Stray Ground Stone Axes from Užnemunė

VYGANDAS JUODAGALVIS

Introduction

The great part of the historical-cultural heritage consists of the stray archaeological finds. It is from the announcement of the stray material and experimenting to interpret it when we start dating the beginning of the archaeology science in Lithuania. That was in the 19th century. Now, during the 21st century, the stray material is being evaluated differently. In general there could be found two different attitudes towards this issue: stray finds have not been regarded as useful in any interpretation or stray finds could be regarded as a serious source for dealing with various matters, including the matters of culture and chronology. The use of stray material is restricted by the methods used in order to amend it, and by unreliable or unsuitable use of it. I think it’s not worth while denying the interpreting possibilities of the stray material basically, but it’s worth while searching of ways of interpreting it in a reliable way. After all, the search of new ways stimulates to escape from definite boundaries and is useful in terms of idea progress. The history of archaeology knows several cases when on the basis of stray finds data new cultures were marked out (e.g. Swiderian culture), the existence of which was confirmed by later research. Careful and differential use of data based on stray finds, statistical analysis in detail, thorough research of finding circumstances may give positive results, while checking the earlier established theories, or be a basis for new hypotheses. As a good example could serve T. K. Ledaen study of Mesolithic stray finds in Western Norway (Ledaen 1998).

This paper deals with one of the longest known and popular archaeological stray finds group – ground stone axes and the specific features of their distribution in southwestern Lithuania.

Approach

There is a number of different classifications of ground stone tools, but it probably would be worthless while searching for one general scheme of all Europe, because in different regions ground stone tools developed in a different way. The most important source about ground stone tools in Lithuania is the article
Distribution of Ground Stone Axes in Užnemunė

Specific historical and geopolitical circumstances made it possible for a few names of southwestern Lithuanian part to appear. The terms of Sūduva, Suvalkija, Užnemunė are used in everyday Lithuanian and in literature as well. In archaeological literature the recent term has been widely used. The literal translation of this compound word is "Beyond Nemunas". From the east and the north Užnemunė is separated from the rest part of Lithuania by the biggest river in Lithuania Nemunas. In the west Užnemunė borders on former East Prussia – recently the district of Kaliningrad, Russia. In the South it borders on Poland and Belorusia. The territory of Užnemunė makes up 12.6% of the area of Lithuania. Šešupė – the main water artery in Užnemunė. Its basin (4899 km² in Lithuania) covers 7.5% of the area of Lithuania and 60% of the area of Užnemunė (Jablonskis, Gaigalas, Simniškaitė 1975). From the point of view of orography Užnemunė is not homogeneous. There are hills, plains and lowlands found there. Northwestern part of Užnemunė belongs to the lowland of the Lower Nemunas.

Its surface is varied by the crests (98–148 m above sea-level) – the watersheds of Nemunas tributaries. The middle part belongs to the compound part of the Baltic hills – the hills of Sūduva, which is divided by the valley of Šešupė to the western (284 m above sea-level) and eastern (202 m above sea-level) hills. The southern part of Užnemunė itself belongs to southwestern part of the lowest southeastern Lowland (Basykas 1959).

It's hard to say when exactly the first stone age artefacts from Užnemunė got into the collections of the museums – till the mid – 19th century the archaeologists – amateurs took very little into consideration the metrics of the finds and the circumstances of their finding. We can only guess that in the collections of E. Tyszkiewicz, A. Kirkoń, F. Dobrianski and others from the Museum of Antiquities and of Vilnius Provisional Archaeological Commission members there had been finds from Užnemunė. In 1981 in Moscow a work of count A. Uvarov was published, which was devoted to the Stone Age in Russia. Besides other finds of the Stone Age, there are six ground stone axes mentioned which had come from Užnemunė together with finding places indicated in the map. The finds had been from the private collection of Podczasinski (Uvarov 1881). Most probably it is the first reference to the ground stone axes from Užnemunė in the archaeological literature.

From the typological point of view Užnemunė does not differ from the general sight of Lithuania. There are all main ground stone axes types found except for boat-axes with clucht round shaft-hole (so-called Karlova type). There are very few of these finds found in other parts of Lithuania as well. Evidently this scheme (Table 1) is different from that which is presented in LAA (Bagušienė, Rimantienė 1974: 104, fig. 17). Table 1 is a little contracted because the expression of the percentage of some extremely small numbers of types can form a presumption for erroneous conclusions. Nevertheless a few of types of one finds group are important in terms of culture and chronology and, to my mind, it is purposeful to single them out. Here we deal with the boat-axe battles.

Mostly the ground flint axes are found in the central part of Užnemunė (Fig. 1). In Lithuania the flint in most cases is found in Chalk period sediments. Chalk system sediments are diffused in a large area which covers all southeastern and southwestern Lithuania (Gudelis 1958). Užnemunė falls under the diffusion zone of chalk substance, but the flint is found diversely in its different parts. Good quality and rather big nodules of flint are found in the lower terraces of the Nemunas, especially below water level. In the southern part of Užnemunė the flint is found rather frequently, but it does not correspond in its quality to the flint found in Nemunas. It is smaller, often porous with chalk admixture.

In the northwestern part of Užnemunė the flint is sometimes found in the exposures of the riversides of Šešupė on the second terrace level. The flint which is found there is of good quality but it's very small, usually hardly 3–4 cm. Generally the situation can be characterised in the following way: in the places where there is more raw material, there are less ground flint axes found.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Lithuania</th>
<th>Užnemunė</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground flint axes</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone axes without shaft-hole</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axes with quadrangular end</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axes with rounded end</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European-type boat axes</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatyvarovo-type boat axes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltic-type boat axes</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-edged axes</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2102</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 1. Distribution of axes without shaft-hole.

The axes of other kinds of stone without the shaft-hole are found in small groups, which are spread along Užnemunė (Fig. 1). No regularities in their distribution were found out, we can only ascertain that they were not found in the western part of Užnemunė.

Shaf-hole axes with rounded end are found in small numbers. In Užnemunė these common working tools are spread with no appreciable order, about 30% of them are found on the riversides of the Nemunas (Fig. 2).

Double-edged axes make up a considerably large group of finds. The places of their findings are arranged in a rather wide but clearly defined belt, which crosses Užnemunė in the direction of southwest – northeast (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Distribution of double-edged axes and axes with rounded end.

The most abundant group are axes with quadrangular end, the so-called Baltic axes (Fig. 3). Basically their distribution coincides with that of flint axes. The greatest concentration is noticeable in the central part of Užnemunė. Boat axes are spread slightly wider (Fig. 4). There are two larger concentrations of the finding places pointed out: in the central part of Užnemunė near the river Šėlupė and in the southeastern part between the Nemunas and the great lakes of Užnemunė.

While examining the distribution geography of the ground stone axes we must pay special attention to the subjective factors. In comparison with general quantity of ground stone axes we may come to conclusion of high level of using ground stone technique in Užnemunė. But if we take a look at the collections of
finds from excavated Stone and Bronze Age sites at Užnemunė we will get another view. Striking instance could be Kubiščiai site that has been entirely excavated. There were found out about 40000 flint artefacts without any evidence of ground flint technique. Only one waste bore-plug testifies the presence of ground stone tools (Juožalavičius 1992). Rather similar situation was observed at Bronze Age settlement Dusia 8 where three ground stone axes were found and none ground flint artefact (Juožalavičius 1989). There is no data of ground stone axes from hill-forts at Užnemunė (Kuliauskas 1982; Tarasenka 1997), while they are rather numerous in the hill-forts of east Lithuania (Grigalavičienė 1995). It seems convincing that relative abundance of ground stone axes is stipulated by specific features of economical development of Užnemunė in the second part of 19th and the first part of 20th century. Development of agriculture, peat industry and land-reclamation was more intense than it was in the other parts of Lithuania. It created more favourable situation for finding of artefacts. It is worth while remembering stray bone and antler artefacts from Užnemunė that were the first mentioned in archaeological literature (Grewingk 1982) and long time represented the Stone Age of whole Lithuania.

There are noticeable several groups of finding places of ground stone axes. It is particularly distinct concentration almost of all types of axes in the central part of
Conclusion

There are two aspects which I stressed in this paper: a) studies of the archaeological heritage in southwestern Lithuania; b) the use of the stray material as a source. Another important point is to impel the archaeologists who are interested in the distribution of the ground stone tools in different regions and to try to take part in the extension of the methods which are being used in order to amend the stray material and finally to draw attention to the material which is concentrated in the funds of the museums. It’s worth mentioning that since publishing LAA there hasn’t been any special articles about the ground stone tools in Lithuania. To my mind, the ground stone tools deserve more attention. The stray material which is piled up in the funds of Lithuanian museums is like a thick book. The question is if we know how to read it and if we understand what we have read? We need to start studying the funds over again. Moreover, while taking into consideration the material which has been filled up during the last years, time has come to think about the creation of the new Atlas of Lithuanian Archaeology.

Literature


Šitaip archeologijos vienos seniausių žinomos ir popularios archeologijos radinių grupės – akmeninių glaudintų kirvių – paplitimo ypatybės Užnemunėje. Autorius siojo „statistiškų geografinių“ metodą – Užnemunė apima 12,6% Lietuvos plotą. Iš tokių radinių jis skaičiavus, kad 79% jų turi antrąjį 12,6% bendro 1,5% rūšių. Skirtumus tarp realaus ir teorinių jų išvesto radinių skaičiaus (5 pav.) ir sudaro priešingas interpretacijas. Pavyzdžiui, didesnius Europos laivinių kovos kirvių kiekis išskiria, tuo atvirai vietos raidos tarp (kirvių ilga kvadratinė pentlinių, baltiški laiviniai kovos kirvių) apžiūrėti tiekai nei kitose Lietuvos dalyse.

Šių straipsnių tikimasi paskatinti kolegų domėjimą akmeninių glaudintų dirbio tipologijos, chronologijos, paplitimo ypatybėmis atskiruose Lietuvos regionuose.

Vygandas Juodagalvis
Archaeology Department
Lithuanian Institute of History
Kražių str. 5
Vilnius LT-2001
Lithuania

Kabeliai 2 Stone Age Site

Tomas Ostrauskas

Introduction
Investigations of Lithuanian Mesolithic first of all are connected with the name of Rimutė Rimantiūnė. She created scheme of Lithuanian Mesolithic on the basis of analysis of huge collections of stray finds and few excavated “sandy” sites in sixties and early seventies of the 20th century. According to this scheme Epipaleolithic Culture left by the mixed population of different Late Paleoecolithic cultures flourished in Preboreal. In early Boreal some groups of Maglemose Culture from N–W Europe reached territory of the country. Local mesolithic Nemunas Culture was formed on the basis of epipaleolithic heritage and Maglemosian groups under the influence of some microlithic traditions from the south in Boreal. A few stray finds of characteristic artifacts of bone and antler and distribution sites of neolithic Narva Culture in Northern Lithuania let the investigator to include this area into area of mesolithic Kunda Culture (Rimantiūnė 1971; 1977; Rimantiūnė 1984). The scheme created by R. Rimantiūnė was basic scheme for investigators of Lithuania and the surrounding area for a long time.

Excavations of some new mesolithic sites in Lithuania and neighbouring countries as well as revision of old collections during latter ten years revealed facts which do not correspond to the scheme of chronological and cultural periodisation of the Mesolithic in Lithuania made by R. Rimantiūnė. Some new conceptions were proposed by investigators of younger generation (Brzažulis 1998; Oparynova 1993; Ostrauskas 1993; 1995; 1996; 1998a; 1998b; Satavilis 1994; 1997). And here the first Lithuanian multi-layer mesolithic peat bog site Kabeliai 2 takes a key position. The present work is a presentation of the data obtained in the first two excavation seasons (1996 and 1997) in the Kabeliai 2 stone age settlement for proper auditorium.

Kabeliai 2 stone-age site (A-116) is situated 400 m to the east from the Ašänkai village of Varėna district (Marčinkonys local administration area), on the southern shore of former lake that has long ago turned into a peat field. The settlement was discovered in 1990. A great amount of flint stray finds were scattered on surface over the area of about 300×200 m including a few small hills (old dunes) on the shore of former lake and the edge of peat field. The total area investigated in 1994–1997 makes up 206 sq. m. It yielded more than 4000 fixed flint, stone,