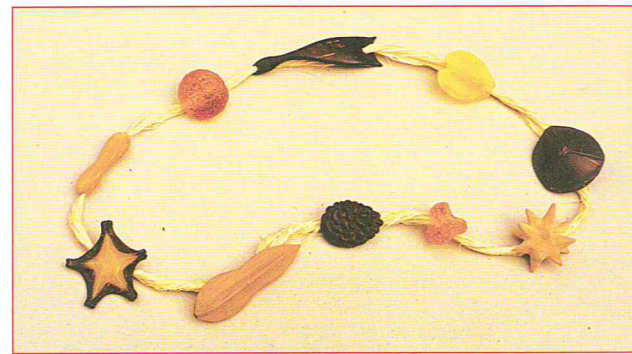


A PARTIAL SURVEY OF RESEARCH ON PRE-NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITHUANIAN AMBER ARTEFACTS (ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS)

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Man kann in der Bernstein-Kunst im Laufe des XX. Jahrhunderts einen veränderten Umgang mit dem Bernstein erkennen. Bernstein wird mehr als natürlich entstandenes Material geachtet, seine vielfältigen Formen und Farben werden von Künstlern geschätzt und bewusst genutzt; andererseits betrachten die Autoren Bernstein auch als konzeptuelles Material, der ohne irgendwelchen Vorurteilen benutzt werden kann.

Die vielseitige Tätigkeit des Bernsteinmuseums-Galerie von Virginija und Kazimieras Mizgiriai ist im litauischen Kulturkontext sehr bemerkenswert. Bernstein hat jetzt seine Rolle auf der litauischen Kunstszene - nicht nur als wertvolles Mineral, sondern auch als assoziativer Rohstoff für zeitgenössische Kunstwerke.

The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century custom of wearing a string of amber beads with national folk costume, and songs and poems about "amber tears" and "the land of amber" made this material popular in Lithuania. We have taken to calling Lithuania the "amber country". However, the question as to when people began to adorn themselves with amber and when it took on the significance of a "lucky stone" is still little researched by Lithuanian scholars. The oldest, pre-thirteenth century, period remains especially poorly researched.

The Stone Age

For a long time our most important source of knowledge about this period was the so-called "Juodkrantė (Schwarzort) Amber Hoard". In 1858, after work began on mining amber from beneath the Curonian Lagoon at this site, man-made amber artefacts were also dredged up from the seabed. These were collected and sent to the Stantien and Becker Mining Company's museum in Königsberg. These finds included pendants, beads and brooches and in 1865 amber figurines of human beings were found¹. By 1880 more than 400 finds had been collected. In 1882 this amber collection was described and published by R. Klebs, who showed that these objects belong to the Stone Age². It should be added that by then amber mining had led to such finds' appearing in the Tilsit and Strasburg museums and even in private collections³. For a long time Schwarzort finds were handed over to the University of Königsberg. In 1938

facsimiles of some human figurines and several other artefacts were made for the Cultural Museum in Kaunas. Between the wars Schwarzort finds were attributed to comb-marked pottery culture⁴ and were cited by many authors writing about the Stone Age in Lithuania and East Prussia⁵. In 1944, as the eastern front closed in on Königsberg, the Schwarzort artefacts disappeared. Only later were a dozen or so finds from this collection tracked down in Göttingen. These include the human figurines found off Juodkrantė⁶.

Another major collection of similar ornaments (amber beads, pendants, buttons) was found near Palanga by the Counts Tyszkiewicz. The exact location and circumstances of their discovery remain unknown. In 1908 a part of this collection was donated to the Vilnius Society of the Friends of Science (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie*). These finds are now in the Lithuanian National Museum⁷. The Tyszkiewiczzes gave the remainder of their collection to the Kretinga Ethnographic Museum⁸. From there they eventually found their way into the Cultural Museum in Kaunas. They were also dated to the New Stone Age and attributed to comb-marked pottery culture⁹.

These two collections from Juodkrantė and Palanga were most important for understanding stone-age ornaments. However, the circumstances of how the Juodkrantė hoard found its way beneath the Curonian Lagoon remain unknown. We do not know whether any other objects, such as animal bones or potsherds, were found with them, because at that time there was no interest in such objects. Therefore, it is unclear whether this is just an amber hoard,

a sacrifice, or the remnants of a dwelling site, or whether they were tossed into the Lagoon at approximately the same time or over several hundred years. Only recently has the thought occurred that some of the Juodkrantė finds might be older and others more recent¹⁰.

Apart from small studies carried out in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries on the Curonian Spit, excavations of stone-age dwelling sites began in Lithuania only in the 1950s. At first sites in central and south-eastern Lithuania were excavated. Remnants of settlements rich in flint finds were investigated and so, when the Stone Age in Lithuania was discussed, still only the Juodkrantė and Palanga finds were used in evidence¹¹.

The situation began to change in 1966 when coastal sites at Šventoji were investigated and later Nida (Curonian Spit) and other sites were excavated. At Šventoji more than 20 pipe beads, approximately 300 brooches, circa 100 pendants and a dozen or so rings, disks, many trial pieces, fragments and many off-cuts were found in addition to pieces of raw material¹². During excavations at Nida in 1973-78 around forty amber artefacts were found¹³. Furthermore, in sites excavated farther from the coast only single amber artefacts or fragments of artefacts were found¹⁴.

Therefore, it is now clear that amber ornaments and amulets were known in Lithuania from the Early Stone Age and that they are found in sites belonging to the Narva and Rzucewo (Pomorze) Culture¹⁵. It is thought that amber artefacts in Lithuania spread not from only from coastal areas, but that single objects also came from eastern Latvia¹⁶.

The Iron Age

We have no amber artefacts from the first millennium BC, the end of the Bronze Age and the early Iron Age, perhaps because fewer people work on this period¹⁷. From the first millennium AD and the beginning of the second millennium our finds come almost solely from graves. In barrows we find mostly unfashioned pieces of amber (Eketė [Klaipėda District], Imbarė [Kretinga District], Juodonyš [Rokiškis District], Mažulonyš, [Ignalina District] and so forth). Grave site excavations have shown that amber beads were worn from around the time of Christ, and from the third-fourth centuries AD amber loom weights were used, which were more common in Curonian and Žemaitijan dwelling sites from the fifth-sixth centuries. In the eighth-ninth centuries certain other amulets spread. However, it should be added that this is only preliminary data because most grave sites have

been excavated only on a small scale. Moreover, the material from the largest grave sites excavated at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (at Anduliai [Kretinga District], Oberhof, [Klaipėda District] and Vežaičiai [Šilalė District]) was lost or disappeared unpublished during World War Two.

During the first century AD trade links developed between the south-eastern Baltic littoral and the Roman Empire. Amber consumption in the Empire was the reason why the first information about amber and the Aesti tribes (considered to be Balts) was included in the works of Tacitus and Ptolemy¹⁸. Trade links with Rome and her provinces provided the Balts with many non-ferrous metal and glass-enamel beads. New non-ferrous metal (bronze, tin, silver) ornaments and glass-enamel beads became very popular among people living then in what is now Lithuanian territory. Metal necklaces, spirals and bronze pendants, coloured glass-enamel beads became the main types of neck jewellery. Amber beads were used more as amulets. Single amber beads are included among other material in women's strings of beads and they are also found in men's graves. They have not attracted much attention in archaeological studies¹⁹.

In the fourth-sixth centuries amber beads are more common and have more varied forms²⁰. Excavations of the Plinkaigalis grave site have shown that at that time larger strings of beads are found but only in graves where there are no necklaces (Graves 24, 55, 56, 126) and various forms of beads are found in strings from that time²¹. Most common finds are double-cut cones and spherical beads while semi-circular and flattened circular forms are rarer. Furthermore the surfaces of certain finds are furrowed with concentric rings (some of which are deep, some broader and almost unnoticeable), some are incised, cut round, while others are carefully polished and turned. We encounter pear or figure-8 shaped bead-pendants, some of which remind one of beetles. Some forms are common in large European areas. Some times they are discussed by archaeologists from other countries, but Lithuanian finds are often ignored or reported in small numbers because Lithuanians fail to publish them.

Amber figure-eight bead-pendants are found in south-eastern Sweden, Denmark, Pomorze (Poland), East Prussia and to the south east finds have been made in the Dnepr Delta²². Lithuanian finds are not marked on find maps. However, such beads have been found in at least six grave sites (Baitai, Gintarai, Prysmančiai and Užpelkiai [Kretinga District], Maudžiorai [Kelmė District], Žviliai [Šilalė District])²³. Žviliai grave research has shown that they were used as amulets²⁴.

The case with so-called Bassonia-type beads is similar. Polish scholars who have surveyed this type of turned bead and its proliferation were able only to mention three find sites in Lithuania, at Oberdorf, and Šernai in the Klaipėda District and Eiguliai (Kauņas)²⁵. R.V. Sidrys collated other researchers' data concerning a further sixteen find sites²⁶, although it seems that there are very many more (grave sites at Eiguliai, Paulaičiai, Stragnai and the Žvirbliai barrows). However, it is typical that they are found on strings together with amber beads of other shapes.

During the whole first millennium AD most beads were used as amulets rather than jewellery, as is illustrated by the frequency (usually one-three beads together) with which they are found in men's graves²⁷. In eighth-tenth-century Curonian graves single amber beads are found near bits. From the fifth century two amber beads are more commonly found in Žemaitijan women's graves near pins and near clasps in men's graves (two beads in a grave). In Curonian men's graves we find two small amber beads in the forehead region but, since organic material tends to disappear for the most part, it is unclear whether these beads were attached to the corpse's hair or head dress. For example, in the Palanga grave site (dated to the eighth-tenth centuries) such grave goods are found with 32% of corpses and at Bikavėnai (Šilalė District) with 30% of burials.

After cremation customs spread in central and eastern Lithuania in the sixth century and the practice became common in Skalvian and Curonian lands in the seventh-eighth centuries less and less data survives relating to the wearing of amber beads and amulets. However, continued use of amber is illustrated by finds from inhumation graves with a horse (date: tenth-twelfth centuries) from central Lithuania. Single beads are found above the horse's head or by its neck. These were probably attached to the horse's manes. We have examples of this from at least ten graves. Lithuanian archaeologists have not compared these finds with amber discovered in human graves.

In Curonian men's graves of the eighth-ninth centuries we come across comb-shaped beads attached to a belt or placed in another part of the grave. These are quadrangular or semi-circular amber plates with schematically incised "teeth" on one side²⁸. In women's graves of the same time we sometimes find a round amber plate above the corpse's head; one side of the plate is polished. The plates lack any holes for attachment and so it is supposed that they were part of a

head dress²⁹. Furthermore, in women's graves we find symbolic tools for weaving sashes (quadrangular amber plates, an amber knife and some times a loom weight with a carved stem)³⁰.

Hitherto amber loom weights have received scant attention from archaeologists³¹. They are found from the third century onwards but are particularly typical of if the first half of the first millennium and are found in Curonian, Žemaitijan and Skalvian-Lamata territory. That is, they are found in the same area where it was a custom to place stone loom weights in women's graves. In size and shape (a low cylinder) they do not differ from stone weights. More than a hundred examples have already been found in around thirty graves. Only 10-11% of these finds are decorated in the same way as stone weights. Sidrys considers these to be ritual artefacts³². The frequency of amulets and their classification as ritual artefacts has forced archaeologists to consider this aspect of amber usage³³.

As we see, we have no single work covering Lithuanian amber artefacts. The most important studies, we think, are those of Klebs, Rimantienė and Sidrys. Amber production techniques, changes in amber production, regional variations, the amber and amber goods trade in the country remain completely unresearched. These and other matters can be studied only when we have a full catalogue of amber finds in Lithuania. Not only excavation material but also accidental finds preserved in all our museums or mentioned in archaeological writing should be drawn into this catalogue.

¹ "Alttertumsfunde", *Altpreussische Monatsschrift* 2 (1865), p.755

² R. Klebs, Der Bernsteinschuck der Steinzeit von der Baggerai bei Schwarzort und anderen Lokalitäten Preussens aus dem Sammlungen der Firma Stantien und Becker und der Physikalisch-ökonomischen Gesellschaft (Königsberg, 1882)

³ F. Siemering, "Über Bernsteinfunde", *Mitteilungen der Litauischen literarischen Gesellschaft* 1887, vol.2, p.230-232; R. Forrer, "Neue Bernsteinschmückstücke von Schwarzort", *Antiqua* 1900 No.1/2, p.1-3

⁴ W. La Baume, "Bernstein", *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte* I (Berlin, 1924), p.431-441; E. Sturms, Schwarzort", *ibid* XI (Berlin, 1927), p.373-379

⁵ W. La Baume, *Urgeschichte Ostpreussens* (Königsberg, 1929), ill.32; B. Richtofen, "Deutung der jungsteinzeitlichen Bernsteinschnitzerei vom Schwarzorter Stil", *Altpreussen* 1935 part 1, p.3-15); C. Engel and W. La Baume, *Kulturen und Völker der Frühzeit im Preussenlande* (Königsberg, 1937), p.36; J. Puzinas, aujausių proistorinių tyrinėjimų duomenys", *Senovė* IV (1938), p.190.

⁶ E. Lausch, chatz in der Schublade", *Stern* 1977 No.34, p.110-112; S. Ritzkowski, "Das Schicksal der Königsberger Bernsteinsammlung", *Muzeumkunde* XLII (2) (1977), p.87-88; S. Ritzkowski and G.

Weisgerber, "Die neolitischen Bernsteinartefakte der Bernsteinsammlung der ehemaligen Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg i. Pr.", *Investigations into amber* (Gdańsk, 1999), p.137-150; A. Gaigalas, Juodkrantės gintaro lobio pėdakais", *Mokslas ir gyvenimas* 2000 No.12, p.30-31

⁷ Lithuanian National Museum, Archaeological Section, AR 29:114-140

⁸ B. Tarvydas, "Senovės gintarinių papuošalų rinkinys", *Gimtas kraštas* 1937 No.1, p.36-46

⁹ Puzinas, "Naujausių proistorinių", p.190-191

¹⁰ Ritzkowski and Weisgerber, "Die neolitischen", p.139

¹¹ P. Kulikauskas, "Gintaro panaudojimas", P. Kulikauskas, R. Kulikauskienė and A. Tautavičius, *Lietuvos archeologijos bruožai* (Vilnius, 1961), p.68-72

¹² R. Rimantienė, *Šventoji: Narvos kultūros gyvenvietės* (Vilnius, 1979), p.87-103; eadem, *Šventoji: Pamarių kultūros gyvenvietės* (Vilnius, 1980), p.45-51; eadem, *Akmens amžius Lietuvoje* (Vilnius, 1996), p.342

¹³ Eadem, *Nida senųjų baltų gyvenvietė* (Vilnius, 1989), p.82-86

¹⁴ A. Butrimas, *Akmens amžius žemaičių aukštumoje. Daktariškės gyvenvietė* (Vilnius, 1982), table 33:1-7; A. Girininkas, *Kriatuonas. Srednii I pozdnii neolit* (Vilnius, 1990), p.92, ill. 115.1-3

¹⁵ Rimantienė, *Akmens amžius* p.190-193, 286-290

¹⁶ Ibid., p.289; Girininkas, *Kriatuonas*, p.92

¹⁷ E. Grigalavičienė, *Žalvario ir ankstyvasis geležies amžius Lietuvoje* (Vilnius, 1995)

¹⁸ M. Michelbertas, "Prekybiniai ryšiai su Romos imperija", *Lietuvos gyventojų prekybiniai ryšiai I-XIII a.* (Vilnius, 1972), p.5-125

¹⁹ Idem, *Senasis geležies amžius Lietuvoje* (Vilnius, 1986), p.106

²⁰ V. Valatka, "Maudžiorų plokštinis kapinynas (1964 ir 1966 m. tyrinėjimų duomenys)", *Lietuvos Archeologija* 3 (1984), p.19; V. Kazakevičius, *Plinkaigilio kapinynas [Lietuvos Archeologija 10]* (Vilnius, 1993), p.99

²¹ Ibid., ill. 100, 102:3, 162:4

²² M. B. Shchukin, "Sovremennoe sostoianie gotskoi problemy i chernokhovskoi kultury", *Arkheologicheskii Sbornik* 18 (1977), p.85, ill.4:8

²³ R.V. Sidrys, "Vakarų baltų gintaro įkapės geležies amžiuje", *Klaipėdos miesto ir regiono archeologijos ir istorijos problemos [Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis 2]* (Klaipėda, 1994), p.69

²⁴ L. Vaitkunsienė, *Žvilių kapinynas [Lietuvos Archeologija 17]* (Vilnius, 1999), p.164-165

²⁵ J. Zak, *Studia nad kontaktami handlowymi społeczeństw zachodnio-słowiańskich od VI do VIII w.n.e.* (Wrocław-Warsaw, 1962), p.168-191; P. Wielowski, "Skarb bursztynu z późnego okresu rzymskiego odkryty w miejscowości Basonia, woj. Lubelskie", *Prace muzeum ziemi* 41 (1991), p.101-133

²⁶ R.V. Sidrys, "Gintaro įkapės senojo ir vidurinio geležies amžiaus kapuose", *Vidurio Lietuvos archeologija* (Vilnius, 1994), p.36-37, ill.10

²⁷ R.V. Sidrys, "Vakarų baltų gintaro įkapės", p.91, table 1

²⁸ *Lietuvių liaudies menas. Senovės lietuvių papuošalai*, ed. R. Kulikauskienė

and R. Rimantienė (Vilnius, 1966), vol. 2, ill. 37-39; A. Varnas, "Gintaro apdirbimas", *Lietuvių materialinė kultūra IX-XIII amžiuje* vol. 1 (Vilnius, 1978), ill.5

²⁹ Ibid., p.181

³⁰ Ibid., p.120

³¹ Ibid., p.119-120; A. Tautavičius, *Vidurinis geležies amžius* (Vilnius, 1996), p.125-126

³² Sidrys, "Vakarų baltų gintaro įkapės", p.72

³³ L. Vaitkunsienė, "Gintaras — laimės akmuo", *Mokslas ir gyvenimas* 1983 No.3, p.8-9; eadem, "Amber in the art and religion of the ancient Balts", *Contacts across the Baltic sea during the late Iron Age (5th-12th centuries). Baltic Sea Conference, Lund, October 25-27, 1991* (Lund, 1992), p.49-57; eadem, "Gintaras senovės baltų mene", *Ikikrikščioniškos Lietuvos kultūra* (Vilnius, 1992), p.36-49

AMBER IN LITHUANIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

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The present amber bibliography covers the period of Lithuanian Archaeological literature from 1792 to 2001. Articles focusing exclusively on amber theme are not numerous in Lithuania. However, there are quite a number of publications, which refer, with more or less detail, to amber artifacts, trade routes and amber collections owned by museums. As a milestone in preparing this bibliography has served the capital study by Adolfas Tautavičius "Lietuvos archeologijos bibliografija" (Bibliography of Lithuanian Archeology, 1782-1998).

The current work "Amber in Lithuanian Archaeological Literature" has no ambition of being an all-exhausting study, but rather is a modest attempt to give a quick overview of the main publications printed locally, as well as those printed abroad, not limited to, but including also material belonging to Lithuanian Archaeological sites. "Amber in Lithuanian Archaeological Literature" is divided into following parts.

I General knowledge (amber in Archaeological material, collections of museums, amber trade routes, amber conservation)

II Stone Age

III Bronze Age

IV Roman Iron Age -Viking Age

I. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (AMBER IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL, COLLECTIONS OF MUSEUMS, AMBER TRADE ROUTES, AMBER CONSERVATION)

1792

1. **Baczko L.** Einige Nachrichten vom Bernsteinhandel zur Zeit des Deutschen Ordens // *Annalen des Königreichs Preussen.* - 1792, T. 3, p. 87 – 93.

1865

2. **Altertumsfunde / S-n //** *Altpreussische Monatsschrift – Königsberg*, 1865, T. 2, p. 755-756.
p. 755 – apie Kuršių mariose prie Juodkrantės rastus gintarinius dirbinius.

3. **Hensche A.** Bericht über die Bernsteinsammlung der Physikalisch-ökonomischen Gesellschaft // *Schriften der Physikalisch-Ökonomischen Gesellschaft zu Königsberg in Preussen.* – Königsberg, 1865, T. 9, Nr. 2, p. 210-215.

1869

4. **Hensche A.** Bericht über die Bernsteinsammlung der Physikalisch-ökonomischen Gesellschaft // *Schriften der Physikalisch-Ökonomischen Gesellschaft zu Königsberg in Preussen.* – Königsberg, 1865, T. 9, s. 1, p. 16-17.

1879

5. **Bujack G.** Bernsteinland und Bernsteinstrassen // *Sitzungsberichte der Altertumsgesellschaft Prussia – Königsberg*, 1877, T. 34, p. 67 – 78.