

● **STONE AGE SETTLEMENTS IN THE COASTAL AREA OF LITHUANIA**
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It is difficult to determine when the first people settled the coastal area of Lithuania, since this region is marked by post-glacial sinking. Early settlements can be occasionally detected under a sand cover at a depth of several meters. The earliest finds are dated to the middle of the 4th millennium BC (calibrated). They are the settlements of the Narva culture at Šventoji, Palanga and the Curonian Spit. Their inhabitants were fishers and hunters who specialized in seals. They produced primitive large pots with pointed bottoms and small basins of rectangular shape.

From the end of the 5th millennium to the 3rd millennium BC, the Narva culture was widespread in the area between the Nemunas River and the Gulf of Finland. In general, the people of the Early Neolithic had few contacts with neighbouring cultures. Such relations developed only during the Middle Neolithic.

From the south, along the coast, the people of the Globular Amphora culture began to penetrate into the Narva area. Apparently, they were accepted by the Narva local tribes. They brought with them their own ceramics and the first agricultural tools and cereals. From the north, the Comb-Marked Pottery culture also made contact, but this was restricted to trade relations - Narva amber products were exchanged for their shale items.

With the start of the 3rd millennium, a new culture wave appeared, i.e. the pan-European horizon of the Corded Ware culture. A specific version of this culture - the Bay Coast culture - was formed in the East Baltic area. It consisted of four components: local Narva and Nemunas cultures, the newcomer Globular Amphora culture and the Corded Ware culture. The people of the Bay Coast culture were primarily farmers and cattle breeders, but fishing and hunting were also very important activities.

The climate became more humid, stimulating the growth of lagoons in the 2nd - 1st millennia BC, and people settled farther from the seashore. The Bay Coast culture spread along the western seacoast, leaving burial mounds with intricate stone constructions.

Archaeological findings in Šventoji

The Stone Age settlements in the Šventoji area were situated around the northern part of the lagoon, the water level of which rose at the end of the Stone Age. This created a favourable preservation environment and cultural layers remained intact. In

all, 40 Stone Age sites have been discovered. Some of them have been investigated, while the rest are significantly disrupted. Four sites had two cultural layers. Excavations have been carried out in 1966-1972 and 1982-1995 by a team headed by R.Rimantienė.

The earliest sites (1B, 2B, 3B and 4B) were detected on the western coast of the ancient lagoon. Their remains were washed out by a later sea transgression. The artifacts made of wood, bone and ceramics which remained in silt are in good condition. The sites are typical settlements of hunters and fishers of the Narva culture. They usually hunted seals as well as forest animals including elk, deer, auroch, roe and various fur-bearing animals. Quite a few hunting tools - bows, arrows with wooden and bone arrowheads - have been found. Seals were hunted by bone harpoons and spears with bone heads.

The fishing tools are very different and some are complex. Nets were made of bast threads. Six pieces of such nets have been found, together with pine bark net floats and stone sinkers, often wrapped in birch bark. There are many remains of fish traps. The fishermen also used mobile weirs, numerous remains of which have been found. They widely used eel leisters; one such tool was found almost intact at Site 4B: it was corded with bast and had a bonehead. Fishermen used dugout canoes. Their remains are numerous, including a model boat 1 m long, as well as many different oars.

Recovered household items include wooden dollies, distaffs, bowls and troughs, spoons, and nets and mats made of bast. Bone was used to fashion fur scrapers, awls and

knives. Narva people worshipped the Master of Animals - this is expressed by two ritual antler staffs from Site 3B and one staff from Site 4B. But there was also an image of the Master appearing as a man. Not far from Site 2B, at the channel going from the lagoon to the sea, a pole 2 m high with a man's head carved on its top was found. Ritual scoops with bird heads were also found.

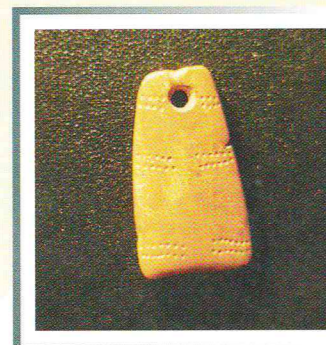
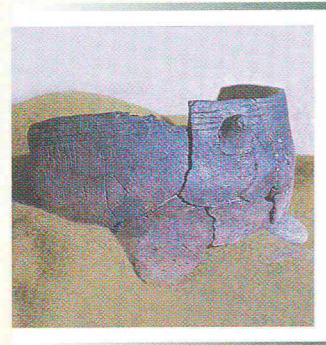
Ceramics were of Narva type, made of clay with crushed shells. The pots were of two shapes: those with narrow bottoms and wide mouths, and small rectangular basins for wick lamps. The pots were ornamented with very small stamps on the neck or rim of the pot.

Some radiocarbon dates are given below:

Šventoji 2B (LJ-2523) 4730(100 bp/cal 3642-3365 BC.

Šventoji 4B (Vs-811) 5110(110 bp/cal 3631-3359 BC.

During the Baltic Sea transgression, the eastern coast of the lagoon was also inhabited. The settlements of the Middle



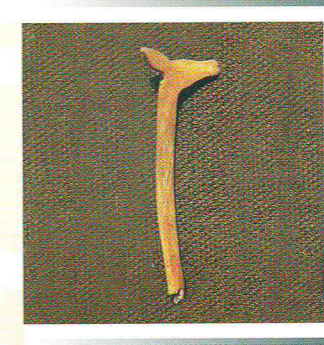
Neolithic Narva culture, i.e. sites No. 23, 26 and 28, have been investigated. In addition to fishing, hunting and household tools, remains of wooden buildings were found in Site No.23. The buildings were quadrangular, about 6 m long and 4 m wide, made of standing poles, apparently wattled with branches.

After the exchange of goods started between the people of the Narva culture and the Comb-Marked Pottery culture, an amber workshop was built here. The amber ornaments were exchanged for shale items. Not far away, two amber hoards have been found. The dating of the Šventoji settlement No.23 is: (Vib-1) 4190(80 bp/cal 2419-2200 BC.

After the sea transgression, settlements developed on both coasts of the lagoon. On the western side, there was settlement No.6 of the Late Narva culture. It is the largest of all the Šventoji settlements. Its cultural layer is thin and occurs 50 cm under the surface, but it is rather poor in wooden, bone and ceramic finds. The ceramics show obvious links with the people of the Globular Amphora culture. The dating of the settlement is: (Vs-499) 4160(11 bp/cal 2423-2125 BC.

At this time on the western coast, the people of the Bay Coast culture began to co-inhabit this site. Three settlements (1A, 2A and 4A) and site No.9 have been studied. The dating of them is as follows: Šventoji 1A (Vs-22) 4100(100 bp/cal 2875-2471 BC. Šventoji 9 (Vib-8) 3860 (80 bp/cal 1964-1731 BC.

There are many fishing, hunting and household tools that are not unlike those of the Narva culture: oars, paddles of canoes, net cords, bobs, spoons, troughs, bowls, spears and a sling. Oxen cultivated the land - remains of a wooden plough and the model of



a yoke confirm this. The ceramics are of a Corded Ware type, but are significantly influenced by the Globular Amphora culture.

Archaeological sites in the Curonian Spit

The earliest traces of humans on the Curonian Spit, i.e. Narva culture ceramics, have been detected at Juodkrantė and Nida. They are attributed to the Middle Neolithic. People seem to have inhabited this area when there were islands in place of the present spit. The entire Curonian Spit was populated only during the Late Neolithic - the period of the Corded Ware Culture. Archaeological finds from this area were collected and published in the 19th century by different scientific societies in Königsberg. Most of these data disappeared during World War II and now they are known only from publications.

Excavations of Nida settlement were conducted in 1973-1977 by the Lithuanian Institute of History. A team headed by R. Rimantienė explored an area of 4 640 m. The investigations have shown that the settlement at the lagoon was formed in the channel between the sea and the lagoon. At present, it is separated from the lagoon by the large Parnidis Dune. The cultural

layer of the settlement is about 20 cm thick. The settlement was flooded several times by sea transgressions, therefore many finds were redeposited by water action to a near-shore deposit layer. People were forced to leave the coast several times and then return. This is determined by hearths found under this layer and above it. There were 293 post molds found dispersed in groups. The buildings were quadrangular 6-8 m long and 4-5 m wide with a row of posts to support the roof in the centre. The buildings in the settlement were scattered chaotically, houses were often rebuilt. There were 77 hearths of different ages found inside buildings, in flat pits 60-120 cm in diameter and 10-15 cm in depth, without any stone constructions. One hearth was somewhat different, it was 60 cm deep and seems to have been used for sacrifices.

Work tools were made of flint, stone and bone, although bone tools survived in very few quantities. Local flint brought in from the Nemunas area was used. The imported flint was highly valued and used to produce blades for chisels. Other products were triangular arrowheads, scrapers, knives and gimlets. Stone hatchets usually have no holes for a handle. Only a few fragments of boat-shaped battle-axes were found. Agriculture is indicated by numerous roughly processed stone hoes, grinding stones, pestles and sickle blades. Numerous net sinkers provide

evidence of fishing. Hunting is testified by arrowheads and bone fragments of some large forest animals.

Decorations are made of amber: ringlike forms, pendants, buttons and tubular amber beads. Among ritual items there is a wild boar figure made of limestone, and fragments of two pots decorated with male figures have been found.

Ceramics represent the most abundant group of finds: 100 000 fragments have been collected, of which some 10 000 sherds are ornamented. The ceramics belong to the classic phase of the Corded Ware - Bay Coast (Rzucewo) Culture. The shape of the pots greatly varies: amphorae, beaker-shaped vessels of various size and shape, bowls and dishes. Funnel-shaped pots up to 90 cm high and rectangular dishes were used as wick lamps or to get salt by evaporating water. More than half of the pots were ornamented with corded motifs, others with ribbons, cuttings and various marks.

There are two C14 dates:

(Vs-632) 4460(110 bp/cal 2854(2655)2501 BC.

(BlN-2592) 4070(50 bp/cal 2200(2135)2048 BC.

