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Logboats on the Nemunas and Connecting Waterways

Summary. The logboat is by many considered to be the earliest ancestor of all modern boats. It has a documented consecutive history in Europe of over 8000 years, and watercraft of more or less similar design remain in use to this day. Logboats are not commonly used in Europe these days, but Lithuania happens to be among the few countries where they still can be found in active use. This can ironically be of negative influence when it comes to protecting and preserving the oldest logboats for the future. Archaeological discoveries of logboats are usually made by the general public, and in order for them to report such a find they must first recognize it as being of potential archaeological or historical value. That may not always be obvious to the person who makes the discovery, regarding the fact that such vessels still can be found in use, and also when taken into consideration the somewhat limited maritime traditions in Lithuania. In other countries where the maritime traditions are stronger we see that not only is there a considerably stronger interest in watercraft, but the number of preserved archaeological finds of logboats are also more numerous. This article gives a general introduction to logboats in general, how they can be constructed and operated, and presents logboat research from other European countries. It further compares Lithuanian logboat finds to those in some other European countries, and analyses the future potential for such archaeological finds in Lithuania. Given the long history of human activity in Lithuania and the favourable conditions for the preservation of logboats in this area, that potential should be significant. And if experiences from other European countries are anything to go by, such future potential logboat discoveries might hold considerable potential in terms of symbolism and identity.

Keywords: logboats, primitive watercraft, early trade, first boats, inland water travel.

The earliest type of boat

Man has made use of the waterways ever since we first learned how travel over water. This is a well-established archaeological fact, manifested in both artefacts

and primitive art from around the world\(^2\). These early watercraft were simple solutions to immediate problems, like the need to cross a river or to gain access to resources like fish\(^3\). Anyone with a bit of fishing experience will know that it soon becomes apparent that to be confined to fishing from the shore is a significant disadvantage, and the fisherman will soon want to go where the fish is. This would mean getting a boat. The oldest boat found in Europe so far is from Pesse in the Netherlands, and is dated to about 6000 B.C\(^4\). It is a simple dugout canoe, made from a single log of scots pine. Although this one is the oldest, it is far from the only finding of an old log boat in Europe. There are numerous such archaeological finds from other parts of continental Europe\(^5\), from The British Isles, and from Scandinavia. Several of them dating back as far as to the sixth millennium B.C. This clearly shows that not only is the technology required to make such boats very old, but it was also widely distributed, since all of these boats are fundamentally similar in design. There are of course some variations, particularly in terms of length, but the overall principle is the same. In fact, such vessels are similar all over the world throughout history. This has a lot to do with the fact that a logboat is made from a single tree trunk\(^6\). Trees are more or less similar in size and shape worldwide, and since the log itself sets the boundaries for what type of boat can be made from it, it is no surprise that all logboats share some basic characteristics. Another factor is that craftsmen sometimes find identical solutions to similar problems regardless of where they live\(^7\). This can be a result of the limitations of the resources and the techniques available. There are only so many ways to create a boat from a single log, and there are even fewer ways of creating a safe and practical boat that serves the purpose. Their techniques may have varied, as we know from ethnographic evidence\(^8\), but the end result is much the same.

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3 Ibid, 8.
When boats were needed — they were made from what was at hand

With a length of about 3 meters, the Pesse logboat would have been suitable for both fishing and hunting, which were the ways in which people sustained themselves at the time, but also for transportation of people. Travelling over water can often be easier than travelling over land\(^9\), and is sometimes even safer. We can only assume that people started using water travel as soon as the technology to master it was available. And if archaeological findings from other European countries are anything to go by, such technology was at hand from very early on. This means that the earliest boats were made using quite primitive tools, made from things like stone or antlers, which would have been a very time consuming process. Still, we know that logboats similar to those we know from modern times, with bulkheads and overhang, were indisputably in use already in the stone age\(^10\). Which means that the primitive tools at hand at the time were no limitation. It just took people longer, and made it more difficult to make a logboat. Based on the wide distribution of the knowledge of how to build logboats at the time, is fair to assume that these techniques were known in Lithuania as well at about the same time. We know from boat finds in other nearby European countries that the technology was available, and we can assume that the need for transportation over water was as present in Lithuania as anywhere else. The tools were there, and so was the forest. The access to suitable trees from which to make such boats have in fact proved the single most determining factor in other countries when it comes to whether people make logboats or not\(^11\). On the other hand, if suitable trees are not available, we have seen that people find ways to make boats anyway if they need them. The boats of the Greenland Eskimos can serve as an example here, which are made of pieces of driftwood covered with walrus hide\(^12\). Early Lithuanians would have had no such problems, so I think it is safe to assume that they would have preferred logboats.

The logboat is a timeless solution to a timeless challenge – how to travel safely across water and along the waterways. We know that these primitive crafts have been a part of peoples material culture for as long as we have sources\(^13\), and that they remain in use to this day in many countries. Lithuania in fact being one of them. These boats may not be impressive in terms of design

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or technology, but they are a consistent feature throughout the era of water travel in Lithuania. Their history by far predates the founding of cities, and even after the cities emerged their importance would have been significant. We know from other countries that remoteness of inland cities from the coast only made the inner waterways all the more important. A large river, such as the Nemunas, with its many connecting rivers covers a large geographical area. Thereby offering a ready-made network of communications that could be used for transport. First between primitive settlements and later to cities. The logboat would have been in use throughout this period, even after it was technologically obsolete. It’s generally far superior successor first saw the light of day as early as in the bronze age, and as near-by as in Denmark. The Danish Hjortspring boat is so far the oldest plank built vessel discovered in Europe, and is dated to about 356 B.C., but even though plank built boats were already then emerging the tradition of building logboats remained. The reasons for this, if we are to believe sources from other parts of Europe, are that that they still served their purpose and that they were still possible to make. Logboats were easier to make compared to plank boats, and in many cases they served the intended purpose just as well. The plank built vessel has far better performance characteristics than the logboat, but those are not always needed. In fact, we know from history that the single most important reason why the tradition of building logboats died out in other parts of Europe is that they ran out of suitable trees. This was not the case in Lithuania, and so the tradition seems to have survived into present times.

The importance of these vessels would on the other hand have been far greater in prehistorical times, when overland transport and communication was significantly more difficult. While logboats today are more of a prehistoric novelty, there was a time when they were the preferred form of water transport. And even later, after plank built boats came about, they would still have played a role on the waterways. We know from other parts of Europe that they were for instance used to ferry people across to rivers, for transportation of goods or people, and of course for fishing. And from western Russia

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15 Klem, Study of Boat Figures in Alta Rock Art, 55.
17 Ibid, 23.
18 Gregory, A comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats, 260.
19 Klaidas Perminas, Luotai iš dabartiniių Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų (Klaipėda – Vilnius: Klaipėdos universitetas, Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2009), 23.
20 Gregory, A comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats, 1.
21 Ibid, 255.
22 Perminas, Luotai iš dabartiniių Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų 19.
we know that both plank-built boats and logboats were present on the same waterway from as early as the 8th century and well into modern times\textsuperscript{23}. This latter example not only shows the presence and importance of the logboat in an area that was linked to the Baltic region in terms of both political, economical, and cultural processes at the time\textsuperscript{24}, but can also illustrate the importance of the waterways in general. Like Lithuania at the time, North-western Russia had its main population centres far away from the coast. This in turn acted to promote the inner waterways, since they were the connection to the Baltic sea\textsuperscript{25}.

\textbf{Logboats found in Lithuania so far}

Logboats have also been found in Lithuania, although not in as large numbers as in other countries. In total there are about 50 such boats in Lithuanian museums and other institutions, including private collections\textsuperscript{26}. The oldest of them date back to the Neolithic Era, and are evidence of how man in those days used the waterways for fishing\textsuperscript{27}. The majority of the recovered boats are between 3 and 4 meters long, with an average width of about 0.5-0.6 meters\textsuperscript{28}. Some of them were used for transportation, but the majority of logboats known from Lithuania were used for fishing\textsuperscript{29}. This would explain why most of them are of rather modest length. Significantly longer boats are known from other European countries, where there are several examples of boats even exceeding 15 meters\textsuperscript{30}. Stability increases with added length\textsuperscript{31}, and this makes longer boats better suited for rougher waters like for instance in rivers. We see this connection between the length of the boat and its intended use reflected in the fact that the vast majority of Lithuanian logboats that are longer than 5 meters have been found near rivers\textsuperscript{32}. One of the few Lithuanian scholars who have written about logboats, Klaidas Perminas, puts the distinction between boats intended for lakes and boats intended for rivers at about 5 meters\textsuperscript{33}. Which is not really in conflict with findings elsewhere in Europe. The biggest difference in terms of length

\textsuperscript{23} Sorokin, “Waterways and Shipbuilding in North-western Russia in the Middle Ages”, 11.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 12
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Perminas, \textit{Luotai iš dabartinį Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų}, 9.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 31.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, 33.
\textsuperscript{30} Gregory, \textit{A comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats}, 91.
\textsuperscript{31} Klem, \textit{Study of Boat Figures in Alta Rock Art}, 27.
\textsuperscript{32} Perminas, \textit{Luotai iš dabartinį Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų}, 31.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 35.
between Lithuanian logboats and those found elsewhere is rather the limited span in variation. For example, logboats found in Scotland range from as short as 1,83 meters to as long as 16,76 meters\textsuperscript{34}. Rather than a result of variations in tradition, this difference most likely relates to the fact that relatively few Lithuanian logboats have so far been recovered and examined.

Another distinction between Lithuanian logboats and boats found elsewhere is the type of wood used for construction. Lithuanian logboat builders seem to have preferred pine, aspen and oak\textsuperscript{35}, all of which are known to have been used for boatbuilding elsewhere in Europe. Oak is particularly common, and seen used for logboat construction all over Europe. Perhaps because this tree is hardwood, and therefore has a higher resistance to decomposition. It also has other qualities that makes it very suitable for making logboats\textsuperscript{36}. Aspen and pine, on the other hand, are softwoods and are less common. Particularly pine is rarely seen as boatbuilding material in the archaeological sources\textsuperscript{37}. The reason for this being that when making a logboat out of pine, the more durable heartwood is removed, leaving only the less durable outer wood. That on the other hand does not mean that logboats made from pine can not survive as long as any other boats, under good conditions. After all, the logboat from Pesse was made from pine, and it survived for 8000 years\textsuperscript{38}.

A lack of variation in the Lithuanian archaeological material can also be seen in the near absence of distinctive features on the boats, at least those that are described in literature. As logboats evolved, it became more common to modify them beyond the confines of the original simple design. From some countries we know of thole pins\textsuperscript{39}, used to enable rowing as a form of propulsion, and from others we know such things of mast steps\textsuperscript{40} allowing for the use of sails. A more common modification emerged during the iron age, when the knowledge of how to expand logboats became common\textsuperscript{41}. This building technique involves using a fire to widen the sides of the boat, creating a wider craft with better stability and increased loadbearing capacity. Such logboats can on the other hand not have bulkheads made from the original log, since the sides are to be expanded. They are instead commonly fitted with internal ribs to strengthen the hull, and bulkheads resembling the ones found in simple logboats are, as far as I know, not commonly known on expanded vessels. Since bulkheads seem to be a very common detail on the logboats recovered from

\textsuperscript{34} Gregory, A comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats, 91.
\textsuperscript{35} Perminas, Luotai iš dabartinio Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų, 31.
\textsuperscript{36} Gregory, A comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats, 257.
\textsuperscript{37} Klem, Study of Boat Figures in Alta Rock Art, 33.
\textsuperscript{38} Gregory, A comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats, 2.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 30.
\textsuperscript{40} Gregory, A comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats, 259.
\textsuperscript{41} Perminas, Luotai iš dabartinio Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų, 15.
Lithuania, found on as many as 29 of the boats\textsuperscript{42}, they can easily appear to be something of a distinctive feature. This feature becomes particularly interesting when we learn that present-day users of such boats explains it as having a practical function, related to separating the fish and other cargo from the paddler\textsuperscript{43}. This deviates from the more traditional explanation that the bulkheads were mainly constructed to strengthen the sides of the boat and prevent splitting. If the contemporary users of logboats in Lithuania are correct in their claims, that the feature of bulkheads really exist primarily for reasons related to fishing and not for structural purposes, it will be natural to expect this feature to be transferred into the tradition of expanded logboats or for that matter onto similar plank built vessels that in time replaced the logboats. Whether this rather unusual transition took place or not is however impossible to determine, since logboats built in this manner have not yet been documented in Lithuania\textsuperscript{44}. Despite the fact that they are well known in other parts of the Baltic region. This, along with the fact that there are no logboats from the Bronze Age known in Lithuania\textsuperscript{45}, indicate that the archaeological material uncovered and studied so far does give a representative impression of how logboats were used throughout Lithuanian history. After all, it makes little sense to assume that such boats were used in both the Stone Age and the Iron Age but not in between. In the same way that it is highly unlikely that the technology of expanded logboats was well known in nearby countries, but not in Lithuania.

\textit{Construction and operation of a logboat}

The expanded logboats are one of three main logboat categories, the other two being the extended boat and the simple hollowed-out boat\textsuperscript{46}. They are all based on a single log, but are distinguished by their modifications or lack of such. The simple logboat is made solely from a single tree trunk. It has a thick bottom, which gives a very low centre of gravity\textsuperscript{47}, and the high level of wood left in the boat gives good strength to the hull\textsuperscript{48}. To prevent the boat from splitting, bulkheads were sometimes fashioned inside the hull\textsuperscript{49}. Since these were made from the original log, they were not possible to transfer in their original form to the expanded logboat designs.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 32
\textsuperscript{43} Perminas, \textit{Luotai iš dabartinįų Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų}, 23.
\textsuperscript{44} Perminas, \textit{Luotai iš dabartinįų Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų}, 27.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{46} Gregory, \textit{A comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats}, 16.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 235.
\textsuperscript{48} Klem, \textit{Study of Boat Figures in Alta Rock Art}, 85.
These boats, which had their sides expanded using a combination of fire and physical pressure, could instead be fitted with internal ribs to keep the hull sturdy. Such expanded boats have better stability, and can handle rough waters better than the simple hollowed-out boats\(^{50}\). The extended logboats are similar to expanded ones in that both types are made wider to increase stability and load bearing capability, but in the case of the extended boats this is achieved by adding additional boards to the sides of the logboat rather than expanding the original log itself. This makes extended logboats better equipped to tackle one of the main problems of early boatbuilding, namely that of water washing in over the bow of the boat in rougher weather\(^{51}\). It is this principle of adding boards to a logboat that is believed to have evolved into plank built boats and ships as we know them today.

The process of actually building a logboat would have started in spring\(^{52}\), or perhaps also as early as in winter\(^{53}\). The wood is easier to work with when the tree is in a green state, because the wood is significantly softer then. This reduces both the amount of wear on the boatbuilding tools and the overall effort required by the builder. The main tools they used would have been axes, adzes and drills\(^{54}\). After felling the tree, the next step was usually to shape the external hull\(^{55}\). During this process, the builder must decide which side of the log that is to form the base of the boat and which side of the log to hollow out. Most likely, the side containing the most knots and branches would be hollowed, since such features indicate weakness in the wood and increase the risk of splitting, which in turn could cause the finished boat to leak\(^{56}\). The internal hull is then constructed, sometimes using thickness gauges to achieve correct thickness in the bottom of the boat. Holes are drilled through the bottom of the boat, as deep as to the intended thickness of the bottom, and the filled with some kind of material that is easily distinguishable from the log itself. This allows the builder, while hollowing out the inside of the boat, to quickly determine when he has reached the desired depth\(^{57}\). The holes are later plugged, using wood or other suitable material.

The finished boats were most commonly propelled through either paddling or punting. There are known evidence of other types propulsion, such as sailing\(^{58}\) and rowing\(^{59}\), but these are rather rare.

\(^{50}\) Klem, *Study of Boat Figures in Alta Rock Art*, 20.
\(^{51}\) Klem, *Study of Boat Figures in Alta Rock Art*, 38.
\(^{52}\) Perminas, *Luotai iš dabartinių Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų*, 18.
\(^{54}\) Ibid, 63.
\(^{55}\) Ibid, 258.
\(^{56}\) Ibid, 60.
\(^{58}\) Ibid, 127.
\(^{59}\) Ibid, 118.
Punting is only possible as long the bottom can be reached with the pole, and can therefore not be used in deeper waters. It is however less energy consuming than paddling, and the pole makes it possible to keep the boat in a fixed position in the lake or river. It is also a very silent form of propulsion, which can be of big importance when fishing of hunting. Paddling on the other hand, makes it possible to travel over deeper water, and also allows for greater speed. To what extent the ability for speed has been important to the logboat builders is uncertain, but such a thing as manoeuvrability must surely have been a significant concern. That is influenced less my the manner of propulsion, and more by the shape of the hull. Water is not frictionless, and as water passes over the submerged area of a boat it causes drag. The shape of the hull decides how much such resistance the boat is exposed to, with the two ends playing significant roles. The bow should allow for easy entry into the water, while the stern should let the water slide easily past and away from the boat. This highly influences the manoeuvrability of the boat, particularly at higher speed. Rounded, and particularly rounded-point ends create the least resistance, while blunter shapes will have the opposite effect. Such factors are particularly visible when using the boats in streams or rivers, while calmer waters like lakes or ponds make them less relevant. The fact that so many recovered logboats have a very abrupt shape also indicates that streamlining the logboat to minimize resistance was not always necessary.

The potential for finding more logboats on Lithuanian territory

The circumstances seem to suggest that the potential for finding logboats of archaeological interest in Lithuania is significant. First of all, the knowledge of how to make such vessels can be traced back as far as to the Stone Age. Secondly, the total number of logboats found on Lithuanian territory so far is rather limited in comparison to other countries in the Baltic region. And thirdly, these primitive watercraft have not been considered very interesting, neither by scholars nor by the Lithuanian public in

67 Ibid, 5.
The reasons for this are several, one of them being that logboats have been in use until present times in Lithuania, unlike in many other European countries. They were even commonly used as late as in the first decades following World War II. This fact makes logboats an item that many people associate primarily with everyday life, either today or when they were young. The first thing that crosses their mind when an old logboat is uncovered from a peat bog or a riverbend is not necessarily that it could be an ancient watercraft dating from the Iron Age or medieval times, but perhaps rather something like “My grandfather had one of those”. My point being that all the uncovered logboats in Lithuania may not have been recognized as being of potential archaeological value, and are consequently not registered. If this assumption is true, it can be a significant explanatory factor, since we know from for instance Norwegian sources that the vast majority of the recorded logboats have been discovered by the general public. Common people are the first to find them, and they are consequently the ones who have to make the initial decision as to whether this is an important find or not. In Norway, not only did the logboats go completely out of use far earlier than in Lithuania, but the status of watercrafts and all things related to water travel is far stronger. This relates to the significant maritime traditions of the country in general, and the fact that these traditions were used very strongly in the construction of the national identity. Many people therefore view anything old related to maritime traditions as potentially being of historical or archaeological value. This attitude also seems to extend to the freshwater crafts used on the inland waterways, and it has been demonstrated how periodically raised awareness surrounding such vessels can result in an increase in people reporting to have found new logboats or remembering to have seen them protruding from the mud in the past. Similar potential cannot easily be expected in Lithuania, where the maritime traditions are neither very dominant nor nearly as emphasized.

The logboats that are still left in the ground or mud in Lithuania are on the other hand not only most likely numerous, but are also in a favourable environment in terms of preservation. The vast majority of them would be in or nearby fresh water, which offers far better conditions for the preservation of organic matter. One of the reasons for this is that to submerge the boat in water is one of the best ways of preserving it over time, for instance from season to season. A number of boats were never retrieved by their owners, and this in combination with the preserving capabilities of fresh water is a major reason why so
many old logboats have survived to this day\textsuperscript{74}. They were submerged and hidden in an environment that did not destroy them. And in the event that there are any logboats submerged in the more salty waters of the lagoon surrounding the Nemunas estuary, those may also be in a favourable environment. In fact, such brackish conditions are considered favourable by marine archaeologists, since they can provide protection against the shipworm\textsuperscript{75}. This is a pest which can cause great damage to submersed timber, and over time might make it decompose completely. However, without the destructive contribution of the shipworm, old logs on the bottom of brackish waters can survive for a very long time. The challenge might rather be to find them. To actively go looking for them requires a lot of resources, and is perhaps not likely to yield satisfying results. At least if experiences gained in Norway are anything to go by. Here, not a single logboat have been found during systematized registration or other archaeological surveys, with the exceptions of those found while examining graves\textsuperscript{76}. And logboats found in connection with graves are not in their natural environment, so even though archaeologists find them there it is not the logboats that they are primarily looking for. In fact, archaeologist rarely look for logboats in their natural environment, and for good reasons. Since many of them are submersed, this would mean looking under water, and marine archaeology is a rather recent addition to the field of archaeology\textsuperscript{77}. As a consequence of this, many of the older underwater discoveries of archaeological interest were originally made by the public in connection with recreational scuba diving\textsuperscript{78}. This correlates to the circumstances surrounding logboats. They are usually found by the public, either at times when the water level in the river or lake is unusually low, during fishing, or while performing some kind of work that involves digging near present or old bodies of water. Under such circumstances, for older logboats to survive, it is crucial that they are recognized as being of potential archaeological value. With logboats remaining in active use up until present days in Lithuania, that might be a challenge.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 126.
\textsuperscript{75} Jansson, "Stockbåter – utveckling och sägner", 1.
\textsuperscript{76} Nymoen Like godt til lands som til vanns: En stokkebåt fra Siljan i Telemark, 126.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 127.
\textsuperscript{78} Arisholm, Nytt om Sørumbåten og andre sørnorske stokkebåtfunn, 9.
Why did the logboat traditions survive longer in Lithuania?

It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that logboats started to give way to plank built boats in Lithuania, but it happened for the same reasons as elsewhere in Europe. Sawmills started to become more numerous towards the end of the 19th century, and eventually planks became both cheaper and more available. Making boats from them made more sense, and the techniques were well known. This does however not coincide with the demise of the logboat building tradition in Lithuania, as it did in many other countries. The reason for this is that the single most determining factor for whether this tradition survives or not is the availability of suitable trees, and not the availability of planks. In many other countries the big trees near water were cut down and used by the sawmills, since the close proximity to water made transportation easier. And since logboat construction usually need to happen close to water because of the weight of the boat, the tradition died out because it no longer made practical sense. Making a logboat makes sense even in the times of plank built boats, provided it serves the intended purpose, is cheap to make and can be constructed by the owner without too much effort or knowledge. But if the finished boat has to be transported for over a long distance before it reaches water, the logboat would have had a hard time competing against plank built vessels. In fact, the reasons given by Lithuanians as to why they stopped building logboats were more oriented towards the fact that it was more time consuming, produced boats more vulnerable to be damaged by splitting of the wood, or that it produced a craft with less stability than plank boats. As opposed to boatbuilders elsewhere, who were more oriented towards the circumstance that there were no longer any available trees around to make such boats from. Nevertheless, the tradition survived until present day.

79 Perminas, Luotai iš dabartinių Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų, 18.
80 Ibid, 17.
81 Gregory, A Comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats, 56.
82 Ibid, 258.
83 Perminas, Luotai iš dabartinių Lietuvos ir Latvijos teritorijų, 27.
84 Gregory, A Comparative Study of Irish and Scottish Logboats, 56.
The potential uses of future logboat finds in Lithuania

The logboat in itself is a rather unremarkable thing. It is simply a hollowed-out log, sometimes so crudely made that archaeologists are known to confuse them with troughs\textsuperscript{85}. As artefacts, logboats are poorly suited to impress people today, since the technology behind them is simple and the craftsmanship often basic. They tend to become overshadowed by the larger plank-built vessels, like the Viking ships or the Hjortspring boat. The one thing that they do have going for them is the potential for old age, which can be impressive enough in its own right. This was demonstrated in Norway in 1995 when the Sørum-boat was discovered in Glomma, the largest river in the country. The 9.8 meter long oaken logboat was dated to about 170 B.C\textsuperscript{86}, making it by far the oldest boat ever recovered in Norway. In a country where the general interest for boats and maritime traditions is considerable, it is perhaps no surprise that this discovery sparked significant attention from the media. When the boat was pulled from the riverbed, TV-cameras and reporters filled the riverbank\textsuperscript{87}. After all, logboats were considered to be the oldest ancestor of modern boats and the primeval mother of all watercraft, and so headlines like “Oldest boat in Norway” and “Archaeological sensation”\textsuperscript{88} came as no surprise. What was surprising was rather that the interest from the general public seemed to endure. Archaeological discoveries rarely tend to keep the attention of the media for very long, but in this instance something was different. Public interest remained, to the extent that several replica logboats were made, documentaries and other films were created, and there was even a heated debate on municipality level over the official name of the boat\textsuperscript{89}. All in all, it eventually became clear that the public interest expanded far beyond the general interest in old boats. The old logboat was something more than an old boat\textsuperscript{90}. It had become a symbol of the cultural history of the waterway, and it seem as though a lot of emotions and feelings of identity connected with the river came together in this boat\textsuperscript{91}. The logboat from Sørum is an example of how archaeological artefacts can become symbols and take on new meaning beyond their value as mere artefacts. From being a mere hollowed-out log of impressive age, it went on to become a local icon. Sparking interest even to the extent that an anonymous donor offered to finance the entire preservation of the boat\textsuperscript{92}.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid, 20.
\textsuperscript{86} Nymoen, Like godt til lands som til vanns? En stokkebåt fra Siljan i Telemark, 10.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 17.
\textsuperscript{88} Nymoen, Like godt til lands som til vanns? En stokkebåt fra Siljan i Telemark, 17.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, 18.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, 17.
A similar chain of events is not unthinkable in Lithuania. To this day, the most iconic watercraft in Lithuanian watercraft is the Kurenas or Kurenkahn. Although native to what is today Lithuanian territory, they are more commonly associated with the German culture present in the coastal region. These rather recent watercraft were, as far as I know, only used in that particular part of the country. As a consequence of this, people from the inland regions will have a more distanced relation to these boats. Logboats on the other hand, have been in use on waterways all over the country since the Stone Age. They can potentially be found anywhere there is, or has previously been open water, and can relate more closely to the everyday lives of average Lithuanians than the Kurenkahns. Ancient logboats found by the Nemunas or its connection waterways are potential national symbols, since they can illustrate the large timespan in which Lithuanians have inhabited these lands and how old the traditions of using the rivers really are. Under the right circumstances, an ancient Lithuanian logboat found within the ancient Lithuanian heartland might mobilize local emotions and feelings of identity related to the river in a way similar to the Sørum-boat in Norway. But for that to happen, it needs to first be recognized as an artefact of potential archaeological and historical value.

References


Reikšminiai žodžiai: luotai, seniausi laivai, laivų pirmas, pirmysčiai laivai, ankstyva prekyba, keliavimas vidaus vandenimis.