

“Upside down” – a strange way of wearing pendants

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This paper examines the phenomenon of “inverted” pendants found in archaeological sites in the Baltic region, particularly from the Stone Age. These anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pendants – depicting human heads, birds, snakes, and elks – were often worn in a reversed orientation, or in other words “upside down”, as indicated by the location of the drilled holes.

It is suggested that contemporary perceptions of “upside-down” imagery may be influenced by cultural biases, including linguistic and symbolic associations with misfortune, inversion, and disaster. On the contrary, archaeological evidence suggests that upside-down pendants were not necessarily seen as anomalies but may have had symbolic, ritual, or practical significance.

Similar cases are found in ethnographic contexts, including the shamanic practices of indigenous North American tribes, where amulets and spirit images were sometimes worn in unconventional ways. This paper considers whether the inverted amulet was worn out of necessity (e.g. due to broken perforations) or whether it was a conscious choice with a deeper meaning.

Keywords: Baltic region, Stone Age, pendants, “upside-down”.

Introduction

I was drawn to the “problem” of the “upside-down” pendants while researching souvenirs related to Stone Age “art objects” depicting humans or animals. I found a souvenir based on a Sungir Palaeolithic pendant on the Internet, possibly depicting a horse [Fig. 1]. Another bronze ornament based on a curved antler staff with an elk head from the Neolithic settlement of Šventoji is found in the shop of the National Museum of Lithuania [Fig. 2]. I will not discuss the aesthetic value of these souvenirs, but I would like to draw attention to the way they are worn on the chest or another part of the body. This seems normal and unremarkable to us, as we are used to seeing images worn in this way. However, the truth is that the originals on which the souvenirs were based were worn differently.

The flat figurine from Sungir must have been worn “upside down”, according to the position of the drilled hole [Fig. 3], as was the staff with the elk’s head from the Šventoji settlement [Fig. 4]. However, for some reason, the souvenir makers did not find this acceptable. It is possible that they took their information from archaeological literature, which always depicts the objects in question in a “normal” way, without paying attention to the location of the holes drilled for hanging [Fig. 5].

This is today’s relationship to upside-down objects, perhaps as a result of language. At least in my native Lithuanian, the expression “upside down” means the same as in English. Here is what Collins Dictionary states: *Definition of “turn sth inside out/turn sth upside down” If something such as a system or way of life is turned inside out or upside down, it is changed completely, making people confused or upset. He felt too shocked to move. His world had been turned upside down.*¹

Another online dictionary explains: *The upside-down face emoji, sometimes known as the upside-down smiley face, has several meanings depending on the context and personality of the user. It can indicate silliness, sarcasm, irony, passive aggression, or frustrated resignation* [Fig. 6].²

1 Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, s.v. “turn sth inside out/turn sth upside down,” HarperCollins Publishers, accessed October 25, 2024, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/turn-something-inside-out>

2 Dictionary.com, s.v. “Upside-Down Face emoji,” accessed October 25, 2024, <https://www.dictionary.com/e/emoji/upside-down-face-emoji/>.



1. Souvenir based on the Sungir zoomorphic pendant. Pinterest

Suvenyras pagamintas pagal Sungiro zoomorfinio kabučio pavyzdį



2. The souvenir is based on an antler staff with an elk's head from the Šventoji 3 site

Suvenyras pagamintas pagal rago lazda su briedės galvute iš Šventosios 3-iosios radimvietės



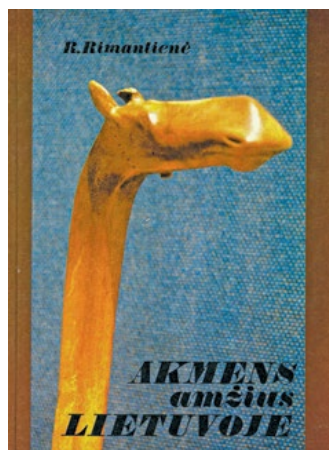
3. Ivory animal pendant 28,000 years BP. Sungir

Zoomorfinis kaulinis kabutis 28 000 metų senumo, rastas Sungire, Rusijoje



4. Staff made from antler with an elk's head from the Šventoji 3 site. National Museum of Lithuania

Rago lazda su briedės galvute. Šventosios 3-ioji radimvietė



5. Rimutė Rimantienė's monograph *Stone Age in Lithuania*, 1996, cover. Designer: Virginija Rimantienė

Rimutės Rimantienės monografijos „Akmens amžius Lietuvoje“, 1996, viršelis. Dailininkė Virginija Rimantienė

Traditionally, the meaning of an inverted American flag has always been that the person who raised it is in great danger or distress, whether to life or property. Finally, an inverted American flag is usually considered a sign of terrible misfortune [Fig. 7]. The U.S. flag code states: “The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.”³ The same interpretation seems to apply to other flags.

The negative connotations are even more pronounced in the descriptions of the inverted pentagram [Fig. 8]: “Sometimes the inverted figure of the pentagram, with two points facing upward and one facing down, is associated with negative or “black” magic and devil worship.”⁴

The unusual nature of inverted images is also reflected in the works of the 20th–21st century German painter, sculptor and printmaker Georg Baselitz. He became well known for his figurative, expressive paintings. In 1969, he painted his subjects upside down to overcome the representational, content-driven character of his earlier work. His upside-down paintings freed him from the trap of literal interpretation and helped him create works that could be considered purely aesthetic objects.⁵

3 *United States Code*, 4 U.S.C. § 8, “Respect for Flag,” Cornell Law School, accessed October 25, 2024, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/4/8>.

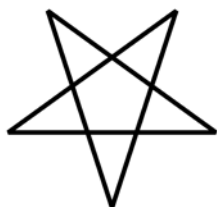
4 Alison Eldridge, “Pentagram,” *Britannica*, accessed October 28, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QK7NF0nHf0L>.

5 Richard Calvocoressi, “A Source for the Inverted Imagery in Georg Baselitz's Painting,” *The Burlington Magazine* 127, no. 993 (1985): 894–899. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/882264>.



6. Upside-Down Face Emoji. Pinterest

Apversto veido emodži



8. Inverted pentagram without a circle. Wikipedia

Apversta pentagrama



10. Anthropomorphic amber pendant from Metsäpirtti, Karelia. Finnish Heritage Agency (Museovirasto)

Antropomorfinis gintarinis kabutis iš Metsäpirtti, Karelijoje



7. Flag of the United States of America (upside down). Wikipedia

Jungtinių Amerikos Valstijų vėliava (apversta aukštyn kojomis)



9. Anthropomorphic amber pendants found in Lake Astuvansalmi, Ristiina, Finland. Finnish Heritage Agency (Museovirasto)

Antropomorfiniai gintariniai kabučiai rasti Astuvansalmi ežere, Suomijoje



11. Anthropomorphic bone pendant from the Asavets 2 site, Belarus

Antropomorfinis kaulinis kabutis iš Asavec 2-osios gyvenvietės, Baltarusijoje

But let us return to the Stone Age in the Baltic region and look for “upside-down” figurines.

Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines have been worn “upside down” at various Stone Age sites in Denmark, Norway, Finland, Karelia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Belarus.

Anthropomorphic pendants

When discussing anthropomorphic pendants, we are referring only to human head-shaped pendants. The inversion of anthropomorphic pendants is evident from a hole drilled in the area of the presumed neck or chin. Such pendants include amber pendants found in Lake Astuvansalmi in Finland [Fig. 9] and Metsäpirtti in Karelia [Fig. 10].⁶ They are all stray finds, but the context and shape of the artefacts suggest that they belong to the Stone Age.

A bone head found during the excavations of the Asavec II settlement in Belarus also had a hole in the lower part of the head [Fig. 11]. The cultural layer of this settlement dates from 3177–1424 BC.⁷

Pendants depicting human heads were found at the Kretuonas 1C settlement in Lithuania [Fig. 12]. Here, a flat pendant with a perforation in the forehead was found – in this context, this is considered a “normal” (in terms of orientation) pendant. Three other pendants had perforations in the upper part of the head but also had traces of former, later-broken holes in the lower part of the head – the presumed neck area. Kretuonas 1C is dated to 2000–1700/1650 BC.⁸

6 Juhani Grönhagen, “An Amber Pendant from Astuvansalmi in Ristiina, Finland.” *Fennoscandia Archaeologica* 8 (1991): 73–76.

7 Alfred Hackman, *Trouvailles préhistoriques: Age de la pierre. Fennia* 17 (1899): 1–40.
Aarne Äyräpää, “Die Verbreitung des Bernsteins in kammkeramischem Gebiet.” *Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistyksen Aikakauskirja – Finska Fornminnesföreningens Tidskrift* 45 (1945): 11–25.

Maxim Charniauski and Mikola Kryvaltsevich, “Belarusian Wetland Settlements in Prehistory,” in *Wetland Settlements of the Baltic: A Prehistoric Perspective*, edited by E. Pranckėnaitė, (Vilnius, 2011), 113–131.

8 Algirdas Girininkas and Linas Daugnora, “The Early Bronze Age Cemetery in East Lithuania,” in *A Hundred Years of Archaeological Discoveries in Lithuania*, eds. Gintautas Zabiela, Zenonas Baubonis, and Edita Marcinkevičiūtė (Vilnius: Society of the Lithuanian Archaeology, 2016), 110–119.



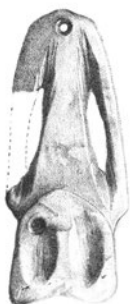
12. Anthropomorphic bone pendants from the Kretuonas 1C site, Lithuania. Nalšia Museum

Antropomorfiniai kauliniai kabučiai iš Kretuono 1C gyvenvietės. Lietuvoje



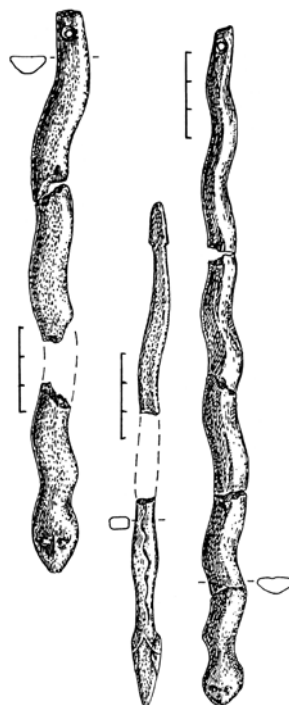
13. Anthropomorphic bone pendant from Tamula, Estonia. Archaeological Research Collection of Tallinn University

Antropomorfinis kaulinis kabutis iš Tamulos gyvenvietės, Estijoje



14. Anthropomorphic (?) amber pendant from the Juodkrantė (Schwarzort) collection. After: Richard Klebs, 1882, Tafel IX: 3

Antropomorfinis (?) gintarinis kabutis iš Juodkrantės rinkinio



15. Bone figurines of snakes from Abora, Latvia. National History Museum of Latvia

Kaulinės gyvačių figūrėlės iš Aboros gyvenvietės, Latvijoje

Anthropomorphic pendants, which could have been worn “upside down” according to the perforations, were also found in the Tamula settlement and in Burial VIII in Estonia [Fig. 13], dated 4330–4070 BC.⁹

Perhaps the strange amber figure from the famous Juodkrantė collection [Fig. 14] can also be attributed to the anthropomorphic “upside down” category. It can be interpreted as a human, a bat or even an owl. For now, we will classify it as anthropomorphic, following Richard Klebs’ description.¹⁰

Zoomorphic pendants

Zoomorphic “upside down” pendants usually depict snakes, birds, and elk.¹¹ Snake figurines seem to have been the most commonly worn in an inverted manner.

The Abora site in Latvia is particularly notable, with as many as five pieces found hanging “upside down” according to the preserved perforations or incisions [Fig. 15; 16].¹² Snake figurines and fragments have also been found in other settlements and monuments in the Baltic region: Tamula [Fig. 17]¹³, Kretuonas [Fig. 18]¹⁴, Olenii Ostrov [Fig. 19]¹⁵, River Sauga

- 9 Lembit Jaanits, “Über die Ergebnisse der Steinzeitforschung in Sowjetestland,” *Finkst Museum* 72 (1965): 5–45.
Lembit, Jaanits, “Die Kennzeichende Züge der Ziedlung Tamula.” *ISKOS* 4 (1984): 183–193.
- Aivar, Kriiska, Lembi Lõugas, Maret Lõhmus, Kristiina Mannermaa, and Kristi Johanson, “New AMS Dates from Estonian Stone Age Burial Sites.” *Estonian Journal of Archaeology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 83–121.
- 10 Richard Klebs, *Der Bernsteinschmuck der Steinzeit von der Baggerei bei Schwarzort und anderen Lokalitäten Pressens*, in *Beiträge zur Naturkunde Preussens* (Königsberg, 1882), 28–29, 73, Tafel IX: 3.
- 11 Marius Iršėnas, Tomas Rimkus, Adomas Butrimas, Gvidas Slah, “The Elks of Šventoji: Taking another Closer Look,” *Archaeologia Baltica* 25(2018), 133–136, DOI 10.15181/ab.v25i0.1834
- 12 Ilze Loze, *Pozdний Neolit i Rannaya Bronza Lubanskoy Ravniny* (Riga, 1979).
- 13 Lembit Jaanits, “Neue Gräberfunde auf dem spätneolithischen Wohnplatz Tamula in Estland.” *Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistyksen Aikakauskirja – Finska Fornminnesföreningens Tidskrift* 58 (1957): 80–100.
- 14 Algirdas, Girininkas, and Linas Daugnora, “The Early Bronze Age Cemetery in East Lithuania.” In *A Hundred Years of Archaeological Discoveries in Lithuania*, edited by Gintautas Zabiela, Zenonas Baubonis, and Edita Marcinkevičiūtė, 110–119. Vilnius: Society of Lithuanian Archaeology, 2016.
- 15 Nina N. Gurina, *Oleneostrovskiy Mogil'nik. Materialy i Issledovaniya po Arkheologii SSSR* 47 (Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1956).



16. Amber figurines of snakes from Abora, Latvia. National History Museum of Latvia

Gintarinės gyvačių figūrėlės iš Aboros gyvenvietės, Latvijoje



17. Bone figurine of a snake from the Tamula site, Estonia. Archaeological Research Collection of Tallinn University

Kaulinė gyvatės figūrėlė iš Tamulos gyvenvietės, Estijoje



18. Fragment of a bone figurine of a snake from the Kretuonas 1C site, Lithuania. Nalšia Museum

Kaulinės gyvatės figūrėlės fragmentas iš Kretuono 1C gyvenvietės, Lietuvoje



19. Bone figurines of snakes from the Olenii Ostrov burial site, grave 23 (1) and grave 57 (2), Russia. Kunstkamera Museum

Kaulinės gyvačių figūrėlės iš Olenij Ostrovo kapinyno, kapo Nr. 23 (1) ir kapo Nr. 57 (2), Rusijoje

[Fig. 20]¹⁶, Järvensuo 1¹⁷. We can see the heads and the sinuous or straight bodies, with no trace of a hole or tool mark at the head. The tail ends of the snakes are poorly preserved, broken off, or worn away. However, based on the Abora specimens, we can assume that the attachment was similar and that these figurines were worn in an upside-down position, as there are no traces of attachment in the head area. The snake figurine from Asavec 2 [Fig. 21] is the only one with a perforation closer to the head, yet even this is not observed in the fragmentary snake figurines from Tamula, Kretuonas, Sauga, or Olenii Ostrov. We can therefore conclude that they were mounted in the tail area and worn in an upside-down position.

Pendants representing birds were also worn upside down. We have examples from the Stone Age settlements of Dziedzekste [Fig. 22], Nainekste [Fig. 23], Zvidze [Fig. 24], and Tamula [Fig. 25]. Interestingly, as with the human head pendants, some pendants show broken perforations and new perforations made for hanging. Such corrections are seen in the finds from the Nainekste¹⁸ and Tamula sites.¹⁹

A flat bone water bird pendant was found at Solsem in Norway, which, according to the location of the perforation, must also have been hung “upside down”. It dates back to the Neolithic or Bronze Age, as it is made of cattle bone [Fig. 26].²⁰

In the double grave of a Valma man and a Valma woman, an amber pendant depicting a beaver (?) with a perforation in the tail [Fig. 27] was found on the woman’s skull, and on the man’s skull were bone zoomorphic figurines, possibly depicting beavers, with perforations in the tail [Fig. 28].²¹

16 Richard, Indreko, “Skulptuur ja Ornament Eesti Kiviaja Luuriistades,” *Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Aastaraamat VI* (1930): 47–66.

17 Satu Koivisto and Antti Lahelma, “Between Earth and Water: A Wooden Snake Figurine from the Neolithic Site of Järvensuo 1,” *Antiquity* 95, no. 382 (2021): e19, <https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2021.79>.

18 Ilze, Loze, *Poseleniya Kamennogo Veka Lubanskoy Niziny: Mezolit, Ranniy i Sredniy Neolit* (Riga, 1988).

19 Lembit, Janits, “Novye dannye po neolitu Pribaltiki.” *Sovetskaya Arkheologiya* 19 (1954): 159–206.

20 Theodor Petersen, “Solsemhulen Paa Leka,” *Oldtiden: Tidsskrift for Norsk Forhistorie* 4 (1914): 25–42. Haakon Shetelig, *Primitive Tider i Norge* (Bergen, 1922). Kalle, Sognnes, “Dyresymbolikk i Midt-Norsk Yngre Steinialder,” *Viking* 59 (1996).

21 Lembit Jaanits, “Über die Ergebnisse”: 5–45.



20. Bone figurine of a snake from the Sauga River, Estonia. Pärnu Museum

Kaulinē gyvatēs figūrēlē iš Sauga upēs, Estijoje



21. Bone figurine of a snake from the Asavets 2 site, Belarus

Kaulinē gyvatēs figūrēlē iš Asavec 2-osios gyvenvietės, Baltarusijoje



22. Amber figurine of a bird from the Dzedziekste site, Latvia. National History Museum of Latvia

Gintarinē paukščio figūrēlē iš Dzedziekste gyvenvietės, Latvijoje



23. Amber figurine of a bird from the Nainiekste site, Latvia. National History Museum of Latvia

Gintarinē paukščio figūrēlē iš Nainiekste gyvenvietės, Latvijoje

These grave goods are typologically attributed to the period of typical comb ware pottery, i.e. the 4th millennium BC.²²

The elk is a key image in the Baltic region. It is best known for its curved antler staffs with carved elk heads, as well as petroglyphs found in Scandinavia and Karelia.²³ However, small-scale pendant pieces are also known. One of them, made from an amber plate and depicting the silhouette of an elk head carved with zigzags, was found on the west coast of the Baltic Sea in Engesvang, Denmark²⁴. There are two perforations in the neck area of the figure, and if these were used, the figure must have been hung “upside down” [Fig. 29].

Another pendant depicting an elk’s head was found in Sarnate, western Latvia. It is a small but voluminous amber figurine, which, according to the traces of a former hole, was worn “upside down” [Fig. 30].²⁵

A small, curved stick made from a rib, about 14 cm in length, with the head of a cervid, was also worn with the head pointing downwards [Fig. 31]. It was found at the Šventoji settlement in western Lithuania, as were two other sticks: one 50 cm in length, worn upside down, and found in the same place, though at a different site.²⁶

An amber pendant from the Juodkrantė collection, which, according to Rimantienė, represents a deer, was worn “upside down” [Fig. 32]. The collection consists of amber artefacts found during amber mining, but most of them are typologically dated to the Stone Age²⁷.

22 Mari Törv, *Persistent Practices: A Multi-Disciplinary Study of Hunter-Gatherer Mortuary Remains from c. 6500–2600 cal. BC, Estonia*, Untersuchungen und Materialien zur Steinzeit in Schleswig-Holstein und im Ostseeraum, Band 9 (Kiel/Hamburg: Wachholtz Verlag – Murmann Publishers, 2023), 81.

23 Ville Mantere, *The Relationship between Humans and Elks (Alces alces) in Northern Europe c. 12,000–1200 calBC*. PhD diss., University of Turku, 2023.

24 Johannes Brønsted, *Danmarks Oldtid. I Stenalderen*. København, 1938: Fig. 38 g.

25 Lūcija Vankina, *Torfyannikovaya Stoyanka Sarnate* (Riga, 1970), 111, tabl. LV: 2

26 Rimutė Rimantienė, *Die Steinzeitfischer an der Ostseelagune in Litauen* (Vilnius: Litauisches Nationalmuseum, 2005), 340–342

Marius Iršėnas et al., “The Elks of Šventoji: Taking Another Closer Look,” *Archaeologia Baltica* 25 (2018): 125–128, <https://doi.org/10.15181/ab.v25i0.1834>.

27 Rimutė Rimantienė, *Die Kurische Nehrung aus dem Blickwinkel des Archäologen* (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 1999), 50.



24. Amber figurine of a bird from the Zvidze site, Latvia. National History Museum of Latvia

Gintarinē paukšcio figūrēlē iš Zvidze gyvenvietės, Latvijoje



25. Bone figurine of a bird from the Tamula site, Estonia. Archaeological Research Collection of Tallinn University

Kaulinē paukšcio figūrēlē iš Tamulos gyvenvietės, Estijoje



26. Bone figurine of a bird from Solsem cave, Norway. Vitenskapsmuseet

Kaulinē paukšcio figūrēlē iš Solsem olos, Norvegijoje



27. Zoomorphic amber pendant from the Valma grave, Estonia. Archaeological Research Collection of Tallinn University

Zoomorfinis gintarinis kabutis iš Valma kapo, Estijoje

"Upside-down" in relation to "normal" pendants

In considering the relationship between "upside-down" and "normal" pendants, it is essential to examine the context of their discovery, as this may offer a potential explanation for the wearing of such "upside-down" images. It is crucial to identify any fundamental contextual differences between "upside-down" and "normal" pendants. All the amber pendants discovered in Lake Astuvansalmi were produced to be worn "upside down". A similar observation was made in the Valma grave, where the pendants were also found to have been worn "upside down". However, at Tamula, Abora, and Kretuonas 1 C, both "upside-down" and "normal" pendants were discovered, suggesting a lack of consistency in the way these items were worn.

I would like to take a closer look at the set of head pendants from the Kretuonas 1C settlement, where a flat pendant with a perforation in the upper part of the head was found – thus a "normal" pendant. There were also three pendants with perforations in the upper part of the head, but also with traces of former, later-broken perforations in the lower part of the head – in the presumed neck area [Fig. 33].

It seems that the holes were originally drilled in the neck area of the pendant head for "upside-down" wear, but as the hole became worn out, new holes were drilled in the upper part of the head. It should be noted that the bottom hole of one of the pendants seems to have broken off during drilling, necessitating an additional hole at the top. This phenomenon can also be observed on another pendant from the same site (see Fig. 33). Newly drilled holes in pendants depicting water birds, such as those from Nainiekste, further support this hypothesis [Fig. 23].

Drilling holes in new places like this suggest that the exact position of the hole or how the pendant hung did not matter significantly. What was important was what the pendant represented, symbolised, and meant to the wearer and the observer(s). One unfortunately quite damaged pendant from the Kretuonas 1C settlement illustrates another way of wearing an anthropomorphic pendant. Here we see what appears to be a human face with two eyes drilled through it. These are actually holes drilled for binding after earlier holes at the bottom and top had broken out [Fig. 33: 3]. The



28. Zoomorphic bone pendant from the Valma grave, Estonia. Archaeological Research Collection of Tallinn University

Zoomorfinis kaulinis kabutis iš Valma kapo, Estijoje



29. Amber figurine of an elk from Egemark, Denmark. National Museum of Denmark

Gintarinė briedžio figūrėlė iš Egemark, Danijoje



30. Amber figurine of an elk from Sarnate, Latvia. National History Museum of Latvia

Gintarinė briedžio figūrėlė iš Sarnate gyvenvietės, Latvijoje



31. Bone figurine of an elk from the Šventoji site, Lithuania. National Museum of Lithuania

Kaulinė briedžio figūrėlė iš Šventosios gyvenvietės, Lietuvoje

examples from Nainiekste and Kretuonas suggest a certain disregard for the manner of wearing and instead a focus on the value of the pendant itself – attention was paid to preserving the pendant rather than its orientation.

The possibility of wearing the pendants in different ways could be confirmed by the pendants representing human heads found at the Tamula site²⁸. In the lower part of the head, a hole – probably representing a mouth – indicates an “upside-down” position based on obvious wear, while two eyeholes do not exclude the possibility of it being worn in a “normal” position. Thus, this pendant also demonstrates flexibility in how it could have been worn [Fig. 34].

Returning to the Kretuonas 1C pendants, it cannot be ruled out that both holes were used and that the piece functioned as part of a wider necklace. This is the interpretation proposed by archaeologist Algirdas Girininkas, who has conducted and published research on Kretuonas 1C²⁹.

“Upside-down” pendants in the context of graves

Only the pendants from Valma and Tamula were found in burial contexts. Let us take a closer look at the circumstances of their discovery. A bird pendant with a hole drilled in the tail area, which must have been hung “upside down”, was found in the grave of a child aged about 8 years (grave VII), which dates from 4720–4500 BC³⁰. However, it is now believed that this date is incorrect and that the grave should be dated to the beginning of the 4th millennium BC³¹. The pendant was found on the right shoulder. One can only speculate whether it was sewn to the fabric in the shoulder area or placed there during burial. The richness of the tomb is also worth noting.

Another Valma grave, containing a man and a woman from Estonian territory, was once considered a simultaneous double burial, but this is now questioned. However, according to Mari Tõrv, the difference between the two burials is not significant. The graves could not be directly dated due

28 Lembit Jaanits, “Über die Ergebnisse”: 5–45.

29 Girininkas and Daugnora, “The Early Bronze Age Cemetery in East Lithuania,” 110–119.

30 Aivar Kriiska et al., “New AMS Dates from Estonian Stone Age Burial Sites,” *Estonian Journal of Archaeology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 83–121.

31 Mari Tõrv, *Persistent Practices: A Multi-Disciplinary Study of Hunter-Gatherer Mortuary Remains from c. 6500–2600 cal. BC, Estonia*, Untersuchungen und Materialien zur Steinzeit in Schleswig-Holstein und im Ostseeraum, Band 9 (Kiel/Hamburg: Wachholtz Verlag – Murmann Publishers, 2023), 79–80.



32. Zoomorphic amber pendant from the Juodkrantė (Schwarzort) collection. After: Richard Klebs, 1882, Tafel VIII: 21

Zoomorfinis gintarinis kabutis iš Juodkrantės rinkinio



33. Anthropomorphic bone pendants from the Kretuonas 1C site, Lithuania. Nalšia Museum

Antropomorfiniai kauliniai kabučiai iš Kretuono 1C gyvenvietės Lietuvoje



34. Anthropomorphic bone pendant from Tamula, Estonia. Archaeological Research Collection of Tallinn University

Antropomorfinis kaulinis kabutis iš Tamulos gyvenvietės, Estijoje



35. A Tlingit shaman spirit charm used in healing (front and back views). After: Patricia Rieff Anawalt, 2014

Tlingit šamanų dvasių amuletas, naudojamas gydymui (abi pusės)

to the lack of collagen, but typologically they belong to the period of typical comb ware pottery, i.e. the 4th millennium BC³².

An amber pendant depicting a beaver (?) with a hole in the tail was found on the woman's skull, while bone zoomorphic figurines, possibly depicting beavers, with holes in the tail, were found on the man's skull³³.

As yet, there is too little evidence to discern clear patterns in how such pendants were worn. They have been found in the graves of a child, a woman, and a man, in the head and shoulder area. More broadly, pendants in the Tamula and Zvejnieki graves have been found in the head, neck, shoulder, chest, and leg areas.

Chronological dynamics

As mentioned in the beginning of this article, "upside-down" pendants can already be found in the Palaeolithic graves of Sungir (30,000 BP) and Malta (24,000–23,000 BP) in Siberia. Thus, this type of wearing is not unique to the Stone Age of the Baltic region.

In the Baltic region, the earliest examples could be dated to the Mesolithic (Egemark, Stolp), but most "upside-down" pendants are found in sites dating from the 4th to the 2nd millennium BC, on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea, as discussed above. However, this increase in finds from the late Stone Age may also be attributed to the greater extent of archaeological investigations. At the same time, the ethnographic examples that we are about to discuss suggest that such inverted wear is neither unique to the Baltic region nor limited to the Stone Age.

Ethnographic and anthropological contexts

The use of ethnographic data to interpret archaeological data is often criticised. Some sources state that this practice can lead to inaccurate or biased interpretations of the past,³⁴ as ethnographic data is often collected from living cultures, which may not be directly comparable to past

32 Ibid., 81.

33 Lembit Jaanits, "Über die Ergebnisse der Steinzeitforschung in Sowjetland." *Finkst Museum* 72 (1965): 5–45.

34 Timothy Earle, "Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology," in *Handbook of Archaeological Theories*, ed. R. Alexander Bentley, Herbert D. G. Maschner, and Christopher Chippindale (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 187–202.



36. Abraham Mignon (1640–1679). *Still Life with Dead Fowl*. CC BY-SA 4.0 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Abraham Mignon (1640–1679).
Natiurmortas su negyvais naminiais paukščiais

societies.³⁵ At the same time, it is well noted that, while archaeological analyses are increasingly based on natural sciences, references to ethnography or the history of religions cannot be dismissed, even if the objectivity of such comparisons is called into question.³⁶ Archaeologists uncover the remnants of social and cultural life but are hampered by the fact that they do not always understand what these findings mean. Ethnography has the advantage that its data “speaks” and can therefore help to interpret archaeological data.³⁷

Much was expected from ethnographic material in the search for an explanation of “upside-down” wearing, but admittedly, little has been found. The only example I could identify is a shamanic healing amulet of the Tlingit tribe from the North American Northwest Coast [Fig. 35].³⁸

35 Robert G. Bednarik, “Ethnographic Analogy in Rock Art Interpretation,” *Man in India* 91, no. 2 (April 2011): 223–234.

36 Ville Mantere, *The Relationship between Humans and Elks (Alces alces) in Northern Europe c. 12,000–1200 calBC* (PhD diss., University of Turku, 2023).

37 Peter N. Peregrine, “Cross-Cultural Comparative Approaches in Archaeology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 1–18.

38 Patricia Rieff Anawalt, *Shamanic Regalia in the Far North* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), 148–151.



37. A hunter with his catch. Vilnius Academy of Arts archive

Medžiotojas su laimikiu

The amulet is double-sided in every sense. On one side of the amulet, there is a figure carved in relief with ribs, resembling a human being, but it could also represent a bear, and on the other side, there is a bird, akin to a water bird. The holes are positioned at both ends of the elongated pendant, and since the figures face in opposite directions, we can assume that one side, however suspended, was hanging “upside down”. Patricia Rief Anawalt writes about their function as follows: “Such amulets were a particularly potent part of every Tlingit shaman’s paraphernalia; some were worn as single pendants, others in groups as parts of necklaces or sewn onto animal-hide tunics, or onto aprons. Some charms were left with a patient after a practitioner’s performance in order to sustain the shaman’s power.”³⁹

Ethnographic evidence from the costume of northern peoples supports the wearing of such pendants sewn to the headdress or other parts of clothing. They can also be interpreted as embodiments of spirit helpers, worn either by a shaman or by an ordinary tribesman in need of assistance from certain spirits. Here, we can recall the locations of pendants in the

graves of Valma and Tamula, where they were found in the head, shoulder, and waist area.

Looking at the “upside-down” bird pendants from Tamula, Zvidze, and Nainiekste, one might associate them with still-life paintings of hunted birds [Fig. 36] or with the modern hunters returning from a hunt carrying birds “upside-down” [Fig. 37]. Perhaps the “upside-down” bird pendants simply reflect a hunting routine, symbolise a successful hunt, or even serve as the abode of a spirit. But what about the snake figurines hanging upside down? Were they also hunted and carried home in this manner, or were they involved in mysterious rituals, clearly depicted in the Minoan Snake Goddess figurines, c. 1600 BC.

Whether the amber “upside-down” heads of Astuvansalmi and Metsäpirtti symbolised hunted enemies or perhaps the heads of highly revered ancestors is open to speculation. Grönhagen astutely observed that these “upside-down” heads are easily visible for the wearer.⁴⁰ It can be assumed that this type of pendant was not intended for the attention of others but held personal significance to the wearer.

Conclusions

Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pendants have been found at Stone Age sites in the Baltic region. Some of them are stray finds, but their shape and context suggest that they can be attributed to the Stone Age. Some pendants were worn “upside down” due to the placement of perforations for hanging. Such upside-down suspension has been observed on zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines from Stone Age sites across the Baltic region, including Egemark, Abora, Sarnate, Zvidze, Nainiekste, Tamula, Valma, Astuvansalmi, Metsäpirtti, and Kretuonas. In the Šventoji settlement in Lithuania, “upside-down” staffs with elk heads were discovered. Such “upside down” wearing is also recorded in ethnographic sources, for example, in the costume of a Northwest American shaman.

Today, “upside-down” symbols are often associated with occult rituals and other negative connotations. Interestingly, objects that were worn “upside down” in the Stone Age, such as the elk-headed staffs from the

40 Juhani Grönhagen, “An Amber Pendant from Astuvansalmi in Ristiina, Finland,” *Fennoscandia Archaeologica* 8 (1991): 73–76.

Šventoji settlement, are now sold as souvenirs intended to be worn “normally”, suggesting a shift in cultural interpretation.

At the same time, Stone Age and ethnographic material show that the wearing of “upside-down” pendants was not universal. Some anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pendants were worn in a “normal” way. This tradition of “normal” wearing is characteristic of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pendants made of amber, bone, or stone found at Stone Age sites in the Baltic region and beyond. So what are the frequencies, patterns, and possible reasons for and consequences of choosing to wear anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pendants in an “inverted” manner? Could the drilling of a hole in the top of the head or neck be simply due to the unusability of a previous hole, requiring a new one, without much thought given to the object’s changed orientation (Kretuonas 1C, Nainiekste)? We cannot exclude the possibility that this was a deliberate choice with symbolic meaning. It may also have been a local tradition specific to a particular site, such as the finds from Lake Astuvansalmi or the Valma grave, where all pendants appear to have been designed to be worn “upside down”. Some pendants may have been worn both “upside down” and “normally”, such as the anthropomorphic pendants from the Tamula site in Estonia. As always, there are more questions than answers.

This study once again highlights the importance of reconsidering contemporary preconceptions when interpreting ancient artefacts. Although the phenomenon of inverted pendants is not yet fully understood, it offers valuable insights into the symbolic, ritual, and practical aspects of prehistoric life.

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Santrauka

„Apversta aukštyn kojomis“ – keistas pakabukų nešiojimo būdas

Marius Iršėnas

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Baltijos jūros regionas, Akmens amžius, „aukštyn kojomis“.

Šiame straipsnyje aptariami „aukštyn kojomis“ nešiojami antropomorfiniai ir zoomorfiniai kabučiai rasti Baltijos regiono akmenų amžiaus gyvenvietėse, kapuose, taip pat atsitiktiniai radiniai. Minėtinos radimvietės: Abora, Sarnatė, Tamula, Valma, Astuvansalmi, Metsäpirtti, Šventoji, Kretuonas, Juodkrantė. Tokių figūrėlių nešiojimą „aukštyn kojomis“ fiksuoja ir etnografiniai duomenys, pavyzdžiui, šamano kostiume.

Straipsnyje iškeliamas klausimas, kodėl šiuolaikinėje visuomenėje „aukštyn kojomis“ vaizduojami objektai dažnai siejami su neigiamomis konotacijomis. Pateikiami įvairių kultūrų pavyzdžiai: apverstos vėliavos kaip nelaimės ženklas, pentagramos siejimas su „juodąja magija“ ir net meno pasaulyje Georgo Baselitzo tapyboje naudojamas apvertimas kaip būdas išvengti įprastų vaizdinių klišių.

Zoomorfiniai kabučiai vaizdavo gyvates, paukščius, briedžius ir kitus gyvūnus.

Keletas radinių rodo, kad skylutės tvirtinimui kartais buvo gręžiamos iš naujo – tai leidžia manyti, kad kabučiai galėjo būti nešiojami įvairiai.

Kartu akmenų amžiaus ir etnografinė medžiaga rodo, kad pakabukų nešiojimas „aukštyn kojomis“ nebuvo visuotinis. Kai kurie antropomorfiniai ir zoomorfiniai pakabukai buvo nešiojami „normaliai“.

Straipsnyje svarstoma, kad galbūt skylės gręžimas žmogaus viršugalvyje ar kakele yra susijęs su ankstesnės skylės nusidėvėjimu ir būtinybe išgręžti naują, per daug nesusimąstant, kaip pasikeis figūrėlės kabojimo kryptis (Kretuonas 1C). Kai kurie kabučiai galėjo būti nešiojami ir „aukštyn kojomis“, ir „normaliai“ (Tamula, Kretuonas 1C).

Straipsnio pabaigoje iškeliamas klausimas, ar akmenų amžiaus žmonėms buvo svarbu, kaip kabutis kybojo – „aukštyn kojomis“ ar „normaliai“. Pateikiamos hipotezės, kad tokie kabučiai galėjo būti susiję su dvasių pasauliu, medžioklės simbolika arba asmenine magine apsauga.

Nors šiandien „aukštyn kojomis“ vaizduojami objektai dažnai turi neigiamas konotacijas, akmens amžiuje šis nešiojimo būdas galėjo būti natūralus ir nesureikšminamas. Archeologiniai duomenys rodo, kad vėlesniais laikotarpiais tokia praktika galėjo išnykti dėl pasikeitusios pasaulėžiūros.