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MARIJA GIMBUTAS' DISSERTATION AND ITS VALUE: BURIAL CUSTOMS IN THE ROMAN IRON AGE

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The aim of this article is to assess the value of Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė's (Gimbutas) 1946 dissertation published in Tübingen (Germany). It is also important to follow how much of an impact this work had on Lithuanian archaeology and what inspiration it may provide for scholars today. This paper concentrates on the parts of the book which deal with burial customs during the Roman Iron Age. Relevant problems of cultural divisions based on burial site types as per Gimbutienė are examined to see how much this classification may be accepted today. The second part of Gimbutienė's dissertation, which focused on the meaning of burial customs, provides insights that are still important for scholarship today, and reveals the young scholar's ability to reconstruct an old belief system and to discern the prospects for the further investigation of burial site material.

Keywords: Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė; burial customs; Lithuania; Roman Iron Age; belief system.

Šio straipsnio tikslas yra įvertinti M. Alseikaitės-Gimbutienės disertaciją, kuri buvo išspausdinta 1946 m. Tiubingene, Vokietijoje. Yra svarbu atsekti, kokį poveikį jos minėtasis darbas padarė Lietuvos archeologijai ir kokias inspiracijas jis gali suteikti šiandieniniams tyrinėtojams. Šis straipsnis telkiasi ties knygos dalimis, kurios susijusios su laidosena romėniškajame geležies amžiuje. Aktualūs klausimai, kurie susiję su kultūrinio skirstymo pagal laidojimo paminklų tipus pagal M. Gimbutienę, nurodomi pabrėžiant, kokių mastu tas skirstymas gali būti taikomas šiandien. Antroji M. Gimbutienės disertacijos dalis, skirta laidosenos reikšmėms, suteikė iki šiandienos svarbių išvalgų, įrodė, kad jauna mokslininkė gebėjo rekonstruoti senųjų tikėjimų sistemą ir matyti tolimesnių tyrimų perspektyvą šia kryptimi, remiantis laidojimo paminklų medžiaga.

Reikšmiai žodžiai: Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė; laidosena; Lietuva; romėniškasis geležies amžius; tikėjimų sistema.

INTRODUCTION

Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė's (later Gimbutas) dissertation, which was published in Tübingen (Germany) in 1946¹ (Fig. 1), was devoted to Lithuanian burial customs in prehistoric times. The largest part of her analysis was related to sites dating to the Iron Age. This article concentrates on Gimbutienė's insights into Roman Iron Age burial sites and aims

to draw attention once again to her first fundamental scholarly work, which appeared in German in order to reach a wider academic audience. The worldwide recognition of her academic research came from her works on the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, which were based on wide primary sources collected from vast territories of Europe. Her dissertation focuses on Lithuanian archaeological material. This paper seeks to evaluate Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė's dissertation in

¹The book is available through the virtual library of the Lietuvos archeologijos draugija (Society of Lithuanian Archaeology): <http://lad.lt/biblioteka-2/pagrindine-literatura/> [viewed on 05 July 2021].

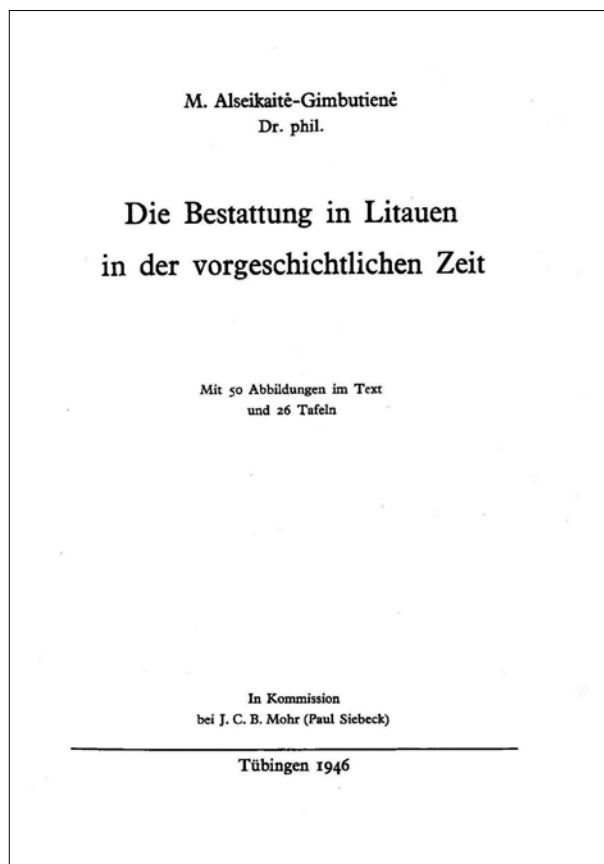


Fig. 1. Title page of M. Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė's dissertation published in Tübingen 1946.

1 pav. Titulinis M. Alseikaitės-Gimbutienės disertacijos, išleistas 1946 m. Tiubingene, puslapis.

the context of contemporary archaeological data, to point out which of her statements are still relevant for Lithuanian archaeology today, and which theses have led to further discussions. It is important to note how much the features of Gimbutienė's first scholarly work witness to her ability to later become a world-famous scholar.

THE FIRST PART OF GIMBUTIENĖ'S DISSERTATION – A DISCUSSION OF ROMAN IRON AGE BURIAL SITE TYPES IN LITHUANIA

The first part of her dissertation was devoted to discussing five types or geographical areas of burial sites in Lithuania during the Roman or Old Iron Age: W Lithuanian flat cemeteries, Central Lithuanian flat cemeteries, N Lithuanian barrow and flat cemeteries, E Lithuanian barrow cemeteries, and the flat stone cairn cemeteries and stone cairn barrow cemeteries of S Lithuania or Užnemunė or Sudūva (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 34, Map 1) (Fig. 2). A very similar classification was employed by Rimutė Jablonskytė-Rimantienė (1955), Adolfas Tautavičius (1977, 5–12, Map 1; 1987, 104–109, Fig. 20) (Fig. 3), and Mykolas Michelbertas (1986) in Soviet era Lithuania. Michelbertas included all of Gimbutienė's work on burials customs in his bibliography of consulted works and mentioned her studies on reconstructing old beliefs (Michelbertas 1986, 222–223). The only difference in the Soviet era classification of burial sites was that a group of flat cemeteries was distinguished in the Lower Nemunas Region. At the beginning of her book Gimbutienė stressed that flat cemeteries were typical of W Lithuania, Central Lithuania and the so-called *Memelgebiet* (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 18). The latter region is part of what is nowadays W Lithuania, but was historically the *Memelgebiet* or the northern area of E Prussia. This region briefly belonged to the independent Republic of Lithuania during 1923–39 but was repossessed by Nazi Germany in March 1939. The *Memelgebiet* or *Memelland* archaeological sites were the main basis for German archaeologist Carl Engel to distinguish a so called *Memelkultur* in the 1930s (Engel 1931a; 1933; 1935, 81, Fig. 47). According to Engel's conception, the western part of historical Lithuania and SW Latvia were also parts of *Memelkultur*. Gimbutienė did not include the cemeteries of former Prussian

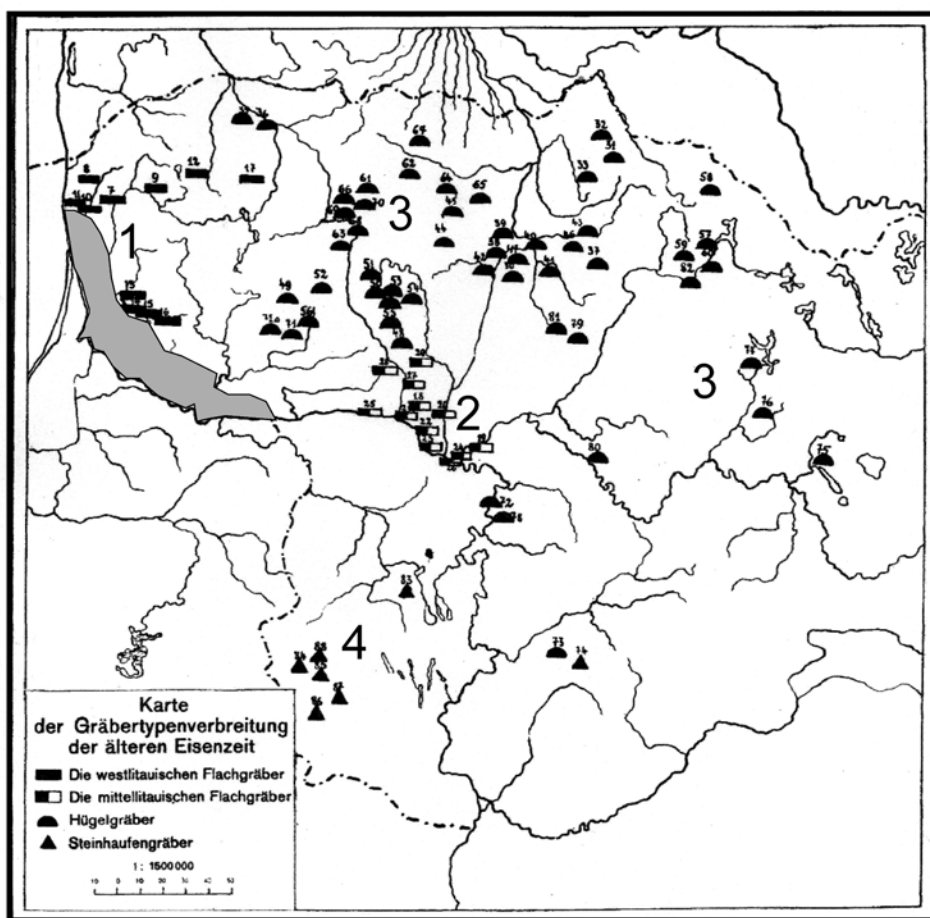


Fig. 2. M. Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė's classification of burial sites in Lithuania (Old Iron Age): 1 – flat cemeteries of West Lithuania, 2 – flat cemeteries of Central Lithuania, 3 – Barrows in Žemaitija, Northern and Eastern Lithuania, 4 – burial sites with stone-cairns in Užnemunė. The grey area marks approximate borders of Klaipėdos kraštas (Memelland) (acc. Alseikaitė Gimbutienė 1946, map 1 with additions of the author).

2 pav. M. Alseikaitės-Gimbutienės laidojimo paminklų klasifikacija (senasis geležies amžius): 1 – Vakarų Lietuvos plokštiniai kapinynai, 2 – Vidurio Lietuvos plokštiniai kapinynai, 3 – pilkapynai Žemaitijoje, Šiaurės Lietuvoje ir Rytų Lietuvoje, 4 – laidojimo paminklai su akmenų krūšnimis Užnemunėje. Pilkai pažymėtos apytikslės Klaipėdos krašto (*Memelland*) ribos (pagal Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 1 žemėlapis – su autorės papildymais).

Memelland in her discussion of the W Lithuanian Group of cemeteries, although she did cite some finds from the well-known Oberhof/Aukštakiemiai and Schernen/Šernai Cemeteries excavated in the 19th century (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 34–37). The map of sites compiled by Gimbutienė left an empty space in the *Memelgebiet* area and she avoided discussing the concept of *Memelkultur* as defined by Engel (Fig. 2), perhaps for political

reasons. Gimbutienė worked on her dissertation during the Nazi occupation. Her first publications on burial types and burial customs in Lithuania appeared in print in 1943 (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1943a; 1943b). Thus she probably wanted to avoid discussing the territories of the Lithuanian Coastland and the Lower Nemunas region of Memelland so as not to irritate the Nazi Germans. In February 1945 the former Memelland became a part of Soviet

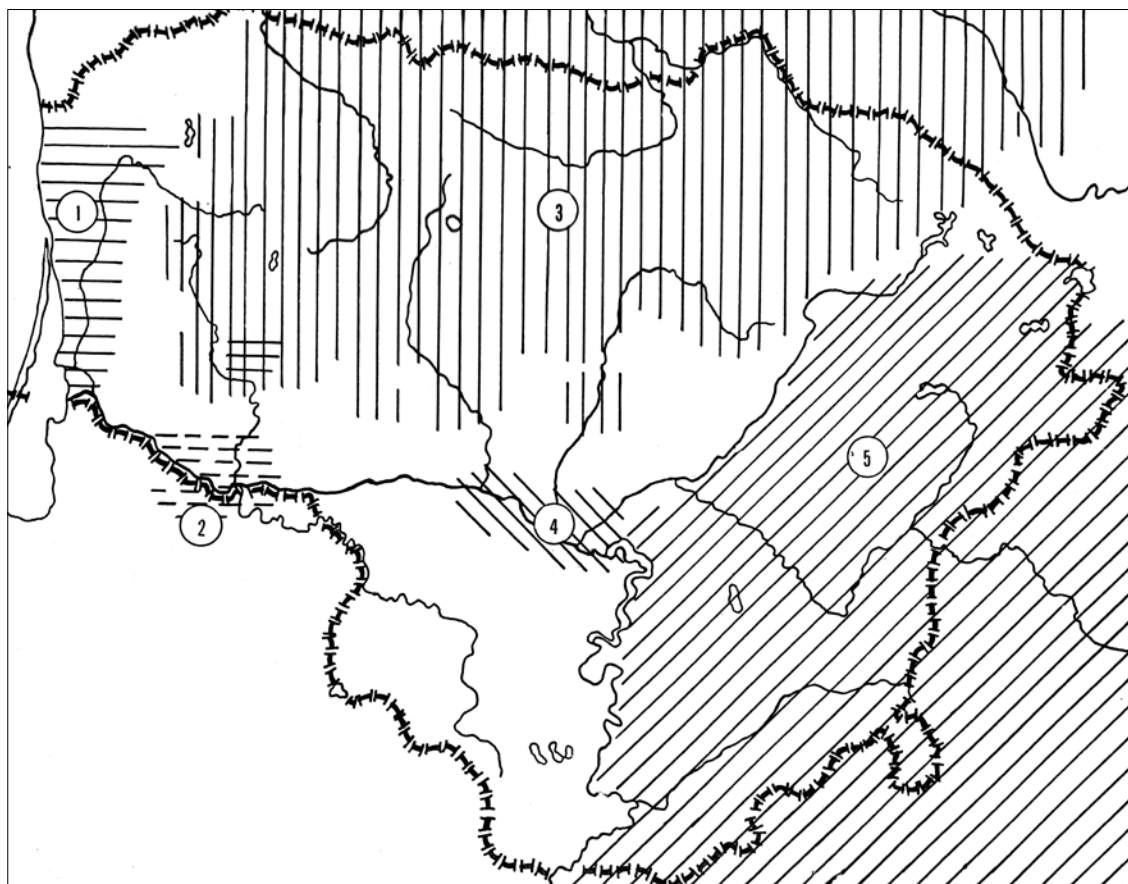


Fig. 3. Cultural areas of 1–4 cent. AD in Lithuania acc. A. Tautavičius (1977, map 7): 1 – flat cemeteries with stone-enclosures in West Lithuania, 2 – flat cemeteries of Lower Nemunas region, 3 – area of barrows, 4 – flat cemeteries of Central Lithuania, 5 – Brushed pottery culture.

3 pav. I–IV a. po Kr. kultūrinės sritys Lietuvoje pagal A. Tautavičių (1977, žemėl. 7): 1 – plokštiniai kapinynai su akmenų vainikais Vakarų Lietuvoje, 2 – Nemuno žemupio plokštiniai kapinynai, 3 – pilkapių sritis, 4 – Vidurio Lietuvos plokštiniai kapinynai, 5 – Brūkšniuotosios keramikos kultūra.

Lithuania, but the question of Memelland probably still provoked haunting memories of the Germans and Gimbutienė did not include this territory in her concept of Lithuania. This feature of her dissertation is the only example in her book which attests to the influence of politics on her views or rather on her ability to express her views during the turbulent time of the early 1940s.

Gimbutienė knew the literature of E Prussian archaeologists well. The investigations in E Prussia were relevant because these areas in prehistoric times

were inhabited by tribes of West Balts, which were of the same origin as the inhabitants of Roman Iron Age Lithuania. In the beginning of her dissertation Gimbutienė stressed that she held a different opinion about the genesis of the inhumations and flat cemeteries in West Balt areas during the Early Roman Iron Age from that which was presented by the E Prussian archaeologists Wilhelm Gaerte and Erich Blume (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 18–19), who noted that inhumations in flat cemeteries were a result of Gothic influences from the Lower Vistula

(compare Blume 1912, 163–164; Gaerte 1929, 165). Undoubtedly such influences can be seen during the Roman Iron Age, but stressing the strength of Gothic culture, which was of Germanic origin, was also a political concern during the 1930s and 1940s. Gimbutienė clearly showed that she did accept the different perspective represented by another E Prussian archaeologist, Carl Engel, who held that inhumations in flat cemeteries in the Samland/Sambia peninsula and Memelland were the result of local evolution and the gradual disappearance of Pre-Roman Iron Age barrows with stone enclosures (compare Engel 1931b, 50). This important statement by Gimbutienė that flat inhumation cemeteries first appeared and spread in the coastland of the Sambia peninsula and the Memelgebiet, in the Lower Nemunas region, and along the river Nemunas as far as the mouth of river Neris is presented at the very beginning of her dissertation. The new ideas in burial customs spread more rapidly along the intensive lines of communication. This thesis is very important when researching the process of the disappearance of barrows in Žemaitija and N Lithuania during the Late Roman period.

It is necessary to stress that Gimbutienė's dissertation was a huge step forward from the understanding of Lithuanian burial site material presented in works from the 1920s. Aleksandr Spicyn had a tendency to generalise the material of a particular period into a concept of one culture. This approach has some validity but the chronological arrangement of Lithuanian Iron Age material was not precise in his day, and so it is possible to see that Spicyn also discussed Roman Iron Age artefacts and sites within Early Prussian culture, 'golden' Swedish culture, and Lithuanian culture (so called Raginėnai culture). This last was associated with the 6th–8th centuries, but Spicyn mistakenly attributed even such famous Early Roman Iron Age sites as the Pakalniškiai barrows to this period (Spicyn/ Спицынъ 1925, 132–141). Petras Tarasenko briefly

stressed the impact of the Roman Empire and Roman culture on some artefacts found in Lithuania but he also systematised the burial site material using Spicyn's cultural classification (Tarasenko 1928, 66–70). Jonas Puzinas retreated in his concept from Spicyn's generalisations and discussed primary sources from burial sites in Lithuania. He provided several important insights, for example, that Veršvai Cemetery in Central Lithuania is closer to the W Lithuanian cultural group, judging by its material; that it is still difficult to draw precisely the eastern and southern distribution borders for Roman Iron Age barrows; and that the structure of their burials shows Užnemunė burial sites are close to the Sudovian burials known in E Prussia (Puzinas 1938, 219). Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė argued her classification of Lithuanian burial sites in her 1943 article published in Lithuanian. She distinguished four groups of burial traditions: I. W Lithuanian flat cemeteries, II. Central and N Lithuanian flat cemeteries and barrows, III. E Lithuania barrows, IV. S and SE Lithuanian burials and barrows with stone-cairns (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1943a, 4). A similar classification was employed in her 1946 dissertation published in Germany, but with more material supporting Gimbutienė's scholarly interpretations. Important inspirations for Gimbutienė's work were undoubtedly provided by the German archaeologist Carl Engel and especially by his map of the cultural division between the Lower Vistula region and the Gulf of Finland (Engel 1933, 262, Fig. 1). Gimbutienė did not follow Engel blindly as her division included a more complicated picture of the Central and S Lithuanian (Užnemunė) burial sites. Gimbutienė was also inspired by Harri Moora's major work on the Latvian Iron Age where he also discussed the similarities of burial sites in Latvia, Lithuania, and E Prussia (Moora 1938, 45–48, 51–64). Another publication by Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė on pagan burial rites in Lithuania appeared in the same issue of 'Gimtasai kraštas' (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė

1943b). She overviewed and discussed every stage of the burial process and the commemoration rites for the deceased on the basis of archaeological data supported by written sources, folklore, and linguistics. She stressed the importance of fire and stones for burial traditions during the Roman Iron Age. Thus, both 1943 articles published in Lithuanian formed an important base for widening and deepening the research presented in her 1946 dissertation published in Tübingen. Unfortunately, students in Soviet Lithuania had no chance to read these articles by Gimbutienė openly as the issues of pre-war and war-time journals were kept in special library departments which were difficult to access. It is important that the archaeological atlas of Soviet Lithuanian burial sites, which was edited by Rimutė Rimantienė, a former class mate of Gimbutienė, included her 1946 dissertation published in Germany in the list of literature (Tautavičius 1977, 162). The 1943 articles in Lithuanian were probably omitted because the citation of scientific works with such a publishing date was not possible. Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė, as a war refugee, brought the material and its analysis done in Lithuania to Germany and the translation of her work into German provided her with a chance to formalise her degree at Tübingen University.

Gimbutienė very figuratively described the joined stone enclosures/stone circles that were typical of W Lithuanian cemeteries and compared them to a honeycomb pattern (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 37; see the contemporary division of cultural areas on the basis of burial sites – Banytė-Rowell 2007, 43–59, Fig. 9; 2019, 10–12 Fig. 4; Bliujienė 2013, 462–484, Figs. 24, 318) (Fig. 4). This metaphor was picked up later in the works of Eugenijus Jovaiša (1997, 54). It is important that Gimbutienė drew her readers' attention to the phenomenon of stone constructions as widespread in Baltic Sea region. She compared stone enclosures unearthed in W Lithuanian cemeteries with those known as *Tarands* in N Latvia



Fig. 4. Stone enclosures in Senkai cemetery (Kretinga rajonas, West Lithuania) (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, Fig. 14) 4 pav. Akmenų vainikai Senkų kapinyne (Kretingos rajonas, Vakarų Lietuva) (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, pav. 14).

and Estonia. Also, Gimbutienė pointed out that stone constructions are also typical for Sweden (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 35). The similarities between the Gotland stone circles and those in coastal Lithuania were pointed out later by Vladas Žulkus as one of the common features of both Gotland and W Lithuania (Žulkus 1995, 77–88). The similar features of the Tarand stone constructions and W Lithuanian stone enclosures were also later stressed in an article by Rasa Banytė-Rowell and Anna Bitner-Wróblewska (2005).

Gimbutienė drew attention to the important features of burial customs in West Lithuania such as horse offerings. She mentioned a horse burial in Lazdininkai Cemetery which was interpreted as the oldest such burial in Lithuania, noting that horse burials were typical of E Prussian areas, especially Sambia (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 37). Stressing this burial rite feature in W Lithuania was an insight with prospects for future work. During investigations in the 1990s–2000s more horse burials were unearthed in Lazdininkai Cemetery as well as other cemeteries on the Lithuanian Coast (see a special study – Bliujienė, Butkus 2007). This burial custom was also typical for SW Latvian cemeteries, which should be treated as a subarea of W Lithuanian cemeteries with stone-enclosures. The horse offering from Mazkatuži Cemetery Burial 23 was made for a richly equipped warrior's burial dating to the second century (Virse 2013). Gimbutienė probably stressed the horse burial in Lazdininkai Cemetery,

knowing that this custom was typical of burial sites of the same type in Memelland. She knew of horse burials in Adl. Heydekrug/Šilutė Manor or Schernen/Šernai Cemeteries, which were investigated in the 19th century (see Bujack 1889; Bezzenberger 1892). Gimbutienė returns once again to the custom of horse offerings in her sub-chapter devoted to the 400–800 period, stating that this custom was a prolongation of the Old Iron Age (Roman Period or Roman Iron Age) burial traditions. She especially noted the burial of a man and horse in Reketė Burial 35 where the remains of burned straw or rough grass were found on top of burned stones. Gimbutienė remarked that food for the horse was probably burned during rituals (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 39). This remark was accurate – Ona Navickaitė-Kuncienė in her 1968 publication on Reketė Cemetery noted that these plant remains were probably oats (Navickaitė-Kuncienė 1968, 180). It is worth noting that Reketė Burial 35 belonged to the end of the Roman Iron Age according to a recent chronological analysis of material from W Lithuania (see argumentation on the chronology of the Reketė burials – Banytė-Rowell 2001, 140–141, 143; 2019, 394, 396, Annex).

The flat cemeteries of Central Lithuania were investigated widely during the time of the first Lithuanian Republic (Puzinas 1938, 213–214, 218–219, 225). Gimbutienė described them as simple inhumations with a pair of stones placed in the area of the head and feet (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 48–51). These stones were probably used to fasten a hollowed-out log coffin (Fig. 5). The burial customs and inner arrangement of the inhumation grave pits in Central Lithuania seem to be similar to those in the Lower Nemunas region which was not described separately by Gimbutienė. It may be that Gimbutienė viewed the Lower Nemunas region as a subarea of the Central Lithuanian flat cemeteries (compare the maps of Figs 2–3). She wrote that the material culture of W Lithuania is similar to that of Central Lithuania (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 92,



Fig. 5. The contours of coffin in the profile of Seredžius cemetery grave 25 (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, Fig. 43b).
5 pav. Karsto kontūrai Seredžiaus kapinyno kapo 25 skerspjūvyje (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, pav. 43b)

94). The latter was influenced by the former and it is difficult to distinguish the precise border between the two cultural areas. A similar point of view was later held by Jerzy Okulicz, a Polish scholar who regarded the culture of flat cemeteries along the river Nemunas as a single whole (Okulicz 1976, 185, 205). Okulicz also based his point of view on Gimbutienė's dissertation (see Okulicz 1976, 202, footnote 56). On the basis of recent data, it is possible to state that the flat cemeteries of the Lower Nemunas region contain very similar sets of artefacts to those of the W Lithuanian cemeteries, but the burial customs are closer to those of Central Lithuania. Pairs of stones also occur in the grave pits in the Lower Nemunas Region (Michelbertas 1986, 41–54; Jovaiša 1997, 56–58; Banytė-Rowell 2013, 68–69, Figs 4–5). The use of stones in Central Lithuania burial rites varied and sometimes they form rectangular enclosures or structures similar to those in W Lithuania (Jovaiša 1997, 57; Bertašius 2018, 169–171). It is worth stressing that important books on Central Lithuanian cemeteries have been published recently. Eugenijus Svetikas prepared a full publication of Sargėnai Cemetery, which was excavated by Jonas Puzinas during 1938–41 and cited by Gimbutienė (Svetikas 2019). Mindaugas Bertašius, in his last book on Marvelė Cemetery (excavated during 1991–2011), interpreted burial customs as a basis for insights into the reconstruction of the social and cultural meanings of the burial rites (Bertašius 2018). Both Sargėnai and Marvelė Cemeteries are located within

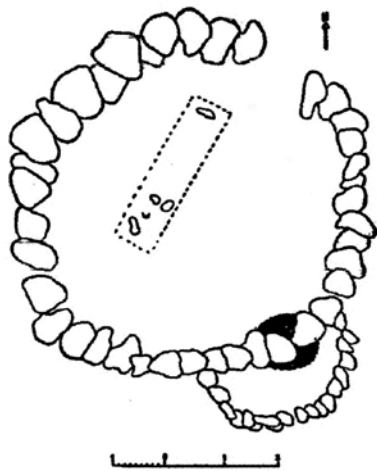


Fig. 6. Paviečiai (now Pavėčiai, Šiauliai rajonas) Barrow 15 (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, Fig. 75).
6 pav. Paviečių (dab. Pavėčiai, Šiaulių rajonas) pilkapis 15 (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, pav. 75).

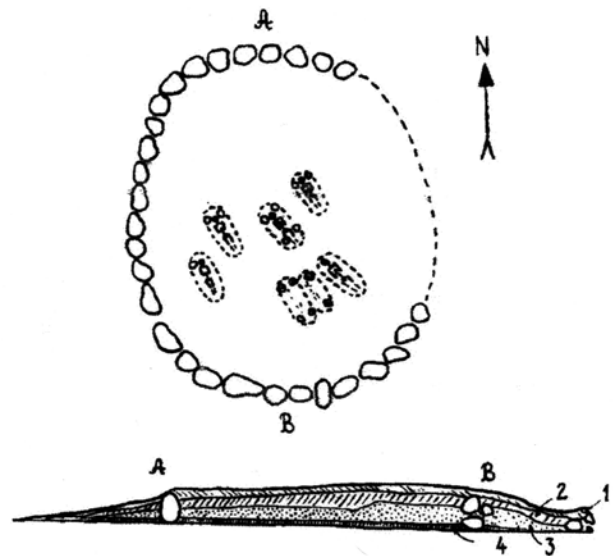


Fig. 7. Barrow in Sandrausiškė (Raseiniai rajonas) (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, Fig. 77).
7 pav. Sandrausiškės (Raseinių rajonas) pilkapis (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, pav. 77).

the city of Kaunas and should be regarded as the most famous Central Lithuanian sites on the middle reaches of the River Nemunas.

Gimbutienė included Upytė Cemetery in the category of Central Lithuanian cemeteries (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 49–50). This cemetery is situated in Panevėžys District, N Lithuania (see the publication of this cemetery – Kulikauskas 1998). Her concept was also accepted by Michelbertas. He called Upytė Cemetery the northern version of Central Lithuanian cemeteries (Michelbertas 1986, 44). This point of view was also held by Jovaiša (1997, 63) and Banytė-Rowell (2007, 48, Fig. 9). Gimbutienė, in discussing barrow burial customs, stressed that barrows were created by communities that maintained conservative traditions. This latter view will be discussed below but it has today inspired a rethinking of Upytė Cemetery as not belonging to the Central Lithuanian group but rather being the result of local changes in the burial customs.

Gimbutienė also associated the so-called barrow cemeteries of N Lithuania with the largest part of

Žemaitija and S Latvia (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 57–62). She stressed that stones were also used as part of the burial ritual (Figs 6–7). Enclosures and pavements were placed at the base of these barrows. She likewise drew attention to the fact that sometimes the stone circles were joined together, a similar feature of the W Lithuanian flat cemeteries, while the arrangement of separate burials in a barrow shared common features with the burials in Central Lithuanian flat cemeteries. Such remarks prove that Gimbutienė saw cultural areas where particular burial customs were practised not as a constant phenomenon but as a field of interactions that depended on the vitality of communication lines. Burial customs may vary in the same area. This tendency was proven during investigations at Marvelė Cemetery. Among the predominant Roman Iron Age flat burials, the remains of barrows typical for Žemaitija and N Lithuania were also detected (Astrauskas 1995; Bertašius 2018, 169).

Gimbutienė shared the insight that barrows began to disappear in N Lithuania at the end of the

Late Roman Iron Age, i.e. from the fourth century (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 61). This problem has not yet been entirely solved. Gimbutienė inspires us to investigate further into whether the Central N Lithuanian flat cemeteries dating to the Late Roman Iron Age appeared as a result of strong influences and even migrations from the middle reaches of river Nemunas or were a natural consequence of the local population renouncing their custom of creating barrows. Gimbutienė stressed that W and Central Lithuanian areas strongly influenced their neighbours. Therefore, following Gimbutienė's concept, it is natural that western and southern influences affected the appearance of flat cemeteries with stone enclosures in the Upper Jūra region of Žemaitija and flat cemeteries of so called Central Lithuanian type in N Lithuania during the Late Roman Iron Age. Maudžiorai Cemetery in Žemaitija as well as Linkaičiai, Gibaičiai, and Vaitiekūnai Cemeteries in N Lithuania contained flat burials which may be clearly associated with the third century (see publications of these burial sites – Maudžiorai: Valatka 1984; 2004; Linkaičiai and Gibaičiai: Tarvydas 1933; Vaitiekūnai: Varnas 1984). Gimbutienė regarded barrows to be the result of conservative thinking in burial traditions. She regarded E Lithuania as the most conservative region where the barrow burial tradition lasted until mediaeval times. She even wrote that *Auch heute noch ist Ostlitauen viel primitiver* (Even today, E Lithuania is more primitive.) (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 131). It is necessary to note that the conservative thinking on burial customs in the area of E Lithuanian Barrows were not dominant. There are several flat cemeteries such as Eikotiškis Cemetery with Late Roman Iron Age burials (Simniškytė 1998).

Gimbutienė proved herself to be a scholar with a deep intuition for cultural processes, despite the modest database of her times. She could rely only on finds from Miežionys and Kaniūkai Barrow Cemeteries in E Lithuania as a basis for her statement

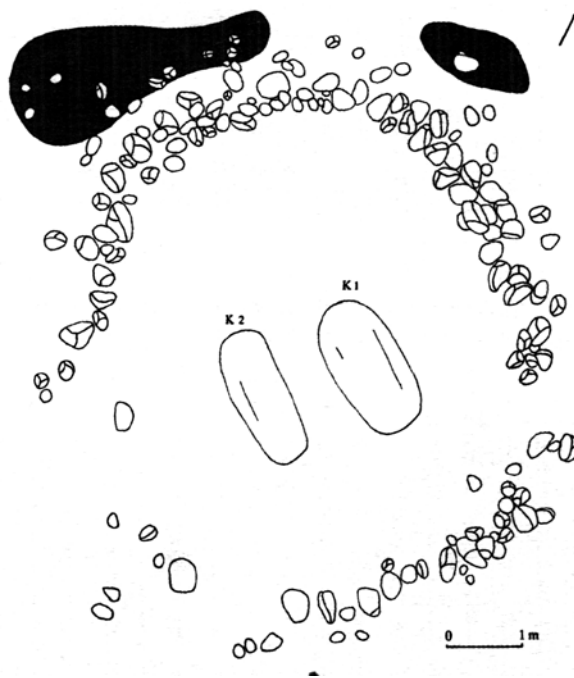


Fig. 8. Pakalniai Barrow 7 (Vilnius rajonas), investigations of V. Vaitkevičius (Vaitkevičius 2004, Fig. 42).

8 pav. Pakalnių pilkapis 7 (Vilniaus rajonas), V. Vaitkevičiaus tyrinėjimai (Vaitkevičius 2004, Fig. 42).

that the E Lithuanian Barrow Culture already existed in the 3–4 centuries ad (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 64). This opinion was also held by Michelbertas (1986, 68–73). Nevertheless, the problem of dating the earliest E Lithuanian barrows still exists while the tradition of associating them mainly with the Middle Iron Age or the Migration Period is still deep-rooted. The discoveries of recent decades by Vyckintas Vaitkevičius in Pakalniai Barrow Cemetery have clearly proven that the genesis of such barrows may be associated with the phases B2/C1–C1a – second half of the second century and the early third century (Vaitkevičius 2003; 2004) (Fig. 8). Archaeological investigations in recent decades have provided more burials from the Late Roman Iron Age such as from Baliuliai Barrow Cemetery (Kurila, Kliaugaitė 2007; 2012; see a detailed overview of the history of the investigations of E Lithuanian Barrows and the main results – Kurila 2016).

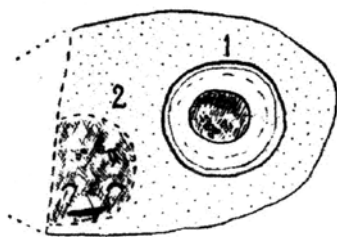


Fig. 9. Double cremation grave in Bargłowo, district of Augustów (now Bargłów Dworny, Podlaskie Voivodship, Poland). Female burial – in the urn, male burial – in the pit (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, Fig. 90).

9 pav. Dvigubas degintinis kapas Bargluve, Augustavo apylinkėse (dab. Bargłów Dworny, Palenkės vaivadija, Lenkija). Moters kapas – urnoje, vyro kapas – duobėje (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, pav. 90).

Gimbutienė saw cultural regions in the context of neighbouring cultural areas. Therefore, she noted that Užnemunė/Suvalkija/Sudūva (SW Lithuania), where flat cemeteries and barrows with stone cairns were distributed, is an area under the influence of the *Ostmasurische*/Eastern Masurian Group which was distinguished by Engel (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 77; compare Engel 1933). Today we see Užnemunė as a region where the Bogaczewo culture in the Early Roman Iron Age and the Sudovian culture in Late Roman Iron Age left significant footprints (for the main features of the Bogaczewo and Sudovian cultures see Nowakowski 1995, 17–20; 1996, 81–83, 91–93; Bitner-Wróblewska 2010, 151–154; Bitner-Wróblewska, Rzeszotarska-Nowakiewicz 2016, 263–267; Szymański 2013, 69–75). The latter cultures are associated with classical West Balts. The tradition of cremation was partly introduced in Užnemunė during the Roman Iron Age and Gimbutienė stressed that this burial custom feature emerged under West Balt influence (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 78, 109) (Fig. 9). Michelbertas also supported a concept, which Gimbutienė stressed, i.e. that Užnemunė burial sites with stone cairns vary, consisting as they do of flat burial sites and barrow cemeteries containing inhumations and cremations (Michelbertas

1986, 73–77). An important contribution to the investigation of Užnemunė burial sites was made recently by Audronė Bliujienė who evaluated the influences from the Bogaczewo and Sudovian cultures on S Lithuania (Bliujienė 2016a; 2016b). One of the first inspirations to see Bogaczewo culture influences, which were detected in the types of ceramics, was provided in an article by Anna Bitner Wróblewska and Gytis Grižas (2007).

Gimbutienė interpreted the barrows of the so-called Rostołty type distributed in the Polish region of Podlasie as being of Balt heritage (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 78). The Polish researcher, Jan Jaskanis, who published material from such barrows in 2012, criticised Gimbutienė's point of view on the ethnicity of the communities who buried their dead in Rostołty-type barrows. Today the latter barrows are associated with the Wielbark culture of Germanic origin. Jaskanis pointed out that there is no sense in applying data from mediaeval written sources, which testify that Podlasie in the Early Middle Ages was a region inhabited by the Jatvingian tribe of the Balts, to the situation of the Roman Iron Age (Jaskanis 2012, 195–196). Gimbutienė used mediaeval written sources as a basis for detecting tribes during the Iron Age. This was a typical feature of scholarship during the 1930s. The same model was used in Soviet Lithuanian archaeology. Despite being officially ignored, Gimbutienė provoked some heated discussions as to the ethnicity of tribes during the Iron Age in Lithuania. One such discussion concerned the border between the Žemaitians and Aukštaitians during the Migration Period. Gimbutienė wrote: *Schon in frühgeschichtlicher Zeit wurde das von Litauern bewohnte Gebiet in Žemaiten (Niederlitauen) und Aukštaiten (Oberlitauen) geteilt... Das Kerngebiet des geschichtlichen Žemaitens können wir an den Flachgräbern Mittellitauens erkennen, das Kerngebiet Aukštaitens – an den Hügelgräbern Ostlitauens* (Already during Prehistoric Times the area inhabited by Lithuanians was separated into

Žemaitija (Samogitia) and Aukštaitija... The central area of historical Žemaitija may be recognised on the basis of Central Lithuanian flat cemeteries and the central area of Aukštaitija on the basis of E Lithuanian Barrows) (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 105, 173). The different opinions on Aukštaitians and Žemaitians and their area of origin were directed towards the Central Lithuanian Roman Iron Age flat cemeteries. They were a basis for discussions in the 1980s (see Tautavičius 1987, 109). Similar scholarly disputes in the 1990s on Early Migration Period cemeteries were also heated (see Vaitkunskienė 1997; Kazakevičius 1999, 61–64). Today it seems pointless to look for Žemaitians and Aukštaitians in the cemetery material dating to the 1st–6th centuries. Žemaitians and Aukštaitians were first recorded in mediaeval written sources and these identities survive to this day. These sources are too late to apply to archaeological data which are almost a millennium earlier than the phenomenon under discussion. Gimbutienė deplored the fact in a letter to her mother in 1960 that her work, which was so widely cited by researchers in many countries, was ignored in Lithuania (Jankauskaitė 2010, 303–304). However, such scholarly discussions as those mentioned above attest to the impact her dissertation had on Lithuanian archaeology in the Soviet and Post-Soviet era.

Gimbutienė stressed that it is impossible to detect ethnic units only on the basis of specific burial customs and specific artefact types. It is necessary to analyse the whole set of data represented by settlements, cemeteries, artefact types, and cult objects. She also pointed out that similar forms of artefacts or the same style of material culture do not necessarily indicate the borders of one tribe. The artefacts of one tribe can move to another. Meanwhile, changes in fashions do not transform burial customs as rapidly as they do artefacts (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 89).

Gimbutienė's statement to the effect that *Die Bestattungssitten zeigen keine scharfe Grenze zwischen*

den Ost- und Westbalten (The burial customs do not attest to any precise border between the East and West Balts) (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 109) reminds us that the categories of West and East Balts are also a matter of academic (dis-)agreement. At the time when Gimbutienė was working, West Balt features were attributed only to W Lithuanian and Sudovian/Užnemunė burial sites. The main cultural areas of the West Balts were associated with Sambia-Natangia (Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture) and Masuria (Bogaczewo culture in E Prussia). Nowadays the border between the West and East Balts has moved towards areas of E and W Belarus and the heritage of the Upper Dniepr and Oka rivers in Russia is interpreted as belonging to proper East Balt cultural areas. Wojciech Nowakowski described all Balt cultural areas between the rivers Passarge/Pasłęka and Daugava as inhabited by West Balts during the Roman Iron Age (Nowakowski 1996, 80). This area includes every region of Lithuania.

THE SECOND PART OF GIMBUTIENĖ'S DISSERTATION – BURIALS CUSTOMS AND SYSTEMS OF BELIEFS – AND ITS INSPIRATIONS FOR LITHUANIAN ARCHAEOLOGY TODAY

The second part of Gimbutienė's dissertation was devoted to the relationship between burial customs and systems of belief (*Die Bestattung und der Glaube*) (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 112–171). This part may be seen as an introduction for her other study on symbols (Gimbutas 1958). Gimbutienė's insights undoubtedly were a source of inspiration for Lithuanian researchers of mythology such as Norbertas Vėlius (see one of his books in English – Vėlius 1989) and Gintaras Beresnevičius who further interpreted the myths of Sovius and the origins of the cremation custom (Beresnevičius 1992). Šarūnė Valotkienė's 2019 dissertation may also be seen as an extension of Gimbutienė's academic way of

thinking when looking at the symbolic meaning of grave goods on the basis of folklore data (Valotkienė 2019).

Gimbutienė used various sources detecting the semantic of human behaviour on the basis of Lithuanian archaeological material. She applied sources from folklore, written historical sources, and linguistics. Some opponents might say that the latter sources were for the most part not contemporary with the burial sites with features discussed by Gimbutienė. She herself had a critical approach. She wrote: *Das Folklore zeigt in der heutigen Zeit die Mischung der verschiedenen Ansichten der früheren und späteren Zeiten* (Modern folklore shows a mixture of views from earlier and later periods) (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 121). However, researchers looking now for special arguments about human behaviour during burial rites frequently pay attention to the customs and ethnography of various archaic tribes which are distant from each other in space and time (for example – van Gennep 2004). Gimbutienė's approach represents a distance in time but not in geography. We are inspired to believe that the remnants of archaic thinking are mostly related to the sphere of interactions between the living and the dead. Gimbutienė's knowledge of foreign languages gave her an ability to use the folklore and linguistic sources of other people in Europe, especially in the east. This reminds us to seek a broad view in scholarship, as Gimbutienė did. Gimbutienė's ability to see the Lithuanian material in the worldwide contexts of burial customs and to use comparative methods proved already in the 1940s that she was not a provincial scholar. Her ambitions to summarise various databases and a talent to compose a picture of prehistoric life and death from shreds of information may be recognised in her 1946 dissertation. Such features were very important for her scholarship during her later academic activity in the USA.

Gimbutienė noticed important details which lacked a broader context in her day, but she stressed

the significance of various rare elements in burial customs. She saw the value of animal and bird bone finds in cemeteries and deplored that usually such finds were not brought to museums for preservation along with the artefacts and were therefore left uninvestigated. She also drew attention to the importance of plant remains in cemeteries, even though the database for such material in her time was very modest. Thus, she stressed the importance of paleo-zoo-osteological and paleo-botanical research for the reconstruction of burial rites and their meaning (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 156, 161). Her thesis was confirmed decades later. For example, several 4th – early 5th-century burials from Baitai Cemetery in W Lithuania contained horsetail remains. The investigation and identification of these plant remains were performed by Dr Dalia Kisielienė (for basic information on the investigations in Baitai Cemetery – Banytė-Rowell 2012). This plant has disinfectant features and probably had a practical or symbolic significance in burial rites. Important publications on the plants found in a West Balt Cemetery, Paprotki Kolonia site 1, of the Bogaczevo culture (NE Poland) have appeared in the last decade (Karczewski 2012; 2014). Adalbert Bezenberger noted that a piece of shell, probably hazelnut, was found in Schernen/Šernai *Fundstelle*/burial 50 (Bezenberger 1892, 157). Polish scholar Andrzej Niewęgłowski remarked that hazelnuts were found in various burial-, cult-, and offering sites in Europe from the early Bronze Age until Early Mediaeval Times. Comparing the mythology and folklore of the Slavs and the Niewęgłowski, a Germanic people, revealed hazelnut meanings such as being a symbol of rebirth, purification, and protection against evil forces (Niewęgłowski 1993, 53–55). Investigations in this direction are very relevant for archaeology today and Gimbutienė's dissertation foresaw the role of nature sciences in prehistoric research.

Gimbutienė presupposed that the small ceramic vessels which are typical finds in W Lithuanian

cemeteries were used for drinking during burial rites (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 136). Recent investigations of the surfaces of small ceramic vessels from Užpelkiai Cemetery (research by Bliujienė and her group) have allowed scholars to conclude that they contained a beverage made from barley and oats which was closer to ale. Paprūdžiai Cemetery in Žemaitija provided a drinking horn which might have contained an alcoholic drink close to mead according to a chemical analysis (Bliujienė, Bračiulienė 2018, 261–262). Thus, Gimbutienė provided many insights which testify to her high scholarly intuition. She also discussed the forms the soul of a deceased person might take according to Lithuanian folklore. One such belief was that a butterfly represents one of the possible reincarnations and forms of the human soul (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 116). It is interesting that the investigation of late Roman Iron Age Baitai Cemetery provided three amber pendants in the shape of insects. Such pendants are rare finds but they occurred in various regions of European Barbaricum (Tempelmann-Maczyńska 1985, 81–86, Pls 17, 70; Banytė-Rowell 2000, 34–35, Figs 2, 4: 2–3, 6: 3; Bliujienė 2011, 120–121, Fig. 39). Only a specific sort of insect or beetle might have been a suitable home for the soul of the deceased. This presupposition may also be supported by Lithuanian folklore which says that a soul could wander from its human home in the form of a bee (Lietuvių tautosaka 1967, 486 Nos. 447). A bee or a beetle is a type of soul home which may appear in other tales as a bird, mouse, snake, or grass-snake. The Lithuanian mythologist Beresnevičius pointed out that beliefs identical or similar to those of the Lithuanians as regards of soul forms and their emergence from the human body were known throughout Europe and can be found in Early Medieval sources (Beresnevičius 1991, 59–61).

There are various important, relevant remarks by Gimbutienė in her chapter devoted to burial customs and beliefs. One of them mentions the occurrences

of iron slag in burials (Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė 1946, 136). Pieces of iron slag were found in Baitai Cemetery burials in W Lithuania (burials 22, 29). It is possible that iron slag found a way into grave pits accidentally when earlier layers of iron production were disturbed at the site (Banytė-Rowell in press). The phenomena may be an inspiration for future investigation into solving the question of whether burial sites were accidentally chosen in iron production areas. Maybe such a site choice had symbolic meaning. The mystical transformation during the production of iron from local bog ore might have a semantic link to the transformation caused by death.

CONCLUSIONS

The 1946 dissertation published by Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė was an important contribution to Lithuanian archaeology and also a very important work for the Baltic Sea region as a whole. This volume published in German opened the data of Lithuanian archaeology to a wider spectrum of the academic world. The author was a very young war refugee. It is a wonder that she managed to preserve the material for her dissertation during the turbulent period of 1944–1945. Despite being a very young scholar, Gimbutienė proved to be a serious and talented researcher with wide horizons and a good knowledge of the literature of Baltic Sea region, who sought to combine archaeological data with folklore, linguistics, and historical data. Gimbutienė provided a foundation in Lithuanian archaeology for distinguishing cultural areas on the basis of their burial sites. Her publications, despite being officially ignored in Soviet Lithuania, undoubtedly did have an impact on archaeologists working behind the Iron Curtain. It is possible to trace the origin of some academic discussions that emerged in the Soviet era to works by Marija Gimbutienė on burial customs during the Iron Age in Lithuania. She had very good scientific intuition and an ability to

see 'small things' in archaeological material which could lead to important conclusions that widened the horizons of archaeology. Her dissertation still inspires discussions on various aspects of burial customs in prehistory.

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MARIJA GIMBUTAS' DISSERTATION AND ITS VALUE: BURIAL CUSTOMS IN THE ROMAN IRON AGE

Rasa Banytė-Rowell

Summary

Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė's (Gimbutas) dissertation, which was published in Tübingen (Germany) in 1946, focused on the burial customs of prehistoric Lithuania, especially during the Iron Age. This article aims to discuss and evaluate the dissertation's relevance for the current context of Roman Iron Age material. Gimbutienė presented the following typology and burial site areas for this period: West Lithuanian flat cemeteries, Central Lithuanian flat cemeteries, North Lithuanian barrow and flat cemeteries, East Lithuanian barrow cemeteries, and the stone cairn cemeteries (flat and barrow) of South Lithuania/Užnemunė/Sūdūva. She did not include Memelland/the Klaipėda region in her catalogue or her discussion of burial sites types. Memelland, formerly the northernmost part of East Prussia, belonged to the Republic of Lithuania during 1923–1939 before being seized by Germany in 1939. Because Gimbutienė prepared her dissertation in German-occupied territory during the Second World War, she avoided discussing Memelland even though German archaeologist Carl Engel had stated that the archaeological Memel-culture covered not only Memelland but also historical West Lithuania in Žemaitija and Southwest Latvia. She was undoubtedly aware of Engel's thinking as well as of other works by East Prussian archaeologists as is confirmed by references she made to their publications.

Gimbutienė's conception of the burial site features also influenced the post-war development of archaeology in Soviet-occupied Lithuania. Her work still inspires scientists to take a broad look at archaeological sources and to evaluate data in the context of the material from neighbouring countries.

For example, it is still important that Gimbutienė compared stone constructions in West Lithuanian cemeteries with structures in Tarand-type cemeteries among the Baltic Finns and the way stones were used in burial sites in Sweden. She did not distinguish the cemeteries of the Lower Nemunas Region as a separate group because most of them belonged to Memelland, which she avoided as an object of her research for political reasons. Nevertheless, Gimbutienė drew an important conclusion, i.e. that it is difficult to distinguish a clear border between the cemeteries of Memelland and Central Lithuania. She also remarked on the late Roman Iron Age process of the spread of flat burials in the area of North Lithuanian barrow cemeteries. The question of when flat burials appeared in this region is still relevant today. Gimbutienė interpreted the custom of barrow burials as a consequence of conservative thinking in funerary traditions. In her view, the most conservative region in this respect was East Lithuania where the use of barrows lasted until the Early Medieval period. It is very important that, despite the modest database that existed at that time, Gimbutienė managed to point out that the earliest barrows appeared in East Lithuania during the Late Roman Period, a thesis finally confirmed by investigations in recent decades. Gimbutienė evaluated the data from Užnemunė (Sūdūva), where burial customs involving stone cairns with flat graves or barrows were typical and inhumation and cremation were also practised like in the area under the influence of the so-called Masurian Group of burial sites according to Engel's concept. Research during recent decades has confirmed that Užnemunė

culture was strongly influenced by the burial customs of the Bogaczewo and Sudovian cultures in Northeast Poland.

The second part of the dissertation was devoted to a reconstruction of burial rites and beliefs on the basis of folklore, written sources, and linguistics. Such data were collected not just in Lithuania as Gimbutienė's broad education and her knowledge of foreign languages enabled her to reconstruct the archaic elements of human thinking. She drew attention to the smallest elements in the stages of the burial rites, which were nevertheless important and opened up new horizons. Already at that time

Gimbutienė understood the importance of the natural sciences in archaeology.

The publication of the dissertation in German made it available to a broader circle of scientists. Despite being officially ignored during the Soviet era, Gimbutienė's concepts had an important impact on Lithuanian archaeology during that period, even provoking specific discussions on the problems of ethnogenesis. Gimbutienė's first book was likewise read by Polish archaeologists investigating Balt sites. The relevance of the problems discussed by Gimbutienė has, for the most part, survived to the present day.

MARIJOS GIMBUTIENĖS DISERTACIJA IR JOS SVARBA: ROMĖNIŠKOJO LAIKOTARPO LAIDOSENA

Rasa Banytė-Rowell

Santrauka

Marijos Alseikaitės-Gimbutienės disertacija buvo išspausdinta 1946 m. Tiubingene (Vokietija). Ji skirta laidosenai Lietuvoje priešistoriniais laikais. Didžioji disertacijos dalis apie laidoseną geležies amžiuje. Šiame straipsnyje aptariamas ir įvertinamas šiandienos aktualumas remiantis romėniškojo geležies amžiaus medžiaga. M. Gimbutienė pateikė tokį šio laikotarpio laidojimo paminklų tipų ir arealų skirstymą: Vakarų Lietuvos plokštiniai kapinynai, vidurio Lietuvos plokštiniai kapinynai, šiaurės Lietuvos pilkapiai ir plokštiniai kapinynai, rytų Lietuvos pilkapynai, Užnemunės, arba Suvalkijos, plokštiniai akmenų krūsnų kapinynai ir pilkapynai su akmenų krūsnimis. Į savo paminklų katalogą ir kapų tipų aptarimą ji neįtraukė Klaipėdos krašto – šiauriausio buvusios Rytų Prūsijos regiono, kuris 1923–1939 metais priklausė Lietuvos Respublikai, o 1939 m. vėl atsiimtas Vokietijos. M. Gimbutienė rašė disertaciją II pasaulinio karo metais vokiečių okupacijos

laikais, todėl Klaipėdos krašto įtraukimo ji aiškiai vengė, nors pagal C. Engelio koncepciją Klaipėdos/Nemuno kultūra apėmė tiek Klaipėdos kraštą, tiek istorinę vakarų Lietuvą Žemaitijos pakrastyje, tiek pietvakarių Latviją. Neabejotinai ir C. Engelio koncepciją, ir kitus rytų Prūsijos archeologų darbus ji gerai žinojo – tai liudija atskiros nuorodos į jų darbus.

M. Gimbutienės romėniškojo laikotarpio paminklų bruožų aptarimas veikė archeologijos vystymąsi ir pokarinėje Lietuvoje, sovietinės valdžios sąlygomis. Aptariamas darbas iki šiol skatina žvelgti į archeologijos šaltinius įvairiakryptiškai bei nagrinėjant kaimyninių kraštų medžiagą. Pavyzdžiui, yra svarbu, kad vakarų Lietuvos kapinynų akmenų konstrukcijas lygino su Baltijos finų *Tarand* tipo kapinynų įranga, akmenų naudojimu Švedijos kapinynuose. Autorė neišskyrė atskiros Nemuno žemupio kapinynų grupės, nes ji didžiąja dalimi priklausė Klaipėdos kraštui, tačiau pateikė svarbią išvadą, kad

sunku nubrėžti aiškia ribą tarp Klaipėdos krašto ir vidurio Lietuvos kapinynų. Ji taip pat pastebėjo plokštinių kapinynų plitimo procesą šiaurės Lietuvos pilkapių srityje romėniškojo laikotarpio pabaigoje. Iki šių dienų tebėra aktualus klausimas – kada ėmė rasti plokštiniai kapai šioje srityje. M. Gimbutienė laidojimą pilkapiuose laikė konservatyvaus mąstymo padariniu. Tokia konservatyviausia sritis, jos manytu, buvo rytų Lietuva, kur laidojimas pilkapiuose tęsėsi iki ankstyvųjų viduramžių. Labai svarbu, kad mokslininkė, turėdama negausią duomenų bazę, nustatė, jog ankstyviausi rytų Lietuvos pilkapiai atsirado vėlyvajame romėniškajame laikotarpyje. Ši tezė galutinai patvirtinta tik pastarųjų dešimtmečių tyrinėjimuose. Užnemunę (Suvalkiją), kurioje būdingas laidojimas su akmenų krūsnimis plokštiniuose kapuose ir pilkapiuose bei griautinis ir degintinis laidojimo būdas, vertino kaip arealą, veikiamą vadinamosios rytų Mozūrijos grupės pagal C. Engelį. Pastarųjų dešimtmečių studijos patvirtina, kad Užnemunės kultūra formavosi stipriai darant įtaką Bogačevo ir Sūduvių kultūrinių sričių, esančių šiaurės rytų Lenkijoje, laidosenos tradicijoms.

Antroji disertacijos dalis skirta laidosenai ir tikėjimų rekonstrukcijai, remiantis tautosaka, rašytiniais šaltiniais, kalbotyra. Šie duomenys surinkti ne tik iš Lietuvos – M. Gimbutienės platus išsilavinimas ir kalbų mokėjimas leido rekonstruoti archajiškos mąstysenos elementus. Ji atkreipė dėmesį į laidosenos sudedamųjų dalių mažiausius elementus, kurie iš tiesų yra svarbūs ir atveria naujus horizontus; jau tuomet suprato gamtos mokslų reikšmę archeologijoje.

Disertacija buvo paskelbta vokiečių kalba, ir tai atvėrė jos prieinamumą platesniam mokslininkų ratui. Nors oficialiai Sovietų laikais ji buvo ignoruojama, M. Gimbutienės koncepcijos padarė svarbią įtaką to meto Lietuvos archeologijai, netgi paskatino tam tikras diskusijas apie etnogenezę. Pirmoji autorės knyga taip pat buvo skaitoma ir Lenkijos archeologų baltistų. Joje iškelti klausimai didele dalimi išlieka aktualūs ir šiandien.

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