



# CREMATION AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE LOWER DAUGAVA AREA IN THE TENTH TO THE 13TH CENTURY: A CASE STUDY BASED ON LIV BURIALS IN THE OGRESGALA ČABAS CEMETERY

Rūdolfs Brūzis

 ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2778-2116

Roberts Spirģis

 ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5163-7798

## ABSTRACT

This article returns to the question of whether Christianity in Europe in the High Middle Ages necessarily precluded the cremation of corpses. The question is addressed focusing on the Livs, a West Finno-Ugric society, who lived in the east Baltic region, before they adopted Christianity and during the early period of Christianisation. The authors combine archaeological expertise with interpretations of historical sources to explore the late cremations of the Livs and, in particular, to analyse two female cremations from the cemetery at Ogresgala Čabas, located near the mouth of the River Daugava. Cremations dominated in the initial phase of Daugava Liv culture in the lower reaches of the Daugava in the second half of the tenth century before they were replaced by inhumations by the middle of the 11th century, especially in female graves. The article deals with the late cremations of the Livs from the late 11th to the 13th century, when they became very rare and took on a different form. Taking into account references to the practice of cremation in exceptional cases of deaths in foreign lands in written sources about the Livs, the article agrees with researchers who believe that not all cremated corpses should be immediately and unconditionally associated with paganism.

**KEYWORDS:** Livs, burial grounds, cremation custom, Late Iron Age, Christianity, Christianisation.

## ANOTACIJA

Šis straipsnis grįžta prie klausimo, ar palaikų deginimas ir krikščionybė Europoje Viduriniais viduramžiais būtinai yra tarpusavyje nesusiję dalykai. Klausimas nagrinėjamas žvelgiant į lyvių, vakarų finougrių, visuomenę rytiniame Baltijos regione prieš jai priimant krikščionybę ir ankstyvuojų christianizacijos laikotarpiu. Jungdami archeologinių tyrimų duomenis su istorijos šaltinių interpretacija, autoriai gilinasi į vėlyvasias lyvių kremacijas ir konkrečiai analizuoja du moterų degintinius kapus iš Uogrėsgalo Čabo kapinyno, buvusio netoli Dauguvos žiočių. Dauguvos žemupyje pradinio Dauguvos lyvių kultūros etape, X a. antroje pusėje, vyravo palaikų deginimas, bet XI a. viduryje šį paprotį išstūmė inhumacija, ypač kalbant apie moteris. Straipsnyje aptariama vadinamoji vėlyvoji lyvių kremacija nuo XI a. pabaigos iki XIII a., kai ji tapo labai reta ir įgavo kitokį pavidalą. Remdamiesi rašytiniuose šaltiniuose apie lyvius aptinkamomis nuorodomis į kremavimo praktiką išimtiniais atvejais, kai mirštama svetimose žemėse, straipsnio autoriai pritaria tiems tyrinėtojams, kurie mano, kad ne visus sudegintus palaikus iš karto ir besąlygiškai reikėtų sieti su pagonybe. **PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI:** lyviai, kapinynai, laidojimo paprotys, vėlyvasis geležies amžius, krikščionybė, christianizacija.

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Rūdolfs Brūzis, Dr. hist., researcher, Institute of Latvian History of the University of Latvia, O. Kalpaka bulv. 4-121, LV-1050 Rīga, Latvia. E-mail: rudolfs.bruzis@lu.lv.

Roberts Spirģis, Dr. hist., independent researcher, Latvia. E-mail: spirģis@inbox.lv.

## Introduction

Archaeological research on the monuments of the Daugava Livs began almost 200 years ago, but the most extensive excavations took place during the construction of the Riga Hydroelectric Power Plant (1966–1974). One of the peculiarities of this culture is the considerable variety in burial rites, which underwent several changes from the second half of the tenth to the 13th century. At the same time, the written accounts of the first German missionaries, the first historical sources, have had a major impact on the interpretation of archaeological material in current historiography. Scientific thought has focused on these sources, interpreting them in the light of contemporary cultural paradigms. Thus, based on this, Baltic and German historiography from the 19th century regards the local people as pagan barbarians, thus justifying the historical mission of the German *Kulturträger*, preachers and conquerors.

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During the period of Latvian independence between 1918 and 1940, Latvian historians criticised these ideas strongly. Their research focused on the pagan beliefs of the local people, and to some extent the narrative of these views determined the popular historical identity of the newly formed nation-state. Scholars associated the arrival of the Roman Catholic Church with brutal invasion and the loss of freedom. Because of the interwar period, the influence of Eastern Christianity, in turn, was regarded in a positive light, since before the German invasion it had been the basis of state associations and reflected the deep spirituality of the inhabitants of these centres.

The Soviet period provided other features that appeared in archaeological studies: scientists often focused on the early contacts with the Ancient Rus'. As a result, articles were published concerning the possible spread of Christianity in the territory of contemporary Latvia before the Crusades, based on archaeological finds of crosses. These works showed that by the 12th century this area was no longer a land of pagans.<sup>1</sup> However, studies based on an analysis of items of personal piety were not popular among Soviet researchers, due to the atheist position of the state. As a result, a paradoxical situation developed: Latvian archaeologists found influences of Eastern Christianity, but they could not identify reliable Christian burial sites that would serve as clear evidence of the adopted faith.

There have been no significant changes recently in the view of the beginning of Christianity in the Lower Daugava area. According to the prevailing view, until the late 12th century, Christianity had some influence on the local people. However, the Daugava Livs adhered to paganism. The non-recognition of the significant Christian influence in the east Baltic area before the German missions at the end of the 12th

<sup>1</sup> MUGURĒVIČS, Ēvalds. Kristīgās ticības izplatība Latvijas teritorijā 11.–12. gs. un katoļu baznīcas ekspansijas sākums. *Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas vēstis*, 1987, Nr. 5, 10.–27. lpp.

century emerged under the influence of the political collisions of the 20th century.<sup>2</sup> The followers of this position methodologically adopted the typical Soviet-school approach to the interpretation of archaeological material and the vision of the spiritual world of Medieval man. As a result, society in general also believed that the Latvians were never true Christians. In the popular view, Christianisation, along with Europeanisation, was carried out with the help of weapons, leading to the loss of independence and further enslavement.

In contrast to the comparatively low activity in Latvia, a broad range of studies on Christianisation have been published around the world over the last few decades. The arrival of the third Christian millennium has brought increased interest in the field. A plethora of conferences, monographs and articles followed. Researchers summarised and reviewed the knowledge about the spread of Christianity. As a consequence, we now have the necessary prerequisites for a significant breakthrough in our understanding of the conversion to Christianity in the Middle Ages. Studies of archaeological sources have played a significant role in this process. As a result of this approach came an awareness of the cultural diversity, which also shows in Christian burials. There is not a single universal model to define Christian burial, because different peoples adopted Christianity in different ways. The presence or absence of a mound, the inventory, the position of the hands, or the orientation, may vary significantly. Recent studies have shown that there is only one consistent phenomenon in the funeral rite that reflected Christianisation: the replacement of cremation by inhumation.<sup>3</sup>

Our main goal is to find the extent of the Christianisation of the Daugava Livs before the German invasion at the end of the 12th century. For example, an analysis of the Latgalian language indicates wide borrowings in the Christian lexicon from Old Russian. The vocabulary is represented not only by terms that could have appeared during a superficial acquaintance with the new religion, but also by concepts from the everyday life of a clearly baptised population.<sup>4</sup> Similar in-depth modern studies of the language of the Livs have not yet been carried out, but according to investigations based on an analysis involving art history methodology, many Liv artefacts have been identified as Christian symbols, and new evidence of the conversion of the local people to Christianity has been discovered: Christian amulets, symbols of Holy Communion, pilgrims' badges, evidence of the baptism of children, etc.<sup>5</sup> An

<sup>2</sup> ŠTERNIS, Indriķis. Pareizticība Latvijā. *Latvijas Vēsture*, 1995, Nr. 4, 9.–12. lpp.

<sup>3</sup> SPIRGIS, Roberts. Kristieši pirms krusta kariem Latvijas teritorijā? Kristietības izplatība Daugavas lībiešu zemēs 11.–12. gs. *Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija*, 2012, 26. sēj., 134.–135. lpp.

<sup>4</sup> VANAGS, Pēters. German Influence on the Christian Discourse of Early Written Latvian. In *Languages in the Lutheran Reformation: Textual Networks and the Spread of Ideas*. Ed. by Mikko KAUKO, Miika NORRO, Kirsī-Maria NUMMILA, Tanja TOROPAINEN, Tuomo FONSÉN. Amsterdam, 2019, pp. 274–277.

<sup>5</sup> SPIRGIS, Robert. Nakhodki zoomorfnykh podvesok «smolenskogo» tipa na territorii Latvii i ikh novaia interpretatsiia. *Stratum plus*, 2012, № 5, s. 195–220; SPIRGIS, Robert. Kruglye podveski livov i ikh simbolyka. In *Arkheologija i istoriia Pskova i Pskovskoi zemli. Seminar imeni akademika V. V. Sedova. Materialy*

assessment of written sources about the process of Christianisation in Latvia has also started.<sup>6</sup>

It should be mentioned here that inhumation among the Daugava Livs started to prevail in the middle of the 11th century. It is especially necessary to look at the study of 'late' cremations, which, although rare, are still found up to the completion of Latin Christianisation in the 13th century. At the moment, work has not been completed on the analysis of all cremations. Therefore, within the framework of this article, the topic is covered based on material from the Ogresgala Čabas burial ground, one of the few funerary monuments of the Daugava Livs, on which extensive research has recently been carried out. Thus, it is proposed to consider the question by combining data from modern methods of archaeological dating and a new approach to the interpretation of the obtained material.

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## The cemetery at Ogresgala Čabas

The complex of archaeological sites at the Čabas farmstead (Ogre district, Ogresgala parish, Ciemupe village) is situated in the centre of Latvia on the right bank of the Daugava, around 37 kilometres from Riga (Fig. 1), and consists of a settlement and two burial grounds. Ogresgala Čabas was discovered in 1979, and trial excavations led by Anna Zariņa took place there in 1984. Three graves and a small part of the settlement were excavated.<sup>7</sup> In 2007, the Institute of History of Latvia resumed research there, due to the fact that the landowner planned to build on the site.

The research carried out in 2007 and 2008 resulted in 35 more burials of the Livs, dating from the 11th to the 13th centuries. A monograph summarising the results of this work is still in progress, but a number of publications have been published, making it possible to present the main results of the research now.<sup>8</sup>

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*61-go zasedaniia (2015 g.).* Vyp. 31. Otv. red. Nikolai LOPATIN. Moskva, Pskov, Sankt-Peterburg, 2016, s. 331–339; SPIRĢIS, Roberts. Finds in Latvia of 13th-century pilgrims' crosses from the Holy Land. *Journal of Historical Archaeology & Anthropological Sciences*, 2018, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 410–415, etc.

<sup>6</sup> SPIRĢIS, Roberts. Indriķa hronika par latīņu un bizantiešu rita baznīcu līdzāspastāvēšanu Austrumlatvijā 13. gadsimta sākumā: historiogrāfija un turpmākās izpētes perspektīvas. In *Reliģiski-filozofiski raksti*, 2020, 28. sēj., 234.–274. lpp.

<sup>7</sup> ZARIŅA, Anna. Aizsardzības izrakumi pie Ciemupes. In *Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas materiāli par arheologu un etnogrāfu 1984. un 1985. gada pētījumu rezultātiem*. Atb. red. Ēvalds MUGURĒVIČS. Rīga, 1986, 148.–150. lpp.

<sup>8</sup> SPIRĢIS, Roberts. Arheoloģiskie pētījumi Ogresgala Čabās 2007. gadā. In *Arheologu pētījumi Latvijā 2006. un 2007. gadā*. Rīga, 2008, 50.–58. lpp.; SPIRĢIS, Roberts; BRŪZIS, Rūdolfs. Arheoloģiskie pētījumi Ogresgala Čabās 2008. gadā. In *Arheologu pētījumi Latvijā 2008. un 2009. gadā*. Rīga, 2010, 52.–56. lpp.; SPIRĢIS, Roberts. Jaunas liecības par akmens riņķiem Daugavas lībiešu kapulaukos: Ogresgala Čabu kapulauka izpēte 2007.–2008. g. In *Ogres vēstures un mākslas muzeja raksti*. Sast. Evija SMILTNIECĒ. Ogre, 2015, 20.–35. lpp.; SPIRĢIS, Roberts; BRŪZIS Rūdolfs. The Ogresgala Čabas Cemetery and Horse Sacrifice.

At the moment, cremations account for only 5% of the investigated burials at Ogresgala Čabas. Only two cremations were discovered, grave 17 and 18 (Fig. 2). All the others, apart from one alleged cenotaph, were inhumations. At the same time, in some other burial grounds of the Livs, cremations account for a quarter (27% in Salaspils Laukskola<sup>9</sup>), or even a third (33.5% in Doles Vampenieši I<sup>10</sup>) of the burials. In fact, if, as will be shown below, the quantitative difference between the different monuments can be easily explained by the chronology of the objects, the question of the cultural and historical context of the cremations in the culture of the ancient Livs is much more complicated. Before we start searching for an answer, it is necessary to dwell on the cremations at Ogresgala Čabas.

### Describing and dating the graves

Both graves of interest were discovered during the first survey season in 2007. The first cremation, burial 18, appeared on the border between excavation areas 50 and 51, in the western part of the area investigated in 2007 and 2008 (Fig. 2) at a depth of 0.5 to 0.6 metres.<sup>11</sup> The highest concentration of burnt bones occupied a round area approximately 0.6 metres in diameter (Fig. 3). The ground around the bones was slightly lighter than the surrounding clay soil. The layer of bones was only a few centimetres thick. Some bones and objects were also found outside this point of concentration, at a distance of up to one metre in a north-northwest direction. Half a twig chain twisted of wire (Fig. 4:1), fragments of broken chains of paired rings (Fig. 4:6), spirals (Fig. 4:7), cylinders (Fig. 4:8) and rings (Fig. 4:5) from cloth decoration, and shards from a circular clay pot with wavy decoration (Fig. 4:10), were found among the small fragments of calcified bones.

On closer inspection, some of the bronze objects showed traces of high temperatures: characteristic cracks and depressions caused by the deformation of molten metal can be seen, and some smaller objects had fused together. However, despite the small size of the finds, which contributed to the melting, the temperature was not so high that the objects lost their original shape and melted.

*Archaeologia Baltica*, 2009, 11, pp. 283–294; SPIRGIS, Robert. Novye dannye o pogrebal'nom obriade daugavskikh livov v XII–XIII vv. po materialam raskopok mogil'nika Ogresgala Chabas 2007–2008 gg. In *Arkheologija i istorija Pskova i Pskovskoi zemli. Seminar imeni akademika V. V. Sedova. Materialy 60-go zasedaniia* (2014 g.). Vyp. 30. Otv. red. Nikolai LOPATIN. Moskva, Pskov, Sankt-Peterburg, 2015, s. 286–293, 354–357.

<sup>9</sup> ZARIŅA, Anna. *Salaspils Laukskolas kapulauks: 10.–13. gadsimts*. Rīga, 2006, 445. lp.

<sup>10</sup> ŠNORE, Elvīra. Daugavas lībieši Doles salā. *Arheologija un etnogrāfija*, 1996, 18. sēj., 128. lp., 3. tab.

<sup>11</sup> The square  $2_{22}$ - $3_{27}$  ×  $20_{50}$ - $22_{10}$ .

The osteological material was burned to whiteness, which is represented by fragments of skull and long bones, indicating a 30 to 40-year-old woman.<sup>12</sup> Judging by the 'scatter' and the low volume of bones, it can be assumed that the burial was disturbed,<sup>13</sup> and that only the deepest lower part of it was preserved at the time of excavation. The nature and the small number of finds, which lagged far behind the wealth usually observed in women's graves, also confirm its destruction. In addition, there was a 'scattering' of the inventory. Thus, one identical twisted link of a flagellum chain (Fig. 4:2) and a deformed wire ring (Fig. 4:3), which probably belonged to the grave, were found 1.75 metres to the northwest, while the pottery shards formed only about a fifth of a whole pot (in undisturbed graves of Livs, pots are usually whole).<sup>14</sup>

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It should be noted that there was no charcoal in the grave. In other words, the burnt bones and objects had been carefully removed from the pyre. It is possible that only some of the bones and burnt goods may have been taken even then. According to cremation researchers in Great Britain, who also noted the unusual cleanliness of cremated remains, which was further enhanced by placing the remains in urns, burnt bones may have been rinsed with water beforehand.<sup>15</sup>

Because of the destruction, a number of elements of the ritual cannot be reconstructed. Considering the white colour and friability of the bone remains, which indicate the high temperature of the pyre,<sup>16</sup> it can be assumed that the clothing, finished in bronze, was not burnt immediately with the body of the dead woman (it was not worn directly on the body). It may have been used to cover the embers of the burnt-out fire, which had already cooled down, or fell into the part of the fire where the temperature was lower. Iron nails (Fig. 4:9) and small fragments of wood (Fig. 4:4) were found in the grave, which may indicate some kind of container in which the remains were placed, the size and shape of which cannot be ascertained.

The cremation of interest is separated from the nearest burials 14, 29, 30, 31 by a distance of three to four metres (Fig. 4:3), which is a sufficient distance to represent a barrow of about four metres in diameter here. Stone heaps two metres to the east-northeast and southeast may have served as a stone circle for this barrow. However, as the area to the west of burial 18 remains unexplored, and the immediate area

<sup>12</sup> The osteological material from the burial site was determined by the bioarchaeologist Dr hist. Gunita Zariņa (Institute of Latvian History of the University of Latvia).

<sup>13</sup> Approximately 70% of the graves have been disturbed. Such a high percentage may be due to intensive economic activity on the Daugava coast, which also resulted in the levelling of existing burial mounds. The mounds also facilitated the task of ancient looters by marking clearly the location of graves.

<sup>14</sup> The calculation is approximate. A more accurate modelling of the pot could involve adjustments. Given that there are still no known cases of cremated remains being placed in urns among the Livs, this burial option is not considered, although it cannot be completely ruled out either.

<sup>15</sup> HOGGET, Richard. *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*. Martlesham, 2010, p. 89.

<sup>16</sup> The authors would like to thank the bioarchaeologist Gunita Zariņa for her advice.

was dug up by a First World War trench that partly destroyed some kind of stone structure here, the presence of a mound is not entirely certain.

Speaking about the dating of burial grounds, it should be noted that the Estonian archaeologist Evald Tõnisson divided Vidzeme Liv finds into three periods.<sup>17</sup> The chronology of the periods was further elaborated on the basis of women's graves by Robert Spirģis: period I lasts from the third quarter of the tenth century to the first quarter of the 11th century; period II covers the second quarter of the 11th century to the third quarter of the 12th century; period III covers the fourth quarter of the 12th to the 13th century.<sup>18</sup>

In the case of burial 18, the lack of finds with a narrow chronological range of occurrence makes it impossible to give a precise date, but the shards from the circular pot rule out the possibility of assigning it to period I. Flagellum chains (Fig. 4:1, 2) made of wire links (they are made of two pieces of wire: one piece is folded in two, leaving loops at the ends, and the second forms a winding piece) were more characteristic of period II than of period III, when easier-to-make links from one piece of wire folded three times and twisted at the centre spread.<sup>19</sup> Iron nails (Fig. 4:9) for coffins made of boards appeared at the end of the 11th century.<sup>20</sup> The grave can therefore be dated to the end of the 11th or the end of the 12th century.

The second cremation discovered during excavations at Ogresgala Čabas, burial 17, survived undisturbed. It was found on the eastern edge of excavation area 50, on the border with area 14 (Fig. 2).<sup>21</sup> A 2.2-metre-long rounded corner of a pit began to stand out on the ground at a depth of 0.65 metres. A grave oriented northwards (azimuth 350°) opened after another 0.1 metres (Fig. 5). Judging by at least seven iron nails (Fig. 8:1), and the remains of wood (it was possible to select and preserve several fragments of planks, the largest of which measures 175×45 millimetres [Fig. 8:2]), the burial was put in a nailed board coffin. The approximate size of the coffin is indicated by the distance of 1.65 metres between the outermost nails and the somewhat darker soil, which occupied an area of 1.8×0.35 metres. At the foot of the grave, outside the coffin, an irregular-shaped, fist-sized granite stone was found.

An unburned Livonian pectoral chain ornament was placed in the coffin, in the same position as found in the inhumations (Fig. 6:3, Fig. 7:2), with the cremated remains

<sup>17</sup> TÕNISSON, Evald. *Die Gauja-Liven und ihre materielle Kultur (11. Jh.–Anfang 13. Jhs.): Ein Beitrag zur ostbaltischen Frühgeschichte*. Tallinn, 1974, S. 149–154.

<sup>18</sup> SPIRĢIS, Roberts. *Brunrupuču saktas ar krūšu važiņrotām un lībiešu kultūras attīstība Daugavas lejtecē 10.–13. gadsimtā*. Rīga, 2008, 326.–328. lpp.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.–177. lpp.

<sup>20</sup> ZARIŅA, Anna. Lībieši Daugavas lejtecē: Ieskats arheoloģiskajā materiālā. *Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas vēstis*, A, 1996, 50. sēj., Nr. 4/5 (585/586), 124. lp.

<sup>21</sup> The square 10<sub>25</sub>–11<sub>10</sub> × 12<sub>67</sub>–14<sub>88</sub>.

placed in the space between the chains (Fig. 6:1c). Calcified bones in the lower part of the decoration were also found on top of the chains (Fig. 6:1d).

The chain adornment consists of a pair of chain-holders (Fig. 7:2a) (type 3c<sub>2</sub>) with three connecting double-link bronze chains (Fig. 6:2b).<sup>22</sup> At 15 centimetres from the left chain-holder, a small oblong chain-divider with four loops for suspension was attached to the two chains (Fig. 7:2c). A number of pendants on bronze and iron flagellum chains (Fig. 7:2g, 2h), or on double ring chains, were suspended on both sides of the chain-holders: an amber pendant (Fig. 7:2d), ten iron keys (Fig. 7:2f) and one bronze one (Fig. 7:2e), a bear tusk (Fig. 7:3), and a bronze pear-shaped pendant (Fig. 7:2j). It is possible that the chain ornament also belonged to an ornament of four bronze spirals (Fig. 7:2k), which was found above the chains on the right-hand side (Fig. 6:1). Yellow beads (Fig. 7:6) from necklaces or embroidered clothing textiles were found between the chain-holders.<sup>23</sup> The dust preserved over the chain-holders and the bronze key can be interpreted as the remains of the coffin cover or the grave covering left from textiles. The bronze key was also found next to cylinders (Fig. 7:7), which were used to decorate the cloth.

In turn, among the calcified bones, we found a drop of smelted bronze (Fig. 7:9), and separate fragments of burnt double-link bronze chains (Fig. 7:8); and a burnt oval fibula (type 5a<sub>1</sub>) was found on the right-hand side under chains of chain ornament (Fig. 6:2a; Fig. 7:1).<sup>24</sup> Judging by the relatively good preservation (the effects of fire patina), the iron knife (Fig. 6:2c; Fig. 7:4) and the iron flagellum chain from three links, on which it was probably suspended, were also exposed to fire. Based on the relative positioning, we can suppose that the knife was directly fixed to the fibula by the flagellum chain (Fig. 6:2b; Fig. 7:5).

Judging by the osteological material, which is represented by fragments of skull, long bones and phalanges of fingers, this was a cremation of a 30 to 40-year-old woman. However, the total weight of the cremated bones collected was much larger than in burial 18, reaching up to one kilogram. The oval fibula of 5a<sub>1</sub> type (Fig. 7:1) and chain-holders of 3c<sub>2</sub> type (Fig. 7:2a) from burial 17 allow us to attribute this ornament to the beginning of period III, which dates this grave to the end of the 12th century.<sup>25</sup>

To the west of grave 17 was grave 13, a disturbed inhumation grave of a 30 to 35-year-old woman (Fig. 5).<sup>26</sup> The distance between the grave pits of both burials was only 0.30 or 0.40 metres, and around 0.75 metres between the bones. In the space between the

<sup>22</sup> SPIRĢIS, R. *Bruņrupuču saktas...*, 47. lp., 1: 197. tab.

<sup>23</sup> When removed from the burial site, some of the beads were scattered.

<sup>24</sup> SPIRĢIS, R. *Bruņrupuču saktas...*, 47. lp., 1:197. tab.

<sup>25</sup> SPIRĢIS, R. *Bruņrupuču saktas...*, 326. lp.; SPIRĢIS, Roberts. Late Liv tortoise brooches of the 12th–13th centuries from the environs of Riga. In *The Hansa town Riga as mediator between East and West: proceedings of an international scientific conference dedicated to 70 years of archaeological research in Riga held in Riga, Latvia, on 23–25 September 2008*. Ed. by Andris CAUNE, Ieva OSE. Rīga, 2009, pp. 182–186.

<sup>26</sup> The square 8<sub>90</sub>–10<sub>20</sub> × 12<sub>70</sub>–15<sub>20</sub>.

graves, a spherical tinkler with a straight slit was found (Fig. 6:10). The inhumation pit was slightly larger, 2.5×1.1 metres, at a depth of 0.9 metres, oriented from south to north (azimuth 2°). Judging by the unfolded position of the intact arm and leg bones, where the bones of the right limbs were above the left, the deceased was lying on her left side. The right arm was bent and pressed against the shoulder, while the left arm was bent over the abdomen.<sup>27</sup> The legs were slightly bent (at an angle of ~35°). The middle part of the grave was mostly dug over. A silver coin pendant was found among the chaotically arranged skeleton bones,<sup>28</sup> glass beads,<sup>29</sup> a bronze ring, several bronze cylinders from textiles, fragments of bronze spirals, fragments of bronze chains from double rings and an iron chain of S-shaped links, and an iron knife. A board coffin was evidenced by the remnants of wood and ten iron nails. In the undisturbed part, a dolomite plate measuring 0.45×0.40×0.03 metres was found at the end of the deceased's left leg.

It appears that a single barrow was built over both women's graves. This is indicated by the section of the ditch to the southeast (Fig. 2). To the west, groups of stones were preserved that can be attributed to the stone circle of this mound. In turn, the southwest edge of the barrow may have been flanked by a stone circle from the barrow above grave 11. Female burial 24 with no grave goods was found in the stones here. The location of these features indicates that the barrow mound above graves 13 and 17 may have reached 5.5 to six metres.

## Cremations at Ogresgala Čabas in the context of ancient Liv culture

In total, about 1,500 burials have been examined in Liv burial grounds in the lower reaches of the River Daugava, among which 306 were cremations (Table 1, 2). The evolution of the Liv cremation ritual is best traced in the material from the most studied burial ground, Salaspils Laukskola,<sup>30</sup> where about 600 Liv burials were discovered (Table 3). Here, among the oldest burials from period I, cremations account for 41% of all burials (54 graves). In period II, against the background of a general increase in the number of burials (247 graves), which can be explained by population growth and the longer duration of the period, the number of cremations also increases (71 graves), but at the same time their share (22.3%) is reduced by almost a half.

A similar trend is observed on the island of Dole (Table 1): in the Vampenieši I burial ground, where burials were mainly carried out during periods I and early II, cremations

<sup>27</sup> The conclusion of the bioarchaeologist Gunita Zariņa.

<sup>28</sup> Undeterminable due to poor preservation.

<sup>29</sup> When taken from the grave, most of the beads were scattered.

<sup>30</sup> The chronology of the burials was determined by the author of the excavations, ZARIŅA, A. *Salaspils Laukskolas kapulauks...*, 156.–178. lpp., 2. tab.

account for 31% of the burials. In turn, at the later Vampenieši II (mainly period II) and Rauši (late period II–III) burial grounds, their share is 14% and 10% respectively. In the late Salaspils Lipši burial ground (late period II to III), cremations were found in only 5% of burials. The numerically fewer representative monuments also confirm the trend: in burial grounds from period I to II (Aizkraukles Lejasbitēni, Tomes Nariņi, Salaspils Vējstūri), cremations may reach a third of the total number of burials, and among the monuments of late period II to III (Ogresgala Čabas, Aizkraukle, Aizkraukles Lejasžagari<sup>31</sup>, Lielvārdes pārceltuve), cremations are rare and account for only 2% to 5%.

The data from little-studied objects where the number of burials does not exceed ten burials may be influenced by the factor of chance, and the statistics may be distorted, since each case of cremation sharply increases the specific gravity. From the same perspective, it is necessary to approach burial grounds of which studies to date have not revealed cremations, for example Ikšķīles Rutuļi (17 burials have been studied).<sup>32</sup>

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An analysis of cremations according to the gender and age of the deceased (Table 1) indicates that children were cremated only in exceptional cases. In turn, if male cremations decrease evenly, then the number of female cremations during period II decreases sharply. Thus, at the Salaspils Laukskola burial ground (Table 3) in period I, mainly women were cremated. The percentage of female cremations (61%) even exceeds that of men (56%). In period II, the proportion of female cremations decreased to 25%. Judging by the chronology of female burials with oval fibulas, which are an important ethnic and social marker among the Livs, the number of cremations of women decreased sharply around the middle of the 11th century.<sup>33</sup> Among female burials with oval fibulas from 1130 to 1270, cremations were rare, and accounted for only about 7%.

Over time, cremations themselves have also undergone change. Three different traditions of cremation can be found in Daugava Liv burial grounds:

Type 1: shallow,<sup>34</sup> round or oval pits averaging 0.5 metres in diameter, which are filled with ashes from the cremation side, where calcified bones are mixed with charcoal, melted, burnt, and often pre-broken objects.<sup>35</sup> Sometimes these 'nests' of ashes were wrapped in cloth.<sup>36</sup>

Type 2: the remains of a funeral pyre buried in rectangular NW-SE oriented pits. The ashes are dispersed, but are sometimes placed in a small wooden chest or box of

<sup>31</sup> Not only were Livs buried in the burial ground but also Latgalians, for whom cremation was not typical.

<sup>32</sup> The head of the excavation identified one object (burial 6) with several burnt objects and the skeleton of a dog as a cremation, although no human remains were found there. For more, see GRAUDONIS, Jānis. Ikšķīles Rumuļi kapulauks. *Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija*, 1987, 15. sēj., 86. lp.

<sup>33</sup> SPIRĢIS, R. *Bruņrupuču saktas...*, 328., 134. lpp.

<sup>34</sup> At Salaspils Laukskola, the depth of the pits was usually 0.5 m, but at Doles Vampenieši I they usually reached only 0.3 m depth: ŠNORE, E. Op. cit., 114. lp.

<sup>35</sup> ZARIŅA, A. *Lībieši Daugavas lejtecē...*, 124. lp.

<sup>36</sup> ZARIŅA, A. *Salaspils Laukskolas kapulauks...*, 18. lp.

birch bark. Compared with inhumations, these pits are shorter, normally 50×120 to 80×170 millimetres in size. The grave goods are burnt.

Type 3: the grave pit has a configuration comparable to that of inhumations. Board coffins are also used, and the implements are not usually burnt, but placed in the grave in a similar manner to inhumations.<sup>37</sup>

In terms of chronology, cremations of the first type were common in the tenth and 11th centuries.<sup>38</sup> A small burial pit was the easiest way to put the ashes in the earth, which is probably why such cremations (type 1) continued to be widespread. In period II, cremations of type 2 were used more widely, and type 3 began to spread. In turn, in period III, among the already rare cremations, the proportion of type 3 increased significantly.

Three cremations from the first Latin parish cemeteries in the Lower Daugava, Ikšķile and Mārtiņsala, should be mentioned separately. Two of them were without grave goods,<sup>39</sup> but grave 280 at Ikšķile contained burnt jewellery: an oval bronze fibula of variant 5b<sub>1</sub>, a round silver pendant with a symbol of the Eucharist,<sup>40</sup> a variant 4b bronze chain-holder, two bronze spherical buttons, and an iron needle. Calcined bones with jewellery occupied a rectangular area measuring 0.35×0.26 metres. Judging by the plan, the bones were taken from the pyre together with charcoal.<sup>41</sup> No traces of a coffin or any other receptacle for bones were found in this case.<sup>42</sup>

The fibula and the chain-holder allow us to date this burial to the second quarter of the 13th century. The other two cremations from church cemeteries also date from the 13th century,<sup>43</sup> but in the Latvian material individual corpse burnings in Christian cemeteries can be found throughout the Middle Ages. The most notable examples come from the upper reaches of the Daugava, in the cemeteries of Krāslavas Augustinišķi and Naujienas Slutišķi, dating back to the late 14th and early 16th centuries,<sup>44</sup> one of which, burial 45 at Augustinišķi, is a striking example of cremated remains buried in a relatively well-preserved board coffin, with unburnt, decorated clothing and items of personal piety.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> ZARIŅA, A. *Lībieši Daugavas lejtecē...*, 124. lp.

<sup>39</sup> Grave 583 at Ikšķile (excavated by Jānis Graudonis, 1973) and grave 1800 (excavated by Ēvalds Murgurēvičs, 1973).

<sup>40</sup> Livonian women wore these pendants around their necks as parts of necklaces of glass beads. Their symbolism is discussed in a separate article, SPIRGIS, R. *Kruglye podveski livov...*, s. 331–339.

<sup>41</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, Vitolds. *Bēru tradīcijas Latvijā pēc arheoloģiski pētīto 14.–18. gadsimta apbedīšanas vietu materiāla* (Latvijas nacionālā vēstures muzeja raksti, Nr 21. Arheoloģija). Rīga, 2015, 62. lp., 22. att.

<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that in Ikšķile cemetery the remains of coffins, wood and iron nails, were found in only a few graves, GRAUDONIS, Jānis. *Ikšķiles arheoloģiskā izpēte 1968. g. Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas referātu tēzes par arheologu, antropologu un etnogrāfu 1968. gada pētījumu rezultātiem*. Rīga, 1969, 34. lp.

<sup>43</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, V. *Bēru tradīcijas...*, 62. lp.

<sup>44</sup> BERGA, Tatjana. *Augšdaugavas 14.–17. gadsimta senvietas: no Krāslavas līdz Slutišķiem*. Rīga, 2007, 14.–17., 88., 89. lpp.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 14.–17. lpp., 7. att.

Thus, burial 17 at Ogresgala Čabas corresponds fully to the second variant of Livonian cremations. The nails and wooden remains found in burial 18 could also be attributed to this type of cremation, although not all the details of the ritual can be determined with complete certainty due to the destruction.

It should be added that the excavations were carried out in 2007 and 2008 in the peripheral part of the burial ground. In our case, the area with the oldest graves is presumably a hundred metres downstream, where, during the investigations in 2003 and 2004, and thanks to the material collected there in 2007 and 2008, fragments of typical tenth-century objects have appeared: Scandinavian oval fibulae (Fig. 9:6, 11, 12, 16), massive hollow bronze Liv armbands (Fig. 9:8, 17), a horseshoe-fibula with cubic ends (Fig. 9:15), twisted neck-ring pieces (Fig. 9:7), a pendant-dirham (Fig. 9:4), etc. The fragments are small, badly burnt and recovered. It can be assumed that they are part of the inventory of shallow buried cremations, and therefore were damaged during agricultural work.

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In addition to the cremations themselves, the grave pits or the bases of the mounds could have been burnt or covered with ashes and coals. In Ogresgala Čabas in particular, the filling of the pit of burial 16 also contained small embers, and in the barrow ditches between burials 7 and 23, burial 32 and burial 33/35, the remains of fires were found in the form of thin layers of charcoal. Some burnt objects were also found: melted beads (Fig. 9:10) in the first case, and burnt dirham (Fig. 9:5) in the second.<sup>46</sup>

Archaeologists have traditionally regarded such traces of various rituals involving fire as evidence of paganism. It is believed that the purpose of these rituals could have been to cleanse the earth of the influence of evil forces. The personal belongings of the deceased (of organic origin) could also have been burned next to the grave.<sup>47</sup> Researchers find similar manifestations of the effects of fire everywhere. This issue is considered more thoroughly in East European literature. Various authors have expressed the opinion that bonfires at funerals had a memorial significance, they were the remains of a wake, they should symbolically replace the hearth, they serve as cleansing from disease, evil spirits and other filth, or they were simply reminiscent of pagan cremations.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, to sum up the brief overview of the evolution of the cremation ritual in the lower reaches of the Daugava, we would like to emphasise once again that pagan cremations of the first variant prevailed in the initial stage of the culture of the ancient Livs. It is possible that more complex type 2 cremations became widespread

<sup>46</sup> Since these finds are somewhat older than the open graves, it cannot be ruled out that they are the remains of period I cremations destroyed by barrows.

<sup>47</sup> APALS, Jānis; ATGĀZIS, Māris; DAIGA, Jolanta, et al. *Latvijas PSR arheoloģija*. Rīga, 1974, 195. lp.; ZARIŅA, A. *Libieši Daugavas lejtecē...*, 124. lp.; CIGLIS, Jānis; ZIRNE, Sandra; ŽEIERE, Irita. *Libieši senatnē = The Livs in antiquity*. Rīga, 2001, 18. lp.; ZEMĪTIS, Guntis. *Ornaments un simbols Latvijas aizvēsturē*. Rīga, 2004, 117. lp.

<sup>48</sup> DZIK, Michał. *Przemiany zwyczajów pogrzebowych w międzyrzeczu Bugu i górnej Narwi (XI–XV w.)*. T. II. Rzeszów, 2015, s. 127–137.

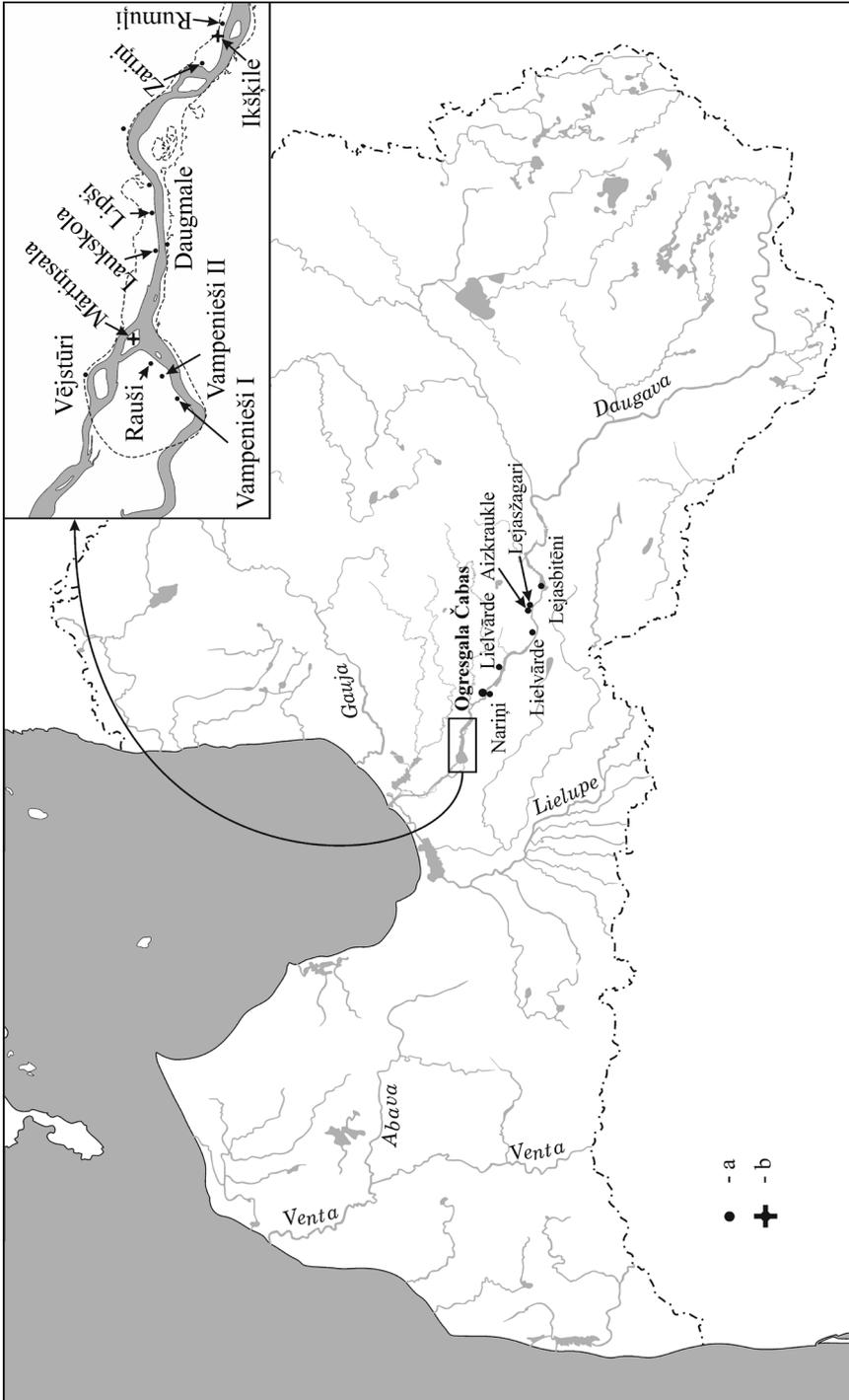


Fig. 1. The location of the Ogresgala Čabas burial ground: a) Liv burial grounds; b) Medieval church cemeteries with cremations

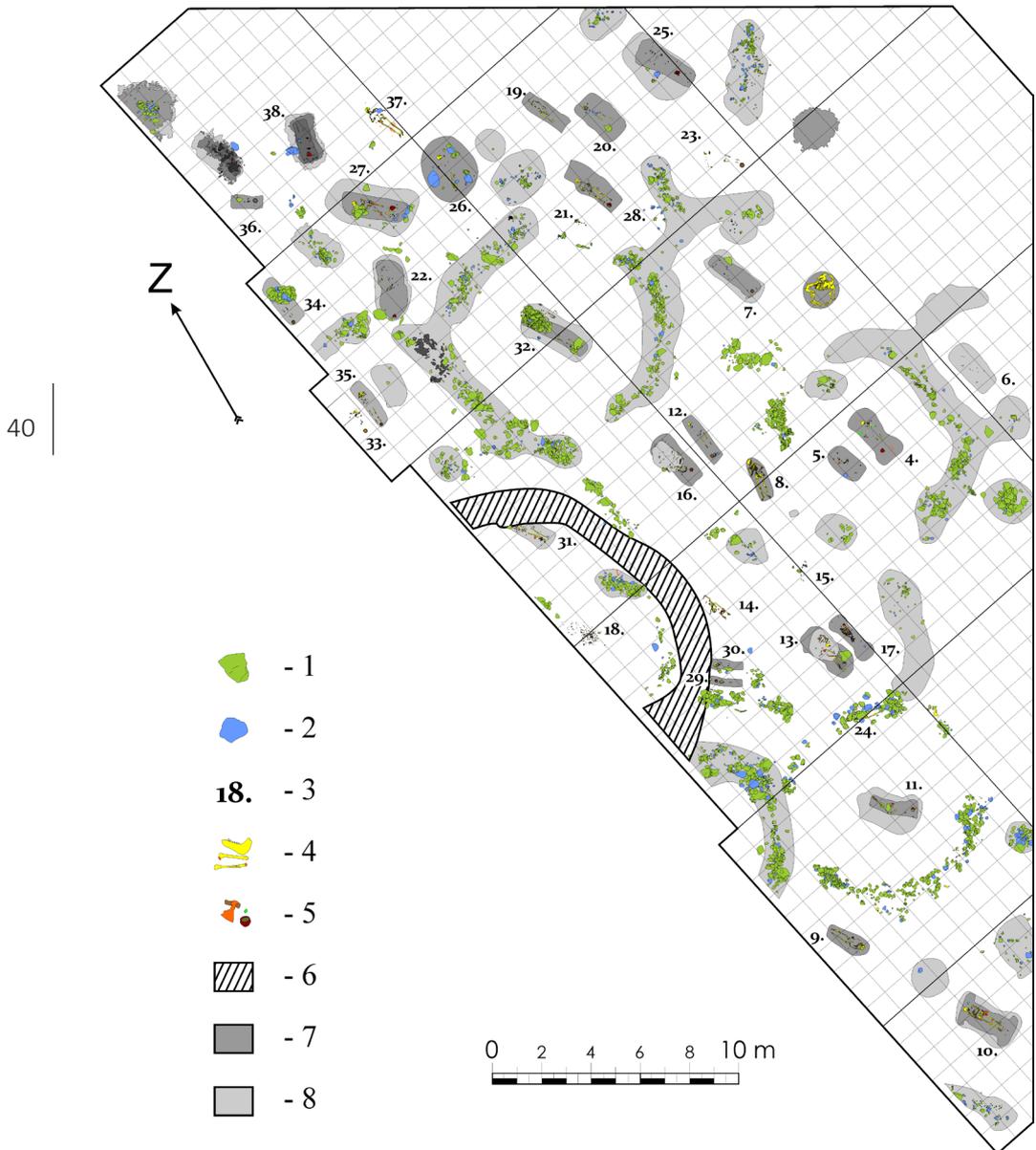


Fig. 2. A plan of burials and artefacts excavated in 2007–2008: 1) dolomite; 2) granite; 3) burial number; 4) bones; 5) artefacts; 6) a trench from the First World War; 7) dark earth from the filling of graves; 8) a dark layer from the filling of ditches and holes

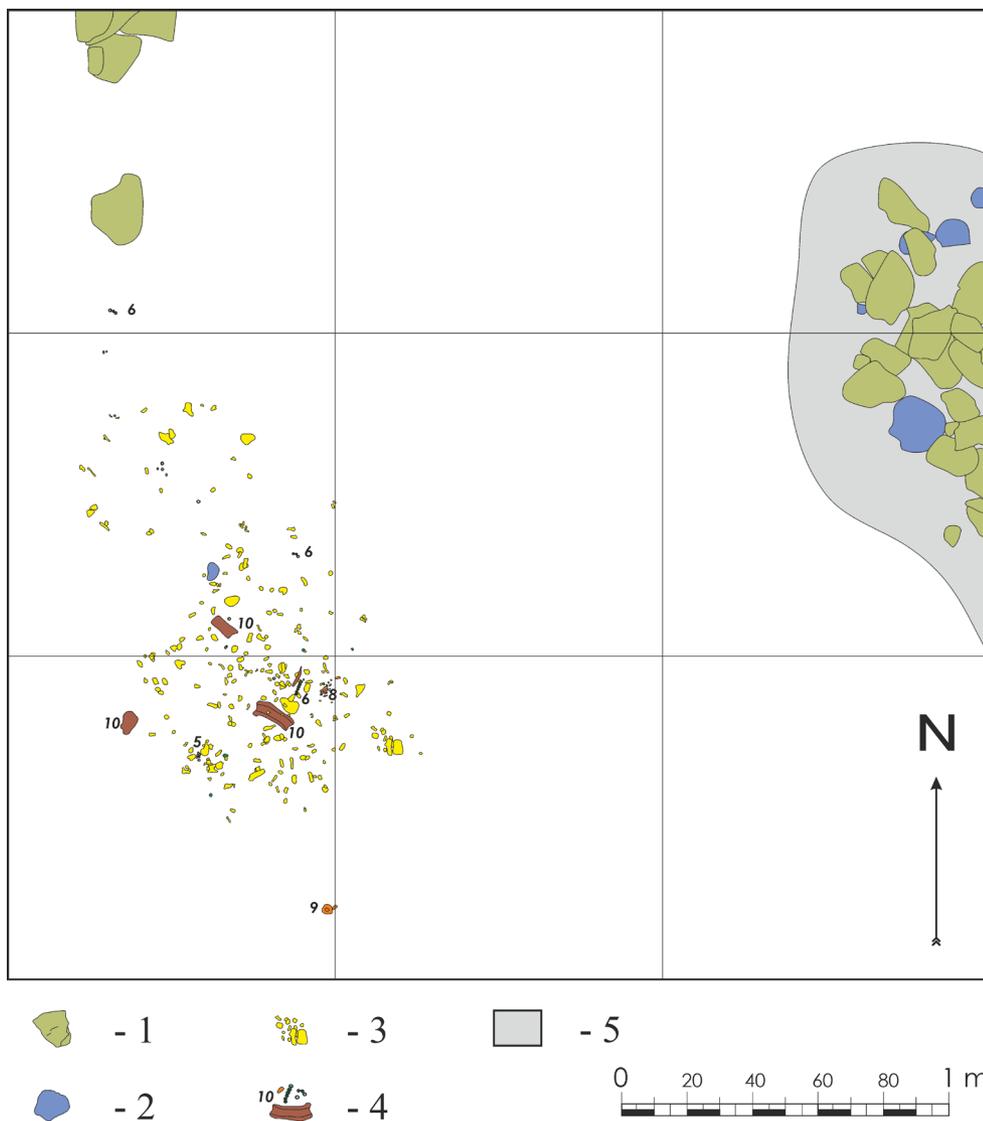


Fig. 3. A plan of burial 18: 1) dolomite; 2) granite; 3) bones; 4) fragments of objects and shards; 6) dark earth from the filling of the ditch



Fig. 4. Grave goods from burial 18: 1) a fragment of a wound link from a chain of bars (585<sup>49</sup>); 2) a wound link from a chain of bars (586); 3) a ring (591); 4) organic remains (no number); 5) burnt fragments of a double-link chain (588, 592, 593); 6) burnt fragments of spirals (587); 7) cylinders from textile decoration (589, 590); 8) nails (594–596); 9) shards of a circular pot (597). 1–3, 5–7 bronze; 8 iron; 9 ceramic

<sup>49</sup> Here and further are numbers from the list of finds from the primary documentation of the expedition.

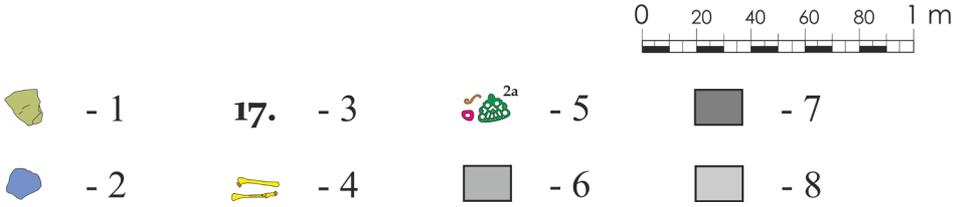
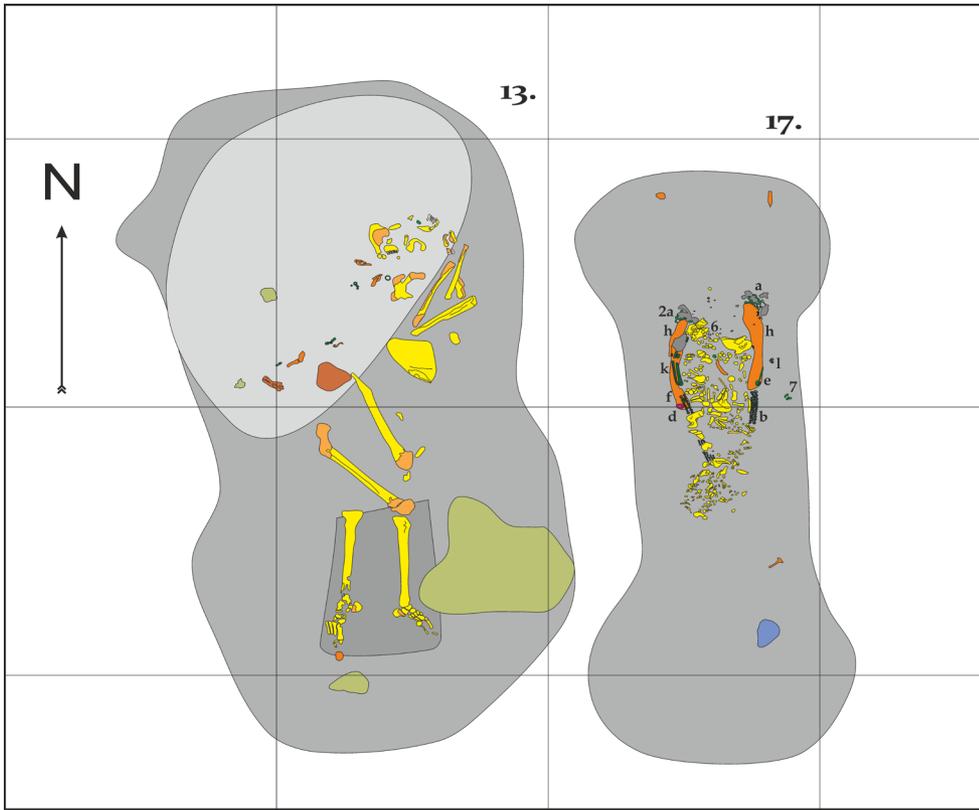


Fig. 5. A plan of burials 13 and 17: 1) dolomite; 2) granite; 3) burial number; 4) bones; 5) grave goods; 6) grave pit, 7) dark earth from the filling of the coffin, 8) disturbed area



Fig. 6. Cleaning burial 17 (photograph by R. Spīrgis): 1) the level of calcified bones: a) stone; b) iron nails; c), d) calcified bones; 2) detail with an oval brooch: a) a bronze oval brooch; b) an iron twig chain; c) an iron knife; 3) chain decoration after the removal of calcified bones



Fig. 7. Grave goods from burial 17: 1) burnt oval fibula (561); 2) chain decoration (562); 2a) a pair of openwork trapezoidal chain holders; 2b) three double-link chains; 2c) a rectangular chain-divider with four loops for attaching the chains; 2d) an amber pendant; 2e) a bronze key; 2f) iron keys (561, 572, 573); 2g) wound chains; 2h) fragments of iron wound chains; 2i) a double-link chain; 2j) a pear-shaped pendant; 2k) bronze spirals (561, 569); 2l) rings from chains of double rings (561, 562, 563); 3) a bear fang (571); 4) a knife (574); 5) a wound chain (568); 6) yellow beads (565, 566); 7) cylinders from textile decoration (570); 8) fragments of burnt and broken double-link chain rings (563, 564); 9) a drop of melted metal (575). 1, 2a-c, 2e, 2g, 2i-l, 7-9 bronze; 2d amber; 2f, 2h iron, bronze; 4, 5 iron; 3 bone; 6 glass mass



*Fig. 8.* The remains of a coffin from burial 17: 1) iron nails (576–582); 2) the remains of wood from boards (no number)



Fig. 9. Random finds from Liv cremations at Orgesgala Čabas: 1) melted indeterminate objects (A13245: 1, 15, 2007 No. 837, 2008 No. 217, 220, 221, 223); 2) melted fragments of double-link chains (A13245: 3, A13401: 3); 3) fragments of plaited chains (A13245: 10); 4, 5) a dirham pendant (2003 No. 96; 2007 No. 736 A13245: 8); 6) a zoomorphic plate from a Scandinavian oval brooch (?), type P47<sup>50</sup> (A13401: 2); 7) melted fragments of twisted neck-rings (A13245: 17, 2008 No. 226); 8) two fragmentary belt pendants (A13345: 12); 9, 10 & 18) fragments of armbands (A13245: 18, 4, 2008 No. 213); 11) a fragment of a neck-ring (?) (A13245: 9); 12) melted beads (2007 No. 354, 355); 13–15) melted fragments of Scandinavian oval brooches, types P51C4, P52, P55:1 (A13245: 2, 2007 No. 831, 2008 No. 219); 16) two melted fragments of spiral fingerrings (?) (2007 No. 837); 17) a fragment of the bow and cubic end of a horseshoe-fibula (2007, No 836): 1–3, 7–11, 13–18 bronze, 4 silver, 5 silver, bronze(?), 6 bronze, gilding, 12 glass

<sup>50</sup> Types of Scandinavian oval brooches by PETERSEN, Jan. *Vikingetides smykker*. Stavanger, 1928.

Table 1. Gender and age characteristics of Liv cremations

		burialground														
		Salaspils Laukskola	Doles Vampenieši I	Doles Vampenieši II	Doles Rauši	Salaspils Lipši	Ikšķiles Zariņi	Ogresgala Čabas	Lielvādras Pārceltuve	Aizkraukles Lejašžagari	Aizkraukle	Salaspils Vējstūri	Tomes Nariņi			
cremation	dating	date uncertain		15	6	5	1	3	3					1	2	
		period I	uncertain	2	4	1										
			children	2	1											
			females	28	18				1						1	
			males	23	20										2	
			total	54	42	1			1						2	
		period II	uncertain	6	0	1							1			
			females	20	10	3	2		2	1	2				2	2
			males	45	6	7			6			1			3	1
		period III	total	71	16	11	2		8	1	2	1	1	1	5	3
			uncertain	1			2	1								
			children				1									
			females	3			1				1					
	gender/age	males	20			10	1									
		total	24			14	2		1							
		uncertain	20	9	6	3	4	3				1	1			
		children	2	1		2										
		females	53	28	4	2		3	2	2				3	3	
	males	92	27	7	10	1	6				1		5	2		
%		27	32	14	10	5	28	5,3	5,4	2,7	2,8	26	31			
total		164	64	17	17	5	12	2	2	1	1	8	5			
graves total		609	198	118	168	100	43	38	37	37	36	31	16			

Continuing table 1

		burialground					total
		Skrīveru Lielrutuji	Daugmale I	Aizkraukles Lejasbitēni	Daugmale II		
cremation	dating	date uncertain					36
		period I	uncertain			1	8
			children				3
			females			3	51
			males		2		47
			total		2	3	1
		period II	uncertain				8
			females	1			45
			males		1		70
		total	1	1			123
		period III	uncertain				4
			children				1
			females				5
			males				31
			total				
	gender/age	uncertain				1	48
		children					5
		females	1		3		104
		males		3			154
		%	10	50	38	33	21
total		1	3	3	1	306	
graves total		10	6	8	3	1458	

Table 2. Types of Liv cremations

burialground		Salaspils Laukskola	Doles Vampenieši I	Doles Vampenieši II	Doles Rauši	Salaspils Lipši	Ikšķiles Zariņi	Ogresgala Čabas	Lielvādris Pārceltuve	Aizkraukles Lejašžagari	Aizkraukle	Salaspils Vējstūri	Tomes Nariņi	Skrīveru Lielrutuji	Daugmale I	Aizkraukles Lejasbitēni	Daugmale II	total
date uncertain		15	6	5	1	3	3					1	2					36
period I	uncertain	6	3	1								1						11
	in coffin	1	2															3
	rectangle pit	7	3															10
	round/oval pit	40	39				1					1			2	3		86
period II	uncertain	5	1	1				1										8
	in coffin	7	4	2			3						1					17
	rectangle pit	24	7	1			3					3	2	1				41
	round/oval pit	35	4	7	2		2		2	1	1	2			1			57
period III	uncertain	2			1													3
	in coffin	7			4			1										12
	rectangle pit	8				2												10
	round/oval pit	7			9													16
type of cremation	uncertain	14	5	4	2	1	1	1	2			1						31
	in coffin	15	6	2	4	1	3	1					1					33
	rectangle pit	42	10	2		2	3					4	3	1				67
	round/oval pit	93	43	9	11	1	5			1		3	1		3	3	1	174
total		164	64	17	17	5	12	2	2	1	1	8	5	1	3	3	1	306

Table 3. The ratio of cremations to inhumations at the Salaspils Laukskola burial ground

		<i>total</i>	<i>inhumations</i>	<i>cremations</i>	<i>proportion of cremations (%)</i>
	date uncertain	29	14	<b>15</b>	<b>52</b>
period I	total	133	79	<b>54</b>	<b>41</b>
	uncertain	6	4	<b>2</b>	<b>33</b>
	children	41	39	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
	females	46	18	<b>28</b>	<b>61</b>
	males	41	18	<b>23</b>	<b>56</b>
period II	total	318	247	<b>71</b>	<b>22</b>
	uncertain	21	15	<b>6</b>	<b>29</b>
	children	109	109	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	females	79	59	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>
	males	109	64	<b>45</b>	<b>41</b>
period III	total	129	105	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>
	uncertain	12	11	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>
	children	24	24	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	females	24	21	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>
	males	69	49	<b>20</b>	<b>29</b>
	total	609	445	<b>164</b>	<b>27</b>

under the influence of Christianity. In the middle of the 11th century, the total number of cremations began to decline, quite sharply among women. Their number continued to decrease in the future, so from period III only single female cremations are known. Among men, the number of cremations also fell, and is less than 30%. In the general burial rite of these cremations (type 3), in any case, what archaeological methods can recognise, the form and orientation of pits, coffins, pots, the dressing of the 'body', etc, do not differ from inhumation ceremonies, except only the appearance of the body of the deceased, which was previously 'processed' by fire.

It should be noted that similar cremations, which imitate the ritual of a common burial with inhumation, can also be found among the Latgalian. Unlike Liv culture, in which pagan cremations originally occupied a large proportion of all graves, Latgalian culture has always been dominated by inhumations. The need for the convenient transport of a body long distances to the homeland is usually cited as the reason for burning corpses.<sup>51</sup>

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## The ritual of cremation

Pagan cremations similar to the corpse burning of the first variant described above were widespread in neighbouring areas inhabited by Scandinavians, Slavs and Baltic Finno-Ugrians. The closest example to the Livs are the Scandinavian burial grounds in Kurzeme: Grobiņa<sup>52</sup> and the recently discovered monuments near Kuldīga.<sup>53</sup> It is no coincidence that the literature suggests that part of the Kurzeme population migrated and participated actively in the ethnogenesis of the Vidzeme Livs.<sup>54</sup>

As for the process of burning bodies, the archaeologist studying burial grounds deals mostly with what happened after cremation. The burning itself must have taken place outside the burial site or settlement, as no such bonfires have yet been found among the Livs. We will probably never know whether the burning took place at night, which could have been particularly 'spectacular', or during the day, when the smoke could be seen from a great distance. We can only imagine the heat, the sounds and smells that accompanied the burning of the body, and the sensations

<sup>51</sup> RADIŅŠ, Arnis. 10.–13. gadsimta senkapi latgaļu apdzīvotajā teritorijā un Austrumlatvijas etniskās, sociālās un politiskās vēstures jautājumi (Latvijas vēstures muzeja raksti, 5. sēj.). Rīga, 1999, 27.–31. lpp.

<sup>52</sup> NERMAN, Birger. *Grobin-Seeburg: Ausgrabungen und Funde*. Stockholm, 1958.

<sup>53</sup> LŪSĒNS, Mārtiņš. Jauns skandināvu kapulauks Kurzemē. *Arheologu pētījumi Latvijā 2014.–2015. gadā*. Rīga, 2016, 68.–72. lpp.; LŪSĒNS, Mārtiņš. Arheoloģiskie pētījumi Kundu senkapos 2017. gadā. *Arheologu pētījumi Latvijā 2016.–2017. gadā*. Rīga, 2018, 68.–72. lpp.

<sup>54</sup> SPIRĢIS, R. *Brūņrupuču saktas...*, 377.–379. lpp.

and emotions it may have evoked in those present.<sup>55</sup> After incineration, the 'material' was collected and the remains were transported to the burial site. How much time elapsed between the cremation and the funeral is also impossible to determine.<sup>56</sup> Some, albeit sketchy, information about pagan cremations in the pre-Christian era can be found in written sources. For example, the cremation of a Scandinavian chief-tain is described in the heroic epic *Beowulf*:

The Great people built a pyre for Beowulf,  
Stacked and decked it until it stood four-square,  
Hung with helmets, heavy war-shields  
And shining armour, just as he had ordered.  
Then his warriors laid him in the middle of it,  
Mourning a lord far-famed and beloved.  
On a height they kindled the hugest of all  
Funeral fires; fumes of wood smoke  
Billowed darkly up, the blaze roared  
And drowned out their weeping, wind died down  
And flames wrought havoc in the hot bone-house,  
Burning it to the core. They were disconsolate  
And wailed aloud for their lord's decease.<sup>57</sup>

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A detailed description of all the stages of the funeral of the leader of the Rus' can be found in the records of the tenth-century Arabian traveller Ahmad Ibn Fadlan: placing the body of the deceased in a special chamber, preparing a platform for the cremation, building a wooden platform and placing a boat with the body on it, and the sacrifice of animals and a female concubine.<sup>58</sup>

However, these sources should be read very critically. For example, the *Beowulf* epic, covering the events of the seventh and eighth centuries, was written only in the

<sup>55</sup> Thus Professor Viacheslav Lipin, the founder of the first crematorium in Russia, made the following records: 'When a corpse is burnt without a coffin, the following picture is observed. At the moment of entering the corpse into the incineration chamber the clothes and hair burst into flames, then the eyes burst, the corpse begins to move, due to the contraction of muscles from the high temperature. The head leans back, the arms crossed over the chest are spread, the legs are bent at the knees and hips, and sometimes the lower back is bent, causing the upper body to rise. At the same time the limbs (muscular tissue) begin to burn and the facial and head tissues are burned. There is a boil of blood through the eye, ear and nose holes and through the mouth. The sutures of the cranium separate. At the same time, the limb bones and thorax are marked and the head separates from the torso. Almost simultaneously with the beginning of the burning of the skeleton, the skull collapses and the brain, burning with greenish flames, is revealed. The limbs fall off at this time. The lungs and viscera of the thorax burn and, somewhat later, the viscera of the abdomen begin to burn. The skeleton burns down at this time, but the ash partially retains the shape of the bones and partially crumbles. The viscera gradually burn except the brain, lungs, stomach, kidneys and liver, which burn last and in consecutive order as listed.' Source URL: <<http://www.requiem.ru/history/doc128/>>, last accessed: 25.09.2022.

<sup>56</sup> HOGGET, R. Op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> *Beowulf*. Transl. by Seamus HEANEY. New York, London, 2001, lines 3137–3149.

<sup>58</sup> The format of this article does not permit an extensive quotation from Ibn Fadlan's Book. The reader may refer to the English translation of the book: DUCZKO, Wladyslaw. *Viking Rus: Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe* (The Northern World, Vol. 12). Leiden, Boston, 2004, pp. 139–141.

13th and 14th centuries. In turn, one of the aims of Ahmad Ibn Fadlan's embassy, described in the 'Book', was to strengthen the faith of the Bulgars and convert the unbelieving inhabitants of the Volga basin to Islam. Therefore, along with a literal reading of this source for the reconstruction of pagan rituals,<sup>59</sup> the literature suggests that Ahmad Ibn Fadlan deliberately introduced grotesque details, such as rampant drunkenness, uncleanliness and sexual licentiousness, which clearly go against the basic Muslim customs of ritual ablution, the prohibition of alcoholic drinks, and the isolation of women from male society.<sup>60</sup> This tendency to exaggerate the barbarity of northern peoples may have been based on the southern peoples' shared religious and geographical view of the world.

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The pagan cremations of the Prussians were described briefly by the Anglo-Saxon traveller Wulfstan in the late ninth century in the Old English translation of the work by Orosius: '[...] when a man is dead there, that he lies indoors uncremated [...] for a month and sometimes two, and the kings and the other high-ranking men as much longer [...] sometimes for half a year [...] Then the same day that they wish to carry him to the funeral pyre, they then divide up his property [...] carried out and cremated with his weapons and clothing [...] And that is a custom among the Ests that people of every nationality must be cremated there, and if a single bone is found unburnt there, they must atone for it greatly.'<sup>61</sup>

It says of the Slavs in the undated part of the Tale of Bygone Years: 'Whenever a death occurred, a feast was held over the corpse, and then a great pyre was constructed, on which the deceased was laid and burned. After the bones were collected, they were placed in a small urn and set upon a post by the roadside.'<sup>62</sup> It is noteworthy that this source does not use the concept of 'burial' to describe pagan rites, which only Christian inhumations are endowed with.<sup>63</sup>

The chronicler Heinrich of Livonia mentions the cremation ritual only among the inhabitants of Saccalia, who in 1208, after a raid by the Letts '[...] for many days they collected and cremated the pitiful bodies, a task inflicted on them by the Letts, and held funerals, according to their custom with much wailing and much drinking';<sup>64</sup> and the Curonians in 1210, the latter using the rite in a military campaign after the

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> KOVALEVSKII, Andrei. Predislovie. In *Kniga Akhmeda Ibn-Fadlana o ego puteshestvii na Volgu v 921-922 gg.* Sost. Andrei KOVALEVSKII. Khar'kov, 1956, s. 8.

<sup>61</sup> BATELY, Janet. Wulfstan's voyage and his description of *Estland*: the text and the language of the text. In *Wulfstan's Voyage. The Baltic Sea region in the early Viking Age as seen from shipboard* (Maritime Culture of the North, Vol. 2). Ed. by Anton ENGLERT, Athena TRAKADAS. Roskilde, 2009, pp. 16-17.

<sup>62</sup> *The Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text.* Transl. and ed. by Samuel Hazzard CROSS, Olgerd P. SHERBOWITZ-WETZOR. Cambridge, MA, 1953, pp. 56-57, col. 14.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>64</sup> HENRICUS Lettus. *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* (henceforth *HCL*). Transl. and ed. by James BRUNDAGE. New York, 2003, book III, chap. 12, §6.

unsuccessful siege of Riga: '[...] the Kurs ... withdrew from the city, collected their dead, and returned to the ships. After crossing the Dvina, they rested for three days while cremating their dead and mourning over them.'<sup>65</sup> The Livonian Rhymed Chronicle mentions the cremation of their fallen soldiers by the Prussians-Sambians,<sup>66</sup> Lithuanians and Žemaitians.<sup>67</sup>

What was the significance of the cremation ritual in the pagan era? Ethnographic parallels suggest that fire was seen as a means of cleansing and liberating the soul by destroying the body.<sup>68</sup> Recall, for example, a conversation between Ibn Fadlan and one of those present at the burning of the *konung* of Rus'. 'He said: "You Arabs are fools." "Why?" I asked him. He said: "You take the people who are most dear to you and whom you honour most and you put them in the ground where the earth, insects and worms devour them. We burn him in a moment, so that he enters Paradise at once."<sup>69</sup>

Analysing cremation rites in the early Saxon context, the English scholar Howard Williams insists that cremation functioned as a mechanism whereby the body of the deceased was not simply destroyed or purified, but was transformed into something new. For example, according to this 'ideology of transformation', if animals were burned together with humans on a bonfire, there was a fusion of man and animal in the fiery glow.<sup>70</sup> This approach suggests an obvious anachronism: the transference of shamanistic and animistic ideas into the realities of the barbaric society of the Middle Ages.

One way or another, with the introduction of Christianity, the practice was eradicated everywhere. The transition to skeletonisation has recently been singled out by archaeologists who study the process of Christianisation as the main feature fixing the conversion of funerary monuments.<sup>71</sup> But why was the practice of cremation so undesirable for a Christian cemetery?

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., book IV, chap. 15, §5.

<sup>66</sup> *The Livonian Rhymed Chronicle* (henceforth *LRH*). Transl. and ed. by Jerry C. SMITH, William L. Urban. Bloomington, 1977, lines 3880–3893.

<sup>67</sup> *LRH*, lines 10099–10101.

<sup>68</sup> HOGGET, R. Op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>69</sup> DUCZKO, W. Op. cit., pp. 139–141.

<sup>70</sup> WILLIAMS, Howard. An Ideology of Transformation: Cremation Rites and Animal Sacrifice in Early Anglo-Saxon England. In *The Archaeology of Shamanism*. Ed. by Neil PRICE. London, 2003, pp. 194–211.

<sup>71</sup> MUSIN, Aleksandr. *Khristianskie drevnosti srednevekovoi Rusi IX–XIII vv. (po materialam pogrebal'nykh pamiatnikov na territorii Novgorodskoi zemli)*. Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata istoricheskikh nauk. Sankt-Peterburg, 1997, s. 28.

## Attitudes in Christianity towards burning the dead

It is known that in the ancient world a dead body was considered defiled and unclean, which is why burial grounds were located outside cities and settlements. In early Christianity, based on Jewish tradition and the belief that the end of the world would mark the resurrection of the dead, when their souls would be reunited with their bodies, it was assumed that the body would be preserved intact. The dead were perceived as having fallen asleep until Judgment Day, and the Second Coming was, in fact, expected in the very near future. Therefore, the practice of using crypts, stone sarcophagi, wooden coffins and similar structures was introduced to preserve the mortal remains, and the remains were considered to be no more unclean than the bodies of living people.<sup>72</sup>

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The fire of the pyre itself may have been associated with hellfire, reinforcing the notion that destroying a body by burning it prevents resurrection.<sup>73</sup> It was no coincidence that burning was a Church punishment that carried the punishment to a time after death,<sup>74</sup> 'guaranteed' to deprive the anathematised person of the possibility of resurrection.<sup>75</sup> The ashes of an executed man were usually scattered or poured into water.<sup>76</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the appearance of cremation in a Medieval Christian cemetery baffles the archaeologist and makes him see a 'pagan trace' there,<sup>77</sup> although in special cases, when an executed person received ecclesiastical forgiveness of sins as a result of repentance, the ashes could still be buried in the holy ground of a cemetery<sup>78</sup> and thus hope to be resurrected.

It should be noted that although such visions of the 'mechanics' of resurrection were shared by a broad cross-section of the population, ordinary people who felt the acceptability of being of this world and the flesh of the resurrection, this was not the only vision in the Christian religion. The early Christians, ascetics and some religious figures were less scrupulous about this matter, showing a desire to leave the body without a funeral or at the mercy of the occasional passer-by.<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that such an ancient and quite developed tradition of extreme asceticism and self-abasement (especially among monks), including the posthumous desecration of the body and leaving it to be eaten by wild beasts and birds, continued to exist

<sup>72</sup> AR'ES, Filipp. *Chelovek pered licom smerti*. Moskva, 1992, s. 59–60, 270.

<sup>73</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, V. *Bēru tradīcijas...*, 60. lpp.

<sup>74</sup> The justification for cremation as a way to bury sinners is based on the words of Peter: 'and reducing the cities of the Sodomites and of the Gomorrhites into ashes, condemned them to be overthrown, making them an example to those that should after act wickedly' (2 Peter 2:6).

<sup>75</sup> AR'ES, F. Op. cit., s. 72–73.

<sup>76</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, Vitolds. Neparasti guldīti mirušie Latvijas vēsturisko laiku kapsētās. *Latvijas vēstures institūta žurnāls*, 2007, Nr.1 (62), 40.–42. lpp.

<sup>77</sup> BERGA, T. Op. cit., 14.–17. lpp., 88. att.

<sup>78</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, V. Neparasti guldīti..., 40.–42. lpp.

<sup>79</sup> AR'ES, F. Op. cit., s. 61.

throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>80</sup> It was particularly symbolic that a dead body had to be handed over to dogs, as it was believed that the soul of the deceased would be eaten by a dog along with the body.<sup>81</sup>

The subject of the funeral rite was very rarely raised by early Christian writers. At the turn of the second and third centuries, Tertullian in his work *De resurrectione carnis* makes fun of the pagan Roman custom of cremating dead people.<sup>82</sup> In the next work *De corona militis*, he mentions the custom of cremation in the context of the downsides of Christian service in the Roman army: '*Et cremabitur ex disciplina castrensis christianus, cui cremare non licuit, cui Christus merita ignis indulsit?*'<sup>83</sup> In both works, the fire of funereal cremations is compared with pagan sacrificial burning. Military life itself is also seen as not the best occupation for a Christian (at that time it was about serving a pagan emperor and a pagan state), but at the same time Tertullian recognised the possibility of Christians pursuing a military career, provided they did not renounce the truths of the Gospel in favour of idolatry. The rest is not so significant. At the same time, it was necessary to try not to fall into sin and to steadfastly endure all other deviations from the ideal Christian way of life that accompany the life of a legionnaire (and therefore posthumous cremation): '*aut omnibus modis cauilandum, ne quid aduersus Deum committatur ... aut nouissime perpetiendum pro Deo, quod aeque fides pagana condixit* [as punishment].'<sup>84</sup>

It should be noted that in the burning itself, Tertullian did not see an obstacle to resurrection, which he justified with an 'indisputable' example from 'ancient ornithology', the ability of the phoenix to be reborn in fire.<sup>85</sup>

We can also mention the words of Augustine of Hippo, who did not believe that the manner of a funeral could have any effect on the deceased.<sup>86</sup> In a similar vein, the

<sup>80</sup> LITVINA, Anna; USPENSKII, Fedor. Strannoje zaveschhanie kievskogo mitropolita XII veka. In *Khoroshie dni: Pamiati Aleksandra Stepanovicha Khorosheva*. Sost. Aleksandr MUSIN. Velikii Novgorod, Sankt Peterburg, Moskva, 2009, s. 334–339.

<sup>81</sup> NEPOMNIASHCHII, Nikolai. *100 velikikh mificheskikh sushchestv*. Moskva, 2015, s. 5.

<sup>82</sup> TERTULLIANUS, Quintus Septimius Florens. *De Resurrectione carnis*. In TERTULLIANUS, Quintus Septimius Florens. *Opera omnia*. T. II (Patrologiae Latinae corpus complectus, T. II). Ed. Iacobus-Paulus MIGNE. Parisii, 1844, cap. I, col. 795: '*At ego magis ridebo vulgus, tunc quoque, cum ipsos defunctos atrocissime exurit, quos postmodum gulosissime nutrit, isdem ignibus et promerens et offendens. O pietatem de crudelitate ludentem! sacrificat an insultat, cum crematis cremat?*'

<sup>83</sup> TERTULLIANUS, Quintus Septimius Florens. *Liber de corona*. In TERTULLIANUS. *Opera omnia...* T. II, cap. XII, col. 92.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. XII, col. 92–93.

<sup>85</sup> TERTULLIANUS. *De resurrectione...*, cap. XIII, col. 811: '*accipe plenissimum atque firmissimum huius spei specimen, siquidem animalis est res, et vitae obnoxia et morti. Illum dico aliam orientis peculiarem, de singularitate famosum, de posteritate monstruosum, qui semetipsum libenter funerans renovat [...] Quid expressius atque signatius in hanc causam, aut cui alii rei tale documentum? Deus etiam in scripturis suis, Et florebit enim inquit velut phoenix, id est de morte, de funere, uti credas de ignibus quoque substantiam corporis exigi posse.*'

<sup>86</sup> AUGUSTINE. *City of God (Concerning the City of God against the Pagans)*. Ed. by David KNOWLES. Cambridge, London, 1972, Vol. 1, book I, chapter XII, p. 61: 'the care taken with funerals, the embalming for burial, the procession of the mourners, are more for the comfort of the survivors than to assist the

Roman Catholic Church, albeit only in 1963, allowed cremation and the preservation of remains in their entirety. That is, the most 'extreme' forms of the further handling of ashes, such as scattering them in the wind, remain prohibited.<sup>87</sup> In fact, for a long time, no canonical prohibition existed. Under Charlemagne, due to the forced Christianisation of the Saxons, strict secular laws were passed which punished death for the slightest offence against the Church and the king. This included death for cremating the dead: '*Si quis corpus defuncti hominis secundum ritum paganorum flamma consumi fecerit, et ossa eius ad cinerem redierit, capite punietur.*'<sup>88</sup>

As a result of the brutal suppression of rebellion, subjugation, deportation and Christianisation, the Saxons were integrated into Frankish society.<sup>89</sup> Since then, there has been a tendency in the recreated Roman Empire to strictly unify Church life and rituals.<sup>90</sup> The trend also influenced the unification of funeral rites.<sup>91</sup> The above-mentioned *Lex Saxonum* of 789 was a secular law which was supposed to support missionaries in the fight against paganism. At the same time, the prohibition in the law has no theological basis. In fact, there really was no canonical prohibition on burning corpses, and it has never been a dogma.<sup>92</sup>

It should be noted that in spite of this tendency towards unification, even in the Latin lands this did not lead to complete 'sameness', which was mainly due to the slow, but ongoing changes in the vision of the afterlife, and above all the strengthening of the belief in purgatory (in Orthodoxy, the equivalent was a belief in the ordeals of the soul in the toll-houses). Along with the new beliefs came new forms of ritual, which had a direct impact on the arrangement of graves and the position of the body in them.<sup>93</sup> For example, monks of various congregations introduced burials in venial

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dead, and the righteous man will be saved even if his body remains completely unburied: If a costly burial does any good to a wicked man, then a good man will be harmed by a cheap one or by none at all.' Cf.: Ibid., book XXII, chapter XXI, p. 303: 'Nay, even if [...] the whole should be utterly ground to dust and scattered in the air or water so that, as far as possible [...] it can by no means be removed from the omnipotence of the Creator. No, not a hair of its head will perish.'

<sup>87</sup> HOGGET, R. Op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>88</sup> Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae. In *Capitularia regum francorum*, T. I. Ed. Alfredus BORETIUS. Hannoverae, 1883, p. 69, §7.

<sup>89</sup> BECHER, Matthias. Gewaltmission: Karl der Große und die Sachsen. In *Credo – Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter. Essays*. Bd. 1. Hrsg. von Christoph STIEGEMANN, Martin KROKER, Wolfgang WALTER. Petersberg, 2013, S. 326–328.

<sup>90</sup> EHLERS, Caspar. Totam provinciam illam in parochias episcopales divisit, Erschließung des Raumes durch Kirche am Beispiel Sachsens. In *Credo...*, Bd. 1, S. 333.

<sup>91</sup> JONUKS, Tõnno; KURISOO, Tuuli. To Be or Not to Be... a Christian: Some New Perspectives on Understanding the Christianisation of Estonia. *Folklore*, 2013, Vol. 55, p. 80.

<sup>92</sup> SCHMITZ-ESSER, Romedio. *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter: Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers* (Mittelalter-Forschungen, Bd. 48). Hrsg. von Andreas FAHRMEIR, Hartmut LEPPIN. Ostfildern, 2014, S. 49.

<sup>93</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, V. Neparasti guldīti..., 40.–42. lpp.

positions;<sup>94</sup> different local landmarks in cemeteries may have influenced the orientation of graves. In addition, the belief that material objects could somehow help the deceased led to the appearance of appropriate objects and symbols in burials.<sup>95</sup> For example, it was believed that wearing rosaries and icons guaranteed a good death, or at least shortened the soul's time in purgatory;<sup>96</sup> ceramic pots in a tomb may have been linked to the New Testament image of a 'mercy vessel';<sup>97</sup> weapons could symbolise membership of a military caste.<sup>98</sup> The grave may have contained coins as payment to St Peter, pilgrimage paraphernalia as a symbol of visiting a shrine, fangs and claws as a means of helping the soul of the deceased to climb the mountain where the judgment of Christ will be held, etc.<sup>99</sup>

In turn, the spread of the cult of the saints led to a rather 'free' treatment of the dead from a modern point of view, when the entrails could be buried separately from the body, and bones were eventually removed from graves and mixed in ossuaries.<sup>100</sup> For Medieval man, relics themselves were a sign of victory over death.<sup>101</sup> As for Livonia, we have here clear examples of 'Christian cremations', and not only in archaeological material, but also according to written sources.

## Evidence in written sources about the practice of cremation in the Christian tradition

Historians have a number of accounts of the use of cremation as a 'legal' Christian funeral rite in exceptional cases in Livonia in the 13th and early 14th centuries. The most famous example is the death of the Livonian chieftain Caupo (derived from the name Jacob) in 1217. An associate of the brothers of the Order of Knights of Jesus Christ, or simply the Swordsmen, *quasi rex* Caupo fell in a battle against the Estonians at Saccala. 'Caupo, indeed, who had been run clear through by a lance, faithfully commemorating the Lord's passion, receiving the sacrament of the Lord's body, gave up the spirit in a sincere confession of the Christian religion, after he had

<sup>94</sup> Examples from excavations at the cemetery near St Peter's Church in Riga are given in a separate article: SPIRGIS, Robert. Pogrebal'nye traditsii kladbishcha tserkvi Sv. Petra v Rige. In *Arkheologija i istorija Pskova i Pskovskoi zemli. Seminar imeni akademika V. V. Sedova. Materialy 63-go zasedaniia (2017 g.)*. Vyp. 33. Otv. red. Nikolai LOPATIN. Moskva, Pskov, 2018, s. 322–332.

<sup>95</sup> ŠČAVINSKAS, Marius. The Christianization of the Past (the Example of the Baltic Society in High Middle Ages). *Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae*, 2017, Vol. 22, pp. 373, 377.

<sup>96</sup> AR'ES, F. Op. cit., s. 265.

<sup>97</sup> ŠČAVINSKAS, M. The Christianization of the Past..., p. 371.

<sup>98</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, V. Neparasti guldīti..., 39.–40. lpp.

<sup>99</sup> SVETIKAS, Eugenius. XIV a. pabaigos – XV a. amuletai iš apkaustyto lokio nago Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje ir kaimyniniuose kraštuose. *Lietuvos archeologija*, 2008, t. 34, p. 196.

<sup>100</sup> AR'ES, F. Op. cit., s. 195–196.

<sup>101</sup> BELIAEV, Leonid. *Khristianskie drevnosti: vvedenie v sravnitel'noe izuchenie*. Sankt-Peterburg, 2000, s. 271.

first divided all his goods among the churches established in Livonia. Count Albert, the abbot, and all who were with them, mourned over him.<sup>102</sup>

There is no doubt about the sincerity of the Christian faith of this Livonian leader. In 1203 he was presented to Pope Innocent III as the leader of another barbarian nation that had converted to Catholicism.<sup>103</sup> It is possible that the unrealised project of Livonia as a Roman Catholic kingdom with a local dynasty at its head is connected with the name of Caupo. In any case, the chronicler describes Caupo's death as an example of the ideal death of a crusader: it is an imitation of Jesus' death, charity, death communion and the grief of those present.<sup>104</sup> It is also contrasted with the ignominious death of the Estonian chieftain Lembit, who was robbed and his body was mutilated by beheading and transported to Livonia.<sup>105</sup> Then, in a way that is incomprehensible to modern readers, 'His [Caupo's] body was burned and the bones were taken away to Livonia and buried at Cubbesele<sup>106</sup> (*Combustum est corpus eius, et ossa delata in Lyvoniam et sepulta in Cubbesele*).<sup>107</sup> There is no mention of any opposition from the clergy; on the contrary, the circumstances of Caupo's death and burial were praised by Henry the Chronicler, and thus also by the Livonian Church.<sup>108</sup>

This way of dealing with Caupo's body is usually explained among researchers by the underdevelopment of Christianity among locals and the syncretism of their beliefs.<sup>109</sup> However, as early as 1920, an article by the German Medievalist Dietrich Schäfer was published<sup>110</sup> in which the researcher compiled an extensive collection of historical accounts of tenth and 13th-century practices among the upper classes to prepare a dead body for transport.<sup>111</sup> The most famous example is that of the crusading emperor Frederick Barbarossa, whose body was cut into pieces and boiled. The boiled

<sup>102</sup> HCL, book IV, chap. 21, §4.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., book III, chap. 7, §3.

<sup>104</sup> TAMM, Marek. Martyrs and Miracles: Depicting Death in the Chronicle of the Henry of Livonia. In *Crusading and Chronicle Writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier: A Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*. Ed. by Marek TAMM, Linda KALJUNDI, Carsten Selch JENSEN. Farnham, 2011, pp. 137–138.

<sup>105</sup> HCL, book IV, chap. 21, §3.

<sup>106</sup> One of the Liv centres of the lower Gauja, now Krimulda.

<sup>107</sup> HCL, book IV, chap. 21, §4.

<sup>108</sup> LEIMUS, Ivar. *Iura christianorum – eine Floskel von Heinrich oder ein Mittel zur Unterwerfung der Heiden? Zur Bedeutung eines Begriffs in der Kreuzzugs-Rhetorik des 12. bis 13. Jahrhunderts und in der Historiographie*. In *Der „Ungläubige“ in der Rechts- und Kulturgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Akademie-konferenzen. Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Rechtswörterbuchs, Bd. 20). Hrsg. von Ulrich KRONAUER, Andreas DEUTSCH. Heidelberg, 2015, S. 137.

<sup>109</sup> TAMM, M. Op. cit., p. 142; GAŚSOWSKA, Maja. Śmierć podczas krucjat bałtyckich w kronice Henryka zwanego Łotyszem (pierwsza połowa XIII w.). *Kwartalnik historii kultury materialnej*, 2016, r. 64, Nr. 2, s. 166.

<sup>110</sup> SCHÄFER, Dietrich. Mittelalterlicher Brauch bei der Überführung von Leichen. *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1920, Jhg. 20, S. 479–498.

<sup>111</sup> The authors would like to thank Vitolds Muižnieks, of the National Museum of the History of Latvia, for kindly providing information about this publication.

meat and internal organs were then left buried in Antioch, and the bones in Tyre (Lebanon).<sup>112</sup>

Schäfer cites 'a wide range' of methods for the treatment of a dead body used in Medieval times. After the removal of the internal organs, for example, boiling in diluted wine, rubbing with spices, salting, embalming, and wrapping in wax-soaked cloth could follow. In the case of boiling the body, the separated bones would symbolise the mortal body and the viscera the soul.<sup>113</sup> The very procedure of gutting and boiling a body in a cauldron is in its 'inferality' far superior to cremation.

In the article, Schäfer mentions the burning of the body and the transport of the bones of the Livonian chief Caupo, a case which the researcher puts on a par with the practices of the Christian elites mentioned at the time.<sup>114</sup> In the context of the Livonian War, rational considerations came to the fore,<sup>115</sup> whereby burning was a cheaper, more practical, and therefore more accessible, method of preparing a dead body for transport than the boiling of bones, practised among the upper classes in Western Europe.

This conclusion is supported by the practice of the Teutonic Knights in the Baltic region. Thus, from the records of the Franciscus de Moliano Inquisition, it is known that the bodies of brothers who had fallen in distant campaigns in pagan lands were cremated (the source uses the terms *comburunt*, *concrematione*) for their transport and later dignified burial. The most striking of these cases was the fate of his brother Gottfried, who, after being badly wounded in the chest with a lance, was about to be burned by his comrades. Only the objections of his servant, saved him; and later (1298–1307) Gottfried became Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia.<sup>116</sup>

At first glance, this source's account may appear to be an exaggeration and discredits the Teutonic Order. Further information about cremations in the allegedly apostate Teutonic Order from 'orthodox Catholicism' is replicated by a number of other papal sources,<sup>117</sup> information which the Order itself vehemently denied.<sup>118</sup>

The only understandable explanation for the failures of the Teutonic Order in the Holy Land, where in 1291, Akra, the last stronghold of the Latins in Palestine, was lost, could be the lack of piety of the brothers in the remaining provinces in Prussia

<sup>112</sup> SCHÄFER, D., Op. cit., S. 478–479.

<sup>113</sup> AR'ES, F. Op. cit., s. 230.

<sup>114</sup> SCHÄFER, D., Op. cit., S. 492.

<sup>115</sup> ŠČAVINSKAS, M. The Christianization of the Past..., p. 370.

<sup>116</sup> FRANCISCUS de Moliano. *Conscriptio inquisitionis testium 1312 = Franciska no Moliano izmeklēšanas protokols 1312. gadā. Liecinieku nopratināšana par notikumiem Livonijā 13.–14. gadsimta mijā*. Tulk. Ēvalds MUGURĒVIČS. Rīga, 2010, testis VII, art. 20; testis VIII, art. 20.

<sup>117</sup> KĻAVIŅŠ, Kaspars. *Vācu ordenis un Livonija: leskats Vācu ordeņa ideoloģijā un mentalitātē 13. un 14. gs. Livonijas vēsturisko notikumu kontekstā*. Rīga, 2000, 89. lp.

<sup>118</sup> Fragmentum. In FRANCISCUS de Moliano. Op. cit., art. 285, p. 360.

and Livonia.<sup>119</sup> The Archbishop of Riga tried to take advantage of such sentiments, while the Order of the Templars was being liquidated, and the charge of cremating the brothers was one of the things they tried to use to accuse the Order of apostasy. It should be noted, however, that the knights were encouraged to practise various forms of corporal self-denial, and during peacetime they were expected to dedicate seven hours a day to liturgical activities,<sup>120</sup> which gives no doubt about the religious zeal of the knights brethren. The authors of this article are therefore sceptical about the attempts by some historians to find local pagan influences in a number of rituals adopted by the Order, such as fortune telling, the cremation of fallen knights, 'offerings' to God, and the veneration of the Virgin Mary.<sup>121</sup> Rather, the aims and activities of the knights' orders allow for some specific rituals and practices, the roots of which, however, stemmed entirely from religious fanaticism and everyday West European Medieval life, even if their nature was essentially a negation of that everyday life of the common people.

It is known that chivalric orders developed an ethos of 'Christian militarism' as much as possible, where brother-knights were seen as fighting for higher justice as holy martyrs, armed with both spiritual and steel weapons. By renouncing personal and worldly glory, they achieved salvation through the nature of the war they waged.<sup>122</sup> This ideological backdrop provided fertile ground for extreme religiosity and a willingness to sacrifice. According to the words of Holy Scripture: 'He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it' (Mat 10: 39).<sup>123</sup> The cremation of the fallen brother-knights was to symbolise the supreme sacrifice, a willingness to give up one's own salvation for the fulfilment of God's Providence.

Returning, however, to the records of the Franciscus de Moliano Inquisition, definitive doubts about the practice of cremation of fallen brother-knights, which are raised by the anti-Order orientation of the investigation, were removed by the account of the Order's own narrative. According to the chronicle Hermannus de Wartberge, 25 knights were killed in Lithuania in 1375 during a campaign. The battlefield was left to the enemy, and the bodies of the fallen Teutons were left unburied, which was an outrage in itself.<sup>124</sup> So when an army led by Robin of Eltz (1375–1385), Land-

<sup>119</sup> SELART, Anti. *Livonia, Rus' and the Baltic crusades in the Thirteenth Century* (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Age, 450–1450, Vol. 29). Leiden, Boston, 2015, p. 287.

<sup>120</sup> MILICERS, Klauss. *Vācu ordeņa vēsture*. Rīga, 2009, 23. lp.

<sup>121</sup> KĻAVIŅŠ, K. Op. cit., 86.–97. lpp.

<sup>122</sup> FISCHER, Marty. Biblical Heroes and the Uses of Literature: the Teutonic Order in the Late Thirteenth and the Early Fourteenth Centuries. In *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500*. Ed. by Alan V. MURRAY. Aldershot, Burlington, 2001, p. 271.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Matthew 16:25, Matthew 8:35, Luke 9:24, 17:33; John 12:25; 1 John 3:16.

<sup>124</sup> HERMANNUS de Wartberge. *Chronicon Livoniae = Vartberges Hermaņa Livonijas hronika*. Tulk. Ēvalds MUGURĒVIČS. Rīga, 2005, 141. lp.

marshal and Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia, arrived, he ordered the bodies of his fallen comrades to be burnt.<sup>125</sup>

It should be noted that at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, the above-mentioned manipulations with boiling bones and the removal of entrails were forbidden.<sup>126</sup> The canonical prohibition comes from the bull of Pope Boniface VIII *De sepulturis* of 27 September 1299 (reiterated on 18 February 1300). The text of the bull is somewhat vague: '[...] *sepulturae tradantur ad tempus, ita, quod demum incineratis corporibus, aut alias ad loca, ubi sepulturam elegerint, deportentur, et sepeliantur in eis.*'<sup>127</sup> It is clear that it prescribes a 'double burial', a temporary burial (*sepulturae tradantur ad tempus*) at the place of death, later followed by exhumation for transport and reburial in the desired place.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, the words *aut alias* (or otherwise) may be taken as indicating the use of methods other than the natural decomposition of the body.

The position of the Pope is clarified by the rescript 'De corpore Johannis de Haricuria', dated 19 April 1303, in which he allows Guy II of Harcourt, the Bishop of Lisieux, to exhume his brother's body, provided that *corpus ipsum in cinerem sit redactum, neque alias cremetur vel coquatur, aut etiam incidatur.*<sup>129</sup> It was probably this rescript of Pope Boniface VIII that introduced the ban on cremation in canon law, based on which further regulations were sent by the Pope to the Teutonic Order in the years 1324 and 1336, which appeal specifically to the canonical ban on cremations.<sup>130</sup> It is important to note that the very mention of cremation by the Pope indicates the existence of such a practice. Moreover, it is chronologically earlier than the beginning of the Inquisition of the Teutonic Order.

<sup>125</sup> *'Invenerunt corpora [...], que conflagrarunt ulterius procedentes'* – according to the younger Livonian Rhymed Chronicle, the Russians also practised the cremation of fallen warriors in foreign lands, see: JONUŠS, T.; KURISO, T. Op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>126</sup> SCHÄFER, D. Op. cit., S. 496; Cf. AR'ES, F. Op. cit., s. 230.

<sup>127</sup> *Corpus iuris canonici*. T. II. Ed. Aemilius Ludwig RICHTER. Graz, 1959, titulus VI. col. 1272–1273.

<sup>128</sup> RENIEBLAS, Isabel Lozano. El prólogo del *Libro del caballero Zifar* y el Jubileo de 1300. In *Actas del IX Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval (A Coruña, 18–22 de septiembre de 2001)*. Coord. por Mercedes Pampín BARRAL, Carmen Parrilla GARCÍA. Vol. 3. Noia, 2005, p. 87. The ritual of exhuming the bones after a funeral, washing them in a mixture of wine and water, and taking them to the temple for a funeral liturgy and reburial, was common in Greece (MUSIN, Aleksandr. *Khristianizatsiia Novgorodskoi zemli v IX–XIV vv. Pogrebal'nyi obriad i khristianskie drevnosti*. Sankt-Peterburg, 2002, s. 80) and goes back to Jewish practices at the time of Jesus Christ (BELIAEV, L. Op. cit., s. 27). Re-burials are still practised in monasteries both in the West and in the East, such as Mount Athos. Apparently, under the influence of monasticism, double burial also spread among the upper classes in the West during the Middle Ages, as is evidenced by numerous wills (RENIEBLAS, I. L. Op. cit., p. 87). In fact, the same happened in ordinary cemeteries when they were dug up and the bones were removed and placed in an ossuary (AR'ES, F. Op. cit., p. 83).

<sup>129</sup> *Les registres de Boniface VIII: recueil des bulles de ce pape* (Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 2<sup>e</sup> série, t. 4). T. 3. Red. Georges DIGARD. Paris, 1921, N° 5218, col. 753.

<sup>130</sup> KĻAVIŅŠ, K. Op. cit., 89. lp.

In any case, there was simply no time in a military campaign to wait for a body to decompose naturally.<sup>131</sup> The method described above with disembowelling, boiling bones and embalming flesh also does not seem possible in the case of a large contingent of fallen knights, especially when their bodies seem to have already decomposed, as was the case with the campaign by Robin of Eltz.

## The symbolism of fire and rituals with fire in Christianity

In the light of the topic under discussion, it is necessary to address, at least briefly, the issue of the ritual use of fire. The symbolism of fire is widely represented in Christianity and it has a dual nature. On one hand, fire is associated with hell, evil, and heavenly punishment: 'And fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them: and they died before the Lord' (Lev 10:2); cf. 'Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mat 25: 41); and 'And there came down fire from God out of heaven and devoured them: and the devil, who seduced them, was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, where both the beast and the false prophet [...] (Ap 20: 9, 10), etc. Not only sinners, the devil and death, but also the earth itself will go up in flames at the end of time: 'And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the king say ... to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mat 25, 33-34, 41); cf. 'But the day of the Lord ... in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence and the elements shall be melted with heat and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up' (2Petri 3: 10).

Fire as a symbol of paganism in the Bible is Moloch's fire (2Kings 23: 10, Jer 32: 35). On the other hand, according to the Saviour's own metaphor, fire is the flame of faith: 'I am come to cast fire on the earth. And what will I, but that it be kindled?' (Luc 12: 49). Believers are also illuminated by the burning rays of truth and are possessed by an inner heat of love for Jesus Christ.<sup>132</sup>

In addition, fire is widely represented as a symbol of purification: 'And all that may pass through the fire, shall be purified by fire' (Num 31: 23). We may also recall the legend of the rebirth and rejuvenation of the immortal phoenix in the fire of the altar. The legend was widely known for its inclusion in *The Physiologist*<sup>133</sup> and the

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<sup>131</sup> Judging from the wills, it was thought that one to two years was needed for this process (RENIEBLAS, I. L. Op. cit., p. 88). The ability of the earth from a particular holy place to promote early decomposition was considered a useful quality. For example, the earth at St Innocent's Cemetery was said to decompose a body completely in it in just nine days (AR'ES, F. Op. cit., s. 83).

<sup>132</sup> IAKOV Voraginskii. *Zolotaia legenda*. Per. Irina KUVSHINSKAIA, Il'ia ANIK'EV. T. I. Moskva, 2017, s. 183.

<sup>133</sup> 'The Physiologist' was an extremely popular treatise in the Middle Ages (compiled around the third century AD in Alexandria) revealing the habits and properties of various animals, birds and rocks from

Medieval bestiary, cornerstone treatises of Christian zoology. In the bestiary, the salamander and asbestos have a close connection with fire: just as fire does not kill the salamander, the purifying fire of purgatory burns away easy sins; just as burning, but not burning asbestos, burns without incinerating the flames of hell.<sup>134</sup>

With the development of the concept of purgatory, the symbolism of fire began to play a special role in Christianity. According to the famous French Medievalist Jacques Le Goff,<sup>135</sup> belief in purgatory is based on the words of the Paul the Apostle (1 Corinthians 3:13): '[...] **the fire shall try every man's work [...].**' In doing so, a person's deathbed penance and the last moments of their life's journey take on added weight. The fact that the choice between hell and heaven could have taken place precisely at the last minute heightened the drama and tension, mixing the fears and hopes of the dying man. As a result, new forms of piety emerge because of the belief in purgatory, which could not fail to have an impact on funerary rites. For example, the already-mentioned burials in venal positions.<sup>136</sup>

Based on this rich symbolism of fire, Christianity provides many examples of its ritual use. For example, rituals with fire were associated with John the Baptist. According to the *Legenda Aurea*, the relics of the Forerunner were burnt and the ashes scattered by order of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, which was like a second martyrdom.<sup>137</sup> So on the Day of John the Baptist, animal bones were collected and burnt to prevent the spread of the pestilence.<sup>138</sup>

The symbolism of fire is closely linked to manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Thus, according to the Dominican theologian Vincent of Beauvais, just as fire burns, the Holy Spirit purifies, warms and sanctifies.<sup>139</sup>

Fire may have been an Easter pilgrimage souvenir from Jerusalem: the descent of the Holy Fire at Easter is a famous 'calendar' Christian miracle, the first mention of which dates from 870. Pilgrims were eager to bring this holy fire to their homeland.<sup>140</sup> In local Christian centres, the Easter fire was also extracted in an 'almost miraculous' way, by means of beryl, i.e. a magnifying glass.<sup>141</sup> The possible connec-

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the point of view of the foundations of Christian teaching, 'recommended' as a source of images for missionaries preaching to northern peoples by Pope Gregory the Great in the late sixth century. By the 12th century, the so-called 'Bestiary' had emerged in the West by expanding and adding new articles from the Physiologist.

<sup>134</sup> LE GOFF, Zhak. *Rozhdenie chistilishcha*. Ekaterinburg, Moskva, 2011, s. 302, 363.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 17.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 435, 533.

<sup>137</sup> Compiled in the mid-13th century by the Franciscan friar Jacobus a Voragine, a collection of hagiographies of the most popular saints.

<sup>138</sup> IAKOV Voraginskii. *Op. cit.*, t. 1, s. 18, 261.

<sup>139</sup> '*In igne spiritus sanctus venit, quia ignis quatuor habet proprietates naturales, vrit, purgat, calefacit, illuminat*' – SCHMITZ-ESSER, R. *Op. cit.*, S. 556.

<sup>140</sup> MONTEFIORE, Saimon Sebag. *Ierusalim. Biografiia*. Moskva, 2017, s. 271.

<sup>141</sup> MULEN, Leo. *Povsednevnaia zhizn' srednevekovykh monakhov Zapadnoi Evropy (X–XV vv.)*. Moskva, 2002, s. 22.

tion between the Paschal fire and funeral traditions is indicated by a custom, already recorded in modern times, whereby Russian pilgrims extinguished the holy fire with hats in which they were going to be buried.<sup>142</sup>

The ritual use of candles in church is widely known. They were also used in a number of 'exotic' ceremonies. For example, a curse was placed on those who transgressed the 'peace of God', in a spectacular ceremony in which the bishops present extinguished their candles simultaneously and threw them to the ground with the exclamation: 'May God thus extinguish the joy of those who do not wish to recognise peace and justice.' Excommunication was extended to those who helped them commit evil, to their weapons, and to their horses.<sup>143</sup>

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Ashes were and are used in Christian rituals. For example, on the first Wednesday in Lent, the priest sprinkles ashes on the heads of the congregation. On the death of a monk, a hair shirt was placed on straw or on the ground and sprinkled crosswise with ashes. The laity often adopted this custom.<sup>144</sup> The body was rolled over at the funeral and the embers from the censer poured into the grave.<sup>145</sup> Thus, the presence of small embers in the filling of a grave pit may be related to the treatment with incense.

For many saints, fire was an instrument of torture or execution, a tradition rooted in the Old Testament: the three biblical young men who passed through the furnace unscathed.<sup>146</sup> *Legenda Aurea* mentions Sts Anastasia, Apollonia, Barnabas,<sup>147</sup> Eustace, Theodore, Tiron, etc,<sup>148</sup> but perhaps the most popular was St Lawrence.<sup>149</sup> The discovery of layers of charcoal or ash in burials in Medieval cemeteries in England and Scandinavia, where his veneration was very common, has been linked to the cult of this saint.<sup>150</sup>

The possibility of interpreting some fire-exposed remains as a Medieval baptism of fire ritual has already been stated in Baltic archaeological literature.<sup>151</sup> Baptism by fire is reflected in Holy Scripture in the words of John the Baptist: 'I indeed baptise you in water unto penance, but he that shall come after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you in the Holy Ghost and fire.'<sup>152</sup>

<sup>142</sup> MONTEFIORE, S. S. Op. cit., s. 474.

<sup>143</sup> FLORI, Zhan. *Ideologija mecha. Predystorija rytsarstva*. Sankt-Peterburg, 1999, s. 109.

<sup>144</sup> MULEN, L. Op. cit., s. 22, 27.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 28; MUSIN, A. *Khristianizatsiia Novgorodskoi zemli...*, s. 76–77.

<sup>146</sup> Daniel 3:12–30.

<sup>147</sup> IAKOV Voraginskii. Op. cit., t. 1, s. 82, 384, 453.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, t. 2, s. 471.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 169–184.

<sup>150</sup> HÄGG, Inga. *Textilen und Tracht in Haithabu und Schleswig (Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu, Bd. 18)*. Hamburg, 2015, S. 147. In Livonia, the cult of St Lawrence is evidenced, for example, by the fact that the saint was the patron saint of the church in the town of Limbaži.

<sup>151</sup> SVETIKAS, Eugenius. Burial and Sacrifice in Lithuania during the Late Fourteenth – Fifteenth Century: Religious Confrontation or a Unique Conversion Phenomenon – Baptism by Fire? *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 2006, Vol. 11, pp. 130–131.

<sup>152</sup> Matthew 3:11; see also Luke 3:16.

Baptism by fire is also mentioned in the two Apocrypha and commented upon by Origen, and while in 'normal' Christianity baptism by fire remains only a metaphor, in some sects, such as the Messalians or Egyptian ascetics, it has developed into a real ritual.<sup>153</sup>

It should be noted that one of the 'effects' of baptism was the renunciation and expulsion of the devil from the neophyte, during which the person vowed to renounce Satan:<sup>154</sup> '[People of Liv village Sydegunde] renounced the devil and his works, promised to believe in God, and those who were predestined by God were baptized.'<sup>155</sup>

It goes without saying that such rituals had a strong impact on the mind of Medieval man, who believed sacredly that his existence was directly dependent on mystical beliefs.<sup>156</sup> The missionaries themselves acted as fighters against Satan as they plucked souls from the clutches of the Antichrist.<sup>157</sup> Christianity is also known directly from the exorcism of fire. Henry in the Livonian Chronicle mentions the symbolic sanctification through the sprinkling of holy water on the castles conquered by the Crusaders and their population, which was supposed to serve as a kind of exorcism of Satan, which secured accession to the body of the church:<sup>158</sup> 'Accordingly, the abbot [Teodorihs] and the provost [Engelberts], with the other priests, went up to them [Selones] in the fort, instructed them in the beginnings of the faith, sprinkled the fort with holy water [...];'<sup>159</sup> cf.: '... they [Estonians] received the priests into the fort [Fellin]. The priests sprinkled all the houses, the fort, the men and women, and all the people with holy water. They performed a sort of initiation ... them before baptism.'<sup>160</sup> In turn, the Elder Rhymed Chronicle says (with some irony) that the Dominicans who were preparing the Teutonic Order may have already used some sort of cleansing ritual using fire: 'There were [on a campaign against Samogitia] monks [*barvûen*, 'barefoots', i.e. Franciscans] and friars [*predigêre*, 'preachers', i.e. Dominicans] in the army and the first fires were set by the latter, the next by the former.'<sup>161</sup> It was not without reason that the symbol of the Order of Preachers, as the Dominicans were called, was a black and white dog (from the Latin *dominus canes*) with a blazing torch between its teeth, which symbolised its willingness to burn witches and heretics.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>153</sup> LE GOFF, Zh. Op. cit., s. 19, 20.

<sup>154</sup> ŠČAVINSKAS, M. The Christianization of the Past..., p. 366.

<sup>155</sup> HCL, book III, chap. 10, §14.

<sup>156</sup> SCHIEFFER, Rudolf. Christianisierung Europas. In *Credo...*, Bd. 1, S. 50–51.

<sup>157</sup> ANGENENDT, Arnold. Credo. Die Taufe als Sakrament des Glaubens in der Mission. In *Credo...*, Bd. 1, S. 62, 64.

<sup>158</sup> ŠČAVINSKAS, M. The Christianization of the Past..., p. 366.

<sup>159</sup> HCL, book III, chap. 11, §6.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., chap. XV, §1.

<sup>161</sup> LRH, vers. 4235–4239.

<sup>162</sup> PHILLIPS, Stowell; FERGUSSON, Sarah Jane. *Animal visual culture in the Middle Ages*. PhD dissertation. Durham, 2008, p. 374.

With this in mind, the report by the French knight Guillebert de Lannoy, who travelled through Livonia in 1413, about the custom of cremating the dead of the Curonians, appears in a slightly different light: The Kurs have a doctrine [*secte*] that after their death [...] they are burned in a fire [...] And they believe that if the smoke goes straight to the sky the soul is saved, but if it is blown laterally the soul is lost.' As historians have pointed out, the message as a whole does not bear any negativity towards the Curonians, and smoke-telling in this case dates back to the Old Testament story of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel, popular in the Middle Ages, who knew whether the sacrifice was acceptable to God.<sup>163</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that Guillebert de Lannoy was not talking about pagans, but really about a community whose adherents, although following certain deviations, in general remained within the framework of the Christian religion.<sup>164</sup> The search for omens to indicate the destiny of the soul of the deceased is in line with Medieval beliefs, and is still practised to this day. So on Mount Athos, three years after a monk's death, exhumation is carried out, and it is believed that the Lord has accepted the soul if the flesh has putrefied in the earth. Particular attention is paid to the colour of the bones: white means that the soul is saved, yellow (the colour of wax) that the person was righteous, black or dark that the person was a sinner, and his soul needed some additional prayers. If the flesh has not yet decomposed, the remains are consigned to earth for another three years, and additional prayers are held for the repose of the soul.<sup>165</sup>

How then, on the basis of the examples discussed, should Livonian cremations be regarded?

## Discussion

Based on the traditional notion of Christian burial, Latvian researchers deny the possibility of Medieval cremations being of Christian origin. For example, three 13th-century cremations from the first Latin cemeteries in the lower reaches of the Daugava are directly correlated with the old, i.e. pagan, traditions.<sup>166</sup> Or it is suggested that we are dealing here with the actions of the Gentiles mentioned in Henry's Livonian Chronicle:<sup>167</sup> in 1211 the Estonians raided Metsepole (the Liv region in north-

<sup>163</sup> MAŽEIKĀ, Rasa; CHOLLET, Loïc. Familiar marvels? French and German crusaders and chroniclers confront Baltic pagan religions. *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, 2016, Vol. 43, pp. 45–46.

<sup>164</sup> This could be a heresy based on the idea of the sinfulness and impurity of everything bodily and recognising only the resurrection of the soul. During the time of Tertullian, adherents of this teaching were called 'new Sadducees', TERTULLIANUS. *De resurrectione...*, cap. II, col. 796.

<sup>165</sup> TALALAI, Mikhail. *Russkii Afon. Putevoditel' v istoricheskikh ocherkakh*. Moskva, 2003, s. 97.

<sup>166</sup> GRAUDONIS, J. Ikšķīles arheoloģiskā izpēte 1968. g.... 34. lp.; GRAUDONIS, Jānis. Ikšķīles arheoloģiskās ekspedīcijas darbs 1973. gadā. *Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas Materiāli par arheologu un etnogrāfu 1973. gada pētījumu rezultātiem*. Rīga, 1974, 33. lp.

<sup>167</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, V. *Bēru tradīcijas...*, 62.–63. lpp.

west Vidzeme), burned the churches, and 'with their pagan sacrifices, committed many abominations around the churches and tombs of Christians';<sup>168</sup> in 1223, during a rebellion, Estonians 'disinterred the bodies of their dead, who had been buried in cemeteries, and cremated them according to their original pagan custom.'<sup>169</sup>

In turn, the Late Medieval Christian cemeteries at Krāslavas Augustinišķi and Naujienas Slutišķi in the upper reaches of the Daugava, rich in Christian symbols and cremations in wooden coffins from the late 14th and early 16th century, have been associated with Lithuanian migrants.<sup>170</sup>

The messages of Henry the Chronicler in the Livonian Chronicle should be placed on a par with other messages of the same kind in other European chronicles, which were meant to show the savagery and ruthlessness of the enemy. For example, according to the chronicle of Helmold of Bosau, the already-baptised Poles were 'brave in conflict, but exceedingly hard-hearted in rapine and murder. They spare neither monasteries, nor churches, nor cemeteries.'<sup>171</sup>

According to the chronicle of Arnold of Lübeck, mercenaries served in the army of Archbishop Philipp of Cologne during his campaign against Henry the Lion in 1179.<sup>172</sup> When Henry the Lion took the town of Bardowick in 1189, 'nor did the men of war spare churches or cemeteries.'<sup>173</sup>

Thus, in the case of Livonia, the Augustinian Henry's mention of cases of the desecration of cemeteries, according to the teachings of Augustine of Hippo, should make the reader understand that the Estonians were apostates who had gone over to the side of Satan.<sup>174</sup>

At the same time, a number of foreign researchers who have studied processes of Christianisation on the basis of archaeological material have concluded that cremation does not automatically qualify as paganism.<sup>175</sup> As has already been noted, Christianity is not a fixed and unchanging doctrine. In the case of Roman Catholicism, the ability to adapt to current conditions has a special term, *aggiornamento*.<sup>176</sup> This

<sup>168</sup> HCL, book III, chap. 14, §10.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., chap. 26, §8.

<sup>170</sup> MUIŽNIEKS, V. *Bēru tradīcijas...*, 62. lp.

<sup>171</sup> *The Chronicle of the Slavs by Helmold, Priest of Bosau*. Transl. with introduction and notes by Francis J. TSCHAN. New York, 1935, book 1, §1.

<sup>172</sup> *The Chronicle of Arnold of Lübeck*. Ed. by Graham A. LOUD. London, 2019, book 2, §11.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., book 5, §2: 'the evil men, "the sons of Belial", who were with him, were of the utmost iniquity, and were insatiably determined to perform their wicked actions. Cemeteries were plundered, churches burned and many houses of religion destroyed.'

<sup>174</sup> BIĻĶINS, Vilis. *Indriķa Livonijas hronika: vidus laiku gara gaismā*. Rīga, 1931, 52. lp.

<sup>175</sup> MUSIN, A. *Khristianizatsiia Novgorodskoi zemli...*, s. 39; LATER, Christian. Neues zum Christentum im frühmittelalterlichen Baiern? – Bemerkungen zu Quellenlage und Forschungsstand. *Fines Transire*, 2012, Bd. 21, S. 180; JONUŠKIS, T.; KURISOO, T. Op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>176</sup> LE GOFF, Zh. Op. cit., s. 535. In Italian *aggiornamento* means 'renewal'.

'flexible' policy was particularly deliberate as it spread into new territories, when the need to adapt to local conditions and customs increased. This is why Christianity, in fact, was able to spread so widely.<sup>177</sup>

In the case of Livonia, it was made possible by a 1214-1215 letter from Pope Innocent III to the Brothers of the Sword and Bishop Albert of Riga, which allowed neophytes to choose the burial rite of their wish.<sup>178</sup> It should be noted that the oldest legal code of the Bishopric of Riga (early 13th century), established by the peasants of the bishopric, does not recognise the prohibition of the cremation of the dead either. Cremation as a punishment for witches and heretics is noted in Livonian-Estonian law, which was in force in northern Estonia and in the Bishopric of Dorpat.<sup>179</sup>

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It can therefore be assumed that, just as in the case of Caupo,<sup>180</sup> the burning of the dead in the context of the Crusades in the Baltic became part of Christian burial practice for a time, and was therefore sanctioned by priests. Of course, within 'ordinary' Christianity, cremation did not become a normative way of dealing with the body, and was only used in 'extreme' cases of death in foreign lands: during a military campaign, in captivity, on trade and diplomatic trips, or on pilgrimage. It should be noted that written sources from the 12th and 13th centuries reflect the increased mobility of the Livonians: Livonian military units were mentioned in Old Russian inter-necine warfare, in trade with Pskov and Lübeck, and in diplomatic journeys to Polotsk.<sup>181</sup> A study of archaeological finds, furthermore, shows the inclusion of the inhabitants of the lower reaches of the Daugava in the short and long-distance pilgrimage movement.<sup>182</sup>

The justification for military cremation in foreign lands, as has already been noted by researchers,<sup>183</sup> may have been what happened to the body of Saul, the first King of Israel, and his sons after their defeat in battle with the Philistines: 'All the most valiant men arose, and walked all the night, and took the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, from the wall of Bethsan: and they came to Jabes Galaad, and burnt them there' (1Sam 31: 12). Moreover, in the case of the description of the cremation of Caupo, the chronicler Henry clearly used the terminology of the quoted extract of

<sup>177</sup> HOGGET, R. Op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>178</sup> LEIMUS, I. Op. cit., S. 136.

<sup>179</sup> Rīgas arhibīskapijas zemnieku tiesības. In *Seno paražu un Livonijas tiesību avoti. 10. gs. – 16. gs.* (Latvijas tiesību avoti. Teksti un komentāri, 1. sēj.). Red. Edgars MEĻĶĪSIS. Rīga, 1998, 26.–27. lpp.; Lībiešu-igauņu zemnieku tiesības. In *Seno paražu un Livonijas tiesību avoti...*, 30.–31. lpp.; LAZDIŅŠ, Jānis. Komentārs. Zemnieku tiesības. In *Seno paražu un Livonijas tiesību avoti...*, 35. lpp.

<sup>180</sup> For more about this, see ŠČAVINSKAS, Marius. *Kryžius ir kalavijas. Kriščioniškųjų misijų sklaida Baltijos jūros regione X–XIII amžiais*. Vilnius, 2012, p. 155–159.

<sup>181</sup> SELART, A. Op. cit., pp. 41, 67, 91–92, 115.

<sup>182</sup> SPIRĢIS, R. Kristieši pirms krusta kariem..., 113.–142. lpp.; SPIRĢIS, R. Finds in Latvia ..., pp. 410–415.

<sup>183</sup> LEVĀNS, Andris; ZANDERS, Māris. *Aizmirstā Livonija: savējā vai svešā, tumšā vai romantiskā?* Rīga, 2021, 96., 98. lpp.

Holy Scripture (*combusserunt-combustum, ossa*), which makes a connection between the Livonian *quasi rex* Caupo and the first Jewish King Saul.

It should be noted that, unlike Caupo, who in the eyes of the chronicler fully deserved and possessed God's grace, Saul, as one who ended his life by suicide, was cursed.<sup>184</sup> This is why the chronicler divides the depiction of the Livonian events between two rival local chieftains: Lembit gets the negative elements, such as defeat in battle and beheading, while Caupo gets the heroic wounds and virtuous piety in the face of death.

In any case, the Livs were the first to encounter and accept Latin Christianisation in Livonia, and were quick enough to adopt the Latin ritual.<sup>185</sup> According to this, cremation in general did not go on after the 13th century.

## Conclusions

Excavations in 2007 and 2008 in the Ogresgala Čabas cemetery have shed a new light on the evolution of Livonian burial rites in the Late Iron Age. The issue of cremation has attracted special attention from the authors of excavations. The female remains examined in the article are important evidence of the ideas of the ancient Livs about the afterlife, and their religious affiliation in general. Both the chronology and the character of the cremations found in the lower reaches of the River Daugava fall into three variants. Moreover, in the middle of the 11th century there was a general reduction in the number of cremations, which occurred most sharply among female burials. During the 11th century, the abandonment of cremation, being evidence of the Christianisation of the region, took place among many peoples in large territories in northern and Eastern Europe. According to the authors, the decrease in the share of cremation in funerary practices of the mid-11th century is therefore not due to some abstract change in 'fashion' (the notion is undoubtedly anachronistic) but to the acceptance by the Livs of a new doctrine. It should especially be noted that from the 11th century cremations were changing, increasingly acquiring features characteristic of inhumations. In contrast to the early cremations of the first variant, in shallow lenticular pits with coal mixed with ashes and strongly melted objects, later

<sup>184</sup> The authors would like to thank Marius Ščavinskas for pointing out this discrepancy between both rulers.

<sup>185</sup> Prior to this, the Orthodox Christianisation of the local population had already taken place in the lower reaches of the Daugava. On the issue of changing the confessional affiliation of the Livs, for more, see SPIRĢIS, R. *Indriķa hronika...*, 234.–274. lpp.; SPIRĢIS, Robert. *Istoriko-teologičeskii kontekst inkorporatsii livov i latgalov v struktury latinskoj tserkvi: Livonskaia «uniia» XIII v.?* In *Arkheologija i istorija Pskova i Pskovskoi zemli. Seminar imeni akademika V. V. Sedova. Materialy 65-go zasedaniia (2019 g.)*. Vyp. 35. Otv. red. Nikolai LOPATIN, Elena SALMINA. Moskva, Pskov, 2020, s. 500–515.

cremations have essentially the same funeral ritual as simultaneous inhumations, as the ashes in these cases were placed in a nailed board coffin. There are cases where clothes and jewellery were not burnt together with the deceased, but served as bedding or a covering, as in the case of grave 17 in Ogresgala Čabas cemetery.

Assessing the cultural and historical significance of the Livonian material, the authors of the article join those researchers who believe that late cremations cannot automatically be attributed to paganism. This conclusion is demonstrated clearly by finding cremations in the first church cemeteries in the lower reaches of the River Daugava. The 'mechanics' of resurrection in Medieval Christianity implied resurrection 'in the body', for which it was necessary to preserve the mortal body after death if possible. The main 'threat' of cremation was not the inhumanity of fire, but the danger of losing the body to be resurrected. A prerequisite for complete destruction was the scattering of ashes. This was the end of the execution of criminals and heretics.<sup>186</sup> Pagans like the Estonians would do the same if they wanted to desecrate the Christian Livs' burial grounds at Ikšķile and Mārtiņšala. Therefore, cremated remains carefully preserved and buried in the holy ground of the cemeteries in question clearly testify to the hope of resurrection, providing clear evidence of the Christian context of these burials.

Another 'danger' associated with cremations was their formal connection with paganism, which dates back to Antiquity and the spread of this custom among the tribes of the Barbaricum. It can be assumed that in the case of the Livs, when Crusaders and Latin preachers established themselves in the region at the beginning of the 13th century, cremation already had a purely utilitarian meaning, and was not directly associated with local paganism. In the opinion of the authors of the article, the above cremations at Ogresgala Čabas cannot be regarded as pagan graves, or any kind of throwback to paganism. With the increasing commercial activities of the population, and the inclusion of new converts in the pilgrimage movement, and with the onset of the Crusades and the increasing number of armed conflicts, the number of deaths in foreign lands may have increased. In such cases, cremation, followed by the transport and burial of the ashes in the ground, could be an acceptable, if not entirely 'legal', or at least not reprehensible in the eyes of the Church, way of handling a dead body.

This view is not contradicted by written sources from the 13th and 14th centuries, which show the incineration of fallen Teutonic knights and the favourable attitude of the Latin Church to the cremation of the Livonian leader Caupo. The spread of burials of this kind may have been encouraged by the spread of belief in purgatory,

<sup>186</sup> Perhaps the most striking and famous example of this is the burning of Joan of Arc, whose ashes were scattered over the Seine.

which embraced the whole spectrum of the Christian symbolism of fire and the belief in its cleansing power.

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## PALAIKŪ DEGINIMAS IR KRIKŠČIONYBĒ DAUGUVOS ŽEMUPYJE X–XIII AMŽIAIS: ATVEJO STUDIJA, PAREMTA LYVIŪ PALAIDOJIMAS UOGRĒSGALO ČABO KAPINYNE

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Rūdofls Brūzis, Roberts Spirģis

### Santrauka

Čabo sodybos archeoloģinē vietovē yra Uogrēs savivaldybēje, Uogrēsgalo valsčiuje, centrīnēje Latvijos dalyje, Dauguvos dešīnijame krante, 37,5 km nuo Rygos. Ją sudaro gyvenvietė ir du kapinynai. Paminklas aptiktas 1979 m., o 1984 m. čia vyko bandomieji kasinėjimai, kuriems vadovavo Anna Zariņa – ištirti trys palaidojimai ir nedidelė gyvenvietės dalis. 2007–2008 m. Latvijos istorijos instituto atnaujintų tyrimų šioje vietovėje rezultatas – dar 35 lyvių palaidojimai, datuojami XI–XIII a.

Šių kasinėjimų metu gauti duomenys leidžia iš naujo nagrinėti lyvių laidojimo papročių raidą vėlyvajame geležies amžiuje. Straipsnyje tai daroma analizuojant du šiame kapinyne aptiktus degintinius moterų kapus, Nr. 17 ir Nr. 18, iš kurių nesuardytas buvo rastas tik palaidojimas Nr. 17. Visi kiti kapinyno palaidojimai, išskyrus vieną kenotafą, buvo griautiniai, atlikti inhumacijos būdu. Minėti degintiniai moterų kapai yra svarbus senovės lyvių idėjų apie pomirtinį gyvenimą ir apskritai jų religinės priklausomybės įrodymas.

Archeologų teigimu, Dauguvos lyvių kapinyuose aptinkami du skirtingi degintinių kapų tipai: 1) Laidojimai negiliose lėšio formos, maždaug 0,5 m skersmens duobėse, kuriuos buvo užpildomos pelenais iš kremavimo vietos; tokiose duobėse suanglėję mirusiojo kaulai dažniausiai sumaišyti su medžio anglimis ir išsilydžiusiais, sudegusiais, o neretai ir anksčiau suskaldytais (sudaužytais) daiktais; kartais šie pelenai būdavo įvynioti į audinį.

2) Laidojimai duobēse, kurių forma atitiko sudegintų palaikų konfiguraciją; jose naudoti lentiniai karstai, o įkapės paprastai nebuvo deginamos, bet dėtos į kapą panašiai kaip inhumacijos atveju.

Ankstesni yra pirmojo tipo kapai, paplitę X–XI a.; antrojo tipo kapai vėlyvesni. Gerai datuota moterų kapų medžiaga aiškiai rodo, kad pirmojo tipo degintiniai kapai Dauguvos žemupyje XI a. viduryje jau išnyko. Per X ir XI a. panašūs pokyčiai, liudiję regiono christianizaciją, vyko ir kitose Šiaurės ir Rytų Europos visuomenėse.

Tačiau XII–XIII a., kai jau vyravo griautiniai kapai (inhumacija), degintinių kapų vėl pradeda rasti. Skirtingai nuo ankstyvojo pirmojo tipo laidojimo negiliose lęšio formos duobėse, vėlyvojo laidojimo kremuojant ritualas iš esmės toks pat, kaip ir vienalaikio laidojimo inhumacijos būdu, nes pelenai tokiais atvejais buvo dedami į vinimis sukaltą lentinį karstą. Be to, pasitaiko atveju, kai drabužiai su papuošalais nebuvo deginami kartu su mirusiuoju, o tarnavo kaip patalynė ar apdangalas, kaip antai, palaidojimo Nr. 17 Čabo kapinyne atveju. Išskyrus kūno sudeginimą, likusi laidotuvių ritualo dalis čia visiškai imitavo tuo pačiu metu plitusį lyvių inhumacinį laidojimo būdą.

Vertindami lyvių medžiagos kultūrinę ir istorinę reikšmę, šio straipsnio autoriai prisideda prie tų tyrinėtojų, kurie mano, kad šios vėlyvosios kremacijos jau negalima vienareikšmiškai priskirti pagonybei. Rašytiniai šaltiniai ir etnografinės paralelės leidžia manyti, kad ugnis pagonybės epochoje buvo suvokiama kaip priemonė apvalyti ir išlaisvinti sielą sunaikinant kūną. Paprastai visus Viduramžių ritualus ir kremavimo praktiką, susijusią su ugnimi, tyrinėtojai automatiškai, nesigilindami į detales, sieja su pagonybe. Tačiau kremacijos aptikimas pirmosiose Dauguvos žemupio bažnyčių kapinėse tokiai nuomonei akivaizdžiai prieštarauja. Reikalas tas, kad prisikėlimo „mechanika“ Viduramžių krikščionybėje reiškė „kūno“ prisikėlimą, todėl, jei įmanoma, po mirties gendantį kūną buvo būtina išsaugoti. Šiuo atveju kremacija pagrindinę „grėsmę“ kėlė ne dėl ugnies pragariškumo, o būtent dėl pavojaus „prarasti kūną“, kuris turėjo prisikelti. Būtina visiško kūno sunaikinimo sąlyga buvo išbarstyti mirusiojo kūno pelenus. Tuo baigdavosi ir nusikaltėlių ar eretikų deginimo egzekucijos. Pagonys, pavyzdžiui, estai, tą patį darydavo, kai norėdavo išniekinti krikščionių lyvių palaidojimo vietas Iškškilėje ir Martinsaloje. Todėl kruopščiai išsaugoti kremuoti palaikai, palaidoti minėtų kapinių pašventintoje žemėje, aiškiai rodo prisikėlimo viltį ir mums yra nuoroda į krikščionišką, o ne į pagonišką laidojimo ritualo kontekstą.

Kita su kremavimu susijusi „grėsmė“ buvo formalus sudegintų palaikų susiejimas su pagonybe, atsiradęs dar tais laikais, kai frankai užkariavo saksus. Būtent Karolio Didžiojo teisės aktai, o ne koks nors teologinis pagrindimas, buvo precedentas įtraukti kremavimo draudimą į katalikų kanoną. Lyvių atveju, kai XIII a. pradžioje regione įsitvirtino Vokiečių ordinas ir katalikų pamokslininkai, Romos Katalikų Bažnyčia kovoti su palaikų deginimu čia nereikėjo, mat deginti palaikus pagonys Dauguvos žemupyje nustojo jau gerokai

anksčiau. Kremavimas nebegalėjo būti siejamas su vietine pagonybe, tad drausti jo šiame kontekste nebuvo praktinės prasmės. Tai svarbu, nes tyrinėtojai dažnai mano, kad lyviai degindavo savo mirusiuosius vienodai intensyviai per visą vėlyvąjį geležies amžių.

Remiantis tuo, kas išdėstyta, straipsnio autorių nuomone, minėtos kremacijos iš Uogrės-galo Čabo kapinyno laikyti pagonių palaidojimais ar pagonybės reminiscencijomis negalima. Augant gyventojų prekybiniam aktyvumui ir į piligriminį judėjimą įtraukiant naujai atsivertusias tautas, prasidėjus kryžiaus žygiams ir gausėjant ginkluotų konfliktų, žuvusiųjų svetimame krašte skaičius galėjo išaugti. Tokiais atvejais kremavimas, po kurio pelenai būdavo išgabenami ir perlaidojami žemėje, galėjo tapti priimtiniu, kad ir ne visai „teisėtu“, bet, Bažnyčios požiūriu, nesmerktinu elgesio su mirusiųjų kūnais būdu.

Šiai nuomonei neprieštaruoja ir XIII–XIV a. rašytinių šaltinių duomenys, kurie mums teikia žinių apie žuvusių Vokiečių ordino riterių deginimo atvejus ir palankų Katalikų Bažnyčios atstovų požiūrį į lyvių vado Kaupo sudeginimą. Tokio pobūdžio palaidojimų plitimą galėjo palengvinti įsitikinimo apie skaistyklos egzistavimą plitimas, nes šis įsitikinimas implikavo visą krikščioniškąją ugnies simboliką ir tikėjimą jos apvalomąja galia.