AMBER GRAVES OF
ZVEJNIKIEKI BURIAL GROUND

Iga Zagorska
INSTITUTE OF LATVIAN HISTORY (LATVIA)

Introduction

Amber jewellery is one of the outstanding constituents of funerary equipment in the Eastern Baltic during the Neolithic period. Amber has been found in the grave inventories of specially arranged burial grounds – Zvejniķi, Kreči, Sope – and in single graves located within residential sites – Valma, Krāpinka, Abara I and Tamula (Zagorskis F., 1961; 1974; 1987; Loze L., 1968; 1996; Janis L., 1957, 1984). All of these graves date from the Middle and Late Neolithic, when natural amber became accessible, the processing of amber, and exchange of raw materials and amber objects began and was organised on a wide scale. In research on amber of the Eastern Baltic Stone Age, more attention has been paid to amber stray finds and amber artefacts from settlement sites. An important amber-processing centre has been discovered in an inland region – the Labānas Lowlands of southeastern Latvia (Loze L., 1969, 1979, 1988).

Amber in the form of grave goods is also very informative. Amber objects help us date particular burials with a greater degree of certainty, since the typology and chronology of amber objects in the East Baltic has been studied extensively (Loze L., 1974; 1975; 2000). The location of amber grave goods in a particular burial helps us to establish how they were worn in the past. Amber ornaments may also be used to understand the spiritual world of the ancient Stone Age inhabitants. Of course, the connection between living society and mortuary rituals is not very straightforward. The main thing is to understand what particular objects were included in the funerary complex and why they were included (Nordbladh J., 1991, 39; Taffinder J., 1998, 52 - 54).

Zvejniķi burial ground

Zvejniķi burial ground on the northern shore of Lake Bureniķi is still the richest in the East Baltic in terms of the number of ‘amber graves’. It was excavated by F. Zagorskis in the 1970s (Zagorskis F., 1987). The Neolithic graves within the burial ground containing amber objects were located on the gently sloping southeastern end of a gravel ridge, concentrating around the Zvejniķi farmstead (Fig. 1). As the graves had been dug into coarse gravel, the amber objects are poorly preserved. It is not possible to determine the structure, former colour or the techniques of working of the amber objects. Only the shape of the objects and their placement in the grave, indicating the function of the amber items, could be observed in the material from Zvejniķi burial ground (Zagorskis F., 1987, 74 - 75).

Amber adornments were found in 17 graves and in one so-called ‘offering place’, with a total of about 210 pieces – pendants, tubular beads, button-shaped beads, rings and discs. Eight male graves and eight child and adolescent graves contained amber objects, while only one female grave (no. 250) contained amber adornments.

Two separate complexes of burials with amber adorn-
Collective burials

The more interesting and attractive is the first group – collective burials, consisting of between two and seven burials in a common grave. Adults, adolescents and children were buried together. Close to these burials, special offering places were established. Both the collective graves and offering places were very heavily powdered with red ochre. The graves and the offerings contained flint, slate, bone and amber artefacts and pottery with comb and pit decoration. Some burials in the collective graves were very richly adorned with amber jewellery: oval, flattened pendants with drilled perforations, triangular pendants, barrel-shaped beads, rings and some spacer (Fig. 5).

In this group we may include four collective graves: 1) grave 206–209, containing two adolescents (206, 207), a man (208) and a woman (209). Amber was found on both adolescent burials; 2) grave 220–225, where five adult persons (220 – male, 221 – male, 222 – female, 223 – indeterminate, and 225 – male) and two children (221-a, 224) were buried. A rich array of amber adornments was found on burials 221-a, 224 and 225; 3) grave 274–278, which contained three male burials (275, 276, 277) and two adolescents (274, 278). Amber adornments were found on all three male burials: 4) nos. 263, 264, and 264-a, containing two males (263, 264) and a small child (264-a). Amber was found on one of the male burials (no. 263). We may include in this group one very badly damaged burial (no. 201) with a similar inventory, which may also be part of a collective grave with at least two burials. Two fragments of an amber adornment were found here. All these collective burials were located in the very centre of the Neolithic group of graves (Fig. 1).

The collective graves were 2–2.3 m long, 1–1.5 m wide and reached a depth of 0.6–0.7 m. The bottom of the pit and the fill consisted of black earth, presumably taken from the adjacent settlement, and an intensive layer of red ochre had been poured around the body. The deceased were laid in two layers, one above the other. The dead were usually placed in an extended supine position, or sometimes on the stomach (no. 263) or on the side (no. 208, 225). In these graves three, four, five, six and as many as seven persons were buried together – adults, adolescents and children. The interred were commonly placed in opposed directions, mainly with the head to east or west, but slight deviations were sometimes observed (NW–SE). It is considered that all persons in one collective grave were buried at the same time, i.e. they were contemporaneous (Fig. 2, 3 A).

Amber objects found in these collective graves are represented by: 1) medium-sized oval pendants of segmental cross-section and between one and three drilled holes in the upper part (Fig. 52); 2) more massive, heart-shaped pendants (Fig. 513); 3) amber rings, medium-sized (dm 2–3 cm) or larger (dm about 4 cm), with a triangular cross-section and rounded margin (Fig. 514); 4) barrel-shaped beads (Fig. 510, 11); 5) some unusual forms, such as a small globular bead, a fragment of a chevron-shaped pendant and a 'spacer' in the form of a rounded triangle with a hole in each angle (Fig. 53).

Amber ornaments in these collective burials were used as separate decorations or amulets, or else formed more elaborate adornments – necklaces: sometimes amber items formed a dense covering over the body; and some male burials showed a very rare and special application of amber rings.

Adornment with individual items was found in a small number of cases. A small oval pendant was found immediately under the skull of adolescent burial 206. A separate amber ring was placed behind the skull of male burial 221 (Fig. 51). One amber ring with a triangular cross-section was found on the chest of a male (no. 263) in collective grave 263–264, 264-a (Fig. 54). These separate adornments were perhaps worn as pendants or fastened to the cap or dress as decoration.

Sometimes the amber items found in the graves 'in situ' formed strings of ornaments, perhaps necklaces. Thus, in collective grave 221–225, amber ornaments formed a pile consisting of eight oval and some
tooth-shaped pendants, a small amber ring and two larger fragmentary rings. The adornment was augmented with two tubular bone beads. The ornaments were found in the chest region of an adult male (no. 225), also very close to the head of a small child (no. 224). Thus, it is not quite clear to which person the amber ornaments belonged — to the child or the adult (Fig. 5:5). Beautiful amber ornaments were found in collective grave 274–278 (Fig. 3A). The ornaments included a large, massive ring and two rows of flat pendants. A second row included three amber rings (Fig. 5:5). This adornment terminated in five small animal tooth-pendants, four of marten and one of wild boar (determinations by L. Lõugas, Tallinn). Perhaps these also belonged to the adornment. The ornaments were found in the area of the legs of the male (burial 277) but had obviously slipped down from the breast of the adjacent male burial, no. 276 (Fig. 3A).

In one case, the amber artefacts formed quite an unusual ornament. In collective grave 220–225 on a male burial (221) 56 amber ornaments were found. These had been laid close one to another in an intensively ochre-strewn area from the middle of the body to the knees, forming a dense covering. This covering consisted of flat, oval pendants and three amber rings (Fig. 2). It is considered that in this case the child (burial 221–2), buried above the adult, was wrapped in a richly adorned covering (Zagorska L., 1997, 44).

Particular observations were made with regard to amber rings. These are 2–3 cm in diameter, with a hole in the centre, and of lenticular section, with a slightly rounded outer margin (Fig. 2). Such rings were found in all of the mentioned collective graves, usually in the head area. In all cases, the area around the head was intensively strewn with ochre. In some cases, a reddish (225, 263) or bluish (206, 275, 277) layer of clay was observed in the head region of the interred. The forehead and face of male burial 225 was plastered with reddish clay, and when this was removed an amber ring was found in each eye socket (Fig. 5:8). Two more rings were found in ochre-rich earth close to the face (Fig. 5:14). Possibly, the eyes had a double covering. The face of burial 275, on the very edge of the collective grave, was plastered with bluish clay mixed with ochre (Fig. 3). In this case too, an amber ring with a small hole was found in the left eye socket, and one with a larger hole in the right eye socket (Fig. 5:7). Amber rings also covered the eyes of adolescent burial 286 (Fig. 5:6). Pairs of rings were also found in the head region of burial 263, which had clearly fallen from the eyes (Fig. 5:9). Amber rings were not found in the bluish
clay on burial 277; however, three such rings were found in the pelvic area and one ring on the chest of the interred.

Amber finds were also unearthed in the offering places. So-called offering places or depots are a completely new feature in Neolithic burial traditions. These places were marked by a very intensive patch of red ochre. In such places, the artefacts were arranged in a compact pile, often deliberately broken as well. The objects are quite varied: bone and antler harpoons, arrowheads and chisels; flint artefacts – arrows, spearheads and scrapers; whetstones, slate rings and amber ornaments. One such offering place was unearthed near collective grave 206–209 (Fig. 6). It consisted of 33 flint, stone, bone and antler artefacts, including three amber items – a massive amber pendant (Fig. 4–3), a flattened oval pendant (Fig. 4–2) and an unworked piece of amber (Fig. 4–1). Such offering places are not unknown in North European Neolithic burial traditions, also being observed in the basin of the Upper and Middle Volga region (Cvetkova I. K., 1975, 102–110).

The collective graves, as well as the offerings, as mentioned above, in addition to amber artefacts, also included hunting and fishing equipment and various household implements. Ornaments in the form of animal tooth-pendants were few, these being replaced by slate rings and especially by amber ornaments. In one of the graves (no. 277), two copper (?) rings were also found. The entire inventory – pottery with comb impressions, oval and rhomboid flint spearheads, slate rings and amber ornaments – is characteristic of the East Baltic Comb and Pin Ware Culture (Zagorodnaya F., 1987, 102; Loze I., 1984, 30–36). Similar finds are known from Sulka bog site in the Lubina Lowland (Loze I., 1988), and a few amber pendants of the same kind are represented at Starnate bog site and among the stray finds from Jookrants on the Baltic coast (Vankina, L., 1970; Rimanietiene R., 1999).

According to the established chronology, these graves were dated to the 3rd millennium BC. Now, the new radiocarbon datings for the Zvejnieki burials provide earlier dates. The collective burials have now been dated to the second half of the 4th millennium BC. Burial 206 is dated to 5285±50 years BP (Ua-3643) and burial 225 is dated slightly later – 5110±45 years BP (OxA-5998). Such earlier datings for the Comb and Pin Ware Culture burials – the second half of the 4th millennium BC – are not really surprising if compared with the datings for Typical Comb Ware (Style 2) in Finland, covering the time span from 3300 until 2800 BC (Sintinen A., 1973, 9).

Close parallels for the Zvejnieki first complex of amber burials can be found to the north-east – in Estonia, Finland, Karelia and north-western Russia. Unfortunately, the skeletons have not been preserved in the acidic soil of the northern areas, except for some small fragments of bone. Most commonly, a rectangle of red-coloured earth has been discovered, surrounded by light-coloured sand. These ochre features may be graves containing one, two or even several burials. These graves contained flint, slate and amber objects, often with fragments of Comb Ware. Sometimes, Comb Ware has been found together with copper rings, as at Suovara and Viganavolok I (Haggert A., 1996, 79, 80). A tradition is observed in these northern territories – Finland and Karelia – that amber adornments are often substituted by slate. All the graves, Type A, along with the corresponding grave inventory, have been described as a Typical Comb Ware complex (Edgren T., 1959, 24–25; 1966). Also belonging to this complex are small bent clay idols, the well-known north European Type E 2 (Nunzi M., 1986, 20). Such figurines are represented in East Baltic figurative art (Loze I., 1995, 20–32), mostly in settlement sites. Collective burial 220–225 also includes a convex-concave clay figurine, perhaps associated with the burial of a child (224) or outside the legs of a man, burial 221.

Grave goods of very similar form have been found in red-ochre graves in southern and central Finland. These include Kolmahaar (Kenhilähti), Pispä (Kokemäki) and Kukkarkoski (Lieto) in south-western Finland, Vaaranta (Taipalsaari) in south-eastern Finland and Haukkala in Laukaa, central Finland (Edgren T., 1966).

At Hartikka, on a gravel ridge close to the settlement site, nine ochre graves were discovered, three of which contained a rich array of amber grave goods. Interesting are the shedded clay patches in the area where the head and upper part of the body would have lain. In burial 3, two lenticular amber buttons were deposited in the clay layer (Miettinen M., 1992 b, 38). Recently, another burial ground has been found in Central Finland at Kaustinen 2, Kangas, with ochre graves and an analogous amber inventory to that of the collective graves of Zwejnieki burial ground (information from Dr. Mirja Miettinen, Helsinki).

Of course, in all of the mentioned burial fields, very similar amber jewellery has been found—flattened pendants with two and more drilled holes, smaller oval pendants and amber rings. V. Luho has described ochre graves decorated with amber rings, found at the site of Pipsa (Kokemäki). Some of these rings bear traces of clay covering (Luho V., 1961, Fig. 12, Fig. 14).

The above-mentioned examples all confirm the existence of a common Comb and Pit Ware Culture area or the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, characterised by very similar and strong burial traditions, concerning also the arrangement of amber ornaments in the graves.

**Individual burials**

Between the collective graves, individual burials were also unearthed. These graves contained only one interred person, sometimes provided with amber grave goods. Amber ornaments were provided for two children (burials 194, 237), a woman (burial 256) and two men (burials 212, 228) (Table II).

The single graves were elongated oval pits filled with dark soil. The deceased were laid in the graves in an extended supine position, with heads oriented west or east. Only in one case (burial 236/237) a woman was buried together with a small child, placed on her right shoulder. A flint knife and short circular amber bead was found in that area. It is likely that these grave goods were provided for the child (burial 237).

The mentioned burials were provided with amber ornaments: round button-shaped beads with a lensatic cross-section, trapezoidal and rhombic pendants and tubular beads of different lengths (Fig. 7).

---

116

---

117
Fig. 6. The 'offering place' next to burial 207: 1—unworked piece of the amber, 2—flattened amber pendant, 3—massive, rounded amber pendant.

Attention should be given to burial 212, where an adult male was buried in an extended supine position (Fig. 4 A, B, C). This man had an amber necklace close around his neck, consisting of 13 button-shaped beads with a V-shaped perforation and lensatic or segmental cross-section (Fig. 4 B). These beads are mainly round or oval, only some of them being rounded or square (Fig. 7:20, 21). The necklace was augmented with five trapezoidal pendants with a straight upper margin and straight or convex lower margin (Fig. 7:28–30). The second group of ornaments occurred in the hip area of the deceased (Fig. 4 C). The adornment consisted of four trapezoidal (Fig. 7:24–27) and two rhombic (Fig. 7:22, 23) pendants and 32 button-shaped beads. These beads are round, with a V-shaped perforation. Unfortunately, the ornaments were not preserved in the original order, but were slightly disturbed. Certainly, the ornament can be imagined has having been fastened to the lower part of the man’s dress. A similar tradition, i.e., a grave with amber buttons, is known from burials at the Abora I habitation site, Lahina Lowlands in southeastern Latvia (Lane I., 1968, Fig. 2, 30–33). There, a man about 30 years old had been buried, with 27 button-shaped beads in the armring.

Another example of the functions of amber ornaments can be seen from male burial 228. This deceased person had very rich and varied ornaments. The first necklace, close to the chin, consisted of four pieces of amber: two figurines of birds and two pendants representing human heads, all of them carved in bone and antler (Zagorski F., 1983, 138–141). The second row of the necklace consisted of 17 button-shaped beads, all round in form (Fig. 7:12–19). A small conical flint arrowhead was placed on the chest. It is difficult to distinguish whether the amber ornament was indeed a necklace consisting of beads on a string, or whether it had been fastened to the dress.

The final grave with amber ornaments was child burial 194, which was badly damaged. The child was buried in dark soil, with the head to east. Next to the right hand of the child, three quite large button-shaped beads were found, and another similar one at some distance (Fig. 7:8, 11). The hip area of the child was adorned with twelve tubular beads. The beads were of various sizes with a conical perforation, drilled from both ends (Fig. 7:1–7). Four tiny, short tubular beads were also found in this grave (Fig. 7:9, 10). The form of the adornment cannot be determined. In Abora I settlements, site near a badly damaged burial a string of beads was preserved in situ, consisting of 22 medium-sized tubular beads and a spacer, which showed that the beads had been arranged in two rows (Lane I., 1975, 75).

Fig. 7. The amber ornaments from Zvirzinki Neolithic graves (second group): tubular beads: 1–7; short tubular beads: 9, 10; button-shaped beads: 8, 11–21; trapezoidal pendants: 22, 23; trapezoidal pendants: 26–30; burial 194: 1–11; burial 228: 12–19; burial 212: 20–30.
The assemblage of amber ornaments found in the group of individual burials is characteristic of the de-scentants of the people of the indigenous Narva Culture, who produced the so-called 'Pestjava Ware' pottery. As this type of pottery was made under the influence of Comb and Pit Ware, the graves could be dated to a slightly later period, the third millennium BC. The chronology of this complex of amber ornaments is based on the typology of amber artefacts, but since no burial of this group at Zvejnieki has so far been dated. Similar amber items are known from Särnae peat-bog site in western Latvia (Vankača L., 1970, 105–114) and from the sites in the Lubina Lowland – Nainiekrēte, Pestjaiva and Zvedze (Lore L., 1988, 43–45; 94–96; Zagorski F., 1965, 35–50, Fig. 5). Rounded button-shaped beads, as well as trapezoidal pendants, are mainly characteristic of the Middle Neolithic. Tubular beads have been found in all Middle and Late Neolithic habitation sites. It is quite impossible to distinguish these Middle and Late Neolithic items, except for the fact that later examples are more massive (Lose L., 1975, 66).

A new discovery obtained from Särnae Dwellings M, characterised by button-shaped beads with a V-perforation, cylindrical beads and trapezoidal pendants, belongs to the very end of the 4th millennium BC – 5065±75 (L 1984A) (Bīrzinā L. V.), in print. The previous datings from the dwellings of Särnae type (V.V. S) covered the whole of the first half and the middle part of the 3rd millennium BC (Vankača L., 1970, 138–139).

The Middle Neolithic in the Lubina Lowlands with its impressive amber ornaments mainly belongs to the whole of the 3rd millennium BC, approximately 2800–2110 BC (Lose L., 1988, 101). It must be stressed that already in the middle of the 3rd millennium, under greater southern influence, a new complex of amber ornaments began to form. This complex belonged to the Corded Ware Culture and was characterized by new forms of artefacts and radical innovations in amber working (Lose L., 2000, 63–78).

It is likely that the second group of amber graves at Zvejnieki burial ground mainly represents the first half of the 3rd millennium BC. Burial 199, which contained fragments of Pestjaiva Ware pottery, dates to 4825±55 (A 15546). It is not excluded, of course, that some of these individual graves could be Late Neolithic, as these traditions continued later as well. The second complex of amber ornaments can be found at all of the Neolithic sites in the Eastern Baltic. In Lithuania, the majority of similar amber objects come from the Sventoji settlement sites, as well as from Palanga and from the famous Juodkrante hoard on the Couronian Spit, western Lithuania (Rimantienė R., 1979, 87–102. Fig. 72, 77, 79; Rimantienė R., 1996, 35–55). The trapezoidal pendants, rounded button-shaped beads and fragments of rings occur at Estonian Stone Age sites such as Akali and others (Jaamis L., 1959, 277–284, Figs. 60, 61).

The second complex of amber ornaments is also typical of wide areas east of the Baltic Sea. The influence of this complex even reached the shores of the White Sea in north-eastern Karelia, testified by finds at the Zalaruga II site (Savatejeva J. A., 1977, 188, Fig. 89, 90). A similar inventory is known from the northern part of Middle Finland, from the sites in the River I basin – such as Kierikki, Porkansuo Bog and Kukasanangas settlement site. The last site is located close to the ancient mouth of the River I, where remains of many huts were unearthed, yielding an exceptionally rich array of amber items and asbestos pottery sherds (Särkäänänen A., 1967, 36–37, Figs. 2, 3. Koivunen P., Nunez M., 1995, 26–29).

The corresponding amber complex is known from the other cemeteries in the Eastern Baltic – Kreiče cemetery in the basin of Lake Lielais Ludzis, and from burial sites at the Ahora I and Kivpala Neolithic sites in the Lubina Lowland. At Kreiče burial, a necklace was discovered, consisting of 20 amber pendants and 14 long tubular beads, the latter made from bird bones (Zagorski F., 1961, 3–18, Table II). Rich in amber jewellery are some burials from the Taumisa site, south-eastern Estonia, with grave goods including tubular and button-shaped beads, trapezoidal pendants, rings and figurine art as well (Jaamis L., 1980–1981, Fig. 3, 4; Jaamits L., 1984, Fig. 4).

The great number of amber grave goods at the Konchanskoj cemetery in Novogord district must be mentioned, north-east of Latvia (Riech N., 1903, 22– 26, Table II. Žirmina M., 1993). The latest research in the area south of Lake Onega has revealed a Neolithic settlement site – Tudozero VI – with a rich array of amber artefacts. The bones, unfortunately, had not been preserved, only red ochre-strewn pits, orientated in different directions, were discovered. Ten burials were excavated on the territory of this site, all of them containing amber, totalling approximately 400 pieces. The amber collection was composed of tubular beads of different forms, trapezoidal pendants, round and oval button-shaped pendants and rings. Sometimes the ornaments clearly formed strings on the chest or waist area (Grave 5, 6). As regards the rings, they were found in seven graves, often two together, in the head area. (Ivanissevich A. M., 1990, 3–20; Ivanissevich A. M., 1992, 86–89; Ivanissevich A. M., 1996, 75–84, Fig. 3). It seems that at this cemetery the amber rings were used in the same way as in Zvejnieki burial ground. The director of the excavations considered that the Tudozero VI burials were close to the Konchanskoj and Ripsichste amber finds, belonging to the Middle Neolithic Volovoo Culture. The central part of this culture is represented by sites in the Upper Volga and Oka region. The influence of East Baltic amber working traditions in that region is often mentioned by Russian researchers (Studzieniaks S. V., 1994, 67).

Conclusions

As can be seen from the above, amber and the ornaments made from this material evidently had a special role in the lives of the ancient people of the Neolithic and in their world beyond the grave. Amber, this cool yellow and reddish stone, which appears as if it had soaked up the northern sunlight, was evidently more than just an ornament – it also had magical powers.

The amber ornaments of the Neolithic replaced the tooth-pendants that were so popular in earlier periods of the Stone Age. At Zvejnieki burial ground, animal tooth-pendants have not been found together with amber: only in one case – burial 276, were four small south-pendant pendants of marten and one of wild boar attached to an amber brooch ornament.

The sets of amber artefacts provided as grave goods have another characteristic feature: neither of the two complexes includes ornaments of irregular, naturally shaped amber pieces, such as have been found in large numbers at Neolithic settlement sites in Latvia – Sīļupe, Särnae and the sites of the Lubina Lowlands. It is concluded that both complexes of amber ornaments were made specially for placement in the grave. It has not been established whether amber ornaments were made locally, or whether they were imported as finished products for the mortuary rituals. This was possible, since the Lake Burntiksi basin was connected to the Baltic Sea by the River Salaca that flowed through the lake. Since only one unworked piece of amber has been found, in the offering place next to burial 207, F. Zagorski considered that the amber ornaments may have been imported as finished products (Zagorski F., 1987, 75). It should be added that a complex of amber artefacts worked and shaped in the same way has not been found at any of the nearby Stone Age settlement sites – neither Zvejnieki I settlement, nor Rūpjukalna or Kaškalna. Admittedly, the settlement sites, particularly Zvejnieki and Kaškalna, have as yet been subject to only minor excavation.

Judging from the placement of amber items in the cemetery, amber artefacts were used as individual pendants (206, 221, 263), formed necklaces (225, 212) or various combinations. The combination of artifacts in one deposit, covering over the deceased (221–a). Ethnographic material shows that amber artefacts, in addition to their role as ornaments, also functioned as amulets that provided protection against dark, hostile forces, symbolizing the forces of light and the sun itself (Jekabsons F., 1929; Šurms E., 1953, 168–178). This can be seen particularly clearly in the use of amber rings and discs. The larger amber rings seem to have been used as individual pendants (burial 221) or were combined with other forms of pendants (burial 276). The small rings and discs found at Zvejnieki burial ground, of a few centimetres diameter, were, however, most commonly used as eye coverings for the deceased. It was at Zvejnieki burial ground that this use of such rings was first established, since the faces of the deceased had been daubed with reddish, specially prepared clay, in which the amber rings had been preserved ‘in situ’. It should be emphasised that the tradition of covering the eyes with amber rings and discs is observed only on male burials and one juvenile burial (206, 225, 263, 275). A similar interpretation can evidently be given for the use of rings on the burials of Tudozero VI settlement site and in certain burials of south-western Finland.

Discs and rings occur widely among the amber finds of the eastern sea of the Baltic Sea. They are characteristic of burials of the Globular Amphora Culture and the Bay-Coast Culture (Šurms E., 1970, 155–159, 176–180), also spreading further to the north-east, into the area of the Comb and Pit Ware Culture. Such amber rings are also found in Bronze Age burial monuments, as indicated by a find in Reznae barrow cemetery not far from Riga (Šurms E., 1936, Fig. 9, A, 76).

It has already been emphasised that an analogous role to that of amber was played elsewhere in the world by a shining Baltic glass, which was ascribed the power of averting destruction, and it was used to cover the exposed parts of the body of the deceased. Jade talismans being provided as grave goods (Spekke A., 1962, 16). Mention should be made of excavations by Russian archaeologist A. Okladnikov on Stone and Bronze Age cemeteries in the area beyond Lake Baikal, where shining green and white jade discs have been found in large
## Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grave</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Pendants</th>
<th>Rings</th>
<th>Burial shaped buttons</th>
<th>Under-represented</th>
<th>Totaly</th>
<th>Position in the grave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 201</td>
<td>child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grave strongly disturbed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 206</td>
<td>adolescent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pendulet under the skull; Rings in each eye socket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 207</td>
<td>adolescent</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Under the elbow of the right hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering by the grave Nr. 207</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>In the pile of the grave goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 220</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Between the femurs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 221 (or 221a)</td>
<td>male (or child)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1 ring - under the skull, others - at the lower part of the skeleton (221)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 224</td>
<td>child</td>
<td>1 (fragl)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>At the area of the legs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 225</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2 rings in the eye sockets; 2 by the forehead; others - on the chest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 263</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 rings by the forehead; one - on the chest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 275</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 rings in each eye socket, one - above the pelvis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 276</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Left from the upper part of the left hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 277</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>On the chest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grave</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Pendants</th>
<th>Bronze shaped artefacts</th>
<th>Talisker beads</th>
<th>Fragments</th>
<th>Totaly</th>
<th>Position in the grave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 104</td>
<td>child</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Grave destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 232</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>On the chest; end of the path; region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 228</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>On the chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 227</td>
<td>child</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (shard)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>By the child's skeleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr. 256</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fragment of the ring; pendants between the legs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References

1. Berčič V. Specifične darbe državna upravštva Šarans široko upravljene. (in press);
4. Edgren T. Jakob – Gruppen. SMFA, 64, Helsingborg, 1966;
8. Ivančič A.M. Posevniči in mogljum na Tudozee // Drevnosti ruskega severa, 1;
9. Vologda, 1996, 75 – 84;
10. Jazdanić L. Poslevniči epohi neolita in ranskega vsega v prajmje reki Emagi. Tallin, 1959;
18. Loze I. Neolithik amber ornaments in the eastern part of Latvia // Progadua Archaeologicae, t. XXIII, 1979, 49 – 82;
19. Loze I. Pasaulio neolitui įkuria buvo užduotis: Riga, 1979;
20. Loze I. Pamajtinti grebėsčio – jėmantoj keramikų // Vienočio Prihikertis // Norve in arheologii SSRIS I Finlandii;
22. Loze I. Pasaulio kentės rūšies buvo labiausiai nėra: Riga, 1988;
26. Lučo V. Kokemčer Piupan kivikuntinai auzinipaika, Suomen Museo, 1961, 51-31;
27. Mietišken M. A. red-ochre grave of the Combt Ware period from Hartlíkka in Läänaka // SKOKS, 1990, 39 – 47;
The Lake Lubāns Depression, one of the most densely populated micro-regions in the central part of the East Baltic, lies 350 km from the major areas where amber is washed up, south of Liepāja. The fact that people inhabiting this micro-region in eastern Latvia did not have any amber source of their own, and had to obtain this material through distant or not so distant expeditions did not affect their desire to obtain it and work it themselves.

The Lake Lubāns Depression, which covers an area of 100,000 ha, lies at the centre of the Lubāns Limnoglacial Plain of eastern Latvia. Neolithic sites, numbering 27, are located in marshes or on rises with mineral soil within these marshes, which cover 47,000 ha of the total area of the depression (Lose 2000, 109). Lake Lubāns collects the waters of nine rivers, and has only one outlet: the River Aiviekste, a right tributary of the River Daugava with a large basin. Neolithic settlements are located on the banks of Lake Lubāns and the river inlets, as well as in the system of the Aiviekste and its tributaries (Fig. 1). This suggests that the advantages of the geographic location of Lake Lubāns for the Neolithic inhabitants contributed in large measure to the development of an effective zone of economic contacts, with travel both upstream and downstream along the Aiviekste and Daugava.

The distribution of amber in coastal Latvia

The eastern limit of the distribution of amber passes through Latvia from the north along the coast