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PROFESSOR MARIJA GIMBUTAS' ADVENTURE WITH PREHISTORIC AMBER AND THE RESULTS FOR US

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This article is dedicated to Gimbutas' approach to prehistoric amber and the results of her hypothesis for 21st-century archaeology. Amber is one of the constant threads in her research but hypotheses about amber have yet to be summarized. It is our aim to discuss the assessment of Gimbutas' studies of amber in a non-exhaustive format, which can help to understand the focal points of her research, especially the chronological changes of amber utilisation from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age. We will discuss Gimbutas' proposals in respect to the amber routes and interpret her ideas from the perspective of recent research. We will also discuss the question of the possible utilisation of amber from western Ukraine's Klesov deposit, which is very similar to succinite. This article focuses especially on the question of how we can understand the meaning of amber in the Bronze Age and suggests the idea that amber had a symbolic rather than economic value in the local Eastern Baltic societies.

Keywords: prehistoric amber, intercultural exchange, succinite, aDNA, symbolic value.

Šis straipsnis skirtas Marijos Gimbutienės požiūriui į priešistorinį gintarą ir jos hipotezes bei jų reikšmę XXI a. archeologijai. Nors priešistorės gintaras yra viena svarbiausių archeologės tyrimų gijų, tačiau jos hipotezės vis dar neapibendrintos. Mūsų tikslas – apžvelgti mokslininkės darbus apie gintarą, kurie gali padėti suprasti jos tyrimų akcentus, ypač chronologinius gintaro naudojimo pokyčius nuo mezolito iki bronzos amžiaus. Straipsnyje aptariami archeologės siūlymai dėl gintaro kelių, jos idėjos interpretuojamos remiantis naujausiais tyrimais. Taip pat keliamas klausimas apie galimą Klesovo telkinio (Vakarų Ukrainoje) gintaro, labai panašaus į succinitą, panaudojimą. Šiame straipsnyje ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas klausimui, kaip galima suprasti gintaro vertę bronzos amžiuje, ir siūloma idėja apie simbolinę, o ne ekonominę gintaro reikšmę vietinėms Rytų Baltijos regiono bendruomenėms.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Priešistorės gintaras, tarpkultūriniai mainai, succinitas, DNR, simbolinė reikšmė.

INTRODUCTION

Amber was a constant thread in Gimbutas' research. Although its presence was accentuated in many of her works, developing a historical account of its evolution in Gimbutas' writings would take too long, especially in terms of the subsequent transformations of amber's importance. Instead of an in-depth analysis of the

author's perception of amber, the authors present an aspect-based examination of the key ideas involving amber in prehistoric Europe. It is our conviction that even a brief qualitative assessment of Gimbutas' studies of amber can help us understand the focal points of her research, especially the chronological changes of amber utilisation from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age.

MESOLITHIC, EARLY NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE AMBER IN GIMBUTAS WORKS

The appearance of amber objects in the natural amber-rich areas of the Southeastern Circum-Baltic coast (also referred to as the Sambian centre) corresponds to the onset of prehistoric activities in the region. Gimbutas considered the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic Narva culture the greatest advancement of amber craftsmanship in the area (Gimbutas 1985). During this time, amber represented one of the key components of the material culture, both along the coast and inland. The typological variety of the amber items associated with the Narva culture included ornaments as well as anthropo- and zoomorphic representations. The utilisation of amber as a means of representing living beings convinced Gimbutas that such items had a religious significance related to chthonic beliefs (Gimbutas 1985).

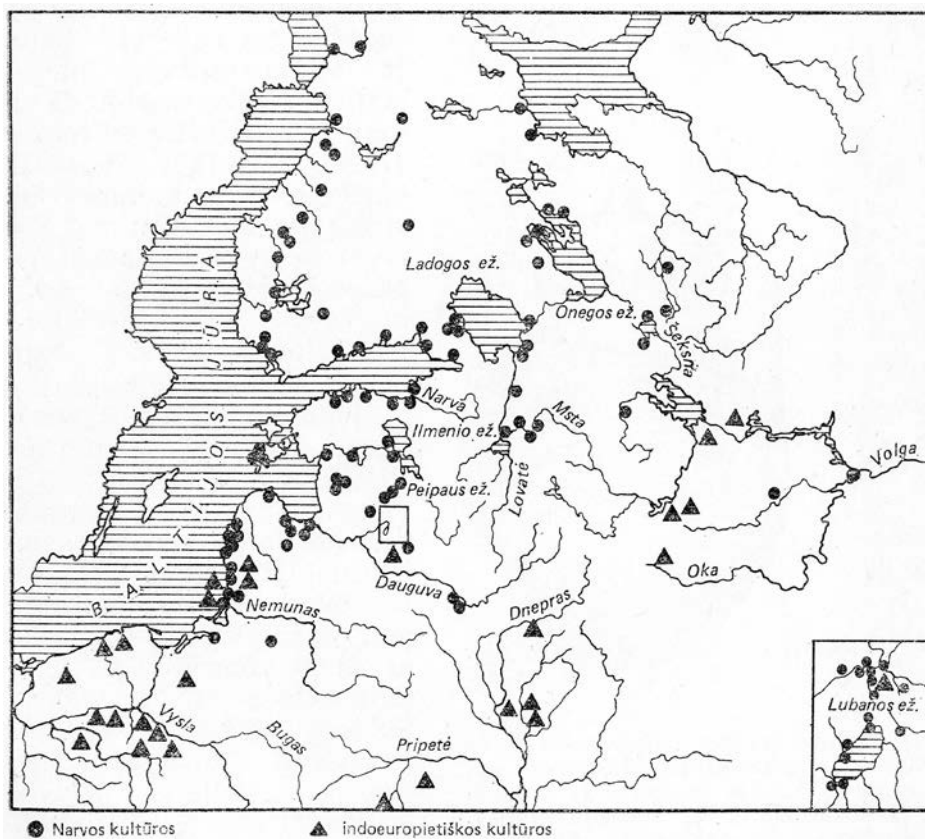
The finds also indicated the presence of the oldest interregional exchange network, which included groups in the Northern Circum-Baltic area (from the Sambian Peninsula to Finland), in the adjacent eastern regions (from the Upper Daugava to the Upper Volga basin, where the Volosovo culture was involved in the exchange and in the vicinity of the White Sea (Gimbutas 1985, 245, Fig. 1). She was first to recognize the interregional significance of amber, which preceded the emergence of a demand for amber in more southern regions.

The amber focus of Narva craftsmanship underwent a substantial change after the appearance of the Globular Amphorae Culture (GAC) in the Southeastern Circum-Baltic area. According to Gimbutas, the GAC represented the first Indo-European group in this part of Europe, which modern archaeological chronologies date to ca. 2850 BC (Szmyt 1999, 193). She thought that the GAC was responsible for the 'Indo-europeanisation' of Narva society (Gimbutas 1985, 251), explaining its

movement to this area as a direct consequence of the region's amber (Gimbutas 1997a, 365). While the GAC embraced amber objects as part of their cultural inventory, especially tubular beads or discs with a central perforation, anthropo- and zoomorphic representations disappeared. At the same time, new objects appear in the archaeological record: rings and discs with solar patterns (Gimbutas 1985, 248). From her perspective, it was the GAC which made succinite known in Central Europe to the south of the amber-rich Southeastern Circum-Baltic area. This idea was derived from the supposed Indo-European origin of the GAC, which conceived of amber in religious terms and adapted it for their solar ideology due to its 'translucent golden hues' (Gimbutas 1997b, 230). This observation was based on the most characteristic GAC amber objects: solar discs with cross- and star-like decorative motifs (Gimbutas 1997c, 288–289). She likewise noted the frequent use of large numbers of amber buttons with V-shaped perforations on funerary dresses, perhaps since they 'shine like the sun' (Gimbutas 1997b, 230). However, amber objects were found mostly in burials of leaders, supposedly adult males (Gimbutas 1997a, 364). She was consistent in addressing the ideological significance of Baltic amber for the 'sun-worshipping people of the Kurgan tradition' (e.g., Gimbutas 1997d, 255–256).

Apart from the importance of amber for the GAC, she recognized the continued utilisation of amber in the Corded Ware Culture (CWC; Gimbutas 1997d, 259). From her perspective, the CWC was the GAC's immediate successor (Gimbutas 1997d, 259; 1997e, 321). She also believed that in the next stage of prehistory (the early Bronze Age), an intensive exchange of metal and amber played an important role in unifying the world of the local CWC groups in a vast area from Switzerland, southern and Central Germany, and Austria to Lesser Poland and western Ukraine (Gimbutas 1997e, 327).

According to her, amber was the reason why regional centres of Early Bronze Age Europe became



12. Narvos kultūros ir indoeuropiečių kultūros (rutulinių amforų, Dnepro ir Volgos aukštupių) gintaro dirbinių radimo vietos

Fig. 1. Excerpt from Gimbutas book „Baltai priešistoriniais laikais“ (1985), p. 35, fig 12.

Amber in Narva Culture and in indoeuropean cultures (GAC, upper Dnepr-Volga)

1 pav. Marijos Gimbutienės knygos „Baltai priešistoriniais laikais“ (1985) fragmentas, p. 35, pav. 12.

interested in the Southeastern Circum-Baltic area. This sparked the onset of the amber ‘trade’, which, in addition to Central Europe (as was the case for the GAC), involved other key European cultural regions, covering the continent with a wide network of transport trails for, *inter alia*, amber (Gimbutas 1965, Fig. 15). The demand for it in Central, Western, and Southern Europe resulted in an increasing flow of bronze items into the amber-rich regions of the Southeastern Circum-Baltic area (Gimbutas 1965, 256). Drawing from this observation, Gimbutas was one of the first researchers to propose the first dynamic model of the succinite trade in the Early Bronze Age. The initial phase of this phenomenon

was related to the emergence of the Únětice culture (Gimbutas 1965, 256). The exchange and utilisation apogee was the classical and late phase of the Early Bronze Age (Gimbutas 1965, 256). The late phase of the Central European Early Bronze Age corresponds to the appearance of amber in the Mycenaean culture on the Greek mainland (Gimbutas 1965, 271).

To sum up, Gimbutas defined three stages in the spread of amber from the Sambia Peninsula:

stage one, the earliest, related to the Narva culture, when amber was exchanged as part of the Northeastern European network (Gimbutas 1985),

stage two, related to the GAC and the CWC, characterized by the Indo-Europeanisation of the

amber-rich regions around the Southeastern Circum-Baltic area, which was mostly related to developments in Central Europe,

stage three, related to the Early Bronze Age (Gimbutas 1965). This stage reached a Pan-European scale. At this point, amber reached the Aegean zone, where it was used from the onset of the Mycenaean culture. Gimbutas was convinced that the amber found in Mycenaean contexts originated in the Baltic Sea (Gimbutas 1965, 48). The third stage was supplemented by a spatial model of the spread of amber, which was the first model to include areas to the East of the Vistula (Gimbutas 1965, Fig. 15). In her model, she provided a description of a possible amber route:

The prepared or half-prepared amber was shipped to the lower Vistula area (from the Sambian center – JC, AĀ) and from there went southward via the Vistula, the Noteć River or Warta River to the Oder River and to the upper Oder. Through Bohemia, Moravia or Slovakia it reached the Danube and the Tisza rivers, where the route split into two branches, one crossing the Alps into Italy, and the other leading along the eastern coast of the Adriatic to Mycenaean Greece. (Gimbutas 1965, 48).

REFLECTIONS OF GIMBUTAS WORKS ON AMBER IN RECENT RESEARCH

As a result of her research, Gimbutas was able to develop a holistic model of amber circulation from its initial appearance to the second millennium BC, which included the resource's changing social significance.

After examining the focal points of her work, we can turn to two different questions. What remains of this model in current research? And, perhaps more importantly, how was this model affected by post-1980s archaeological findings?

Let us consider two angles: 1) the expansion of empirical datasets due to advances in archaeological

and supplementary research 2) the changes brought about by new interpretative models.

The greatest advancement in amber studies since the 1980s is related to the increasing accuracy of absolute dating due to the widespread reliance on radiocarbon dating and the natural sciences, especially the increasing accuracy of their calibration. When describing Gimbutas' findings, we intentionally avoided absolute dates, focussing instead on observations based on relative dating. Here lies the greatest strength of her research: the sequence she made remains generally valid.

The second significant change was the popularization of the FTIR (Fourier Transformation Infrared Spectrometry) method (Schwochau *et al.* 1963; Beck *et al.* 1964; Sawkiewicz, Szaks 1964a, b), which became an efficient tool for distinguishing succinite from other fossil resins. Although we believe that insufficient analyzes have been made, current results show that she correctly assessed the main changes. Succinite was in fact the most important fossil resin in the prehistoric Europe. Another question is whether the Neolithic and Bronze Age amber objects came from the Baltic Sea, and especially the Sambian centre.

On this note, a completely new factor in European amber research, i.e. the discovery of the Klesov deposits in western Ukraine (Tutskij, Stepanjuk 1999), must be pointed out. The amber found there has very similar properties to Baltic amber (succinite), but until now, this discovery has not been completely incorporated in the models for the spread of amber in prehistory. The primary issue is the potential contribution of Klesov amber on the continued spread of amber in GAC society. In order to resolve it, it is necessary to determine if the Klesov deposits were discovered by prehistoric people, which would require a sound fieldwork program of the areas around the amber deposits. Unfortunately, the continued exploitation and illegal extraction of amber in the Klesov area is destroying

potential archaeological sites and ultimately affecting the possibility of investigating the utilisation of regional amber in prehistory. Since no archaeological projects are investigating the issue, we can evaluate the existing dataset to formulate some general observations.

An analysis of stylistic traits suggests that GAC amber artefacts are related to the production centre in the Southeastern Circum-Baltic area (Czebreszuk 2009; Butrimas 2016; Butrimas, Ulozaitė, Iršėnas 2018; Loze 2008; Bliujienė 2007). In addition, the temporal synchronization of the appearance of amber objects in the GAC corresponds to the appearance of first GAC archaeological sites in the Sambian centre, which suggests that this amber was not connected with the Klesov deposits. Therefore, we can assume that the Klesov deposits were unknown in the third millennium BC.

Since the 1980s, the accuracy of chronological research on amber production in the Sambian centre has drastically improved. As a result, the current models support the regional continuity of amber exploitation until the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2000 BC), which extends beyond the initial significance of the Mesolithic-Neolithic Narva culture (cf. the works of Ryszard Mazurowski, summarised: Mazurowski 2014).

Having examined the changes in the empirical investigation of amber utilisation, we can now focus on the challenges of Gimbutas' interpretative model. Is it still valid despite the quantitative and qualitative changes of the original dataset?

The most obvious challenge is the cultural-genetic interpretation of the GAC. Gimbutas saw the GAC as the first Indo-Europeans, almost identical to the CWC, a perspective not supported by current research, which positions the GAC and CWC on two different trajectories of socio-biological change in Neolithic Europe. The GAC is seen as the final developmental stage of the early agriculturalists (Czebreszuk, Szmyt 2011, Fig. 11), the CWC as

a completely new phenomenon (Czebreszuk, Szmyt 2011, Fig. 11; Piličiauskas 2018) preceding the formation of the so-called Early Bronze Age European Civilization (cf. Machnik 1987). Recent advancements in aDNA research have especially lent support for this interpretation. The analyzed GAC samples display Early Neolithic Central European ties, while the CWC samples point towards Eastern European steppe communities. The latest aDNA research suggests that the CWC communities and the neighbouring Yamnaya represent the oldest wave of Indo-European migration to Central Europe (Tassi *et al.* 2017).

While substantial in terms of the historical development of the societies in Central and Eastern Europe, these findings do not undermine the overall structure of Gimbutas' model with its basis, especially Europe's three stages of amber adaptation from the 7th to the 2nd millennium BC, remaining generally valid. Compared to other models (de Navarro 1925; Harding 1984; Czebreszuk 2011), her model remains an essential contribution due to its spatial focus on continental developments, especially the inclusion of Eastern European changes.

In addition, her model shows potential for improvement, especially its focus on the eastern and northeastern exchange network (i.e. so-called stage one). The spread of amber can be potentially linked to the spread of other resources and technologies, such as the direction of ceramics development on the fringes of Asia and Europe, and its potential East to West directionality (Piezonka 2015).

Finally, one can firmly state that her findings regarding the adaptation of amber in prehistoric Europe remain generally valid and, more importantly, provide stimulating grounds for further research. The research direction she initiated remains one of the continuously developing fields in archaeological research, to which we have the honour of making contributions.

ON THE MEANING OF EASTERN BALTIC AMBER FINDS

One thing Gimbutas was interested in was the meaning of artefacts, especially of anthropomorphic figurines (see contributions in this volume). Her approach has inspired people to think not only about the material but also the symbolic value of prehistoric artefacts.

The process of assessing the value of archaeological objects is truly difficult because applying theoretical and economical evaluation methods can be very complicated. The archaeological evidence enabling us to understand the ancient system for assessing the value and meaning of objects is also limited. Nevertheless, a number of studies have supported the importance of moving archaeology towards the humanities and incorporating social, psychological, and philosophical arguments into archaeological discourse (Furholt, Stockhammer, 2008; Maran 2010; Smith *et al.* 2012; Stockhammer 2016).

When speaking about value, we have to analyze all of an object's physical properties such as material, size, colour, durability, malleability, and weight. Simply put, it is a purely economic entity. The Macmillan English Dictionary (2006) defines 'value' as:

'(1) the amount that something is worth, measured especially in money. (*e.g., The value of the painting is not known.*), or the amount that something is worth compared to the money that it costs, (*e.g., Thanks to the strenghth of the pound, these wines offer tremendous value just now.*);

(2) The degree to which someone or something is important or useful (*e.g., documents that will be of great value to future historians.*)'

Meanwhile the word 'meaning' represents non-material things that are hidden in the mind, i.e. psychological and emotional factors. The same dictionary defines 'meaning' as 1) the ideas that

signs, symbols, or ways of behaving represent (*e.g. It seems that the clothes have a deep religious meaning.*); 2) the special importance or purpose of something (*e.g. Religion has little meaning for many people today.*)

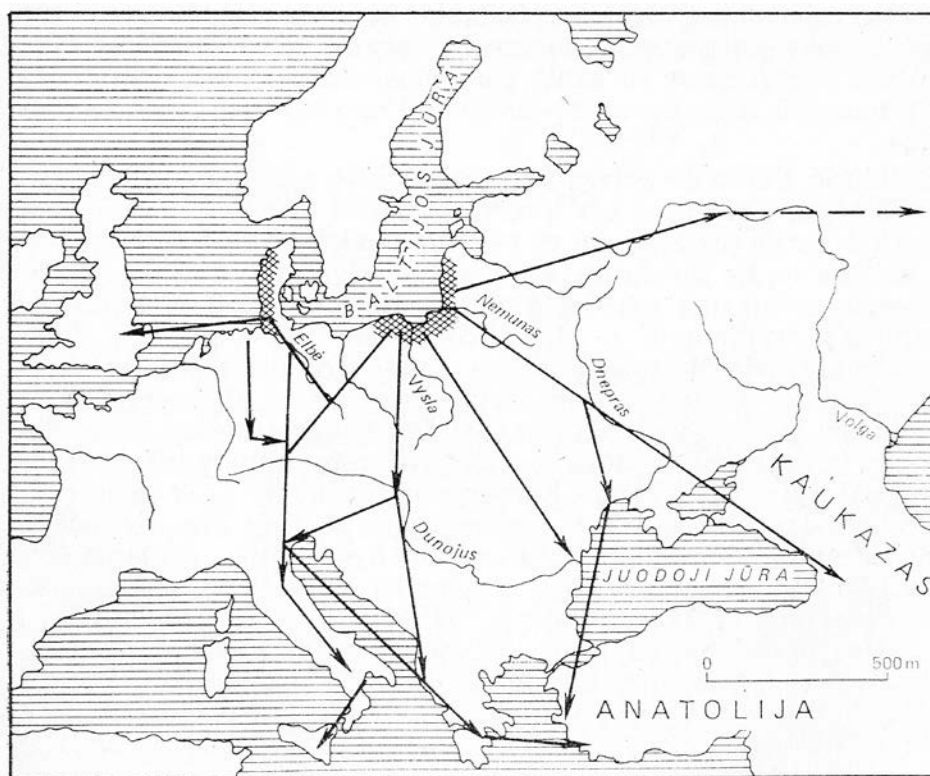
Thus, as we can see, while the two terms are different, they overlap and in some sense can be synonymous. Both play the same or a very similar role.

A difference exists between objects as commodities and as gifts or valuables, in other words, two spheres of functionality: profane, i.e. connected with daily life, and mental, i.e. with social behaviour. Please note; this distinction is only a working construct offered to help understand the value and meaning of things, but it is also clear that both perspectives can complement each other.

As a result, we as archaeologists are alternating in a cycle of relativistic and hypothetical approaches. Since the artefacts themselves cannot speak, we can only try to find a way to go deeper into recognizing the prehistorian materiality. We should also note the semiotic and semantic theories, which, as Martin Furholt and Philipp Stockhammer pointed out, open up new perspectives to the interpretation of prehistoric material culture (Furholt, Stockhammer 2008).

Amber is a material that can be linked to these ideas: although it has economical value as commodity, its meaning is connected to its exceptional properties.

Being found together with other exceptional objects, amber (mostly beads) reflects a connection between different worlds, the best example possibly is the Bronze Age Europe's glass and amber beads, which often occur together in the same burial or the same hoard such as Danish graves with amber and glass beads from Syria and Egypt (Varberg *et al.* 2015; 2019) as well as Romania's sacrificial Cioclovina cu Apa Cave also with large numbers of amber and glass beads. This hoard, or rather accumulation of deposits, of over 7500 objects is by far Europe's largest Late



25. Gintaro prekybos kelias žaltvario amžiuje (XVIII–XIII a. pr. m. e.)

Fig. 2. Excerpt from Gimbutas book „Baltai priešistoriniais laikais“ (1985), p. 58, fig 25.

Amber routes in the Bronze Age (XVIII–XIII ct. BC)

2 pav. Marijos Gimbutienės knygos „Baltai priešistoriniais laikais“ (1985) fragmentas, p. 58, pav. 25.

Bronze Age hoard with the majority being various beads dating to 1300–1200 BC: so far 520 of tin, 2339 of Mesopotamian glass, 1784 of amber, and 572 of faience (Varberg *et al.* 2019).

The East and West Mediterranean also has examples of amber (succinite) and glass found together, from burials and settlement sites to the Uluburun shipwreck (*ibid.*). Perhaps ‘Nordic amber’ would be preferable considering the rich North Sea amber sources: succinite is amber from ‘the North’, i.e. the southern beaches of the Baltic Sea to the North Sea beaches, the west coast of Jutland, and especially, the Sambian peninsula and eastern coast of the Baltic Sea (*ibid.*).

In keeping with this idea, amber could have featured in extremely long distance exchanges,

reach distant lands, and obtain shapes attractive for the locals, mostly of highest social stratum. Interestingly, in the Bronze Age, amber disappears from the archaeological sites in the Eastern Baltic, which Gimbutas explained using the classical point of view about the amber trade. She mentions the figurine from Šernai (West Lithuania) as the evidence for long distance exchanges, in which the most important commodity was amber (Gimbutienė 1953, 251–252). We agree with Gimbutas’ opinion as well as Michael Heltzer’s that the Šernai statuette reached the Eastern Baltic region as a result of the amber trade (Fig. 2). However, we think that this occurred indirectly through the role of a mediator, most likely Scandinavia. The Šernai statuette was probably brought to Scandinavia from Syria as a



Fig.3 M. Gimbutas wearing amber necklace (reprinted with permission of the Estate of Marija Gimbutas).

3 pav. Marijos Gimbutienė pasipuošusi gintaro vėrinium (perspausdinama leidus Marijos Gimbutienės šeimai).

reward since Scandinavian society was already familiar with many oriental ideas (Čivilytė, Duberow, Pernicka 2015).

The question arises, what kinds of amber artefacts have been found from the early metals period in this region. First of all, it should be noted that the Eastern Baltic region has yielded no early metal period amber find sites, which might have involved raw amber collection and processing for transportation further afield. Amber artefacts began to increase gradually in barrows on the Samland peninsula during the Late Bronze Age. It is thought that in the early and especially mid-first millennium BC, a trade route from Samland gradually evolved towards the River Pasłęka and the lower reaches of the Vistula, which latter developed into a communication route ca. 800–400 BC (Dąbrowski 1993, 113). That unprocessed amber pieces have been found in Latvian and Estonian hillforts, where bronze objects were produced (Čivilytė 2015, 140), may show that the amber routes

in the Eastern Baltic region were not long distance but were restricted to internal contacts, including Baltic Sea maritime contacts. The bigger amber trade centres may have been as interested in Eastern Baltic amber as the Nordic societies. Amber from both the Blue Earth and Jutland was transported further South via mediators. The Bruszczewo (Poland) settlement near the Baltic Sea coast could be such a procurement centre (Czebreszuk, Müller 2015; Czebreszuk *et al.* 2015; Müller *et al.* 2010). People of the Ūnėtice culture were undoubtedly Central European amber mediators in the Early Bronze Age as objects made from Baltic amber, probably from the Polish coast, were extremely widespread in precisely this region. (Erneé 2015).

Interestingly, amber is very rarely found in Eastern Baltic region graves; even in large cemeteries, only one or several graves will contain a few amber objects or just one, mostly small pieces of raw amber (Čivilytė 2016) and usually without any other objects in the grave. Does a burial with just a single piece of amber represent a lower social status than one with more objects? We think that amber never lost its relevance and always had a prestige value with a symbolic meaning, even when it is a single piece of raw amber in a grave, which might explain amber's extraordinary meaning as a special material in prehistory. If so, amber's value can be understood as non-commercial, as incorporating a symbolic and social meaning, because the material and symbolic value are never an inherent and fixed object, but are generated within social practices (Stockhammer *et al.* 2020).

POST SCRIPTUM: AMBER AND GIMBUTAS' PERSONAL APPRECIATION

Finally, we want to discuss the amber jewellery (beads, brooches, pins), which played such an important role in Gimbutas' life. She collected several artistic pieces made of Lithuanian amber, putting



Fig. 4. M. Gimbutas in the exhibition of Lithuanian folk art UCLA 1966 (reprinted with permission of the Estate of Marija Gimbutas).

4 pav. M. Gimbutienė Lietuvos liaudies meno parodoje UCLA, 1966 (perspausdinama leidus Marijos Gimbutienės šeimai).

them on show at the 1966 Los Angeles exhibition 'Lithuanian Folk Art' (Fig. 3). Moreover, on special occasions she used to wear beautiful accessories that caught everyone's eye (Fig. 4). Amber primarily expressed her deep connection with Lithuania, and her mother in particular. She wrote in a letter to her mother: *'Not a day passes that someone does not comment on them. I have become a huge advertisement for amber and that I was lucky has also been due to my wearing it for it holds the power of your life and your love, which strengthen me everywhere'* (Jankauskaitė 2010, 312). The symbolic value of a single piece of amber is expressed in another letter, which makes it obvious why amber was such an important topic in Gimbutas' research: *'Of all the things here, amber, without a doubt, causes the biggest commotion. Now that I am a guest so often, I wear it all the time as it is a huge attraction. With a single piece of amber, I can sway the hearts of the greatest women'* (Jankauskaitė 2010, 313).

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PROFESSOR MARIJA GIMBUTAS' ADVENTURE WITH PREHISTORIC AMBER AND THE RESULTS FOR US

Janusz Czebreszuk, Agnė Čivilytė

Summary

This article discusses models of Gimbutas' approaches to prehistoric amber in order to give an overview of her ideas. As this has not been done before, the aim of the authors is to elucidate different stages of amber utilisation in prehistory according to Gimbutas' works, which define three stages in the spread of amber from the Sambia Peninsula:

the earliest, related to the Narva culture, when amber was exchanged as part of the northeastern European network;

the second, related to the GAC and the CWC, characterized by the Indo-Europeanisation of the amber-rich regions around the southeastern Circum-Baltic area, which was mostly related to developments in Central Europe,

the third, related to the Early Bronze Age, which reached a Pan-European scale. At this point, amber reached the Aegean zone, where it was used from the onset of the Mycenaean culture.

As a result of her research, Gimbutas was able to develop a holistic model of amber circulation from its initial appearance to the second millennium BC, which included the resource's changing social significance. One of the greatest strengths of her research is that the sequence she made remains generally valid. Thanks to FTIR, which became an efficient tool for distinguishing succinite from other fossil resins, Gimbutas' models of amber distribution appear to be correct.

The recent question about the prehistoric utilisation of amber from Klesov, western Ukraine, which is very similar to succinite, is still open. However, a stylistic analysis of GAC amber artefacts allows one to assume that the Klesov deposits were

unknown in the third millennium BC. The current models support the regional continuity of amber exploitation until the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2000 BC), which extends beyond the initial significance of the Mesolithic-Neolithic Narva culture.

Despite the quantitative and qualitative changes of the original dataset of amber investigations, Gimbutas' model with its basis, especially Europe's three stages of amber adaptation from the 7th to the 2nd millennium BC, remains generally valid and an essential contribution due to its spatial focus on continental developments, especially the inclusion of Eastern European changes. The research direction she initiated remains one of the continuously developing fields in archaeological research, to which we have the honour of making contributions.

In the Bronze Age, amber disappears from the archaeological sites in the Eastern Baltic, which Gimbutas explained using the classical point of view about the amber trade. She mentions the figurine from Šernai (West Lithuania) as evidence for long distance exchanges, in which the most important commodity was amber. We agree with Gimbutas' opinion as well as Michael Heltzer's that the Šernai statuette reached the Eastern Baltic region as a result of the amber trade. However, we think that this occurred indirectly through the role of a mediator, most likely Scandinavia.

Finally, we are convinced that amber never lost its relevance and always had a prestige value with a symbolic meaning, even as a single piece of raw amber in a grave, which might explain amber's extraordinary meaning as a special material in prehistory. If so, amber's value can be understood

as non-commercial, as incorporating a symbolic and social meaning. In the same way Gimbutas also appreciated amber personally, a lone piece of amber

being her good luck charm that was able to sway the hearts of the greatest women.

MARIJOS GIMBUTIENĖS PRIEŠISTORINIO GINTARO TYRINĖJIMAI IR JŲ REIKŠMĖ ŠIANDIEN

Janusz Czebreszuk, Agnė Čivilytė

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje aptariami Marijos Gimbutienės siūlomi priešistorinio gintaro naudojimo ir reikšmės modeliai, siekiant apžvelgti jos idėjas. Kadangi anksčiau tai nebuvo daryta, autorių tikslas – nagrinėjant mokslininkės darbus išaiškinti įvairius gintaro panaudojimo etapus priešistorėje. Galima išskirti tris gintaro plitimo iš Sambijos pusiasalio epizodus. Anksčiausias susijęs su Narvos kultūra, kai gintaras cirkuliavo kaip Šiaurės Rytų Europos kultūrinio tinklo dalis. Antras susijęs su rutulinių amforų ir virvelinės keramikos kultūromis, jam būdinga gausių gintaro regionų indoeuropeizacija aplink Pietryčių Baltijos regioną, kuris daugiausia palaikė ryšius su Vidurio Europos bendruomenėmis. Trečias epizodas vyko ankstyvajame bronzos amžiuje Europoje. Būtent tada gintaras pasiekė Egėjo jūros zoną ir buvo naudojamas nuo pat Mikėnų civilizacijos pradžios.

M. Gimbutienė sukūrė holistinį modelį gintaro cirkuliacijos nuo jo atsiradimo iki II tūkstantmečio pr. Kr., kuris rodė kintančią socialinę gintaro reikšmę. Vienas iš didžiausių jos tyrimo pranašumų – kad sudaryta seka išlieka visuotinai galiojančia. Dėl FTIR, tapusio efektyviu sukcinato atskyrimo nuo kitų gamtinių dervų metodu, mokslininkės gintaro pasiskirstymo modeliai yra teisingi. Neseniai iškilęs klausimas apie priešistorinį Klesovo (Vakarų Ukrainoje) gintaro, labai panašaus į sukcinatą, panaudojimą vis dar neatsakytas. Tačiau stilistinė rutulinių amforų

gintaro dirbinių analizė leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad III tūkstantmetyje pr. Kr. Klesovo telkiniai dar nebuvo žinomi. Dabartiniai modeliai patvirtina regioninį gintaro eksploatavimo tęstinumą iki ankstyvojo bronzos amžiaus (apie 2000 m. pr. Kr.), daug svarbesnį nei mezolito-neolito Narvos kultūros laikotarpyje. Nepaisant kiekybinių ir kokybinių pirminės gintaro tyrimų duomenų bazės pokyčių, M. Gimbutienės teorija, ypač minėti trys Europos gintaro adaptacijos etapai VII–II tūkstantmetyje pr. Kr., visuotinai galioja. Jos modelis – esminis indėlis į XXI a. archeologiją, nes dėmesys sutelkiamas į pokyčius Europoje, ypač jos rytuose. Mokslininkės pradėta tyrimų kryptis yra viena iš nuolat besivystančių archeologinių tyrimų sričių, prie kurios turime garbės prisidėti.

Bronzos amžiuje gintaras nyksta iš Rytų Baltijos archeologinių vietovių. Šį reiškinį mokslininkė aiškino klasikiniu požiūriu į prekybą gintaru, gaunant metalo. Kaip tolimųjų mainų įrodymą ji mini bronzinę Šernų (Vakarų Lietuva) statulėlę. Sutinkame su M. Gimbutienės ir Michaelo Heltzerio nuomone, kad Šernų statulėlė Rytų Baltijos regioną pasiekė prekiaujant gintaru. Tačiau manome, kad tai įvyko ne tiesiogiai, o tarpininkaujant Skandinavijos bendruomenėms. Galiausiai esame įsitikinę: gintaras neprarado aktualumo ir visada turėjo prestižinę vertę – simbolinę reikšmę net ir tada, kai kape būdavo vienintelis gintaro žaliavos gabalėlis. Tai pagrindžia gintaro, kaip ypatingos medžiagos, reikšmę

priešistorėje. Tęsiant šią mintį, gintaro vertė gali būti suprantama kaip nekomercinė, turinti simbolinę ir socialinę reikšmę. Lygiai taip pat M. Gimbutienė

vertino gintarą savo gyvenime: net mažiausias gintaro gabalėlis buvo tarsi jos sėkmės talismanas, galintis palenkti didžiausių ponių širdis.

Vertė Agnė Čivilytė

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