

# THE ŽVILIAI CEMETERY

## SUMMARY

**Introduction.** The cemetery is located at Žviliai village, Šilalė district (western Lithuania). The burial site was arranged on a hillock on the right bank of the Akmena river (tributary of the Jūra) (fig. 1–4). The site is badly damaged as the territory had been used as an arable field since old times. The cemetery was first mentioned in archaeological literature in 1966. In the summer of 1968 fact-finding excavations were carried out by an expedition from the Lithuanian Historical Museum (headed by Adolfas Tautavičius). An area of 320 sq.m. was excavated and 8 graves were investigated. In autumn the same year, an expedition of Šilalė District Division for Protection of Monuments and Ethnography (headed by Vladas Statkevičius) excavated an area of another 51 sq.m. and investigated 13 graves. In 1983–1989 “Žemaitija” expedition from the Lithuanian Historical Institute (headed by the author) investigated an area of 2147 sq.m. and uncovered 282 graves (table 1). Thus, a total area of 2518 sq.m. has been investigated in the territory of the cemetery and 303 graves have been investigated. More than 1580 grave goods have been found (table 17), more than 90 stray finds collected (table 2), apart from isolated pottery fragments. Documentation of the excavations consists of a written text of 29.5 quires, 660 sketches and drawings, and about 900 photo negatives. All the material is kept in the archives of the library of the Lithuanian Historical Institute, while the finds are at the disposal of the Lithuanian National Museum.

The monograph comprises 3 major chapters. Lists of references and abbreviations are attached.

**Sources.** This chapter presents a short description of every grave excavated at Žviliai cemetery, enumerates all the grave goods, describes their position in respect of the dead. Remains of horse offerings (head of the animal) found in the burials of 13 male adults and 2 boys are characterized (table 14). Descriptions are illustrated by plansketches of less disturbed graves and pictures of burial goods.

**Analysis of sources.** The chapter consists of 2 parts. The first part studies *burial rituals*. The cemetery functioned in the old (1st – to 4th century), middle (5th – to 8th century) and late (9th – to 12th century) periods of the Iron Age. The territory of the cemetery expanded as the deceased were buried in a meridian direction, i.e. from the North to the South. 182 graves of the 3rd–4th century were excavated in the northern part, 22 graves of the 10th – to 12th century in the southern part, and 99 graves of the 7th – 8th centuries in the central part (table 3).

Stone constructions were only found in the northern part of the cemetery. These were stone rings, 300–340 cm long and 220–260 cm wide, oval in form. More intact rings consist of 3–5 levels and are up to 55–60 cm high (fig. 112). Remains of such structures encircled 55 graves. Individual stones or stone groups found in the excavated area show

that more burials with stone rings or attached semi-rings existed (fig. 33, 105, 108). There were graves, on the other hand, with no stone structures. The custom to enclose the burial with a stone ring was popular with local inhabitants only in the Old Iron Age.

Adults and children were buried in pits of different size. Adults were laid in pits 180–240 cm long and 60–90 cm wide, children – 110–160 cm long and 40–60 cm wide. 2 or 3 dead individuals, laid side by side, were buried in wider pits (110–160 cm wide) (fig. 41 : 1; 53 : 1).

Some rites were associated with fire: the bottoms of pits were filled with charred particles, they were also found in the earth which covered the dead, and strewed on top of the burial and stone structures. Charred particles are particularly abundant in that part of the cemetery which contains Old Iron Age burials. 2 fireplaces (hearths) dating to this period, furnished with stones (fig. 120) have remained intact. They have not yielded any artefacts or bones. There is no doubt that fire was burnt in fireplaces during funeral and its “remains” were strewed into the grave.

Wood remains in some graves show that the deceased were buried in coffins. They were sometimes supported with 1–3 stones. In some graves, however, isolated 1–4 stones were placed, which had no connection to the coffin (fig. 64).

Skeletal remains are scarce. Fragments of separate skeletal parts are preserved only at bronze ornaments. The deceased were buried in single burials. Two individuals were found in 12 graves, three – in one grave. Thus, there were 308 dead individuals buried in 303 excavated graves. There was only one cremated burial (grave no. 3). It contained a handful of bones collected from a ritual fire, spread on the bottom of the burial, and a large stone on both sides.

Most of the deceased were buried in the depth of 45–70 cm from the present earth surface. Some burials, however, were just 30 cm or as much as 130–150 cm deep (table 15). The graves were most often dug in the NW–SE direction, and two times less often in the NE–SW direction. Orientation of the burial was established in 207 graves, which contained 212 deceased individuals. 78 individuals had a NW orientation, 52 – NE, 43 – SW, 39 – SE. It has been determined, that 133 burials contained male and 107 – female individuals. The sex of the remaining burials has not been established due to lack of evidence. Not less than 75 individuals were children: 29 girls, 25 boys, the sex of the rest has not been established. Analysis of the burial direction of male and female individuals shows the tendency of sexual juxtaposition.

15 graves (13 adult males and 2 boys) yielded a horse offering (table 14). All these graves are attributed to the 7th–8th century. A horse offering consists of the animal's head, placed on the right, and very seldom on the left side at the head of the dead. In some male burials, the horse head was placed on a special step arranged at the flank of

the pit. Burials of both boys were furnished with the head of a colt instead of a grown-up animal. Alongside some horse heads, there were remains of leather bridle, fragments of iron bit, clasps, and bronze bindings.

A table of consolidated burial data (table 15) is given at the end of the chapter.

The second part of the chapter presents *analysis of the finds*. The buried individuals were furnished with grave goods, made of diverse materials: metal, glass, amber, clay, wood and stone. The grave inventory usually includes several artefacts of different destination. Some burials were furnished with as many as 10–25 grave goods. There were also graves, though, most often disturbed, which only yielded 1–3 artefacts (table 17).

**Tools and weapons.** The cemetery yielded 55 axes: 49 come from graves, while 6 were stray finds. The rite to bury men with axes was widespread with the local inhabitants in the Old Iron Age. The later period has yielded only 2 axes (graves no. 186, 202), dated to the 7th–8th centuries. The remaining artefacts come from graves of the 3rd–4th centuries. The axes are made of iron, socketed, 18–26.5 cm long, with the blade 4.2–8.4 cm wide and the socket measuring 3.7–5 cm in diameter (fig. 136, 137). Burials of boys contained smaller axes (11.7–16 cm long). It was customary to place axes at the head of the burial, together with other tools and weapons. They were also found, however, at the side or legs of the buried individuals (fig. 130).

The cemetery yielded 99 knives: 95 in graves, and 4 stray finds. The knives are made of iron, hafted, straight, about 11–29 cm long, with blades measuring 7–21 cm long and 1.8–4 cm wide (fig. 138). All through the Iron Age local people had adhered to the custom of providing men (both adults and children) with grave goods of the kind. In female burials, just a few of these have been found. On the basis of external features, 6 groups of the aforementioned artefacts are distinguished. Also found were 2 hafted knives-sickles, about 13–15 cm long. One of these was found in male burial no. 80 (second half of the 3rd century (fig. 40 : 3), the other one – in female burial no. 196 (7th–8th century) (fig. 76 : 1).

Knives, same as axes, are much more often found at the head of the buried individuals than at their side or leg (fig. 131).

There were 56 awls found in 55 burials. The ones more intact are 10–14 cm long (fig. 139). Smaller awls (6.5 cm long) were deposited in burials of children (graves no. 182, 224). The exterior of artefacts shows that local inhabitants had been using rather similar awls all through the Iron Age. It was customary to place this grave good solely in female burials. One man (grave no. 35), however, had been buried with an awl among other grave goods. The grave is dated to the 3rd–4th century (fig. 139 : 3).

There were 28 spindles found, all in graves. They are divided into 2 groups. 24 samples have the shape of a low cylinder, 3.5–6.6 cm in diameter, 1.3–1.8 cm high, made of stone. Some spindles are decorated with pits, lines, notches (fig. 140). 4 spindles have the shape of a double transected cone, about 3.8–4.5 cm in diameter and 1.8–2.6 cm high, made of either stone or clay. The ornament consists of in-

cised strokes and a row of nail imprints. All through the Iron Age the custom to place a spindle to solely female burials was followed. Only two graves (No. 8, 87) yielded 2 spindles each. Burials of girls yielded small spindles up to 3.2 cm in diameter, placed together with childish awls.

Three male burials each yielded a whetstone. One more sample was a stray find. These are oblong stone artefacts of an irregular shape, about 5–12.5 cm long (fig. 141). They are all dated to the 3rd–4th century. A stone firesteel, found in male burial no. 58 (fig. 142 : 3) is also attributed to the same period.

1 fishhook made of iron wire was found (grave no. 85). It is about 4 cm long (fig. 143 : 3), dated to the 4th century.

Four men were furnished with tweezers. 3 of these, made of bronze, come from the 7th–8th century, 1, an iron one, – from the 3rd–4th century. They are 5.7–7.8 cm long (fig. 144).

97 socketed iron spearheads were found: 88 in graves, 9 – by chance. They are divided into 6 groups: 1) spearheads with a rhomboid shaped blade (3rd–4th century); 2) lanceolate (3rd–8th century); 3) with a scalloped-edge blade (4th century); 4) with a lancet form blade (7th–8th century); 5) with a willow leaf shaped blade (4th–12th century); 6) with a narrow prolonged triangular blade (11th century). The spearheads vary a lot in terms of size. They are from 11 cm to 40 cm long, while the blade is from 2 to 6 cm wide (fig. 146–148). Smaller spearheads are more characteristic of boys. The usual place of spearheads in a grave is at the head of the buried individual, on the right or left side. Most often, 1 spearhead was deposited, in rare cases – 2. There was only one man found furnished with 3 spears (fig. 11:1).

9 swords were found: 8 – in graves, 1 – by chance. All of them were hafted swords with two kinds of blades. 8 swords are single edged, with broad ends, 42.5–52 cm long with a blade 32–41.5 cm long, the broadest part of which is up to 4.5–8 cm wide (fig. 67 : 9). Swords were placed in the grave (sometimes with a wooden scabbard bound in metal and a belt) on the left side of the dead, at his head, extended arm, or in parallel to spear hafts (fig. 129). Swords of this type are attributed to the 7th–8th centuries. The stray find was a double-edged sword, 93 cm long. Its gradually tapering blade, 4.65 cm in width, has an longitudinal groove in the middle (fig. 149 : 3). It has analogues in the collection of 9th – to 12th century swords found in Lithuania.

The cemetery yielded a piece of just one shield – an iron umbo. This artefact is 18.5 cm in diameter, with a cylindrical elevation about 11 cm in diameter, and a termination of the shape of a hemisphere-cone, about 6 cm high (fig. 150). It was found in the grave of a rider, dated to the 4th century.

**Clothing elements and ornaments.** Only one woman was buried with a cap (grave no. 4A). It was woven of flax yarn and bronze links, adorned in the front with pendants of the shape of maple seed. The cap is about 17 cm high (fig. 152), dated to the 10th–11th century.

29 deceased individuals were buried with handbands, which fall into 5 types: 1) cloth band with bronze spirals attached in the front (3rd to 4th century); 2) a strip twisted

of yarn with a bronze spiral at the back of the head (4th to 8th centuries, fig. 154 : 1–3; 155–157); 3) headbands consisting of bronze spirals separated by small plates (4th century, fig. 159); 4) cloth band with 6 parallel lines of bronze staples-cones fastened in front (7th to 8th century, fig. 154 : 5); 5) cloth band, both sides of which are furnished with a row of small chains (7th–8th centuries, fig. 154 : 6).

Headbands of types 1–3 are attributed to female grave goods, while types 4 and 5 belong to male grave goods.

53 neck-rings were found in the cemetery: 45 – in graves, 8 – by chance. They are divided into 9 types: 1) neck-rings with cone-shaped ends (3rd century, fig. 163); 2) with a box-shaped clasp (3rd century, fig. 164); 3) with a spoon-shaped clasp (4th century, fig. 98 : 2); 4) necklaces with a key-shaped hole in clasp plate (4th century, fig. 165 : 2, 3; 166); 5) neck-rings with a round plate-loop and a hook clasp (4th century, fig. 165 : 1); 6) neck-rings with coiled wire sides and ends, with a loop-and-hook clasp (3rd–4th century, fig. 167); 7) neck-rings with tapered ends, with a loop-and-hook clasp (7th–8th century, fig. 72 : 8); 8) neck-rings with overlapping ends (4th century, fig. 168); 9) plaited neck-rings with multangular knob-shaped ends (10th–to 12th century, fig. 169). In the Old Iron Age neck-rings were used by local inhabitants to adorn women, and very seldom – men. In the Middle and Late Iron Ages the buried individuals (both female and male) were seldom buried with neck-rings.

Beads and necklaces. The cemetery yielded 409 beads: 227 were made of glass and enamel, 180 – of amber, 1 – of clay, 1 – of bronze. The majority of glass, enamel and amber beads (274 specimens) of different size and colour, combined with bronze spirals, comprised necklaces which also included a crescent-shaped openwork pendant of bronze or several silver, bucket-shaped pendants. Such ornaments were deposited with 37 individuals of both sexes. The remaining amber, glass, enamel and 1 clay bead (132 specimens) should be treated as amulets, 1 to 3 of which had been attached to brooches or pins (fig. 174). 88 individuals of both sexes were buried with amulets. Merely 3 beads were stray finds. Amber beads were found in graves dating to the 3rd–4th centuries, as well as graves from the 7th–8th and 10th–12th centuries, while glass, enamel and clay beads come exclusively from graves of the 3rd–4th centuries. The chronology of the accidentally found bronze bead is unclear. Special reference should be made to an original necklace consisting of 9 figured, amber beads (fig. 176). It was a boy's grave good (4th century).

The cemetery yielded 36 necklaces consisting of bronze spirals and pendants. They are divided into 8 types: 1) necklaces threaded of bronze spirals alone (3rd–4th century); 2) necklaces of silver, bucket-shaped pendants (3rd–4th century, fig. 98 : 1); 3) necklaces of spirals and bronze, crescent-shaped pendants (3rd–4th century, fig. 188 : 2–4); 4) necklaces of bronze, stick-shaped pendants (4th century, fig. 32 : 2); 5) necklaces of spirals and bronze, chain-shaped pendants (7th–8th century, fig. 75 : 5); 6) necklaces of spirals and bronze pendants-joints (7th–8th century, fig. 180 : 2, 3); 7) necklaces of spirals and bronze, maple seed-shaped pendants (7th–8th century, fig. 74 : 1–5); 8) necklaces of spirals and bronze, openwork, trefoil pendants (7th–8th

century, fig. 180 : 1). All the above described ornaments represent grave goods of women and children (both girls and boys).

The cemetery yielded 55 brooches. They decorated 47 male individuals. Brooches fall into 4 major groups: round, crossbow, cruciform and penannular. The only one round rosette-shape brooch, 5.7 cm in diameter, was found in the burial of a child, dated to the second half of the 3rd century (fig. 181 : 2). The second group includes 47 crossbow brooches. The most numerous are brooches decorated with ringlets (fig. 45 : 3; 100 : 4), found in 3rd–4th century graves. Burials of the 4th century yielded crossbow brooches with a bent foot (fig. 183 : 1). A rare find presents crossbow brooches with a triangular foot, 2 of which were found in burials of the end of the 4th century (fig. 52 : 2). The only one crossbow brooch with a star-shaped foot is also dated to the end of the 4th century (fig. 183 : 2). 3 crossbow brooches with a moulded clasp and a short foot (fig. 96 : 4, 6) come from the same period. Also from the same 8th century comes a crossbow brooch with flaring ends (fig. 185 : 3). Crossbow brooches with poppyseed-shaped ends were also found in graves of the 8th and 10th centuries (fig. 186 : 1, 3). The three cruciform brooches, attributed to group 3, were found in 7th–8th century graves (fig. 186 : 2). The fourth group contains 4 penannular brooches (fig. 187). They include specimens with cylindrical, quadrangular and poppyseed-shaped ends. These are ornaments of the 10th – to 12th centuries.

Pins represent the most numerous group of metal finds. 264 pins were found at the cemetery: 249 in graves and 15 – accidentally. They fall into 6 types: 1) with a barrel-shaped head (3rd–4th century, fig. 188 : 1); 2) with a ring head (3rd century, fig. 8 : 1, 2; 8th–10th centuries, fig. 190 : 5); 3) crook-like (3rd–12th centuries, fig. 31 : 1; 7th–12th centuries, fig. 190 : 1, 2); 4) cruciform (4th century, fig. 193; 7th–8th century, fig. 194, 196; 10th–11th century, fig. 6); 5) with a flask-shaped head (7th–8th centuries, fig. 190 : 3, 4); 6) awl-shaped (4th century, fig. 197 : 1). The custom to fasten men's clothes with 1 iron crook-like pin existed through the whole Iron Age. Female burials were furnished with 2 bronze pins of different types, or 2 iron crook-like pins. In both cases they were often coupled by a bronze or iron chain. These grave goods were almost always placed beside deceased female or on her shoulder, chest, or waist.

There were 184 bracelets found at the cemetery: 173 in burials, and 11 – accidentally. They fall into 6 groups: 1) sash-like, half round or triangular in cross-section (3rd–4th century, fig. 198); 2) with thickening terminals (end of the 4th century, fig. 45 : 1); 3) spiral (3rd–4th century, fig. 203 : 1; 7th–8th century, fig. 202 : 5, 6); 4) armbands (7th–8th century, fig. 77 : 5, 6); 5) warriors' (8th century, fig. 185 : 1); 6) with animal terminals (10th–12th century, fig. 204). Local inhabitants adhered to the habit of decorating women and children (both girls and boys) with bracelets much more often than men. Graves of the 3rd–4th century contained even several bracelets each. Men and boys usually had a bracelet on one arm, and very seldom on both. Not a single man buried in the 10th – to 12th century, though, was furnished with a bracelet.

174 rings were found: 164 in burials, 10 – accidentally. They fall into 2 types. The majority comprises spiral rings (fig. 202 : 1–4). They were used to adorn the deceased all through the 3 periods of the Iron Age. Most often, the buried individuals were furnished with 1–2 rings, less frequently – 3–4. Only 22 rings were sash-like. Some of them are shut, i.e. have adjoined ends (fig. 74 : 9, 10). They were widespread both in the 3rd–4th centuries and 7th–8th centuries. Both men and women usually had one ring on each hand.

78 male individuals had been buried with belts. This is witnessed by bronze or iron buckles, and fragments of leather bands with bronze bindings found in burials. Besides, 7 more buckles were stray finds. The majority of buckles are oval in form (3rd–4th century, fig. 22 : 1). Half less buckles were D shaped (3rd–4th century, fig. 205 : 1, 4, 5) and with quadrangular frames (7th–8th centuries, fig. 69 : 9). There was one specimen of a wheel-shaped buckle (7th–8th century, fig. 205 : 3). The surface of some belts is mounted with conical, bronze bindings. A fragment of an exceptionally exquisite belt, 2.5 cm wide, was found in a rider's grave no. 47 (4th century, fig. 207). Details of the bindings were bronze and silver. There was a habit to place a folded or bent belt (sometimes with a knife or sword attached to it) at the head of the buried individuals or, less frequently, on the chest, at the shoulder or the side (fig. 30, 123).

Other clothing elements worth mentioning include remains of an apron, or, to be more precise, a bronze detail which decorated the lower edge of an apron (grave no. 4A). It is assembled of spirals, arranged in 5 rows, and separating plates. The find is dated to the 10th–11th century.

*Articles of horsemen and riding gear.* 13 iron and bronze spurs were found: 11 – in graves and 2 stray finds. They are very different. Some of the spurs are sash-like, somewhat broadened at the spike (4th century, fig. 210 : 7, 8). The upper part of the broadened detail is sometimes prolonged, thinned and bent like a hook (4th century, fig. 210 : 3). There are spurs with bent ends (7th–8th century, fig. 210 : 1) and round plates at the ends (7th–8th centuries, fig. 210 : 2). A different kind comprises spurs with a bow half-round in cross-section, tapered ends, terminating in rhomboid plates. The bow of these artefacts has a crossbar and a profiled spike in the centre (4th century, fig. 211). The 2 accidentally found spurs have oval plates with 2 perforations at the ends (10th–12th century, fig. 210 : 4). Graves usually contain 1 spur, sometimes – 2. Close to some of them were fragments of leather belts with remains of bronze bindings and buckles (4th century, fig. 212).

2 stirrups were found, both accidentally. They are oval in shape, with a straight foot-bar. The top of the bow has a quadrangular hole to thread a belt. Stirrups of this type are attributed to the 11th–13th centuries (fig. 213).

Finds of bridles and their parts (riding bits, buckles, mountings) come from 22 burials. One burial (no. 47) yielded 2 bridles. More intact bridles include specimens bound with broze cones, and bronze cross-like bindings, decorated with a crescent shaped pendant (4th century, fig. 214). Other bridles are mounted with bronze, quadrangular, transverse bindings (7th–8th century, fig. 80 : 4, 5). 14 riding bits with chains at the ends were found. They were

all made of iron. There was only one bit with bronze chains (4th century, fig. 216). Riding bits were also found in burials of the 3rd–4th centuries, 7th–8th, and 10th – to 12th centuries (fig. 215).

Bindings of 17 drinking horns were found. Among them was a binding of the orifice (4th century, fig. 221 : 1, 2; 7th–8th centuries, fig. 220 : 4, 5). There was only one beaker-shaped metal mouthpiece found which had the shape of a glass (4th century, fig. 221 : 4). It was customary to place one drinking horn at the head of the buried individual. These grave goods are usually found in male burials, though there were some found in female burials attributed to the 7th–8th centuries.

6 burials of men, women and children yielded a wooden box each (3rd–4th century, fig. 221 : 1), sometimes decorated with bronze bindings. The boxes contained amber beads-amulets, rings, and sometimes a string of beads, and an awl.

144 pottery fragments were collected: 90 – from burials, the remaining as stray finds. Besides, 2 cups were found, approximately 8.5 cm high (4th century, fig. 223, 224). Pottery fragments were sherds of hand-modelled pots with a coarse surface (3rd–4th century, fig. 197 : 4). One sherd with a smooth surface, dated to the 7th–8th century, was found in grave no. 243. Graves most often contain 1–3 sherds, less frequently – 4, 5. They were found placed beside the buried individuals and also in earth piles. Both cups were placed at the head of the burial. Pottery fragments were found in graves of women, men, and children.

Other noteworthy finds include a stray find of posthumous sesterce of Faustina II (died in 175), and 2 flint flakes, found in the burials of a man and a boy.

The chapter is concluded with a composite table of burial inventory (table 17).

*Chronology of the cemetery.* Concrete archaeological evidence lead to the conclusion that the very earliest burials date to the 3rd century. They are concentrated in the northern part of the cemetery, i.e. trenches no. 11–13, 20, 21, 23–25, 28, 29, 36 (fig. 103). Burials investigated to the northeast and south of above graves (trenches no. 14–19, 22, 26, 27, 30–35, 37–48, 66–82), are dated to the turn of the 3rd–4th centuries and the 4th century. Burials located in the opposite, i.e. the southern part of the cemetery, are dated to the 10th–to 12th century. Burials found in the central part of the excavated area are attributed to the 7th–8th centuries (fig. 227). Thus, results of the excavations carried out by “Žemaitija” expedition in 1983–1989 show, that the Žviliai cemetery had been functioning for long centuries. Until then, archaeological literature had maintained that the Žviliai cemetery was an archaeological site of the 9th–to 12th century.

Burial topography allowed to adjust the chronology of some artefacts, which had been based until now merely on the typological-comparative method. This, for instance, applies to neck-rings with overlapping ends, round in cross-section (fig. 168), neck-rings of some types with a loop-and-hook clasp, crossbow brooches with a star-shaped (fig. 183 : 2) and a triangular foot (fig. 59 : 2), some cross-bow brooches decorated with ringlets (fig. 100 : 4),

headbands made of bronze spirals and transverse plates (fig. 159), bracelets with thickened terminals (fig. 45 : 1), spearheads with a scalloped-edged blade (fig. 146 : 3–7; 148 : 5, 6), which were found at Žviliai burials, dating to the 4th century, end of the 4th century. It has been previously assumed that the above mentioned artefacts started to spread in Lithuania later, i.e. from the 5th century. There has been an established opinion based on the typological-comparative method in archaeological literature that massive warrior's bracelets (fig. 185 : 1) and cruciform brooches (fig. 186 : 2) were widespread in Lithuania in the late Iron Age (9th–to 12th century). At Žviliai cemetery, these ornaments were found in burials dating to the 7th–8th centuries. Burial topography, thus, has allowed to particularize the chronology of brooches and bracelets of the above mentioned type.

*Ethnical interpretation of the archaeological material.*

Regarding the legacy of Western Balts. It has been established, that the 3rd–4th century cemetery with stone rings, excavated at Žviliai, belongs to archaeological sites of the same category, known from the Baltic coastline, the Kretinga and Klaipėda areas. The archaeological culture represented by the above mentioned cemeteries is said to have been widespread at the Lithuanian coastline as well as Samogitia, or, to be more precise, the Jūra river basin. In this area, “Žemaitija” expedition has already registered 14 cemeteries with stone rings (fig. 228). Some of them have been excavated already. It turned out that the earliest burials date back to the 3rd century. New evidence led to the conclusion that in the beginning of the Iron Age, in the 1st–2nd centuries, inhabitants of the Jūra river basin practised burial in barrows (Vienragiai, Paragaudis, Šarkai, Žasinas, fig. 231), while starting with the 3rd century, the dead were buried in flat burial grounds with stone rings. One of these, as a matter of fact, is represented by Žviliai cemetery of the 3rd–4th centuries. An analogous shift of burial monuments has been established at the Lithuanian seacoast, where the custom of inhumation burials got established in the 2nd century, and the rite of depositing the deceased in barrows vanished, as they were succeeded by flat burial grounds with stone rings. Consequently, analogous burial sites, widespread in the Old Iron Age both in the Jūra river basin (Samogitia) and on both sides of the Minija (Lithuanian seacoast), pertain to same cultural area. There is no doubt that the area of cemeteries with stone rings at the Lithuanian seacoast belongs to the West Baltic Culture. It developed from the West Baltic Barrow Culture of an earlier period. The conclusion is therefore made that analogous 1st–to 4th century burial sites widespread in Samogitia, namely the Jūra river basin, belong to the legacy of Western Balts as well. The 3rd–4th century burials with stone rings found by “Žemaitija” expedition at Žviliai, were, thus, left by Western Balts. This challenges the opinion dominating in archaeological literature that in Samogitia, hence also in the Jūra river basin, only barrow burials were practised in the 1st–to 4th century, and that the 1st–4th century burial sites preserved in this region (it is not quite clear why they are called barrows, fig. 229) represent the legacy of Samogitian ancestors (prosamogitians). True, these statements were

published on the basis of archaeological evidence available before the year 1977. Nothing has much changed since then, however, as the above notion, altered by different modifications and supplemented by migration ideas, is still repeated today. It is quite natural that new archaeological discoveries at the Jūra river basin make researchers correct the old assertions or create new hypotheses on ethnical dependency of the 1st–to 4th century burial sites. The present archaeological data allow to assert that the 3rd–4th century burials with stone rings, excavated at Žviliai, represent a Western Baltic cultural site.

Regarding the legacy of Eastern Balts. Analysis of the 7th–8th century archaeological material shows that local inhabitants of the time were rather remote from the world of Western Balts. This is proved by different aspects of the material culture, traditions and a world outlook characteristic of another cultural area. In the 5th – to the 7th century, this area in Samogitia embraced a territory from the Jūra and Varduva rivers in the west, and up to the Dubysa and Susva rivers in the east. Archaeologists have localized Samogitians in this cultural area, which means that the 7th–8th and 10th–12th century burials excavated at Žviliai belong to their legacy as well. Samogitians belong to the community of Eastern Balts. A unique situation emerges: 3rd–4th century burials of western Balts concentrate at one side of the Žviliai cemetery, and 7th–8th, as well as 10th–12th century burials of eastern Balts are found on the other side. The question is, when and how the Jūra basin, a land of western Balts, entered the union of eastern Balts and Samogitians which was formed in approximately the 5th century. The answer might be found in the archaeological evidence of the 5th–6th century, as it belongs to the oldest layer of Samogitian culture. It is best represented by the Pagrybys cemetery, located at the Jūra basin and excavated by the “Žemaitija” expedition in 1980–1982. Analysis of its burial patterns and finds allowed to establish that the cultural legacy of an earlier, i.e. the PreSamogitian period, is distinct in the oldest layer of Samogitian culture, i.e. the 5th–6th centuries. This legacy is demonstrated by archaeological material, obtained at excavations of the west Baltic cemeteries with stone rings at the Jūra river basin (Samogitia) and on both sides of the Minija (Lithuanian seacoast). A continuous relation between the earlier and the older cultures allowed to estimate the outcomes of the interaction between traditions and novelties, and ascertain that the territory had been inherited from generation to generation. An opinion was reached that the western Baltic communities, dwelling at the Jūra basin, could have been incorporated into the Samogitian Union at approximately the 5th century by military force, coming from eastern neighbours who had been living on both sides of the Nevėžis river, lowlands of Central Lithuania, since old times.

As tribal unions were forming, territories inhabited by genetically different ethnical groups fell into the domain of stronger tribes in the result of military conflicts. With a mixture of kinsmen and tribes, territorial administrative-political tribal units were established. The Samogitian union, formation of which started in the middle of the 1st millennium, represents such a unit, encompassing the ethnical

groups of western and eastern Balts. Its hegemon were the eastern Balts, prevailing in the Nevėžis river basin. Assimilation of the inhabitants of the Jūra river basin was apparently a long process. It was, nevertheless, an irretrievable process, as even the 7th–8th century finds from Žviliai alone testify the digression of inhabitants of the said area from the western Balts.

*Archaeological material on the relationship between the living and the dead.* First of all, the chapter discusses the issue of localization of the world of the dead. A conclusion is reached that the after-death world could have been localized in the imagination of the Iron Age farmers to a space beyond the world familiar to the living, to the “paraworld” spheres, so to say. Data are presented, which lead to an assumption that water could have been conceived as a separating line between the world of the living and the abode of the dead.

Analysis of the burial patterns shows controversy characteristic of the entirety of rituals. Some rituals clearly attest the caring of the living for the dead, and their endeavours to retain good relations with them. Other rituals show that the living wished to isolate the dead, to guarantee that they will not come back, and to drive away unwanted consequences of death from the community. Most evidence of this ambivalent disposition of the living towards the dead has been provided by studies of burial equipment and analysis of finds from graves. Especially noteworthy in this respect are 3rd–4th century graves with multi-layer stone rings and attached semi-rings (fig. 33, 105, 108). It is highly probable that the magic circle, the ring, symbolizes the sacred, impenetrable border, which bars the way for return, and which forces the dead to overcome all the obstacles and dangers in the journey to the after-death world. In these stone rings, individual stones or even certain chains were found cast above the dead. This “cover” is most probably yet another indication of the efforts of the living to ensure the irrevocability of the dead. Though the custom of encircling the dead with a blind wall gradually declined, local inhabitants continued to use stones for grave constructions. Even in the 10th–to 12th century burials, for instance, individual stones of different sizes were found on both sides or at the head of the buried individual. Two big stones were placed in a cremation burial as well (grave no. 3). A feasible supposition can be made that individual stones represent a reminiscence of the extinct custom to encircle a burial with a stone ring.

Much attention was paid to the magic of fire. It is ascertained that during funeral farmers’ community treated fire rather like a demolishing, cleansing ritual power, than a replacement of solar energy. The ritual power had to destroy all the spiritual and material residue which could have brought ill fortune to the living, it was also supposed to eliminate any slightest possibility for return of the dead. In the territory of the cemetery, 3 hearths, circled by stones, were found. They contained no artefacts or bones (fig. 120). The author believes that fire was burnt in hearths during a funeral, and cinders were shed into the grave pit, on the

coffin, and stone constructions. Cinders were also shed when the deceased was covered with earth. They were also poured on top of the grave.

In burial rituals, thus, natural elements – water, stone, and fire – symbolize the efforts of the Iron Age dweller to fully and finally border the dead from the world of the living. Studies of the burial inventory, though, show another picture. They show that the living were, nevertheless, concerned about the life of the dead in the other world, and wanted to alleviate his after-death journey, as it was, furthermore, believed to be full of impediments and dangers. This concern for the dead is first of all proved by the fact that they were seen off to the other world supplied with various things. Furthermore, burial equipment is full of various amulets. 3rd–4th century burials contained 1–2 (less frequently 3) beads-amulets of coloured glass, enamel and amber. They were nearly always found attached to brooches or pins. The Roman coin (posthumous Faustina II sesterce), accidentally found at the cemetery, should be treated as a grave good endowed with magic powers. Burials of the 7th–8th and 10th–12th centuries have yielded only amber amulets. It is highly probably that a piece of flint, associated with the magic of fire, represents magic realia in the after-death journey as well. Also noteworthy are wooden rods pierced into 7th–8th century headbands. Apart from a practical function, they might have had a magic task, as examination of some of them revealed that they were made of juniper. In the Baltic Mythology, the juniper, an evergreen tree, is covered with an halo of sacredness. Lithuanian agrarian and calendar rites are full of rituals associated with juniper. The objective of these rituals was to avert ill fortune, to wish vitality, rebirth and prosperity.

The position of some grave goods in burials is also symbolic. For instance, a belt, which is a very important detail of men’s apparel, is stretch out at the side of the warrior. This situation of the belt, a band, could possibly symbolize a “thread”, a bridge, a road to the after-death world, a joint between the world of the living and the dead. The concern of the living for the dead is especially picturesquely revealed by horse offerings (head of the animal) in burials of men and boys (fig. 68, 129). The horse was believed to have been a mediator between the world of the living and the dead, the horse made the last journey easier, the horse offering has a magic power.

What are the possible reasons which made the living care for the dead and maintain good relations with them, though, as mentioned above, the living sought to ensure the irretrievability of the dead? The main reason is the notions and beliefs, typical of the mentality of farmers, that the welfare of those remaining on earth depends on the mercy of the dead. The cult of ancestors, as a matter of fact, was one of the most important forms of religion. Farmers’ tribes used various rituals and prayers to win over the beneficent ancestors, as they believed that ancestors can influence the mysterious and powerful forces which predestine order on the earth and the fate of men.

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- Fig. 165. Neck-rings with a flat loop-and-hook clasp: 1 – with a round hook from grave No. 67; 2, 3 – with a key-shaped hole in clasp plate from graves No. 29, 47.
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- Fig. 177. Pendant-bead necklace from boy's grave No. 261.
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- Fig. 203. Girl's ornaments from grave No. 46: 1 – bracelet; 2, 3 – rings; 4, 5 – pins.
- Fig. 204. Bracelets with zoomorphic terminals from grave No. 4
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- Fig. 207. Belts and their parts: 1 – grave No. 58; 2, 3 – grave No. 56; 4 – grave No. 47.
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- Fig. 211. Spurs from male grave No. 47.
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Payžnis; 13 – Pajūralis; 14 – Pakalniškiai; 15 – Šarkai (investigated); 16 – Šiaudaliai; 17 – Žviliai (investigated) – all in Šilalė district.

Fig. 229. Barrow culture area in Lithuania in the 1st–4th century (according to A. Tautavičius).

Fig. 230. Brushed Culture area in Lithuania in the first half of the 1st millennium A. D. (according to E. Grigalavičienė).

Fig. 231. Remains of barrow with stone constructions uncovered during the “Žemaitija” expedition in 1976 (Žašinas, Šilalė district).

Fig. 232. Baltic tribes in the 18th century (according to M. Gimbutienė).

Fig. 233. Bindings of drinking horns: 1 – Plinkaigalis, Kėdainiai district (5th–6th century); 2 – Rubokai, Šilutė district (5th–6th century).

*Translated from Lithuanian by Dalia Merkevičienė*