

SUMMARY

The castle of Pieštėvė in Lithuania's defense. A legendary castle of Lithuania's beginning */SEREDŽIUS*

By Romas Batūra

Vilnius Pedagogical University

The impressive confluence of the rivers Nemunas and Dubysa has a majestic mound and a significant history.

The legendary part of Lithuania's chronicles depicts Lithuania's beginning in the light of historical tradition as if duke Palemonas with his abundant retinue had withdrawn from Rome and then *„... sailing along the Nemunas river upstream reached the Dubysa river, sailed into it, saw high mountains on both sides, and wide plains and thriving oak-woods beyond those mountains, there were lots of various wild animals in them and plenty of unusual fish in the rivers... They settled at this river – also at the rivers Nemunas and Jūra – and began propagating“*.

The theory of Lithuania's origin from the Romans was spreading in the 15th–16th cent.-s. In the last decades of the 16th cent. the bard of Lithuania's grandeur Jonas Rodvanas in his heroic epos „Radviliada“ (published in 1592) prolongs Lithuania's historical tradition, glorifies the Lithuanian origin from the Roman nobles, the arrival of Roman military leaders Libonas, Palemonas and their settling in Lithuania. They built a new Roma here, in the mouth of blue-wave Dubysa... Honourable Kings come into being here one after another, i. e. the rulers of Lithuania spread, Mindaugas arises.

Thus, the historical tradition states the exclusive significance of the Nemunas–Dubysa confluence, its environs at which the castle of Pieštėvė arose.

There is some keen Renaissance epoch wits in the legends mentioned above but most probably some historical truth is reflected in them as well.

The nowadays science confirms the mutual relations that existed between the Roman Empire and the Baltic lands, the former trade links up to the Nemunas by the so-called “amber road” and by sea. It is known from the written sources a trade expedition headed by a Roman horseman to the Baltic seaside in the times of Neron (the 1st cent.) or a bit later. The Crusader Order tradition also mentions the contacts between the Ancient Rome and the Balts.