Vitolds Muižnieks

5 The Co-Existence of Two Traditions in the Territory of Present-Day Latvia in the 13th–18th Centuries: Burial in Dress and in a Shroud

Introduction

The perception of death and of life beyond the grave is one area of human spiritual life that has been significantly altered through the influence of Christianity. Ideas concerning death and life after death are manifested in mortuary practices. The form of burial indicates changes in world view and religious beliefs that followed conversion to Christianity.

In studies by historians and archaeologists the main criteria attesting to the influence of Christianity in the sphere of mortuary practices are generally taken to be: inhumation, aligned with the head to the west, burial in a shroud, and burial in churches and consecrated churchyards (Zoll-Adamikowa, 1971; Fehring, 1979; Gräslund, 1987; Valk, 1998). These criteria are seen as the characteristic features of Christian burial rites, which were gradually introduced into the burial practices of the inhabitants of Western and Central-Eastern Europe along with the spread of Christianity.

The process of consolidation of burial practices connected with Church funerary ritual differed from country to country, depending on the time and conditions of the spread of Christianity. In some areas this was a long process, while elsewhere the changes followed very soon after conversion to Christianity and the establishment of parochial organisation. For example, in Scandinavia, northern Germany and Poland the changes in the form of burial occurred over a period of 100–200 years. On the other hand, in the area populated by Baltic and Finnic groups (present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and former Prussia) the process was protracted, lasting more than 500 years (*Валуев,* 2003; Muižnieks, 2011; Valk, 2001; Урбанавичюс, 1985; Žulkus, 1998). If we take into account the aforementioned characteristics of burial rites, we may consider that here the transition from paganism to Christianity was never really completed. It did not happen in the Middle Ages (13th–15th centuries) or later, in the comparatively recent past, the 19th or 20th century. During this whole period in Latvia and the neighbouring lands the continuity of particular burial traditions can be observed, something we can largely regard as a regional peculiarity.

5.1 The Christianisation of Latvia and Changes in the Form of Burial

With the spread of Christianity in the 11th–13th century, the Baltic and Finnic peoples inhabiting present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and former Prussia came to be within the area of influence of both the Western Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In this period efforts to introduce the Christian faith were connected with activities by the Catholic rulers of Scandinavia, and the Orthodox princes and traders of Russia. In the late 12th century the Holy Roman Empire also became actively involved in spreading Christianity: having expanded its realm to the southern shores of the Baltic Sea, it continued to extend its influence further eastwards. Accordingly, in Latvian historiography three partially overlapping periods of the spread of Christianity are distinguished: Scandinavian, Slavic and German (Mugurēvičs, 1987).

During the first two stages the native peoples' acquaintance with Christianity was largely of an indirect nature. In the 11th and 12th centuries there is no reliable evidence of any purposefully established mission nor of missionary activities by the Catholic or Orthodox Church. The information about churches and church-building in the written sources can be explained as referring to special cases, where the churches served the needs of a narrow group of traders and settlers. This is confirmed by the fact mentioned in the History of the Archbishopric of Hamburg (*Gesta Hamburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*), by Adam of Bremen († *circa* 1085), that in 1070 a Danish merchant, urged by the King of Denmark, built a church in Couronia (Anderson 1989, 252). Likewise, the Orthodox centres at Jersika (in Latgale) and Koknese (in Vidzeme) are mentioned in the 13th century Chronicle of Henry in connection with the Russians (*rutheni*) who were living here (Indriķa Hronika [IH] X, 3; XI, 8; XIII, 4). It is not impossible that some of the native inhabitants had also been converted to Orthodoxy and were accordingly referred to as *rutheni*, since in the 13th century the term could be used not only in an ethnic, but also an ecclesiastical sense. Judging from the Chronicle of Henry, the inhabitants of present-day northern Vidzeme (Tālava) and south-eastern Estonia (Otepää) also belonged to the Orthodox community. In the 13th century, as a result of the crusades, they adopted the Latin faith (IH XI, 7; XIV, 2; XVIII, 3; XX, 3). Unfortunately, the author of the chronicle does not reveal to what extent the native peoples were familiar with Orthodoxy: whether it was the majority of the population who were Christian or just a restricted group – the social élite.

Indirectly reflecting the influence of Orthodoxy are the symbols connected with Christianity that are represented in the 11th and 12th century material from occupation sites and burial sites in the area of present-day Latvia: enamel eggs, various crosses, medallions and enkolpions with images of the saints. (Мугуревич, 1965, p. 71;

Mugurēvičs 1974; Mugurēvičs, 1999). On burial sites they have been discovered mainly with female and child burials, along with other kinds of pendants and artefacts. It is also thought that various Latvian words relating to Church terminology were borrowed from Old Slavic at this time: *gavēt* (to fast), *zvans* (bell), *krusts* (cross), *svece* (candle), *grēks* (sin) etc. (Anderson, 1989, pp. 246, 247). On the other hand, the archaeological material from 11th and 12th century burial sites does not reveal significant changes in the form of burial. In terms of grave orientation, the native traditions are preserved, and the dead are buried with elaborate jewellery and other grave goods. In parallel with inhumation, cremation is also practised; the dead are buried in flat and barrow cemeteries. In view of this, locating the earliest churches is problematic. Perhaps because of this, so far it has not been possible to obtain convincing archaeological evidence of 11th and 12th century religious buildings and churchyards.

A different situation developed during the third period of Christianisation, in the late 12th and 13th centuries. The impact of German missionary and crusading activities was significantly more extensive and purposeful, affecting the political, social, economic and spiritual areas of life. The course of this mission is documented extensively in written sources (the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia, the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle, papal bulls, agreements etc.), which reflect the course of the spread of Christianity and subsequent events. The advent of written culture and the introduction of Christianity were followed by a series of other changes: the Western European system of feudal relations was introduced, the Livonian Confederation of ecclesiastical states came into being, towns were founded, stone castles and religious buildings erected, and a parochial system established, for example. These processes affected the whole area of present-day Latvia. The events and their consequences are partly also reflected in the archaeological material from residential and burial sites (LA 1974, pp. 285–300).

Archaeological excavation has been undertaken at more than 250 burial sites from the 13th–18th centuries, including urban and rural parish cemeteries, chapel sites and other locations (Muižnieks, 2005) (Fig. 1). Major excavation has also been undertaken at the earliest churches and churchyards, established already in the time of Bishops Meinhard, Berthold and Albert, in the late 12th and early 13th centuries (Ikšķile, Mārtiņsala, Rīga, Aizkraukle and elsewhere). This research has served to reveal and characterise the influence of Christianity on the form of burial, which can be compared with other contemporaneous burial sites.

The archaeological material shows that from the 13th century the local burial practices of the native peoples (Livs, Couronians, Semigallians, Latgallians and Selonians) gradually disappear, and in their place a characteristic form of burial gradually becomes established across all of present-day Latvia. The majority of norms associated with Christian funerary ritual are adopted starting from the 15th century. At this time cremation disappears, having been widely practiced hitherto in the areas populated by the Couronians and occasionally represented at burial sites

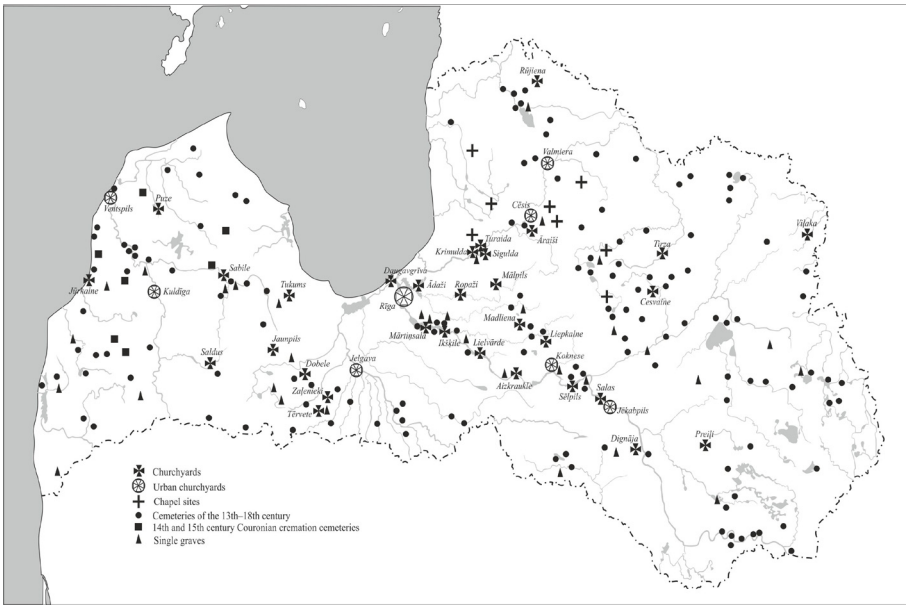

Figure 5.1: Archaeologically excavated medieval and early modern burial sites.

of the other ethnic groups as well. In eastern Latvia cremation was discontinued during the 13th and 14th century, whereas in western Latvia (Kurzeme) cremation burials disappear in the first half of the 15th century. Grave orientation towards the west became established, observable with minor deviation in more than in 90% of cases. The tradition of raising burial mounds or creating stone structures over burials disappeared. In the 15th–18th centuries the barrows and stone graves of earlier periods (mainly the Bronze and Early Iron Age) were used only for secondary burials. Flat cemeteries became the dominant kind of burial site, and in many cases burial was organised on the model of churchyards, being within a delimited area, in rows and in several layers, observing grave orientation to the west and so forth (Muižnieks, 2011).

Several of these changes took place relatively quickly during the 13th–15th centuries, but the practice of burying the dead in dress and with grave goods continued up to the 18th and 19th centuries, and even later. Sometimes offerings of food were made to the deceased; funeral meals were eaten beside the graves or within the cemetery, and feasts held in memory of the dead. Likewise, in the period from the 13th–18th centuries the dead were not consistently buried in consecrated churchyards next to churches. Other burial sites, not directly connected with churchyards, were utilised, these being located in the vicinity of settlement sites such as villages,

parishes, manors and individual farmsteads (Muižnieks, 2010). In this regard, there were no significant changes following the Reformation or Counter-Reformation. The form of burial with its characteristic features that became established in the Middle Ages continued into the Modern Era.

5.2 Burial in Dress and with Grave Goods

Following the establishment of a parochial system, the pattern of Christianisation in most states and countries involved a transition from local burial sites to churchyards, abandoning at the same time the practice of burial in dress and with grave goods (Rom and Byzanz 1997–1998; Valk 1998). In the case of Latvia and the neighbouring lands the tradition of burial in dress and with grave goods was not interrupted. It was practiced from prehistoric times into the Middle Ages and the Modern Era as well. In this regard, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries did not introduce significant changes. The tradition of burying the dead in their dress and with grave goods was retained in both Protestant and Catholic districts.

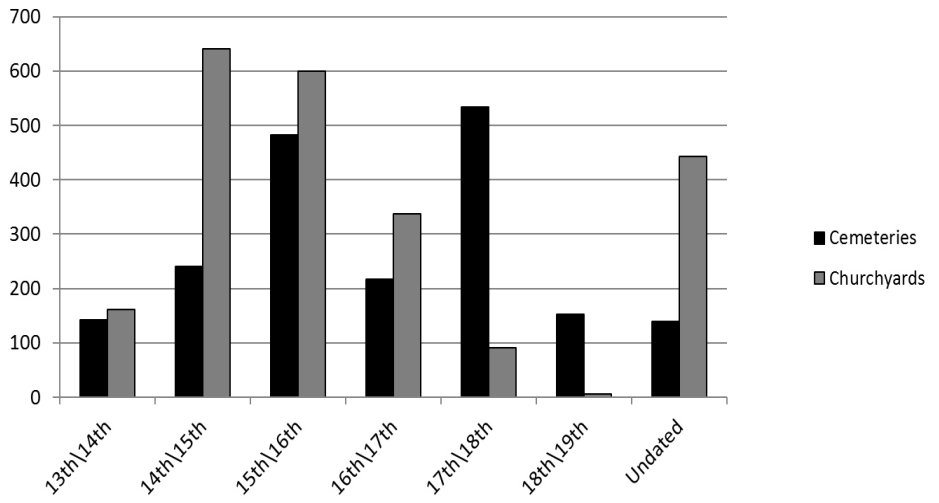

Figure 5.2: The number of archaeologically excavated burials with grave goods.

Burials of men, women, adolescents and children together with dress remains and grave goods occur both on local burial sites and in churchyards (Fig. 5.2). In neither case can these burials be viewed as exceptional, since most members of society, rather than just particular individuals, were being buried in dress and with grave goods (jewellery, tools, everyday utensils etc.). This tradition existed contemporaneously with the practice of burial in a shroud, which was gradually introduced starting from the turn of the 13th century. In cemeteries located next to medieval castles, manor centres, and in villages and townships, burial with grave goods is confirmed in 44% of cases, whereas burials with grave goods at sites unconnected with these centres more frequently have grave goods: in 58% of cases (Tab. 5.1). It is thought that the differences between the two groups of burial sites can be explained in terms of the more frequent observance of the burial traditions practiced in Western Europe in churchyards. Churchyards could also contain the burials not only of the native population of the rural areas of present-day Latvia, but also of foreigners and their descendants.

Table 5.1: Grave goods in rural churchyards of the 13th–18th centuries.

Parish	No. of graves	Grave goods, %	Tools, %	Weapons, %	Ornaments, %	Coins, %	Date (cent.)
Aizkraukle (Ascheraden)	131	75%	22	0	66	12	13th-17th
Ādaži (Neuermühlen)	32	34%	3	0	4	93	17th,18th
Āraiši (Arrasch)	28	18%	44	0	56	0	14th-18th
Cesvaine (Sesswegen)	264	21%	14	0	65	21	14th-6th\17th
Dobele (Doblen)	1344	42%	24	1	65	10	14th\15th-16th\17th
Ikšķile (Uexküll)	835	32%	13.5	0.5	83	3	12th\13th-18th
Jaunpils (Neuenburg)	3	33%	0	0	0	100	17th
Krimulda (Cremon)	4	50%	0	0	100	0	17th,18th
Lielvārde (Lennewarden)	10	60%	23	0	69	8	13th-18th

Continued **Table 5.1:** Grave goods in rural churchyards of the 13th–18th centuries.

Parish	No. of graves	Grave goods, %	Tools, %	Weapons, %	Ornaments, %	Coins, %	Date (cent.)
Madliena (Sissegal)	20	80%	16	2	38	44	13th\14th-17th
Mārtiņsala (Martinsholm)	1808	46%	22.5	0.5	70	7	12th\13th-17th
Preiļi (Prele)	25	12%	0	0	17	83	17th, 18th
Puze (Pussen)	148	84%	13	1	80	6	13th\14th-17th
Ropaži (Rodenpoys)	8	50%	13	0	62	25	15th-17th
Sabile (Zabeln)	5	80%	16	0	47	37	14th-18th
Salas (Holmhof)	93	50%	14	0	30	56	15th\16th-17th
Saldus (Frauenburg)	57	70%	16	0	78	6	15th,16th
Saldus Jāņa (Johannis)	33	18%	14	0	86	0	17th, 18th
Sēlpils (Selburg)	234	58%	31	1	53	15	13th\14th-17th
Tērvete (Hofzumberge)	56	68%	14	0	28	58	15th\16th-16th
Turaida (Treyden)	45	36%	10	0	55	35	13th-18th
Zaļenieki (Grünhof)	20	75%	27	0	67	6	16th
	5203	**44%**					

A good example is the church and churchyard of Ikšķile, established in the time of Bishop Meinhard at the end of the 12th century and serving as the initial base for missionaries and crusaders. In the excavated part of the cemetery, where burial continued up to the 17th century, only 32% of burials were found to have grave goods. Judging from the stratigraphy of the burials (rows and layers), burials with and without grave goods are contemporaneous. The artefacts recovered from the graves clearly indicate that the provision of grave goods was generally a practice of the native inhabitants. Similarly, at the churchyard of Mārtiņsala, consecrated in 1197 in the time of Bishop Berthold and used until the early 17th century, there are contemporaneous burials with and without grave goods. Grave goods are more frequent in the graves of the churchyard (46%) than in the graves excavated within the church itself (27%) (Muižnieks, 2006, pp. 173, 179). It was generally the members of the higher-ranking social orders who were buried inside churches: the clergy, members of the Livonian Order, vassals, burghers, etc., who in general did not come from the native population. Judging from the ornaments found with the burials, members of the native community were buried in Mārtiņsala Church, accompanied by grave goods. Some of the graves ended up inside the church as a result of alteration work, the church being extended to include part of the former churchyard.

The differences between the burial practices of the native population and the newcomers are also vividly observable in the archaeological material of the urban cemeteries, where burials without grave goods predominate. For example, in the excavated 'Grey Cemetery' on the north side of Riga Cathedral burials without grave goods constitute more than 80% of the total. Grave goods (dress accessories, tools and coins) occur mainly with the chronologically earlier burials, from the 13th and early 14th centuries, and with the early modern burials (Tilko, 1998). Similarly, individual burials with grave goods from the 13th and the turn of the 14th centuries, and also from the Early Modern Era (16th and 17th centuries), have also been discovered in the churchyard of St Peter's in Riga (Pāvele, 1959; Spirģis, 2012). Judging from the finds, it was the native population, descendants of the Livs, Semigallians and Couronians, who were buried in dress and with grave goods. The urban population initially consisted of people from the rural areas of present-day Latvia, who had settled here already at the end of the 12th century. Later, after the founding of the city of Riga, they were joined by merchants from Russia and settlers from Western Europe. In the cultural layer of the oldest settlements in Riga, jewellery of the native peoples can generally be found in the period up to the 15th century, largely corresponding to the finds from the 13th and 14th century burials in the churchyards of Riga (Caune & Gammeršmite, 1983; Celmiņš 2009; Smiltniece & Vijups, 1998). Evidently, in the 14th and 15th centuries the local jewellery ceased to be widely used, a development that could have been influenced by regulations limiting ostentation and jewellery-wearing, as well as by the control exerted over the manufacture of jewellery in the city and its import (Šterns, 1997, p. 269; Taube, 1960). It is thought that the practice of providing grave goods (jewellery, tools

and other objects) ceased at the same time. Much less jewellery of the native peoples has been found in the cemeteries than in the urban cultural layer, indicating that from the start (in the 13th century) the permanent residents of the town, both native and non-native, were burying their dead in shrouds. It is possible that integration of the native population into the urban cultural milieu was promoted by the corporate structures – confraternities of merchants and craftsmen – that regulated the life of the townspeople, including funerals[1].

Judging by the evidence from excavations at urban cemeteries in Latvia and Estonia, grave goods start to appear more frequently again from the 16th century onwards. These changes can partly be explained through the influx of rural people into the towns, especially in times of war and famine, which particularly affected the inhabitants of present-day Latvia in the 16th–18th centuries (Valk, 2004). It may be thought that the Reformation, which first spread in the towns of Livonia and subsequently came to encompass rural areas, also had an important role. The influence of the Reformation led to a decline in the religiosity characteristic of the Middle Ages, something that also affected burial practices. In Western Europe, from the 16th century onwards, the shroud was progressively replaced by funeral costume, in addition to which burial in secular dress also began, and grave goods increasingly appeared (Kenzler, 2011; Felgenhauer-Schmiedt, 1993; Wittkopp, 1997).

Similar changes followed in the urban cemeteries of Latvia and in those rural parish churches where mostly people of foreign origin were buried. For example, the 16th–18th century burials of the Dukes of Courland and Semigallia (in Jelgava) and likewise the family burial vault of the barons in St John's Church, Saldus, and the burials of townspeople in St Peter's Church, Riga, in many cases have remains of dress, jewellery, everyday items and other objects which rarely occur with medieval burials (Ārends, 1940; Celmiņš, 2012, p. 99; Līdaka & Ruša, 1996)[2]. It is possible that the changes in the form of burial that appeared among the non-native population and their descendants indirectly promoted a continuation of the tradition among the native population of burial in secular dress. At archaeologically excavated sites this tradition is indicated by finds of elements of dress and grave goods with burials. In rural cemeteries in the period from the 13th–18th centuries grave goods are

1 The statutes of the Riga Latvian Fraternity of Bearers in 1450, state that: 'Should a brother of this guild or association die, drown or be killed in Riga or within a mile of the city, all the brothers shall assemble and accompany the deceased with candles and a funeral pall to his grave' (Stieda & Mettig, 1896, p. 416).

2 Medieval burials sometimes have coins, for example the burials of Riga Cathedral (Berga & Celmiņš, 1998), and the grave of Andreas Stenberg, Landmarschall of the Livonian Order (†1375), in Aizkraukle Church (Stepiņš, 1943). The grave of Archbishop of Riga Michael Hildebrand(†1509) in the cloisters of Riga Cathedral had the remains of the vestments (the chasuble), a coin and fragments from a chalice or other object of tin placed in the grave (Jaksch, 1893).

represented in 50% of graves. The burials have elements of dress (crown head-dresses, woollen shawls, footcloths, footwear, belts, buckles, buttons, hooks and loops, pins), ornaments used to fasten the dress (brooches and dress-pins) as well as objects not relating directly to dress (necklaces, finger-rings, bracelets, tools, weapons, coins, items of personal hygiene, etc.) (Fig. 5.3).

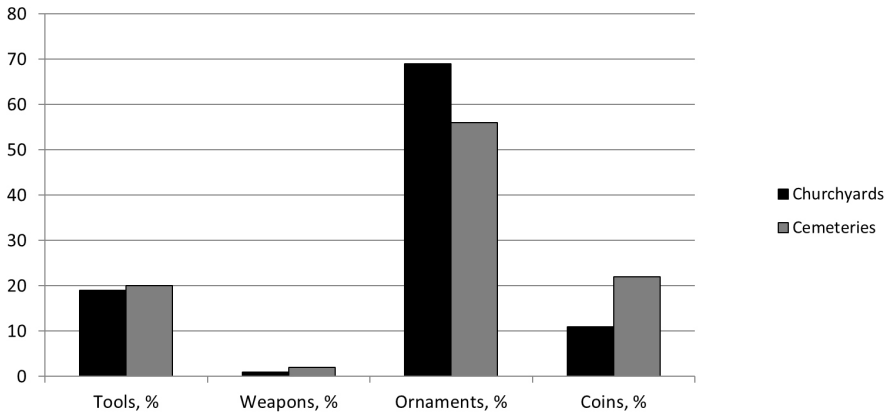

Figure 5.3: Percentage breakdown of categories of grave goods at burial sites.

Both groups of burial sites (churchyards and local burial sites) show a higher proportion of grave goods in the medieval graves than the early modern graves. Over the centuries there were changes in the range and quantity of grave goods provided for the deceased. Starting already in the 13th century, the large objects – such as swords, horse trappings, clay pots, sickles, scythes, shears, pectoral ornaments and neck-rings – gradually disappear from the range of grave goods (Fig. 5.4). This can be observed clearly at the parish churchyards such as Ikšķile, Mārtiņsala, Aizkraukle and Sēlpils (LA, 1974, pp. 295–300). Similar changes occurred at the local burial sites, where the number and range of grave goods decrease over time. This process, traceable in the archaeological material of both groups of burial sites, was promoted by several factors, including changes in religious views, traditions, fashion, socio-economic conditions. The finds from early modern (16th–18th century) burials mostly relate to dress (brooches, buttons, belts, buckles, loops and hooks). The most common everyday utensils are knives and sewing equipment (Fig. 5.5). Ritual coins became favourite grave goods, and in percentage terms they often comprise the largest proportion of the finds from burials of this period.

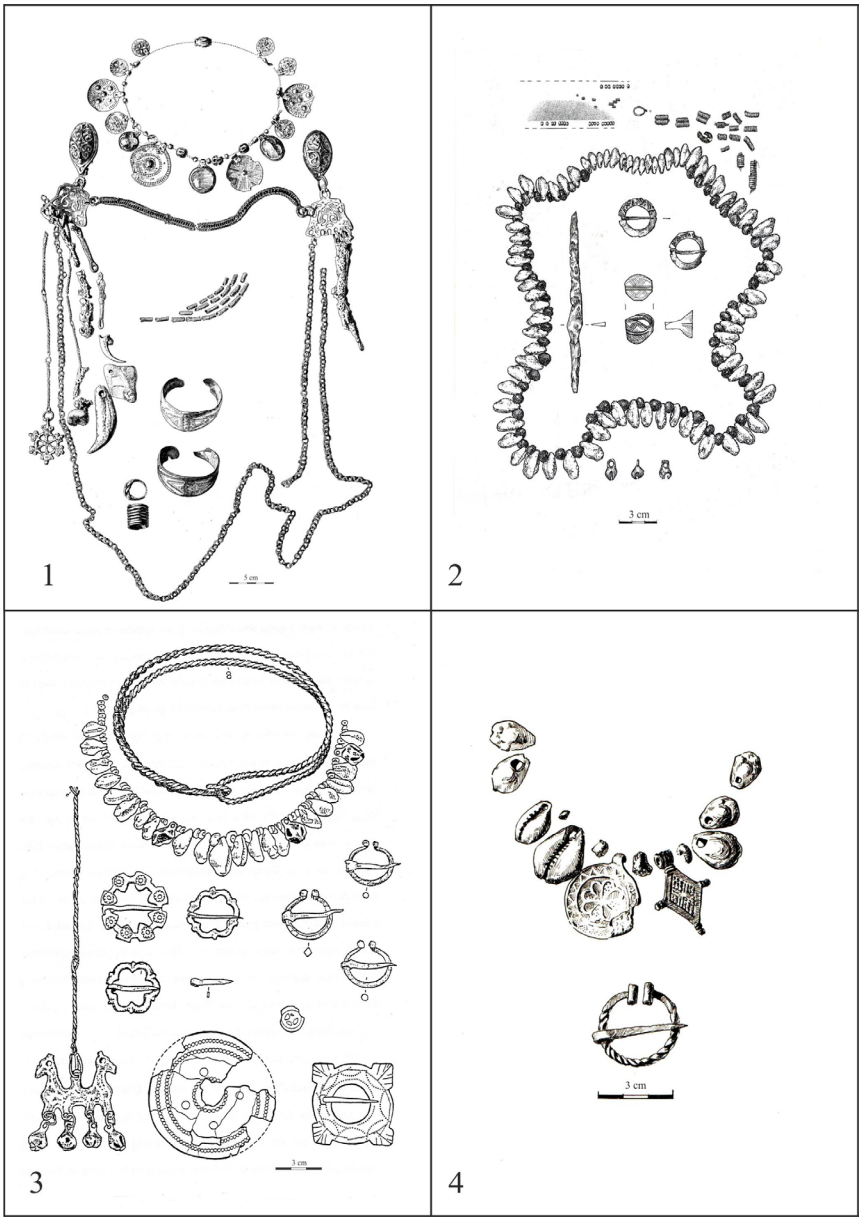

Figure 5.4: Female burials of the 13th-16th centuries. 1 – Churchyard of Mārtiņsala, inventory of Burial No. 1212 (13th century), excavated by A. Zariņa in 1966; 2 – Churchyard of Sabile, inventory of Burial No. 5 (14th century), excavated by I. Berga and V. Muižnieks in 2006; 3 – Churchyard of Dobele, inventory of Burial No. 740 (15th century), excavated by J. Daiga in 1981; 4 – Churchyard of Sēlpils, inventory of Burial No. 225 (16th century), excavated by A. Zariņa in 1964.

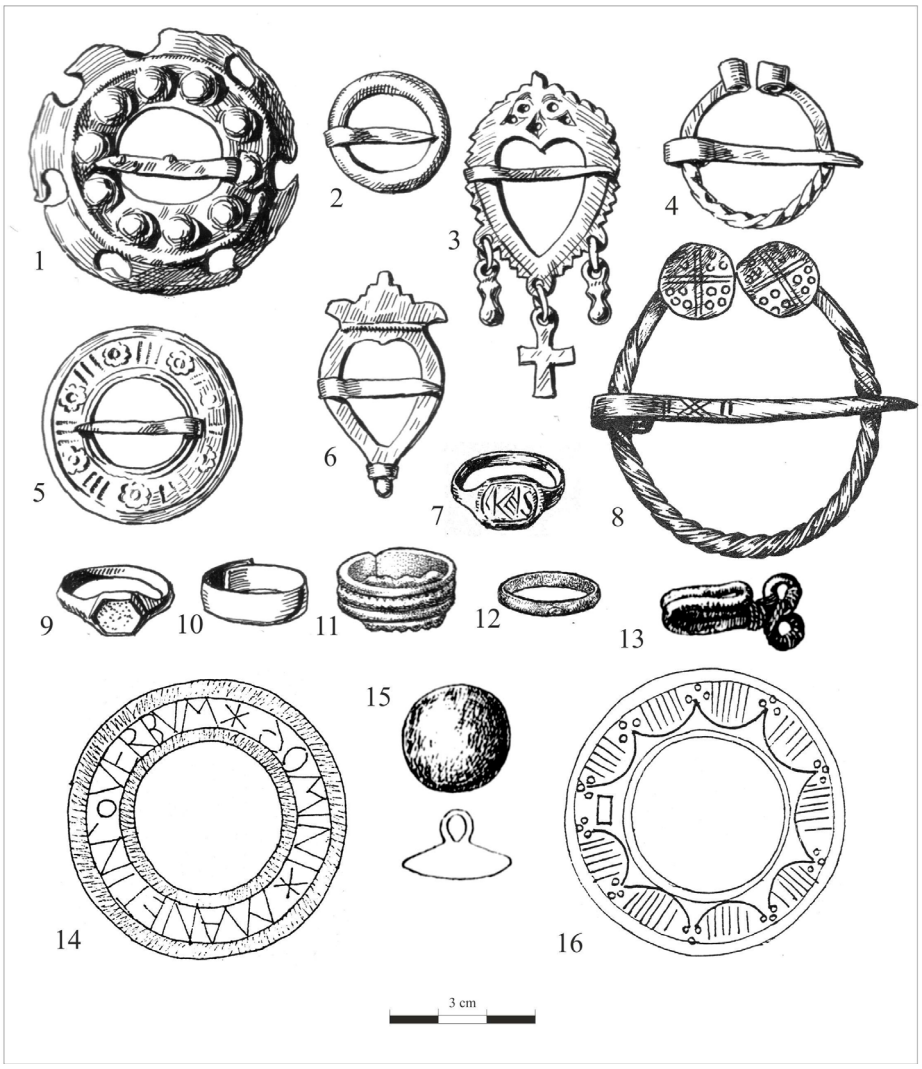

Figure 5.5: Ornaments and elements of dress from early modern burials (1-6, 8, 14, 16 – brooches; 7, 9-12 – rings; 13 – dress hook; 15 – button). Items 1-6, 9, 10 – Jēkabpils Zvanītāji, Churchyard of Salas muiža, excavated by E. Šnore in 1974; Item 7 – Churchyard of Sēlpils, excavated by A. Zariņa in 1964; Item 8 – Kastrānes Skubiņi cemetery, excavated by P. Stepiņš in 1937; Items 11, 12 – Jersikas Ružas cemetery, excavated by N. Jefimova in 1989-1991; Items 13, 15 – Auru Agrārieši cemetery, excavated by J. Graudonis in 1959; Items 14, 16 – Churchyard of Dobele, excavated by J. Daiga in 1972-1982.

So far, no differences in the range of grave goods have been observed that might reflect affiliation to a particular denomination. Analogous groups of objects are represented in graves in Lutheran and Catholic rural areas. Elsewhere in Europe the early modern burials in Catholic cemeteries usually have medallions showing images of the saints and rosaries, while Protestant burials have prayer and hymn books (Kenzler, 2011, p. 25). Rosaries were being made in Livonia already in the Middle Ages. Rosary makers (*paternostermacher*) are mentioned in Riga in the 14th century (Stieda & Mettig, 1896, p. 69). In later documents, from 1545 and even in the 17th century, the rosary is mentioned as a favourite gift for a bride and as a woman's necklace (Ģinters, 1938, p. 148; Kelch, 1695, p. 21; Olearius, 1656, p. 107). It has not proved possible so far to distinguish clearly objects belonging to this category from the rest of the finds. Neither are there any hymn books or remains of them from burials, even though folklore attests to a tradition of placing them in the grave (Šmits, 1941, p. 2064). Judging from the range and quantity of jewellery found with early modern burials, it was mainly less valuable ornaments that were placed in the grave, compared to those worn in life. Silver brooches, rings, belts and so on were usually bequeathed instead. This is indicated by the silver jewellery found in hoards and by the mentions of silver and gold objects belonging to Latvians in inventories of the property of the city of Riga (Ceplīte, 1970; Ģinters, 1938; Jansons, 1971; Straubergs, 1939). It is possible that in the Early Modern Era, in contrast to the Middle Ages, the dead were no longer buried in elaborate festive attire, everyday dress serving this purpose instead.

5.3 Cultural Aspects of the Burial Customs

The evidence in medieval written sources concerning grave goods and the dress of the deceased is comparatively meagre and general. The sources from the early period of Livonia give no specific indications or requirements that might reflect changes in burial ritual and indicate to what degree new practices were introduced or old ones retained. We may gauge the position taken by the Church from the context of written sources reflecting the events of Christianisation. For example, the encyclopaedia by English monk Bartholomaeus Anglicus (*De Proprietatibus Rerum*) discusses, in the geographical description of Livonia, the practices of the native population before conversion to Christianity, including cremation of the dead, burial in dress, together with livestock, slaves, servants and various items. The author notes that at the time of writing (*circa* 1240), by the grace of God and the aid of the Germans, this land and other districts under its control have been freed from this superstition (Spekke, 1935, pp. 92, 93). Interesting in this regard is the peace treaty concluded in Christburg in 1249 between the Teutonic Order and the Prussians, in accordance with which the inhabitants of several Prussian districts had to abandon their pagan cults and bury their dead in cemeteries according to Christian practice. They had to cease to perform

cremation or to bury the dead together with horses, people, weapons, fine dress or other valuable things[3]. Among the written sources from Livonia, only the Statutes of the Synod of the Riga Ecclesiastical Province, from 1428, elaborate on funerary practices, condemning burial in unconsecrated cemeteries from pagan times (*locis prophanis*), as well as feasts (*convivia*) held on memorial days in cemeteries and churches[4]. Judging from these sources, the official position of the Church in Livonia did not diverge significantly from the norms observed elsewhere. Thus, the dead were to be buried in consecrated churchyards rather than on burial sites from the pagan era; they were to be inhumed without grave goods, and feeding the souls of the dead was prohibited. A similar position was expressed by the early modern Lutheran and Catholic clergy, even though this did not correspond to the real situation in the Middle Ages or in the Early Modern Era. Judging from the archaeological evidence, the dead were buried in secular dress with grave goods, in shrouds and later in a special funeral costume, such practices being observed both by the native population of present-day Latvia, and by immigrants and their descendants.Indications of the co-existence of the two traditions and of the changes occurring in the Early Modern Era are to be found in written sources and folklore. The 1570 Statutes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia state that the dead must be dressed in modest funeral costume (*nottürftige grabkleidern*) and that in this land dressing the dead and placing them in a coffin is an ancient Christian tradition (*undin diesen landen ein alter christlicher gebrauch der verkleidung und der sarken stets gewesen ist*) (Sehling, 1913, p. 104). The Statutes of the Livland Church, from 1686, state that the faithful must be continually urged to refrain from burying the dead in an expensive funeral costume and coffin (*Das Volk soll… standmaßig zu bezeugen … daß sie von kostbahren Sargen und Ankleidung der Todten ablassen*) (Buddenbrock, 1821, p. 1809). Essentially, these documents make reference to special funerary dress, which in the Early Modern Period replaced the shroud, although in view of the specific regional practices, it is also possible that the instructions in the church statutes refer to secular dress. Indirect evidence of the practice of burying the dead in secular dress, thought to have spread among the urban population in the Early Modern Period, is provided by the 1677 regulation on dress issued by the town of Riga, stipulating that

3 […] quod ipsi vel heredes eorum in mortuis comburendis vel subterrandis cum equis sive hominibus vel cum armis seu vestibus vel quibuscunque aliis preciosis, vel eciam in aliis ritus gentilium de cetero non servabunt, sed mortuos suos iuxta morem christianorum in cymiteriis sepelient et non extra […] (Švābe, 1940, pp. 283, 287).

4 […] antiquum gentilitatis morem a nonnullis neophitis sive rusticis hujus patrie hucusque abusive continuatum, quo sacrata cimiteria contempnendo preeligunt se in campis silvestribus cum feris sepeliri ac eciam in quibusdam locis prophanis, ubi ipsorum parentes et amici sue gentilitatis temporibus sunt sepulti, et eciam plerumque in ecclesiis et cimiteriis consecratis convivia preparant, defunctis eorum parentibus et amicis cibu met potum exhibentes, credentes hoc in eorum cedere consolationem, alisque diversas sue gentilitatis perfidias ibidem exercentes […] (LUB VII, 690: 19 doc.).

the dead were not to be dressed otherwise than in an ordinary burial gown and shirt (*Todten-Kittel und Hemd*) (Taube 1960, 296). Descriptions of funerals in the 16th–18th centuries give fairly extensive information concerning the practice among the native population of burying the dead in dress. For example, 16th-century sources indicate that the deceased were dressed in their own dress (*ziehen sie Inene an mit seienen kleidern*). In the 17th century Paul Einhorn, Superintendent of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, mentions that fine dress was used (*mit guter Kleidung versehen*), whereas J. A. Brand writes at the turn of the 18th century that everyday dress was used for this purpose (*legen sie denselben in seinem gewöhnlichen habit*) (Mannhardt, 1936, pp. 257, 297, 364, 467, 607). A. W. Hupel writes in the late 18th century that only the poor bury their dead in secular dress (shirt, apron), while the rest wrap them in linen cloth (*Die Leichen weden in Leinwand gewickelt*) (Hupel 1777 II, 155). Similarly, Latvian folksongs recorded in the second half of the 19th century refer to a cloth: *Mother, give me my share; it's not much I need: a cloth woven with two heddles, and six wooden boards* (27419). *Fine white linen I spun, and my cloth I wove; my cloth I wove for to sleep in the sand* (27427) (Barons & Vissendorfs, 1909, pp. 895, 896). It is not known how old this practice is or when it was introduced. The folk songs quoted here are thought to reflect an earlier tradition, practised already in the Middle Ages. This is confirmed by research in churchyards and local cemeteries, where burials with remains of dress and grave goods occur, as well as burials without these, suggesting that burial in a shroud was also practised.

Is it possible to speak of two different cultures in Livonia in the Middle Ages and in later centuries: Western Christian and local pagan or semi-pagan? Or was the population itself divided into two or more camps on the basis of religious beliefs? The question cannot be definitively answered on the basis of archaeological evidence. It seems that the people buried in secular dress and with grave goods were not viewed as less pious, pagan or semi-Christian than those who did not follow these practices. Otherwise such graves would be absent at urban and rural churchyards, where the Church forbade the burial of pagans, heretics, godless. Instead, they would have been buried elsewhere, outside of consecrated churchyards. It is a different matter that, from the present-day perspective, we can try to evaluate the degree of religiosity and the religious views of the people of that time, assessing whether they corresponded to Christian teaching or diverged from it significantly. At the same time, we should take into account that in the Middle Ages and later, there were interpretations of the essentials of Church teaching among the ordinary faithful, reflected in the various beliefs and superstitions, that would seem incompatible today and are very remote from the contemporary understanding. A great many examples are to be found in the medieval genre of visionary literature (Dinzelbacher, 1999; Гуревич, 1999; Le Goff, 1985). Written sources and Latvian folklore generally describe the world beyond the grave as parallel to the earthly world. It was a world where one had similar needs, and grave goods are often mentioned as provision for needs in the afterlife (Kurtz, 1925, p.

184; Mannhardt, 1936, p. 467). The Jesuit Petrus Culesius wrote in his annals of 1599 that the deceased was provided with a tool (*instrumentum*) in the grave, related to what he had done in life, so that when working in the afterlife he could continue to stave off poverty (Kleijntjenss, 1941, pp. 255, 256). According to a Latvian folk belief recorded in the late 19th century, when the deceased was laid in the grave, they were to be provided with money, bread, a set of clean underclothes and a whisk for the bath-house, so they would lack nothing in the afterlife (34140) (Šmits, 1941, p. 2063). In a sense, the grave inventory can be seen as the property of the deceased, or as part of it (*pars pro toto*). The need for grave goods stemmed from concern for the dead and fear of them, and also from the belief in a close connection between the community of the living and the dead. The origins of such beliefs go back to prehistory. However, they cannot be seen as connected exclusively with a pagan world view. A belief in the unity of the dead and the living was also characteristic of Christian medieval Europe. The Church teaching on the Communion of Saints (*Communio Sanctorum*) was literally interpreted in the Middle Ages, taken to mean that the dead are present as full-fledged members of the community and with which they have a close relationship (Oexle, 1983).

We may see as harking back to this kind of understanding and attitude towards the dead the view current in Latvia up to the present day that in the course of burial it is necessary to respect the last will and wishes of the deceased. *'That which had already been decided with regard to preparing and dressing the deceased could not be omitted, otherwise the deceased would appear in a dream and complain that he was missing these things'* (Šmits, 1940, 20904). *'You must not take any object from the dead, since otherwise they he will follow you for the rest of your life, asking for its return'* (Šmits, 1940, 20828). In this regard the grave goods served as a means of averting the ill-will of the deceased, and the evil or illnesses that could afflict people who had a connection to the deceased person. Objects that the deceased had used in life and which had come into contact with the person (a bathhouse whisk, razor, brush, comb, soap, pipe, tobacco etc.) were placed in the grave. Such items were not used after preparing the deceased in fear of misfortune, and in the 18th and 19th century this may also have had a practical, hygienic basis. *'If you comb your hair with a brush belonging to a dead person, then all your hair will fall out'* (Šmits, 1941, 34135). Grave goods and items of dress were also seen as necessary equipment for passing from earthly life to the afterlife. A church inspection record from the parish of Lazdona in 1775 notes that the Latvians would bury their dead in *pastalas* (ordinary leather sandals), so that their path to heaven would be easier (Bregžis, 1931, p. 128). A similar purpose is indicated for the provision of coins as grave goods: so that the dead could more easily enter heaven and would be able to pay St Peter (Šmits, 1940, pp. 1278–1279; Šmits, 1941, pp. 2060, 2063).

Written sources and folklore give practically no indication of the social aspects and reasons for the provision of grave goods. In this connection we may mention the

geographical description (*Cosmographia*) of Sebastian Münster, published in 1550, which tells of Livonia and the funerary practices of the peasantry: '*When they place the deceased in the grave, they provide him with a wooden axe, food, drink and some spending money, charging him to take all of this to the next world, where he would be lord and master over the Germans, just as they have been the rulers in this world*' (Spekke, 1935, p. 242). This passage is quoted by the authors of various 16th–18th century chronicles and geographical accounts, although the practice of placing weapons in the grave was no longer being observed. Weapons (spears and axes) disappear from the grave inventory in the mid-16th century, around the same time as Münster's *Cosmographia* was published. It is possible that provision of weapons as grave goods ceased in connection with the collapse of Livonia, when the role of the native population in military activities decreased. Also, several ordinances prohibiting the keeping and bearing of arms by the peasants were issued in the 16th century (Dunsdorfs & Spekke, 1964, p. 178; Lazdiņa, 1936, pp. 42, 43). In descriptions of funerals the placement of an axe in the grave is mentioned in connection with the social tension existing in Livonia in the 16th century, the time when serfdom was coming into being, as depicted by the authors of the age of humanism. It may be thought that in the Middle Ages, on the contrary, burials with weapons indicated the social status of the deceased. These may have been the burials of members of the native population who were free peasants, vassals or their representatives, involved in military service under the Livonian Order or the bishop.

The disappearance of grave goods in medieval Western Europe is explained in terms of the change from material to spiritual care of the dead. The moveable and immovable property of the deceased was donated to churches and monasteries, so that they might hold masses and prayers for the dead, or else distributed as charity for the poor (Angenendt, 2001, p. 283; Effros, 2003, p. 116; Fehring, 1979, p. 568). At the same time, medieval written sources include examples where the description of life beyond the grave reflects archaic ideas, life after death being depicted as resembling earthly life, as a kind of materialised world. In the genre of visionary literature the depiction of life beyond the grave is modelled on the perception of the real-world space and earthly life. Paradise, hell and purgatory are not located in complete isolation from the earthly world. One could enter and leave the world beyond without crossing the boundary between life and death. An arduous journey awaited the deceased after death, with tests of a material nature: he or she had to cross a plain covered in sharp stones, spikes and thorns, a river full of sword blades or a razor-sharp otherworld bridge, for example (Dinzelbacher, 1999; Le Goff, 1985). Also, the world beyond the grave was imagined and perceived as having a similar social structure as did earthly life (Dinzelbacher, 1979). Evidently for this reason, members of the higher social circles (rulers and clergy) were buried in their official robes along with the attributes of their status. Rulers were provided with the symbols of power: the sceptre, crown and sword; clergymen were buried with their religious equivalents: the ring, staff,

chalice, paten (Brandt, 1976; Dąbrowska, 2008; Meier, 2002). The tradition of burying the clergy in their vestments has been retained in the Catholic Church up to the present day. Thirteenth-century Church authors wrote in this connection that a clergyman's dress symbolises dignity (expressing virtues and abilities), and it is in such dress that they are presented among other people before the Lord[5]. Despite the commonplace medieval notion that the soul was sexless and naked in Heaven, a great number of written works and paintings depict Heaven as populated not only by a hierarchy, but by a clothed hierarchy (Daniell 1997, p. 156; Dinzelbacher 1979, p. 35; Dinzelbacher 1999, p. 61).

It appears that burial in dress did not essentially contradict the medieval ideas concerning life beyond the grave, although the works of late medieval Church authors (Jean Beleth (*†1182*), Sicardus of Cremona (*†1215*) and Durandus of Mende (*†1296*) specifically direct that the ordinary faithful (laity) are to be buried in a shroud, just as Christ has been laid in the grave (Migne 1855a, p. 159; Migne 1855b, p. 427; Davri & Thibodeau 2000, p. 100). This tradition was the most widespread form of burial, but not the only one. In the Middle Ages members of the upper social strata were buried in dress and with the attributes of their status, whereas in the Early Modern Era, starting from the 16th century, the practice of burial in dress and the provision of grave goods gradually also spread among the body of the faithful, both in Protestant and Catholic lands.

In this period, in view of the developments mentioned above, the differences that had existed between Livonia and the rest of Europe in the Middle Ages were reduced. A similar motivation, beliefs and traditions may be found in the Early Modern period across a wide region (Germany, Latvia, Russia and elsewhere) (Zender 1959; Kenzler 2011, pp. 28, 29; Соболев 2000, pp. 138, 139; Бузин 2007, pp. 334–345; Šmits 1940; Šmits 1941). It is difficult to explain how the early modern system of religious beliefs developed, considering that folklore and archaeological material from burial sites reflect universal ideas and similar practices. Is this an entirely new development of the Modern Era? Or does it incorporate an older stratum of beliefs that becomes more overtly expressed at this time? In the case of Latvia, the system of beliefs relating to burial practices formed over a long period of time, from prehistory right up to the Modern Era. Burial in dress and with grave goods was not interrupted in the Middle Ages, as it was across much of Europe, instead being practiced in parallel with the custom of burial in a shroud.

5 [...] vestes enim sacerdotales virtutes significant, cum quibus prae caeteris sunt Domino praesentandi [...] (Migne, 1855a, p.427; Davri & Thibodeau, 2000, p. 100).

5.4 Conclusions

Certain burial norms (burial in parish churchyards in a shroud and without grave goods) which existed in the Middle Ages, being observed in the majority of European lands, and which are nowadays often seen as indications of the consolidation of Christianity, cannot be so unequivocally interpreted in Latvia. In the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era people strove to dress the dead in their best clothes, which they wore ordinarily or kept for festive occasions. Over the course of time, valuable objects ceased to be placed in the grave, but the dead continued to be buried in dress. This is undoubtedly a tradition inherited from prehistory, and has been retained in the area of present-day Latvia and in the neighbouring lands right up to the present. However, this practice cannot be explained as pagan, since the dead were buried in dress not only on local burial sites, but also in churchyards. Under Church law, burial in churchyards was prohibited to those such as pagans, heretics and godless people, which means that the remains of dress and grave goods found with burials cannot be interpreted so straightforwardly.

It is not entirely clear what was the deciding factor that led to the disappearance of this practice in Western Europe and elsewhere. Was it connected with a new understanding of life beyond the grave, the dead and the soul, with a change from material to spiritual care (prayers, donations to the Church and to the poor)? Or with grave-robbing, which led to a reconsideration of the necessity of grave goods? Or was it a matter simply of strict adherence to the norms laid down by rulers and the Church? After all, why did burial in dress and with grave goods re-appear in the Modern Era? It is possible that burial in dress, together with personal items, was not seen as a tradition that expressly contradicted Christian teaching. In the Middle Ages, it was rulers and clergymen who were buried in dress, whereas in the Early Modern Era burial in dress also spread among the ordinary faithful, the laity. Thus, while burial within a shroud can be regarded as the most widespread form of burial in the Middle Ages, it was not the only one. Evidently, this criterion which is widely used in the study of religious life, cannot be taken as an absolute indicator in Latvia and the nearest neighbouring countries. The course and preconditions of Christianisation differed between peoples and lands. The Christian Church emerged and developed on the basis of the earlier religious beliefs, retaining specific characteristics in each region (The Cross Goes North 2005). Evidently, in the lands of the Baltic and Finnic peoples burial in dress and with grave goods, reflecting the syncretic nature of the religious life of the native population, was preserved as a local tradition under the Christian Church in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era.

Translated by Valdis Bērziņš

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