LITHUANIAN AMBER ARTIFACTS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM AND THEIR PROVENANCE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF EASTERN BALTIC REGION

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Abstract

The spread of amber in Lithuania and its popularity over different periods, application of amber in ornament production, changing trends in amber jewelry wear as well as the links of these customs with gender, sex, and, more generally, with the Lithuanian world outlook, are the issues usually discussed based on ungrounded assumptions that the amber artifacts found in Lithuanian burial sites and the cultural strata of hill-forts and settlements had originated from the Lithuanian coast. It is unexpected, but credible possibility, that Baltic Sea amber artifacts, belonging to different archaeological sites across Lithuania, are not only local products, but also imports via different trade routes. As far as analysis of Lithuanian amber artifacts has established, raw amber was exported from the coast southwards. Lashed and semi-lashed amber beads found at the cemeteries in central Lithuania, the lower Nemunas region and even in coastal Lithuania and dated to the late Roman Iron Age—early Migration period, are imports of several workshops in the lower Vistula, Kūnėvai areas, Mazurian Lakeland, Sambian peninsula and other regions. On the other hand, it should be noted, that amber beads of common shapes known since the Roman Iron Age onwards, figure-eight shaped beads-pendants and those of other less common shapes, as well as beads and other amber artifacts typical of the Vendel and the Viking Age were produced by local amber craftsmen in coastal Lithuania.

Introduction.

Though the knowledge provided by written sources on the Balts (Arretii, hesit, aesti) in the middle of the first millennium and the Roman period is only of general character, even these short accounts inform on the Baltic peoples and their trade in amber. The Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus (ca 55-120) was the first one to refer to gentes Aestiorum as all the Baltic tribes collectively in his opus Germania, 98. Tacitus mentions the gentes Aestiorum being distinct from others, as it is the only tribe of these known to Tacitus, to collect amber (in their language glesium) on the Mare Suchicum (Baltic Sea) coast. Yet, being barbarian, they never explore the nature of amber and do not know it. The gentes Aesti bring raw amber to merchants, they take reward for it with surprise (Tacitus, 1972, 45; with Latin checked by Veronika Gerliukiené). This observation by Tacitus is of great value, as besides emphasizing the fact, that the Balts collect amber washed up by the sea, it also points out, that they bring it themselves to markets known to both sides involved in this trade. Since it is known that the Goths left the lower Vistula region in the second century, it is possible to assume that the area where the west Balts collect drift amber includes the lower Vistula region, Samland and coastal Lithuania. In modern language that would mean southeastern and eastern regions of the Baltic coast. The Roman Caius Plinius Secundus (23-79) also mentions trade in amber in his Naturalis Historia. The
book tells of a Neolithic time expedition by a Roman nobleman (equester Romanus) from Carnuntum commer- cians, a Roman frontier fortress and important trade center in the middle reaches of the Danube, to the Baltic coast (amber-bearing island) to purchase am- ber. Researchers mentioned by C. Plinius Secundus, linked amber-bearing island with Samland peninsula. Lithuanian sea coast or inland situated west of Jutland (Jutland) 1845, p. 13-15; Michalberta, 1938, p. 17-49). However, C. Plinius Secundus also mentions the fact that the Germanic tribes take amber to Pannonia, from where the Etrusci provide it for the Romans (Naturales Historiae, XXXVII, 59-85, translation from Latin by Veronika Ghebákené).

Claudius Ptolemy (ca 90-168) in his opus Geogra- phy mentions two Baltic tribes, Gallindians and Sudovians (sudovii; LIS, 1955, p. 81). These two tribes, having no access to the Baltic shores, could only control the area rich in mined amber in northwest Poland. The letter mentioned by the Ostrogost King Theodoric written around 523-526, besides important political information contains references to amber trade. This letter was written by Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus (ca 487-ca 578). The letter by Theodoric proves that the Baltic were known in Europe of the fifth-sixth centuries and put efforts to continue and expand trade in amber, which was impacted by the processes of the Great Migration period. The inflow of amber to the Roman Empire in the fourth century was very significant (though less than before (Wielowiejski, 1980, pp. 14-21, Kolendo, 1990, p. 91-100). Jordanes, a Gothic historian, retelling Historia Getica by Cassiodorus, mentions the Baltic peoples as involved in the processes of the Great Migration in Europe together with the Goths (Wielowiejski, 1999, p. 101-133, 1997, p. 217-342; Michalberta, 1972, p. 65-72; Girondins, 1965, p. 141-146; Gubinaité, 1985, p. 56-59). Researchers who fo- cus on intertribal trade aspects, view it as a wide cross- regional phenomenon. The Baltic peoples traded amber for salt and non-ferrous metals; for them it was also a way to obtain prestige goods. Trade in amber made them a part of historical processes of the period, as, be- sides goods, fresh cultural ideas traveled along the same routes. Amber trade was a factor that stimulated trade rela- tionships among the peoples living in the Baltic region.

Laima Vaitkuskiene has explored the role amber played in religious beliefs and burial rituals of the Bal- tic tribes of Lithuania (Vaitkuskiene, 1992 a, p. 36- 49; 1992 b, p. 49-57). Algirdas Varnas has researched Lithuanian amber artifacts dated to the ninth-twelth centuries (Varnas, 1978, p. 117-124). The role of amber in religious beliefs and burial rites of the Baltic peoples, its economic significance, the sites of amber finds and tribal differences in application are the as- pects, covered by Raymond Vyniens Sidrys' studies, for which he has applied a nonparametric statistical method (Sidrys, 1994 a-b). Both L. Vaitkuskiene and R. Sidrys arrive to the conclusion, that amber for the Baltic peoples was a rear and expensive material, while rituals and prohibitions restricted in everyday applica- tion. The spread and role of amber in the Roman Iron Age, after the Migration Period and in the Middle Iron Age, have been also investigated in the works by Mykolas Michalbertas and Adolfo Tautavičius (Michalberta, 1986, p. 105-106; Tautavičius, 1996, 186-188).

Characteristics of amber artifacts from the middle of the first millennium

Amber beads and beads-pendants are the most important amber artifacts found in Lithuania and dated to the middle of the first millennium. One dis- tinctive feature of the burials from this period is that besides amber beads they abound in raw amber. Over the Roman Iron Age, the Baltic peoples of Lithuania started wearing amber beads in the period B2/C1-C1b. Based on 1986 data, over a hundred of amber beads dated to the Roman Iron Age have been found at thirteen burial sites in western Lithuania, the lower Nemunas region and central Lithuania (Michalbertas, 1986, p. 106). More necklaces of amber and other beads have been recently found in the burials of the Roman period at the Dauglauskis, Baitai, Marevė, Pleškiūnai-Pangraišiai, Pajunė, Pakalniai and other cemeteries. But this recent data do not alter previ- ously established tendencies of placing amber into graves in the Roman Iron Age. Over the Roman Iron Age, amber beads were scarce. At that time, a few am- ber beads would be strung together with monochrome, colourful, multicolour and gift beads of glass, crystal or bronze. Traditional Roman Iron Age shapes for am- ber beads were flattened spherical or truncated bicontic: semi-circular and low tubular amber beads were typical of the end of the period.

Recent research done to identify spread of amber artifacts in Lithuania justifies a conclusion that the Middle Iron Age, in contrast to the Roman Iron Age, was much richer in amber artifacts (Sidrys, 1994 a, p. 85-86, fig. 8). But this comparison of intensity levels in application of amber artifacts in Lithuania was drawn based on chronological Iron Age periods tradi- tionally distinguished in Lithuania: the Roman Iron Age (1-400), the Middle Iron Age (400-800) and the Late Iron Age (800-1200). Therefore, the concluded marked increase in amber artifacts usage in the Middle Iron Age (400-800) is not correct. Indeed, the number of amber artifacts found in Lithuania starts increasing in the burials dated to the late fourth century. It should also be noted that most of amber artifacts are being found in the graves from the fifth and sixth centuries. By that time amber artifacts–amber beads are already spread across all the territory of Lithuania, as pointed out by the archaeologists M. Michalbertas and A. Tautavičius (map 1; Michalbertas, 1968, p. 87; 1986, p. 106; Tautavičius, 1996, p. 186-189). Amber artifacts from the fifth and sixth centuries are not only numerous, but also come in diverse shapes of beads, beads- pendants, amber spindles and raw amber (fig. 1-13). Statistical data also evidences a marked increase in am- ber usage based on the finds from the fifth-sixth centu- ries (map 1). According to the data from the year 2000, of 215 number of burial sites attributed to this period, 86 were found to contain amber ornaments (map 1). A marked increase in amber ornaments is observed in the burials from the late Roman Iron Age (C2 mostly C3 periods) and the Migration Period. This phenom- enon was noticed and beads of the same shapes were found in Wielbark culture, and in a large area inhab- ited by the western Baltic peoples, as well as in Den- mark, southern Sweden, and on the islands of Öland, Bornholm and Gotland (Strunka, Beck, Bergström, 1994; Kulakov, 1997, p. 115-117; Bursche, Okulicz- Kozarzyn, 1999, p. 141-154). It was a region at that time closely connected by political, trade and cultural ties. Shorter and longer bead necklaces of different kinds are found in female and adolescent graves of the pe- riod. Bead necklaces are found placed on the chest of a buried person, often they appear to have been fixed to other ornaments, like brooches and pins. Single beads- amulets are typically found in male graves. Short amber bead strings are rare in male graves (Plinkagalis, grave 54, 246; Vidžgiriai, grave 14; Žvilai, grave 246). Interestingly, amber beads from the fifth and sixth cen- turies are frequently found in the graves of children and teenagers, especially so of young girls. Such a habit is especially pronounced at coastal cemeteries of western Lithuania and accounted for the fact that amber beads of less sophisticated forms and beads-pendants were usually made of amber and thus less valuable produce. A general tendency of amber artifacts being most numerous in the graves of children and teenagers has several reasons. One of the key reasons is that all burial sites of medieval Eu- rope, not excepting Lithuania, children’s (young child 1-7 years old) and adolescents’ (7-15 years old) graves make up about a half of all the buried (Česnys,...
Map 1: Lithuanian amber trade links in the middle of the first millennium

Lithuanian burial grounds of the end of the 4th – 6th c. with amber artifacts


* Only a few graves and stray finds are dated to the 9th c.
** Burial ground is not excavated. Some finds are dated to the different time periods and in the end of 4th – 6th c.

Balčiūnienė, 1988, p. 67-69; Stoodley, 2000, p. 456-472. Infant mortality was especially high, and being of a low status within society, infants were buried without any funerary goods. With age, the attitude to the children changed, and the older the child, the more grave goods she or he had in the grave (Stoodley, 2000, p. 456-472). Usually, shorter and longer necklaces are found in children’s graves (Stoodley, 2000, fig. 1-2). Such a habit is noticed in a large part of Europe. High child mortality encouraged a search for methods that would increase children’s chances to survive. Having in mind the fact, that since the Greek and Roman times, amber was believed to have curative qualities, it is not surprising at all, that it was expected to protect children from illnesses and an evil eye. On the other hand, amber was easily available in Lithuania, and simple hand-made bead strings were nothing luxurious (fig. 1:1-3,5). Small 3-7-11 bead necklaces tied up to one or two crook-shaped iron pins have been found in adolescent and children’s graves from the fifth-sixth centuries in Lithuania (Raudonai, grave 83; Kaunošiai, graves 150, 229; Lazdininkai (excavations of 1940), grave 70; Rūkųkalnis I, graves 40, 43; Trakai (excavations of 1985), grave 22; Šiūkai, barrow 3, grave 8, barrow 1, grave 6; Saukštis, graves 8, 14, 30; Tūbavai, grave 22, 42; Upninkai, graves 15, 22, 29, 32, 92, 94). In contrast from previous centuries, the fifth and sixth centuries saw Lithuanian women from the Baltic tribes wear long necklaces strung exclusively of lathed, semi-lathed or hand made amber beads, mixed necklaces of amber, glass and iron beads also stayed on fashion (colour fig. 11-13). Such habit is manifested by the finds from the cemeteries of the lower Nemunas region and central Lithuania, which experienced import of amber artifacts (fig. 2). The long strings of lathed and semi-lathed amber beads appear in rich equipped women’s graves. Amber necklaces were made of 10-16-18-21-24-29-39-43-53-72 beads (Kaunošiai, graves 35, 118, 191, 217, Marvele, graves, 294, 305; Plinkaigis, graves 9, 16, 29, 30, 34, 43, 51, 56, 67, 84, 98, 120, 125, 130, 139, 160, 215, 325, 346, 364 and cremated grave A; Vidgriai, graves 21, 34; Lazdininkai (study of 1940), grave 70; (study of 1953), graves 32, 37, 38; Upninkai, graves 44, 92, 94). Only Lazdininkai and Upninkai are in the Baltic sea coast region.

Necklaces of 3-15 amber beads, bronze spirals, links of a chain, sometimes from one to five or up to 17-22 amber beads of amber, green glass, enamelled, pewter or even clay have been found in the graves of children, teenagers and women buried in the late fourth
through the sixth centuries in the rest of Lithuania.

The longest necklaces dated to the fifth-sixth centuries and most of single beads have been found not on the coast of Lithuania, but in the lower Nemunas (Vidgrita) region, in central Lithuania (Kalininkai, Marvele, Plikaigalis) and even eastern Lithuania (Balulai). Most probably the longest bead necklace dated to the fifth century strung of 232 amber, glass and enamel beads, was found in 2000, in eastern Lithuania at the Balulai barrow cemetery, barrow 12, inhumation grave 1. Over 173 shapes of amber beads (irregular bWong, flattened spherical, irregular cylindrical and square) were put together to make this necklace.

The bead necklaces from the fifth-sixth centuries found in the coastal part are strung of fewer beads, only 7-10-20. These are mostly traditional small truncated biconical or flattened spherical beads, though in some of such strings small cylindrical beads also turn up (fig. 1:3,5; 2:6,8; 3:5,7).

As regards Busenion type beads, the fewest of them have been found in the fifth-sixth century graves in western and central Lithuania (fig. 2:9-10, 12-14; Sidrys, 1994 b, p. 42; fig. 10). However, coastal part of Lithuania is exceptionally rich in lathed step-cut beads (432 types according to Tempelmann-Maczenska, 1985). Twenty-six lathed step-cut amber beads of different shapes have been found in the Užpelktis burial site (fig. 3:3, 4, 5). The lathed step cut beads are known from the third - fourth century Wielbark culture (Bursch., Okulicz-Kozaryn, 1999, fig. 4, 6, 11). Lathed step-cut beads have been found at Suvalki barrow cemetery and other Jotvingian burial sites of the end of the fourth-beginning of the fifth centuries (Antoniewicz, 1961, p. 21-22, tab. II:12).

One or two amber beads-pendants have been found strung together with amber beads in necklaces for the juvenile, buried in the fifth-sixth centuries (fig. 1:3,5). The beads-pendants found in the burial sites in coastal, north-western, central and even southern and eastern parts of Lithuania come in different shapes (fig. 6:1-44). Yet, the most popular were figure-eight beads-pendants, spread across Lithuania in period C3 (fig. 6:1-19, 25-26; Banytė, 1995, p. 5-15, fig. 1-7; Banytė-Rowell, 2000, p. 29-40, fig. 2-5). Most of figure-eight beads-pendants have been found in the graves from the fourth - early fifth and the first half of the fifth century (Valaksa, 1984, p. 17-19, fig. 12-15). However, the necklaces made exclusively of beads-pendants are very rare. Such rare necklace strung of seven figure-eight beads-pendants and two rectangular bead-pendants has been found in boy’s grave 261 at the Zviliūnai cemetery and in Plikaigalis female grave 313 (fig. 1:4, 7-2; colour fig. 12).

Different types of necklaces and beads may indicate different trade routes, not necessarily related with Lithuanian coast (map 1). Amber artifacts found in the burial of the lower Nemunas region, central or eastern Lithuania could be not only local imports of coast Lithuania, but also more distant imports of Sambland, the Gdaski bay, Mazurian Lakeland, Kujavia region or south-western Poland, as these areas are known to have had amber beads of identical shapes, and also amber bead workshops, hoards and storage houses.

Position of amber artifacts in the graves

A custom of attaching a big lathed amber bead to a handle of a battle knife-dagger, spread in the middle of the fifth and sixth centuries (Simenas, 1996, p. 27-71). Such graves are known in the cemeteries of Kalnininkai (grave 214), Liepotoirai (grave 59), Marvele (grave 323), Plikaigalis (graves 106, 228); Vidgritus (graves 13, 19, 37). To attach amber or some other material bead to their battle knife-dagger was also a Scandinavian and Finno-Ugric custom. In Sweden during the Iron Age, amber beads were sometimes attached to swords (Stenqvist, Beck, Bergström, 1994, p. 38-39). The Huns would fix a bead-amulet of glass, semi-precious stones or amber to a handle of a sword (Csalányi, 1961, p. 259-260; Böna, 1993, fig. 22: 2-3; 4(9), 33, 36; 61; plane XVI). It should be noted that some lathed amber beads found in the Baltic lands in

Fig. 3. Amber beads from Užpelktis cemetery
1-4 - MLIM GEK 55 195, 63, 244/3; 5-7 - APM 717/81781; 1-2, grave 31

Fig. 4. Step cut amber beads from Užpelktis cemetery
1-MLIM GEK 63 228; 2 - MLIM GEK 55 166;
3 - MLIM GEK 63 250 4 - MLIM GEK 55 893; 5 - MLIM GEK 63 237.

(Photos by Antanas Lukšiūnas)
their form mirror the Hunnish ones (Bóna, 1993, fig.
22:2). Large amber beads would also be attached to a
belt or a sash, as manifested by the finds of male graves
at the burial sites of Kalnuškiai and Uspelkalnai (fig. 3:2).
The custom fix a big head-pendant, not necessarily
an amber one, to the belt or sash was part of Danubian
Sarmatians and German’s costume of the rich persons.
Evidently during the early Migration period, such
custom was popular within a large area from the
Caucus up to the Rhein under the influence of
prestigious Mediterranean fashion. In the fifth-sixth
centuries, an amber bead was sometimes attached to
a sash (Vidrigirai, grave 9).
Amber beads found singly in the graves from the
fifth-sixth centuries happen to be placed not only on
the chest, where they were attached to a necklace,
brooch, pin, sewn to dress or strung on a piece of
rope and hanging on a chest. Some singly found am-
ber beads are placed next to the head (Liepiai, grave
65, Marvele, grave 335; Plinkaigalis, grave 21, 46, 97),
some are placed next to the bracelets (Žilūtis, grave
149) or in the area of the waist and pelvis. This posi-
tion of amber beads relates not only to the male custom
to attach a bead to their battle knife-dagger’s handle;
women seem to have had to custom to fix an amber bead,
a piece of raw amber or even a spindle to a sash, mostly
on the left side. This means that amber beads were used
not only in neck ornaments. Therefore singly found
amber beads should be considered amber-amulets.
In the context of Lithuanian amber artefacts from
the fifth-sixth centuries, the finds from the Vidrigirai
cemetery in the lower reaches of the Nemunas evi-
dence a distinct amber necklace wear style (map 1).
Besides Baltic elements, the burial rites and accom-
panying material have analogues in central Europe,
the Danube and the lower Vistula regions, Scandinavia
and the Baltic Sea coast (Šimienas, 1996, p. 6). Iron
prolong-headed pins have been found in female graves
at the Vidrigirai cemetery (graves 11, 16, 17, 41). Such
pins have been found next to the head, they were used
to fix a headband. From five to nine small lathed amber beads were attached to these pins. Besides, in
grave 11, one amber bead was attached to a brooch,
while 12 more beads on the left side were tied up to
a sash. Beads fixed to iron pins were also found in grave
16, besides, seven amber beads were found by the left,
and 20 of them—by the right hand of the buried per-
son. In female grave 19, ten lathed beads of Bosonia
type were strung into a necklace; five other beads were
fixed to a headband. From five to twelve amber beads
attached to sashes on the left and the right side were
found in the Vidrigirai cemetery (graves 11, 14, 16, 17,
19, 34; grave 14 is male).
Alongside with other tools placed next to the buried
person’s head, amber spindles of cylindrical form have
also been found at the Lithuanian cemeteries dated to
the fifth-sixth centuries (fig. 8). Most of such are the
finds from the Laždininkai cemetery (excavations of
1949, graves 16, 46, 65, 67, excavations of 1998, graves
37; fig. 7: 1, 3). Some single amber spindles have been
found in the lower Nemunas region, (Vidrigirai,
grave 72) at the Samogitian cemeteries (Pagryžis, grave
33, stray finds; fig. 8:2, 4). The graves dated to the fifth
and sixth centuries are found to contain raw amber. Raw
amber pieces happen to be in different locations in the
grave: near the head (Lepiotai, grave 77, Uobelkiai,
grave 94) on the chest (Laždininkai, exc. 1940, grave
39, Pagryžis, grave 1534) in the area of pelvis
(Mažužiai, grave female 175, Uobelkiai, male graves
16, 66, female grave 84). Raw amber material found at
the Lepiotai cemetery, male grave 6, was located next
to the chin. A noteworthy piece of natural amber was
found in female grave 84 at the Uobelkiai cemetery.
It had a natural cavity in it, and through that opening
it was tied up to a sash in a fashion of amulet (fig. 10).
This Uobelkiai find relates amber pendant-amulets with
apropatrician Bronze pendant of the seventh-ninth cen-
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with the spread of the kick-wheel (potter’s wheel). In most cases, semi-lathed amber beads imitate shapes of lathed ones. Only the peoples, which at the time used potter’s wheel in pottery, could also produce lathed beads (Żak, 1962, p. 182-186). Thrown on the wheel pottery appeared in the region of the amber route and its branches only in the end of the second century; by the fourth century, throwing was introduced into pottery locally (Żak, 1962, p. 186-188; Wielowiejski, 1980 b). Amber turning lathe and potter’s wheel could have been brought to these quarters by Gothic merchants from amber processing workshops in Aquileia and Pannonia. In Sандland peninsula in the fifth century, potter’s wheel was used occasionally (Okulicz, 1973, p. 441).

West Balts saw the first lathed and semi-lathed amber beads in the period B2/C1. Production of such beads started spreading there only at the turn of the periods C3-D (Okulicz, 1973, p. 439, 454-455, fig. 217: c, 218: j, 224; Wielowiejski, 1976, p. 98). However, production of lathed amber beads was indeed established in the Baltic lands early in the period D. Lithuania was reached by the first imports of lathed beads in the middle of the second half of the third century together with Roman coins, glass and enamel beads (Ladzinski, grave 13 (research of 1992), Dauglaukis, grave 1, LNM AR 3661 f).

It is known, from the fifth through the ninth century, modelling was the only method used in Lithuania for making pottery (Tautavičius, 1996, p. 264-270). In the eleventh centuries potter’s of the Baltic tribes started combining modelling with throwing, thrown pottery was introduced in the tenth century (Žalkas, Klimka, 1989, p.46-53). This means that no proper technical equipment for turning amber beads existed in Lithuania in the fourth-sixth centuries. But this fact does not preclude a possibility that some beads-pendants made by hand, or maybe on a bow-type turning device (for making semi-lathed beads).

A large amber beads production center was situated at the lower reaches of the Vistula, the seashore between the Vistula and the Oder and the Vistula-Parsęt (Gdańsk region and the area of Kolbreg-Słups). Lathed and semi-lathed amber beads typical of the late Roman Iron Age and the Migration period were produced in these quarters until the fifth century. Other possible regions of producing lathed and semi-lathed amber beads were basin of the rivers Narva-Vistula and southeastern part of Poland (Wielowiejski, 1997, p. 213-347; Gruszczynski, 1999, p. 183-199; fig. 2: 1-5, 9-10, 12-14; 3: 1-4). Based on the occurrence of step-cut amber beads in the area, such beads over the period B2/C1 and C3/

D could have been produced somewhere between Gdańsk and the Nogat river, maybe in Mazurian Lakeland (fig. 4: 1-5; colour fig.11.13; Okulicz, 1973, p. 455; 1976, p. 181-213). 997 is the date when Gdańsk amber processing workshops first entered the written sources, however, amber processing in these quarters goes back to the Stone Age (Tateciuszyk, 1999, p. 177-180).

In the late fourth century and over the first half of the fifth, large amber processing workshops operated in Świecie, Rzessów voivodeship (southeastern Poland). Świecie amber beads are very similar to the ones found in Lithuania (fig. 2: 1-4; colour fig.11.13). Among the Świecie amber beads (especially type IV according to P. Wielowiejski or type 440, according to M. Tempelmann-Maćzyńska) are similar to Rosatka beads (Wielowiejski, 1990, p. 111). To classify these amber beads by type of production, the bulk of the Świecie beads are hand-made, probably produced with the help of a knife and chisel. Only a couple of the amber beads show traces of having been turned on a lathe (Gruszczynski, 1999, p. 185). Excavations have revealed that Świecie amber workshops were deserted unexpectedly, and the end of their existence is related with the collapse of the Hunnish Empire in 455 (Gruszczynski, 1999, p. 188).

Over the Iron Age and the Early Migration Period, quite sizeable amber workshops existed in Kuiavia

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**Fig. 8. Amber spiral**

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**Fig. 9. Strings of amber beads and amber beads**
region (central Poland). The products of these workshops are similar to the amber beads from the fifth-sixth centuries found in Lithuania. Kuitavia region was at the confluence of trade routes between the Oder and the Vistula rivers and a spot of natural salt springs into the bargain. Thus Kuitavia was the target of long-distance amber trade, rather than a mere transit area. Nowarczak, Kruszka-Zamkowa, Jacew, Pachucki, Gąski, Wróble, Konary, Kozłowska, Chow now, 1983, p. 43, note 1, Benicí, Radwanice amber workshops were operating in this region since period B1b. Most of these amber workshops existed until their collapse in the fifth century as the economic depression in Italy brought down all Central European market (Czota- Broniowska, 1999, p. 151-175).

Amber processing workshops should have existed in Samland. Over A1/B3 period, Mazurian Lakeland was a large amber trade center (Nowakowski, 1997, p. 100). Completed and ready for wear amber beads, half-processed amber beads prepared for turning, shavings of amber, and, of course, raw amber is found on the sites of the former workshops. The analysis of amber samples indicates the Baltic Sea as it provenance. Infrared analysis of the amber from Świćica has provided evidence of it being typical sucinite (Gruszczynska, 1999, p. 186). A part of the Baltic raw amber arrived to this huge region via the amber route to be processed and returned back in the form of lathed and semi-lathed amber beads and in the lot of cases with beads-pendants (fig. 67, 14-15, 18, 19, 23-24, 26; 7:2; colour fig.11). The rest of the raw amber and the parts of ready made amber beads were traded further to the south.

In the late Roman Iron Age and during the Migration Period, the current Polish portion of the amber route or other spots of active amber trade are found to have had not only amber processing workshops and hords, but also warehouses to store raw amber and amber beads. Raw amber from these warehouses traveled further south. Amber beads were traded to the merchants coming from Barbaricum, including merchants from Lithuania. The merchant board found in Basonia near Lublin is the most famous. The board found was 300 kg of raw amber lumped and 4 kg of five types turned on lathe amber beads, dated to the first half of the fifth century (Wielowiejski, 1990, p. 101-133). Most amber beads of Basonia type are found in the huge region inhabited by the western Balts (Tempelmann-Magynska, 1985, Abb.12, Tafel 68; Wielowiejski, 1990, p. 111-113). It should be assumed that these beads were produced by the workshops located within the area of their occurrence. Basonia type beads are quite numerous at the high reaches of the Elbe and Wezer rivers; the beads were brought here by trade links. In Lithuania, some of Basonia type beads have been found in the graves at the cemeteries dated to the fifth-sixth century in the lower Nemunas region and central Lithuania; several of such beads came from the cemeteries in Samogitia and Eastern Lithuania. However, they are rare in Lithuania (Sidrys, 1994 b, p. 40, fig. 10). The development of Samland culture and the culture of the lower Nemunas region would indicate that trade in amber could have been an element unifying both Baltic areas (Nowakowski, 1999, p. 110-118). In the periods D-E1 the number of amber beads found at the Sembia -Notanga cemeteries increases (Kulakow, 1997, p. 114-118; Simenė, 1999, p. 52 - 115). The beads found in cremations of this cultural group show rough work, they are simple hacked out without any burnish (fig. 9: 4). Similar amber beads have been found at the cemeteries of central Lithuania, especially big numbers of these have been found in recent years at Kańkūnė (graves 127, 133, 194) cemetery, some of them have been found at Marvės cemetery (grave 294, 305) at Samogitian Suograiniai cemetery (grave 9), also in eastern Lithuania (Odažaities, grave 58; fig. 9: 1-3, 5-6). Yet such beads are not typical of coastal Lithuania.

It is quite possible that Lithuania traders in raw amber from Samland could reach Kuitavia, the environs of Rostok and other markets of central Europe, where we should add, with Baltic merchants used to buy amber beads and other goods manufactured in central Europe. Some indirect evidence of the Balts trading in raw amber comes from Tacitus, when he claims that amber was granted its value only by Roman desire for luxury (Tacitus, 1972, p. 29-30). The artifacts produced in Aquileia and Pannonia workshops from the ancient times (amber sculptures of gods, deities and Cupids, theatrical performers or heroes - brooches, vases and even necklaces of amber beads, or the amphitheatre decorated for Nero's gladiators) are based on completely different traditions (Catacchio, 1993, p. 191-211; Losi, Rapossi, Ruggiero, 1983, p. 203-210; Lund Hansen, 1996, p. 186-107). Such artifacts never reached Lithuania.

This does not exclude a possibility of trips by Baltic merchants to the Roman Empire's provinces or even Rome itself. It is obvious, that raw amber merchants and having purchased the goods they needed, like bronze, salt, lathed and semi-lathed amber beads, glass and home bringing along the purchased amber beads and other goods. Those who would arrive from the coast, they only carried home the delicate lathed beads (fig. 3:1-4, 4-5). There was no need to import amber beads of poorer work into Lithuanian coastal regions because of locally produced hand-made and semi-lathed beads in truncated biconical, flattened spherical shapes and beads-pendants in different shapes. It is worth noting that local craftsmen of coastal Lithuania started imitating lathed truncated biconical beads. Coastal Lithuania also developed local varieties of beads-pendants (typical only of Lithuania (fig. 6: 1-4, 6, 8-13, 17, 20-22, 27-44). Locally made beads and beads-pendants were meant for domestic trade. As last years datan shows Mazurian Lakeland by trade route should be connected with central, southern and eastern parts of Lithuania. The amber beads found at such multistepoi cemeteries like Vidišiai should have been brought over by their owners. Unfortunately, excavations of the hill-forts and settlements from the Iron Age failed to provide any evidence of amber processing in Lithuania. A few small dumps of raw amber and loose beads were found in several Lithuanian hill-forts (Elėkė, Zarde, both in Klaiptė d., Imbrė, Kretinė d., Mazalynos, Ignalina d., Kaukial, Alytus d.; Narkūnai, Utena d.; Varnas, 1978, p. 124; Luchinas, 1981, p. 14). It is assumed that in at least the ninth-twelfth centuries amber processing centers could exist at Palanga settlement (coastal Lithuania), somewhere in Kėdainiai and Sileiùrė regions (Varnas, 1978, p. 123; Žukūkas, 1999, p. 147, 1997, p. 274-275, fig. 181-183, 184-3). A hoard of raw amber, several hand made beads and parts of pendants have been found at Palanga settlement.
**Introduction**


The researches of the pre-historic periods have been mostly orientated to other themes, probably because of the rich metal finds, so that amber remained in the shadow of more complex chronological and settlement studies (Teržan 1984).

The Roman period studies were orientated towards historical and political themes, i.e. studies of territorial appurtenance and political divisions, the formations of provinces and town developing - together with the necropoles. The finds of amber goods are known from Emona graves (Plesničar-Gec 1972, Petru 1972, Petru 1978), but are rather modest in comparison with the rich finds from Petrovo (Vomer-Gogović 1996, Istenič 1999, 79). In fact, the Roman amber has not been much researched, the only exception being a short review study (Bertoncelj-Kučar 1979).

The Roman time amber artefacts used to be the subject of anthropological analyses, and unlike the pre-historic amber, has not been researched in the field of scientific studies (Hadli, Orel 1978).

¹ Acts from the conference about amber in Lithuania 1990 indicate a perfect insight in separate sites along the Amber Road. Amber in Archaeology, Praha 1993, (ed. C. W. Beck, J. Buzasik).