

Latvian amber master who was showing me pieces that are shaped from one flow of golden amber, called massive amber, the opposite of shelly amber which is an amber composed of many flows or layers of amber. The piece was naturally balled, he said, like the pieces that were traded to the Greeks and given to Eurymachus or to the other Heroes who, from either side went into battle before the walls of Troy. As he showed me necklaces that are still called Greek Trade Pieces, necklaces made in specific patterns with an amber still called The Golden Tears of the Sun, we talked of how the Letts, the Livs, Libiesi, Kurs, Jamaicans, Lithuanian Prussians, Prussians, all the coastal tribes and the great river tribes, must have been incredibly sad for those Greeks whose stories spoke of a loss of even the smallest part of their Sun, for how did a People see themselves who could speak so easily of losing that which is most consistent?

I have been taught the great Greek shapes. I know the weavings that would make a Greek necklace. I know the Roman. I know the nature of the black amber that went to Smyra for exorcism, and the striped gray amber that went to Asia Minor for magic. I know how the magic was made. I can show you the Sun's disks that were clipped by Catholicism and made into an odd, ungraceful bead. I have been schooled to a history of meaning outside of the people, the *Tauta*, yet I have been schooled from the position of the *Tauta*.

If I speak of love for them and for my craft I do not speak of it easily. Those who work amber and rise to the status of master do not have easy lives. It is they who have sacrificed to hold onto a soul of a people through a great stagnation, if they still treat amber traditionally. It is they, who like Janis' brothers, have become blacksmiths who forge in the smithy of their souls, a simple profundity, that is meant to offer to their people a chance at possessing beauty in a very real and harsh world, who offer amber as a reconciliation and a harmony.

In honor of them, allow me to offer one Latvian myth that has survived serfdom. It was kept by the amber makers, and passed on by amber workers. It reflects the Balts' sensibilities and world view. I doubt that it has been published although there is a similar myth recorded from Lithuanian oral tradition, but it is not as inclusive nor, in its recording, as balanced. As I grow older I find the simplicity and roundness of this myth more and more moving. I offer it so that it may be remembered.

For to the wise, amber is the world mountain, a great triangle that rises from the line of the Earth to breach the Heavens under the Sun. To it the people are born and from its foot they climb. Long they climb till they reach the summit. There the whole that is the *Tauta*, can be seen. There under *Saule*, the Goddess of the Sun, on the amber mountain's height where one is

closest to Her warmth, compassion and healing, one is offered wisdom, grace and a vision that allows one to descend. The descent is that movement towards the change that will become old age and eventual death. But it is a descent that is made with a knowledge and a healing born from the journey's prime that everyone who is in balance with the world must take. Eventually one descends to the line that is the Earth, and unites what one is with the very foundation that holds the mountain.

I heard the legend in 1987 and I was stunned. Such beauty, simplicity and balance itself stood out like a mountain among that sad continuity that still surrounded the life of the master amber worker. For an artisan in those years still had to petition to the soviets to make something cultural, something non-international, out of precious metal. The beaches were being raked and the amber ground into powder to be cast into molded pendants that killed the amber's spirit. Many people lived not so differently than did Caures Janis, family name first, use name second, who centuries before lived in a cottage named after the simplest of long grasses.

Yet in the amber world, memory is a sea. It refuses no wisdom. It negates no revel. It abandons to rapture. It realizes sorrow for it captures all. And, it releases all piece by piece, like a little golden tear, until wisdom is gone. To that sea I sing. To a black snake on a rock I sing a song of harmony. I sing that, that the sea will take my words, for I offer to it a part that is the best that I am. I offer to it remembrance and those who have sung such a remembrance before me, those who are greater than I am, those with whose words, now so long ago, I began my own journey into Amber's Sea and found there a mountain that embraced the very heart of the land.

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## From the *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego*

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## PEPLIN

An estate in the Chojnice District, with the Post Office and the Catholic Parish in Lesno, 1.5 miles away, or in Sominy in the Bytow District; the school is in Windorp. The area is 3449.72 morg (during the Prussian partition 1 morg = 0.631 acres.) In 1868 there were 15 buildings, 5 houses, and 59 Catholic citizens. In 1856 the owner's name was Lipinski. Peplin lies in the northeast part of the district, over the Peplinsko Lake and previously as a wilderness it belonged to the Tucholska Prefecture. In 1693 Wojciech Peplinski complained to the Tucholski Administrator, Erazm Jankowski, that residents of Lendy and Skoszewo were pasturing their cattle on his land even though the castle administration had forbidden them to do so, and that they also plowed over the arable land. The office allowed Peplinski to catch fish in Miectok Lake and on the river. The meadow next to the forest belonged to Peplinski.

Notes of Fr. Kujot taken in Peplin

## Skoszewo

Skoszewo, a village in Chojnice District, post office in Studzienice, Catholic parish in Lesno (2 miles away), 590 hectares (1 of forest, 11 of meadows, 308 of arable land). In 1885, 17 houses, 134 Catholics, and 22 evangelic; 1 class of catholic school. Skoszewo lies on South end of Sominskie Lake, on the South border of Chojnice District; South from there lies Skoszewskie Lake. Inspection by Mr. Szaniawski in 1710 states that Skoszewo would pay 2 bushels of buckwheat for taxes. Waldemar's privilege from the year of 1313, that parts Slupski Land from Pommeranian, states that Skoszew Stream by Skoszew is a border for the two lands. (from notes of U.B. v. Perlbach, page 617). According to inspection of Tucholskie Prefecture from 1664, Skoszewo paid 36 zloty 20 groszy in taxes. (Father Fr.)

## Lesno

Lesno, or Leszno, in notes of Teutonic Order- Leyste. Knight's estate and peasant village, parish, in Chojnice District, between two lakes Great and Small Luban Lakes, where Zbrzyca Stream has its beginning, in the wooded and sandy area on a border of Koscierski District, and near the Chojnicko- Koscierski highroad. Area contains 8579 morg (in Prussian partition 1 morg = 0.631 acres), 72 buildings, 26 houses, 300 Catholics, 12 evangelic. Parish and school in the village, post office in Brusy. In addition, the Knight's estates contain separately 468 ha of plough land, 152 of meadows, 329 of pastures, 967 of forests, 41 of other fields, 104 of water, all together- 2062 hectares; the Heir\* is Pawel Sikorski. Three fairs a year take place in Lesno; for the cattle, horses and booths. Also they opened the post office lately. In 1354 the Great Master of Teutonic Order, Winryk Von Kniprode, signs off, as an inherited

property, by Chelminskie Law, the area of 40 wlok (a unit of a land measurement, equals 30 morgs) in Leyste (Lesno) and Small Lubowo Lake, in their borders as marked, to Dytryk. 'Great Lubowo lake we'll keep for ourselves. For the Goods Dytryk will serve us, in case of the war, with armed forces and horses, and also he'll help to build a castle and other buildings. And because the arable lands are poor there they will give us for taxes only a bushel of oat per wloka per year, and they will pay their duties to the bishop.' During Polish management Lesno goods belonged to Tucholskie Prefecture. The inspection report of this area, from 1570, says; in Lesno village there are 4 empty wlok of the land, 2 taverns, and 5 gardeners (besides the gentry goods). Year 1664 reads; In Lesno there are 40 wloks of land, 4 village handman, 4 pastures, what was granted to them by teutonic jure hereditatis law, and confirmed by king Wladyslaw IV in 1636; also 3 plough wloks, and the right to plough the land\*, as that they showed, was granted to them by King Jan Kazimierz in 1652; they pay 137 zl. of rent. Two village handman and 4 tavern owners and others from Lesno, are obligated to join and share a duties at the wild beehive and forests. Jezierski was the owner in 1686. In 1710 there was a new wooden church built that was affiliated to Brusy parish, and after the restitution of the old parish system in 1859 it was separated again as a parish church, on February 10, with a great help of Jerzy Jeszki's ( Bishop of Chelminski District) solicitation in that matter. The Parish counts 2,748 parishioners, at the Holy Cross church, under the patronage of the government. There is no data on when the church was funded, and consecrated. There is a hospital for 4 poor man at the church and confraternity of sobriety from 1861. The villages that belong to the parish are; Lesno, Orlik, Lamk, Glowczewice, Warsin, Kaszuba, Widno, Laska Stara, Laska Nowa, Rolbik, Kruszyn, Paszyn, Windorp, Peplin, Skoszewo, Skoszewko, Zwangshof, Ledy, Wysoka, Kloniecznica, Trzebun, Radun, Dunajki. Catholic Schools: in Lesno there are 77 Catholic children, a teacher and organist in one person; in Trzebun -78, in Windorp- 84, in Widno-55, in Radun-67. Information was taken from handwritings of Peplin church archives, by Dreger; page 106, from Belno handwritten copies, page 59, and Chelminska Diocese office documentation, page 289. (Father F.)

\*Heir- as a gentry

\*jure hereditatis- from Latin- the right to inherit (in this case by all the villagers)

\* villagers were not allow to plough the land freely, unless granted by the law (privilege)

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