
Decorated Late Palaeolithic spindle shaped dagger from Šarnelė, western Lithuania: archaeological and use-wear analysis

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Résumé

Šarnelė settlement is situated on the shore of now drained Ertenis Lake, and on the left bank of here now flowing river Varduva. First Stone Age bone and antler chance finds from Šarnelė got to the museum in 1940, when school teacher Brunza took them to Telšiai. In 1965 this collection was supplemented by the ethnographer K. Bružas. Later, during the Ertenis Lake and Varduva river reclamation works, antler and bone findings collection was supplemented one more time. Only in 1973 this settlement was excavated by the archaeologist for the first time. Later, in 1981 and 1982 settlement was excavated again. During two excavations seasons artefacts characteristic to the Neolithic were found: pottery, flint tools, amber, bone and antler tools. So far it was accepted that this site should be regarded as the Late Neolithic monument. This conclusion was supported by pottery, and bone and antler artefacts technological features. In 2016 detail attention was given to the chance antler and bone findings from Šarnelė, which got to the Žemaičiai „Alka” museum in the middle of 20th century. After radiocarbon dating of ornamented bone dagger it was clear that this artefact should be dated to the end of Late Palaeolithic – 10 500 cal BC. Currently it is one of the earliest dates of this kind of tools in the eastern Baltic and Samogitian highland. The dagger is made from splitted tubular bone, its spindle is ornamented with crossing lines, which forms small triangles. This geometric ornament is characteristic to the Late Palaeolithic. Use-wear analysis of this tool shows that it was used quite intensive. At present there are no exact analogies found of this kind of artefact in the eastern Baltic. Radiocarbon dating enables us to think that first settlers could have dwelled here in the Younger Dryas period. This demonstrates that climate conditions and environment was favourable for settling by the Ertenis Lake and in Samogitian highland at the end of Late Palaeolithic.

Mots-Clés: Bone tools, Late Palaeolithic, Use wear analysis, radiocarbon dating, western Lithuania

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