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FOREWORD

Archaeology is an integral part of art – a realization that dawned upon me when spinning 3D projections of a bronze axe on my computer screen. Current technology offers unlimited possibilities for the virtual analysis of archaeological objects, e.g., making a bronze axe translucent or carved with many intertwining lines. The craftmen who made axes or other artifacts millennias ago could not have imagined the impact of their aesthetic impressions on modern observers. Among archaeology's most underappreciated interdisciplinary contributions is the inspirational force it bestows upon artists to innovate: a simple Google search will point a searcher to various projects that purposefully combine the shapes of excavated objects with new artistic forms. The transformation of an old object into a modified creature of art demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between science and imagination, without which Humanities cannot exist as a discipline in its own right.

This is the essence of Giedrė Jankevičiūtė's text as art critic, exhibition curator, and Lithuanian National Prize award-winner. In her chapter, „Alternative persceptions of Archaeology", Jankevičiūtė talks about the subjective relationship of art researchers and artists to archaeological science. She questions how archaeology is perceived by those who observe, follow, and evaluate the development of the discipline of archaeology and the reception of its activities and research results. Jankevičiūtė proposes that archaeological finds should be recognized as objects from our environment, thereby connecting observers with artifacts. Her text contains an emotional-sensorical perception of archaeology, revealing the distinctive and important mission of archaeology in contemporary society.

Earlier this year, we lost Rimutė Rimantienė, the matriarch of Lithuanian Stone Age research. She remains a bright prodigy of the scientist who made Lithuania famous in Europe and the world. As Šarūnas Milišauskas writes in his epitaph to Rimantienė: „Her legacy is characterized by an infinite love for archaeology and a philosophical approach that encourages us to rethink the significance of archaeology in these turbulent times."

Bronze Age research has been the focus of this group of scientific papers. Two articles deal with different aspects of the aforesaid period and offer avenues for future research. Bianca Nessel's article raises the question about the interpretation of freshwater mollusc (mussel) shells. Although researchers believe that mussels supplemented the protein diet of Bronze Age communities, the author does not rule out other possible uses. Interestingly, the fact that the majority of shell finds in both Lithuanian, German, and Polish settlements are limited to a particular type of mollusc reflects a deliberate choice of shell. This article will show whether mussels were part of the daily diet or part of one-off feasts. The author also describes the circumstances in which the shells were found *in situ,* their processing characteristics, and possible consumption options, stressing that these archaeological finds open up a wide range of perspectives for new research on diet, nature, and climate.

Ondřej Chvojka and Jan John write about a unique Bronze Age find, a Nortycken type axe found in a Late Bronze Age hoard in Olesná, South Bohemia. It is the southernmost known find of this type to date, with a distribution in Northern Germany, Poland, and the Eastern Baltic Sea region.

Interestingly, the axe is not broken, although the vast majority of the objects in the more than 13 kg hoard are fragmented, with the exception of two bronze vessels. The authors attribute the appearance of this axe in the hoard to Bronze Age communication networks, which may have been stimulated by Baltic amber, but leave room for further discussion as to whether such finds can be interpreted as imports from distant lands, or whether another explanation should be sought. In any case, the Nortycken type axe in the Olešná hoard prompts reflection not only on its purpose, but also on the potential for the activity of the communities of the Eastern Baltic Sea region in long-distance contacts.

Jens Schneeweiss and his team's article on the problem of hillfort research presents the INHILDAUGAR project's main idea and preliminary results. The authors introduce readers to the hillforts along the Daugava River, only a small part of which has been investigated thus far. The project added nine hillforts to its list of newly investigated sites, and established their chronology. Thereafter, it undertook geological and geomorphological studies on the same. The INHILDAUGAR project is important because it uses non-invasive and minimally invasive methods and integrates archival and linguistic material. The project will help better understand the hillforts and prehistoric settlement patterns of the Daugava Valley and surrounding areas. The project's datasets are being compiled with an increasing focus on systematic data analysis and mapping findings in an open access atlas of hillforts.

The following two articles are dedicated to the City of Vilnius. Oksana Valionienė analyzes and interprets the vessels found in a potter's workshop in Subačiaus Street 11 in the 14th-15th centuries in a novel way, using big data analytical methods. The author's IT media in her research of Vilnius archaeological household pottery revealed their potential for the most accurate reconstruction of forms, identification of purpose, technology, and dating. O. Valionienė is even able to identify groups of individuals who made ceramic pots. Valionienė argues that their vessels were not completely identical even though the Subačiaus Street 11 workshop was occupied by potters with similar backgrounds. The scientific body developed by the author opens up the possibility of applying it to the study of houseware ceramics, with the prospect of creating a separate morphological research laboratory.

Irma Kaplūnaitė, Rytis Jonaitis, and Daiva Luchtanienė's article focuses on the territory of the so-called German City, the Catholic part of Vilnius, which began to emerge in the period before the Baptism in 1387. The article discusses the earliest nature of human settlement in this part of the city, the activities of the people who lived here, and what is not mentioned in the written sources, especially in the late 14th and the first half of the 15th century.

A written source is published for the first time in the history of this journal. Namely, chapters I-IV of Motiejus Kazimieras Sarbievius (born in 1595)'s treatise, „The Gods of the Pagans"/"Dii gentium", translated from Latin to Lithuanian by Laura Kisieliūtė. Sarbievius collected the material for this treatise during his studies in Rome (1623 - 1625). In his work, Sarbievius cataloged several hundred different varieties of allegorical images, using figures of ancient deities. He also pointed out the various ways in which they could be used in texts, including those on theological themes. The treatise is a rather multi-layered work, reflecting not only the intellectual and cultural climate of the 17th century, but also allowing the author to demonstrate the knowledge he had gathered from other mythological encyclopaedists, mythographers, and his own notes.

Chapters I to IV of the *Dei gentium* selected for this volume describe the division of the gods and provide a varied description of the spaces, natural sites, and buildings used for ritual and prayer. It is an extremely interesting read, revealing the customs

of Pagan belief from a 17th-century Christian perspective, and is sure to broaden the horizons of archaeologists, not only with its piquant details, such as the sacrifice of a pig, but also with its descriptions of the worship of sacred groves or stones. Indeed, have you ever wondered that a temple, a shrine, and a holy site are not the same thing? According to the translator of the treatise, Laura Kisieliūtė, „Sarbievius regards ancient literature, artifacts, and myths as a set of pagan traditions that served as backdrop to the Christian faith tradition and the Christian God. Such a multifaceted work could be studied not merely as a historical corpus of the Latin literature of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but also as a source of knowledge about ancient Rome's mythology, which remains relevant today."

We are pleased to publish a discussion text in this volume. Its author, Kathleen Wilson, reflects on the wave of DNA research that has swept archaeological science in the last decade. She discusses the use of DNA in biological sex determination and proposes a reflection on non-binary gender identity and non-heteronormative sexuality in past communities. She believes that humans cannot be strictly categorized as *Barbies* and *Kens.* After discussing three examples, Wilson demonstrates that DNA alone cannot be used to determine gender in anthropological material. Interpreting past societies through the Western, heteronormative, and binary perspective of early 20th-Century archaeology is no longer acceptable, and we must therefore be extremely careful not to approach the study of gender in the past through the prism of presentism.

This publication wraps up with the aforementioned text on archaeology and art by Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, which returns this science to the humanities. Indeed, it is possible and even necessary to reduce the distance between the object excavated by archaeologists and the observer–for example, the art historian–by opening up the object's meaning (biography) in a comprehensible and recognizable way.

I would like to conclude my foreword with this philosophical idea by thanking all the authors for their inspiring input. I also extend my sincerest gratitude to Mindaugas Maskoliūnas and Sigutė Mikšaitė for their invaluable contributions that enabled the publication of such works. May all our readers be inspired by this compelling material, we wish you a pleasant read, further success, and a peaceful new year.

Agnė ČIVILYTĖ,
Editor-in-Chief