5. RELIKTY
KULTURY POGAŃSKIEJ
(POŁOWA XIII—
początek XVI w.)

Poczynając od XIII w. Litwa pozostawała w stałym kontakcie ze światem chrześcijańskim. Był on utrzymywany między innymi poprzez związki małżeńskie możnych zawierane z przedstawicielami ruskich prawosławnych rodów książęcych, liczne najazdy na ziemie chrześcijańskich sąsiedów — Polskę i Rus’, walki z zakonem krzyżackim. Masowy napływ jeńców chrześcijańskich, a także pojawienie się na Litwie coraz liczniejszej rzeszy rzemieślników i kupców z Europy Zachodniej sprzyjało poznaniewiary. W połowie XIII w. władca Litwy Mendog wraz z częścią szlachty litewskiej przyjął chrzest. Akt ten, wymuszony względami politycznymi, nie był jednak trwał i w 10 lat później, w 1261 r., Mendog pozwolił wiarę chrześcijańską. Na początku XIV w. w Wilnie zaczął funkcjonować kościół katolicki. W końcu tego stulecia sytuacja polityczna skloniła Wielkiego Księcia Litewskiego Jagielló do przyjęcia chrztu w obrządku łacińskim (wraz z imieniem Władysław) i poświęcenia Królowej Polski Jadwigi, a następnie do rozpoczęcia chrystianizacji Litwy. Chrzest Litwy w 1387 r. nie objął Żmudzi, która pozostawała wówczas w rękach Krzyżaków. Została ona ochrzczona dopiero w latach 1413–1417.

Dzieje Litwy w XIII i XIV w. to okres wypierania przez nową religię miejscowych tradycji pogańskich, których relikty jeszcze przez następne stulecia były obecne w zwyczajach ludności wiejskiej.

W pierwszej połowie XIV w. na obszarze niemal całej Litwy, z wyjątkiem ziemi Zemgala, zarzucono zwyczaj sypania kurnlinik i zapanował jednolity obrządek pogrzebowy. Zwłoki zmarłego wraz z wyposażeniem (броń, narzędzia, ozdoby) spalano, a szczątki umieszczano w płytkach jamach grobowych.

Jan Długosz opisuje, że zmarły w 1377 r. ojciec Włady-}

sława Jagielly, Olgiert, został spalony na stosie wraz z 18 rumakami w paradnej uprzęży i całym bogatym wyposażeniem rycerskim. Podobny rytuał towarzyszył śmierci Kiejs- tuta, ojca Witolda, w 1382 r.

W XIV w., zapewne pod wpływem chrześcijaństwa, obrzeże szkieletowy stopniowo wypierał ciałopalenie, przy czym nadal użytkowane były cmentarze założone kilkaset lat wcześniej. Zmarłych chowano w pozycji wyprostowanej, z rękoma ułożonymi wzdłuż tułowia lub złożonymi na brzuchu, na ogół z głową w kierunku zachodnim. Do pierwszej połowy XVI w. zachowała się tradycja wyposażenia zmarłych w ozdoby, broń, narzędzia, przedmioty codziennego użytku.

W XIV-XV w. w grobach w południowej i wschodniej części Litwy pojawiły się zasusznice, importowane z obszaru Słowiańszczyzny. Nie upowszechniły się one jednak w środowisku litewskim. Dominowały tu lokalne typy ozdób, a wśród nich różne formy zapinie podkowiastych, ażurowych, tarczowatych. Te ostatnie występują w grobach po kilka, niekiedy do 8 sztuk. Popularną ozdobą, zwłaszcza na Żmudzi, były też pierścienie i naszyjniki skrącone z drutu zakończeniami rozklepanymi w wydłużoną, zdobioną tarczkę.

W wyposażeniu grobowym brak natomiast szpil; używano jedynie małych szpilk do przypinania nakryć głowy lub wstążek. W grobach z XV-XVI w. brak również bransolet.

Na wiejskich cmentarzach dominują ozdoby brązowe, natomiast na cmentarzach przykościelnych lub w kościołach, gdzie chowali swych zmarłych ludzie zamożni, znajdowano liczne ozdoby srebrne. Wiele z nich świadczy o wysokim poziomie rzemiosła jubilerskiego. Potwierdzają to również skarby z tego okresu, w skład których wchodzą m.in. zapinki.
LITHUANIA FROM THE BRONZE AGE TO THE MIDDLE AGES
(SUMMARY)

The Bronze Age (the 16th – 6th centuries B.C.) and early Iron Age (the 5th – 1st centuries B.C.) have been little investigated yet. We know that at that time the role of the agriculture and cattle breeding in the economy of all Baltic tribes increased. The 2nd and 1st millennia saw the spread of fortified settlements on the hills. Part of them were used continuously and with breaks for several or more centuries, some of them – from the 1st millennium B.C. to the 13th-14th centuries A.D. These are so called earthworks which number in Lithuania is about 1000. Metal finds from the 2nd and 1st millennium B.C. are scarce (about 120 places of their location and about 260 items are known); most of them are loose finds. The cultural layers of earthworks and settlements are characterized by the shoted ware pottery; animal bones, stone and bone artifacts are numerous. Clay crucibles for smelting nonferrous metals, fragments of clay forms for casting bronze decorations and axes are found. In the 1st century B.C. people learnt to produce iron from the bog ore. They lived in the buildings of pole construction with an open fireplace.

Graves are known mainly from the Lithuanian coast, where barrows similar to those of the Samland peninsula survived. Graves were surrounded by stone circles; a custom of burning the dead was prevalent; most of the graves are without furniture. Several burial grounds with cremation graves in urns or without them are known from east and south-west Lithuania.

In the Roman period (1st – 4th centuries A.D.) culture of all Balts (so called Aestii), including Lithuania’s inhabitants, was influenced by the intensified barter with the Roman Empire and with the Germanic, Slavonic and Finno-Ugrian tribes, also by the spread of the local iron production, iron tools and arms. Old settlements continued to be used, new ones emerged, especially on hills; wooden buildings of pole construction were used for dwelling; in the eastern part of Lithuania – stroked ware pottery, in the rest of it – pottery with a coarse and smooth surface.

Lithuania is also found. These sites are investigated at the large scale. In the 1st – 4th centuries the inhumation was introduced. A custom was established to bury the dead with metal, mainly bronze, decorations, some tools, men – also with arms. Burial rites, furniture and other features taken together fall into five groups, whereas the 6th cultural area consists of the region of stroked ware pottery surviving in east Lithuania with yet unknown graves. The mentioned groups vary in size: part of them in the 4th – 6th centuries split into smaller ones, others underwent gradual changes and survived to the 12th – 13th centuries, when written sources mentioned tribes inhabiting the area. One of the first distinguished tribes are Scalovians at the lower Nemunas and Aukštaitians in central Lithuania.

The great migration of peoples did not touch the territory of Lithuania. As can be judged from the isolated finds and burned hill-forts, in the 5th – 6th centuries only separate nomadic groups from the south steppes reached Lithuania.

In the 5th century – 1st half of the 10th century the majority of hill-forts were repaired, ramparts were raised, deeper moats were dug. They were not permanently used for dwelling, because there is no distinct cultural layer of the 5th – 9th centuries. There were buildings with timber walls and stoves in the corner. Shaped pottery of various forms was still in use. There were also found numerous fragments of animal bones, iron slag, metal tools and ornaments.

The cremation burial rite was spreading in south, south-east and central Lithuania in the 5th century. In the 5th – 7th centuries it was also spreading on the Lithuanian coast. Some tribes used to bury their dead cremated from the 5th to the 12th-13th centuries (Lithuanians, Aukštaitians). The Lammatians and Curonians continued to bury the dead burned and unburned from the 8th to the 13th centuries, while Samogitians and Semigallians did not burn their dead until 12th – 13th centuries. Furniture of the cremation and skeleton burials were similar. Cremation graves were very different, though there were no graves with urns. Numerous metal ornaments, some tools and arms, sometimes horses were put into the graves. From the 5th – 6th centuries there were 9 types of graves related to the ethn-cultural groups mentioned in the 9th – 14th centuries written sources.

From the 10th century part of the inhabitants (most of them probably noblemen) lived in wooden castles situated on the hills; on hills’ slopes bailey was built. Pottery made on potter’s wheel, more developed tools and arms were used; intensive barter was carried on; silver was more abundant. The cultural influence of the Scandinavian Vikings became particularly important.

The Vikings attacked Lithuania in the middle of the 9th century. Later in the 10th – 11th centuries lands inhabited by Lithuanians and their relatives Jatvingians were attacked several times by dukes of Kiev Russia and Poland. In the 13th century raids of the German Orders on Lithuania began under the pretext of introducing Christianity, first from Livonia, later also from Prussia. These wars continued for about 200 years. In the 9th – 11th centuries Dregovichi and Vollnychans colonized the lands of the eastern Balts and partly Jatvingians. The Russian duchies, Dregivichi and Kricichi became Lithuanian’s eastern neighbours.

Part of the Curonian, Semigallian and Selanian lands was occupied by the Livonian Order in the 13th century, while the Teutonic Order occupied Scalovian and Jatvingians lands. The rest parts of Semigallians, Selanians, Scalovians and Jatvingians together with Samogitians, Aukštaitians and
Lithuanians around the year of 1240 formed the Lithuania state. Its first known ruler Mindaugas, together with his court converted to Christianity in 1251. After his death the old faith became the official religion again, though Lithuanian rulers were related with the Russian Orthodox dukes and the Polish Catholic dukes. Lithuania tolerated Orthodox and Catholic religions, churches and the clergy. After the union with Poland in 1387-1413 did Lithuania become officially baptized again.

The above mentioned wars inflicted a great damage on Lithuania's economy and material culture. Also the Christian culture influenced the old Lithuanian cultural. Burial rites became more unified; in the 14th century the inhumation was introduced again, though bodies of the last pagan, Lithuanian grand dukes Algirdas (1377) and Kęstutis (1382) were burned on the funeral pyre.

In the 15th – 16th centuries the old custom to bury the dead with metal ornaments, tools and arms was dying away; ornaments were simpler and more similar. In the course of time (from the 2nd half of the 16th century) grave furniture were replaced by the small coins put into the graves.

Items found in the settlements and particulary in the graves are helpful in learning about the original culture of the Baltic tribes which inhabited Lithuania, its thriving in the 5th – 12th centuries and its decline, when it was ousted by the Western civilization and Christian customs. This process is reflected the best by metal ornaments.