

Lithuanian Archaeology in the Past and Present

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Three chronological stages may be distinguished in the history of Lithuanian archaeology. The first includes the whole 19th century up to World War I. The second covers the period of archaeological research in the Republic of Lithuania from 1918 to 1940. The third stage is post-war Lithuanian archaeology, from the Soviet period to the present.

The interest in antiquities and archaeological monuments in Lithuania goes back to the 16th century. The mid-nineteenth century was an age of Romanticism and national revival which aroused interest in the origins of the Lithuanian nation. Writers, poets, military officers, clergymen, landowners and other intellectuals strove to have their own collections of antiquities. At the same time, the first organisations for the propagation of national history and antiquities appeared in the Eastern Baltic: 1834 in Riga, 1838 in Dorpat, and 1844 in Königsberg. The term “Balts” was suggested in 1845 by professor Ferdinand Nesselmann of Königsberg University as a common label for the local ethnic groups of Indo-European origin.

The establishment of such organisations in Lithuania is associated Count Eustachy Tyszkiewicz, who was very involved in archaeology. In 1842 he published *A glimpse of the Sources of Lithuanian Archaeology*, the first attempt to systematize local archaeological finds, in which he tried to apply the Three Age System to this material. On his initiative, an Archaeological Commission was established in Vilnius in 1855. The Museum of Antiquities was opened the following year. During the almost ten years it was in operation, the museum gathered over 67 000 artefacts. At the time, Lithuania was the so called “north-west province” of the Russian Empire, following the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian common state in 1795. In 1861 to 1863, the uprising against Russian rule paralysed the activity of the Archaeological Commission. The uprising was crushed and the Russians transformed the Museum of Antiquities into a state institution, eliminating all symbols of the former Polish-Lithuanian state from its exhibits.

Through the whole 19th century until World War I, Lithuania remained merely a province of an empire, and was under the influence of archaeological research in Russia. The Imperial Archaeological Commission (IAC), founded in St. Petersburg in 1859, acted as the central co-ordinating body for archaeological excavations in the whole empire. It's responsibilities included granting permission

to excavate, and financing and directing all excavations. The results of archaeological excavations were published in *Reports of Imperial Archaeological Commission*. In the late 19th to early 20th centuries, on the initiative of the IAC and other imperial institutions, Russian archaeologists began to undertake excavations in Lithuania. Fiodor Pokrovskij stands out among them. His most important contribution to Lithuanian archaeology was the publication of archaeological maps for three Lithuanian provinces in 1893, 1895 and 1899.

Another imperial institution was the Archaeological Society, established in Moscow in 1864. One of the duties of this institution was to organize conferences in the different regions of the empire. One of them was held in Vilnius in 1893. The 161 participants included not only local and Russian archaeologists, but also representatives from other countries. The conference was followed by an archaeological exhibition.

At the beginning of 20th century there were a fair number of local investigators who promoted archaeological research in Lithuania. They included Dr. Jonas Basanavičius, Wandalin Szukiewicz, Tadas Daugirdas and others. Given the influence of nationalistic ideas at the time, most of their organisations were based on national principles. Two scientific organisations were formed: the Society of Lithuanian Scientists, and the Society of Polish Scientists, both founded in Vilnius between 1906 and 1907. Another name of the period worth mentioning is that of Ludwik Krzywicki, a Polish anthropologist and archaeologist famous for his work on Lithuanian hill-forts.

In 1918, the Republic of Lithuania gained independence. The following year, the Archaeology Commission was founded in Vilnius, but was moved to Kaunas shortly thereafter when Vilnius and much of Eastern Lithuania were occupied by Poland. They remained under Polish control until 1939. The Commission later changed its name to the State Archaeological Commission. Its main functions included the registration and protection of archaeological monuments. Post-war Lithuania lacked specialists in archaeology, and activities of the commission were therefore initially rather passive. However, Commission provided a valuable service by accumulating information concerning cultural monuments. As a result, we have an extensive archive of archaeological data from between 1920 and 1940. Real reforms regarding preservation, legislation and investigation of archaeological monuments occurred much later when the State Archaeological Commission became the Referendary of Monument Protection in 1935, and the Department of Monument Protection at the Vytautas Magnus Museum of Culture in Kaunas was founded in 1936.

Societies for regional studies were very active in the province during the Lithuanian Republic. On their initiative, local museums were founded in Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Biržai, Telšiai, Klaipėda, and Mažeikiai. The biggest museums dealing with archaeological material, Kaunas city Museum and the Military Museum of Vytautas Magnus, were located in Kaunas, which was the capital of Lithuania at the time.

There were only a small number of people involved in early Lithuanian archaeology. Some of them were educated archaeologists, others were relative amateurs. It took great effort to establish a course in archaeology at the Kaunas University in 1922. *Materials of Lithuanian Archaeology*, written in 1928 by Petras Tarasienka served for a long time as the basic archaeology text book. Field excavations were limited in comparison with neighbouring countries. Over a period

of 20 years, only 3 hill-forts and a few Iron Age cemeteries were excavated. The main figures of the time who deserve mention are Gen. Vladas Nagevičius, director of the Military Museum of Vytautas Magnus and leader of the famous excavations at Apuolė and Impiltis hill-forts in North-west Lithuania, Prof. Eduardas Volteris, head of the Department of Archaeology at Kaunas University, and the above mentioned Petras Tarasenko, famous for his scientific and popular books on archaeology.

The situation began to change under the influence of Jonas Puzinas. In 1934, he obtained his doctorate from Heidelberg University and was appointed to the Kaunas city Museum. There he fundamentally changed the exhibition to bring it in line with the contemporary European standard. He also began as an assistant researcher at the Department of Ethical Sciences at Kaunas University. He taught a new approach to Lithuanian archaeology and became known as the “founder” of modern national archaeology. In 1940, he moved to Vilnius and started work at the Vilnius University as head of the Department of Archaeology. In 1942, his first students Regina Volkaitė, Rimutė Jablonskytė, Pranas Kulikauskas and Marija Alseikaitė completed their undergraduate degrees in archaeology. Unfortunately, Professor Puzinas’ very promising career was interrupted in 1943 when the Nazi regime closed Vilnius University. Nineteen forty-four brought serious losses to Lithuanian archaeology when J. Puzinas and his student M. Alseikaitė emigrated to Germany to escape from the Soviet regime. Following World War II, they moved to the United States where Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutas later became a world famous archaeologist.

After World War II only four archaeologists remained in the country to begin the “post-war” period in Lithuanian archaeology. Archaeological excavations were resumed in 1948. In 1950, archaeological research was concentrated mainly in the Department of Archaeology and Ethnography in Vilnius University, and the Institute of History at the Academy of Sciences. Lithuania’s incorporation in the Soviet Union had a large impact on archaeology and all other research. Censorship and the introduction of Marxist-Leninist ideology into the research were unavoidable.

From the Soviet period until the present, with the exception of the period from 1966 to 1976, archaeologists were trained mainly at Vilnius University. It graduates about 10 archaeologists per year. Presently, archaeology is only offered at the Universities of Kaunas and Klaipėda. The Lithuanian Institute of History was built according Soviet standard as a research centre separate from the universities. It was established in the post-war period, and in 1961 a Department of Archaeology was founded there. Ever since, it has been a leading archaeological institution, co-ordinating field excavations and serving as an archive for field reports. This institution is also responsible for editing the annual publication *Lithuanian Archaeology*, a field report volume *Archaeological Excavations in Lithuania*, and the newly established *Archaeologia Baltica*.

As for museums, there are over 300 000 artefacts in the magazines of the National Museum of Lithuania in Vilnius. Less extensive collections, mostly containing local archaeological material, are located in Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and other smaller museums. The Department of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Culture is in charge of inventory, study and protection of cultural, archaeological and historical monuments. A system of archaeological monument preservation and legislation finally was completed in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. In 1967,

the new law was passed, and in 1973, a list of monuments was compiled. The list of sites has been expanded over the past 23 years and now comprises some 400 Stone Age settlements, 750 hill-forts, and 2000 burials and other monuments. Currently, there are 21 PhD involved in archaeological research in Lithuania. However, there are roughly 80 people working in fields related to archaeology. Most of them are the members of Society of Archaeologists.

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Lietuvos archeologija praeityje ir šiandien

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Santrauka

Susidomėjimas archeologiniais radiniais bei paminklais Lietuvoje siekia XVI a. Romantizmas ir praeito amžiaus viduryje prasidėjęs nacionalinio judėjimo laikotarpis skatino domėjimąsi savo tautos ištakomis. Būdingas to meto reiškinyms buvo tai, kad dvarininkai, rašytojai, kariškiai, dvasininkai – visi, kuriems rūpėjo savo krašto proistorė, stengėsi sukaupti nuosavas senienų kolekcijas.

Laikiniosios archeologinės komisijos įkūrimas Lietuvoje 1855 m. yra siejamas su grafo Eustachijaus Tiškevičiaus vardu. Kitais metais buvo atidarytas Vilniaus senienų muziejus. Po 1861-1863 m. sukilimo komisijos veikla nutraukta, o muziejus reorganizuotas.

XIX a. pab.-XX a. pr. caro valdžios iniciatyva į Lietuvą pradedami siųsti rusų archeologai. Vienas jų, Fiodoras Pokrovskis, Lietuvos archeologijai nusipelnė išleisdamas Vilniaus, Gardino ir Kauno gubernijų archeologinius žemėlapius. 1893 m. Vilniuje įvyko IX Rusijos archeologų suvažiavimas.

XX a. pradžioje Lietuvoje dirbo nemažai vietinių, daugiau ar mažiau profesionalių archeologų, kurie, veikiami nacionalinio judėjimo, pasiskirstė pagal tautinį principą. Taip Vilniuje atsirado dvi mokslinės organizacijos – lietuvių ir lenkų. Atskirai reikėtų paminėti Lietuvos piliakalnių tyrinėtoją Liudviką Kšivickį.

Lietuvos Respublikos laikais 1919 m. Vilniuje įkuriama Archeologinė komisija. Vėliau ji pavadinta Valstybine archeologine komisija. Jos veikla nebuvo itin aktyvi. Reformos archeologijos paminklų apsaugoje prasidėjo tik 4-ojo deš. viduryje. Lietuvoje trūko archeologijos specialistų, gal todėl prieškaryje nedaug kasinėta. To meto žinomiausi archeologai buvo Petras Tarasenka, gen. Vladas Nagevičius, prof. Eduardas Volteris. Kauno Vytauto Didžiojo universitete skaitytas archeologijos kursas, bet tokios specialybės nebuvo. 4-ojo deš. pabaigoje Jonas Puzinas pradėjo naują etapą Lietuvos archeologijos mokslu. Jį pagrįstai galima vadinti nacionalinės profesionaliosios archeologijos pradininku. Po Antrojo pasaulinio karo liko tik 4 archeologai, pradėję pokarinį laikotarpį Lietuvos archeologijoje. Apie 1950 m. buvo dvi pagrindinės institucijos, kuriose vystytas archeologijos mokslas – Vilniaus universiteto Archeologijos ir etnografijos katedra ir Istorijos institutas prie Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademijos. Tarybinio laikotarpio archeologijoje, kaip, beje, ir kitose mokslo srityse, marksistinių – lenininių idėjų propagavimas bei cenzūra buvo neišvengiami dalykai.

Šiandien Lietuvos nacionalinis muziejus Vilniuje turi didžiausią archeologinių radinių kolekciją. Kultūros vertybių apsaugos departamento darbas yra inventorizuoti ir saugoti archeologijos paminklus. Saugomų paminklų sąrašė apie 400 akmens amžiaus gyvenviečių, 750 piliakalnių bei 2 tūkst. įvairių laikotarpių laidojimo paminklų. Šiuo metu archeologijos srityje dirba 4 habilituoti daktarai, 1 profesorius ir 12 daktarų. Bendras skaičius žmonių, kurie vienokiu ar kitokiu būdu susiję su archeologija, siekia 80. Daugelis jų yra Lietuvos archeologijos draugijos nariai.

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