

Preface

In the 25th issue (2024) of the annual scientific journal of the Department of Archaeology of Vilnius University, *Archaeologia Litwana*, we present the latest archaeological research and a chronicle of the Department's scientific activities. The Department of Archaeology of Vilnius University has Bachelor's and Master's programs in archaeology, which can be continued in doctoral studies. Archaeologists research archaeological monuments of various periods ranging from the Stone Age to historical times, therefore, scientists working in various archaeological periods teach at the Department; also, the Department features research centers for paleobotany and paleozoology. The Department cooperates with researchers and scientists representing the Institute of Lithuanian History, the National Museum of Lithuania, the Directorate of The State Kernavė Cultural Reserve and other important Lithuanian archaeological institutions, and maintains contacts with researchers from other countries.

The majority of archaeological research conducted in Lithuania settles in reports, whereas archaeological findings are stored in museums. Currently, natural science research and radiocarbon method dating are already mandatory to carry out in archaeological research (although previously they were only used in exceptional cases). Archaeology has become an interdisciplinary science. The sheer volume of archaeological research conducted using non-destructive research methods has also been increasing. By applying new interdisciplinary research opportunities, a new review and evaluation of natural science research, archaeological museum collections and their findings, and previous research materials often provide new and sometimes even unexpected or outright impressive results.

The scientific articles presented in the 25th issue of *Archaeologia Litwana* can be divided into several groups: monument protection and theoretical articles, newly conducted analysis and evaluation of materials from previous archaeological research, methodology and results of non-destructive archaeological research.

J. Poškienė's article presents contemporary trends in the protection of archaeological heritage and provides insights into the attitudes of local communities towards archaeological heritage in Lithuania. D. Barusevičius, a doctoral student in philosophy at Vilnius University, based on theoretical constructs and Near Eastern archaeological material, presents an interesting and intriguing hypothesis on explaining the origins of the phenomenon of counting.

As already mentioned, some of the articles are dedicated to a new evaluation of the archaeological material of previous research by using interdisciplinary research. We believe that the excellent analytical – and even detective – work carried out by M. Daubaras, J. Kozakaitė, D. Brazaitis, D. H. Pauža and V. Kriaučiūnienė in finding and presenting, and, most importantly, accurately dating and localizing the collection of skulls accumulated by Jurgis Žilinskas (1885–1957), which was previously considered lost, is of particular importance for the development of the inhabitation of Lithuania and the entire surrounding region. Perhaps the most important discovery of this study is the accurately dated three early Mesolithic skulls. This article also provides historical, archaeological, and anthropological information, a catalog of registered skulls, supplemented the latest AMS ¹⁴C dates.

The article by L. Kurila and G. Piličiauskienė presents a detailed scientific study which, based on the analysis of strontium stable isotopes, assesses the mobility and possible immigration of Lithuanian people and horses in the 3rd–8th centuries.

The territory of the Kalnų (Hill) Park is of particular importance for the medieval history of Vilnius, where the wooden Kreivoji (Crooked) Castle stood until 1390, and the area is also shrouded in legends. Nowadays, it

is the territory of the Directorate of Vilnius Castles State Cultural Reserve. The change in the relief of this place, the assessment and dating of the burials found here are researched in the article *Burials in the Territory of Vilnius Kalnų (Hill) Park* by D. Kontrimas.

Medieval Vilnius was multi-ethnic and multi-confessional. In the Western part of the current Vilnius Old Town, in the late 14th century, a Catholic part, called the German City, was established. At that time, a Franciscan church and a monastery were also built there. The article *The Earliest Development of Vilnius Franciscan Church and Monastery Area* by I. Kaplūnaitė, R. Jonaitis, V. Indrulėnaitė-Šimanauskienė and V. Veževičienė discusses not only previous archaeological research on this site, but also provides analysis of radiocarbon, archaeobotanical, and architectural research.

Non-interventional archaeological research, its methodology, and the importance of such work are well revealed in the articles of our colleagues from Poland and Ukraine, H. Binnebesel, M. Sudoł-Procyk, V. Vietrov, and K. M. Bondar.

We hope that this issue of *Archaeologia Lituana* 25 will be a fascinating read and an extensively cited source. Therefore, we are eagerly waiting for new articles of our colleagues for the next annual issue.

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