EXARC JOURNAL 2023/2
14 Articles | Open Access

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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Event Review: Archaeology Days in Kernave, 2023

Persistent Identifier: https://exarc.net/ark:/88735/10703

EXARC Journal Issue 2023/3 | **Publication Date:** 2023-08-25

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As part of the SUN (#S_U_N) initiative, NGO "Chorna Galych" and colleagues from National and cultural reserve “Davnij Halych”, participated in the “Gyvosios archeologijos dienos Kernavėje XXIII” (Live archaeology day in Kernave - https://www.facebook.com/events/2378148619026377), that was held between July 6-9, 2023. The event was held at the historical and cultural reserve "Kernavės archeologinė vietovė", which is an archaeological monument and considered the ancient capital of Lithuania.

> “Another feature of this event was the theme - children. A significant part of the educational and entertainment program was dedicated to this age category. A separate yard was set aside for the children’s workshop...

NGO "Chorna Galych", Ukraine, first visited Kernave in 2017; this was the second time the NGO participated in this event. The experience of this trip revealed to us new interesting aspects of cultural heritage interpretation methods and became an important starting point for changes in our own attitude to the matter. It was especially interesting to see how the festival and the reserve have changed.

In 2021, Jonas Vitkūnas, one of the initiators of the event, passed away, but the tradition of the event did not end with him. Daiva Luchtanienė, the president of Pajauta Club has been co-organizer for many years. We have known each other for about 10 years, because they attended the Tustan Festival, delivering lectures and presentations that inspired the participants of our NGO to work in the same direction of interpretation and experimental archeology. Therefore, we got acquainted with the printed materials of the scientific publication which they brought with them.

This year the festival was led by Austėja Luchtanainė and her team, who managed to continue the tradition; preserve the image of the festival and start introducing a new vision.

The event took place within the replicated area (replicating the ancient settlement) which was built based on archaeological remains and finds, making the event even more attractive.

The area contained a forge, a bathhouse, residential and commercial premises, and furnaces. Outside of the replicated settlement is an area dedicated to the Stone Age, with housing, ceramics, and flint processing.

Each location is full of life, thanks to the fact that reenactors, craftspeople from all over Lithuania, as well as guests from Latvia, Poland, Germany, Belarus (only those who currently live outside Belarus) and Ukraine come to the event. We would like to note the friendly welcome we received from the Lithuanian hosts. Their position regarding the Russian full-scale invasion was made very clear; all participants at the event signed a declaration of condemnation of Russia's actions. As far as we understand, this event is important for Lithuanians at the national level, as it took place during Lithuanian’s Independence Day and therefore commemorates the nation’s past through the preservation of the cultural heritage of memory.

So, at each location, in addition to being able to try out a craft, and participate in an activity, there was also historical and ethnographic information. In this way, the development of tradition and the transformation of medieval culture into national Lithuania is traced.

Another feature of this event was the theme - children. A significant part of the educational and entertainment program was dedicated to this age category. A separate yard was set aside for the children's workshop, where there was an area dedicated to creating models of houses and household elements with the help of clay and natural materials; another area was dedicated to leather work (children could practice with punches); a separate area displaying and trying out medieval board games; and another area where tattoos were used to introduce the world of symbols.

Our team organized an artistic activity, where children had the opportunity to paint wooden models of Easter eggs, similar to those of the 10th -11th centuries, which were found in the west of Ukraine.

Andrii Husak, a leading researcher of the Davniy Halych National Reserve, joined our group to get acquainted with the format of the event and to establish contacts between the reserves. This choice was made because, like Kernave, Halych in the 13th century was a princely residence that functioned as the capital, and therefore, at the heyday of the time were almost identical. Also, part of the archaeological finds is related to finds from the territory of Rus, with some of them actually having been imported.

Special thanks to Andrius Janionis and Aleksiejus Luchtanas for a tour of the museum and an excursion into the history of the establishment and familiarization with the inner workings of the reserve.

We plan to gather a larger group from Ukraine and look forward to visiting Kernave next year!

Keywords event
review
archaeological open-air museum
public archaeology

Country Lithuania

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FIG 1. UKRAINIAN LOCATION AT THE FESTIVAL IN KERNAVE. PHOTO BY YAREMA IVANTSIV

FIG 2. PREPARATION FOR THE COOKING COMPETITION. PHOTO BY YAREMA IVANTSIV

FIG 3. THE YARD OF THE RECONSTRUCTED SETTLEMENT. PHOTO BY YAREMA IVANTSIV

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