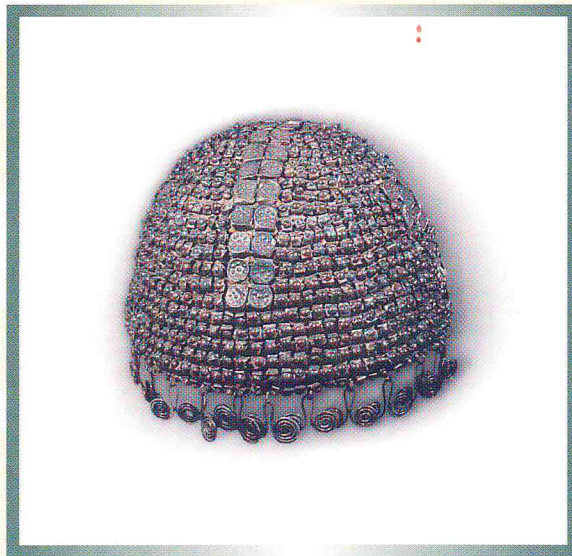




LITHUANIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

LITHUANIAN ARCHAEOLOGY: INVESTIGATIONS AND FINDINGS



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INVESTIGATIONS AND FINDINGS

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To Our Readers:

This modest publication is a brief overview of Lithuanian archaeology. It is part of the effort by the Lithuanian Archaeological Society to present a Day of Lithuanian Archaeology on September 19, 1998 in Biskupin, Poland.

At this event, archaeologists and artisans will demonstrate to the public, in a personal and interactive way, the techniques and processes of traditional Lithuanian craft production. We are eager to tell you more about our country, and to describe our archaeological sites and finds to people who are interested in Lithuania's past.

Each year, archaeological investigations take place at several dozen sites in Lithuania. The nation has more than a dozen archaeological institutions united by an umbrella organization, the Lithuanian Archaeological Society, which numbers 150 professional archaeologists.

We hope this publication will stimulate the reader to seek more comprehensive studies of Lithuanian archaeology. Therefore, only short surveys of the more important investigations are presented here. We also describe the national policy on the archaeological monuments and identify major artefact collections in Lithuanian museums.

We are grateful to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and the Department of Cultural Heritage Protection for supporting this edition.



Dr. Albinas Kuncevičius
Chairman of the Lithuanian Archaeological Society

— STONE, BRONZE AND EARLY IRON AGES —

● THE STONE AGE

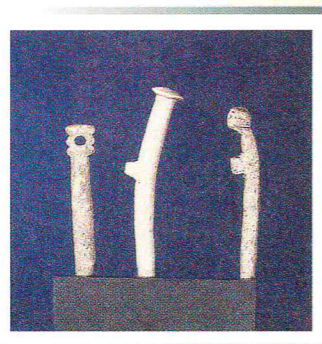
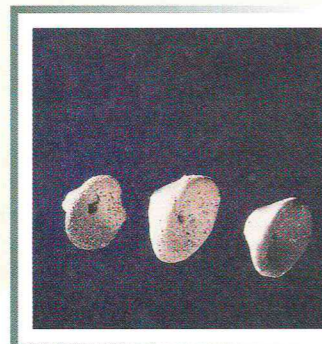
Algimantas Merkevičius

The Paleolithic

The last glacier retreated from the present territory of Lithuania sometime between the 14th and the 11th millennium B.C. The first small groups of reindeer hunters probably arrived during the first warmer period of Boling. Our knowledge of them is, unfortunately, very limited. In the neighbouring Kaliningrad area and the territory of north-eastern Poland, artefacts made of reindeer bone, attributed to this period, have been found. The culture of this period is called the Hamburgian Culture.

A second warmer period, called the Allerod and dated to the 10th millennium B.C., provided more favourable living conditions. Hunters of the Allerod oscillation belonged to the Bromme Culture. Some time later, groups of hunters representing the Ahrensburgian and the Swiderian Cultures came to the territory of Lithuania. For the east Baltic area, Lithuanian archaeologist R. Rimantienė proposes that the Bromme and Ahrensburgian Cultures represented a single group, the Baltic Magdalenian Culture.

About 40 camp-sites of the Bromme and Ahrensburgian Cultures are known in Lithuania, the most important being the camp-sites of Vilnius and Mergežeris 8. The Swiderian Culture is known from about 60 camp-sites, the most significant are those from Eiguliai, Skaruliai and Puvočiai. All the camps were set up on high terraces of rivers. Flint quarrying and processing was an important trade. Flint quarries have been found in the villages of Ežerynas and Eiguliai, on the bank of the Nemunas. Flint articles are the most frequent finds from Paleolithic camp-sites, as most other artefacts have not survived. They are associated with hunting and processing of game animals. The prevalent finds include spearheads, scrapers and burins. Bone and antler artefacts are scarce. Artefacts of the Bromme Culture also include hoes of the Lyngby type, made of reindeer antler. One example of such a hoe was found at Rasyte on the Curonian Spit, and another one at Maurušaičiai (near the Kaliningrad border). A similar inventory of bone and antler was used by the population of the Swiderian Culture. Finds of this Culture include 4 spearheads with oar- and bobbin-shaped blades, made of reindeer antler and bone. At the end of the period, hybridization of Paleolithic Cultures took place.



The Mesolithic

The Mesolithic period starts with the Preboreal climatic period, c 8000 B.C. and continues through the Boreal and part of the Atlantic period. During the Preboreal period, the climate became considerably warmer. Forests developed in up on the territory of Lithuania, flora and fauna increased, and reindeer retreated.

Very little is known about sites of the Preboreal period. They are usually found on the first terraces of rivers. The most important sites are those of Dubičiai 2a and Pamerkinė. In the Preboreal and Yoldia Sea period, R. Rimantienė singles out the EpiPaleolithic culture dated to approximately the 8th millennium B.C. This culture is characterised by Paleolithic traditions.

During the period of the Boreal climate and the Ancylus Lake, inhabitants of Lithuania were considerably influenced by the Maglemosian Culture. The most conspicuous example of this impact is the Maksimonys 4 camp-site, set up on the first backwater terrace. This site is dated to the 7th millennium B.C. and the inventory includes massive flint artefacts: arrowheads with a broken retouched base, knives, scrapers, burins and other items.

In the 7th millennium B.C., the Mesolithic Nemunas Culture began. On the basis of the topographical situation, sites of this period are divided into 3 groups. The earliest sites are found on flood lands. Main camp-sites have been found along the Nemunas and in southern Lithuania, including Paštuva, Kačerginė, Derežnyčia 15. The flint artefacts from these campsites are massive and covered with a patina.

Sites of the second group were set up during the period of the maximal transgression of the Littorina Sea and are found on high terraces of rivers. The main sites include: Žemieji Kaniūkai 1, Netiesų 1a, Merkinė 3a. Finds of this group are smaller. Trapeziums are found, and microliths become more frequent.

Sites of the third group are found on flood lands, like those of group 1, but their flint artefacts show notable differences from those of group 1. They are usually small and not patinated. The main sites include the Kampiškiiai 1, 2, 3, Lampėdžiai, Derežnyčia 27 and 52. The Nemunas Culture was widespread in southern Lithuania, the Kaliningrad area, and partially in Belorussia. Typical artefacts of

this culture were flint items: spearheads with the point slashed to one side and a retouched stem, as well as spearheads with lanceolate and trapezoid blades. Frequently found are knives and blades. Wide use was also made of scrapers, burins and side scrapers. Sometimes bores are found, as well as massive flint artefacts, such as oval axes and wedges.

During the Boreal period, formation of another Mesolithic Culture, called the Kunda Culture, took place. It was widespread between Finland in the north and the Nemunas-Neris line in the south. This culture embraced the northern part of Lithuania. The main sites include Širmės kalno 3, Spiginas, Kulnikas, Šaltaliūnė. Finds of flint artefacts are scarce and of low quality. The best flint artefacts are made of imported flint the most characteristic being the Pulli type points. Basic artefacts of bone, horn and antler include harpoons, spearheads, daggers, ice-picks, axes, chisels, and axe hafts.

Hunting in the Mesolithic was very different from that of the Paleolithic period, as forest animals which lived in small groups were hunted. The main hunting tool was the bow and arrow, though spears were also employed and pitfalls were dug. It is probable that dogs were used in hunting. During the Mesolithic, the main fishing pattern was harpooning. During the second half of the Mesolithic, nets and weirs came into use. Netiesų 1 campsite has yielded a piece of linden bast fibre which might have been from a net.

In terms of flint production, the microlithic technique became established in the second half of the Mesolithic period, and a new method of blade percussion, the so-called technique of microburin, spread quickly.

Several Mesolithic burials have been found at the Biržulis lake, on Spiginas Cape. The individuals were laid prone and covered with ochre. Female Grave 4 was the best preserved burial. She had two hafted points in the zone of her chest and 7 amulets of perforated teeth of elk and wild pig on the chest and pelvis. The burial was dated to 5871 B.C. by C-14 method.

The Neolithic

The start of the Neolithic in Lithuania is traditionally associated with the appearance of ceramics. This is in contrast to many European countries, where the beginning of this period is associated with the emergence of an agricultural economy. Environmental conditions in the Neolithic were most favourable. These were the periods of the Atlantic and the Sub-Boreal climate. Deciduous forests prevailed at that time. The Neolithic in Lithuania is divided into Early, Middle and Late periods. This division reflects cultural changes and marks the arrival of new inhabitants. The Early Neolithic began in approximately the middle of the 5th millennium B.C. In the Early Neolithic, the two Mesolithic Cultures - the Kunda and the Mesolithic Nemunas Culture, which were called the Narva and

Nemunas Cultures in the Neolithic period, continue and develop. They cover almost the same territories as during the Late Mesolithic. The Narva Culture encompasses the northern part, and the Nemunas Culture - the southern part. The same principal types of artefacts continue, and the beginning of a new period is only evidenced by ceramics, which are, unfortunately, very fragile. Ceramic vessels of both cultures included large pots with a pointed base and a wide mouth. The clay paste features a substantial inclusion of plant fibre or ground shell. The necks have the shape of I, C, or S. Ornamental motifs were few, and they can only be seen in the decoration of pot rims.

Most of the Nemunas Culture sites have been found on flood plains. The main settlements include Dubičiai 3C, Ežerynas 23a, Zapsė 5a.

Sites of the Narva Culture have been excavated in two zones: western Lithuania, as well as eastern Lithuania. The most important sites are Šventoji (1B, 2B, 4B), as well as Jara 1 and 2, Kretuonas 1B, Žemaitiskės 3B.

In the Middle Neolithic, two new cultures reach Lithuania - the Comb and Pit Marked Pottery Culture from the northeast and the Globular Amphora Culture from the west. People of the Comb and Pit Marked Culture exerted the most substantial influence on the northeastern part of Lithuania. They were representatives of hunting and

gathering economy, while people of the Globular Amphora Culture were farmers and livestock breeders. They are believed to have introduced agriculture and stock breeding to the inhabitants of western Lithuania.

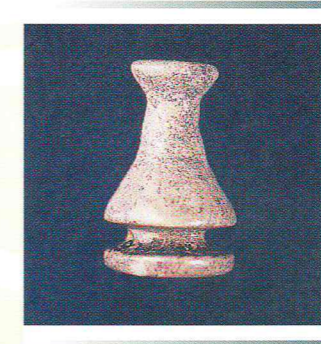
Evidence of the Comb and Pit Marked Culture has been found in

eastern Lithuania, at the Kretuonas 1, Žemaitiskės 2 and some other settlements. Globular Amphora pottery has been found only at the Šventoji 4A and 6 settlements.

In the Early Neolithic, people became more sedentary and settlements grew larger. They were close to lakes and lagoons. Structures were rectangular, with gable roofs, supported by rows of lengthwise posts. They measured about 6-8 x 5 metres, and had an open fireplace inside.

The prevalent hunting tools were bows with arrows, as well as spears. Fragments of bows have been recovered from the Šventoji 1B, 4B, 23 settlements. They may have been about 2 m long. Fishing became especially popular in this period. Nets, weirs, fishhooks and other tools were used. Excavations at the Šventoji 2B settlement have yielded 6 pieces of fishing-nets. They were knitted of linden bast rods. Dugout boats came into use. A model of such a dugout boat was found at the Šventosios 2B settlement.

The first animal domesticated in Lithuania was the dog. Bones of dogs have been found at Šventoji and at the Kretuonas lake. Settlements of the Middle Neolithic have also yielded bones of other domestic animals. Bones of livestock and small cattle were recovered at the Šventoji 23 settlement. The Kretuonas 1B



settlement has yielded numerous bones of cattle, horses and pigs. These domesticates, however, account for only a small percentage of all bone findings.

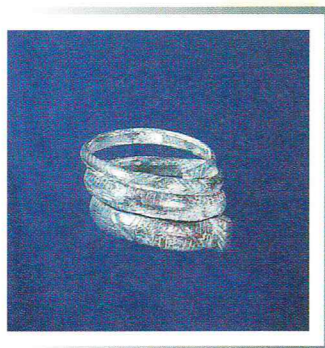
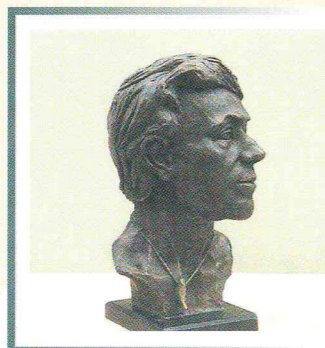
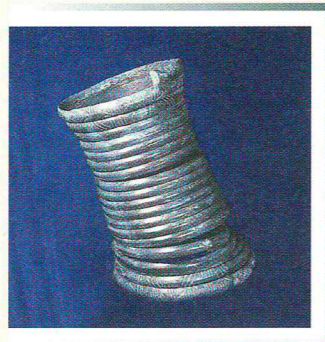
The first indicators of agriculture are found by the end of the Middle Neolithic. The Šventoji 6 settlement yielded 3 ards made of thick curved branches of ash-tree. They were 63, 55 and 45 cm long. Stone and horn hoes were also used in farming. The first cultivated plant brought to Lithuania was the hemp. Bristles of millet (*Setaria Italica*) plants have been found at the Šventoji 6 settlement. Two-row barley (*Triticum dicoccon*) have also been found.

During this time tools were improved. Plain surface, retouch, bifacial retouch on brims of artefacts appears. In the end of the Middle Neolithic, people had learned to retouch the edges of flint artefacts. In the Early Neolithic, only axe blades were ground, while in the Middle Neolithic the entire surface of the axe is ground. Many wooden artefacts were preserved in peat-bogs: spoons, troughs, bowls and pestles.

Numerous Neolithic ornaments have been found. Some of them served as amulets. The oldest are pendants of animals teeth. Amber pendants were also widely used in the Neolithic. They were especially popular with the inhabitants of the coast. Amber beads and buttons were also widespread. The majority of amber artefacts, as well as raw material, come from the Šventoji settlements, as well as Palanga and Juodkrantė hoards. Isolated amber artefacts have been also found at settlements in other parts of Lithuania. Figurines were made of amber, wood, horn and other materials. Especially impressive are ritual staffs with the head of an elk on top, found at the Šventoji

3B settlement. Often found are figurines of birds, mostly as decorations of ladles and handles of oars. People were sometimes depicted on ceramic, flint and wood. For example a 2 m post sculpture with a human face was found at the Šventoji 2B settlement. Burials from this period are scarce. The largest cemetery was found in the lower cultural layer of the Kretuonas 1 settlement, which yielded burials of six individuals. They were buried on their backs, in extended position. Four burials contained grave goods: a chisel and a dagger, both made of bone, a sharpened boar fang, and a flint lanceolate point. Ochre was found on two of the skeletons. A few Neolithic burials have been found at the Biržulis lake.

The Late Neolithic starts with the appearance of new inhabitants of the Corded Ware Culture. This happened before the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C. The most typical finds are ceramics ornamented with a corded pattern and boat-shaped axes. Representatives of this culture were buried in crouched position. Some of them were buried in barrow



mounds. In most cases, isolated graves of this kind have been found by chance. At Plinkaigalis, 4 graves were excavated and some yielded burial goods of flint knives and axes. Ochre is no longer found in the burials of Corded Ware Culture. Charred wood particles and ashes seem to indicate rituals with fire. After the arrival of people of the Corded Ware Culture, assimilation began with local inhabitants of the Narva and Nemunas Cultures started in Lithuania. This resulted in the formation of a new culture, the Baltic Coastal Culture. In eastern and southern Lithuania, however stretching over a great distance from the sea, the Narva and Nemunas Cultures persisted for some time longer.

The Bronze Age

In western Lithuania, the Bronze Age began c 2000 B.C., in eastern - c 1800 B.C., or a little bit earlier. This period is divided into Early and Late stages. The borderline between these two periods is marked by the appearance of cremation. The first bronze artefacts brought to Lithuania includes flat axes, which bore close resemblance to flint specimens, early flanged axes, pendants of bronze wire, and halberds. These articles were brought from the metallurgical region of central Europe and mostly exchanged for amber articles or raw materials. The manufacturing technology of bronze articles was quickly mastered, and even before 1800 B.C. local production of bronze artefacts started, although their import continued. Bronze artefacts usually came from the Unetice Culture, the burials of which contain a lot of Baltic amber, received in exchange for bronze artefacts and raw materials.

By about the later second millennium B.C., bronze artefacts in Lithuania increase in number and acquire singular forms. A specifically Baltic Bronze Age culture was formed with its centre in the Sambian peninsula and the neighbouring areas, including western Lithuania. The main local artefacts of the period comprise bronze pins with a spiral head, flanged axes of the east Baltic type, Nortican type axes, snake-headed hoes of stone, and other articles. Nevertheless, the majority of bronze artefacts of the period were still imported, including weapons (swords, axes, spearheads) and ornaments (bracelets, pins). During this period, exchange expanded to Scandinavia as well as eastern and southern Europe. Various bronze artefacts arrive even from more distant lands, as, for instance, a figurine of a Near East deity, found at Šernai forest in western Lithuania.

In the Early Bronze Age bronze artefacts were objects of luxury and prestige even in western Lithuania. They were particularly

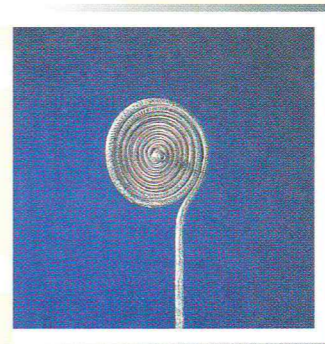
rare in eastern Lithuania, an area which was remote from the main trade routes and did not have amber, which interested inhabitants of the metallurgical regions. Stone and bone artefacts predominated, and are found in large quantities both in settlements and cemeteries.

Not many sites of the Early Bronze Age have been investigated. Artefacts from the beginning of this period show little difference from those of the end of the Neolithic. More variation appears by the middle of the second millennium B.C., when formation of two specific Lithuanian Bronze Age cultures, the West Baltic Burial Culture and the Stroked Ware Culture, began.

Among the excavated sites of the Early Bronze Age, which have yielded most evidence on the period, the most informative are the Šlažiai barrows in western Lithuania and the Kretuonas 1C settlement in eastern Lithuania. Much new material has been recently recovered from excavations at Turlojiškės settlements and cemeteries in southwestern Lithuania. Settlements of the Early Bronze Age in Lithuania were very similar to those of the end of the Neolithic. They were close to lakes and rivers.

By the 13th century B.C. in western Lithuania, and a few centuries later in the remaining area, transition to the Late Bronze Age took place.

Production of flanged axes was replaced by socketed axes. A new type of settlement develops in eastern Lithuania - fortified settlements on hillocks. The West Baltic Barrow Culture, with typical barrows and unfortified settlements is formed in western Lithuania, and the Stroked Ware Culture appears in eastern Lithuania, best characterized by fortified settlements - hill-forts, widely used stroked pottery, and artefacts of stone, bone, horn and antler.



During the Late Bronze Age, the main archaeological sites of western Lithuania are barrow cemeteries, and very few settlements have been found. The most extensive excavations were carried out at the Kurmaičiai and Egliskės barrow cemeteries. They are dated to the end of the Bronze Age and the Pre-Roman Iron Age. Barrows of this period had 1-3 stone rings with smaller inner rings or other stone construction inside, where burnt bones of cremated individuals with charcoal were deposited. In some cases cremated bones were put into urns. The urns usually had a plain surface and were fragile, with the clay mass tempered with crushed stone. Small pots are often recovered near burials. Bronze artefacts in cremation burials are very rare.

A few dozen hill-forts have been excavated in eastern Lithuania, while information about cemeteries is very scarce. Most evidence was recovered during excavations of the Narkūnai, Nevieriškės and Sokiškės hill-forts. At that time, hill-forts of eastern Lithuania become administrative, religious, trade and production centres. It was also there that metal was smelted and bronze artefacts produced. The majority of artefacts associated with metal smelting (casting moulds, crucibles, etc.) were found

at the Narkūnai hill-fort. Nevertheless, stone and bone artefacts, and not bronze items, were dominant in eastern Lithuania during this period. Bone was used for a large variety of artefacts - ornaments, work and household items, and even weapons. Many stone artefacts have been found as well, especially shaft-hole axes. Ceramics with a stroked surface is also very common.

The Early Iron Age

The Early Iron Age started in approximately the 5th century B.C. and continued until the turn of the eras. In about the middle of the first millennium B.C., the first imported iron artefacts, basically ornaments, came to Lithuania. They were imported from the central areas of Europe. In the beginning of the period, the established trade routes break off due to tribal re-groupings in central and northern Europe. Nevertheless, the same cultures remain in Lithuania. In western Lithuania, barrow cremations continue and in eastern Lithuania - in cemeteries. The most important cemetery excavations have been carried out at Pavėsininkai, Stanaičiai and Kernave. Cremation was practised, and burnt bones were deposited in urns, pits, or stone rings and other stone constructions. Burial in barrows remained practically the same, although the number of stone rings in barrows was reduced. More considerable changes appear in the burial patterns of western Lithuania in the 2nd century B.C., when inhumation began to spread. Such graves have been found at the Egliskės and Šlažiai barrows. In contrast to cremation burials, inhumation graves yield numerous bronze grave-goods. Especially common were ornaments: pins, neck-rings, bracelets, temple ornaments and pendants. In the 1st and 2nd centuries B.C. both cremation and inhumation was practised. Only by the 1st century A.D. cremation was completely replaced by inhumation.

In eastern Lithuania, hill-forts are reinforced, small ramparts and ditches appear and the first foot settlements are established.