MATERIAL AMBER TRADITION IN THE WEST LITHUANIAN CEMETERIES WITH STONE CIRCLES IN THE COMPARATIVE CONTEXT OF BALT CULTURES. SOCIAL ASPECT

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Introduction

Scientific literature distinguishes the Roman period as a time of considerable change in the economical and social development of the world of the Balts. The study of archaeological material attest to this period of change, while data from early written sources provides us with no less important information that considerably fills in certain gaps in knowledge as regards the communities of that time. One such testimony is Tacitus’ *Germania*. This prominent work was the first to introduce the Aestii (*Aestiorum gentes*) to the world – the tribes that lived by the Baltic (*Suebian*) Sea and collected amber, even though, according to the Roman historian, they did not make use of it themselves. In scientific research the Aestii are most commonly related to the inhabitants of the Sambian Peninsula and to the inhabitants of the eastern Baltic region in general. On the basis of archaeological material, researchers give credence to the information provided by Tacitus as regards the issue the inhabitants of the Baltic Sea having no use for amber. Within burial sites the occurrence of quantities of raw amber, and amber artefacts in particular, is scarce. This situation changed in the second half of the second century – third century (B2/C1, C1 a periods) when amber artefacts began to be placed into graves between the early and late Roman periods. These changes can be seen in both the cemeteries of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture and in other cultural groups of Central Lithuania, the Lower Nemunas, Sambia-Natangia and Sudovians. Within the system of communal exchange that existed at the beginning of the Roman period, amber was greatly valued and “desired”. Written sources and archaeological material demonstrate that amber was highly valued and in great demand in the regions of Central Southern Europe. However, the question of what information is “encoded” in the amber burial items found in West Lithuanian communal burial sites with stone circles has remained little discussed. There is a lack of knowledge concerning the social groups of the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture and the spread of amber artefacts in the socially divided society. It is worth
to research what circumstances provoked a change in the tradition that existed in the communities of the mentioned culture during the late Roman period as it was exactly during this period that amber artefacts began to be placed into some of the graves.

The obvious inconsistency in research material relating to the spread of amber in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture determined the issue of this thesis. Through the methods of the discernment of social stratification, based on the burial material from the communities mentioned, it has been important to trace and clarify whether amber was indicative of, as had been the case in ancient society, a certain social class in the Balt communities under discussion. In the absence of a more detailed discussion and assessment of the significance of amber burial items as not only an element which indicates the gender or age of the buried individual – it becomes equally important that amber’s function as, possibly, an indicator of social status within the emerging society of that time be revealed. Yet another aspect of the amber tradition is important, namely the similarities and differences that exist in manifestations of this tradition in the neighbouring Balt cultures. In addition, this research work aims to elucidate whether a certain amber tradition that had been formed in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture was akin to the neighbouring Lower Nemunas, Central Lithuania, Sambia-Natangia and Sudovian cultures.

The object of this doctoral thesis is amber artefacts and their spread within the most widely investigated cemeteries of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Kurmaičiai, Baitai, Žviliai) and in the chosen cemeteries of the other Balt (Lower Nemunas, Central Lithuania, Sambia-Natangia, Sudovian) cultures; and the statistical data of the distribution of amber artefacts in the graves as viewed in the context of the gender, age and social relationships of the deceased. The methods for the evaluation social groups on the basis of the archaeological material from the burial sites.

The objective of this work is to highlight the social and material stratification of the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle
Grave culture, while at the same time revealing the significance of amber in these communities; moreover, to present the results of the analysis in the comparative context of the amber tradition of the Balt cultures.

The following tasks have been set:

1. Having investigated the archaeological material collected from the amber rich cemeteries of south western Latvia and western Lithuania, to present the data of the analysis of the graves of adult and children, men and women.

2. Having applied the principles of the chosen methodology, to identify the social classes in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, and to name and discuss in more detail the basic features of the groups of individuals belonging to different social groups on the basis of the burial items found in their graves.

3. To analyse the manifestation of the amber tradition in the context of the social stratification of the communities belonging to the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture.

4. To discuss the chronology and methods of processing of the most popular amber artefacts in the communities of south western Latvia and western Lithuania during the late Roman period.

5. To discuss the issue of the impact of the geographical distance from the sources of raw amber on the spread of amber in the context of the analysis of the cemeteries of the Balt cultures.

6. To compare amber spread on the basis of the distribution of amber artefacts in the more widely researched cemeteries of the Balt cultures. The clarification of similarities and differences.

7. To analyse the change in amber tradition and its features during the late Roman period.

Research methodology. A statistical correlation data analysis was carried out using the database of archaeological material from the chosen cemeteries (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Kurmaičiai, Baitai, Žviliai) of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture. The features of the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture and amber tradition were distinguished using as a basis for the method of measuring grave wealth. A comparative analysis of
the elements of the amber tradition’s manifestation in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, with other cemeteries of the Balt cultures that had been given a more thorough investigation, was undertaken. The results obtained are cartographically analysed. Aiming to more clearly present the data obtained, tables, graphs and line, column, volume, bar, and sector charts were employed. More detailed discussed of methods of measuring grave wealth used in the work are in the separate section of the work.

The relevance of this dissertation is determined by the elucidation of social differentiation in the features of the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture and the identification of the social status of the deceased individuals through the employment using cluster of several methods. In this work, the analysis of grave contents has been chosen as the criteria for the assessment of social status. This analysis has been conducted by employing statistical calculation methodologies to evaluate the burial items’ value; and by applying these methodologies not to the entire complex of the burial site in general but to separate grave groups according to the gender of the deceased individual. Final assessing results of statistical calculation method are being compared to the significant number of burial goods and number of types of burial goods. Also original items’ evaluation method based on the substance of burial goods and its manufacturing technology’s complexity is being presented. The object of this study necessitates the search for original approaches to the subject. Having employed a more versatile method for the analysis of grave contents, the aim is to formulate new assertions in relation to the social stratification of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, and by extension the amber tradition in communities belonging to the latter. The analysis of grave contents allows us to reveal within separate cemeteries the distribution of amber artefacts in graves that are differentiated as regards the wealth, gender, and age of the deceased. The specifics of the sources employed, the analysis of amber artefacts within the separate context of each cemetery, and the methodology applied allow us to compose a theoretical model of the
society’s social stratification. Each community, which was united by the common features of one culture, may have had its own unique features and differed one from another and, moreover, may have exhibited specific characteristics in its amber artefacts. The correlations in amber use that exist within some ware groups reveal that certain patterns were evident within the society and allow us to draw a comparison with similar processes in other cultural groups. The cartographical presentation of some ware groups and the distinguishing of distinctive variations of one particular type of amber pendant allows us to trace the similarities of the communities and their interrelations.

Certainly, the results obtained do not claim to be definite and unquestionable. This study operates only with data provided from burial sites. The settlements of the Roman period have been hardly touched upon. Therefore, the possibility for the misinterpretation of a true social stratification is not excluded as a burial site is a unique archaeological complex which contains deep ideological and symbolic content. Furthermore, the investigation of all the burial sites under discussion in this study, even those most thoroughly explored, is still not final; not to mention the fact that the grave complexes have often been disturbed, or are incomplete, etc. In terms of burial rites, they assume different forms in every society and are closely related to the mentality, ideology and worldview of a certain community. It is precisely because of these aforementioned factors that the present day investigator may encounter certain communicational difficulties, as they are called in sociology, when trying to perceive the realities of that day. For that reason, the results are of interpretational nature and may be adjusted in the.

Structure of the dissertation and summary of the contents

The work consists of an introduction, a review of the historiography, a methodological chapter which is divided into two subsections, five chapters devoted to the analysis and interpretation of
the study results obtained from the archaeological material, a conclusion, a list of sources and literature, and appendixes.

**The amber issue in the context of the historiography of social archaeology**

In scientific literature mention of amber is often made alongside other archaeological finds without any emphasis being placed on its presence; or raw amber and amber artefacts are analysed through the prism of the analysis of trade links with the Empire and its provinces. It is important to note that in Lithuanian scientific literature before 2001, when the subject of amber in archaeology began to be more thoroughly analysed by A. Bliujiënė, barely a few scientific articles existed on the subject. As concerns the deeper analysis of the social aspects of amber artefacts’ “owners” and social stratification of the individuals who were buried with amber burial items, the works by A. Bliujiënė, published in 2007 and 2011, which discussed the amber of Lithuanian prehistory and analyzed such extensive periods as Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, are of especial importance. One of the first studies in which a digital/statistical approach was applied in order to describe the use of amber by the ancient Balts was published by R. V. Sidrys in 1994; however, when analysing the Roman period, the author did not attempt to divide it into smaller periods nor did he pay particular attention to the archaeological material which shows that amber was practically absent in the early period of Old Iron Age (early Roman period), and its quantity only began to increase in graves dated to the second half of the Old Iron Age (late Roman period). It is for these reasons that the statistical data provided may need to be altered. Sidrys left such issues as amber’s links with the age of the deceased and their material differentiation for future research. Scientific literature provides examples of the various approaches researchers have taken as regards the clarification of social aspects through the burial practice. Having taken a deeper interest in the manifestations of the social aspects of amber wear when researching the material from burial sites in the west Balt cultures in 2006, the
The author of this dissertation has become acquainted with the diverse methods that are applied when attempting to establish the social status and wealth of the deceased on the basis of the artefacts found in the graves; such methodologies will be presented in more detail in this work.

Hence, the scientific literature that discusses the social issues and the issue of amber burial items during the Roman period fails to provide a link between these burial items and – methodologically divided – social classes, or the material differentiation of the deceased according to their gender. Archaeological amber has not yet been analysed following the correlation principle – which would help clarify in which graves (men’s or women’s) and with which burial items amber is most often discovered. Therefore, by examining the material of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture cemeteries following the principle of social methods, we may be able to uncover important knowledge as regards both the features of the deceased individuals and the community that buried them.

**The methods for the evaluation of a community member’s social status on the basis of archaeological material taken from the cemeteries under analysis**

The anthropologists, sociologists and economists of the late twentieth century unanimously agree that in socio-economical organisations of traditional communities the distribution of material goods reflects the social relationships that existed among individuals in the community. The tendency to transfer material goods to the burial pit of a deceased individual has been noted during explorations of the burial sites of the late Roman period. But can material goods clearly define the social status of a deceased individual to a sufficient degree? The issue of whether burial items served as an expression of the social status of the deceased individual are discussed in the subsections of this chapter; in addition, the methods employed for the
evaluation of the grave’s richness are discussed. This work supports the position that burial inventories reflected the social status of the deceased individual; a status which is multilayered and encompasses various aspects (gender, age, inherited or earned status, wealth, occupation, etc.). Manifestations of these aspects, although not expressed necessarily in a direct manner, can be traced in the material of the burial sites. This chapter presents the experience of the Scandinavian scholars L. Jørgensen and N. Ringstedt and their methodology for estimating the wealth of a grave – which has been slightly modified and adjusted to the archaeological material of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture. When calculating the value of burial items, the category of the burial item’s relative value is introduced – meaning that it is not the number of burial items that is summed up but their total value. Having slightly altered this method, the author of this study chose to apply a separate calculation for the value of men’s and women’s burial items, as during burials different genders were provided with burial items that basically had no inter-connection; social gender roles were expressed through different means. Final assessing results according to the first (scores) method is being compared to the significant number of burial goods and number of types of burial goods. Such comparison of some methods makes the results more objective. In this work also original items‘ evaluation method based on the substance of burial goods and its manufacturing technology‘s complexity is being presented.

The analysis and results of certain cemeteries of south western Latvia and west Lithuania

West Lithuania contains around 35 burial sites which belong to the group of graves with stone circles. The archaeological material found in the latter sites allows us to date them to the second half of the first century – late fourth century. However, for the elucidation and discussion of the social groups of the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, the archaeological material of the four most widely explored cemeteries (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai,
Baitai, Žviliai) has been chosen; two of these cemeteries (Mazkatuži and Žviliai) have been ascribed to the periphery of a latter culture. The archaeological material of the Kurmaičiai cemetery has been used for comparative analysis – employing the method of social differentiation to a statistically smaller community. With the aim of elucidating the features of amber tradition in the communities of the late Roman period, the communities of Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Baitai and Žviliai have been chosen due to the abundant number of amber artefacts that were uncovered in these sites and the frequency with which amber was used as a burial item for men and women.

The subsections of this chapter discuss the sources used in this study individually and briefly present the chosen cemeteries of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai (Kalnalaukis), Kurmaičiai, Baitai (Baičiai), Žviliai); the methodology for the evaluation of grave wealth was applied to the archaeological material of the aforementioned cemeteries. The results obtained in the context of the analysis of each community are summarized. Having first distinguished the separate social groups of men and women, their distinctive features are then discussed and the elements of amber tradition that belong to those groups are clarified.

**Amber artefacts in some of the most widely researched cemeteries of other Baltic cultural groups**

With the aim of clarifying the extent to which the amber tradition that was formed in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture in the late Roman period was similar to or different from neighbouring Baltic cultures, the most thoroughly explored cemeteries of Baltic cultures (the Lower Nemunas, Central Lithuania, Sambia-Natangia, Sudovian) are included in the analysis. With the intention of conducting a comparative analysis, archaeological material of the late Roman period from Dauglaukis (Lower Nemunas culture), Marvelė (Central Lithuania culture), Dollkeim-Kovrovo (Sambia-Natangia culture) and Netta (Sudovian culture) was chosen. The subsections of this chapter discuss the material of the latter cemeteries while at the same time
highlighting both the social features of the burial sites and the amber tradition.

The origins of the dominant forms of amber beads and pendants, their chronology and possibilities for technical processing in the cemeteries of coastal Lithuania

The increased occurrence of amber artefacts within the graves of the late Roman period in comparison to the early Roman period shows that there was a sudden increase in the demand for this material in the contemporary local communities of this period. As regards the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, the chronological dates of the spread of amber artefacts in the general European context casts light on particular trends as concerns the wearing of amber artefacts and, also, the lag in processing technology. This chapter explores such issues as whether the making of amber beads was complex and whether pendants of more peculiar forms were of local origin. Although it is important to discuss these questions, at the same time consideration needs to be given to such issues as the local value of amber artefacts or the amount of access that community members from different social strata had to amber. The majority of amber artefacts consisted of flattened spherical beads (TM388) and bi-truncated conical beads (TM395, 396) which are not technologically difficult to produce. It is most likely that it was ideas related to the shapes of amber artefacts or amber processing technology that were shared between communities but not amber artefacts themselves. The broad geographical distribution of diverse types of amber artefacts illustrates the mobility of the people of the day. Variations in some types of amber pendants (TM465, 471), slight local “refinements” of standard shapes, and the existence of artefacts of unique shapes prove that an interchange of ideas existed. Amber artefacts cast light on the economic/material, mythological and religious aspects of the communities of the time.
The signs of amber tradition from the perspective of social differentiation within the people of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture

Archaeological material from a total of 383 graves was used as the basis for the analysis of the cemeteries of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture; from this number, 130 dead individuals were buried with amber burial items. When dividing the graves according to the gender of the deceased in the cemeteries of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, the tendency to place amber into women’s graves becomes noticeable; however, it is important to note that amber was not merely a female burial item. In the men’s group, graves containing amber comprise around 26% of all the graves of the cemeteries belonging to the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture that have been researched in this work, while in the women’s group – such graves make up 50%. In the context of each cemetery, graves containing amber correlate in a slightly more diverse manner with the general number of graves. In the cemeteries that have been explored, a total of 311 adult and 72 children graves have been discovered. The value of the burial items found in the graves of both genders was expressed as a score, and calculations of the inventories of adult, children and adolescent graves were included onto the general table. Children’s burial items were not, in the main, childish in appearance. From the perspective of the evaluation of a grave’s wealth, children graves – most likely influenced by their family’s status – are often attributed either to the grave group of the wealthy or to the moderately wealthy. It has been observed that amber artefacts are more common not only in the graves of adult women but also in those belonging to children of the female gender, although no clear distinction between the graves of girls and boys that were buried with amber has been observed. When estimating the frequency of the distribution of amber artefacts in separate groups of adults and children within the general context of the cemeteries under investigation, children graves with amber make up 43% of all graves
in the children group, while adult graves with amber compose 32% of all the graves of this group. Hence, amber artefacts were placed at a lesser frequency than one in every second grave within the children group. It is most probable that that it was the status of a child’s parents that determined what amber burial items were placed into their children’s graves.

According to the abundance of items found in the graves, three grave groups have been distinguished in each of the cemetery complexes of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture researched: wealthy, moderately wealthy and poor graves. The poor women from the latter cultural group either did not own any material valuables at all or did not own as many and as precious or rare valuables as those in the moderately wealthy and wealthy groups. They also wore less jewellery made from brass or iron, and did not wear head decorations or long necklaces (in some of the graves, one or a small number amber or glass beads have been discovered). The graves of this group were rarely equipped with imported goods, and then only sparsely – with such items as glass beads or Roman coins. Some of these women were buried with miniature ceramic cups. Some of them were buried with household tools: spindles, awls or knives – such tools were commonly used by the community (Kurmaičiai, Lazdininkai, Baitai – spindles, Žviliai – awls); however, such items were not frequent or abundant in quantity. The social stratification of a community is a very subtle and complex process. In the groups of individuals who have been generally divided and defined regarding their material status – separate sublayers can sometimes be detected (wealthier or less wealthy individuals from the group of the poor and the like). This could explain the appearance of more ordinary artefacts in the graves of the poor (as some work tools or coins) that are more characteristic to the groups of moderately rich or rich individuals. As regards work tools, their appearance in the graves of the poor might signify a certain privilege or that the buried individual had been deemed worthy of or equal to some activity that was common to individuals of rank. Analysis of the correlations between work tools and amber artefacts has shown that for women, often of a higher social
rank, who wore amber ornaments in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, the symbolism of a spindle, which was often complemented by an awl, was of especial importance. Amber spindles, which occur rarely, most likely carried a symbolic resonance and expressed mythological aspects. At the same time they reflected the social status of the deceased woman. The amber spindles that have been found in Lazdininkai and Baitai cemeteries (the graves, accordingly, No. 40 (1998) and No. 42) were exclusively placed into graves of moderate wealth. It was in moderately wealthy graves that the most abundant quantity of other work tools was found. These tools were, most probably, part of the personal image of the individuals who belonged to the latter social rank. The graves of moderately wealthy women, and also wealthy women, are distinguished by the abundance of their ornaments. In all five cemeteries, it was in the graves of the wealthiest and moderately wealthy women that the largest quantities of pectoral and arm ornaments were found. A few moderately wealthy women from Baitai and Žviliai communities wore rare ornaments or jewellery made of precious metals (silver-tin). Pins and bracelets were the most frequent types of ornaments found in graves in which amber artefacts were discovered. Traditionally, the women of this culture combined necklaces, especially long ones, with various types of pins. The correlation between rings and amber burial items was less pronounced. Headware decorations was one more type of feminine ornament that distinguished a woman of higher status in the communities of Kurmaičiai, Baitai, Mazkatuži and Žviliai. Women of high rank in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture combined their headwear ornaments with amber artefacts (amber beads were an element of headwear; the graves of the deceased women also contained headwear ornaments alongside amber burial items). Imported goods found in graves, such as coins or glass beads with golden foil inside, did not occur with the same frequency as amber burial items. This is based on chronological differences (in graves, when the quantity of amber artefacts began to grow, the import of Roman coins subsided, and the appearance of gilded glass beads
became less common). Other imported goods – such as multi-coloured glass beads – appear in the graves for a much longer period of time. In the graves of women, in all the cemeteries except Žviliai, the quantity of amber artefacts significantly exceeded the quantity of multi-coloured glass beads. In the cemeteries of Mazкатуţi, Lazdininkai and Kurmaičiai, the quantity of amber artefacts that were found in the graves of wealthy individuals on their own exceeded the general quantity of imported beads found in all the graves of the group. This data reveals that the high ranking women of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture valued amber ornaments and gladly combined them with imported glass beads and multi-shaped pendants that were sometimes even made of precious metals (silver-tin).

The graves of poor men in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture are first of all distinguished by a scarcity of material valuables (either ornaments or work tools). The quantity of weapons is also smaller. In the men’s group, just as in the women’s group, the discovery of large quantities of artefacts that were indicative of certain fields of farming activity revealed that the buried individual was of a moderately wealthy rank or sometimes – the wealthy. Aiming to render the image and importance of a certain individual, their grave would be furnished with exclusive burial items that marked a certain craft, such as smithery or carpentry. It is possible that in smaller communities the number of men who perfected certain crafts or performed certain activities was not large. Therefore, their activity must have borne importance not just to their families but, I presume, to their entire community. The domestic life of the men of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture’s community was mostly represented by whetstones and firestones, which probably contained a certain sacral meaning as they stood out from other household tools. The latter burial items closely correlated with amber artefacts and have mostly been found in the graves of wealthy or moderately wealthy community members; these artefacts reflected certain customs of the local community that may have been related to the striking of fire or other actions (a whetstone, for example, could be used for grinding and polishing). Weaponry used for military purposes
or hunting was one of the most defining signs of the social status of a man. As was, most definitely, the elements of a horsemen’s riding gear which were related to the image of a rider. The material from Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Kurmaičiai and Žviliai shows that axes and spearheads were characteristic weapons for all social ranks. Men were accompanied into the afterlife with not only weapons but also amber artefacts. In all the researched cemeteries amber artefacts in general and amber pendants, which are considered separately, most strongly correlate with the knives found in the graves of the men’s group. Another soldier’s attribute, a shield boss – the preserved metal fragment of a shield – is most often associated with the poorer men of the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture and has no correlation with amber burial items. The graves of the wealthy men of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture were characterized by the following items: horseman’s riding gear; complete sets of weapons and burial items from the group of ornaments; and in some instances – imported artefacts and items that signify the man’s authority in the community, such as drinking horns, belts or amber pendants. In the Lazdininkai community of the western Lithuanian stone circle grave area, men were buried with large amounts of coins – a feature characteristic of this particular community – which were placed into the graves of wealthy and moderately wealthy men. In the men’s groups of the Kurmaičiai and Mazkatuži communities, coins do not correlate with amber artefacts; while coins have not been found at all in the regions of other communities.

A desire for self adornment was not alien to the men of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture region. Evidently, many of the ornaments fulfilled the practical function of fastening or holding clothes in place, while others were most likely worn for mythological or religious reasons. Men were predisposed to wearing brooches that varied in types, and pins were equally popular. Rings and brooches have been found in about half of the men’s graves that contain amber. Having compared the inventories of men’s and women’s graves, it becomes evident that although the men’s group has a larger number of
graves, the quantity of ornaments in them, and especially those ornaments that are characteristic to both genders, is significantly smaller in comparison to the amount found in women’s graves. As a result, those beads and pendants which are found in men’s graves, especially in the graves of wealthy and moderately wealthy men, reflect the exceptional character and value (both material and sacral) of these burial items.

As regards the amber artefacts found in the graves of the late Roman period, it is amber beads – which compose the largest part of amber artefacts – that first come to mind. The relatively rare multi-shaped amber pendants and the few amber spindles which have been found in women’s graves have been attributed to amber artefacts. Men and women of the late Roman period wore amber artefacts as decorative elements on their robes, as headware (women), necklaces or as pectoral ornaments. Bi-truncated conical beads began to be “lengthened” during the Migration period. However, the beads found in the graves of the Baitai cemetery (although smaller and elongated in shape) most likely denote the changing of trends during the transitional period (the turn of the late Roman and Migration period).

Within the region of West Lithuanian graves with stone circles, amber pendants worn by men and children could be loosely divided into two large groups: figure-of-eight-shaped pendants and pendants of a similar shape and pendants of rare geometrical shapes. Amber pendants were used as offerings for the burials of girls of moderate wealth and women of varying wealth. Amber pendants were favoured for men of great wealth and boys (Lazdininkai, Baitai, Žviliai). The majority of pendants of geometrical and other rare shapes were most likely made by local craftsmen who were aiming to meaningfully render the images of a separate community or culture. Some specific features of the shapes of amber pendants or burial rites demonstrate the interconnections of the communities of the culture under discussion or even their connections with more distant cultures. Within historiography, various pendants have been associated with the manifestations of certain images which relate to mythological and religious aspects. On the whole, the slightly late adoption or
introduction of a more abundant use of amber in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture communities (as was the case for all Balt cultures), can be associated with the “healing” and “protecting” qualities of amber which were already known in the ancient world. Perhaps some of the distinct ways in which these amber beads or pendants were worn – which are manifest in the graves in respect of the age or gender of the deceased individual – can be attributed to the function of the prevention of an illness or “protection” against an “evil eye”. In Lithuanian, the word for amber is *gintaras*; specialists in Baltic philology tend to relate this word of Baltic origin to the Lithuanian verb *ginti*, which means “to protect”. The amber tradition was also defined by the principle of social stratification. Amber artefacts are more likely attributable to wealthy (Baitai) and moderately wealthy (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Baitai, Žviliai) men of the Roman period, but even more so to wealthy (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Kurmaičiai, Baitai) and moderately wealthy (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Baitai, Žviliai) women. The graves of the poor of both genders account for the smallest number of amber burial items. In terms of age, amber was more often offered to adult community members. As regards children graves, amber artefacts most often occur in the burials of individuals of a higher social status. Amber was valued in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture. The people of all social groups adorned themselves in amber. The value that amber held in the society of the day might possibly be illustrated by the ratio that exists today between social groups and their ability to own items made from gold. In today’s society, representatives from all social groups are capable of purchasing small articles made from gold; however, gold is considered to be a symbol of wealth and its amounts as regards social stratification are distributed unequally.
The material amber tradition of western Lithuanian cemeteries with stone circles of the late Roman period within the comparative analysis of Balt cultures

The amber tradition which evolved in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture communities over the late Roman period shares many common features with the amber traditions of the communities of other cultural groups. The increase in amber artefacts within the graves of the late Roman period reveals that certain common features were shared between the culture of the communities that lived closer to the seacoast and those who lived deeper inland (graves containing amber: in the cemeteries of western Lithuania make up from 28% to 57%; in Dollkeim-Kovrovo cemetery – 39%; in Dauglaukis cemetery – 32%; in Netta cemetery – 16%; in Marvelė cemetery – 5%). On the basis of this data, we may presume that amber was the mark that distinguished a certain community and that this was possibly related to a few aspects. It is likely that common traditions for the placement of amber in graves existed in the region of the West Lithuania, Lower Nemunas and Sambia-Natangia cultures, while the number of graves with amber burial items belonging to the cemeteries of the deeper inland Sudovian and Central Lithuania cultures – was much smaller.

In the cemeteries of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, the quantitative tradition of children’s burials is similar to those that existed in the neighbouring Balt (the Lower Nemunas and Sambia-Natangia) cultures. A larger number of children’s burials were uncovered in the Marvelė and Netta cemeteries; however, some of these cases clearly reflect that children inherited their social status from their parents.

If we were to divide the graves in the cemeteries of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, the Dauglaukis cemetery of the Lower Nemunas culture and the Marvelė cemetery of the Central Lithuania culture according to the gender of the deceased, we would discover that it is within the graves of women that we find the largest
concentration of amber burial items, although amber was placed into the graves of men as well. The amber artefacts in the latter cemeteries are also slightly more characteristic of girls’ graves, although the ratio between the graves of boys and girls with amber artefacts is similar. A different amber tradition, in terms of gender, developed in the Dollkeim-Kovrovo and Netta communities where amber artefacts were worn more often by men. Many common features amongst the neighbouring cultures that have been discussed in this work are revealed through the prism of the correlation between amber and other burial items that were common to both genders. The aspects of the amber tradition that existed in the socially divided Baltic communities allow us to reveal the original character of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture or, conversely, to highlight the resemblances that existed between these communities.

In the general context of the Balt cultures, female work tools, such as spindles and awls, which most often signified higher social status, were closely related to amber burial items. An amber flywheel, found in Dauglaukis cemetery in grave No. 55, has been dated to the earlier B2/C1 – C1b period; amber spindles in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, meanwhile, have been dated to the turn of the Roman and Migration period at the earliest. An amber spindle from Central Lithuania culture Marvelē cemetery has been dated to the Migration period. The chronology of amber spindles in neighbouring countries marks the birth of a certain trend that spread from the south to the north and the north east.

The correlation between articles belonging to the ornament group and amber artefacts found in the graves of women reveals the existence of close connections between the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture and the Lower Nemunas and Central Lithuania regions. Somewhat different tendencies have been observed in the communities of the Sambia-Natangia and Sudovian cultures where the trend of combining pendants and amber burial items is replaced by a trend for brooches. In the Netta cemetery, amber burial items correlated with brooches, sometimes bracelets, although in the
majority of cases, except the graves of the wealthy, amber only occurred as an individual burial item.

Mass Roman imports – roman coins and glass beads – comprised the largest amount of imported finds in the Baltic cultural habitats that were researched in this work. Amber, for the most part, has not been related to Roman coins in the graves of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture. Conversely, in the Dauglaukis cemetery, although coins were placed into just a few female graves, they closely correlated with amber burial items; however, such relations did not exist in the graves of men. A similar tendency can be seen in the cemetery of Dollkeim-Kovrovo. The relationship between amber artefacts and coins did not exist in the cemeteries of the other two cultural groups (Marvelė, Netta). Hence, the use of coins as a trade sign or a sign of individuals who conducted trade was not associated with amber or its artefacts in the communities. Imported gilded beads, mostly placed into the graves of the early Roman period, were combined with amber beads only in the Dollkeim-Kovrovo cemetery. The fact that amber was valued in the Baltic communities of the late Roman period is confirmed by amber correlations with exclusive imported artefacts (Netta cemetery) which were often made of precious metals (amber in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture and some other communities correlated with silver ornaments or decorations; gold artefacts have been noted in the Sambia-Natangia culture cemeteries).

Burial items representing certain fields of agricultural activity (chisels, pliers, adzes, gouges, cooper’s knives, fishhooks, whetstones, scissors, etc.) that were found in the graves of men were much more numerous than those found in women’s graves (only awls, needles and spindles). However, such diverse sets of common domestic burial items were particularly scarce in the groups of men’s graves, and it is due to this scarcity that it is rather difficult to evaluate the relation between amber artefacts and these burial items. Yet we may try to trace the relationship between such tools as whetstones and firestones, and amber artefacts. In the cemeteries of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, amber artefacts were found in all of the men’s
graves which contained firestones, and in half of the graves that contained whetstones. In the Dauglaukis cemetery of the other cultural group (as was also the case in the Netta cemetery) hardly any whetstones were found in the graves of wealthy males, and in nearly all of these cases they were placed together with amber burial items. In the grave group of the Dollkeim-Kovrovo cemetery, the correlation between amber and whetstones was smaller, while in the Marvelė cemetery’s graves of the Roman period whetstones have not been found.

The men of the Balt cultures liked to adorn themselves. Pins most strongly correlated with amber artefacts in the men’s graves of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture. Brooches and rings have been found in about half of the graves with amber. This tradition of male ornaments is similar to that found in the cultural group of the Lower Nemunas. According to the data of the researcher of the Dauglaukis cemetery, pectoral ornaments were, alongside amber, the most numerous ornaments found in all social groups of men. An especially large amount of brooches was found in the graves of moderately wealthy and wealthy men. A similar situation can be observed in the region of the Marvelė cemetery of Central Lithuania where brooches and rings correlated with amber equally strongly in men’s graves dated to the Roman period. In men’s graves of the Dollkeim-Kovrovo cemetery, as in the Netta cemetery, amber artefacts correlated with brooches and buckles.

The men of Balt cultures were buried with sets of weapons, although some research shows that communities for the most part lived in peace. In the cemeteries of western Lithuania, men were sent into the afterlife with weapons and amber artefacts which mostly correlated with knives. The typical attributes of warriors, such as spearheads, socketed axes and knives, strongly correlate with amber in the Roman period graves of the Marvelė cemetery, and this is also the case in the Dauglaukis, Dollkeim-Kovrovo and Netta cemeteries.

The preserved metal fragments of a shield (a boss, handle, scarce details of fittings) are another common attribute of warriors. In the Dauglaukis cemetery, in contrast to the cemeteries of the western
Lithuania, shield bosses were found in the graves of moderately wealthy and wealthy men.

However, it is likely that in the men’s graves of the Lithuanian coastal and Dauglaukis cemeteries shield fragments and amber artefacts did not correlate. It is impossible to discuss the connection between amber and shield fragments in the graves of the Marvelė cemetery as here the shield bosses have been dated to the Migration period. Scholars have drawn attention to the especially important role of shields in the Sambian cultural groups. But even here, where the appearance of amber in the graves is nearly as common as in the West Lithuania Stone Circle Grave culture cemeteries, it does not correlate with the burial items under discussion. The Netta cemetery of the Sudovian culture is no exception. Here, in the graves of both the first and second phase of the cemetery (C1b – D period), amber artefacts were not placed together with the shields that were found in the cemetery. We may only guess whether or not this inconsistency between amber artefacts and individuals who wore shields was determined by a certain belief related to amber tradition, prohibition or the limitations of social status.

Researchers into the material of Balt cultures maintain that the graves of warrior-horsemen – with their corresponding burial items – indicate that that individual was of a higher social status. Amber is often found in graves with contain elements of the riding gear in the cemeteries of both the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave and Sambia-Natangia cultures.

The distribution of amber artefacts in the context of social classes can also be seen in other Balt cultures. In the Marvelė cemetery of the culture of Central Lithuania, long bead necklaces were found in some of the graves of wealthy and moderately wealthy women; meanwhile, amber artefacts were more abundant in the graves of wealthy and moderately wealthy men. In the Dauglaukis cemetery in the lower Nemunas area, most amber was found in the graves of moderately wealthy men and women. A similar amount of amber artefacts was found in the graves of wealthy and poor women in the Dauglaukis culture area. However, one must not forget that the amount of
individuals that belonged to these social classes was not equal; hence the quantity of amber per capita is also different. In the Dollkeim-Kovrovo cemetery, men’s and women’s graves with amber are quite abundant in both quantity and diversity. It has been observed that in the Netta cemetery of the Sudovian cultural group, those amber artefacts which appeared over the C1b period were distributed in some of the wealthiest graves of the cemetery. However, these amber artefacts have mostly been discovered as chance finds in adult graves characterised by sparse amounts of burial items (2 – 3 items). In abundant graves, amber correlates with imported artefacts of precious metal.

As regards the types of amber artefacts in the Balt cultures, the amber beads of diverse shapes, whose majority consists of flattened spherical beads (TM388) and bi-truncated conical beads (TM395, 396), are the most common in the graves with amber burial items. Another common feature to the cultures under discussion is that amber beads, like pendants, were strung into necklaces together with glass beads, brass spirals, and iron, brass and silver pendants of a variety of shapes. Such necklaces were more characteristic of women’s graves. In contrast to the Sambia-Natangia culture, cemeteries in coastal Lithuania or the Netta cemeteries of the Sudovian culture, the graves of the Dauglaukis cemetery were absent of intact amber necklaces. Individual (unstrung) amber beads, or in rare cases pendants, were more frequent in men’s graves, although they were also found in women’s graves. It is likely that they served as decorative elements for robes, necklaces or pectoral ornaments. In women’s graves in the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave and the Lower Nemunas cultures, amber artefacts decorated the robe of the deceased or were elements of necklaces and other pectoral ornaments. The number of amber beads, and sometimes pendants, greatly varied in intact amber necklaces and amber necklaces composed of beads and pendants made of other materials. The graves of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture were most abundant in amber artefacts. In this area the quantity of amber artefacts varied from 11 to 81 items per grave (in the graves of Mazkatuži, respectively: 81, 19, 19; Lazdininkai: 36;
Quite long amber necklaces composed of, respectively, 7, 43 and 20 amber beads, were found in the Marvelė cemetery of the Central Lithuania culture. In the Dauglaukis cemetery, amber was combined in necklaces with beads and pendants made from other materials. Amber beads were not particularly numerous (9, 6 items). Two amber necklaces were found in the women’s graves of the late Roman period at the Dollkeim-Kovrovo cemetery; the number of amber beads was accordingly 10 and 15 pieces. The amber necklaces found in the three Netta cemetery’s graves contained the smallest quantity of amber beads (from 5 to 6 amber beads per necklace).

In contrast to the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, the members of the Marvelė and Dollkeim-Kovrovo communities did not adorn themselves with amber pendants. A few amber pendants of different types were found in the areas of other Baltic communities. In the Dauglaukis cemetery, in contrast to western Lithuanian cemeteries, amber pendants have been related exclusively to women’s graves. The quantity of amber pendants was also scarce in the Netta cemetery. As figure of eight amber beads were discovered in shared graves, it is difficult to say to which gender they are more common. Having compared the archaeological material of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture to the material of other Baltic communities, we can maintain that, within the context of the archaeological material of Baltic cultures, the refinements noticed in the aforementioned shape of eight amber pendants are basically reflections of the local inter-connections of a few communities; and also confirm the existence of the local production of amber pendants of irregular shapes. This leads us to presume that local amber processing traditions existed in some Baltic communities.

Researchers tend to relate single amber finds found in graves to mythology and religious beliefs and ascribe to them the role of bead-charms. Amber beads of ordinary shapes and even pendants were most likely processed by local craftsmen. Raw amber was processed by using ordinary domestic tools, while similar artefacts of other materials (glass or brass, for example) may have served as a stimulus for the creation of shapes in raw amber. According to the opinion of
some scholars, figure of eight amber pendants may have been copied by imitating the shapes of glass or brass pendants.

**Conclusions**

1. On the basis of the archaeological material from the burial sites of Balt communities, we may conclude that gender was one of the main factors which determined the social structure of the community in the society of that day. Some burial aspects (the size of the grave pit, the quantity and diversity of burial items) were intended to signify the age and gender of a deceased individual; his/her features in social life; his/her role and status in the family or community. The gender of the deceased adult members of the community bore influence upon the formation of the amber tradition over the late Roman period.

2. The communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture were socially stratified. The study outlines three social groups on the basis of the material status of both men and women: the wealthy, moderately wealthy and the poor. The possibility that individuals from the main social/material groups might have belonged to different ranks has not been excluded. Different evaluation of the graves items’ wealth shows it. The comparison of social groups stratification made by using different methods proved that using any method separately the same result is received. In social life, both adults and children held different positions. Wealth in the graves of children from both genders has been connected to the inheritance of the social status of their family. The poor individuals of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle culture were, most likely, the free members of the community who had the smallest amount of material valuables at their disposal. Although graves of the poor were, in the main, free of exclusive imported items or ornaments made of precious metals, in some rare cases individuals from this group were buried with imported glass beads and coins, or with common domestic tools which were characteristically in greater abundance in the graves of moderately wealthy individuals. The poor were buried with the smallest quantity of weapons. Shield bosses formed a distinctive element in a small part
of the poor graves, which were generally free of burial items. In some of the communities the poor may have had connection with horses, and were possibly in charge of their upkeep. Wealthy and moderately wealthy individuals were distinguished by the quantity and quality of burial items and in the abundance of items in their graves. In the graves of individuals of moderate wealth only one or two prestigious burial items were found. Although moderately wealthy people wore more ornaments in comparison to their wealthy counterparts (on rare occasions some individuals were found with an ornament or adornment made of precious metal), the representatives of this group are more identified with craftsmen and land labourers. The graves of the wealthy are distinguished by the fact that they contain the largest amount of ornaments, some of which were coated with silver-tin, headware and long necklaces. Distinctive burial items signifying prestige were also characteristic of the graves of the wealthy. Wealthy men, similar to those of moderate wealth, were armed and provided with domestic work tools, and in some cases the number of burial items in the graves of wealthy individuals might even be slightly less than those found in the graves of moderately wealthy men; however, wealthy men are more often associated with symbols relating to horses. The following items are symbols that were characteristic to the high-ranking men of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture (these wares were ascribed the highest value scores): silver-tin and white metal ornaments, gilded glass beads, amber pendants, one of a kind work tools and firestones, whetstones, shields and rare domestic burial items – drinking horns, belts, tweezers and combs. The following items were the symbols of high-ranking women: ornaments made of silver-tin and white metal, gilded glass beads, amber pendants and long necklaces, headware and rare domestic tools, such as amber spindles, needles, awls, tweezers or a brass cup.

3. Amber tradition in the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture was determined by certain social groups. Burial Cartography reveals the trend to bury individuals with amber items next to each other. The relative popularity of amber in the graves of the late Roman period, in comparison with the graves of the
early Roman period, reveals that amber artefacts were more likely to be included in the graves of wealthy (Baitai, Žviliai) and moderately wealthy (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai) men, and, first and foremost, to wealthy (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Kurmaičiai, Baitai, Žviliai) and moderately wealthy (Baitai) women. The rarest and smallest amount of amber burial items was found in the graves of the poor of both genders. In terms of age, amber was more often offered to the adult members of the community. The amber artefacts that were found in the graves of children most belonged to burials of individuals from a higher social class.

4. The spread of common Barbaricum ideas and technological simplicity provided the craftsmen of the communities of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture with the opportunity to create amber artefacts – this was also the case for the other neighbouring Baltic communities. Variations of figure-of-eight-shaped pendants (similar to TM465 type) and the slight “refinements” made to standard shapes are testament to the existence of local amber processing. Flattened spherical beads and bi-truncated conical beads are the most common amber bead shapes found in the graves of the Baltic cemeteries explored, while amber pendants might be divided into two groups: figure-of-eight-shaped pendants and pendants of a similar shape and pendants of rare shapes. At the turn of the late Roman and the Migration period, amber artefacts became noticeably larger in scale (bi-truncated conical beads began to be lengthened; and larger raw amber pieces were used for the making of spindles).

5. The statistical analysis of the late Roman period grave complexes revealed that the tradition of placing amber burial items into graves was similar in West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave, the Lower Nemunas cultures and in Sambian Peninsula. The percentage of amber burial items in the Sambia-Natangia culture is not, as one may expect, significantly larger because of the richer amber sources found there. In the Sudovian (Netta) and Central Lithuania (Marvelė) cemeteries, the graves with amber burial items were rarer and the tradition of placing amber into graves was less pronounced. The fact that a similar frequency and quantity of amber was found in the graves
of cultural areas that had slightly different amber resources leads us to believe that amber carried a similar meaning – as a symbolic burial item – within the certain group of community members who buried the dead. West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture‘s community graves with amber items in them cartographical analysis reveals it, too.

6. The aspects of the amber tradition in the Balt communities allow us to both reveal the original character of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture and emphasise the general features that arose as a result of cultural interactions by invoking the correlations between amber artefacts and the groups of burial items, as well as the cartography of amber artefacts. Having compared the strongest correlations between the groups of burial items of both genders and amber artefacts, a clear distinction can be drawn between the Sudovian culture (Netta) and the northern part of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai). By comparing the aspects of the amber tradition of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture to the material of the other Balt cultures which have been more widely explored, the study was able to reveal that in the communities of other Balt cultures there was practically no correlation between amber burial items and shield bosses and Roman coins. One may only attempt to guess whether such an inconsistency was determined by the prohibition of a certain belief or some limitations of social status. In other socially differentiated Balt communities, amber is found in the graves of the deceased from all social strata (i.e. amber burial items were placed only within a certain part of the graves of community members); however, it often correlates with burial items which delineate the high status of the deceased individual. In the cemeteries of Lazdininkai, Baitai and Žviliai of the West Lithuanian Stone Circle Grave culture, as in the Dollkeim-Kovrovo and Netta cemeteries, the burials of children containing amber burial items fell into the group of the wealthy and moderately wealthy individuals whose grave inventories happen to frequently contain rare and highly valued burial items.
Just as in other Balt communities, amber was of value in the area of the West Lithuania Stone Circle Grave culture. The significant change of attitude towards amber manufacturing has been noticed. Amber served as an adornment for individuals from all social groups. The frequency and quantity of amber placed into part of buried community graves differed – which allows us to make the assumption that, within the context of the graves of dead individuals, amber artefacts indicated not only the social status of the individual, but also the relationship that existed between the deceased individual and the group of community members group which was unified by the meanings of mythological images that were related to amber as a material or amber artefacts. In the general European context, taking into consideration the chronological spread of the shapes of amber artefacts and the small references made to them in some written sources, we may assume that in the Balt communities the late arrival of the trend of amber adornment brought with it information concerning the healing properties of amber or, rather, its usage for preventive purposes (Lith. gintaras (“amber”) = Lith. ginti (“to protect”)): thus it became spread amongst all social classes in differing frequencies and quantities.
Reziumė


P. K. Tacitas tekste, datuojamame apie 98 m., trumpai apibūdindamas aisčius pažymi, kad šie, gyvendami prie jūros <...> vienintelį iš visų rankioja gintarą <...> ir <...> patys jo visai nevartoja: renka gabalus, parduoda neapdirbtą <...>. Tyrelį moksliniose darbuose aisčių gentys dažniausiai sietinos su baltų Sembos-Notangos kultūrinės grupės Sembos pajūrio gyventojais ir kartu bendrai su to meto rytinio Baltijos regiono gyventojais. Vis dėlto yra darbų, kuriose abejojama dėl aisčių etninės krašto priklausomybės ir diskutuojama apie iki šiol pateiktas, galimai, klaidingas lotyniško teksto interpretacijas. Greičiausiai pagrindinių prieštaravimų vertinimams sudarė pats nagrinėjamos ištraukos autorius P. K. Tacitas, kuris naudojosi ankstesniais veikalais aprašydamas niekuomet nematyto ir nelankytos šalies gyventojus, jų buitį bei pateikdamas aprašus per to laiko romiečio pasaulėvaizdzio prizmą, remdamasis to laiko aprašomajį tradiciją.

Pateikto tyrimo problematika suponuoja kintantis Vakarų Lietuvos kapų su akmenų vainikais kultūros bendruomenių gintaro vertinimas. Pasitelkus socialinės stratifikacijos išskyrimo metodus, pagrįstus anksčiau minėtų bendruomenių vėlyvojo romėniškojo laikotarpio

Darbo objektas – gintaro artefaktai ir jų paplitimas plačiausiai tirtose vėlyvojo romėnų laikotarpių Vakarų Lietuvos kapų su akmenų vainikais kultūros (Mazkatuži, Lazdininkai, Kurmaičiai, Baitai, Žviliai) bei baltiškų (Nemuno žemupio, Vidurio Lietuvos, Sembos-Notangos, Sūduvių) kultūrų Dauglaukio, Marvelės, Dollkeim-Kovrovo, Netta kapinynuose; statistiniai jų paskirstymo kapuose duomenys mirusiųjų lyties, amžiaus, socialinių santykių kontekste. Socialinių grupių išskyrimo metodikos, jų taikymas naudojantis laidojimo paminklų medžiaga.

Šio darbo tikslas – remiantis kapų kompleksų vertės skaičiavimo metoais ištirti atskirų Vakarų Lietuvos kapų su akmenų vainikais kultūros bendruomenių socialinį/turtinį susisluoksiavimą kartu atskleidžiant gintaro reikšmę Jose, analizės rezultatus pateikti lyginamajame baltų kultūrų gintaro tradicijos kontekste.

Darbe keliami uždaviniai:
1. Pateikti Pietvakarių Latvijos ir Vakarų Lietuvos pasirinktą kapinių archeologinės medžiagos analizės duomenis.
2. Įvardyti bei detaliau aptarti skirtingo socialinio statuso asmenų grupių esminius bruožus pagal rastas jų kapavietėse įkapes.
3. Išanalizuoti gintaro tradicijos raišką Vakarų Lietuvos kapų su akmenų vainikais kultūros bendruomenių socialinės stratifikacijos kontekste.

4. Aptarti populiairiausių gintaro dirbinių chronologiją bei apdirbimo galimybes Vakarų Lietuvos pajūrio bendruomenėse vėlyvojo romėniškojo periodu.

5. Išanalizuoti geografinio atstumo, besidriekiančio nuo gintaro žaliavos šaltinių, įtakos gintaro paplitimu klausimą baltiškų kultūrų kapinynų kontekste.

6. Palyginti gintaro paplitimą nešiosenoje remiantis gintaro artefaktų sklaida baltų kultūrų plačiuose kapinynuose bei išryškinti panašumus ir skirtumus.

7. Remiantis darbo tyrimo rezultatais aptarti gintaro tradicijos kaitą ir jos bruožus vėlyvajame romėniškojo laikotarpyje.


Žinoma, tyrimo rezultatai nepretenduoja į absoliučius ir neginčytinus. Darbe operuojama tik laidojimų paminklų teikiamais duomenimis. Romėniškojo periodo gyvenvietės beveik netirtos. Taigi neatmestini realios socialinės stratifikacijos iškraipymai, nes
suvokiamą, kad laidojimo paminklas yra savitas archeologinis kompleksas, turintisGilų ideologinį ir simbolinį turinį. Darbe nagrinėjami, kad ir plačiausiai tirti, kapinynai vis dėlto nėra galutiniai ištirti, kartu pasitaiko suardytytų kompleksų ir pan. Be to, laidojimo papročiai, kurie kiekvienoje visuomenėje yra savitai, glaudžiai susiję su tam tikros bendruomenės mentalitetu, ideologija ir pasaulėžiūra. Būtent dėl šių išvadų faktorių mūsų dienų tyrėjai gali kilti sociologijoje vadinamų *komunikacijos* keblumų suvokiant anų dienų realijas. Todėl darbe gauti rezultatai yra interpretacinio pobūdžio ir ateityje gali būti koreguojami.

Darbo tiriamajai dalis panaudota 383 kapų archeologinė medžiaga, iš kurių 130 mirusiųjų buvo palaidoti su gintarinėmis įkapėmis. Atliekus įvairiapusę duomenų analizę darbo pabaigoje pristatomos pagrindinės išvados:


3. Gintaro tradicija Vakarų Lietuvos kapų su akmenų vainikais kultūros bendruomenėse taip pat buvo nulemta tam tikrų socialinių grupių. Laidojimo paminklų kartografija atskleidė, kad asmenys su gintaro įkapėmis laidoti arčiau vieni kitų. Sąlyginis gintaro dirbinių populiarumas vėlyvojo romėniškojo laikotarpio kapuose, lyginant su ankstyvojo romėniškojo laikotarpio kapais ir vertinant kapų turtingumą, atskleidžia, kad gintaro dirbiniai labiau skirtini vėlyvojo romėniškojo laikotarpio turtingiems (Baitai, Žviliai) ir vidutinio turtingumo (Mazkutužiai, Lazdininkai) vyrams bei visų pirma turtingoms (Mazkutužiai, Lazdininkai, Kurmaičiai, Baitai, Žviliai) ir vidutinio turtingumo (Baitai) moterims. Rečiausiai ir mažiausiai gintaro įkapių rasta neturtinguose abiejų lyčių mirusiuosiuose rūmuose. Amžiaus atžvilgiu gintaras dažniau aukotas suaugusių bendruomenės nariams. Vaikų kapuose rasti gintaro dirbiniai dažniausiai pasitaikydavo aukštesnio socialinio sluoksnio abiejų lyčių kapuose.

4. Bendrų Barbaricumo idėjų sklaida, technologinis nesudėtingumas suteikė galimybę Vakarų Lietuvos kapų su akmenų vainikais ir kitų artimu Baltiškų bendruomenių meistrams kurti gintaro dirbinius, apie kurių vietos gamybą liudija aštuoniukės formos kabučių (artimi TM465 tipui) tipų variacijos, nedidelėi standartinių formų „patobulinimai“. Baltų kapinynų nagrinėtose kapuose populiarusios tradicinės, suspausto rutulio ir dvigubo nupjauto kūgio, gintaro karolių formas, o aptinkamus kabučių būtų galima skirstyti į dvi grupes: į aštuoniukės, jai artimų formų ir į geometrinių, retų formų kabučius. Vėlyvojo romėniškojo periodo pabaigoje bei seniausioje su tautų kraustymosi periodu pastebima tendencijos pradžia, kai imta gaminti vis stambesnių formų gintaro dirbinius (dvigubo nupjauto kūgio formos karoliai ima „ilgėti“, kapuose randami gintariniai verpstaikai, kurių gamybai naudoti stambesni gintaro žaliavos gabalėliai).

5. Tyrimų metu atlikta statistinė vėlyvojo romėniškojo laikotarpio kapų kompleksų analizė parodė, kad gintaro įkapių dėjimų į kapus tradicija buvo panaši tiek Vakarų Lietuvos kapų su akmenų vainikais, tiek Nemuno žemupio kultūroje, tiek ir Sembos pusiasalyje. Gintaro
įkapių nuošimtis Dollkeim-Kovrovo kapinyne nėra žymiai didesnis, kaip būtų galima tikėtis dėl Semboje gausiau randamų gintaro išteklių. Toliau nuo jūros pakrančių esančiuose Sūduvių (Netta) ir Vidurio Lietuvos (Marvelė) kultūrų kapinyose kapų su gintaro įkapėmis pasitaikė rečiau – gintaro dėjimo į kapus tradicija buvo kiek silpnesnė. Panašus gintaro pasitaikymo kapuose dažnis ir kiekis tose kultūrinėse srityse, kurioms buvo prieinami kiek skirtingi gintaro išteklių, leidžia manyti buvus panašią gintaro, kaip simbolinės įkapės, reikšmę tam tikrai bendruomenės narių, laidojusių savo mirusius, grupei. Tai patvirtina ir Vakarų Lietuvos kapų su akmenų vainikais kultūros bendruomenių kapų su gintaro įkapėmis kartografinė analizė.

Publications on the subject of the dissertation


Bagužaitė-Talačkienė S. Gintaro dirbiniai vėlyvojo romėniškojo laikotarpio bendruomenių socialinių santykių kontekste (Kurmaičių ir Žvilių laidojimo paminklų duomenimis) In: Istorija. T. LXXIX. Vilnius, 2010, p.3-16.

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