethnic Celtic component . The archeological period is considered " La Tène " until the beginning of the Common Era . The beginnings of the powerful ascent of the Germanic people , who replaced the Celts , are not easy to discern (e.g. to what degree the Pomeranian culture lands became the Przeworsk culture lands by internal evolution , external population influx or just permeation by the new regional cultural trends) .

The early Germanic Jastorf cultural sphere was in the beginning an impoverished continuation of the North German Urnfield culture and the Nordic circle cultures . It formed around 700 ? 550 BC in northern Germany and Jutland under the Hallstatt influence and in Jastorf 's early stages its funeral customs resembled a lot those of the contemporary Pomeranian culture . From the Jastorf culture , which rapidly expanded from around 500 BC on , two groups sprang and settled the western borderlands of Poland during the 300 ? 100 BC period : The Oder group in western Pomerania and the Gubin group further south . These peripheral for the Jastorf culture groups very likely originated as Pomeranian culture populations influenced by the Jastorf cultural model . Jastorf communities established large burial grounds , separate for men and women . The dead were cremated and the ashes placed in urns , which were covered by bowls turned upside down . Funeral gifts were modest and rather uniform , indicating a society that was neither affluent nor socially diversified .

The above @-@ mentioned migration was undertaken by a part of the Jastorf population , which probably included the tribes later called Bastarnae and Scirii in Greek written sources , noted because of their military exploits around Greece and Greek colonies in the later part of the 3rd century BC . Their route went along the Warta and Note? rivers , then crossed Kujawy and Masovia , turned south along the Bug River and continued on to what today is Moldavia , where they settled and developed the Poienesti @-@ Lukasevka culture . The route is marked by archeological findings , especially the characteristic bronze crown @-@ shaped necklaces .

= = = Oksywie culture and Przeworsk culture = = =

While it is not clear whether , and to what degree or for what duration some of the passing Jastorf culture people settled at that time on Polish lands , their migration catalyzed , together with the accelerated at this point La Tène culture influence , the emergence of the Oksywie and Przeworsk cultures . Both new cultures were under a strong Jastorf circles influence . The increasingly common within the Przeworsk culture area presence of objects made by the Jastorf people reflects penetration by their population . Both the Oksywie and Przeworsk cultures fully utilized iron processing technologies , and , unlike their predecessor cultures , they show no regional differentiation .

The Oksywie culture , so named after a village (now within the city of Gdynia) where a burial site was found , lasted from 250 BC to 30 AD and originally occupied the Vistula delta region , then the rest of eastern Pomerania , expanded west up to the Jastorf Oder group area , in the 1st century BC also including partially what was before that group 's territory . It had basically , like other cultures of this period , La Tène cultural characteristics , with traits typical of the Baltic cultures . Oksywie culture 's ceramics and burial customs indicate strong ties with the Przeworsk culture . Men only had their ashes placed in well made black urns with fine finish and a decorative band around . Their graves were supplied (unlike those of the Jastorf culture) with utensils and weapons , including typical for this culture swords with one @-@ sided edge , and were often covered or marked by stones . Women 's ashes were buried in hollows and supplied with feminine items . A clay vessel with relief animal images found in Go??biowo Wielkie in Gda?sk County (2nd half of the 1st century BC) is among the finest in all of the Germanic cultural zone .

The Przeworsk culture , named after a town in Lesser Poland , near which another burial ground was found , originated like the Oksywie culture around 250 BC , but lasted a long time . In its course it went through many changes , formed tribal and political structures , fought wars , also with the Romans , until in the 5th century AD its highly developed society of farmers , artisans , warriors and chiefs left for the temptations of the fallen empire lands (for many of them it happened possibly rather quickly , during the first half of that century) .

The Przeworsk culture initially became established in Lower Silesia , Greater Poland , central Poland , and western Masovia and Lesser Poland , gradually replacing , moving eastbound , the Pomeranian culture and the Cloche Grave culture , coexisting with the older cultures for a while (in some cases well into the younger pre @-@ Roman period , 200 to 0 BC) and assimilating in process some of their characteristics , for example the Cloche Grave funerary practice and ceramics

. The Przeworsk people must have originated from the above two local cultures , because of the lack of any other archeologically viable possibility , but in respect to their predecessors they represent a striking cultural discontinuity (different cremation rite and pottery) .

In the 2nd and 1st century BC (late La Tène period) they followed the lead of the more advanced Celts , who had established population enclaves in southern and middle Poland . The Przeworsk culture developed as a result of the local populations ' adoption of the La Tène culture models . The passage of the Bastarnae and Scirii and the associated unrest likely functioned as the outside catalyzing agent : Jastorf culture archeological material has been found in pre @-@ Przeworsk artifact assemblages and in some of the early Przeworsk range . The Przeworsk people mastered and implemented the various achievements of the Celts , most importantly developing large scale production of iron . Local bog ores were used for that purpose . They sometimes formed mixed groups and cooperated within common settlements with the Celts , of which the Tynieć group in the Kraków region and another one in Kujawy are the known examples . Arms , clothes and ornaments were patterned after the Celtic products . In the early stages the Przeworsk people displayed no social distinction , their graves were alike and flat , and ashes together with funeral gifts buried usually without urns . Religious practices of pagan Germanic people included offering ceremonies performed in swamp areas , involving man @-@ made objects , produce , farm animals , or even human sacrifice , as was the case at a site near S?owikowo in S?upca County ; another such investigated site is in Otal??ka , Grójec County . Dog burials within or around a homestead were another form of protective offerings .

As the Celtic domination in this part of Europe was coming to an end and the borders of the Roman Empire had gotten much closer , the Przeworsk culture people were being subjected to the Greco @-@ Roman world 's influence with a rapidly growing intensity .

= = Cultures and tribes in Roman times = =

= = = Early Roman wars and movement of tribes = = =

Much circumstantial evidence points to the participation of Germanic people from Polish lands in the events that took place in the first half of the 1st century BC and found their culmination in Gaul in 58 BC , as related in Caesar 's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* . At the time of the Suebi tribal confederation led by Ariovistus arrival in Gaul , a rapid decrease of settlement density can be observed in the areas of the upper and middle Oder River basin . In fact the Gubin group of the Jastorf culture disappeared then entirely , which may indicate this group 's identity with one of the Suebi tribes . The western regions of the Przeworsk culture were also vacated (Lower Silesia , Lubusz Land and western Greater Poland) , which is where the tribes accompanying the Suebi tribes must have come from . Burial sites and artifacts characteristic of the Przeworsk culture have been found in Saxony , Thuringia and Hesse , on the route of the Suebi offensive . The above @-@ mentioned regions of western Poland had not become repopulated and economically developed again until in the 2nd century AD .

As a result of the consequent Roman efforts to subjugate all of Germania , the member tribes of the Suebi alliance became displaced , moved east , conquered the Celtic tribes that stood in their way and settled , the Quadi in Moravia , and the Marcomanni in Bohemia . The latter tribe , under Marbod , formed a quasi @-@ state with a huge army and was able to conquer the Lugii tribal association among others . What archeologists see as the Przeworsk culture , by this period (early 1st century AD) is believed to consist first of all of the Lugii tribes . A Roman defeat in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (9 AD) stabilized the situation at the periphery of the Empire to some degree . The Lugii and other tribes on Polish lands increasingly became involved in trade and other contacts , through the Marcomanni and Quadi intermediaries , with the Danubian provinces of Rome . The Lugii , according to Tacitus , was a very large union of tribes . In 50 AD they invaded and pillaged the Quadi state created by Vannius , contributing to its fall . The motivation for the expedition were the rumours of the enormous riches that Vannius had accumulated by plunder and

charging duties . In 93 AD the Lugii , fighting a war with the Suebi , asked Emperor Domitian for help , and received one hundred mounted soldiers .

= = = Amber Road = = =

Operations of the ancient Amber Road - a trans @-@ European , north @-@ south amber trade route , continued and intensified during the Roman Empire times . From the 1st century BC the Amber Road connected the Baltic Sea shores and Aquileia , an important amber processing center . This route was controlled first by the Celts , and later by the Romans south of the Danube , by Germanic tribes north of that river , and was used for transporting a variety of traded merchandise (and slaves) besides amber . As told in *Naturalis Historia* by Pliny the Elder , during the reign of Nero an equestrian of unknown name led an expedition to the Baltic shorelines , from where he brought a huge quantity of amber , which was subsequently used for propaganda purposes during public games - gladiator fights . The infrastructure of the Amber Road was destroyed by Germanic and Sarmatian attacks in the second half of the 3rd century AD ; to a lesser degree it was still used intermittently until the mid @-@ 6th century . The Przeworsk culture sites provide a rich assortment of Amber Road traded objects .

= = = Gustow group and Lubusz group = = =

From the beginning of the new era until 140 AD two local groups existed in northwest Poland . The Gustow group (named after Gustow on Rügen) people lived in the area settled in the past by the Oder group , and south of there , by the middle section of the Oder River was the Lubusz group , in the area previously inhabited by the Gubin group . Those were of an intermediate character , between the Elbe cultural circle to the west , and the Przeworsk and Wielbark cultures to the east (the last one replaced the Oksywie culture after 30 AD) .

= = = Przeworsk culture settlements and burial sites = = =

The Przeworsk culture people of the earlier Roman period lived in small , unprotected villages , populated each by a few dozen residents at most , made up of several houses , usually set partially below the ground level (semi @-@ sunken) , each covering an area of 8 ? 22 square meters . They knew how to dig and build wells , so the settlements didn 't have to be located near bodies of water . Thirteen 2nd century wells with variously constructed timber lined walls were found at a settlement in Stanisławice , Bochnia County . Fields were being used for crop cultivation for a while and then as pastures , when animal excrement helped the soil regain fertility . Once iron share plows were introduced the fields were alternated between tillage and grazing .

Several or more settlements made up a micro @-@ region , within which the residents cooperated economically and buried their dead in a common cemetery , but which was separated from other micro @-@ regions by undeveloped areas . A number of such micro @-@ regions possibly made up a tribe , with these separated by empty space , zones " of mutual fear " , as Tacitus put it . The tribes in turn , especially if they were culturally closely related , would at times form larger structures , such as temporary alliances for waging wars , or even early statehood forms .

A Przeworsk culture turn of the millennium industrial complex for the extraction of salt from salt springs was discovered in Chabsk near Mogilno .

Examinations of the burial grounds , of which even the largest used continuously over periods of up to several centuries , contains no more than several hundreds graves , shows that the overall population density was low . The dead were cremated and the ashes sometimes placed in urns , which had the mid @-@ part in the form of an engraved bulge . In the 1st century AD this was replaced with a sharp @-@ profiled (with a horizontal ridge around the circumference) shape .

In Siemiechów a grave of a warrior who must have taken part in the Ariovistus expedition during the 70 ? 50 BC period was found ; it contains Celtic weapons and an Alpine region manufactured helmet used as an urn , together with local ceramics . The burial gifts were often , for unknown

reasons , bent or broken , and then burned with the body . The burials range from " poor " to " rich " , the latter ones supplied with fancy Celtic and then Roman imports , reflecting a considerably by this time developed social stratification .

= = = Wielbark culture and its burials = = =

The Wielbark culture , named after Wielbark in Malbork County , where a large cemetery was found , replaced in Pomerania the Oksywie culture rather suddenly and over its entire territory . While the Oksywie culture was closely related to the Przeworsk culture , its successor the Wielbark culture shows only minimal contacts with the Przeworsk areas , indicating a clear tribal and geographical separation . The Wielbark culture lasted on Polish lands from 30 to 400 AD , although most of its people left Poland long before that later date . Some of this culture 's burials are skeletal - the dead were inhumed in solid wood log coffins , while other crematory , both identically equipped . The cremated remains were either placed in urns , or just buried in dents . No weapons or tools were put there , but clay vessels , decorations , attire elements and spurs , if the deceased was well @-@ positioned enough to possess a horse . Those various items , and especially the 1st and 2nd century AD jewelry , made of bronze , silver and gold , are the works of highest quality and exceed the comparable products of the Przeworsk culture . This craftsmanship reached its apex in the 2nd century finesse of " baroque " jewelry , beautiful by any standards , placed in graves of women in (as the Wielbark culture expanded south) Poznań, Szeląg and Kowalewko , Oborniki County , among other places .

The Kowalewko cemetery in Greater Poland is one of the largest in Poland and is distinguished by a great number of beautiful relics , made locally or imported from the Empire . The total number of burials is estimated at over 500 , most of which have been excavated . 60 percent of the bodies were not cremated and typically placed in wooden coffins constructed of board or plank pieces . The burial ground was in use from the mid @-@ 1st century AD to about 220 , which gives approximately 80 area inhabitants per generation . Remnants of settlements in the region have also been investigated . At Rogowo near Chełmno a Wielbark settlement , an industrial production site and a 2nd to 3rd century bi @-@ ritual cemetery with very richly furnished graves have been discovered . In the area of Ulkowskie , Gdańsk County a settlement consisting of both sunken floor and post construction dwellings , as well as a burial ground in use from the mid @-@ 1st century to the second half of the 3rd century were found . Only a part of the cemetery was excavated on the occasion of a motorway construction , but it yielded 110 inhumations (11 in hollowed @-@ out log coffins) and 15 cremations (8 of them in urns) and a rich collection of decorative objects , mostly from the graves of women . Those include fancy jewelry and accessories made of gold , silver , bronze , amber , glass and enameled plates . Ceramics , utility items and tools including weaving equipment were recovered from the settlement site . Other significant Wielbark settlements in the area were encountered in Swarzędz and Stanisławów , both in Tczew County .

Many Wielbark graves were flat , but kurgans are also characteristic and common . In the case of kurgans the grave was covered with stones , which were surrounded by a circle made of larger stones . More earth material was piled to cover all that , with a solitary stone , or stela often put on top . Such a kurgan could include one or several individual burials , have a diameter of up to a dozen or so meters and be up to one meter high . On some burial grounds large stone circles are found . These consist of massive boulders or rock pieces , up to 1 @.@ 7 meters high , separated by several meters wide spaces , sometimes connected by smaller stones , the whole structure having a 10 to 40 meter diameter . In the middle of the circles one to four stelae were placed , and sometimes a single grave . The stone circles are believed to be the locations of meetings of Scandinavian (see below) tings - assemblies or courts . The single graves inside the circles are probably of people sacrificed and buried there - human offerings to the gods , to assure their support for the deliberations . A stone kurgans cemetery was found in Wąsosz , Kartuzy County ; another burial site with ten large stone circles was discovered in Odry , Chojnice County , both dated 2nd century AD .

= = = Origins and expansion of the Wielbark culture = = =

This brings the issue of the mysterious origin of the Wielbark culture , and why it so immediately replaced the Oksywie culture . According to the legend quoted in The Origin and Deeds of the Goths by the 6th century Gothic historian Jordanes , the ancestors of that Germanic tribe arrived from Scandinavia (under King Berig) in two boatloads and landed on the South Baltic shores , followed by a third boat carrying the ancestors of the Gepids . Supposedly they conquered the native people of that region , and then , some years later (under King Filimer , the fifth one counting from Berig) , continued their migration toward the Black Sea . This story , in the past dismissed , is now seen as containing basic elements of the true sequence of events and the Wielbark culture is in part identified with Germanic ancestors of the Goths indeed . The idea of an arrival in the mouth of the Vistula region of culturally different (although related) people , who mixed with the Oksywie culture population , and being more advanced possibly dominated it (at least culturally) to some degree , is not at odds with the state of archeological findings and may explain the change of cultures in Pomerania around 30 AD .

Archeology nevertheless shows the evolution of the Oksywie culture to be the fundamental source of the Wielbark culture , as the two cultures extended over exactly the same territory and continuously used the same cemeteries . The locally present Veneti and Rugians became influenced by the Goths or their Scandinavian protoplasts . It is presently believed that the Scandinavian arrivals directly settled the areas where the great cult kurgan and stone burial grounds are found . They are referred to as the Odry @-@ W?siory @-@ Grzybnica type , were established in the second half of 1st century AD and occur in parts of Pomerania west of the Vistula , up to the Koszalin area . The contemporary and rather closely related Wielbark culture in (previously settled by the Przeworsk culture) Greater Poland , represented by the Kowalewko cemetery , lacks however for the most part the kurgans and the stone structures . The Wielbark people came here from Pomerania .

In the course of the 1st and 2nd century AD the Wielbark culture expanded south , towards Greater Poland and Masovia , partially at the expense of the Przeworsk culture . Around the mid @-@ 1st century the Wielbark culture people forced out the Przeworsk population from northern Greater Poland and settled the area for about 150 years . The Przeworsk culture itself also expanded in the southern , eastern and south @-@ western directions .

= = " Barbarians " , Late Roman Empire and the Great Migration of Peoples = =

= = = Marcomannic Wars and movement of tribes = = =

The Marcomannic Wars fought during 166 ? 180 AD were caused by the pressure exerted by the northern Germanic peoples (settled around the area of today 's Poland) on the tribes located in the vicinity of Roman limes , the Empire 's defended border . Expansion of the Proto @-@ Gothic Wielbark culture displaced from northern Greater Poland and Masovia the Przeworsk culture people ; they in turn , moving south and east , crossed during the third quarter of the 2nd century the Carpathian Mountains . The ethnic composition of the Przeworsk population at this stage is not known , as the Lugii tribes no longer seem to be mentioned . Related to the Przeworsk culture was the Wietrzno @-@ Solina type , a cultural unit with Celtic and then Dacian elements , situated within the more eastern part of the Beskids range (San River basin) during the 100 ? 250 AD period . The Kotins tribe Celtic survivors with their Púchov culture disappeared now for good , as a result of their migration and involvement in the Marcomannic Wars . There were also changes in northwest Poland , on the border of the Elbe cultural sphere region . The Lubusz group there was absorbed by the new Luboszyce culture (Luboszyce , Krosno Odrza?skie County) , that occupied the middle Oder basin during the 140 ? 430 AD period . Its birth was related to the arrival from the east of population groups strongly influenced by the Przeworsk and Wielbark cultures . Gradually a new branch of Germanic people , the Burgundians , whose origins are traced back to Scandinavia and the

Bornholm island in particular and whose ancestors then migrated to the northwest Przeworsk culture area, developed and evolved under new favorable conditions here. On the other hand, the Gustow group left western Pomerania, to be replaced after 70 years by the Dąbczyn group (Dąbczyn, Wschowa County), established by the arrivals from the Elbe cultures and lasting between 210 and 450 AD.

== Economic development and currency ==

The economic development of what to the Romans were barbarian lands (also called "Barbaricum", regions populated mostly by Germanic peoples, north and northeast of the Empire) benefited greatly from the skills of the prisoners taken during the protracted Marcomannic Wars, Roman legionaries and craftsmen, some of whom undoubtedly stayed beyond the limes and made their contribution there. Contacts with the wealthy Danubian Roman provinces during the wars were also quite active and intensive. Because of all that, from the end of the 2nd century AD on, the Roman @-@ originated and based technical expertise and inventions were becoming increasingly widespread within the Germanic societies. For example, besides traditional houses supported by pillars, framework houses were being built, lathe machines were used for amber and other jewelry work. The barbarian societies were getting more wealthy and, especially during the last centuries of imperial Rome, more socially polarized.

An estimated 70 @, @ 000 Roman coins from all periods were found in Poland, starting with the 2nd century BC silver denarii. A treasure of these and other coins, some as early as the 1st century AD, was found in Połaniec, Staszów County, probably a booty captured around 19 AD from King Marbod of the Marcomanni. Greater waves of Roman money found their way to Poland throughout 1st and 2nd centuries and then again during 4th and 5th centuries, this time as bronze and golden solidi. The barbarians did not use them for commerce; they were being accumulated in dynastic treasuries of rulers and occasionally used for ceremonial gift exchange. The chiefs also kept large golden Roman medallions or their local imitations. The largest barbarian medallion, an equivalent of 48 solidi, is a part of the gold and silver treasure found in Zagórzyn near Kalisz.

== Princely burials ==

The evolution of the power structure within the Germanic societies in Poland and elsewhere can be traced to some degree by examining the "princely" graves - burials of chiefs, and even hereditary princes, as the consolidation of power progressed. Those appear from the beginning of the Common Era and are located away from ordinary cemeteries, singly or in small groups. The bodies were inhumed in wooden coffins and covered with kurgans, or interred in wooden or stone chambers. Luxurious Roman @-@ made gifts and fancy barbarian emulations (such as silver and gold clasps with springs, created with an unsurpassed attention to detail, dated 3rd century AD from Wrocław Zakrzów), but not weapons, were placed in the graves. The 1st and 2nd century burials of this type, occurring all the way from Jutland to Lesser Poland, are referred to as princely graves Lubieszewo type, after Lubieszewo, Gryfice County in western Pomerania, where six such burials were found. On the 3rd and 4th century sites two types of princely graves are distinguished. The Zakrzów type, named after the location of three very rich stone chamber burials found in Wrocław Zakrzów occur in southern Poland, while in the northern and central parts of the country the Rostółty (Białystok County) type kurgans are rather common. At some sites, believed to be dynastic necropolises, the princes were buried in generation long time increments. During the late Roman period the princely burials are fewer in number, but they get increasingly more elaborate.

== Ceramics and metallurgy ==

The pottery as well as iron mining and processing industries kept developing in Poland throughout the Roman periods, until terminated in the 5th century or so by the Great Migration. Clay pots were still often formed manually and these were more crude, while the better ones were made with the

potter's wheel, used beginning in the early 3rd century. Some had inscriptions engraved, but their meaning, if any, is not known (Germanic people had occasionally used the runic alphabets). Wide open, vase type Przeworsk culture urn from the 2nd century AD found in Biały, Zgierz County is covered with representations from Celtic and Germanic mythology, such as deer, horse riders, crosses and swastikas. The 3rd and 4th century buckets were made of wood and reinforced with bronze braces and sheets. Przeworsk culture's large globular clay storage containers from the 3rd and 4th century were 60 cm to over one meter tall. The 4th and 5th century ceramic specimens from the late phase of this culture include pitchers, clay pails, beakers and bowls.

Characteristic of the Roman times iron industry were huge centers of metallurgy. One such concentration of ironworks, in Więtokrzyskie Mountains, which already produced iron on an industrial scale in the 1st century AD, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries became Barbaricum's largest. It may have been responsible for the majority of the iron supplied for barbarian weapon production during the Marcomannic Wars. The iron product was obtained in rather small, single use smelting furnaces. One furnace's iron output was from a few to 20 kg, which required 10 to 200 kg of ore and the same amount of charcoal. The satisfaction of so much need for charcoal caused significant deforestation of the areas surrounding the iron centers. Not only turf, but also hematite ores were utilized, which involved building mines and shafts to provide access. The furnaces in Więtokrzyskie Mountains were grouped into large complexes, located in forested areas, away from human settlements. There could have been as many as 700,000 smelting furnaces built in that area; one big concentration of the Przeworsk culture's spent furnaces (2nd-3rd centuries) was located in Nowa Sępia, Kielce County. The second largest iron production center functioned at that time in Masovia, west of Warsaw, with the total number of furnaces there, in which only turf ores were used, estimated at up to 200,000. They were operated as very large complexes, with several thousand furnaces at a time located near populated areas, where intermediate products were processed further. Those two great concentrations of metallurgical industry produced iron largely for long distance trade; to fulfill local requirements and on smaller scale iron was obtained at a number of other locations.

Graves of warrior-smiths buried with weapons and sets of tools were found, which suggests that they belonged to the societal upper ranks and were held in high esteem.

== Weapons and tools ==

A set of iron carpenter's tools from the 3rd-4th century, including a compass for marking circles, was found in Przywóz, Wieluń County, where there was a Przeworsk culture settlement and a 2nd / 3rd century dynastic burial complex. The graves of Przeworsk men typically include substantial collections of arms, so that their warrior's battle equipment and its evolution are well known. Less wealthy warriors fought typically on foot, with spears (for close range combat) and javelins (for throwing), both with iron heads. The better off fighters used swords, first of the long Celtic kind, and then in the 1st and 2nd century AD of the short and broad, gladius Roman infantry type. Swords were kept in sheaths, some of which, depending on status, were very ornate. The long and narrow swords, better suited for horseback combat, became popular again in the 3rd century, but only the more wealthy warriors had horses, not to mention iron helmets or ring armor. Round wooden shields had iron umbos in the middle, usually with a thorn for piercing the enemy. There were no saddles, but the richest of horsemen used silver spurs and bronze bridles with chain reins. Numerous Przeworsk culture objects including spurs and a unique silver belt buckle were recovered at the Aleksandrowice, Kraków County settlement area; some relics there are dated possibly as late as the first half of the 6th century.

== Migrations of Wielbark and Przeworsk cultures people ==

In the 2nd century AD the Proto-Gothic people of the Wielbark culture began their own great migration, moving east, south and south-east. In the first half of the 3rd century they left most of Pomerania except for the lower Vistula region, where a small Wielbark population remained.

; Pomerania west of there became mostly settled by the Dąbczyn group . Also evacuated at that time northern Greater Poland was retaken by the Przeworsk culture people . The Wielbark people successively took over eastern Masovia , Lesser Poland , Podlasie , Polesie and Volhynia . They settled in Ukraine , where they encountered other peoples , which resulted in the early 3rd century AD in the rise of the Chernyakhov culture . This last culture , which in the 4th century encompassed large areas of southeastern Europe , was of a mixed ethnic composition ; in the more western part it was made up of the Wielbark culture people , as well as other Germanic people and the Dacians . It was within the Chernyakhov culture that the Gothic tribes assumed their mature form .

The Przeworsk culture populations were for the most part also moving (to a lesser extent) south and east , which by the 4th century caused a lessening of the population density in northern and central Poland with a simultaneous settlement concentration increases in Lesser Poland and Silesia . The Przeworsk people there at this point in time are often identified with the Vandals Germanic tribe . The 4th and 5th century Przeworsk societies had to cope with a deterioration of their traditional tribal social structure , caused by the accumulation of wealth and influence in the hands of the rich , the warriors , the tribal elders and rulers , who controlled the trade , imposed contributions and plundered . During these two centuries the number of the Przeworsk culture settlements and cemeteries generally decreases . There are also clear signs of the environment being overly exploited , which provided another motivation for the population to gradually leave . Most burials were getting more poorly equipped , in comparison with the previous periods . Late Przeworsk culture ceramic materials from Greater Poland show impoverishment and lack of differentiation of form , but on the other hand metal 5th century clasps , found at a variety of locations from eastern Lesser Poland , through eastern Greater Poland to Kujawy , demonstrate the usual for mature Germanic societies highest quality of workmanship .

= = = Hun advance , barbarian migrations in Europe = = =

On top of the Przeworsk culture 's internal crisis situation came external pressures , namely the massive migration of peoples . At around 370 AD the Huns crossed the Volga River , defeating the Alans and then the Ostrogoths , causing in 375 the fall of their state located in the Black Sea shores region . This unleashed a domino effect , as various Germanic peoples moved west and south to avoid the danger . The Visigoths and others retreated , forcing further migrations , while the weakness of the Roman Empire encouraged encroachments of its territory , the whole scenario resulting in the fall of its western part . The paths of this Great Migration of Peoples led in part through the Polish lands , and the Germanic tribes living here joined the movement themselves , with the result of an almost complete , in the course of the 5th century , depopulation of Poland .

In the upper Vistula basin , where the Przeworsk culture settlements were still relatively dense in the first half of the 5th century , they are markedly absent during the second half of it . This is also the case in Silesia - the depopulation pattern began there earlier and the latest finds are dated around 400 AD . All of it agrees well with the information given by Procopius of Caesarea , according to whom the Heruli returning to Scandinavia from the Carpathian Basin in 512 , heading towards the Varni tribe area in Germany , crossed a large region devoid of human settlements - presumably Silesia and Lusatia . Likewise there are no settlements found in Masovia and Podlasie beyond the early part of the 5th century . On the other hand , in central Poland and Greater Poland isolated remnants from the Roman era cultures continue to be located through the end of 5th and even into the earlier parts of the 6th century . Still further north , in Pomerania , such findings are actually quite numerous , including many cult coin deposit sites (Roman and then Byzantine golden solidi) . That 's where the Germanic groups lasted the longest (and kept up trade and other contacts with their brethren elsewhere) .

The territory of the powerful confederation of the Hun tribes included about 400 AD the lands of southern Poland , where burial and treasure sites have been investigated . A woman 's grave in Jędrzychowice , Strzelin County contained fancy feminine ornaments and a nicely preserved bronze kettle , which gave a name (" Jędrzychowice ") to one of the two basic Hun kettle types , while a burial of a young warrior aristocrat including his horse and precious harness , attire and

weaponry elements (gold sheet covered ritual bow and sword sheath) was found in Jakuszowice , Kazimierza Wielka County . Still further east , in ?wilcza near Rzeszów a hidden Hun treasure was located ; this last find dates from the mid @-@ 5th century , when the Hun empire was about to crumble .

= = Baltic peoples = =

= = = Early Balts in light of ancient sources and linguistic research = = =

The Balts or Baltic peoples , or their Indo @-@ European protoplasts , have settled (at different times different parts of) the territory of today 's northeast Poland as well as the lands located further north and east , generally east of the lower Vistula River , the Baltic seashore north of there including and past the Sambian peninsula , and the inland area east of the above regions (some of their ancestors came from as far east as the upper Oka River) , from the early Iron Age . The analysis of the Baltic historic range has been aided by the studies of their characteristic toponyms and hydronyms , in addition to the examination of the archeological record and the few ancient written sources .

Herodotus wrote of the Neuri tribe , who lived beyond the Scythians and to the north of whom the land was uninhabited as far as he knew .

Of the Baltic tribes may have written Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy when they spoke of the Veneti , Venedi or Venedai people . Pliny in Natural History locates them in the mouth of the Vistula region , while Ptolemy in Geographia just east of the lower Vistula along the Bay of Gda?sk . The Western Baltic Veneti 's territory may have reached east all the way to Sambia . Tacitus in Germania , describing (possibly the same) inhabitants of the south @-@ eastern Baltic shores , mentioned the Aesti people , involved in collecting amber not for their own use but for long distance trade in a raw state . Jordanes in Getica speaks of the " Aesti , who dwell on the farthest shore of the German Ocean " (beyond the Germanic @-@ named Vidivarii people , who occupied the mouth of the Vistula area) . This " Ocean " he defines as where the floods of the Vistula empty , the Baltic Sea . Various versions of the Aesti name were used later for various purposes ; in particular that 's what in the 9th century the Baltic Old Prussian people were called and their country was then referred to as Aestland .

Ptolemy in Geographia gives the names of two Baltic tribes : " Galindai " and " Soudinoi " , which he localized east of the lower Vistula , some distance from the sea , just about where the Baltic Galindians (in Masuria) , and the Sudovians or Yotvingians east of the Galindians lived a thousand years later .

According to linguistic sources , the Baltic tribes precursors appeared first inland , in the forest zone regions far from the sea , and only later settled the near Baltic Sea areas , extending from the northeastern part of the Vistula basin to the Daugava River basin . This westbound expansion resulted in the establishment of the two main Baltic branches : The Western Balts , represented by the extinct Old Prussians and Yotvingians , and the Eastern Balts including the modern nations of Lithuanians and Latvians .

= = = Western Balt culture = = =

The Western Baltic Kurgans culture , which resulted from the interaction between groups arriving from the east and the people living in the Masuria @-@ Sambia region (middle first millennium BC) is discussed in the Bronze and Iron Age Poland article , within its time frame . The process of separation and differentiation of the eastern and western Baltic tribes deepened during the period of Roman influence , when the economy , culture and customs of the Western Balts became increasingly influenced by the more highly developed Przeworsk and Wielbark cultures people . From the beginning of the Common Era we can speak of the Western Balt culture , which included several distinct groups of the Western Baltic cultural circle and which definitely can be connected

with the Baltic peoples .

Beginning in the 1st century AD the Western Balts experienced their " golden " period - the times of economic expansion and increased affluence of their societies , all of which was based on the amber trade , but resulted in active and long term contacts with the lands of the Roman Empire . As late as in the early 6th century an Aesti mission arrived in Italy at the court of King Theodoric the Great of the Ostrogoths with gifts of amber . As elsewhere , with wealth came imported and locally manufactured luxurious objects , social stratification and an emergence of the " princely " class , together with the appearance of their burials .

= = = Balt settlements , economy , crafts and burials = = =

Despite the advent of iron reinforced plows and other improved methods of crop cultivation , the regional environmental conditions placed limits on the practicality and extend of land tillage , but various grains , beans and peas were grown . The dense forest coverage on the other hand facilitated gathering and was more amenable to the raising of farm animals , which involved all of the major species , including in particular the small , forest type horses . The horses constituted an important element of the Baltic tribes ' culture ? men of the upper socioeconomic status were often buried with their horses and even together with their fancy horsemanship gear .

The settlements were small , forming family based communities , but some of them were more sizable and functioned over many generations . They lacked artificial fortifications , but natural factors facilitating self @-@ defense were often utilized . Such settlements could form small clusters separated by uninhabited areas . One rather large dwelling place , which functioned from the 2nd to the 4th century , was discovered and investigated in Osowo near Suwa?ki . The living quarters consisted of pillar supported houses , while the farming infrastructure area included eighty grain storage caves . Small fortified refuge areas were built to a limited extend beginning at the end of the 4th century , but on a larger scale fortified settlements were constructed by the Western Balts only during the Middle Ages .

The dominant burial customs involved cremation of bodies , with the ashes placed in urns that were either ceramic , or made from organic materials , such as fabric or leather . The flat graves , in seashore areas covered by stone pavement , formed large cemeteries . Skeletal burials from 1st and 2nd centuries are found in Sambia , and later ones (3rd ? 4th centuries) in Sudovia . In this case the usually single graves had stone structure and kurgans . From about 400 AD on cremation became the only form of burial and the " familiar " kurgans emerged ? each grave contains the remains of several persons .

Samples of ancient Baltic mature craftsmanship (2nd ? 4th century) have been found in ?ywa Woda and Sz wajcaria , both in Suwa?ki County and in Augustów County among other places . The princely graves as usual also contain many imports from southern and western Europe . Baltic fine bronze ornamental items , such as thin , openworked plates for the attachment of necklaces , were typically coated with colored , often red enamel . Foreign influence can also be seen in the design of clay urns , such as the 3rd or 4th century Greek kernos type vessel with additional miniature urns attached , or the 5th century " window " container with a square opening from Olsztyn County , similar to the urns found in Denmark and northwestern Germany .

= = = Olsztyn group = = =

The last mentioned specimen comes from the Olsztyn group burial ground in Tumiany . The Olsztyn group represents the late phase of the Western Baltic cultural circle , with the beginnings in the second half of the 5th century and the developed stages in 6th and 7th centuries . It was located in Masuria , partially in areas vacated by the Wielbark culture people . The group is believed to have been established by branches of the Galindians tribe , including a part of it that migrated to southern Europe and then returned to the Baltic area . The Olsztyn group cemeteries contain horse burials and many sophisticated style plate clasps , buckles , connectors and other objects made of bronze , silver and gold , studded with semi @-@ precious stones and decorated with engravings , which

demonstrate its people 's extensive interregional and far reaching trade and other relationships and contacts , that included Scandinavia , western , southern and southeastern Europe .

= = = Migrations and their effects on Baltic people = = =

The Baltic settlement patterns were being altered beginning in the 5th century by the Migration Period population shifts and the pressure from the westbound movement of the Slavic peoples . The Western Balts took over the lands left by the Wielbark culture people and reached the eastern part of the mouth of the Vistula . A major trade route connecting the southeastern Baltic areas with the Black Sea shores went now through the regions controlled by the Balts . Expansion of the Old Prussian tribes , for example the previously mentioned Galindians and Yotvingians , encompassed today 's northeast Poland and the adjacent territories further north . Galindia (today 's western Masuria) , including the Olsztyn group , became in 6th and 7th centuries the most affluent of the Baltic people settled lands , with highly developed local craftsmanship supplementing the wealth of items brought from distant countries .

This westbound expansion was accompanied by the regress at the southeastern bounds of the Baltic range caused by the advancing Slavs , the Balts ' closest relatives . A majority of the Baltic peoples , whose population at the end of first millennium AD is estimated at about 480 thousand , became extinct during the later Middle Ages because of attempts of forced Christianisation , conquest and extermination , or assimilation , the Old Prussians being the primary example . Lithuanians and Latvians are the surviving Baltic peoples .