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**COMPARATIVE STUDIES.
CEMETERIES IN CROSS-BORDER REGIONS. VITA MEMORIAE**

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The Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus Cross-border Cooperation Programme within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument succeeds the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG IIIB Neighbourhood Programme Priority South IIIA Programme for the period of 2007–2013. The overall strategic goal of the programme is to enhance the cohesion of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Belarusian border region, to secure a high level of environmental protection and to provide for economic and social welfare as well as to promote intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity.

Latgale region in Latvia, Panevėžys, Utena, Vilnius, Alytus and Kaunas counties in Lithuania, as well as Vitebsk, Mogilev, Minsk, Grodno oblasts and the city of Minsk in Belarus take part in the Programme. The Joint Managing Authority of the programme is the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. The web site of the programme is www.enpi-cbc.eu

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FOREWORD

Cemeteries in Latvia and Belarus as the Object of Area Studies in the Context of Cross-Border Culture Communication

The study of cemeteries located in the border zone between Latvia and Belarus has been produced in the framework of European neighbour relations and partnership instrument 2007 – 2013 cross-border cooperation program Latvia – Lithuania – Belarus project “Popularization of Oral History Centres in the cross-border territory of LV – BY”, ID LLB-2-143. Cemetery comprises a sensitive and delicate topic both for an individual and the society at large. Not only does it preserve unique informative and historico-cultural segments but also foregrounds the collective traumatic experience or personal memories.

Cemetery culture as an object of study proved to be a new challenge for the project team of scholars, thus it was necessary to define the concept of border zone cemetery culture, consider its uniqueness and, on the basis of the prior studies of necropolises used in culture studies and social anthropology, crystallize the methodology for the particular study and produce fieldworks in the territory of urban and rural cemeteries in the border area between Latvia and Belarus. The comparative approach was approbated in the given research in the context of area studies gaining new knowledge on the phenomenon of cemetery culture as a representative of intercultural communication.

The introduction of the research paper collection offered to readers sets out the methodological positions of the project and maps the polemic character of the collected material. The theoretically empirical part of the collection characterizes the religious creed, ethnic, historical, social, etc. segments of cemetery studies in urban and rural cemeteries in the border zone between Latvia and Belarus.

The research “Cemeteries in Cross-border Regions” has been produced and the research paper collection “Comparative Studies. Vol. VI (2)” is published by the financial support of the European Union.

Maija Burima, project manager

INTRODUCTION

Maija Burima

CEMETERY CULTURE IN BORDER ZONE AS A PHENOMENON OF COMPARATIVE AREA STUDIES

Summary

The present paper maps the methodological positions of European neighbour relations and partnership instrument 2007 – 2013 cross-border cooperation program Latvia – Lithuania – Belarus project “Popularization of Oral History Centres in the cross-border territory of LV – BY”, ID LLB-2-143, studies of cemeteries in the cross-border area between Latvia and Belarus and characterizes their adaptation for the aims and tasks of the given project. Several common and different features of cemeteries in Latvia and Belarus are indicated that are determined by the traditional and contemporary culture trends, national identity traits, religious creed specificity, the soviet period and other factors. The peculiarities of cemeteries in the border area between Latvia and Belarus are compared to those of other regions in Latvia, framing the polemical character of the collected material.

Key words: cemetery culture, area studies, commemoration, border zone, fieldwork, cemetery, necropolis, communal cemetery, rural cemetery, urban cemetery, cemetery festival, grave, tombstone, ritual

*

The Theoretical Background of Cemetery Studies

One of the tasks of the European neighbour relations and partnership instrument 2007 – 2013 cross-border cooperation program Latvia – Lithuania – Belarus project “Popularization of Oral History Centres in the cross-border territory of LV – BY”, ID LLB-2-143 was related to studying the specificity of border area cemetery culture. The project involved experts from Daugavpils University and experts and field researchers from Grodno Yanka Kupala University. In cooperation they elaborated methodological guidelines for producing a description of cemetery territory in the culturally anthropological and socio-historical discourse. Using a comparative approach, in the closing conference of the project researchers mapped the further perspective of studying border zone cemetery territory: to characterize the typology of cemetery culture of this area and emphasize specific features, accounting for them by using religious creed, national, political, historical, social, and everyday life arguments.

Cemetery (in Latvia two synonymous words are used to denote a territory of burial of the dead – ‘kapi’ (graves) and ‘kapsēta’ (cemetery or graveyard)) is a delicate object of study because it is emotionally associated with sacred attitude and piety towards the memory of the persons buried there. Traditionally, cemetery was mostly an object of archaeological and ethnographic studies for archaeologists and ethnographers. At the time of contemporary synthesis and hybridization of various scientific approaches,

cemetery studies are an object of interdisciplinary research, synthesizing the anthropological approach with other spheres of the humanities and social sciences. In the framework of the European neighbour relations and partnership instrument 2007 – 2013 cross-border cooperation program Latvia – Lithuania – Belarus project “Popularization of Oral History Centres in the cross-border territory of LV – BY”, the study of cemetery territory was positioned as interdisciplinary one and addressed particular geographical, national, or culture regions.

The term “area studies” basically exists as a notion bringing together heterogeneous research practices that entails both social sciences and humanities: history, political studies, sociology, culture studies, languages, geography, linguistics, literature and related spheres. In contrast to cultural studies, area studies often include diaspora and emigration phenomena. Cemetery studies foreground philosophical issues as well as take up characteristics of subject experience in a phenomenological perspective.

The phenomenon of necropolis culture is related to death rituals in public traditions. Laura Uzule and Vita Zelče in their study “Latviešu kapusvētki: identitātes rituāls” (Latvian cemetery festivals: identity ritual), which is dedicated to a uniquely Latvian commemoration form – cemetery festivals, map the stages of transformation of the concepts ‘death – commemoration’:

Nāves rituālos ir iespējams izšķirt trīs secīgus posmus. Pirmais – miršanas rituāls: atvaidīšanās, pēdējās gribas izteikšana vai uzrakstīšana, grēku nožēla, kristīgo pēdējais vakarēdiens; pēc nāves seko mirušā ķermeņa sagatavošana bērēm, kas arī ietver dažādas rituālprakses. Otrajā posmā iekļaujas bērņu rituāli. To saturu nosaka “sliekšņa situācija”, kurā mirušais un sērotāji uz laiku norobežojas no pārējās sabiedrības, lai kopā izdzīvotu pārejas brīža emocijas un pēc bērēm atgrieztos ikdienā. Trešajā – komemorācijas rituāli: kapavietas apmeklējumi, mirušā cilvēka dzimšanas un nāves dienu atcerēšanās, Mirušo piemiņas dienas¹.

[In death rituals it is possible to discern three subsequent stages. The first is the ritual of dying: farewell, expressing or writing one’s last will, confession of sins, Christian last Communion; after death the dead body is prepared for funeral that also entails various ritual practices. The second stage includes funeral rites. Their content is determined by the “liminal situation” where the dead and the mourners temporarily detach themselves from the rest of the society, in order to live through the emotions of passage and return to normal after the funeral. The third stage includes commemoration rites: visiting the burial place, commemorating the dead person’s birthday and dying day, All Souls’ Day.]

The notion of commemoration expresses the remorse of the society concerning a collective loss and collectively experienced commemoration of good and bad events.

Tas ietver visus veidus jeb mehānismus, kas kalpo kā pagātnes norišu atgādinājums un iemiesojums. Komemorācija cilvēkos rada un uztur piederību pagātnei, senčiem, kopīgas sajūtas, emocijas un atmosfēru. Tā ietver publiskos un individuālos atceres (arī sērošanas) rituālus, memoriālu veidošanu, piemiņas vietu iekārtošanu gan reālajā, gan virtuālajā vidē, pieminēšanas vides, infrastruktūras un mediju produktu radīšanu, kā arī vēl daudzas citas darbības.²

[It includes all ways or mechanisms that function to remind of and embody past events. Commemoration creates and sustains a sense of belonging to the past, ancestors, common feelings, emotions, and atmosphere. It includes public and individual commemoration (also mourning) rituals, founding of memorial places

both in the real and virtual environment, creating commemoration environments, infrastructure and media products as well as many other actions.]

In Latvia the study of burial places until present has focused on characteristics of commemoration rites. Commemoration means [...] *both* ‘to recall to memory’ *and* ‘to remind somebody of something’, *and in both cases the act of remembering and not its object is at stake*³. Interdisciplinary research or popular science activities dedicated to the understanding of the notion of commemoration and its principles have been growing in number and diversity. They are aimed at systematizing a wide corpus of information, e.g. in Latvia a net source has been created: www.nekropole.info.lv that is positioned as a historico-cultural encyclopaedia of persons, events, and graves and sets as its strategy several thematic vectors: informative – persons, cemeteries, burial places, maps; phenomenological – condolences, events. Thematic sections “Persons”, “Cemeteries”, “Burial places” are created in the form of a catalogue in alphabetical order. The catalogue has not yet been filled with information (e.g., many cemeteries in Daugavpils are not photographed, only three persons are marked), the information on cemeteries available in the portal is general and formal, no principles of material selection are clearly defined. Latvian portal, <http://www.vieglassmiltis.lv/kapsetas> was opened to public in January 2012. It gives an opportunity for any person to create a virtual place of commemoration for their close and beloved people as well as public, famous, and historical personalities. Memorial places can be created by any visitor of the portal and this service is free. The portal also provides information about actions at time of mourning – things to be done, papers to be settled, organization of funeral, providers of funeral service, enterprises of undertakers and related spheres, etc. The portal provides information about cemeteries in major towns and regions of Latvia, including contact information as well as the dates of cemetery festivals and candle festivals. It is planned that in the course of time this information could cover all cemeteries in Latvia. The Internet site publishes thematic articles, information about memorial and commemoration events, etc., visitors may exchange experience, ask for advice, they are invited to participate in discussions and surveys. The portal <http://neogeo.lv/?p=8158> provides a map of cemeteries in Latvia⁴. There are Internet resources that provide a survey of burials of German soldiers in Latvia⁵ and Jewish cemeteries in Latvia⁶.

The segmented empirical material of cemetery studies, joined with thematically, geographically, chronologically segmented oral history audio-visual units, give rise to new net resources. The project “Popularization of Oral History Centres in the cross-border territory of LV – BY” yielded not only the empirical and methodological research of the cemetery segments of the border zone between Latvia and Belarus but also the e-museum www.vitamemoriae.eu with anthropological audio-visual units that in many cases contain references to stages of death and burial rites and commemoration.

Grobiņa region is one of the first in Latvia that has completed the digitalization of two of its major cemeteries, thus gaining a valuable database. Hence, the memory of the dead is preserved. There are more than 30 cemeteries in Grobiņa region, Ilģu cemetery being the largest one. The number of burials there exceeds 1500. Until present the names of the buried are registered in the cemetery book where information is provided just about recent 25 years. Cemetery curator, Rita Vilpora admits that the entries in the book are usually supplemented with various information, to make it easier to preserve it in memory. Vilpora tells, *Here I add information for my own reference, I cannot keep*

*it all in mind. If there is a cross and tombstone, then all right, but if not, I write, for instance, beside the son*⁷. To systematize and keep the cemetery in order, graves in Ilģu and Limbiķu cemeteries of Grobiņa region are measured, photographed, the data base is created that makes it possible to find the necessary information. Unfortunately such specification of cemetery territories is rather infrequent in Latvia.

Cemetery studies are produced by research expeditions of Latvian research institutions, centres and higher education academic staff and students, the materials whereof are collected in research and popular scientific editions that, inter alia, provide evidence of investigation of ancient burial places⁸. Janīna Kursīte has studied and organized expeditions to Belarus to investigate the material culture evidence of Baltic tribes. The most astounding finding of these expeditions was the so-called stone old women – small size stone sculptures dressed in clothes, erected by small roads or field edges, as well as in the woods or old cemeteries. They are related to the stone old women found in the lands of Eastern and Western Prussia that made it possible to assume that western Baltic tribes shared a tradition of stone idols or – even wider – common sacred tradition of Baltic and Slavic regions. Investigations were carried out in Minsk, Gomel, Mogilev, and Grodno districts. Latvians in Belarus were studied not only as the ancient layer of history but also as that related to the nineteenth-century migration of Latvians, as in the 2nd half of the 19th century Latvians started emigrating to Belarus in large numbers in search for better material conditions.

*Uz Zaļesji kurzemnieki devušies pēc muižnieka Vrangeļa uzaicinājuma, kurš apkaimē uzcēla spirta pārstrādes fabriku un piedāvāja uz izdevīgiem noteikumiem zemi nomai. Sākumā latvieši kaut arī dzīvoja blakus, tomēr viensētās. Tika dibinātas biedrības, skolas, kori, spēlēja teātri, notika sarīkojumi, kopīgi svinēja svētkus, cēla baznīcas. Samērā mierīga un pārticīga dzīve turpinājās līdz 20. gadsimta 20. gadu beigām, kad Baltkrievijā bija ap sešdesmit latviešu koloniju. 1929. gadā sākās piespiedu kolektivizācija. [...]*⁹.

[People from Kurzeme left for Zalesye upon the invitation of squire Vrangell who built a spirit processing factory in the neighbourhood and offered land for lease on beneficial terms. Latvians at first lived in detached homesteads. They founded societies, schools, choirs, played theatre, celebrated festivals, built churches. Rather peaceful and plentiful life lasted till the end of the 1920s when there were about 60 Latvian colonies in Belarus. In 1929 forced collectivization started.]

Cemeteries may be regarded as a part of culture environment that reflects the peculiarities of this environment. Inscriptions and dates on tombstones, epitaphs, photographs, shapes of tombstones and crosses comprise visual and textual information ranges and person database. Human's memorial place in this world is public. Under the conditions of the 21st century culture globalization, cemetery studies become topical also as border studies in a hybridized border space of individual's profane and eternal existence where individual's private sphere becomes public and typologizes individual's commemoration. Laura Uzule and Vita Zelče state: *Nāve, atvadīšanās un arī bēres (tāpat kā dzīve) lielākoties notiek publiskajā telpā*.¹⁰ [Death, farewell and also funeral (the same as life) mostly happen in the public space.]

Burial places, becoming a public space, either organically match the style of a particular necropolis or, contrasting with it as other or alien, attract special attention, interest, confusion, and objections.

Fieldwork Method Adaptation for Cemetery Studies

Study of the cemeteries in Latvia and Belarus within the project in the specific context of border zone culture required the adaptation of the fieldwork method to the respective object of investigation and its correction corresponding to the fieldwork conditions. Three stages of fieldwork are distinguished in the research.

The first stage is that of preparation. It includes the description of the history of the cemetery foundation and development, interviewing cemetery employees, the familiarization with the burial scheme in the cemetery and the collection of data about the dead and the cemetery development. At this stage the principles of selection of the material are specified and the analysis of the cemetery is produced. As a result, the most distinct features of the cemetery are extracted that are related to the impact of the multicultural environment and the interaction of various cultural traditions.

The second stage of the fieldwork is excerpting of the categories to study. During this stage, **indicators** – “grave”, “tombstone”, “territory of the burial place” are characterized according to the following parameters: architectonic elements (cross, sculpture, decorations, etc.), size (principles of measuring), form (horizontal, vertical, ground slab (whole, consisting of separate elements); material (quality, colour), graphic (ornament, alphabet, script, portrait, technique); epitaph (text, interpretation). **Indicator “burial place”** is characterized according to the following parameters: territory (size, location); design (borders, elements, number of graves); traditions of tending (objects, memorial signs). **Indicator “buried person”** is characterized according to the following parameters: personal data, biography of famous (well-known, significant) persons.

The third stage of fieldwork envisages the systematization of research outcomes, identifying typological similarities, influences, borrowings and unique features, the promotion of the research outcomes in wider public and their transfer to tourist branch as well as integration into systemic preservation and promotion of culture legacy.

Border Zone Cemetery Studies Methodology

Methodology of cemetery studies in border area is a significant segment in the consideration of the peculiarities of past and present, individual and collective, ethnic and religious creed aspects of culture space. Investigation and description of cemetery culture may be realized in the following directions: 1) pilot research (survey and interviews of border area inhabitants and cemetery employees); 2) investigation of cemeteries and related traditions and recording them (audio, video, photo materials, cemetery schemes, etc.); 3) collection and systematization of materials.

Cemetery studies have a number of significant functions because burials bear evidence to the historical trends of various epochs and provide characteristics of significant personalities as well as unusual or original burial places; they manifest the ethnic and confessional specificity of people buried in a cemetery, reveal the technical indicators of the cemetery sector or concrete grave designing. An important aspect in the characteristics of a cemetery is related traditions (cemetery festivals, All Souls' Day, candle night, Pentecost, etc.); cemeteries are regarded as a component of culture tourism.

In cemetery studies certain criteria and principles of selecting material are to be respected. Within the present project, a segmented field research was made and its

outcomes are presented in the research papers in the given collection. The territory of cemeteries was not studied fully in the research. Researchers focused exactly on manifestations of culture peculiarities in border area cemeteries, emphasizing three indicators: culture processes in the context of specific religious confessions and their interaction; modifications of cemetery culture determined by historical processes; social stratification. In the practical implementation of the research, the material was selected according to certain categories taking into consideration major periods of the cemetery development: soviet period – post-soviet period, segmenting burials by decades, starting with the 1960 – 70s until the present. In each of the determined cemetery sectors the researchers had to select significant, unique, noteworthy tombstones (in average 3 burial places a row or alley) that were photographed from different angles. Tombstones and graves were measured, the text on the tombstone was registered. If it was impossible to decode the semantic of a particular tombstone, cemetery employees or the family of the dead were surveyed or interviewed; they helped establish the bond between the buried person and the grave or the tombstone. Special attention was attributed to burials of persons significant for the investigated region (e.g. priests, famous culture or public figures) and their tendencies (e.g. after the reconstruction of statehood in Latvia borders were drawn with Russia or Belarus that limited people's ability to visit their family graves in border area and as a result many graves became untended and abandoned).

The research provides the analysis of the statistics of the common cemetery sector (tendencies of location, common materials in grave ornaments, social differences in tending of graves, etc.).

Project “Popularization of Oral History Centres in the Cross-Border Territory of LV – BY” Implementation Experience and Results Gained

Cemeteries make visible signs of the historico-cultural legacy. They have changed in the course of time in Latvia. Regarding the tending of graves historically, archaeological research shows that both the fire graves of the ancient tribe of the Cours and the burial mounds of the Selonians manifest respect towards the deceased. In the 16th and 17th centuries, when churches were built in the Duchy of Courland and Swedish Livland, church vaults and yards were used as burial places of landlords, priests and other prominent persons. Peasants were still buried in burial mounds. In the 18th century, during the Great Plague and the Northern War, a great number of population died in Latvia, burials were often chaotically formed and the evidence of them was soon lost in the memory of the people. Only in 1773, when Livland had become a part of the Russian Empire, its governor issued an order to mark cemeteries by a fence or a wall around them. Burials in churches or near them were prohibited. In Livland very large cemeteries were developed that covered wide areas. In Courland after the year of 1864 homesteads were traded and many people set burial places of their family or household members on the land they had bought. In the course of time they grew into parish graveyards. Unfortunately until recent times there were scarce investigations of the trends of cemetery formation in Latgale that is heterogeneous both ethnically and as regards religious creeds, the territory whereof from 1802 to 1917 was a part of Vitebsk (at present in Belarus) province. These voids are partially filled by Vitolds Muižnieks' study “Bēru tradīcijas

Latgalē pēc arheoloģiski pētīto 14. – 18. gadsimta apbedīšanas vietu materiāla”¹¹ (Funeral Traditions in Latgale According to the Archaeological Studies of the 14th – 18th century burial places).

Laura Uzule and Vita Zelče in their study of cemetery festivals in Latvia point out the regional differences in Latvia in the visual and architectonic design of graves; the tradition of cemetery culture initiated by Herrnhuter brothers in Livland, especially near the town of Valmiera, is especially distinct. This region is marked by large and well-tended cemeteries, while those in Courland are smaller and located closer to one another.¹²

The study published in the present collection is a step towards characteristics of cemetery culture in Latgale in recent times and their comparison to cemeteries in the border area with Belarus.

Latvian – Belarusian cross-border area is a multi-cultural and poly-lingual territory in the south-eastern part of Latvia and north-western part of Belarus. In Latvia it is represented by Latgale that is a territory where, often even within one family, several religious creeds coexist (mostly Catholics, Russian Orthodox, Old-Believers), several languages and dialects (Latvian, Latgalian, Russian, Belarusian, Polish), a number of ethnicities (Latvians, Latgalians, Russians, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Polish, Jews, Roma people).

The territorial identity of contemporary Latvia emerged at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries. In the following centuries Latgale was marked by many socio-political events that determine the essential presence of Slavic identity component as well as German and Jewish identity component integration in the cultural identity of this region. Daugavpils is the biggest town in Latgale and second largest town in Latvia. It is situated in the border zone between Latvia, Belarus, Lithuania, and Russia. Like Latgale on the whole, Daugavpils is also a distinctly multi-cultural and poly-ethnic town. This peculiarity is obvious also in the cemetery culture of the town.

Daugavpils cemeteries are located on the outskirts of the town, on both sides of the largest streets leading to/out of the town. The largest cemetery is Daugavpils Communal cemetery with the area of 364.342 m². Daugavpils Communal cemetery is located on both sides of the central street of the town – 18th November Street. On one side of the street there is a large territory of the cemetery as well as Jewish, Moslem, and Baptist ethnic and religious creed sectors. Daugavpils Communal cemetery borders on the Orthodox and Old-Believer cemeteries formed before the soviet period that are still functioning (it must be noted that there are no enclosures between some of the cemeteries that was an essential cemetery culture element of the 19th – early 20th centuries). Next to Daugavpils Communal cemetery in the soviet period Brethren Cemetery was laid. All of these cemeteries are tended by a united infrastructure of Daugavpils municipality. In the centre of the territory of Daugavpils Communal cemetery there is a mortuary, in which funerals are held according to secular or religious rites. On the other side of 18th November Street there is a parallel range of cemeteries including Lutheran cemetery as well as Catholic cemetery with a chapel where funerals are held according to Catholic rites. Though the territory of Daugavpils Communal cemetery is big and old, the municipality has not developed systematized data or register of burial places yet; there is no grave scheme with sectors; alleys and particular burial places are not marked.

Rural graveyards are a specific element of culture environment with its cultivated landscape, botanical, and historical significance. Rural cemeteries in the Latvian and Belarusian cross-border area bear emotional load rooted in Latvian and Belarusian everyday life traditions. Latvian rural cemeteries often resemble shady parks. Formed at the turn of the 18th – 19th centuries, they had a rectangular design with the main alley and perpendicularly located one or several cross-alleys and side lanes, segmenting the whole territory in the shape of cross or regular quadrangles. The big cross of the cemetery is traditionally located in the centre of the cemetery. By this cross service is held during cemetery festivals and other occasions of commemorating the dead (Pictures 1, 2, 3). Cemeteries are regularly visited, scrupulously tended and make an intrinsic part of rural social and cultural environment all over Latvia.



Picture 1. Skrudaliene civil parish cemetery, Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 2. Lāču cemetery. Lociki, Naujene civil parish, Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima

The evidence of Latvian culture on the territory of Belarus is encountered in various forms of representation. Janīna Kursīte, the leader of numerous folklore and culture anthropological expeditions, mentions a number of anthroponyms that characterize traces of Baltic culture of various ages in Belarus and simultaneously mark a perspective and functionality for border and cross-border culture investigations:

*Par baltu cilšu un tautu klātbūtni Brestas apgabalā liecina vietu nosaukumi Jatvezj, Jatvesk (jātvingi), Krivčici, Krivjač (kriviči, kurus vieni pieskaita slāviem, citi baltiem), Pruska, Prusko (prūši), Mogiļevas apgabalā Latiševo (latvieši), Prussy, Prusino, Minskas apgabalā Kriviči, Latigoliči, Latigolj, Dainova (jātvingi), Grodņas apgabalā Dainova, Dainovka, Jatouti, Jatvezj, Latveļi, Latoviči, Latiši, nerunājot par Vitebskas apgabalu, kurā daudz gan Latigoliču, gan Kriviču ciemu. Ko mēs ar to varam iesākt? Meklēt arheoloģiskas, antropoloģiskas, folkloriskas, lingvistiskas liecības dažādos laika slāņos, tā palīdzot saprast savu vēsturi, arī palīdzot ar savām zināšanām baltkrievu speciālistiem.*¹³

[The presence of the Baltic tribes and peoples in Brest district is testified to by the place names Jatvezj, Jatvesk (Jatwingi), Krivčici, Krivjač (Krivichi, who are attributed to Slavs by some and Balts by others), Pruska, Prusko (Prussians), Latiševo (Latvians) in Mogilev district, Prussy, Prusino, in Minsk district Kriviči, Latigoliči, Latigolj, Dainova (Jatwingi), in Grodno district Dainova, Dainovka, Jatouti, Jatvezj, Latveļi, Latoviči, Latiši, not to mention Vitebsk district with numerous villages of Latigolichi and Krivichi. What can we do with this? We can search for archeological, anthropological, folkloristic, linguistic evidences of different time layers thus promoting the understanding of our history and with our knowledge helping Belorussian specialists.]

In Belarus there is not only the evidence of Baltic culture but also the typological affinities or common features conditioned by various factors, anthropological influences and borrowings. This is clearly demonstrated by the territories of border town and rural cemeteries.

Vitebsk is the fifth largest city of Belarus. It is situated in the northeast of Belarus by the river Daugava that flows from Belarus through Latvia. As to religious creed, about 80% of believers in Vitebsk are Orthodox. Within Russia Vitebsk became a major Jewish centre who constituted more than a half of the city's population in the early 20th century.

Cemeteries in Vitebsk interweave the whole territory of the city. They are both functioning and "conserved" or closed cemeteries where burials are terminated. In the cemeteries made at the turn of the 19th – 20th centuries the differentiation of creeds was observed, e.g. Old-Believers were buried in Grishano-Zolotogorsk cemetery, while Orthodox were buried in Novosemyonovskoye cemetery. In the Severnoye cemetery of the city of Novopolotsk nowadays the dead of various creeds are buried (mostly Orthodox and Catholics). Contemporary Belarusian urban cemeteries have a well-planned



Picture 3. Bėrtuļa cemetery in Rūjiena.
Photo by Maija Burima

structural design; hence in Severnoye cemetery there are the indications of sectors and lines with detailed information about the territory at the cemetery (Pictures 4, 5).

In the Latvian and Belarusian border area cemeteries there is evidence of the soviet period when, under the pressure of ideology, the religious factor was either ignored or hidden, or functioned as a secondary indicator, when choosing the place of burial. On the other hand, burial traditions and design of the burial place are aspects that in the time of soviet occupation preserved the religious rituals and attributes actually banned by the ideology. This is proved by the permission under conditions of atheism to use the sign of cross on tombstones. In the soviet period the Christian cross was used also in burial places in Latvia, though in various creeds it had different practical application traditions. In Daugavpils and cemeteries in Old-Believer family burial places large Old-Believer (also Orthodox) crosses are observed that are engraved in stone bases (Pictures 6). This appears also in Belarusian cemeteries (Picture 7). In Catholic cemeteries such crosses are also observed, yet in Catholic burial places cross signs are engraved on tombstones.



Picture 4, 5. The Severnoye cemetery of the city of Novopolotsk. Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 6. Skrudaliene civil parish cemetery, Daugavpils municipality. Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 7. Zalesse cemetery, Belarus. Photo by Maija Burima

In Daugavpils region cemeteries one may see such a design of burial places where the cross is replaced by another sign or a photograph representing the dead person, e.g. a picture of a person engraved in stone wearing a military or professional uniform with the aim of indicating the professional belonging of the buried person or his/her achievements in lifetime (military rank, etc.). Other professional identification signs occur as well, e.g. a musical instrument, a clef, musical score – for a musician, an airplane – for a pilot, etc. For instance, on a forester's family grave there are engraved oak-tree leaves and Latvian national ornaments (Picture 8).



Picture 8. Lāču cemetery. Lociki, Naujene civil parish, Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima

The ornamental national design on the tombstone refers to Latvian identity: pre-Christian heathen cult influences, totemism, mythological and folklore images. The symbolism of

oak-tree – the tree contour, a branch (broken branch as a variation, related to the interrupted way of life), also oak-tree leaves as a universal decorative symbolical element are used in many Latvian male grave tombstone designs, as oak-tree in Latvian mythology is a sacred tree, also the Tree of the World as the axis connecting past, present, and future. Other tree images, e.g. birch-tree, willow, are also used in tombstone designs. Trees were decorated with offerings in annual festivals and until nowadays have preserved a bond with the cult of totemism. Nowadays the symbolical patterns of trees, garlands, branches and flowers used in tombstone engravings in cemeteries, under the influence of the soviet atheist ideology, condition the principles of designing the burial places that do not contain any Christian elements (Picture 9) or synthesize ornamental designs of flora with Christian iconography (Pictures 10, 11). One of the most often used decorative elements on tombstones is reclining tree or floral garlands that symbolize sorrow and loss.



Picture 9. The Severnoye cemetery of the city of Novopolotsk.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 10. Lāču cemetery. Lociki, Naujene civil parish, Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima

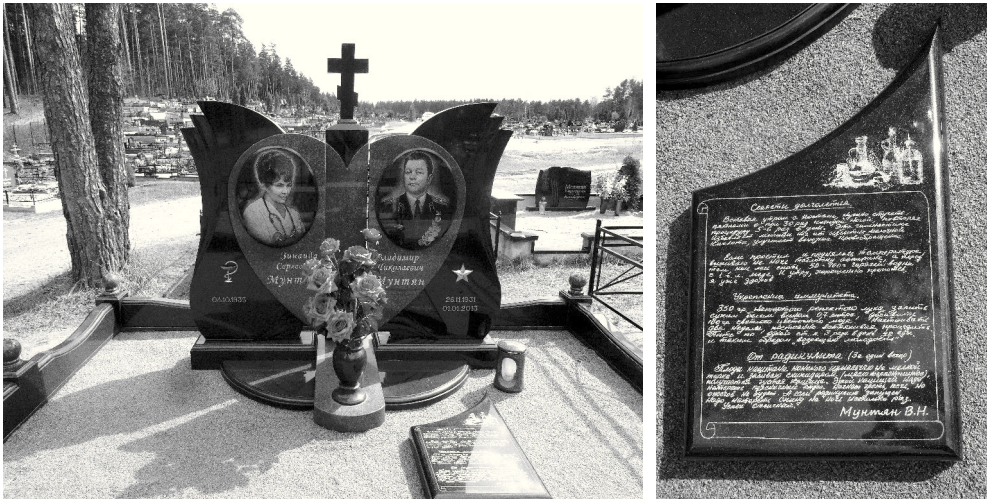


Picture 11. Daugavpils Communal Cemetery. Photo by Maija Burima

Contemporary cemetery territories have preserved a number of historical relics and artefacts, yet they manifest also the features of postmodernist culture and globalization, spiritual and material culture innovations. 21st century design of graves possesses a different aesthetically decorative style, e.g. aphorisms or even suggestions for a healthy lifestyle written on grave slabs, philosophical images, tombstones in the shape of secular images, e.g. a butterfly or a heart that symbolizes the fragility of life as opposed to death and eternity (Pictures 12, 13, 14, 15).



Picture 12, 13. Daugavpils Communal Cemetery. Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 14, 15. Daugavpils Communal Cemetery. Photo by Maija Burima

In Daugavpils Communal Cemetery mixed creed family burials occur more than in Belarusian border area. Spouses or relatives (Catholics, Orthodox, Old-Believers, Moslems) mark with the attributes of their religious creed a common tombstone or everybody may have one's own tombstone (Pictures 16, 17, 18, 19).



Picture 16, 17, 18, 19. Daugavpils Communal Cemetery. Photo by Maija Burima

The tradition of regular visiting and tending of graves in Latvia has been stable throughout several centuries. Laura Uzule and Vita Zelče note:

*Pasaules kultūrā vērojama atvadu rituālu, atdusas vietu un kapsētu, sēru un atceres liela daudzējādība gan laikā, gan telpā, tomēr attieksme pret šo dzīves/nāves jomu vienmēr ir bijusi ļoti nopietna un jēgpilna.*¹⁴

[In the world culture one may observe great diversity of funeral rites, burial places and cemeteries, mourning and commemoration in time and space, yet attitude to this sphere of life/death has always been very serious and meaningful.]

Decoration of graves with flowers in the territory of Latvia was first introduced by Herrnhuter brothers around Valmiera and Cēsis in the late 18th century. In fishing villages of Courland grave crosses were decorated with woodcarvings, plain and hand-woven ribbons. Tombstones with engraved names, coats of arms, and commemoration signs started to spread in Riga in the 15th century. When it was ordered by law to organize burial places only outside towns, the Great Cemetery (Lielie kapi) was laid in 1773. In 1910 Riga Municipal Council allotted about 100 ha of land for cemetery in a wood; this was the origin of Wood Cemetery (Meža kapi) that have grown over a century into a vast “town for the dead”. Its territory was first divided among religious parishes. Only Rainis Cemetery was independent of religious creeds. Both world wars conditioned the emergence of burial places of numerous soldiers in Latvia (Pictures 20, 21).



Picture 20. Bērtuļa cemetery in Rūjiēna. Monument to the soldiers killed in Liberation battles (fragment). Designed after L. Švalbe's project. Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 21. Skrudaliene civil parish cemetery, Daugavpils municipality. Burials of the Soviet Army soldiers killed in World War II. Photo by Maija Burima

Many specific features are manifested by cemeteries of border area in the use of everyday life details. Unlike the rest of Latvia (with the exception of towns with a large ratio of ethnic minority population), in Daugavpils urban and rural cemeteries artificial flowers are abundantly used in decorating graves (Pictures 22, 23). One of the wreaths dedicated to a recently buried person was decorated by a band made in the stylistic of national colours (Picture 24). This trend is obvious also in Belarus (Picture 25). They decorate burial places in all seasons and provide a bright spot when the ground is covered with snow (Pictures 26). In other regions of Latvia artificial flowers are not used in cemetery decoration or for making wreaths for funerals. In the greatest part of the territory of Latvia graves look rather modest, sometimes even plain, they are covered with small decorative plants, flowers in vases (Picture 27). In Latgale there are lawns instead of stone or concrete edges (Picture 28). In the territory of Belarusian border unusual oval shaped tombstones are used that seem to protect the photograph on the tombstone in bad weather (Pictures 29, 30). Tombstones are often in bright colours – light blue. Such a tombstone, with the image of Virgin Mary on it, might be associated with the Heavenly kingdom (Picture 31).

Metal fences are a typical feature of cemeteries in the Latvian and Belarusian border area (Pictures 32, 33). In other regions of Latvia fences are not used or their function is performed by hedges (Pictures 34).

Picture 24. Lāču cemetery. Lociki, Naujene civil parish, Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 22. Lāču cemetery. Lociki, Naujene civil parish, Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 23. Daugavpils Communal Cemetery.
Photo by Maija Burima

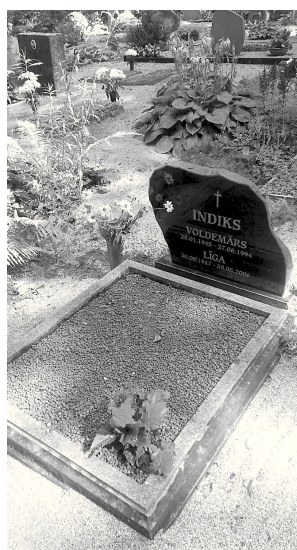




Picture 25. A quiet Belarusian rural cemetery near the Latvian border (name not known).
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 26. The Severnoye cemetery of the city of Novopolotsk.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 27, 28. Bērtuļa cemetery in Rūjiena.
Photo by Maija Burima

Picture 29. Zalesse cemetery, Belarus.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 30. Zalesse cemetery, Belarus.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 31. The Severnoye cemetery of the city
of Novopolotsk. Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 32. Daugavpils
Communal Cemetery.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 33. The Severnoye
cemetery of the city
of Novopolotsk.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 34. Bērtuļa cemetery in Rūjiena.
Photo by Maija Burima

Abandoned graves occur on both sides of the border (Pictures 35, 36, 37). In the interviews, cemetery superintendents admit that this is accounted for by emigration, obstacles for those who are non-EU citizens to visit Latvia to tend the graves due to visa regime (Picture 38). For Latvian border area population this issue is simplified by the agreement between the governments of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Belarus concerning the simplified procedure of mutual visits of people residing in the border area between the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Belarus. Sometimes the abandoned graves are tended by those who look after the nearest burials, the cemetery superintendent, or somebody else. Sometimes family members who are aware of not being able to tend the grave regularly, place a stone slab on the grave so that it would not overgrow with grass or sod (Pictures 39, 40).



Picture 35. Skrudaliene civil
parish cemetery,
Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 36. Lāču cemetery.
Lociki, Naujene civil parish,
Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 37. Zalesse cemetery, Belarus.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 38. Skrudaliene civil parish cemetery,
Daugavpils municipality.
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 39. A quiet
Belarusian rural cemetery
near the Latvian border
(name not known).
Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 40. Daugavpils Communal Cemetery. Photo by Maija Burima

It must be concluded that, in the border area of Latvia and Belarus, urban and rural cemeteries in general manifest more common features than those in Latgale and other regions of Latvia.

Cemetery festivals are a unique feature of Latvian cemetery culture in all four regions of Latvia. In summer, from the end of June to early September, cemetery festivals take place in cemeteries on weekends with gathering of the relatives, friends, and neighbours of the dead who live in various places in Latvia or abroad. The cemetery festival tradition is no more than a hundred years old but it is solidly rooted and support people's belonging to the local community.

A record in Latvia Culture Canon Folk traditions part reads:

Gatavojoties kapu svētkiem, kapi tiek īpaši saposti – pie kapiņām noliktas vāzes ar ziediem, sveces, tiek uzbērti svaigi smilts, pārstādītas puķes, apgriezti košumkrūmi. Latvieši kapsētas kopj kā dārzus, un ainavu arhitekti atzīst, ka Latvijas kapsētas var uzskatīt par savdabīgiem parkiem.

Kapu svētku norise ietver mācītāja vadītu dievkalpojumu vai laicīgu ceremoniju ar mūziku, dzeju, runām un svinības, kas notiek vai nu ģimenes lokā turpat pie kapsētas, ja dzimtai piederīgie tuvumā vairs nedzīvo, vai tuvējās dzimtas mājās, vai arī plašākā vietēja kopienā – pagasta vai pilsētas rīkotos svētkos, kas pielāgoti kapusvētku norises laikam.¹⁵

[Getting ready for the cemetery festival, the graves are specially decorated – vases with flowers and candles are placed nearby, fresh sand is sprinkled, flowers are replanted, decorative shrubs are cropped. Latvians tend cemeteries like gardens, and landscape architects admit that Latvian cemeteries may be regarded as specific parks.

The procedure of a cemetery festival entails a religious service held by a priest or a secular ceremony with music, dance, speeches, and celebration either among family members by the cemetery, if nobody in the family lives nearby, or in the closest family homestead, or in a wider local community – celebration organized by the civil parish or town that is adjusted to the time of the cemetery festival.]

People design their relatives' graves according to various traditions. The regular notions of the valuable or less valuable are vanishing.

Kopjot aizgājušo kapavietas, cilvēki nevadās no šauri personiskām interesēm, bet gan izsaka savu līdzjūtību un cieņu aizgājējiem, kā arī spēju izkopt un novērtēt daiļumu, tomēr diemžēl līdzās šai pastāv arī cita motivācija – savas maksātspējas demonstrēšana un vēlme izcelties. [...] Kapusvētku svinēšana ir kristietības ieviesta tradīcija. Arhīvos tā minēta jau 18. gadsimta beigās – 19. gadsimta sākumā. Laikā no jūnija beigām līdz septembra sākumam katru gadu Latvijas kapsētās pulcējas mirušo piederīgie. Kapusvētkiem gatavojoties, kapi tiek saposti īpaši. Ikreizējs kapu apmeklējums ir sava veida rituāls: vieniem – pienākums, citiem – emocionāls pārdzīvojums, vēl kādam – ieradums.

Pirmoreiz kapusvētki pavisam oficiāli svēti Vietaļvas draudzē 1911. gadā, kad tos iedzīvinājis pretrunīgi vērtētais mācītājs un rakstnieks Andrievs Niedra. Viņš precīzi uztvēris: latviešiem raksturīga iezīme ir pulcēšanās un svinības ārpus telpām, un kapusvētki šai tradīcijai ļoti labi atbilst.¹⁶

[Tending the graves of the deceased, people are not guided by strictly personal interests; instead they express their sympathy and respect to the dead as well as their ability to cultivate and appreciate beauty, yet beside this motivation unfortunately there is another – the demonstration of one's paying capacity and wish to distinguish oneself. [...] The celebration of cemetery festivals is a tradition introduced by Christianity. In the archives it is mentioned already at the end of the 18th century – early 19th century. From the end of June till early September every year the relatives of the dead gather in cemeteries in Latvia. Preparing for the festival, the graves are specially decorated. Each case of visiting a grave is a kind of a ritual: for somebody it is a duty, for others – an emotional experience, for somebody else – a habit.

For the first time a cemetery festival was officially celebrated in Vietaļva parish in 1911; it was organized by the priest and writer Andrievs Niedra who has received contradictory responses. He noted that Latvians are fond of gathering and celebrating out-doors, and cemetery festivals match this tradition very well.]

Cemetery festivals are a deeply rooted tradition in Latvia; this tradition is observed by all visitors of cemeteries and they note on which day they should visit their dead relatives. The festival functions also as a uniting factor in the community: in many places in Latvia cemetery festival is a major occasion of family reunion, especially in the small rural cemeteries, when the living come to visit the dead, people come from villages that no longer exist as the villagers have died or emigrated from the countryside and from Latvia during the early twenty-first century wave of emigration. For this reason, the number of cemetery festival visitors declines every year. Many people cannot visit a more distant cemetery and tend the graves for economic reasons, or they have left the country, therefore the continuity of the annual cemetery festival tradition may be endangered in future.

Tending of graves is the theme of the publication “Kapsētas ētikas kodekss” (Cemetery ethic code) by Evija Pozņaka (consulted by Kristīne Dunska) in the magazine “Citādā pasaule” (The different world), No. 23, 2013, section “Padomnieks” (Adviser); it reminds the readers of what must be observed when they visit the graves to tend them (Picture 41). The publication advises when the best time to visit graves is, how to behave in a cemetery, what may, must, must not be done in a cemetery, what psychological feelings may overwhelm a person in a cemetery and how to account for them:

Dvēseles attīrīšana. Ja uz kapa krusts sašķiebies, mirušā cilvēka dvēsele iegūtu mieru¹⁷; Bez rotaļām. Bērniem nevajadzētu ļaut spēlēties starp kapu kopiņām, aiztikt smiltis vai ko pacelt no tām, jo tad kādam no tuviniekiem vai mājiniekiem gaidāma nāve, vai arī – Grēku mazināšanai. Ja nomāc vainas sajūta vai gadījies izdarīt ko nelāgu, palīdzēs kādas aizaugušas kapu kopiņas regulāra apkopšana. Tas uzskatāms par svētīgu darbu un varētu veicināt grēku piedošanu.¹⁸

[Purification of the soul. If a cross on the grave is awry, the dead person's soul is searching for peace. No games. Children should not be allowed to play between the graves, touch the sand or take something from the graves because then somebody in the family or household will die. If you are oppressed by the sense of guilt or you have done something wrong, regular tending of an abandoned grave will help. It is regarded as a benedictory work and may facilitate forgiveness of sins.]



Picture 41. Publication “Kapsētas ētikas kodekss” (Cemetery ethic code) by Evija Pozņaka (consulted by Kristīne Dunska) in the magazine “Citādā pasaule” (The different world), No. 23, 2013, section “Padomnieks” (Adviser)

Contemporary cemetery culture studies pay little attention to the characteristics of the visual design of graves in Eastern Latvia because, under the impact of Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Russian neighbouring cultures, it has gained many different elements and does not fit into traditional Latvian visual aesthetics and everyday life culture norms, e.g. artificial flowers on graves, metal fences around a grave instead of a hedge like elsewhere in Latvia, big and decorous tombstones and crosses from various kinds of stone and metal instead of wooden crosses and tombstones (as it is observed in Lithuania near the border with Latvia).

Sava mode valda arī kapakmeņu izvēlē. Tiesa, to lielā mērā nosaka cilvēka rocība, jo tas tomēr nav lēts prieks.¹⁹ [There is a certain fashion in choosing a tombstone. In

fact, it is greatly determined by the capacity of paying because it is not a cheap purchase.] Dzidra Viļevko, who works as a cashier – salesperson in the shop Ltd “Kantiņi” specializing in selling tombstones, edges and similar things, tells that especially industrious people decorate the graves just before the cemetery festival. Usually this is the time when a tombstone is erected to their beloved deceased. In the shop one can choose a tombstone from a catalogue brought from Germany that stonemasons will make exactly after the model upon a customer’s wish. *Mūsdienās kapu pieminekli gluži kā kleitu var izgatavot pēc klienta atnestā šablona, piegriezties,*²⁰ [Nowadays a tombstone can be made like a dress exactly after the model, pattern brought by the customer.] Dz. Viļevko states. She has observed that tombstones with a human image are mostly ordered by Russians, while Latvians are more modest and prefer a couplet to be engraved in the tombstone. She has also noticed that concrete edges are gradually replaced by stone ones but the latest fashion of edges brought from abroad prefers covered or partially covered grave edges.

The research on the cemetery territory of the border area region provides essential information and understanding about the changes in the attitude of a mixed religious and ethnic society towards the most significant anthropologic concepts (life, death, memory, ritual) which take place in the situations when socio-political situation changes, ideology is being transformed and territorial borders shift. The investigation shows that gradually the funeral rituals grow simpler. The transformation of stratification features of the society also takes place. The cemetery culture (funeral rituals, cemetery design) is essentially influenced by the situation in funeral business (the material situation of population determines the procedure of funeral ceremony, choice of a burial place for the deceased person, the design and maintenance).²¹

The common soviet experience in contemporary border area cemeteries or places of commemoration is revealed by the commemoration places of soviet soldiers killed in World War II. A common feature of Belarusian and Latvian towns with a high ratio of Russian speaking ethnic minority population or even their prevalence above the titular nation is stable tending of the commemoration places of soviet soldiers killed in World War II (Pictures 42, 43). Besides, in Belarus in many cemeteries and inhabited locality centres there are sculptures and commemoration objects (bases with tanks, a monumental image of a soldier collectively representing the memory of the killed soldiers, red star on obelisks, stellas, etc. as a symbol of the Soviet Army, etc.) dedicated to the victory and heroism of the Soviet Army.



Picture 42. Daugavpils Communal Cemetery. Photo by Maija Burima



Picture 43. Daugavpils
Communal Cemetery.
Photo by Maija Burima

Conclusions

The investigation of the border area cemeteries provides an essential notion of the changes in religiously and ethnically mixed society's attitude towards the major anthropological concepts (life, death, memory, ritual) that takes place in situations of shifting socio-political situation and ideological changes and territorial shifts. In contemporary cemeteries in the border area both in Daugavpils and Vitebsk there is observed a mixture of religious creeds and ethnicities. There are very few homogeneous burials. It must be stated that the burial rite has gradually grown simpler. The transformation of social stratification signs is also evident. Cemetery culture (burial rites, grave design) is essentially affected by the undertakers' business (the financial opportunities of people determine the funeral procedure, choice of the burial place, design and tending of the grave). At the same time, contemporary cemeteries located in the culture border areas become more "open" to society. Due to the multiculturally conditioned diversity, during the recent decades cemeteries have more often become a tourist attraction but cemetery festivals and visiting graves in religious festivals become events that, apart from commemorating the dead, function as family reunion for people who live in distant towns and countries.

The study of cemetery culture in border area within the project "Popularization of Oral History Centres in the cross-border territory of LV – BY" grew into the cross-border cooperation occasion, providing new research ideas and perspectives for area studies in Latvia and Belarus.

¹ Sumiala, J. Media and Ritual. *Death, Community and Everyday Life*. Routledge: London and New York, 2013. – pp. 91–92. In: Uzule, L.; Zelče, V. *Latviešu kapusvētki: identitātes rituāls*. Rīga: Mansards, 2014. – p. 26.

² Turner, C. Nation and Commemoration. In: Delanty, G., Kumar, K. (eds). *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*. London: Sage Publications, 2006. – p. 206. In: Uzule, L.; Zelče, V. *Latviešu kapusvētki: identitātes rituāls*. Rīga: Mansards, 2014. – p. 21.

- ³ Ankersmit, F.R. Commemoration and National Identity. *Textos de Historia*. Vol 10, no ½, 2002. – p. 17.
- ⁴ <http://neogeo.lv/?p=8158> [accessed 10.02.2015.]
- ⁵ http://www.volksbund.de/fileadmin/redaktion/BereichInfo/BereichInformationsmaterial/KGS/Themenhefte/Lettland_2004__lettisch.pdf [accessed 10.02.2015.]
- ⁶ http://www.shamir.lv/lv/menu/6-ebreju_kapsetas_latvija_.html [accessed 10.02.2015.]
- ⁷ Grobiņas novadā digitalizē divas kapsētas. 23.10.2014. <http://www.lsm.lv/lv/raksts/latvija/zinas/grobinjas-novada-digitalize-divas-kapsetas.a103586/> [accessed 17. 05.2015.].
- ⁸ E.g. Kursīte, Janīna. *sfumato nesfumato*. Rīgā: Madris, 2008. – p. 264.
- ⁹ Kursīte, Janīna. Baltkrievijas latviešu brīnums. *Diena*, 2007. gada 26. septembris <http://www.diena.lv/arhivs/baltkrievijas-latviesu-brinums-13256645> [accessed 10.02.2015.]
- ¹⁰ Uzule, Laura; Zelče, Vita. Latviešu kapusvētki: identitātes rituāls. Rīga: Mansards, 2014. – p. 22.
- ¹¹ Muižnieks, V. Bēru tradīcijas Latgalē pēc arheoloģiski pētīto 14. – 18. gadsimta apbedīšanas vietu materiāla. Rīga: LNVB, 2015.
- ¹² Uzule, L.; Zelče, V. Latviešu kapusvētki: identitātes rituāls. Rīga: Mansards, 2014. – p. 40.
- ¹³ Kursīte, J. Baltkrievijas latviešu brīnums. *Diena*, 2007. gada 26. sept. <http://www.diena.lv/arhivs/baltkrievijas-latviesu-brinums-13256645> [accessed 10.02.2015.]
- ¹⁴ Ibid, p. 21.
- ¹⁵ Latvijas kultūras kanons. <http://www.kulturaskanons.lv/lv/1/4/142/> [accessed 10.02.2015.]
- ¹⁶ Matisāne, Inese. Cik stabilas ir latviešu izslavētās kapu kultūras tradīcijas? <http://www.lvportals.lv/print.php?id=211325> 2010. gada 5. jūn. [accessed 10.02.2015.]
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- ¹⁸ Ibid, p. 29.
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**RESEARCH OF NECROPOLISES
IN LATGALE REGION**

Inguna Teilāne

FUNERAL RITES IN MEMORIES OF LATGALE RESIDENTS

Summary

Each cycle of life begins and ends with something. Nothing lasts forever and that is why our attitude towards although inevitable but at the same time natural process as passing away is essential. In funeral rites of Latgale religious affiliation of the deceased is of great importance. It determines the customs according to which the deceased will be buried. The article regards the modern Catholic funeral rites basing on life stories of Latgale residents. In Latgale it is a common tradition to perform Psalms or Officiums for the dead held on the evening before the funeral. It should be noted that Psalm singing in Latgale is included in Latvian Cultural Canon as a prominent and unique folk tradition. In comparison with other rituals despite some innovations the funeral rites are more conservative as they reflect views on death and mutual relationship between the living and the dead which do not change quickly. The observance of funeral rites and funeral repast expresses respect for the deceased.

Key words: funeral rites, Psalm singing, traditions, Catholic, Latgale

*

Introduction

Each cycle of life begins and ends with something. Nothing lasts forever and that is why our attitude towards although inevitable but at the same time natural process as passing away is essential.

For centuries, our ancestors have been developing and passing down from generation to generation funeral traditions and rites with the aim to provide respectful farewell ceremony for the deceased.

In funeral rites of Latgale, religious affiliation of the deceased is of great importance. It determines the customs according to which the deceased will be buried. The present article regards the modern Catholic funeral rites basing on life stories of Latgale residents.

In Latgale the following lexemes are used to define the dead: 'nabašņiks' (in Polish – 'nieboszczyk'), 'aizguojiejs', 'nūmyrušais', 'myrūns' – *the deceased, the departed, the late*.

The description of the rites considered should be started with the moment when a person is close to death. For each religious group it is important for a person to confess before death, that is, to ask God sincerely for forgiveness of sins.

In order to relieve suffering of the dying, family members try not to make a noise, not to speak loudly; in the house all windows are curtained. There is an opinion that if a person is seriously sick, feels pain and suffering for a long time but cannot die, God does not want to take him / her or a person has not confessed fully. All who are asked

for forgiveness by the dying should forgive him / her. If they do not forgive, the sins of the deceased can pass on them.

In Latgale according to Catholic traditions it is necessary to call a priest that the dying can confess sins consciously and gain the anointing of the sick. By the grace of God the anointing strengthens a person's soul and body in old age or serious illness.

The sacrament of anointing is administered by a priest who lays his hands on the sick or dying person reciting certain prayers and anointing him / her with blessed oil. Through the sacrament a gift of the Holy Spirit is given, increasing the strength of the sick in the struggle for salvation of the soul, renewing confidence and faith in God and reducing the fear of death. Thus, it strengthens the sick not only to endure but also to struggle with difficulties. Besides, if necessary, the sacrament gives to the sick person forgiveness of sins and Christian repentance.¹

The priest forgives sins and gives anointing of the sick even if the sick person is unable to make a confession but one can reasonably assume that, acknowledging himself / herself a believer, would repent if he / she could. If a priest attends the sick but finds him / her already dead he prays for the dead person asking that God forgives his or her sins and graciously receives him or her into the kingdom. In the case of death the sacrament of anointing is not administered.

The room of the sick is made ready for the visit of the priest: a table is covered with a white cloth, on the table there is a crucifix, two lighted candles, a vessel containing water and cotton wool.²

People say that 'slymū spavedei' (in Polish, 'spowiadać') – *the sick is confessed*; 'dūd piedeļū svaidejumu' – *is given the last anointing*. The respondents emphasize:

*If a person is religious it should be done necessarily for the soul to go to heaven.
And all try and observe it – to have time to call a priest before death.*

As death approaches all family members are called to say goodbye and support the dying person in his / her journey to another world; a candle is lit and a window is opened – in the respondents' opinion, to allow the soul of the deceased to leave. In accordance with the views of the Catholic Church, immediately after the death the soul is in a quite difficult state. Accordingly, all the rituals and prayers administered in the funeral process must, to the utmost, relieve the state.

Before the onset of rigor mortis the body of the deceased is washed. Someone from the fellow villagers is invited to wash the body of the deceased. Usually elderly women are engaged in it. It is believed that the nearest relatives are prohibited to take part in the washing of the deceased. In the past there were women who did it. The respondent from Daugavpils region admits that nowadays, if there is nobody who can do it, the deceased is also washed by the near relatives, and comments that Christianity views it as a superstition. The religious meaning of this ritual is the body purification: it is not allowed to bring 'the dirt of the earthly life' to the afterlife. In Latgale the ceremony of washing the deceased is connected with some other beliefs too. For example, one of the respondents remembers her grandmother's words:

- the water used for washing the deceased is usually poured out outside the yard in the place where people do not walk, for instance, on the corner of some building;

- the soap used for washing the deceased can ‘lead out illnesses’, for instance, bunions or other diseases.

The respondents of Preiļi and Daugavpils regions remember that in their childhood already in the first evening when placing the body in a coffin singers were called who were singing from the old books the song *Let's Put the Corpse into the Coffin* [*Liksim mes tū mīsu grobā*], reading prayers and performing psalms.



Picture 1. Nīcgale, 1947. Photo from Elina Rancāne's personal archive

On the Origin of Latgale Psalms

The musical expert Mārtiņš Boiko admits that the performance of Psalms and Officiums for the dead is a genre of prayer existing only in Latgale and nowhere else is present.³ The Lithuanian (and Latvian) Catholic funeral songs are studied by the scholar of ethnology Alfonsas Motuzas.⁴

In Latgale this genre is quite ancient – in historical documents the record of the Officium of the dead refers to the 18th century. It was performed at home by women. Till nowadays the performance of Psalms has been preserved in its original form, namely, in the form created at the end of the 18th century by Latgale Jesuits. In Latgale the Officium is unique as the performance of Psalms has transformed from the Church rite into the folk tradition organized by people themselves without any interference from the religious authorities.⁵

A special edition is devoted to the Psalm singing called *Psalm Singing in Latgale* published in 2012. Its authors – Aigars Lielbārdis and Mārtiņš Boiko – consider that the Psalm singing was and still is an essential part of the traditional culture connected both with the events in a family (funeral, memorial service on the day of death) and with the traditions (activities on All Saints Day, November 1 – 2).⁶ Psalm singing in Latgale is included in Latvian Cultural Canon as a prominent and unique folk tradition.

In Latgale the Officium of the dead was and still is performed mostly at home. Every evening before the funeral relatives and friends came together in the house of the deceased and sang monotonous Psalms. After the performance the singers were always treated to dinner. In Latgale the respondents remember that in the past all neighbours and relatives came together to pray and sing Psalms starting with the first evening and till the funeral as they believed that the Psalm singing helped the soul of the deceased earn its way to God; they also believed that by singing they asked God for forgiveness for the sins of the deceased. Boiko notes:

The motive for people to perform the Officium of the dead is their belief that Psalm singing can alleviate the plight of the dead in Purgatory. But there is also another motivation – a widespread conviction that after leaving Purgatory the deceased could pray for the living. And the Psalm performers repeated several times: ‘The more a man prays for the dead in his life the better he lives’ [...].⁷

In former days all attended a funeral – nobody was formally invited as people believed if a man has died everyone must attend a funeral and pray for his soul, for his afterlife. Many singers came – about forty; they took their children along (thus, children inherited melodies of Psalms). Being asked the question how they have mastered the melody of Psalms the singers always answer: *We have learned from the singers of previous generations by singing together with them. So we remembered the melodies.*

The Psalms were performed every evening but especially for a long time on the last evening – till two or three at night. They sang by the Old books of Psalms (Catholic prayer-books published in the beginning of the 20th century), sang a lot. The monotonous melodies of Psalms were quite difficult to sing for a long time. The singers believe that *at the funeral there is nothing more valuable than big Psalms, they should be sung for the dead.*

Nowadays the singing occurs on the evening before the funeral. In other places, for instance, in the village Prikuli they sing during the day from 1 to 4 p.m. Now in the village only four or five people can sing. For three hours the Psalms are sung from new books of Psalms published in the 1980 – 1990s. Because of the demographic situation a number of the followers of traditions constantly decreases in Latgale. However, the faith is still strong. That is why nowadays the Psalm performers are financially rewarded. The Psalm singing and pray-reading are continued on the funeral day morning, then in 30 or 40 days, afterwards – on the anniversary of death.

There is a belief that on the funeral day after the deceased is carried out of the house the place where the dead was located has to be tidied away as quickly as possible in order not to have another one. The deceased was transported in a funeral cortege to a church where Holy Mass for his soul was administered. After the Mass a funeral procession moved to the cemetery. Nowadays the dead can be transported immediately to the cemetery where at the gate the priest meets the procession and leads the burial ceremony. At the end of the funeral rite the priest throws three handfuls of earth on the coffin – in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then all funeral guests do the same.



Picture 2. Stiglava, 1930s. Photo from Jānis Rancāns' personal archive



Picture 3. Stiglava, 1930s. Photo from Jānis Rancāns' personal archive



Picture 4. Stiglava, 1970s. Elements of ritual at civil funeral emerged during the soviet times – brass band. Photo from Jānis Rancāns' personal archive

Covering a coffin with a national woven blanket (before it is lowered into a grave) is considered by the respondents to be a quite recent tradition which appeared some twenty or thirty years ago; usually it is done by grandchildren or children. In former days such tradition (or, as the respondents call it, *fashion*) did not exist. Why is the coffin covered with the blanket? Some explain that the deceased will be warmer in the next world, others – that it makes the soil hit the coffin quieter.



Picture 5. National woven blanket used for covering a coffin before lowering it into a grave. Photo from Elina Rancāne's personal archive

By the door of the house of the dead, the yard gate and cemetery small fir-trees with black ribbons and broken tops are placed. The broken tops symbolize a life cut short.

In the past, a month after a person's death the funeral repast was organized. Then they also sang Psalms and prayed. The next remembrance of the deceased took place a year after the death. Nowadays, believers mostly arrange the Holy Mass after thirty days, half a year and a year after the death. After forty days the wreaths are taken away from the grave.

In former days, the necessary mourning period lasted for thirty days – people did not switch on the radio or television and they did not take part in any activities. As the respondents say, nowadays people more follow their personal feelings than traditions.

The Respondents' Attitude to Cremation

Andris Sprukts – the priest of Roman Catholic Church – notes that the Catholic tradition allows cremation of the deceased; the only requirement is – ashes should be buried in the ground, and not be scattered in the wind or over water.⁸

The most of villagers oppose cremation. They believe that *It is out of the question with Catholics. The soul has already left but the body should be returned to earth, of earth we are made and into earth we return.*

In comparison with other rituals the funeral rites are more conservative as they reflect views on death and mutual relationship between the living and the dead which do not change quickly. The observance of funeral rites was considered essential for the fate of the soul in the afterlife and that is why it was a moral duty of relatives in relation to the deceased. The burial and funeral repast are treated as an event when it is inappropriate to show excessive economy or ignore the customs (even seemingly unnecessary). The observance of funeral rites and funeral repast expresses respect for the deceased.

Conclusions

In Latgale, funeral traditions and rites, passed from generation to generation, are still observed to ensure a respectful burial for the deceased. In funeral rites the religious affiliation of the deceased is of great importance; it defines the customs according to which he / she will be buried. By the Catholic traditions, a priest is called that the sick can confess sins and can gain the anointing of the sick.

On the last evening and in the morning of the funeral day, the performed Officium – Psalm singing – is observed, with some variation, in all investigated rural territories. The respondents inform what they have experienced by themselves as well as what they have heard about burying suicides, about funeral rites of other denominations. The respondents reveal their own attitude to cremation.

¹ *Portal of the Archdiocese of Riga*. <http://www.catholic.lv/main.php?parent=148> (accessed 2014).

² Vaivods J. *Teicīt kungu*. Rīga: Reigas metropolijas kurija. 1990. – p. 351.

³ *Mārtiņš Boiko par latgališu salmu rošonūs i nūzeimi*. <http://www.lakuga.lv/2012/07/06/martins-boiko-par-salmem-latgola/> (accessed 2014).

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⁸ *Latgales Lingvoteritoriālā vārdnīca.* Rēzekne: Rēzeknes Augstskola, 2013. – p. 490.

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Žans Badins

PECULIARITIES OF MUSLIM NECROPOLIS OF DAUGAVPILS COMMUNAL CEMETERY

Summary

The article is dedicated to the study of Muslim Necropolis of Daugavpils communal cemetery. Although people who profess Islam are not the dominating ones in Latvian cultural space, their exclusion makes the talk on the ethnic palette of modern Latvia incomplete. During last two decades one of the main tendencies in the world is the issue of ethnic and cultural identity. Every national culture declares itself through the whole complex of its own unique traditions and values. The burial ritual is one of the most significant elements in any culture, whereas the cemetery becomes not only a sacral place but also a cultural and historical monument, an evidence of the presence of a certain ethnicity in the cultural space. The study of Daugavpils Muslim necropolis is a new and topical problem. The communal cemetery presents an example of a relatively new, but at the same time exceptionally intensively developing necropolis of Daugavpils. There is no doubt that Muslim necropolis of Daugavpils Communal cemetery differs from the necropolises in the countries where Islam is the dominating religion. In Daugavpils Muslim necropolis the orientation of a burial place towards Mecca traditional for Muslims from all over the world coexists with the influence of both secular tradition of the burial place (a portrait of the deceased, reference to his / her occupation) and the Christian (the image of the cross and the Virgin Mary). The synthesis of different traditions is indicative of organic coexistence of various cultures in the space of the town. The Islamic community of Daugavpils is not isolated; it takes elements of other cultures, adapts and uses them.

Key words: Daugavpils, Communal cemetery, study of necropolis, Islam, Tatars

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The study of Islamic segment in the history of Latvia's culture still raises the problem. Wherein, the presence of small national groups in Latvia is closely connected with the history of formation and development of the country. From the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s one can observe the growth of national consciousness not only among Latvians but also among other ethnicities residing in Latvia. Since 1988, in Latvia, one after the other different national cultural societies have registered themselves – Armenian cultural society, Azerbaijan cultural society 'Kobustan' (later 'Azeri'), the Crimean Tatar Cultural society 'Vatan', Tatar society 'Idel' and a number of others.¹ There is no doubt that the main aim of national and religious societies was not only the rebirth of interest in national traditions, beliefs, and language, but also the adaptation and the integration in the modern Latvian space. This theme was investigated by Valters Ščerbinskis in *Ienācēji no tālienes. Austrumu un Dienvidu tautu pārstāvji Latvijā no 19. gadsimta beigām līdz mūsdienām* (Newcomers from Far Away. The Representatives

of the Eastern and Southern Nations in Latvia from the End of the 19th Century till Nowadays), and in the chapter *Latvijas nacionālo minoritāšu atdzimšana (1988 – 2003)* (*The Rebirth of Latvian National Minorities (1988 – 2003)*) in Leo Dribin's book *Etniskās un nacionālās minoritātes Eiropā. Vēsture un mūsdienas* (*The Ethnical and National Minorities in Europe. History and Nowadays*)². The experimental methodological aids were prepared – *Mazākumtautību vēsture Latvijā* (*The History of Minorities in Latvia*)³, *Mazākumgrupu (minoritāšu) integrācijas aspekti Latvijā* (*The Aspects of Integrating Minorities in Latvia*)⁴.

The Russian researcher of Islamic culture Svetlana Luchickaya rightly notes:

*The Christian understanding of Muslims, the image of Islam... This theme fits in wider context of the key problem studied in philosophy, sociology, psychology and history – the phenomenon of 'the Other'. [...] But the knowledge of another culture and self-knowledge are an essence of the same phenomenon.*⁵

The study of Latvian Muslim necropolises is a new and topical problem since cemeteries are not only the significant part of the human culture but they are also highly valuable as sources. A burial place – it is always an evidence of spiritual life of people observing one or another funeral tradition.

The communal cemetery presents an example of a relatively new, but at the same time exceptionally intensively developing necropolis of Daugavpils. The cemetery appeared at the end of the 1960s and is located opposite the Catholic, but among Old-Believer, Orthodox and Military cemeteries. In the 1970s, the chapel was built there. During the soviet times, as well as nowadays, in the communal cemetery they buried the deceased irrespective of their religious affiliation. Like any necropolis, on the one hand it performs the function of collective memory, but, on the other hand, it reflects the social transformation and processes. It is surprising, but until recently the communal cemetery was not the object of serious research. There is no doubt that this necropolis presents an extremely interesting material to diagnose the state and development of the modern society. As a matter of fact, the spatial organisation and ritual practises of obsequies make it possible to find out a lot about the current trends in culture and the existing stratification structure in the society.

The Muslim necropolis appeared at the end of the 1990s and presents one of the most recent segments of Daugavpils Communal cemetery. The history of its origin appears to be closely connected with the history of Muslims in Latvia and, in particular, Daugavpils. But, in its turn, the history of Muslims in Latvia is closely linked to the history of traditional Muslim nations – Turks, Tatars, Bashkir and other.

One of the most serious problems for the representatives of Muslim diaspora in the countries or regions where Islam is not the dominating religion and where Muslims are national minorities is a question about the rules of burying Muslims in the Christian or Jewish cemeteries. This issue is quite completely revealed in Ruslan Kurbanov's research *Фикх мусульманских меньшинств. Мусульманское право в современном немусульманском мире (На примере стран Западной Европы и Северной Америки)*⁶ / *Fiqh of Muslim Minorities. Mohammedan Law in the Modern Non-Muslim World (Based on the Countries of Western Europe and North America)*.

Modern Islamic theologian – the Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi offers, in particular, the following strategy:

Every group of Muslims in non-Islamic countries should strive, with inner solidarity, to prepare separate cemeteries for Muslims, and to make an effort to convince those in charge to do so, if they can. If Muslims cannot maintain their own cemetery, at least they should have a special lot on one side of a Christian cemetery, where they may bury their dead. If neither [solution – Ž. B.] works for the Muslims, and a Muslim dies, they should transfer him to another city which has a Muslim cemetery, if possible, and if not, they should bury him in a Christian cemetery, if they can, in accordance with the rules of necessity.⁷

Due to the growth of the town in the middle of the 19th century there was an urgent need to have new cemeteries. The municipal authorities began to allocate space for cemeteries along the high road Saint Petersburg – Warsaw (at the present time – 18. Novembra street, previously – Shosseynaya) – mostly in the area of the lake Gubishche. Jewish cemetery was located to the south of the lake, Muslim cemetery was close to it; Orthodox and Old-Believer cemeteries were situated to the east. The layout of burial places was approved in 1865. At the suggestion of the City Council in January 3, 1874 a new location for Lutheran and Catholic cemeteries was approved – to the north-east of the lake Gubishche. The layout was confirmed in September 5, 1875 by the decree No 2995 of Vitebsk Governorate administration. In the 1960 – 1970s, by the decision of the city authorities the Jewish and Muslim cemeteries were destroyed.

The initiator of creating Muslim cemetery in Daugavpils was the first chairman of Tatar cultural society Alim Ashirov who later, in March, 2010, was buried in this cemetery. According to the memories of members of Tatar Cultural society 'Vatan' and Muslim society 'Idel', the implementation of this idea was very difficult and laborious.

The communal cemetery that appeared in the soviet period completely corresponded to the state ideology concerning the burial rite. The funeral was transforming into the municipal service. The soviet power opposing to 'religious customs and traditions which hinder the building of communism' intensively introduced new, different from the previous, burial rites and places. The separation of cemeteries by religion was completely



Picture 1. Tatar Cultural society 'Vatan',
Daugavpils Islamic Centre 'Idel'.
Photo by Žans Badins



Picture 2. A burial place of Alim Ashirov.
Photo by Žans Badins

cancelled and, probably, it was a formal reason for the demolition of Jewish and Muslim cemeteries.

The modern location of Muslim sector in the communal cemetery is quite convenient. The cemetery is situated not far from the chapel (a peculiar centre of the necropolis). The distance from the chapel to Muslim sector does not exceed 100 metres. From the main entrance one can walk or drive to the communal cemetery through the central paved alley and turn left at the nearest to the chapel bend. The cemetery is located on a small hill, not in a valley, and not far away from the hand water pump. On the south site of Muslim segment of the cemetery there is a quite wide gravel path providing a convenient access to it and separating Muslim burials from the burial places belonging to other religions. On the north site from the road a forest presents a natural border of Muslim necropolis.

On the east-west axis Muslim necropolis is adjacent to the lot of the cemetery where they bury victims of the siege of Leningrad having lived in Daugavpils as well as their relatives. The compositional centre is a monument to the citizens of besieged Leningrad. The monument is situated on the north site of the main road. The flagstone foot-path, twenty-five metres in length, leads from the road to the monument. Inside the monument, on the left side, a capsule containing soil taken from Piskaryovskoye Memorial cemetery (in Saint Petersburg, Russia) was laid.



Picture 3. The monument to the citizens of besieged Leningrad. Photo by Žans Badins

For the present the opposite territory is not occupied (about 40 – 50 metres) but further a quite recent area of burial places of the communal cemetery follows.

There is no doubt that Muslim necropolis of Daugavpils communal cemetery differs from the necropolises in the countries where Islam is a defining religious and cultural factor. In the Islamic countries there are a number of strict requirements concerning Muslim burial places:

- 1. In Muslim cemeteries the representatives of other religious cannot be buried.*
- 2. An assignment of a separate lot for burying members of one family is allowed in Muslim cemetery if it does not make burying of other people difficult.*
- 3. It is necessary to provide passages between the graves for visitors of the cemetery to reach the burial place freely without stepping over or on the neighbouring graves of Muslims.*
- 4. The grave should be made in such a way that it is possible to place the deceased facing the Kaaba.*
- 5. The grave is recommended to be simple; on the gravestone (plate) the name of a buried person is written.⁸*

If looking at Muslim necropolis situated inside Daugavpils communal cemetery one can notice that all tombstones and graves are facing towards Mecca, thus, one of the main requirements in orientation of burial places according to the Islamic tradition is observed. The carelessness in the planning graves is not permitted – the demanded intervals between the burial places are observed allowing the visitors pass them without the risk of stepping accidentally on the grave that could be disrespectful to those who have been buried there. The vast majority of the graves are properly maintained.

Interviews with representatives of the local Muslim community reveal that the requirement of a quick burying having been developed already at the dawn of the Islamic civilization is topical nowadays too. Since those days the views on the grave have not changed: a small mound (four fingers high) with several stones above it (a protection from wild animals). In some places they believed that when the mound levelled the soul would come to Allah at last. Sharia disapproves lavish displays considering them unnecessary wastefulness. Initially in Muslim cemeteries there were no stone slabs; they appeared later – with the beginning of a settled lifestyle. During the period the shapes of monuments improved, there appeared stones in the shape of trapezoids, rectangular stela, monuments crowned by an arch or with truncated upper part. Generally material for monuments was taken by Muslims from natural resources available for them.

Considering the graves of Daugavpils Muslims we can say that the local necropolis differs from the requirements usual for the Islamic tradition. We can notice the penetration of elements not characteristic of the Islamic culture although there are also ascetic burial places created in accordance with the religious tradition. The majority of the monuments have a shape traditional for gravestones offered by various Daugavpils companies and these gravestones differ from the Christian ones only by featuring a crescent or a crescent with a star. The image of the crescent is the most frequent detail in the decoration of the graves in Daugavpils Muslim necropolis. In addition to the depiction on the gravestones and stone slabs, the symbol of the crescent is often located next to the burial place as a separate sign, usually green, sometimes black, and it is also widely used in the decoration of the cemetery fence.

The multicultural peculiarities of Daugavpils resulted in intermarriages –



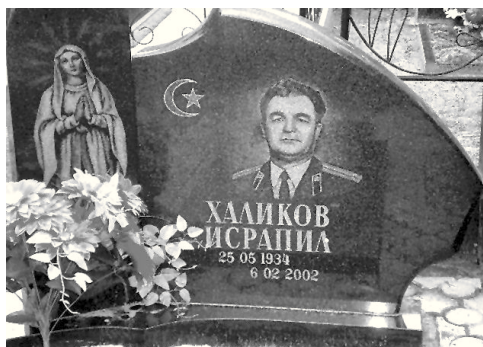
Pictures 4 and 5. Burial places in the Islamic sector of Daugavpils communal cemetery.

Photo by Žans Badins

the process that found a representation in the design of the necropolis. There are burial places presenting a combination of two religious traditions – Christian and Islamic. The most striking examples are: a plot belonging to the family of Shahverdievy, the burial place of Israpil Halikov and the burial place of Oleg and Ibrahim Muhambetkalievi (it is interesting that they are aligned).



Picture 6. The gravestone of the Shahverdievy family. Photo by Žans Badins



Picture 7. The gravestone of Israpil Halikov. Photo by Žans Badins



Picture 8. The gravestone of the Muhambetkalievi family. Photo by Žans Badins

In the first case, there are images of two religious symbols on the gravestone – the Christian cross and the Islamic crescent. This ornamentation can be an evidence of the intermarriage. On the right side of Israpil Halikov's gravestone (with the image of crescent on it) there is a figure of the Virgin Mary. In the ornamentation of the gravestone one more tradition characteristic for the burial places in Daugavpils communal cemetery is present – a photo of the deceased depicts the occupation during his life connected with service in the Armed Forces. The gravestone of Oleg and Ibrahim Muhametkalievi allows concluding that two relatives belonging to different religious beliefs – the Christianity and Islam – are buried. Asked about the local Muslims' attitude towards monuments of this kind the respondents noted that such situation was, of course, untypical and initially caused some conversations but then all the talk died down whereas the members of the Islamic community once again demonstrated religious tolerance to non-canonical design of the burial place on the territory of Muslim necropolis.

According to the Islamic tradition, the arrangement for the cemetery plot is not done beforehand but nowadays it happens that worldly wisdom dominates over the religious traditions. The most striking example is a burial place of Batarshiny family that is purchased in advance.

Thus, the Islamic sector of Daugavpils communal cemetery is a unique monument indicating the presence of the Islamic culture in Latvia's space. After the fall of the USSR, Muslims, who lived in Latvia, had a possibility to maintain and develop their culture and traditions in accordance to their wishes and needs. In addition to Muslim cemetery in Riga, separate sectors in the cemeteries of Jaunpils (Riga) and Daugavpils were created. The characteristics of the burial places in Muslim necropolis of Daugavpils communal cemetery present the synthesis of a variety of traditions – Islamic, Christian, secular; it is an evidence of peaceful coexistence of different cultures in the space of the town. Daugavpils Islamic community is not isolated; it takes the elements of other cultures, adapts and uses them.

¹ Ščerbinskis V. *Ienācēji no tālienes. Austrumu un Dienvidu tautu pārstāvji Latvijā no 19. gadsimta beigām līdz mūsdienām*. Rīga: Nordik, 1998 – p. 35.

² Dribins L. Latvijas nacionālo minoritāšu atdzimšana (1988 – 2003). *Etniskās un nacionālās minoritātes Eiropā. Vēsture un mūsdienas* Rīga: Eiropas Padomes Informācijas birojs, 2004, pp. 203–244.

³ Dribins L. *Mazākumtautību vēsture Latvijā*. Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC, 1998.

⁴ Ziemeļe I. *Mazākumgrupu (minoritāšu) integrācijas aspekti Latvijā*. Rīga, 2001.

⁵ Luchickaja S. I. *Obraz Drugogo: musul'mane v hronikah krestovyh pohodov*. Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteija, 2001. – p. 5.

⁶ Kurbanov R. V. *Fikh musul'manskih men'shinstv. Musul'manskoe pravo v sovremennom nemusul'manskom mire (Na primere stran Zapadnoj Evropy i Severnoj Ameriki)*. Moskva: Centr arabskih i islamskih issledovanij instituta vostokovedenija RAN, 2010. <http://www.ansar.ru/downloads/pdf> (accessed 2014).

⁷ Fishman S. *Fiqh al – Aqalliyat: A Legal Theory for Muslim Minorities*. http://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1148/20061018_monographfishman2.pdf (accessed 2014).

⁸ Gadzhiev al'-Inchhi M. *Musul'manskie kladbishha i ih poseshenie*. <http://www.islam.ru/content/veroeshenie/musulmanskie-kladbishha-i-ih-poceshenie> (accessed 2014).

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Ingrīda Kupšāne

CATHOLIC AND LUTHERAN CONFESSIONAL SEGMENT IN DAUGAVPILS COMMUNAL CEMETERY

Summary

Daugavpils Communal cemetery represents the town in the 20th – 21st centuries: its ethno-confessional structure, social stratification as well as the influence of the political events and the borderland position. Just as during the life all citizens of the town get along together like good neighbours, thus also in eternity they are close to each other: Catholics and Orthodox, Lutherans and Muslims, Baptists and Jews, Old-believers and atheists. In the article, the burial places of Catholics and Lutherans in the cemetery are regarded as one segment since the external signs of the graves make it impossible to define the religious affiliation of the deceased. Analysing the Catholic / Lutheran segment of Daugavpils Communal cemetery, several aspects can be emphasized: 1) ethnolinguistic – Catholics / Lutherans are mainly Poles and Latvians, much less – Russians, Belarusians and Lithuanians; 2) the signs of religion (Christian symbols); 3) the specific character of collective burials, including mixed marriage couples in which a husband and a wife belong to different confessions; 4) the peculiarities of burial places indicating interethnic interaction and the specific character of the borderland position of the town (metal fences, artificial flowers, patronymic).

Key words: cemetery, Catholic / Lutheran segment, borderland, interethnic interaction

*

Daugavpils is a city in Latvia populated by the representatives of many ethnic groups forming a rich 'bouquet' of different national cultures. Revealing the peculiarities of the development of the region and first of all Daugavpils in the historical perspective Fjodors Fjodorovs writes:

At all stages the town was a marginal border space, not only from the point of view of the state formation but also from the social and ethnic cultural perspective. Latgale during the first Republic of Latvia the same as at present in the eyes of the metropolis is a far-eastern Latvian province with completely obvious features of the alien space. Yet during the catastrophic cataclysms, due to its border status, the town became the centre of global events that played a fatal role in its development. On the other hand, the marginality determined its multinational and multi-cultural landmarks.¹

The historical and geographical factors are the main determinants of Daugavpils developing into heterogeneous space directed towards the polylogic coexistence of different ethnic groups, denominations, cultural traditions. This diversity of Daugavpils is reflected in the Communal cemetery too.

The ethnographer Elena Bugryj notes:

Cemeteries are an integral part of any society. Cities of the dead – necropolises – were always side by side with the cities of the living. And at all times there was an invisible connection between them. Cemeteries present a specific chronicle of the history of a settlement connected with them. It means that information ‘preserved’ in such places can serve as a basis for many researches.²

Daugavpils Communal cemetery represents the town in the 20th – 21st centuries: its ethno-confessional structure, social stratification as well as the influence of the political events and borderland position. Just as during the life all citizens of the town get along together like good neighbours so in eternity they are close to each other: Catholics and Orthodox, Lutherans and Muslims, Baptists and Jews, Old-Believers and atheists.

Catholics are the largest denomination in Daugavpils – 44 % of believers, in their turn Lutherans are only 2 %. For now in the town there are four Catholic parishes: the parish of St. Peter (*Sv. Pēterā Romas katoļu draudze*), the Blessed Virgin Mary parish (*Jaunavas Marijas Romas katoļu draudze*), the parish of Grīva Roman Catholic Church (*Grīvas Romas katoļu draudze*) and the Sacred Heart of Jesus parish (*Jēzus Sirds Romas katoļu draudze*) as well as one Lutheran parish. In Daugavpils Catholic churches, services are held in Latvian, Latgalian, Polish and Russian. There are Catholic (100 thousand square meters in size) and Lutheran (64 thousand square meters in size) cemeteries. Daugavpils Communal cemetery can attract the researchers' interest since in this space the customs of almost all ethnic groups residing in Daugavpils coexist and are closely interwoven [except Roma who are mainly buried in Grīva cemetery as most Roma live on the other side of the river Daugava in Grīva (a part of Daugavpils)].

In the article, burial places of Catholics and Lutherans in the Communal cemetery are regarded as one segment because the external signs of the graves make it impossible to define the religious affiliation of the deceased. Of course, one can assume that if the inscription is in Polish and the sacral symbols are indicated on the gravestone, the deceased, most likely, was a Catholic. Yet it is only an assumption.

Examining the technical data of the headstones (material, form) one can conclude that from the middle of the 20th century till the 1970s the headstones made from concrete or marble chips dominated, grey or red granite was less used. The decoration was laconic. During the late 1960s and the early 1970s the headstones of black marble appeared indicating an increase of material well-being. The second ‘wave’ of headstones made from marble chips can be noticed in the beginning of the 1990s when the old world was collapsing but the new one – being built. In the situation of changes, instability, violation of established economic relations by manufacturers and financial difficulties of customers the cheaper, locally manufactured materials dominated.

As the representatives of companies specializing in the delivery and installation of gravestones inform, today mainly Karelian granite from Russia, black and red granite from Sweden as well as Aurora granite from Finland are purchased. The orders are fulfilled through the intermediary – Lithuania (where large saws for cutting slabs are located). The representatives of the companies also note that there is so-called ‘Chinese stone’ (stone in the ‘glaze’) – these are the headstones of no high quality. On such headstones the bad weather causes fading of inscriptions and appearing of micro-scratches.

Analysing the Catholic / Lutheran segment of Daugavpils Communal cemetery several main layers can be emphasized:

1) **Ethnolinguistic aspect** – Catholics / Lutherans are mainly Poles and Latvians, the percentage of Russians, Belarusians and Lithuanians is much smaller. Thus, the religion functions as a unifying factor.

- Inscriptions on the headstones are made according to the ethnolinguistic principle, mainly in Polish, Latvian or Russian. The interaction of languages is quite often observed. In the inscriptions, the elements of two languages may be present, for instance, the inscription is in Latvian but the name or the surname – without the ending (*Edgar, Aleksandr, Jurkjan, Tomaševič, Puzan, Jazep Žukovski*), vowels without lengthening marks (*Helena, Natalija, Jazep*), consonants without palatalization marks (*Bronislavs, Boleslavs, Mini, Plotnikova*); the influence of the Polish language is present – the name is written in Latvian but the letters of the Polish alphabet are used (*Woldemar, Wanda, Wanag*); a Lithuanian name, a surname are written in Latvian or Russian but the endings characteristic of the Lithuanian language are retained (*Vitautas Leitanas, Константинас Паукенас*).



Picture 1. Daugavpils Communal cemetery. The interaction of languages.
Photo by Ingrida Kupšāne

2) **Signs of religion.** The intensity of depicting the signs of religion on the headstones depends on the specific historical period. For example, in the soviet times it was not used to emphasize the faith in God. Presumably, choosing the motifs for the gravestone the relatives of the faithful deceased did not always dare to use the religious attributes. On the other hand, the use of signs of religion might present a kind of opposition to the soviet power and its atheistic ideology.

The signs of religion are represented by the Christian symbols depicted on the headstone:

- the most common is the cross (both the laconic one and its more complicated variants – in crucifix form, carved on gravestones, or as a component connecting two parts of the headstone into a single unit etc.);
- the image of Christ is rare;
- for Catholics the cult of the Virgin Mary is more typical and, accordingly, her image. She is quite often depicted standing in the rays of light, both on the front and back sides of the headstone;

- the motif of rose is frequent – presumably, associated with the Virgin Mary who is often referred to as the rose or having a rose as her attribute. The legend tells that the Archangel Gabriel took white, yellow and red roses and wove them into three wreaths for Blessed Virgin Mary. White rose wreath signified Mary's joy, red rose wreath – her sorrows, but yellow rose wreath – her glory. The Virgin Mary is addressed as the Mystic Rose, Heaven's Rose, the Rose without Thorns, as a thorn represents suffering, death, and in Christianity it is a symbol of sin. According to the early Christian tradition a rose was without thorns but it became thorny after the fall. It is interesting that on the headstones roses are quite often depicted where the photography of the deceased had to be present;
- angels – as images on the headstones are not frequent, more often there are small angel statues by the headstone';
- belief in God is emphasized in epitaphs. More common formulas are: *Mūžīgo mieru dod viņiem, Kungs; wieczny pokoi; pokoj ich duszhom; spozywaj v Bogu.*

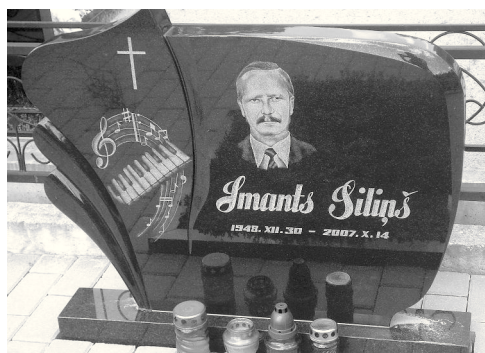


Picture 2. Daugavpils Communal cemetery.
Signs of religion – the image of the Virgin Mary.
Photo by Ingrīda Kupšāne

Sometimes the religious paraphernalia are depicted very intensively personifying the depths of sorrow and faith.

3) The religious paraphernalia often go with the secular (worldly):

- characterising the deceased the sign of faith (defining him / her as a Christian) as well as attributes connected with his / her profession or hobby are depicted on the headstone. More often the profession of a doctor is indicated (mainly on the headstone the symbol of pharmacy is depicted – a cup with a snake twined around it; there can be a portrait of the deceased in a white coat). The second most frequent is the profession of a teacher (in addition to the name and surname there is usually an inscription on the headstone (*neāzogs, skolotāja*). The profession of a railwayman is also indicated (a locomotive or the deceased in uniform are reproduced). As to hobbies and interests music is dominating (a clef, music fragment or musical instrument are depicted).
- along with the cross there are elements of the nature that might be interpreted both in the religious context and as components of the Latvian scenery (during the late 1980s and the early 1990s a view with an elk was very popular; a swan (the swan song) is a rare occurrence, crucified Christ, more often – oak or birch leaves, wheat);
- rarely the connection with the country is emphasized (for example, on the Pole's headstone the coat of arms of Poland – the white eagle wearing a golden crown – is depicted).



Picture 3. Daugavpils Communal cemetery. On the headstone the sign of faith as well as attributes connected with the deceased person's profession or hobby are indicated.

Photo by Ingrida Kupšāne



Picture 4. Daugavpils Communal cemetery. On the headstone the sign of faith as well as the connection with the country (the coat of arms of Poland is depicted) are indicated.

Photo by Ingrida Kupšāne

4) The specific character of collective burials, including mixed marriage couples in which a husband and a wife belong to different confessions:

- In the case of an interfaith marriage two models of burial can be specified:
 - an emphasis is on the family as a whole, that is, one headstone is erected but differences in religions are indicated, usually it is a corresponding cross (of course, an economic criterion is also possible here);
 - an emphasis is on the differences in religious beliefs (each has one's own headstone, a cemetery bench and a table are located on the side of the Orthodox).



Picture 5. Daugavpils Communal cemetery. A collective burial of mixed marriage couples – positioning by generations: the older generation is positioned in one row, the younger – in the other. Photo by I. Kupšāne

- If it is a collective place of burial (three or more graves in a fenced area), the differences in religious beliefs and burial traditions are indicated by a body positioning:
 - one variant – an opposite positioning depending on religious traditions (for example, in a fenced area where relatives professing different religions are buried, the Catholics Smilginy are positioned opposite the Orthodox Balickie);
 - positioning by generations: the older generation is positioned in one row, the younger – in the other.

5) The peculiarities of burial places indicating the interethnic interaction and the specific character of borderland position of the town:

- metal fences (on the one hand, it can be explained by a wish to fence off the area of the deceased relatives since in the communal cemetery graves are located very close to each other). On the other hand, the influence of neighbours, specifically Belarusians, is likely to be present. If there is no fence, burial places more often belong to Latvians or Poles. As a kind of fencing decorative shrubs are used;
- artificial flowers (Catholics and Lutherans' attitude towards the artificial flowers is cautious, especially referring to funeral process). At a funeral, the attendees mainly come with fresh flowers or wreaths featuring natural flowers. Only in winter fresh flowers are replaced with artificial ones. But in our region decorating graves with artificial flowers has become a common tradition. It is also practical: if family members have no possibility to visit a grave often, artificial flowers do not require any special care. Sometimes graves are even heaped with them;



Picture 6. Daugavpils Communal cemetery. Artificial flowers.
Photo by Ingrida Kupšāne

- usually Latvians do not specify their patronymics, but in the Communal cemetery there are quite a lot of graves with the headstones having a father's name on them (especially on the headstones of the soviet period) (*Ruža Voiceks Ādama d.*, *Ruža Monika Pētera m.*, *Dārznieks Boleslavs Antona d.*).



Picture 7. Daugavpils Communal cemetery. Family burial place.
On the headstone beside the name and surname also the father's name are indicated.
Photo by Ingrida Kupšāne

In the cemetery one can also see peculiar, somewhat strange elements, for example:

- 1) a headstone is erected but it is not clear where exactly in a fenced area of the burial place the deceased is located (there is no stone slab);
- 2) a sunflower as an element of the green zone of the burial;
- 3) a fence without graves but with the Beatles melody *Yesterday*.



Picture 8. Daugavpils Communal cemetery. Strange elements – a fence without graves but with the Beatles melody *Yesterday*.
Photo by Ingrida Kupšāne

Sergey Shokarev writes:

*The sociocultural significance of the necropolis is determined by its direct connection with the eternal problem of life and death. This phenomenon is based on the idea of preserving the memory of the dead, the memory of the previous generations and preserving representations of the past in general. The necropolis and its perception in different epochs are the indicators of historical consciousness existed or existing in the society.*³

In conclusion, it should be noted that Daugavpils Communal cemetery is a significant historic and cultural-historical source of the contemporary history. The places of burial store the information about the changes in the political and socio-economic situation and indicate the influence of the existing state policy on people's consciousness (imposing the atheistic worldview, etc.). The ethno-consolidating role of the cemetery is essential. In this aspect, the religion functions as a unifying factor. In its turn the borderland position defines the intercultural interaction found in the language and the burial traditions.

¹ Fjodorovs F. The Spiritual Space of Latgale. *Latgale as a Culture Borderzone*. Daugavpils: Daugavpils University Academic Press 'Saule', 2009. – p. 12.

² Bugryj E. *Kladbishha kak ob'ekt kraevedcheskih issledovanij*. http://www.library.vn.ua/Konf2010/texts/1_5.htm (accessed 2013).

³ Shokarev S. *Nekropo'l kak istoricheskij istochnik*. http://iai.rsuh.ru/binary/1870554_11.1324599851.29957.pdf (accessed 2013).

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Elina Vasiljeva

DAUGAVPILS JEWISH CEMETERY: DYNAMICS OF TRADITION

Summary

The article considers the history and specificity of the modern Jewish cemetery of Daugavpils. The history of the cemetery is examined in the context of the socio-cultural processes of the 1970s. Special attention is paid to the transformation of a Jewish tradition connected with cemetery culture: specificity of monuments, structure of epitaph, traditions of decoration. The research of cemetery culture occupies a special place in modern Jewish Studies. Cemetery becomes a specific sign of Jewish tradition, which mainstreams the category of memory. First of all, cemetery is a special type of space with its peculiar architectonics. In this regard, the historical and cultural aspect of the research of cemetery has recently become a mainstream: a description of the organization of space, traditions of grave decoration, monuments. The modern Jewish cemetery in Daugavpils demonstrates a model of transformation of the Jewish tradition under modern socio-cultural conditions. On the one hand – in the life of the community, the cemetery performs a significant function: for the majority of the representatives of the Jewish community the status of the Jewish cemetery is indisputable, it is viewed as an integral component of the Jewish tradition. On the other hand – many components of the tradition of burial accepted in Judaism are not taken into account.

Key words: Jewish tradition, epitaph, monument, grave, memory

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The research of cemetery culture occupies a special place in modern Jewish Studies. Cemetery becomes a specific sign of Jewish tradition, which mainstreams the category of memory. During the past years, the SEFER Centre of university scholars and teachers of Jewish Studies carried out a number of field studies related to the research of old Jewish cemeteries. In 2013, a compendium of materials *The Shtetl of Zheludok in Contemporary Cultural Memory* of another field school was published.¹ The tradition connected with cemetery culture has been formed throughout the history of the Jewish people, and it has undergone various transformations under the influence of political factors and neighbouring cultures. A certain lexicon related to the definition of the realia of death, funerals and graves has been formed. This lexicon has also been changing and adapting to a specific linguistic environment. *In the Biblical and rabbinic lexicon, graveyard has different names: מעול בית, eit-olam ('the house of eternity', Ecc 12: 5; in Aramic במלע יתא, beit-alma or ועלמי בית, תקברו בית, beit-kvarot ('house [place] of graves'): euphemistically – יה לקל מועד בית, beit-moed le-chol chai ('the house appointed for all living', Job 30: 23), מהחי בית, beit-ha-chaim ('the house of life').² Despite the discrepancies, in all the given variants the dominant connotation is linked to the symbolism of house;*

thus, a burial site is viewed as another house, which is decorated in accordance with some certain parameters.

In the Jewish life cycle, the moment of leaving one's life is imbued with specific significance. Moreover, the Jewish Law pays special attention to the behaviour and actions of those, who escort the deceased in his or her final journey. The commandments require respect for the dead, which is manifested both in the ritual of preparing the body for burial and burial customs, and in the tradition of keeping memory of the dead. Therefore, special semantics is allotted to everything connected with passing away, and the space of cemetery gains its semantic field as well. Cemetery is a closed space, a special world, where the actions of the living are subject to certain laws. Most of the regulations related to the behaviour in a cemetery are introduced as prohibitions (a special type of commandments of prohibition that are built according to the formula 'do not'). Thus, it turns out to be logical that one of the compulsory traditions restricts visits to cemeteries, since frequent visits may disturb the peace of the dead. If a cemetery is visited, the only goal of this action is to commemorate the dead; this primarily is embodied in a prayer and grave care. Consequently, all other actions widely spread in everyday life appear to be forbidden: one cannot eat, sleep, talk loudly within the territory of a cemetery. The space of cemetery cannot be misused – e.g. a tradition prohibits moving across a cemetery to shorten one's way.

Stories about some specific burial customs are rather common for the corpus of stereotypes of Jews in the culture of other peoples.³ The information that Jews are not allowed to bring flowers to funerals should be given as the credible one on the specificity of Jewish funerals.

In fact, the Orthodox tradition itself does prohibit flowers that symbolize joy and life being placed close to the place of commemoration. But under the influence of other cultures, starting from the 19th century, a custom when Jews plant flowers on their graves appears. However, there has been set a special stylistics of grave decoration in a Jewish cemetery.

There are many aspects of the research of the specificity of cemetery. First of all, cemetery is a special type of space with its peculiar architectonics. In this regard, the historical and cultural aspect of the research of cemetery has recently become a mainstream: a description of the organization of space, traditions of grave decoration, monuments. In 2006, the Shamir Centre published a book-album *Jewish Cemeteries in Latvia* written in three languages (Latvian, English, Russian).⁴ At present, in Latvia a site, which aims to compile information about places of burial (www.nekroppole.lv), is being created.

Cemetery is a part of religious life; it is a place marked by ritual actions and objects. The opposition of religious and secular traditions of cemetery marked a milestone in the culture of the 20th century. Cemetery became a popular and visited attraction in the sphere of cultural tourism.

In the Jewish tradition, a specific attitude to cemetery is observed: cemetery is a space specifically marked by rituality. In understanding the essence of Jewish community, cemetery and funeral rites are given a special place. In fact, a model of community is considered to be a traditional one, when it is marked by the presence of such components: synagogue (house of prayer), mikvah (a bath for ritual immersion), elementary school (header) and burial holy society (Chevra Kadisha). Taking into account the specificity

of the existence of Jewish community in the world today, outside Israel, various deviations from the Orthodox tradition due to a number of objective and subjective reasons turn out to be rather understandable (the problem of accessibility of the elements of the tradition in a non-Jewish world, the problem of personal identity and identification within Judaism).

In this respect, the transformation of the tradition is much more than just widely spread. Simultaneously one sequential regularity, which is indicated by Semyon Charny in his observations, can be noted: even in case of complete separation from the Jewish tradition (non-compliance with a number of the main mitzvot – Commandments) a desire / wish to be buried according to the Jewish burial ritual and by all means (!) in a Jewish cemetery becomes the only relevant component of the affiliation to Jewry.⁵

On the one hand, the history of the Jewish cemetery in Daugavpils reflects a typicality of the problem; on the other – it demonstrates a peculiar model. The history of the Jews in Dinaburg – Dvinsk – Daugavpils dates back to the 17th century. The first half of the 20th century, when the Jews constituted about 50% (49.3% in 1913)⁶ of the population of the city, becomes a defining period; this suggests a consideration of a special Russian – Jewish period in the history of the city.⁷ From the viewpoint of religion, in the first half of the 20th century the Jewish community of Dvinsk – Daugavpils was not homogeneous: Hasidic and Misnaged traditions were equally represented. There were many synagogues in the city. Consequently, the traditional burial holy brotherhood 'Chevra Kadisha' was active. The so-called old Jewish cemetery was in the present day residential area of the city – Chemists'. Actually, until the 1970s the territory of the Jewish cemetery existed as a double-faceted formation – an old and a new Jewish cemetery.⁸ However, in the 1970s, the history of this Jewish cemetery came to an end: in 1971 a directive was issued to close the old Jewish cemetery⁹; later the so-called new Jewish cemetery was destroyed too. The closure and liquidation of Jewish cemeteries in the territory of the post-war Soviet Union became a common fact.

The destruction of the Jewish cemetery in Daugavpils obtains its own mythology. Actually, the very location of the cemetery makes it recognizable among different age groups of Daugavpils population: the cemetery was surrounded by a number of public topoi – the Palace of Culture (formerly – the Palace of Culture of Chemists, at present – the Palace of Culture and Sport), secondary schools, a branch of Riga Technical University.

In the 1970s, simultaneously with the decision on the liquidation of the cemetery an attempt was made to create a small park in the area of the cemetery. In the 1970s and early 1980s, as the place became the focus of the attention of schoolchildren and youth, a small but fixed corpus of narratives and stories related to the Jewish cemetery was made, (a story about specific Jewish ritual actions related to the washing of the deceased, performed in a special place in the cemetery, which bears a threat to the sanitation of one of the city's water bodies in the area of the cemetery; a story about regularly observed burning phosphorus that is coming from the graves).

The destruction of the cemetery was dramatically perceived by the Jews of the city. The majority found themselves in a dual situation facing the issue of possible reburial. On the one hand, the Jewish tradition prohibits reburial – the dead cannot be disturbed. On the other hand, it was unacceptable to leave the remains of the loved ones in the

territory of the planned park. A story of my family, Shteiman-Goldin, serves as one of the examples of such a dilemma. My grandmother, Deborah Goldin (born in 1909, maiden name – Steiman), insisted on the reburial of the remains of her brother, Anatoly Steinman. The procedure of reburial was performed. But many graves remained in the territory of the former cemetery.

After the liquidation of the old Jewish cemetery the city government (executive committee) provided a new land site for the Jewish cemetery in the territory of the city-wide Communal cemetery. Actually, the land meant for Jewish graves had existed in this cemetery from its early days. It was a small sector on the right side of the cemetery, located near the chapel, visible from the central alley.¹⁰ This site had a convenient location and at present it is considered a prestigious area of the cemetery to bury the deceased.¹¹

Nevertheless, the city officials allocated a new site, which according to the documents of the city's Housing and Communal Department is defined as a Jewish cemetery. In fact, the very location of this sector demonstrates a specific social and ideological position. First of all, the Jewish sector is away from the central alley. Most likely, one of the reasons to choose a remote land site was a necessity to move the graves of two famous rabbis – Yosef Rozin (Rogatchover)¹² and Meir Simcha Katz-Kagan.¹³ In the general concept of Communal cemetery, not only a multicultural, but also a secular, non-denominational aspect was emphasized. The graves of the rabbis located close to the central alley would violate the common ideological concept.

The location of the Jewish cemetery is disadvantageous and non-prestigious in many respects. On the general plan, this sector is located in the south-western part of the Communal cemetery, in the eastern part it is located next to the communal territory (there is a rather vast free territory between both the sectors that functions as a border), in the southern part it actually abuts railway track (approximate distance – 20 m), its western edge borders the section of the cemetery for the homeless and the residents of assisted living establishments for single and elderly persons (the recent graves of the homeless are on the opposite side of a narrow path); the southern part of the sector is opened (it is a place for new graves). The total land area of the Jewish cemetery is 1200 sq. m. Most of the graves are arranged in rows along the 'south-north' line, but there are several rows in a transverse direction ('east-west' line). The principle of family affiliation (when members of one family are buried in one site) is the most common principle of the graves. In modern Jewish cemetery (unlike in the old ones), the Orthodox principle to bury men and women in separate sections is not observed. In the second half of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, a tradition of erecting a family monument became a common cultural tradition – one monument is erected on the grave lots of two or in some cases of three relatives (most often these are spouses, other relatives are less often).

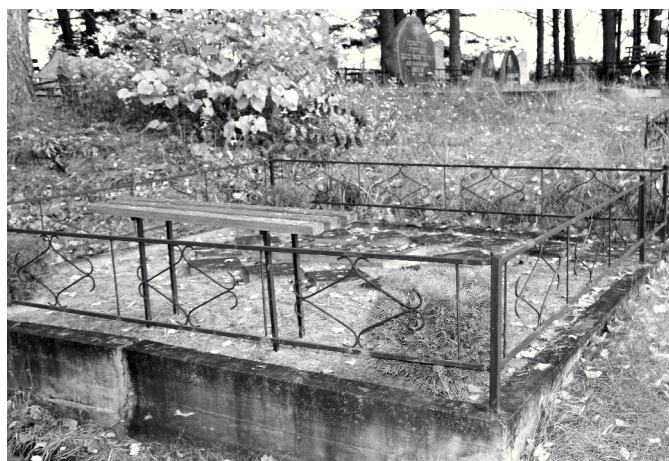
In the Jewish cemetery, one can find a different version common for Daugavpils cemeteries: after the death of a spouse one common family monument is erected, often with one double or two separate portraits, engraved with names and dates, except for the date of the death of the surviving spouse. Taking into account the general multicultural situation of Daugavpils and the commonness of intermarriages, the presence of multi-confessional graves seems to be rather natural, though in the Jewish cemetery such graves are quite rare.



Picture 1. Family monument of two confessions: Combination of a Star of David and an Orthodox Cross. Photo by Elina Vasiljeva

Multi-confessionality on the monuments of the post-Soviet period is emphasized by the markers of a specific religious cultural identity (Magen David – Judaism, cross – Christianity), and within the framework of Christian culture these are confessional variants of the cross. In fact, in the investigated part of the Jewish cemetery two monuments with a multicultural marker were discovered. Most of the multi-confessional graves are to be found in the territory of the city-wide Communal cemetery.

The fact of reservation of grave sites in a cemetery should be attributed to the social characteristics of the sites. On the one hand, the existing tradition of the studies of necropolises considers booking as a fact that confirms the stratification of the society¹⁴, which is connected with the understanding of the grave prestige class and the high cost of the reservation that proceeds from it. In social and economic terms, the situation in the cemeteries of Daugavpils is slightly different: the sites in the cemeteries are available at no charge in accordance with the established standards (standard grave space).



Picture 2. Reserved burial site. Photo by Elina Vasiljeva

A specific amount is set to make a reservation of a site. The fact of reservations is not very frequent. In the Jewish cemetery, only one site has been reserved that can hardly be viewed as a fact of stratification. Sites in this section are available and their class is not considered highly prestigious, unlike the territory that is close to the chapel and the central alley. Thus, a separate Jewish section in the right part of the Communal cemetery is more prestigious. It should also be noted that grave reservation is a tradition accepted by Judaism.

The graves of the rabbis are a semantic and architectural dominant of the Jewish cemetery since, these are the graves that form a kind of the eastern boundary of the cemetery, which bears a certain meaning.



Picture 3. The graves of rabbis – Meir Simcha and Yosef Rozin (Rogatchover).
The reburials from the old Jewish cemetery in Daugavpils, destroyed in the 1970s.
Photo by Elina Vasiljeva

The monuments on the graves of the rabbis are facing the East, in front of the graves of the rabbis there are no other Jewish graves; thus, these are the monuments of the rabbis that become religious direction signs for the Jerusalem temple. At the same time the graves of the rabbis form a specific vertical of the cemetery – the monuments are erected as a kind of mausoleum, as these are the highest and most massive constructions that are guiding the direction in the sector, being visible from a distance. Close to the graves of the rabbis there are reburials from the old Jewish cemetery.

The existence of the Jewish cemetery for more than 40 years has left their stylistic mark on the maintenance of the graves, the choice of a monument (*matseva*), the use of different decorations.

Matseva or Jewish gravestone is closely connected with the burial tradition; the decoration of *matseva* is subjected to a particular canon. It should be noted that the Halakhah tradition does not define any of the canons in the decoration of a gravestone. Moreover, magnificent monuments were historically considered by Jews as a penchant for idolatry, especially bearing in mind the Hellenistic nature of the tradition to erect a memorial sign at a gravesite.¹⁵ The modern Daugavpils Jewish cemetery shows a model of deviation from the canon. Actually, the fact that the burials (as well as some secular reburials) were conducted in the Soviet and post-Soviet period leaves a certain social

mark – in the decoration of the graves, the Jewish canon is minimally represented with the prevalence of secularism, which is determined by the ideology of the time, the ritual possibilities of the Jewish community and the situation in the ritual services market.

The temporal change in stylistics can be most clearly observed in family burial grounds.



Picture 4. Stylistic peculiarities of monuments from different periods: the beginning of the 20th century and the 1980s. Photo by Elina Vasiljeva

The monuments are made of different materials, in different shapes and the inscriptions are in different styles. The originality of grave decoration in the Jewish cemetery correlates with the common urban tradition. Notwithstanding the wide present-day market of ritual services, the possibilities to order original monuments are limited. Within the city limits, the working funeral bureaus and workshops offer processing of monument templates (produced in Poland, China), thus limiting the possibility to make a choice. In fact, in the cemetery there are two monuments that can be assigned to artefacts. The monuments of the beginning of the 20th century are mainly made of black stone with a carved portrait (computer graphics).

Researching Jewish cemeteries the inscriptions on gravestones or epitaphs are of particular interest. In this regard, the following aspects can be pointed out: the language of an inscription, the information about the deceased, long text-citations or text-dedications and drawings. Judaism unequivocally rejects the tradition of displaying human images (following the commandment ‘Do not make yourself an idol’), therefore, on the monument there should not be an image of the buried person. But this rule undergoes changes under the influence of the existing European traditions. Since the 1980s the image of a human being is regularly displayed on Jewish monuments. It becomes extremely topical at the beginning of the 21st century; it can be explained by the standard offers in the ritual services market. In Daugavpils Communal cemetery, this phenomenon is representative in the burial sites of the last fifteen years – the most frequent type of monument – a black polished stone of a different variation (usually horizontal) with a portrait (head-and-shoulders portrait), images in full growth are less common. Among the monuments

erected at the beginning of the 21st century, monuments without images are quite rare: photos are no longer used, but a new technique of portraits displayed on the monuments is connected with the use of a photographic image.

In the research of Jewish cemeteries, in accordance with the established scientific tradition epitaph should be referred to mean not only a poetic text-dedication, but also the whole inscription engraved on a monument. The tradition of epitaphs is one of the oldest. Its linguistic canon and clear structure has been formed historically. Michael Nosonovsky dates the first epitaph in Hebrew from between the 3rd – 8th centuries (Jewish gravestones in Italy).¹⁶ Since approximately the 16th century a structure of the epitaph of a Jewish monument starts developing. In this structure, there are four obligatory elements: introductory formula, name of the deceased, date, eulogy. Some other elements can be added to this formula: all sorts of texts to emphasize either the virtues of the deceased or the grief over the loss of a loved one.¹⁷

In the Jewish cemeteries of Latgale, it is traditional to use various languages. According to the Jewish tradition the language used in gravestone inscriptions is Hebrew, in Latgale, in its turn, since already the 19th century inscriptions were made in Yiddish, and in the 20th century inscriptions in Russian and Latvian became rather frequent. Daugavpils Jewish cemetery fully demonstrates this tradition. Bearing in mind the historic linguistic situation in Daugavpils, the Latvian language in the Jewish community is an exception: in the cemetery, there is only one monument with an inscription in Latvian.



Picture 5. The only monument in Daugavpils Jewish cemetery with an inscription in Latvian. Photo by Elina Vasiljeva

The presence of Yiddish inscriptions is representative of the tradition of the given region. And, as a rule, it is Yiddish with Soviet orthography. In fact, in a number of inscriptions made either in Yiddish or in Hebrew, there is a variant that goes back to the tradition of Russian questionnaire, when family name, given name and father's name are mentioned.¹⁸

The chronology of burials shows a specific linguistic evolution of the inscriptions. On the monuments of the 1970 – 1980s the inscriptions in Hebrew are frequently found. In the 1980s, the tradition to engrave the inscriptions in two languages – in Hebrew and Russian – appeared. In this case both versions can be fully identical.



Picture 6. Bilingual inscription on a monument. Photo by Elina Vasiljeva

At the same time there can be some discrepancies in the versions: in a Russian text, there is a secular Russified version of the name, such as *Maxim* (*Максим*); in a Hebrew text, there remains a Jewish version, *Morduch*.

There are differences in spelling of father's name. In fact, the Jewish tradition suggests writing 'daughter of / son of'. In a number of cases on the monuments there is Sovietized spelling: in case when a father's name, which must be mentioned in a Russian variant, appears in a Hebrew text, it is simply transliterated. In accordance with the tradition of the 20th – 21st century, all the monuments contain the name, which traditionally does not appear on the traditional Jewish gravestones of the 19th century.

In the decoration of inscriptions on matseva, much attention is paid to the date of death, which is obligatory to be shown and it must be given in accordance with the Jewish calendar (it is connected with the tradition of honouring the deceased, which should be held on the anniversary of the death, and the Jewish calendar is the computation of the anniversary of a date of death). In a traditional formula of the epitaphs, the date of birth is not given. In Daugavpils cemetery, most of the dates are indicated in accordance with the traditional Gregorian calendar, and most monuments (especially of the recent decades) have both the date of birth and the one of death, which indicates a more secular orientation of the community.

In the decoration of matseva, along with the obligation to indicate the dates of death, there is a certain set of formulas that are given in an abridged way. Introductory formula and eulogy are among the basic significant formulas, which must be engraved in accordance with the Orthodox tradition. The introductory formula, which is followed by the full inscription, explains the purpose of the monument – *poh nitman* (meaning 'here lies'); it is designated using two letters. This two-letter formula can be placed in the upper part of a monument or it can be inserted into a graphic symbol (Magen David or an open book are the most frequently used symbols of such a type).

This formula is common mainly in the burial sites of the 1970s – 1980s. Eulogy is the final phrase that is also given in an abridged variant TNZBH – *May His / Her Soul be bound in the eternal bond of life*.



Picture 7. Decoration of monument in accordance with the traditions of the decoration of inscriptions on matseva. Photo by Elina Vasiljeva

In the 19th century, this formula was obligatory in the monuments of the old surviving Jewish cemeteries; this eulogy was found almost on all monuments. In the modern Jewish cemetery of Daugavpils, this formula is extremely rare to be found.

Various dedications placed on the monuments are more frequent; they are often made in Russian, being a universal rather than national tradition. These dedications can be divided into two groups: dedications that state to whom (degree of kinship) the monument is dedicated (*Dear husband, father, grandfather*); dedications that denote those, who have erected this monument (from *loving wife, children, grandchildren* or in the nominative case). In a number of studies on the epigraphy of Jewish cemeteries, the formula, which expresses confidence in the resurrection of the dead, is indicated as a frequency. A certain

analogue of the given formula is found on one of the monuments, which provides additional information to the poetic text of the epitaph, functioning as a summary – *good-bye*.

In a Jewish cemetery, poetic epitaphs are extremely rare, and judging by the dates on the monuments, they can be considered as a modern element. Most epitaphs are universal; they are found in different national and confessional burial sites. The couplet *Cannot be forgotten / Cannot be returned* is the most frequent one. In fact, almost all texts are widely used epitaphs, which are offered by the manufacturers of monuments as standard formulas. Out of the modern inscriptions the following one can be considered authentic: *My friends, my support, / My rear, reliable capital. / I've got Tallit and Torah, / I've seen my destiny in you.*

Not only a monument, but also a so-called tombstone is one of the specific features of modern graves. Only in few graves a tombstone is used instead of a monument. Most of the tombstones are closed plates, which can have minimal decoration (Magen David, flowers, candles) or an inscribed name of the deceased.

In the territory of the Communal cemetery, the tombstones with a hollow inner part, which is to be decorated with flowers and grass, are more frequent. In some respects, such a tombstone can be related to the Jewish tradition of not planting flowers at a grave site. However, decorating graves with flowers is common in the Jewish cemetery. These are both planted flowers and artificial ones used as decoration. Many graves demonstrate a combination of traditions of laying flowers and laying stones.

The modern Jewish cemetery in Daugavpils demonstrates a model of transformation of the Jewish tradition under modern socio-cultural conditions. On the one hand, in the life of the community, the cemetery performs a significant function – for the majority of the representatives of the Jewish community the status of the Jewish cemetery is indisputable, it is viewed as an integral component of the Jewish tradition. On the other

hand, many components of the tradition of burial accepted in Judaism are not taken into account.



Picture 8. Stylistic eclecticism in the decoration of a burial site.
Daugavpils Communal cemetery. Photo by Elina Vasiljeva

Owing to the joint work on the improvement of the cemetery, the land site given for the Jewish cemetery has become more attractive in terms of the perception of the landscape. Moreover, the graves of the rabbis that are located in the Jewish cemetery are gradually becoming the object of tourist routes.

¹ Kopchjonova I. (ed.) *Zheludok: pamjat' o evrejskom mestechke* = *The Shtetl of Zheludok in Contemporary Cultural Memory*. Moscow, 2013.

² *The Jewish Encyclopedia In Russian On The Web*. <http://www.eleven.co.il/article/12113> (accessed 2013).

³ See: Alekseevsky M. Predstavlenija o evrejskih pohoronno-pominal'nyh tradicijah v rasskazah zhitelej Latgalii = The View of the Jewish Funeral Ceremony in the Stories of Latgalians. Amosova S. (ed.) *Utrachennoe sosiedstvo: evrei v kul'turnoj pamjati zhitelej Latgalii* = *Lost Neighbourhood: Jews in the Cultural Memory of the Inhabitants of Latgale*. Moscow, 2013. – pp. 19–36.

⁴ Melers M. *Ebreju kapsētas Latvijā* = *Jewish Cemeteries in Latvia*. Rīga: Šamir, 2006.

⁵ Charnyj S. Tri problemy evrejskikh kladbishh = Three Problems of Jewish Cemeteries. *Evro-aziatskij evrejskij ezhegodnik* = *Eurasian Jewish Bulletin* No 5768, 2007 / 2008. <http://library.eajc.org/page70/news13516> (accessed 2013).

⁶ Volkovich B. Shtrihi iz zhizni evreev Dvinska v nachale 20 veka = Strokes of Life of the Jews in Dvinsk of the early 20th century. *Evrei v Daugavpilsē* = *Jews in Daugavpils*. Daugavpils, 2011. – p. 13.

⁷ Fedorov F. Jetjud o Dvinske = Study on Dvinsk. *Humanitāro Zinātņu Vēstnesis* No 12. Daugavpils, 2007. – p. 89.

⁸ The history of the old Jewish cemetery is considered in: Volkovich B. Iudejskaja obshhina Daugavpilsa posle Vtoroj mirovoj vojny (1945 – 1973) = Daugavpils Jewish Community After World War II (1945 –1973). *Evrei v Daugavpilsē* = *Jews in Daugavpils*. Daugavpils, 2011. – pp. 22–30. B. Volkovich studied the history of Daugavpils Jewish community for many years. In

2013, when the given research was carried out, Volkovich passed away; he is buried in the Daugavpils Jewish cemetery.

⁹ Regional State Archive of Daugavpils Fund 202, Inventory 6, File 59, pp. 125–126.

¹⁰ At present, there is no plan of the Communal cemetery. The cemetery workers have an approximate system of cemetery division into specific land sites. The central alley, which leads from the entry to the chapel dividing the territory of the cemetery into the right and left parts, serves as a common direction sign.

¹¹ By 'prestigious' is meant a convenient location rather than social differentiation here.

¹² Yosef Rozin (Rogatchover Gaon) (1858 – 1936), great rabbi and Talmudic scholar. From 1889 he served as rabbi to the Hasidic community of Daugavpils.

¹³ Meir Simcha Katz-Kagan (1843 – 1926), one of the most known rabbis in Latvia. Several stories are connected with his name; one of the most known is a story that tells about a wise man, whose prayers helped to avoid the flood of the year 1922.

¹⁴ Filippova S. Kladbishhe kak simvolicheskoe prostranstvo social'noj stratifikacii = Cemetery as a Symbolic space of social stratification. *Zhurnal sociologii i social'noj antropologii = Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* Volume XII, No 4, 2009. – pp. 80–96.

¹⁵ Nosonovskij M. «Zavjazannye v uzle zhizni»: k pojetike evrejskij jepitafij = 'Bound in the Bundle of Life': On the Poetics of Jewish Epitaphs. *Zametki po evrejskoj istorii = Jewish History Notes* September 5 (No 19), 2002. <http://www.berkovich-zametki.com/Nomer19/MN18.htm> (accessed 2013).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The author of the paper is very grateful to the director of the museum 'Jews in Latvia', Ilya Lensky, for his assistance in translating the inscriptions from Yiddish and Hebrew.

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**RESEARCH OF NECROPOLISES
IN WESTERN BELARUS**

Albina Semenchuk

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH OF NECROPOLISES IN MODERN POLISH AND BELARUSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Summary

Among the closest neighbours of Belarusians, Polish science, especially its branches (archaeology, cultural anthropology, ethnology, sociolinguistics and others), has the richest experience in the research of burial sites. Each of these disciplines has its own huge history of research and literature on the subject. In Polish historiography, there are several specialized publishing issues, devoted to the study of death – thanatology. These are Tanatos, Funeralia Lednickie compendia, which have been being published for more than 15 years, and the monographs by Jacek Kolbuszewski, Arkadiusz Kalinowski and others. In Poland, scholars traditionally conduct inventories of the necropolises not only in their own country, but also in Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, i.e. in the territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Belarusian science is taking the very first steps in the research of necropolises. Small-scale studies are devoted to the cemeteries in the town of Navahrudak, in the village of Pleban, and to Hrodna Catholic and Orthodox necropolises. Belarus is a polyconfessional country, that is why all the research studies of necropolises are related in some way to the cultural and historical traditions of the national and social groups residing in it. In the past, the population of Belarus professed the Uniate religion as well. At present, the Catholic and Jewish cemeteries in Belarus together with the national memorial in Kuropaty, where tens of thousands victims of Stalinist repression are buried, have been extensively studied. Further research in the field of Belarusian thanatology is not possible without drawing on the experience of European, especially Polish, scientists.

Key words: cemetery, necropolis, thanatology, cultural anthropology

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According to a widely spread belief, cemetery is a place, where the body of a dead person or the remains of a body after cremation are buried in individual or collective graves (this is a secular point of view). Initially, cemeteries appeared in connection with the cult of the memory of the dead and the belief about the afterlife. Since prehistoric times the idea of cemeteries has been rooted in the religious ideas of people. Arkadiusz Kalinovsky, Catholic priest, points out the main functions of cemeteries: 1) creation of a respectable peaceful and quiet gravesite, where it is possible to perform religious ceremonies in accordance with the traditions of the professed religion, 2) protection against profanation of the places of final resting and 3) provision of sanitation norms.¹

From a terminological point of view, 'cemetery' is an institutionally designed spatial segment used for burials, organized in accordance with certain rules that are connected with the ritualized forms of burial of the dead and the existing cultural tradition to

preserve the memory of them.² Thus, cemetery is both a sacral place and a semantic system, a 'text of culture'.

In the present paper, the research methodologies for the investigation of Christian cemeteries in the Polish and Belarusian humanities are being analysed. Jewish or Muslim cemeteries were not the subject of our special historiographical interest. They require separate consideration; therefore information about these cemeteries appears as supplementary in compendiums devoted to the funeral traditions of Christians.

In Poland, modern thanatology (the scientific study of the death) is seen as consisting of several parts, each of which has its own subject and sources for research. Among its all possible manifestations we are interested in burial sites. But even with such a significant narrowing in the themes to be studied the research field still remains very broad. It should be noted that the Polish humanities have been concerned about burial sites for a long time and has accumulated a lot of experience in this research.

A huge range of burial practices among all humankind and different civilizations and epochs is considered in an annually published compendium of conference materials: *Problemy współczesnej tanatologii. Medycyna – antropologia kultury – humanistyka*. In 1997, the first conference proceedings were introduced, and in 2012, the sixth volume was published. Jacek Kolbuszewski, the professor of Wrocław University, is an ideological inspirer and organizer of these scientific events. He is also an editor of all the volumes of the aforementioned issue and the leading researcher of the Polish necropolises as semantic systems, culturological objects, spaces of historical and national memory, literary texts.³

Polish investigations of death studies were not pioneers in the sphere of cultural anthropology, they base their work on the studies carried out by French scholars in particular. The death-issues became popular after the publishing of the book *The Hour of Our Death* (*L'homme devant la mort*) by the famous French historian Philippe Aries (translation in Polish – 1989; translation in Russian – 1992) in 1977; and after the Polish edition of another work by the French scholar Louis-Vincent Thomas *The Corpse. From Biology to Anthropology* (1991) and his *The Anthropology of Death* (1993). Therefore, it was no coincidence that the idea to hold cyclical conferences entitled *Tanatos*, which, by the way, started after All Saints' Day (November 1) in the town of Karpacz in the Polish Karkonosze Mountains, emerged.

In Polish culture (as well as in the culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in general until the end of its existence), the theme of death has a vast variety of different and original manifestations, for example, *portret trumienny* (a coffin portrait), *ars bene moriendi*, epitaphs, finally, the works of contemporary cinematography (in one of his films *Life as a Fatal Sexually Transmitted Disease*, the well-known Polish film director Krzysztof Zanussi approaches the issues of thanatology). In conference materials *Problems of Modern Thanatology*, there is also a consideration of the issues related to death in primitive societies; in ancient India and modern Hinduism; beliefs and practices in New Guinea; Ghana and the Republic of Congo. Some articles are devoted to the funerary rites of the Caribbean Indians in Northern Amazonia. There is a consideration of better studied issues of death and funerals of Celts or ancient Romans. Yet the greatest part of the materials of the sixteen compendiums of *Tanatos* is devoted to the territories of Poland and its neighbouring countries.

Besides the problems of cultural anthropology as such, in *Tanatos* compendiums, the issues of broadly understood humanistic studies, from philosophy to jurisprudence, are considered. In *Tanatos*, the issues of death and eschatology found in the works by Arthur Schopenhauer, Sigmund Freud, Max Scheler, Tadeusz Kotarbinsky, and others are presented.

The issues of dying and death are addressed in various works of literature, especially in proverbs, fairy-tales, songs (folk and spiritual), funeral sermons and speeches, memories of the Gulag prisoners, diaries of dying men, stories and novels. In 2005, the death of Pope John Paul II before the eyes of the entire world and his funeral was an exceptional thanatological event. This fact was considered in the proceeding of IX Thanatological conference in the same year. In *Tanatos* compendiums, the works of art related to so-called 'pornography of death' were reflected and analysed, i. e. its exposure, focusing on the shock of the audience caused by brutal scenes of death that spill over to us from the screens of movie theatres, television and other media.

Another Polish multidisciplinary project directed to the research of thanatological issues is the cycle of conferences-seminars *Funeralia Lednickie*, held on a regular basis by Poznań Department of the Scientific Archaeological Society, the results of which are published in corresponding volumes of materials. In these volumes, both the problems and research methodologies and problems of interpretation of the collected material are considered. The themes of the future publication subjects are self-explanatory: *Spotkanie 2. Czarownice; Spotkanie 4. Popół i kość; Spotkanie 5. Kobieta, śmierć, mężczyzna; Spotkanie 6. Dusza maluczka, a strata ogromna; Spotkanie 7. Do, ut des – dar, pochówek, tradycja; Spotkanie 8. Starość, wiek, spełnienie; Spotkanie 9. Środowisko pośmiertne człowieka; Spotkanie 10. Epidemje, klęski, wojny; Spotkanie 11. Metody, źródła, dokumentacja; Spotkanie 12. Tak więc po owocach poznać ich; Spotkanie 13. Kim jesteś człowieku?; Spotkanie 14. Obcy; Spotkanie 15. Migracje.*

For the current investigation, the issues discussed in the 9th volume entitled *Post-mortem Environment of Man* (2007) are of the greatest importance.⁴ The authors and the organizers of the conference had asked the following questions: How can one reconstruct cultural necrostructure (cemeteries, graves, burial sites, accompanying objects, places of cremation and funeral feast, etc.)? What are (could possibly be) the burial grounds for their contemporaries and what role do they play nowadays, what are the research challenges and opportunities? What is a burial ground – just a place to bury the diseased, which nowadays are 'excavated and used' to study human settlements, or something greater?

Could it be seen as a space where in the two worlds of the past, the metaphysical and real one, meet? Do the researchers studying cemeteries and burial grounds nowadays know the concepts of their ancestors? Are they able to think in the same way as before or do they simply offer interpretations of the phenomena they have discovered? What is the direction of their interpretations? Does modern scientific reflection allow exploring something greater than just the remains of the material? Is it possible to interpret strange, unexplained phenomena? Finally, what research methods are applicable for the study of interpersonal, population, cross-cultural communication reflected in thanatology? These are just some of the issues that arise while researching an ancient necropolis. In fact, modern cultural anthropology suggests a much wider range of research objectives

aimed at the breadth and depth of the object of research, which is the burial rite and funerary monuments.

Jacek Kolbuszewski, the professor of Wrocław University, who is the forefather of Polish thanatology, is still considered to be the leading researcher of necropolises. His works in one way or another are approached by younger researchers of the issue. His monograph *Cemeteries* that offers a comprehensive research of burial grounds considering them primarily as places of historical and national memory, has become a classical one.⁵ The title of the first chapter *Ojczyzna to ziemia i groby* quotes the words that are ascribed to Ferdinand Foch, French marshal: *Motherland is the land and the graves. Nation, who has lost its memory, will lose its life*. It is no accident that the book begins with the introduction of the characteristics of cemeteries, which have not only Polish, but also pan-European significance. Polish cemeteries are the evidences of a dramatic inter-weaving of the collective destiny of the Poles and the history of the human kind. In the Polish land, there are graves of thousands of victims of crimes against humanity. They show history in a dramatic way: these are Oswiecim / *Auschwitz*-Birkenau, Majdanek, Belzec.

The mass graves at Kurapaty in the north-east of Minsk can serve as an example of mass graves in the territory of Belarus. In the period July 6 – 15, 1988, on the initiative of the Prosecutor's Office of the BSSR an archaeological research was carried out by the specialists of the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, led by Zianon Pazniak. As a result, the mass graves of the executed in the late 1930s and the early 1940s were discovered.⁶ For the time being, the precise number of victims remains unknown and, according to various estimations, may range from 7.000 to 250 thousand people.

As it has already been mentioned, the most productive approach to the research of burial sites is a **cultural-anthropological approach**. Its theories and methodologies are discussed in several articles of a scientific compendium *Miasto i sacrum*, edited by Maciej Kowalewski and Anna Małgorzata Królikowska⁷.

The article by Barbara Lewicka from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Silesia in Katowice⁸ shows that, in the life of a modern town, urban necropolises perform specific functions; they have their own infrastructure and bear socio-cultural significance. In an inhomogeneous urban space, different parts of a town play specific roles, acquire different symbolism. In a complex urban life, people use certain mental schemes, which allow ordering a variety of motivational moments generated by the given place. Thus, for a believer there are consecrated and unconsecrated places. Following Kolbuszewski, Lewicka singles out three phases in the functioning of the space of the dead both in Polish culture and in Pan-European one in general:

- 1) archetypal – it is an extremely lengthy period of the formation and maturation of pre-Christian culture; At that time graves could be placed randomly and chaotically;
- 2) the period of 'triumphing death' or 'expected death' – it started in the 10th century A. D. and continued over the next eight centuries. The cemeteries of this period were typically located nearby a temple or inside it. There were usually mass graves;
- 3) the 18th – 19th century onwards – the phase, which is still continuing nowadays. It is a phase of sublimation of the process of dying, perceived in romantic

categories of 'death of another', death that takes away the loved ones bringing the pain that can be relieved by a monument as a memory of the deceased. Necropolises became a mirror of the social reality of the period marked by the conquest of the rights and freedoms of citizens, by democracy and triumph of individuality; thus, cemeteries reflected the right to have a separate gravestone, a grave with a private individual epitaph.

Aleksandra Pilarczyk, a researcher from Szczecin, is interested in a close issue of *weathering of 'sacrum'*, i. e. a process of transition of the space of old necropolises from the sphere of 'sacrum' into the one of 'profanum'.⁹ The research studies were conducted on the basis of the cemeteries in Szczecin, Wrocław, Kraków, Hamburg, etc. The researcher concludes that old cemeteries are an evidence of the lives of many generations, a document of history. Therefore, in addition to sacral value, old cemeteries also maintain historical and cultural values; thereby they can be considered as cultural monuments, valuable state-protected objects. These features make cemeteries attractive tourist sites, which can be visited with the aesthetic and informative aims. However, as a result of this function, cemeteries also lose their sacral value and become a place of 'profanum'. *Weathering of 'sacrum'* also happens as a result of natural processes of aging and decay of material objects in a cemetery. Over time social, historical and cultural changes make it difficult for us to understand the value and symbolism of the things that were close and clear to our ancestors.

Anna Krolikowska, a sociologist of Szczecin University, has devoted her paper published in a compendium *Town and Sacrum (Miasto i sacrum)* to similar issues.¹⁰ In her opinion, a cemetery is an image of our attitude to the deceased, to the ancestors.

For this reason a cemetery is viewed as a space meant for the meetings of the living and the dead. At first sight, a sociologist has nothing to do in the place, which is not marked by the presence of living people with their relationships and problems. However, as it turns out people bring their problems to the space devoted to the deceased. For example, it seems that a cemetery is a space where time has stopped. However, in the chapter *Cemetery and Time* Krolikowska explains that in fact, the 'eternal existence' of cemeteries should be ensured by the interest of the living ones to the memory of the dead and to death as such. Nevertheless, the cases of mercantile attitude to the gravesites, grave trade, destruction of graves, the maintenance of which has not been paid by the family, etc. have been increasingly observed. Once again, the author of the article emphasizes that cemeteries are 'texts of culture', from which it is possible to read a sociological sense. How much of *sacrum*, and how much of *profanum* is in it? This volume depends exactly on the degree of the respect and knowledge of religious dogma expressed by a certain person, on the traditions he is brought up in. The existence of places of remembrance and their cultivation is conditioned by the presence of descendants and a family. However, the key issue of cultural anthropology is as follows: how much are the dead needed by the living? The secularization of life, a belief that death is just a biological phenomenon, an unambiguous end of life, reduces the tendency of being responsible for the ancestors' final resting place, weakening their 'social role'.

The text by Jan Jagielski *Cemeteries and Gravestones as Historical Source* is of methodological character.¹¹ Cemeteries are authentic and well-preserved monuments of peoples and ethno-religious groups. The author demonstrates possible ways in the

research of cemetery using the Jewish cemeteries in the region of Warmia and Masuria and in Podlasie as an example: first, the demographics and statistics in the region should be studied; then, through the history of settlements and religious communities one should move to the topography and urban changes of a specific settlement. Having started to study the cemeteries as such, the author suggests the following study scheme:

- 1) to determine the modern localization of a cemetery and to relate it to the historical urban affairs;
- 2) research of cemeteries is connected with religious rituals that are reflected on gravestones, epitaphs, the very grave location system (the more important dead were buried in more prestigious places);
- 3) direct examination of the material objects that are located within the given space. Adhering to the abovementioned principles, a researcher can obtain important information on the chronology and socio- and ethno-cultural processes in a particular region.

Igor Borkowski drew his attention to the linkage among the local communities that erect gravestones to their members in a particular cemetery and, thereby, demonstrate their ethnic, national and cultural identity¹². In the article, it is noted that from the 18th century, when cemeteries no longer were located nearby the temples of a town, the very paradigm of their existence changed. These were not sacral places any more (a church and its precincts), but a fenced territory, remote from human habitations, where the dead were buried and their memory, if possible, was perpetuated. Moreover, the rich and the poor, aristocrats and rootless plebeians could be placed close to each other. The elitism of a cemetery within a temple or near it was changed by the elitism of individual gravestones of the dead from a specific local community. At first, this principle was implemented by the members of Evangelical communities, later – by the Catholic and the Orthodox. These changes, which separated the space of the living from the one of the dead, had to connect a cemetery and its space with certain communities, joining its members together. Wherever some cultural elements distinguish a specific community from a homogeneous semiotic environment, the space, where only the members meet, turns into a place, where besides the theological, moral, eschatological ideas there are patriotic, national, ethnic ideas as well. In his article, I. Borkowski showed the connections between the language, which we find in epitaphs, and national identity using the examples of cemeteries and communities from a mono-national territory and a territory of multi-ethnic groups, that both have been living there for ages and have been embedded into the mono-ethnic environment of other ethnic groups.

The author of the article compared the cemetery in Warsaw Powonki (a relatively mono-ethnic territory) and multi-ethnic Hrodna Fara's Cemetery, Vilnius Rossa Cemetery and Lviv Lychakiv Cemetery.

We should add that the comparison of these four cemeteries shows the significance of Hrodna Catholic necropolis for the history of culture not only of Belarus, but also of the whole of Eastern Europe. Its typological similarity with the most famous necropolises, which is recognized by experts, allows to consider the memorial specificity and huge cultural importance of the given object. A monograph *Fara's Cemetery in Hrodna 1792 – 1939* by the researchers from Krakow, Jacek Rozmus and Jerzy Gordziejew, is devoted to it.¹³ The uniqueness of the situation in Hrodna comes from the topographic closeness

of two cemeteries: the Catholic cemetery and the Orthodox one. In her turn, Valentina Cherepica devoted her book to the Orthodox cemetery *Hrodna Orthodox Necropolis (from Ancient Times till the Beginning of the 20th Century)*.¹⁴

In the Polish cultural-anthropological and ethnological science at the turn of the 20th – 21st centuries, the research studies of some cemeteries have been conducted directly from the territory of Belarus. These studies resulted in the chapter of the monograph by Justyna Straczuk *Śmierć-pamięć-wspólnota. O wiejskich cmentarzach na pograniczu kulturowym*¹⁵ and in the article by Dagnosław Demski 'Najważniejsze, żeby pamiętać...'. *Cmentarz jako źródło do badań tożsamości zbiorowej mieszkańców wsi na Białorusi i ich wyobrażeń na temat śmierci*¹⁶.

At first, Straczuk analyses the space of village cemeteries, which show certain elements of the reality of borderline and the characteristic features of peasant memory and the changes that have taken place in it during the last hundred years. According to the researcher, the space of cemeteries is also a place that reflects the social structure of a village very well: the organization into family groups demonstrates the existence of religious borders (division into Catholic and Orthodox cemeteries) and, on the other hand, their violation (persons of other religions are buried because of non-religious reasons – family, local). The study of the infrastructure of cemeteries (monuments and inscriptions, mixed alphabets, bilingual versions of names and surnames) once again convinced Straczuk in cultural ambivalence, interpenetration and inseparability of the reality of borderline and a phenomenon of cross-border culture¹⁷.

A village parish Catholic cemetery in Naliboki (Stowbtsy region, Minsk district) was the object of the research conducted by Demski. The Polish ethnologist drew his attention mainly to the changes of the identity (national, religious, local) of the rural population during the last 166 years, which could be observed on the basis of the inscriptions on the gravestones of the local cemetery. The local population surveys and some parish registers of the 19th century were used as an additional source of information. The main conclusion arrived at by the author is that the cultural and national identity of the Catholic population of the parish Naliboki was greatly influenced by specific political changes, especially the ones of the 20th century.

Recently, a cultural – anthropological approach in the research of cemeteries has been being observed in Belarusian ethnology. Vladimir Lobach devoted one of his articles to the symbolic status and ritual functions of rural cemeteries in the modern Belarusian folk culture in the upper Berezina River and Viliya River.¹⁸ Sergey Gruntov uses semantic approach as a methodological basis of his research of cemeteries, funeral traditions and rituals of the Belarusians from the end of the 19th century to the contemporary times¹⁹. In 2011, he defended his thesis *Sjemantyka mjemaryjal'nyh pomnikaw bjelarusaw kanca XVIII – pachatku XXI stagoddzja* for the Candidate's Degree.²⁰

Analysing rich literature on thanatological research studies in the Polish and Belarusian humanities it can be concluded that, in the bibliography, there dominate works on the **history** of specific cemeteries, which can be well-known and less-significant, urban, local, rural, Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The geography and the typology of the researched cemeteries are so wide that a full analysis is possible only in a special monographic research study. In the present article, we shall confine ourselves to the books and articles devoted to the necropolises of the Polish-Belarusian border regions.

In his article *Cemetery as a Source of the Study of Urban Elites (case of Bielsk Podlaski)*²¹, Zbigniew Romaniuk underlines that urban necropolises continue to be a poorly studied source for the history of some localities. One of the most interesting urban necropolises of the Podlaski region is a cemetery in Bielsk Podlaski, as it has a multicultural and multi-confessional character. The author of the article collected the oldest epitaphs from the 1840s till 1939. Out of 15.000 graves that have remained until today only some percentage make up the burials before World War II. Z. Romaniuk has analysed 100 gravestones, among which about 50 gravestones are Roman-Catholic, more than 40 – Orthodox (Uniate gravestones have not remained) and 4 – Protestant. During the analysis, the researcher's attention was paid to the historical data remained on the monuments, their artistic merits and epitaphs that could be a testimony to the affiliation of the deceased to the elites of the town. It is noted that, in the inscriptions, indications of appointed positions or responsibilities are rare to be found. Therefore, in order to find out the occupation and the profession of the deceased, the historian conducted archival research on the basis of the lists of the officials, records of the church books of the dead and other acts. Romaniuk stresses that the cemetery in Bielsk is a typical confessional necropolis; he calls it "ecumenical necropolis".

In a book of the same series *Small Towns*, an article by a priest, Adam Szot, is published – *Cemetery of the Saint Roch in Zabłudow*.²² This area is very significant for the history and culture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Once it belonged to the aristocratic Chodkiewicz family, who are known as the founders and patrons of the monastery in Supraśl.

The author shows that the cemetery is located around the church; it appeared since the formation of the parish in the 16th century, at the end of the 18th century the dead were buried inside the church as well. In the beginning of the 19th century, services were started to be held in the former Protestant church that had been rebuilt into a Catholic church; as a result a new cemetery spread around the church. The new cemetery destroyed the Protestant one, which had existed since the middle of the 16th century; thus, the source materials to research the ethno-cultural and religious specificity of the town of Zabłudow and the Podlaski region were reduced.

The book by Rozmus and Gordziejew *Fara's Cemetery in Hrodna 1792 – 1939* is a historical and culturological research of the oldest Catholic cemetery in Hrodna.²³ The authors intended to conduct a comprehensive research study of the given necropolis. First, there was presented a brief history of the creation and formation of the cemetery at the end of the 18th century up to the moment, when the cemetery was closed by the town authorities in the mid-1970s. The past of the cemetery chapel and the most expressive gravestones are considered against this background. The materials collected by the researchers from Krakow in Fara's cemetery make it possible to reconstruct the ethnic composition of the Catholic population in Hrodna in 1792 – 1939. Poles, Belarusians, Lithuanians, French, Germans, Austrians, Italians and even Czechs are buried here.

If in the cultural-anthropological and methodological respect the research of cemeteries in Belarus have so far had modest results, then the situation with the quality of historical research studies is somewhat better. In his historiographical article, Nikolai Gaiba presented the main research studies on the historical studies of necropolises in Belarus in the 20th century, taking into account both the works produced in Belarus and

in other countries (Poland and Russia). The author considered predominately the studies devoted to Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish and Tatar urban and parochial cemeteries²⁴.

The monograph *Hrodna Orthodox Necropolis (from Ancient Times till the Beginning of the 20th Century* by Cherepica, stands out among few books on the history of cemeteries.²⁵

This book, for the first time, contains a comprehensive study of the history of all Orthodox cemeteries in Hrodna. The structure and the presentation of the material of this book are very similar to the monograph by Rozmus and Gordziejew, devoted to Hrodna Catholic cemetery. It should be noted that both cemeteries are located opposite to each other, creating a single memorial space.

Gajba's brochure is devoted to the history of necropolises in one of the oldest cities of Belarus – Navahrudak.²⁶ The research study is divided into two parts: the first part is a brief historical sketch about Navahrudak cemeteries; the second one is devoted to the old Christian necropolis of the city. The author considers the location and layout of the cemeteries, the architecture of the chapels and gravestones, describes the crosses and fences, analyzes the epitaphs.

The most complete comprehensive study of a rural Catholic cemetery was conducted in 2007, in the village of Pleban, Maladzyechna district, Minsk region.²⁷ This small book consists of two parts: an analytical part (a brief history of the area, the church and the cemetery), and a catalogue of the graves. The catalogue includes several hundreds of gravestone inscriptions out of 600 that have remained.

From among a variety of themes in the compendiums *Tanatos* by the researchers of the Belarusian and Polish gravestone inscriptions, the articles by Kristina Syrnicka, a Lithuanian sociolinguist of Polish origin, can be of particular interest.²⁸ The author investigated inscriptions in Polish engraved on the crosses and gravestones in the ethnic Belarusian and Lithuanian lands. She claims that the Polish language in our territories appears in two forms – a regional dialect and a literary language; she also notes the linguistic peculiarities of the so-called 'polszczyzną kresową', which can be found in various cemeteries of the Polish – Belarusian – Lithuanian border.

The last aspect to be considered is an inventorisation and catalogisation of the cemeteries in the territory of Belarus. The expedition led by Dariusz Śladecki from Lublin, carried out the aforementioned activities in the period from 1989 until 2000.²⁹

As a result Catholic and mixed Orthodox-Catholic cemeteries in Navahrudak, Beniakoni (Voronovsky district), Mir, Voroncha (Kareličy district), Pinsk, Lahiśyn (Pinsk district) were best studied. In total, there were inventoried about 50 Christian and 29 Jewish cemeteries. The Jewish cemeteries were studied by a group led by Paweł Sygowski.³⁰ The inventarisation of another Jewish cemetery was carried out by a joint Moscow – Hrodna expedition in the village of Zheludok (Ščučyn district).³¹

In 2007 – 2008, in Poland there were published three catalogues devoted to the historical cemeteries remained in the western regions of Belarus:

A. Lewkowska, J. Lewkowski, W. Walczak. *Zabytkowe cmentarze na Kresach Wschodnich Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Wschodnie powiaty dawnego województwa białostockiego (obecnie na terenie Białorusi)*, Warszawa 2007; A. Lewkowska, J. Lewkowski, W. Walczak. *Zabytkowe cmentarze na Kresach Wschodnich Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Województwo wileńskie na obszarze Republiki Białoruś*, Warszawa 2007; A. Lew-

kowska, J. Lewkowski, W. Walczak. *Zabytkowe cmentarze na Kresach Wschodnich drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Województwo Nowogródskie, Warszawa 2008.*

The compilers primarily focused on the Catholic cemeteries located separately or near by a church, and the burial places of the participants of the 1863 – 1864 uprising, World War I, the Polish – Soviet war of 1920, the partisans of *Armija Krajeva* in 1940 – 1945. In the catalogues, the material is presented in the following way: a brief description of the history of each settlement, in which a cemetery or a burial place is located, a map of the area and the layout of the cemetery, selected gravestone inscriptions and a great number of the photos of the headstones. The Tatar and Jewish cemeteries were also partially mentioned on the pages of the given editions. With respect to the Orthodox cemeteries, then, as we understand, the compilers left their cataloguisation to the Belarusian researchers.

¹ Kalinowski A., ks. *Cmentarze: ewolucja przepisów w kościelnym ustawodawstwie kodeksowym XX wieku*. Pelpin: Benedyctinum, 2001. – p. 16.

² Kolbuszewski J. *Cmentarze*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996. – p. 33.

³ Kolbuszewski J. *Wiersze z cmentarza. O współczesnej epigrafice wierszowanej*. Wrocław, 1985; Kolbuszewski J. *Cmentarze*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996.

⁴ Dzieduszycki W., Wrzesiński J. (eds.) *Rodowisko pośmiertne człowieka. Funeralia Lednickie*. Spotkanie 9. Poznań, 2007.

⁵ Kolbuszewski J. *Cmentarze*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996.

⁶ Paz'njak Z., Shmygaljow Ja., Kryval'cevic M., Iow A. *Kurapaty*. Minsk: Tehnaljogija, 1994; Tarnavskij G., Sobolev V., Gorelik E. *Kuropy: sledstvie prodolzhaetsja*. Moskva: Juridicheskaja literatura, 1990.

⁷ Kowalewski M., Królikowska A. M. (eds.) *Miasto i sacrum*. Kraków, 2011.

⁸ Lewicka B. *Cmentarze – mejskie enklawy Sacrum*. Kowalewski M., Królikowska A. M. (eds.) *Miasto i sacrum*. Kraków, 2011. – pp. 183–195.

⁹ Pilarczyk A. “Wietrzenie Sacrum”. *Process przechodzenia przestrzeni dawnych cmentarzy od sfery Sacrum do sfery Profanum*. Kowalewski M., Królikowska A. M. (eds.) *Miasto i sacrum*. Kraków, 2011. – pp. 196–211.

¹⁰ Królikowska A. M. *Cmentarz – obraz stosunku do zmarłych, stosunku do przodków*. Kowalewski M., Królikowska A. M. (eds.) *Miasto i sacrum*. Kraków, 2011. – pp. 211–222.

¹¹ Jagielski J. *Cmentarze i nagrobki jako źródło historyczne*. Traby E., Traby R. (eds.) *Tematy żydowskie*. Olsztyn, 1999. – pp. 286–300.

¹² Borkowski I. *Przestrzeń cmentarza – wybór języka – manifestacja kultury*. Język inskrypcji nagrobnych jako dowód przynależności narodowej i kulturowej lokalnej wspólnoty. *Problemy współczesnej tanatologii*. Medycyna – jantropologia kultury – humanistyka. Tom V. Wrocław, 2001. – pp. 389–398.

¹³ Rozmus J., Gordziejew J. *Cmentarz farny w Grodnie 1792 – 1939*. Kraków, 1999.

¹⁴ Cherepica V. N. *Grodenskij Pravoslavnyj nekropol' (s drevnejshih vremen do nachala 20 veka)*. Hrodna: GrGU, 2001.

¹⁵ Straczuk J. *Cmentarz i stół. Pogranicze prawosławno-katolickie w Polsce i na Białorusi*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006; Straczuk J. *Śmierć-pamięć-wspólnota. O wiejskich cmentarzach na pograniczu kulturowym*. Kurczewska J. (ed.) *Oblicza lokalności. Tradycja i współczesność*. Warszawa, 2004. – pp. 228–266.

¹⁶ Demski D. “Najważniejsze, żeby pamiętać...”. *Cmentarz jako źródło do badań tożsamości zbiorowej mieszkańców wsi na Białorusi i ich wyobrażeń na temat śmierci*. *Etnografia Polska* T. XLI. Z. 1–2. – pp. 79–98.

¹⁷ Straczuk J. *Cmentarz i stół. Pogranicze prawosławno-katolickie w Polsce i na Białorusi*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006. – pp. 9–10, 143–144.

- ¹⁸ Lobach U. A. Simvalichny status i rytual'nyja funkcyi mogilak u bjelaruskaj narodnaj kul'tury vjarhowjaj Bjareziny i Vilii XX – pachatku XXI stagoddzja. *Vestnik Polockogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* No 1. Serija A. Gumanitarne nauki, 2008. – pp. 71–82.
- ¹⁹ Gruntov S. V. Pamjat' i zabvenie v prostranstvennoj perspektive: k funkcional'nomu analizu semantiki belorusskich tradicionnyh kladbishh. *Kobrinskij M. E. (ed.) Problemy metodologii sociogumanitarnogo poznaniya: dialektika i germenevtika: materialy Mezhdunarodnogo kollokviuma*, 14 maja 2009 g. Minsk, 2009. – pp. 186–188; Gruntow S. U. Mogilki jak gorad: kul'turalagichny analiz mjetafary na prykladzje garadow i mogilak zahodnjaj Bjelarusi (kanjec XVIII – XX stst.). *Garady Bjelarusi w kantekscje palityki, ekanomiki, kul'tury: zbornik navukovyh artykulaw*. Grodna: GrDU, 2007. – pp. 196–204.
- ²⁰ Gruntow S. U. *Sjemantyka mjemaryjal'nych pomnikaw bjelarusaw kanca XVIII – pachatku XXI stagoddzja* [tekst]: awtaref. dys. ... kand. gist. navuk: (07.00.07). In-t mastactvaznawstva, etnagrafii i fal'kloru imja K. Krapivy Nac. akad. navuk Bjelarusi, Minsk, 2011.
- ²¹ Romaniuk Z. Cmentarz jako źródło do badań nad elitami miast, na przykładzie Bielska Podlaskiego. *Zemł E. (ed.) Małe miasta: Elity*. Acta Collegii Suprasliensis. Tom VI. Supraśl, 2005. – pp. 433–447.
- ²² Szot A., ks. Cmentarz św. Rocha w Zabłudowie. *Zemło M., Dobrowolski R. (eds.) Małe miasta: Zabytki. I Acta Collegii Suprasliensis*. Tom XII. Lublin – Supraśl, 2009. – pp. 169–185.
- ²³ Rozmus J., Gordziejew J. *Cmentarz farny w Grodnie 1792 – 1939*. Krakow, 1999.
- ²⁴ Gajba M. P. Gistarychnyja mogilki Bjelarusi: gistaryjagrafija i vopyt dasljedavannja temy. *Gistaryjagrafija i krynicy pa gistoryi garadow i procesaw urbanizacyi w Bjelarusi: zbornik navukovyh artykulaw*. Grodna: GrGU, 2009. – pp. 367–373.
- ²⁵ Cherepica V. N. *Grodenskij Pravoslavnyj nekropol' (s drevnejshih vremen do nachala 20 veka)*. Hrodna: GrGU, 2001.
- ²⁶ Gajba M. *Mogilki i pahavanni w Navagrudku*. Minsk: Pjeito, 2000.
- ²⁷ Sjamashka V. Na "panskih" mogilkah Pljaban. Układal'nik V. Sjamashka. Minsk: Mjedysont, 2013.
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Sergey Omelko, Evgeny Mahnach

METHODS AND SOURCES OF RESEARCH IN URBAN NECROPOLISES (CASE OF HRODNA)

Summary

The research studies on the history of the development of necropolises demonstrate that the concepts related to them are closely connected with people's religious beliefs. Belief in God, Christ gives people the belief in resurrection. Funeral turns out to be a symbol that distinguishes man from the animal world. At present, representatives of various religious confessions should address a complex issue – what type of burial to choose (cremation or traditional burial). During the Soviet period, an established tradition of burials (rituals) was gradually lost; there appeared some peculiarities connected with perpetuation of memory in cemeteries. And it originated under the influence of not only cultural and religious factors, but of social and political factors as well.

Key words: necropolis, cemetery, burial site, sarcophagus

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Urban necropolises are an integral part of the historical and cultural landscape of a town and they are closely connected with the material culture and spiritual life of its inhabitants. In the modern humanities, in order to reconstruct the evolution of funeral rite, as well as traditions and stages of the formation of sacred space an integrated method of analysis of archaeological, documentary, narrative and cartographic sources is being used. It allows for more comprehensive research of the history of the micro-region in a wide chronological range.

Rare medieval urban burial grounds have remained until the present days, while towns have been growing continuously. Accidental findings during construction work and archaeological excavations of the cultural layers of a town shape the mostly known information about urban gravesites.

Burial sites near temples have provided a lot of information, but, for the most part, they have been destroyed during reconstruction and repair work. In the city of Hrodna, the first burial sites were located around temples and in their undergrounds. Noteworthy among those is a burial place in the sanctuary of the temple of St. Boris and Gleb, where in 1513 there was buried the governor of Trock, Bogush Boguvitsinovich, who donated the village of Cheschevlyany to church. It was a big brick crypt chapel, later used for the burial of Princess Anne Golovin – Golitsyno, who died in 1784 (the gravestone), made in the main apse, in the central nave and in the central part of the underground. According to Bishop Joseph (Sokolov), in 1864 in the undergrounds, the remains of many human bones could be seen. They were preceded by the burials in the Lower and Upper churches, found during the archaeological excavations conducted in the 1930s.¹

According to the medieval ideas of the futility of earthly life no steps were taken to ensure that the memory of the deceased would be kept as long as possible (however, a tradition of monetary donations for a memorial service for the dead to be held was widely spread among the Szlachta and the richest town-dwellers). The Roman Council of 1059 prescribed the location of a cemetery around a temple at a distance of 60 steps. The bodies of the dead were not buried deep enough, being tightly piled up. They could be piled upon each other several dozen deep. Medieval coffins did not contain any inscriptions that in exceptional cases could be placed on the walls of churches. Not every grave had a cross.² A similar situation is observed in the parish cemeteries of Hrodna, when a high level of overcrowding, a state of neglect, the use of the land for the urban development, the increase in the number of graves due to epidemics and wars led to the situation, when there arose a question about the closure of the cemeteries and their relocation beyond the city borders. In 1782, Hrodna Fara's Catholic church was damaged by fire; what is more, the technical condition of the church left much to be desired. In 1783, it was decided to move the Fara's Catholic church into a vacated building of Jesuit church. Old cemetery existed until 1804.³



Picture 1. Hrodna Fara's Catholic church. Burial crypt. The coffin of an unknown. The 18th century. Photo from the archive of Sergey Omelk



Picture 2. Catholic cemetery in Hrodna. October 15, 2013. Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

In post-war years, most of the churches were closed and the buildings were used by various kinds of institutions⁴, for example, Bridgettine monastery in Hrodna was closed in 1950.⁵ The remains of those buried in the crypts of the former Church of the Annunciation were taken away to an unknown direction. Founded in 1634, it became the resting place of the family members of its founders, the richest town-dwellers. Judging by the bone remains, there were children's graves as well. These could be the remains of orphaned girls who were raised by the nuns. The basement area of the building of the church is divided into four parts, the first of which is at the main entrance into the church. The ceiling height is 2.5–3 m. Three other rooms have vaulted ceilings in the form of cylinders. They were opened during the research carried out by the eighth expedition of the State Art Museum of the BSSR in 1966. The leader of the expedition, Helen Aladova, recalls that the entrance into the crypt was completely filled with the rubbish: [...] *there, behind a row of mangled coffins, at the black damp wall, something similar to pictures could be seen* [...]⁶. At present, in the undergrounds, there is a museum exhibition.

Among the preserved in the temples monuments of sacred art there are rather valuable monuments of ancient art and culture, which, at the same time, are important sources for heraldry, genealogy and epigraphy. Unfortunately, they have been neglected for a long time. In addition, in some cases we can witness their direct destruction. This happened in all the parish churches of the city without any exception. To date, in the lateral nave of Hrodna Fara's (Jesuit) church, the funerary slab of Frantisek Doroshkevich Boufal has been preserved with an inscription in Latin: FRANCISKO DOROSZKIEWICZ BOUFFAŁŁ // VENATORI CURIAE M.D.LITH. 1773 – 1790 PRAE // FECTO WIERZBOVIENSI MARSCHALCO SOCOLS //CENSI COMMISSIONIS BONI ORDINIS GROD//NENSIS BENE MERITO PRAESIDI VIRO // CLARISSIMO HUMANISSIMO GRATA POSUIT PROLES A.D.MCMXIII.

It can be read as follows: *Frantisek Doroshkevich Boufal, court stalker of G[rand] D[uchy] of Lith[uania] 1773 – 1790, elder of Verzhby, marshal of nobility of Sokolka, commissar of the Commission on streamlining of Hrodna district, honourable man good and educated, is buried [here] by grateful descendants, the year 1913.*

Besides the inscription it is also important to mention the portrait of the deceased, made in the so-called 'Sarmatian' style: a bust portrait of Frantisek Doroshkevich Boufal in armour, with a ribbon of the Order of Saint Adam Boniecki:

*Frantisek, guard and scribe of the town of Hrodna 1766, assistant stolnik 1770, stolnik and elder of Verzhby, Lithuanian court stalker and a Commander of the Order of St. Stanislaus 1777. In 1776 and 1778, he was an elected ambassador to the Sejm. In 1786, he applied for the position of the elder of Hrodna, and in 1793 – Castellan of Hrodna (after Hrodna Voivodeship had been created). He belonged to the political party of the Lithuanian Court Treasurer, Antoni Tyzenhaus, and then of the Kossakowski. In 1913, his grandson Bronislaw received permission to place a memorial plank; though only in 1924 a table stored in the undergrounds of the church was embedded into the wall.*⁷

In the same period, the Psezdecki, the heirs of Count Tyzenhaus, get permission to place a marble monument devoted to their famous ancestor in the walls of the church (by Tomasz Dykas, Lviv sculptor). In the middle part of the monument, there is a bronze medallion with the image of Tyzenhaus and the inscription placed below the table:

ANTONI HR. TYZENHAUZ., STAROSTA GRODZIENSKI, PODSKARBI W. KS. L., UR. 1733 – 1785. MARJA Z HR. TYZENHAUZOW ALEKSANDROWA HR. PRZEZ-DZIECKA, SPELNIJAC WOLE OJCA I BRATA, POMNIK TEN WZNIOSŁA. At the base of the monument, there is a bronze gold-plated figure of a woman.

Among the gravestones of interest, there is one noteworthy monument devoted to Kazimir Micuta, Court Chamberlain of Hrodna, participant of the Northern War; in 1733, he took part in the elections of the King:

VRGITE ADIUDICI MORTUI ... UM DE DOM IECZNOŚCI POZNYM WIEKOM GROB OTWORZI ŻE GRODZIENSKI PODKOMORZY KAZIMIERZ NA WAHA-NOWIE MICUTA PO ZMARŁEY GŁOWIE TU NAZNACZYŁ PLAC POKOIU ZAWSZE W RADACH MĘŻNY W BOIU SWIADCZĄ DZIEŁA DZIAŁA GROTY IAKIEY W WOYSKU MAŻ OCHOTY ZA DWÓCH KRÓLÓW CNY WOIOWNIK DZIELNY ŻOŁNIERZ Y PUŁKOWNIK ZBROYNICH HUFCOW WRAZ Z ORĘŻE M WRAZ PRZY WIERZE SŁAWNYM MĘŻEM NA SEYM POSŁEM Z WOLNYM GŁOSEM W TRYBUNAŁACH PRAWDY ŁOSEM SDZIA ZAMKNAŁ WIEK ZRE-NICĄ Z KOŁŁATAIOW ŻYŁ KOTWICĄ IMIĘ SAMEY EUFROZYNA SŁAWĄ Y CNOTĄ HEROINA LEŻĄ W PARZE KTO IE MIJA PROSIM O ZDROWAŚ MARIA HOC CI US OBIIT MEN AO DIE ... 17... .. AM SSS TRIGA... UM... UPPEDI-TATUR HONORE.⁸



Picture 3. Hrodna Fara's Catholic church. Burial crypt. The coffin of Kazimir Micuta. The 18th century. Photo from the archive of Sergey Omelko

In the underground of the altar of the temple, in a separate room, there is Micuta's coffin. In the coffin, he lies dressed in a coat with a birch log under his head. The grave-stone, located next to the altar of St. Casimir, is decorated with the coats of arms and divided into two parts (in the left part, there is the Gozdawa coat of arms, in the right – a coat of arms is erased), the inscription in bronze letters has been badly damaged.

Ksendz Y. Muchinsky, Canon of Smolensk, was the initiator to open a cemetery outside the city. For this reason, the initial cross was established. Later, he Orthodox would be buried there. The Orthodox part of the cemetery, divided by the Cemetery Street, appears in the beginning of the 19th century.⁹

The origins of the parish cemetery in Zaneman suburb of the city are connected with the construction of a Franciscan monastery and a temple on the donations of Eustachius Kurcz, the elder of Upitë, and his wife, Suzanne (née Tyszkiewicz) in 1635. In 1697, a newly erected temple became a parish church. Over the next hundred years, the area around it became a parish cemetery. In the second half of the 1790s, the burials started to be made outside the city boundaries. For the first time at the Council of Trent, it was decided to keep registers of births and baptisms in all Catholic parishes.

Only almost 50 years later, in the countries of Western Europe (in 1614) and in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (in 1631) the rite of baptism appeared. They later began to appear regularly only in the second half of the 18th century. First, it was a financial interest aimed to obtain the highest possible income. There is no doubt that until the end of the 18th century a custom to bury the wealthiest deceased people in the undergrounds of a temple was widely spread. Less wealthy people were buried around the temples, at a location nearby. During epidemics, those who died because of the disease (and due to overcrowding in the cities) were buried outside the city boundaries. The need of such a type of gravesites was brought about by epidemic diseases. The plague that befell the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1708 – 1710, the epidemics of the 1850s and the early 1860s in the Hrodna region caused a substantial reduction in the number of parishioners up to 70%. By all means, this was reflected in the records kept in the parishes. In the 1880s in Hrodna Franciscan parish, which comprised the neighbourhood villages, a parish priest had to submit an application to the authorities to open a separate cemetery in Pyshki tract, where those who died of contagious diseases could be buried. However, he received a categorical refusal to his request. The oldest remained marked burial in the Franciscan parish cemetery is dated 1842. This grave belongs to Leokadia Kollontai, 7 years old, with an epitaph from the parents.

In 1854, with the donations from Jakov Rummel a chapel-shrine was built. In 1881, the City Council decided to extend the territory of the cemetery. Peter Stetskevich, abbot of Hrodna Franciscan monastery, notes:

The cemetery due to its long standing and small size is filled with the bodies of the dead so that there is a necessity to dig out almost fresh graves that corresponds neither to the Christian respect for the dead, nor to sanitary rules.¹⁰

It should be noted that in Pyshki tract there was the second military cemetery adjacent to the city area. The soldiers of Russian garrison, Catholics, were buried there.

From January 7 to December 18 of 1881, about 30 recruits, soldiers and non-commissioned officers of 101st Perm Infantry Regiment, 102nd Vyatka Infantry Regiment, 103rd Petrozavodsk Infantry Regiment and other units of Hrodna garrison, the parishioners of the Bernardine Church were buried in this cemetery. Among the major diseases resulted in death there were pneumonia, typhoid, pox, erysipelas, edema, purulent infections.¹¹

In the modern military cemetery on Belusha Street, among the oldest graves there are some graves of Orthodox soldiers. However, some representatives of other religions were buried there – one may see a shrine of Major-General Alexander Alexandrovich Russau (1843 – 1896), who was a Lutheran.¹² Presumably, the first graves appeared in the early 1880s (at that time it was Forshtadt Street).



Picture 4. Orthodox cemetery in Hrodna. October 3, 2013. Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

Durability of mental heritage in trans-boundary areas had a strong impact on the formation of certain categories that characterize nepotism, collectivism, pragmatism and social activity. However, the first definition rather accurately reflects (identifies) family ties. Public / state and private / family sectors delineation is clearly observed in the 2nd half of the 19th century, when the effects of the 1863 – 1864 uprising bring to an almost complete exodus from public life. It is a family and the life biography of some of its members that become an example for compensation in business development, in economic sphere. However, it helps to focus on attempts to understand the history, culture and one's own place in the complex social and political processes.¹³

This is reflected in sacred complexes that appear in parish cemeteries. Nikodem Kiersnowski, chairman of Hrodna Chamber of Civil Court, died in Druskieniki in 1881; he was buried in a companion crypt together with his 3-year-old grandson, Georgy, who died there as well (a nameless grave, it contains an inscription: Grob rodziny Kiersnowskich).

The noble Nikodem Ivanovich Kiersnowski died of inside inflammation on January 17, 1881 in the town of Druskieniki, received Holy Communion. The former Chairman of Hrodna Civil Chamber, widowed after the death of his wife Loiza née Pilecka. Has left behind his sons Ivan Kazimir and Genrik, and daughters Irena and Jelena, 87. His body was buried by the Chaplain of Druskieniki R.-C. Chapel, ksendz Joseph Majewski in Druskieniki R.-C. cemeteries on January 20, 1881.¹⁴

Their ashes rest next to other members of this family. Nepotism, which was particularly valued by the people, who had endured the years of exile for being involved into the uprising, is preserved there.

Druskininkai, founded as a state resort (in 1862, there was a discussion whether it could be transferred to private ownership), was 'colonized' by Hrodna dwellers in the 1830s – 1840s. Houses and villas for holidaymakers from different social classes were built there. However, the death and the resort could not accompany each other. Therefore, the grave of a famous poet, Jan Chechot, who died there in 1847, is located in the

village of Rotnitsa (a suburb nowadays). It was only later, in the 2nd half of the 19th century, when the shrines of the representatives of the local aristocracy appeared there (O'Brien de Lassi, Butowt-Andrzejkiewicz, De Nizo, Princess Massalsky, Erbstein, Krusenshtern, Kiersnovskis, Pilecki, Grudzinski, etc.).

The existing rules related to the procedures of burial and exhumation of bodies in forensic investigation required permission (presence) of the parish clergy. According to the circular of Wilno Roman-Catholic Spiritual Consistory of May 3, 1903, Ellert, Hrodna Dean, was in charge of the following:

Widespread instances of burial in catacombs and crypts are dangerous with regard to sanitary issues and that, in accordance with Article 712 of Medical bylaws, volume XIII, Chapter laws, published in 1892, the bodies of the dead should be buried in the specifically set cemeteries, so that the clergy, having preliminary agreed on burials not in accordance with the rules prescribed by the law, seek the consent of the local authorities.

In view of the aforementioned decision the Consistory proposes to make a resolution in the diocese that the clergy carrying out the burials of those dead in the cemetery catacombs and crypts under the churches each time requests for a permission of the local authorities.¹⁵

Changes in socio-political situation in the Russian Empire determined the character of burial ceremonies carried out in parish cemeteries. On March 13, 1905, baron Ropp, bishop of Wilno, invited Hrodna dean to make some commitments concerning the burials of the Orthodox in the Catholic cemeteries of Wilno diocese. It resulted in rather frequent disagreements and conflicts between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox clergies, which is why the Consistory was proposed to set some areas in all Roman-Catholic parish cemeteries meant for the burials of those, who according to the statute of the church, could not be buried in the common cemetery. For this reason, these specifically set areas were separated by a ditch or a fence and had a separate entrance.¹⁶

The very procedure of death registration had a well-defined structure and was unconditionally enforceable (in contrast with the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, when the priests often did not register death in the registers desiring to conceal a part of their earnings).¹⁷ Legal revisions of the registers of death required an unsworn examination of the circumstances of the case, when there was conducted an interview of the relatives of the deceased, engaged in the funeral arrangements, concerning when and where, from which illness he died, when, in what cemetery, by which ksendz he was buried, which class he belonged to, what his name, patronymic and surname were, whether he was single, married or widowed, how old he was, in which church he was a parishioner, who from his family he had left behind, i.e. his wife and children, and why an entry in the register of death had not been made on time. There was a decision made on the procedure of the investigation and the list of required documents.¹⁸

At present, there rises an issue of giving old cemeteries the status of state protected objects of historical and cultural heritage, with a possibility of their further use as tourist attractions, which at the same time would carry out spiritual-moral functions, acting as a link between generations. We can note their artistic value.¹⁹ However, it should not be forgotten that necropolises are not static objects, but a 'living' organism, which exists independently and can fade away into the past.

- ¹ Cherepica V. N. *Grodnenskiy pravoslavnyy nekropol' (s drevnejshih vremen do nachala XX veka)*. Grodno: GrGU, 2001. – p. 23, pp. 27–28.
- ² Skrok Z. *Wykopalska na pograniczu swiatow*. Warszawa: Nasza Ksiegarnia, 1988. – pp. 89–90.
- ³ Gardziejew Ju. *Magdeburgskaja Garodnja*. Garodnja-Vroclaw, 2008. – pp. 101–104.
- ⁴ By the decision of Hrodna City Executive Committee of 26 April, 1990 Bridgettine church was handed over to believers. On 13 September, 2008 in the undergrounds of the church, there was opened a permanent exhibition devoted to the history of the church; the preserved relics were displayed there.
- ⁵ Gremza A. Ekspozycja w kryptach kościoła Pobrygidzkiego w Grodnie. *Rocznik Grodziński* No 2, 2008. – pp. 135–142.
- ⁶ Paintings discovered there are from the first half of the 17th century. The findings were proved to be a part of the interior of the church, hidden during World War II. By 25 March, 1950 the remaining paintings and other objects were moved by the nuns to Bernardine church.
- ⁷ Gardziejew Ju. Materyjaly da gjenjealogii i epigrafiki u garadzjenskim farnym kasele. *Gerol'd Litherland* No 1–2, 2004. – pp. 27–29.
- ⁸ Jodkowski J. *Grodno*. Wilno, 1923. – pp. 104–105.
- ⁹ Rozmus J., Gordziejew J. *Cmentarz Farny w Grodnie. 1792 – 1939*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP, 1999. – pp. 9–15.
- ¹⁰ Gardziejew Ju. Z gistoryi pomnikau francishkanskaj parafii g. Grodna. *Krajaznauchyja zapiski* No 4, 1997. – pp. 66–78.
- ¹¹ *National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno*. F. 259. Op. 3. D. 1. Metrisheskie knigi o rodovshihshja, brakosochetavshihshja i umershih za 1881 g. – pp. 126 – 143.
- ¹² Cherepica V. N. *Grodnenskiy pravoslavnyy nekropol' (s drevnejshih vremen do nachala XX veka)*. Grodno: GrGU, 2001. – pp. 68–70.
- ¹³ Krysztofika K. (ed.) *Szlachcicowa I. Swoi i obey Orientacje mentalne a obraz kulturowo Innych na pograniczu*, in: *Pogranicza i multikulturalizm w warunkach Unii Europejskiej. Implikacje dla wschodniego pogranicza Polski*. T. 1. A. Sadowskiego. Bialystok, 2004. – pp. 279–300.
- ¹⁴ *National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno*. F. 259. Op. 3. D. 1. Vypisi metrisheskoj knigi Rimsko-katolicheskaj (prihodskoj cerkvi) Druskeniskaj kaplicy. Chast' tret'ja. Ob umershih s 1 janvarja po 31 dekabrya, 1881 g. – pp. 577–578.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. F. 886. Op. 3. D. 1. Cirkuljary Vilenskoj r. k. konsistorii. – p. 5.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. F. 886. Op. 1. D. 5. O predostavlenii nastojateljami kostelov grodnenskomu dekanu vedomostej o rodovshihshja, brakosochetavshihshja, o porjadke pogrebenija umershih katolicheskogo veroispovedanija i po drugim voprosam. – p. 60.
- ¹⁷ Kuklo C. *Rodzina w osimnastowiecznej Warszawie*. Bialystok, 1991. – pp. 142–143.
- ¹⁸ *National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno*. F. 886. Op. 3. D. 1. Cirkuljary Vilenskoj r.k. konsistorii. – p. 9.
- ¹⁹ Kulajchuk S. Nekropol' kak jekskursionnyj ob'ekt. *Borko A. I. (ed.) Nauka*, GrGU im Ja. Kupaly. Grodno: GrG, 2008. – pp. 162–165.

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National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno. F. 2. Op. 20. D. 1192. Delo o postrojke katolicheskoy kaplicy v im. Druskeniki Grodnenskogo uezda. 1840 – 1841; F. 259. Op. 3. D. 1. Metricheskie knigi o rodivshihsja, brakosochetavshihsja i umershih za 1881 g.; F. 850. Op. 1. D. 1. Delo o remonte kostela, kaplicy v mestechke Druskeniki Grodnenskogo uezda. 1846 – 1862; F. 886. Op. 1. D. 5. O predostavlenii nastojateljami kostelov grodnenskomu dekanu vedomostej o rodivshihsja, brakosochetavshihsja, o porjadke pogrebenija umershih katolicheskogo veroispovedanija i po drugim voprosam; F. 886. Op. 3. D. 1. Cirkuljary Vilenskoj r.k. konsistorii. Pawlowicz E. *Wspomnienia. Nowogrodek. Wiezienie. Wygnanie*. Lwow: drukarnia Winiarza, 1881.

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Irina Pivovarchik, Natalya Filina

EPIGRAPHICS OF GRAVESTONE MONUMENTS OF A POLYCONFESSIONAL REGION

Summary

In the article, the analysis of the gravestone inscriptions recorded on the gravestone monuments of the Hrodna region is provided. The components fundamental in the structure of the epitaph are studied: their differences, determined by confessional belonging of the buried, as well as motive space of the 'plot' part of the gravestone inscriptions. The paper considers orthographical, lexical and other peculiarities of the epitaphs. Continuously changing political situation of Belarus has formed its cultural space and linguistic image. In west Belarus, two types of culture have crossed – Roman-Catholic and Byzantine-Orthodox that carried confessional character and which can conventionally be called 'religious'. Church-Slavonic and Latin functioned on this land as sacral languages. Specifics of the language situation are clearly seen in the gravestone inscriptions of the Orthodox and Catholic necropolises. Epigraphic texts at a Catholic and Orthodox necropolis, following and preserving the Byzantine canon, have, nevertheless, distinctions. In the Orthodox tradition, a part of gravestone inscriptions has social character. The main distinction lies in the attitude to church faith. The epitaphs of these cemeteries are not distinguished by special originality as they represent a rather conservative genre and are biased towards traditional cliché and poetic formulas.

Key words: epigraphy, genre, gravestone inscription, necropolis, epitaph

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Burial places constitute an important part in the culture of any nation as they contain interesting data about an area's past. Inscriptions on gravestones conceal a great amount of information not only about the history of the state and nation, but its language that has been formed under the influence of proper linguistics, as well as extra linguistic factors.

In this article, the gravestone inscriptions on the monuments of Hrodna's oldest necropolises – its old Catholic (farny cemetery) and the old Orthodox as well as the cemetery in Pobeda (Victory) street in Hrodna, established in the latter half of the 1860s and the beginning of the 1870s have been analysed.

The inscriptions from the cemeteries of the Hrodna region (all together about 1500 inscriptions) have been of interest in the course of this research, too. In the Christian tradition the gravestones are erected for all deceased people irrespective of their property status; however, the gravestone words with fine texts were only carved on the tombstones of rich and prominent citizens. The old Hrodna necropolises show a great number of primitive gravestones without indication of ranks or titles, but an epitaph's text consists of several phrases: name of the buried person, date of his / her death, reference to those who have erected a monument.

Standard short phrases that differ merely in names and dates are of no interest for this analysis.

The structure of an epitaph as a cemetery genre was already established in ancient Greek and Latin cultures. In our research we are using the definition of an epitaph as 'a gravestone inscription'. In its structure we distinguish, following the researchers of Russian epitaph, a **formula** part which contains surname, name, dates of birth and death, some secondary elements (e. g. occupation, rank and etc.) and '**plot**' comprised of verse, prayers, citations from the Bible and (or) religious texts.¹

Any epitaph opens with an introductory formula, as if specifying the idea of the gravestone. In the Orthodox tradition, the majority of gravestones read, *Here rest the remains of ...*, or *Here is buried....* [Здесь покоится прах..., Здесь погребен...]. On the grand monument of a stately counsellor, I. I. Ignatov, an extensive introductory formula is read: *Under the protection of the Lord's cross here is buried: an active Stately Counsellor Ivan Illaryonovich Ignatov, died 23 April 1907 at his 88th year of life* [Под сенью креста Господня покоятся здесь: действительный Статский Советник Иван Илларионович Игнатовъ ум. 23 апреля 1907 г. на 88-м году жизни].

As the given part of the epitaph is very laconic, the lexical variability of the phrase is fairly poor too: the preference is given to the words 'buried', 'rest', and from time to time the verb 'died' occurs indicating more official, formal language of the epitaph. As we see in the headline complex of the epitaphs, the lexeme 'here' occurs and from the point of view of logic, this is absolutely odd. However, it reveals the power of the tradition as well as the formularity of the genre, lexical load of the formula.

At the Catholic cemetery the initial phrases of the epitaph also contain information about the belonging of the gravestone to signatory's name and the composition of the formulas is almost the same: *Tu leży Ś.P.*; *Tu spoczywają zwłoki Ś.P.*; *Tu Grob*; *Spoczywa w tym grobie ś.p.*

A fundamental element we have recorded on all the monuments without an exception is the set expression *święty pokój*, which is abbreviated Ś.P. (Ś.†P.; ś.p.), the components of which can be separated by the sign † or a stylized schematic image of plant branches.

The location of the abbreviations is almost always constant: on top in the middle of the gravestone or (more seldom) on top to the right or left. If two relatives are buried in one grave then the abbreviations are found on the gravestone slab in the top right or top left. Such a formula carved in the Polish language in the form of abbreviation is preserved on the later gravestones even if the epitaph is inscribed in another language (Russian usually). Thus, it becomes a symbol of Catholic faith and functions as a decorative element.

On the Orthodox grave, the occurrence of abbreviations in the introductory formula has been recorded too; for instance, *З†П here rests* [здесь покоится] and *В†П eternal rest* [вечный покой]: *here rests Ruksha Maria Ivanovna, born 27.04.1898, died 04.03.1972* [З†П Рукша Мария Ивановна Род. 27.IV. 1898 г. Ум. 4.III. 1972 г.]; *Eternal rest Keiko Yelena Mihailovna, born 10.02.1888, died 12.02.1967* [В†П Кейко Елена Михайловна Род. 10.II. 1888 г. Ум. 12.II. 1967 г.] (Orthodox cemetery, the city of Hrodna).

However, such transformation of introductory formulas into abbreviation is a very rare phenomenon at the Orthodox cemeteries in the city of Hrodna and can be interpreted as a result of the impact by Catholic tradition.



Picture 1. Orthodox cemetery in the city of Hrodna. Epitaph on the gravestone of infants Muchiny. October 3, 2013.

Photo by Irina Pivovarchi



Picture 2. Orthodox cemetery in the city of Hrodna. Epitaph on the gravestone of Nina Batusheva. October 3, 2013.

Photo by Irina Pivovarchik



Picture 3. Catholic cemetery in the city of Hrodna. Epitaph on the gravestone of Jozefa Sakowicz. October 15, 2013.

Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

In contrast to the Orthodox epitaphs, regarding the stability of the genre, the dedicatory element of the epitaph on the Catholic gravestones shows much more freedom. The form of the word 'zwłoki' shows grammatical variation: on some gravestones the word is used in a dative case and structurally the inscription is organized in such a way that all information as if hold in its initial formula: *Zwłokom Ś.P. Anny Ławickiej z Mikułowskich zmarłej dnia 17 listopada 1856 roku złożonym obok swej matki i trójca własnych niemowląt – żyła lat 30.*

As the main character of the gravestone is a buried person, his / her anthroponyms are in the central place on the monument that

complies with the Christian tradition, according to which a human after death appears before the Lord without any ranks or titles, only in his / her own name. On the memorial inscription of the Orthodox tradition a surname, name, patronymic of a deceased person are carved. However, in the Catholic tradition, a surname and a name, as a variant – a name and a surname, then the date of death follows.

The inscriptions express the intention of relatives of a deceased person to describe his / her social status, profession, ranks and titles, services to his / her father / motherland:

Here rest the remains of the Chairman of the Hrodna Criminal Court Chamber, Maksim Anisimov who had served in public service for 58 years; a guberniya secretary Aleksandr Litvinenko, a collegiate councillor Pyotr Andreyevich Dmitriyev, a monitoring chamber manager Pyotr Evanovych Volkov.

[Здесь покоится прах Председателя Гродненской палаты уголовного суда, статского советника и кавалера Максима Анисимова, прослужившего в госу-

дарственной службе 58 лет; губернский секретарь Александр Литвиненко, коллежский советник Петр Андреевич Дмитриев, управляющий контрольной палатой Петр Иванович Волков.]

At the burials of servicemen, the aforementioned element of the memorial inscription is fundamental.

At the cemeteries there are graves with several burials, as a rule, these are members of one family. In such cases, the gravestone inscriptions emphasise the family belonging of the dead and this is manifested in linguistic form: a surname is used in its generalized, combined form, then the listing of names follows: *tu spoczywaja CHALECKIE JÓZER żył lat 50 zm 1961r / MARJA żyla lat 53 zm. 1975r / CZESLAW żył lat 14 zm 1961r / JAN żył lat 12 zm 1961r / LEOKADJA żył alat 4 zm 1961r / POKÓJ JIH DUSZOM / PAMIANTKA OD RODZINY; SZULEWSCY Józef 1893 – 1970 / Józefa 1898 – 1997 / Melania 1929 – 1956.*

The next formula element of the gravestone inscription is the dates of birth and death. In the Orthodox and Catholic traditions, the day and the year are written both in Roman and Arabic figures: *ЛИСОВСКИЙ ВЛАДИМИР СТЕПАНОВИЧ род. 5.VIII. 1908 г. ум. 17.X. 1972 г.; USMIERCZYK JULJ Aur. 1903 r. zm. 12.XII. 1966 r.* At the rural cemeteries the information with the reference to the name of a village where a deceased person had lived is inscribed: *S' † P ZIEMIANCZYK PETRUNELA zm. 1944 r. Ze wsi Wasilewicz; SZYMCZYK ZOFJA żyla lat 78 ZM. 1960 r. Pokoj jej duszy z Sopockin.* It seems the reference to the place of residence is the only way to identify a deceased person among a great number of his / her namesakes.

On the gravestones there are references to the circumstances of death. They are not random, but reference untimely death or accidental death in public service. The inclusion of this formula into the list of memorial inscriptions on the gravestones of servicemen who died in war or uprisings was compulsory. Moreover, the circumstances of his / her death could be described in detail. A good example is the inscription on the grave of a general of the Patriotic War of 1812, Sergey Nikolayevich Lanskoj.



Picture 4. Orthodox cemetery in the city of Hrodna. Epitaph on the gravestone of general Lanskoj. October 3, 2013. Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

This inscription is characterized with precision typical for the regulations; the description of the addressee is restrained:

Here is buried the body of the lieutenant-general Sergey Nikolayevich Lanskoj, who properly and excellently served on the battle-fields; he was injured on February 23 nearby the settlement Kraon and to mutual sorrow of his comrades and subordinates passed away in the city of Namyur on 18th March 1814 at 2 a.m. at his 35th year of life.

[Здесь погребено тело генерал лейтенанта Сергея Николаевича Ланскова, с честью и славой служившего на полях брани от полученной раны под селением Краоном февраля 23-го дня к общему сожалению своих товарищей и подчиненных преставился в городе Намюре от рождения на 35-м году сего 1814 г. марта 18-го дня по полуночи в два ч.]

At the Catholic cemetery the most popular phrase that highlights the death of a soldier in war was *ofiara wojny*: *Boleslaw Kaczan żył 27 lat zm. 1945 r. ofiara wojny*. An introductory formula on female gravestones at a Catholic cemetery has its own features determined by Polish tradition – i.e. reference to the genealogy of the first tribe. This way it secures the data about the blood relations – ‘by sword’ and ‘in tow’ for eternity: *Józefie z Łaniewiczów Sakowiczowej Dobrej matce I żonie Ten pomnik żalu w pamięć Jej ót domowych*. Female gravestone inscriptions rarely provide reference to a woman’s occupation. We have recorded single inscriptions on the gravestones: *Kvetkovskaya Vera Fyodorovna from Sulkovskiye, a teacher* [Кветковская Вера Федоровна из Сулковских Учительница]. The formula ‘a wife of’ [жена того-то...] is quite unchanging:

Yelena Mihailovna Pavlyukovskaya, a wife of the lieutenant-colonel of 171 sub-unit of the Kobrinskiy regiment, died 8 January 1910 at the age of 45;

[Елена Михайловна Павлюковская, жена подполковника 171 п. Кобринского полка Сконч. 8 января 1910 г. 45 лет]

Tu spoczywa obok matki męża Ś. P. Maria z Sumowskich Suszyńska żona inżyniera 22 roku życia.

A significant lexical amount of epitaphs preserved up to these days are numerous eulogies – a piece of writing praising the person who has died. In the Orthodox tradition, this is a standard expression *Rest in peace* (you, he, she, they) [Мир праху твоему (его, ее, их)] that goes back to the verse in the Bible and, for this reason, it is frequently dubbed into the Church-Slavonic language.

At a Catholic cemetery, formularity also prevails over tradition: praise consists of standard formulas: *Pokój jej duszy; Pokój jej cieniom; Pokój jego popiołom; Niech odpoc-*



Picture 5. Cemetery in the city type settlement Sopockin. Epitaph on the gravestone of a participant of military mission in Afghanistan. March 8, 2014.

Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

zywają w pokoju. Lexical variability of the components provides no new information: all variants develop the theme of ‘peace’ of a deceased person that can be regarded as protection against sacrilege and inadmissibility of defying a grave. In Polish epitaphs, this plot is extended with the theme of glory and eternal memory by descendants: *Cześć twojej pamięci; Pokój twojej duszy*.

A stable and fixed place on the gravestones is taken up by the information about people (a person) who have established the monument. Most frequently these blood or close relatives are referred to directly. Beginning with simple references such as *om жены, мужа, родителей* [from wife, husband, parents] and others, the dedicators of a monument transform them into extended, typical for such cases, phrases: *To unforgettable husband and friend. Ill-fated wife; Yours affectionately wife; To unforgettable wife from affectionate husband Fundatorka Teofila Radziewiczowa* [Незабвенному мужу и другу. Злосчастливая жена; От горячо любящей жены; Незабвенной жене от любящего мужа; Fundatorka Teofila Radziewiczowa]. The verbal manifestation of the identical situation on Catholic gravestones is more expressive: the introduction into the concluding part of an inscription of a set metaphor ‘monument’ [памятник] / *smutny upominek, smutna pamiątka, pomnik wiecznego smutku* – facilitates the sense of sorrow and grief; the whole text acquires high stylistic colouring [*Ten smutny upominek Najdroższej Matce poświęcają dzieci; Kamień ten kładzie dowód pamięci żalu pozostały syn i brat Tadeusz*]. The text of gravestone inscriptions is an important source of information about the ethnic and confessional belonging of a deceased person. The phenomenon of superposing the sacral-confessional language onto the language of everyday communication can be observed both at Orthodox and Catholic cemeteries. For example, the inscription on a new gravestone at the Orthodox cemetery in the city of Hrodna is made in two alphabets, the Cyrillic and the Roman alphabets: *Стр Эдвард Стефанович 19.10.1962 – 19.05.1994*. As a Polish researcher, Yustyna Strachuk, testifies, the co-existence of texts written in two languages on one gravestone is a fairly common phenomenon for the necropolises of the Hrodna region.²

Polish-Belarusian linguistic interconnection inevitably results in the phenomenon called interference. If inhabitants of the region were using the Polish language in Catholic churches, in social life and in general it was available for the people, then the written form of the language caused some difficulties. For this reason the inscriptions in the Polish language show a number of orthographical mistakes which are caused by the differences in phonetic distribution of the Belarusian language (‘akanie’ (pronunciation of unstressed ‘o’ as ‘a’, ‘cekanie’ (pronunciation of ‘k’ as ‘c’), ‘dzekanie’ (pronunciation of ‘d’ as ‘dz’), softening of the consonants). The most common examples are as follows:

- misspelling of nasal vowels: *ten pamiątkę, jej merza, pamiątką od curak;*
- misspelling caused by mixing graphical systems of the Roman and the Cyrillic alphabets: *Ugnatowicz, Vaclav, Bronislaw, Filipczyk Ielena, Pomiątka, Пемп жул 60 let;*
- spelling based on transliteration: *Maksimczik, Martinowicz, Dietczyk, Tiszan, Awgustinowicz, Iwan Siwolowskij, Покуй ego душу;*
- the use of words with Belarusian inflectional forms: *Kochanemu mężu i ojcu / Śpi spokojno mama moja / wiecznaja pamiec od syna Józefa’, pokój twojej duszie; żyli po 6 miesjoncy; Żyła 41 rok.*

Some attempts to form a patronymic have been recorded on the Catholic burial: *Pawłowna, Feliksowna*.

The graves dated in the 1960s show orthographical, derivational, and punctuation mistakes determined by Belorussian-Russian interference and the low level of people's literacy. The mistakes caused by the practice of spelling words in accordance with morphological and orthographical rules of the Belarussian language are rather common phenomena [*Боярын Феодора Станиславовна, Нарейко Павел Барысович, Радуха Антаніна*; other examples: *Жыл 44 года; Тежолый слой земли сырой Вас от наших глас скрикает Но светлый образ ваш живой В сердцах не угасает*] (Hrodna, the cemetery in Victory street [ulica Pobedy]). The gravestone inscriptions of Orthodox burials reveal the influence of the Church-Slavonic language that has most noticeably manifested itself in lexis, morphology and graphics. It is probable that the use of the Church-Slavonic words points to the aspiration of the authors of epitaphs to emphasize their personal religiousness and belonging to Orthodox faith [*Помяни мя Господи егда приидеши во царствии твоём*]; forms of flexions [*Заневскаго, усопшаго, до скорого свиданя*]; vocative from [*Христе*]; graphical representation of surnames [*Киверъ, Кашевникъ, Леховичъи*] and names [*Павель, Борисъ, Марія, Анисія*].

Derivational means in the texts of epitaphs are used to express diminutive meaning. For this reason the diminutives are characteristic for children's graves [*Дорогой сынок; Юленька, Олеженька*]. Diminutives on the cemetery inscriptions of graves of adults, more probably, testify to particularly warm attitude [*Ниночка не забудь нас*].

In the composition of epitaphs, the elements considered above can be regarded as fundamental because they carry biographical character, have a fixed place on a gravestone. In contrast, another part, 'plot', contains texts of a different type: liturgy insertions, poetic and prosaic notes of sacral and social character that develop a whole spectrum of motives. They are separated by a carved line, a rhomb or placed on the side or back part of a gravestone. The genre of epitaph touches upon the problem of human death, because of this epitaph reveals a tension between a funeral ritual and the Christian philosophy of life that propagates immortality of the soul, eternal life, and resurrection of the soul and the body. Though a cemetery epitaph does not allow deep conclusions about death perception in the national consciousness, nevertheless it is an important source for discovering mentality and the folk philosophy of death. The contents of cemetery epitaphs is full of the Christian world outlook, as it expresses in major sacral-Christian motives. For example, there is no death but the immortal soul and eternal life beyond the grave.

Epitaph does not reveal the horrors of death. It is an epic unperturbed perception of death as inevitability, as universal fate:

Full of holy faith Pure reverie and hope for happiness; Blessed is the one who [has moored] the eternal peace, not having tried the wordly waves.

[Полны веры святой Светлых грез и надежды на счастье; Блажен, кто к вечному покою, не попытав житейских волн.]

If nothing can be changed then resign yourself to your lot, accept it as it is: *Taka była wola boża bycie zabrac spośród dzieci Teraz niechaj boża łaska Nad twą duszą wiecznie świeci. Żona z dziećmi*. Death is being tabooed, that is why in epitaph texts it is implied in the set metaphor 'death – dream' [смерть – сон]. *The motif of eternal dream, wishes of peaceful dream are constant for this genre as no other*³. This metaphor carries deep

psychological support as it switches attention from the sphere of death to the living world.

On the level of text, this poetic image forms a complete conceptual voice; it foregrounds a whole complex of predicates and signs that characterize the condition of a dream; for example, a stable epitaph reference to a deceased person 'rest' [спи, покойся, спoczywa], but dream is accompanied by unchanging in these genre epithets 'eternal', 'peaceful' [вечный, спокойный].

The motif of dream is logically connected with the situation of awakening that is grounded in the Christian dogma about the body's resurrection which, however, occurs on the level of signification rather than narrative level. In epitaph texts the theme of the meeting of loving souls acquires its most general features: *Rest in peace, angel, my blessed time will come for us to meet; Rest my darling child till the joyful morning* [Спи спокойно, ангелочек, Мой настанет час благословенный Мы встретимся с тобой; Спи дорогое дитя До красного утра]; *Bóg nas rozłączył Bóg nas połączy.*

The generalization and imprecision of expressing this motif is presented as a meeting 'in the otherworld', a new and better one; it is explained by the fact that this motive has not, probably developed in Christianity.

Appealing to the Lord is implied and envisaged in the general funeral ritual, that is why the majority of epitaphs are prayers. These are direct prayer appeals to the Lord which *had to serve as a continuous remembrance, substantiated eternal prayer, in case of record of death – a remembrance prayer*⁴. These epitaphs abound on gravestones. The following are examples of pleadings: *Lord, let Thy fellow-bondman rest in the fellowship of Thy saints; God, in Thy name save me, and in Thy strength do Thou judge me!* [Со святыми упокой, Господи, Душу раба Твоего; Боже, во имя Твое спаси мя И в силе Твоей суди мя!]; *Boże miłosierdzia wielkiego! Racz przyjąć dusze jego do królestwa swego.*

Especially sensible are the epitaphs-prayers written by parents of children who had died. In the centre of tragic perception there are parents who are alive and mournful rather than a deceased child. It is probable that these verses are self-made and lack literary style; it is *a cry by harrowed soul*. The epitaph on the gravestone of A. F. Leshynsky (†1911 г.), who died at the age of 24 in the city of Kremenchug, highly resembles a canonical prayer:

*O God, we ask the Lord for the coming of the Kingdom of God,
You receive our darling son within the precincts of the holy abode,
But you have left your poor soul on the earth,
You have left it in the gloom of sorrow silence,
You have guided the lives of all fathers.
Do direct my life to you as well.*

Mother

[О милостивый Боже, царство небесное у Господа просим.
Ты прими нашего сына дорогого в стенах обители святой,
Но на земле ты душу бедную оставил,
Оставил во мраке скорби тишины,
Ты жизнью отцов всех правил.
Направь же и мою к себе.

Мать]



Picture 6. Orthodox cemetery in the city of Hrodna. Epitaph in the form of a prayer. October 3, 2013.

Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

A particular group at the Hrodna necropolises is made by repeatedly occurring, so called 'speaking' inscriptions read by the dead himself / herself after his / her death. These inscriptions go back to the Latin epitaphs that have influenced Europe and Russia. In the Latin epitaphs ready-made formulas were used, for example, *hiciacet 'здесь погребен'*, *Sta, viator!* 'стой, путник', *sistegradum 'остановись'*. They became a marker of this genre and belong to world literature as a whole.

Anonymous epitaphs in necropolises show variations of the image 'I am at home but you are still on a visit' ('я дома, а ты еще в гостях'): *Don't be proud a passer-by. Visit my remains as I am at home (But) You are still on a visit.* [Не гордись прохожий Посети мой прах Ведь я уже дома (А) Ты еще в гостях.]

More common and in the foreground is the genre of 'speaking' epitaphs at a Catholic cemetery, but it carries totally different, complying with its culture, character. The formula pleading *a passer-by, a pilgrim, a witness* [прохожий, путник, свидетель] is apparant here too; these words are the words-conceptions for the Christian culture.

A human passing by a grave at the same time goes his earthy way. But after 'behind a grave' the Heaven way will begin; pilgrim. A passer-by walks down not merely the road but the way of 'life vanities'. In the Christian tradition pilgrimage, wandering often serves the metaphors of 'life / earthy way'.⁵

This type of epitaph is represented by several variants but all of them contain pleadings to a passer-by to make a prayer: *Proszę o Zdrowaś Maryja; Prosi o pozdrowienie anielskie*. In its 'full version' of the text the maxim increases interest that partly explains the pleading: you are mortal too, today you make a prayer for me and tomorrow I will do it for you: *Przechodniu! Niech żaden z was grób mój nie minie bez Anioł Pański i Zdrowaś Maryja I Wieczny pokój zmów przy mym grobie. Gdy życie skończysz, zmówię i po tobie*. As we see, this type of epitaph at the Catholic cemetery bears religious character and reflects outlooks characteristic among Catholics.

Thus, the language of epitaph texts at the Hrodna necropolises is Russian and Polish, while the farny cemetery occasionally shows inscriptions in German.

To answer a question 'Why are there no epitaphs in the Belorussian language?' one has to point to the language situation in Belarus in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The continuously changing political situation of Belarus has formed its cultural space and linguistic image. In west Belarus two types of culture have crossed – Roman-Catholic and Byzantine-Orthodox that carried confessional character and which can be called 'religious'. Church-Slavonic and Latin functioned on this land as sacral languages. The Russian language for a long time performed a function of business language, language of documents, science and literature. The Polish language had a function of a literary language; it was impossible to imagine the culture of that time without this language.

Polish was a sacral language intended for liturgy and sermons. The Belorussian language was a language used by the folk and it was completely excluded from social life. These languages have established themselves with particular social groups and performed the functions inherent in them.

The specifics of the language situation are clearly seen in the genre of epitaphs – gravestone inscriptions on the monuments of ‘old’ Orthodox and Catholic necropolises. Epigraphic texts at a Catholic and Orthodox necropolis, following and preserving the Byzantine canon, have, nevertheless, distinctions. In the Orthodox tradition, a part of gravestone inscriptions has social character. The main distinction lies in the attitude to church faith. The

epitaphs of these cemeteries are not distinguished by special originality as they represent a rather conservative genre and are biased towards traditional cliché and poetic formulas.

The Hrodna and Vitebsk oblasts historically have been polyethnic and polycultural regions. Since the 14th – 15th century the Jews and Tatars who professed Judaism and Islam have settled on the territory of present day northwest and northeast Belarus. Specifics of socio-economic activity of the Jews have left a trace on the image of settlements of Belarus where in many cases the Jews used to constitute the prevailing population. In present day culture-historical landscape, the preserved objects of Jewish culture-historical heritage are represented by the monuments of architecture and cemeteries. In the context of our investigation we will highlight the specifics of the Jewish necropolises in the region. It is noteworthy that in Belarus, and particularly in the Hrodna oblast, the investigations of the epigraphic Jewish necropolises have been conducted – in Hrodna and in the city type settlement Zheludok of the Shchucin region.⁶

According to the researchers’ opinion on Jewish epigraphic, the content of epitaph is not regulated by the rules of Jewish religion. The key idea of traditional Jewish epitaph is mystic. It should contribute to comforting the soul of a deceased person in Heaven and help him / her to join the totality of souls of Jewish nation.

One of the euphemisms of the word ‘died’ [умер] is the word ‘joined (his nation)’ [присоединился (к своему народу)], but the good wish *Let his / her soul be tied up in the Knot for Life (together with the souls of forefathers and righteous men)* [Да будет его / ее душа завязана в Узле Жизни (вместе с душами праотцов и праведников)] has become a fundamental attribute of the epitaph. Jewish epitaph places a deceased person into the context of history, compares and contrasts him / her with Biblical characters and patriarchs.

At the same time it lists his / her virtues so that they are credited at the trial by single combat. It shows the radical distinction of Jewish epitaphs from Antique or Christian epitaphs that commonly appeal to a passer-by or a casual reader; its aim is to remind him / her about mortal existence and urge him / her to repent. Even if a Jewish



Picture 7. Orthodox cemetery in the city of Hrodna. Epitaph with citation from the Gospels. October 3, 2013.
Photo by Irina Pivovarchik



Picture 8. Jewish cemetery in the city of Hrodna. Gravestone inscription in Yiddish and Russian. November 27, 2013. Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

epitaph is addressed to the reader (a human), it does not contain didactic motives but envisages that a passer-by, on reading it, will make a remembrance prayer for a deceased person. These features of Jewish epitaph determine its content and structure, consisting of four indispensable elements: initial formula, official formula, date of death in accordance with Jewish calendar, concluding formula – eulogy.⁷

Epitaph connects the soul of a deceased person with the souls of Jewish nation and introduces him / her into the context of Jewish history. For this sake the name and date are played up, Biblical analogy is provided; likeness of the situation with the death of particular Biblical characters is emphasized. Unity of place, date and name provides for linking of three systems of co-ordinates: space, time and individuality. Jewish epitaphs almost always are impersonal, written in the third person and not addressing a reader.

¹ Car'kova T. S. *Russkaja stihotvornaja jepitafija XIX – XX vekov*. Sankt-Peterburg, 1999. – p. 7.

² Strazcuk J. *Cmentarz i stół. Pogranicze prawosławno-katolińskie w Polsce i na Białorusi*. Wrocław, 2006. – pp. 129–143.

³ Car'kova T. S. *Russkaja stihotvornaja jepitafija XIX – XX vekov*. Sankt-Peterburg, 1999. – p. 167.

⁴ Beljaev L. A. *Russkoe srednevekovoe nadgrobie*. Moskva, 1996. – p. 259.

⁵ Veselova V. Jepitafija – formul'nyj zhanr. *Voprosy literatury* No 2, 2006. – p. 139.

⁶ Kopchjonova I. (ed.) *Zheludok: pamjat' o evrejskom mestechke*. Moskva, 2013. – pp. 88–266.

⁷ Nosonovskij M. Starinnye evrejskie kladbishha Ukrainy: istorija, pamjatniki, jepitafii. *Angel smerti. Simvolika evrejskogo pohoronnogo obrjada*. Moskva: proekt “Jeshkolot”. pp. 10–11. www.eshkolot.ru (accessed 2014).

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Svetlana Selverstova

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND RESEARCH METHODS FOR THE STUDY OF RURAL NECROPOLISES OF NORTHWEST BELARUS

Summary

In this article the issues of the investigation of the rural cemeteries in the area of northwest Belarus are considered. The author points out that the study of necropolises is based on the general paradigm of the study of cemeteries as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Such investigations envisage an interdisciplinary approach with the application of methods of historical science, anthropology, ethnology, culture studies and art criticism. This reveals the peculiarities of the necropolis itself as well as provides an opportunity to collect materials for the study of the micro-region. The interdisciplinary approach is significant as its aim is to apply the tools of various branches of knowledge and interpret the obtained data. We have singled out the following main factors that have produced impact on the specific features of the rural cemeteries in the northwest part of Belarus: polyconfessionality and polyethnicity of the region; specific features of social composition of the population which used to be characterized by a high percentage (up to 10%) of representatives of the privileged estates – szlachta; preservation of the elements of the old pagan burial and remembrance tradition and their transfer into Christian burial ritual.

Key words: necropolis, cemetery, monument, tradition, micro-region

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Introduction

Firstly, it is noteworthy to mention that this discussion will focus on Christian necropolises. The study of rather common in northwest Belarus Jewish cemeteries and Muslim mazars requires other approaches and research methods.¹

In our opinion, the methodological groundings for the study of rural cemeteries should be based on the general paradigm whereby the necropolises are studied as a socio-cultural phenomenon. In particular, such investigation implies an interdisciplinary and complex approach, application of the methods and tools of the historical science, ethnology, culture studies, anthropology, art criticism and other humanitarian sciences. The given approach reveals the peculiarities of the necropolis itself and, on top of everything, it provides valuable material for the study of various aspects of human society's functioning on the micro- and macro- levels.

A similar approach, in particular, has been used by the Polish anthropologist Slawomir Sikora in the study of Polish necropolises. The investigation that is viewed as anthropological, owing to its basic features, is extended here with the insights into history of

the region, ethnography, psychology and other branches of knowledge.² Description of a necropolis may not be put forward as its own aim. It is just an intermediate stage for other scientific findings. In an attempt to describe a cemetery, revealing its peculiarities and describing gravestones and inscriptions on them, a researcher must consider for which kind of scientific objectives his study will be relevant. In this respect, an interdisciplinary approach is significant as it aims at applying the tools of various branches of science, as well as at the interpretation of the data collected.

When studying the necropolis it is essential to know the region in which it is located. At first sight, this evident point is extremely important because the only condition for the proper interpretation of the collected data obtained in the course of description is the knowledge of the history, traditions, language, social relations and ethnical composition of the region.

One of the fundamental approaches that can be applied in the description of cemeteries is the typological one. Burial refers to the most ancient ceremonies. Throughout thousands of years of its existence, this phenomenon has established firm traditions which comply with the religious and other outlooks of the society. It follows common sense that each epoch, each region, ethnic or religious community has developed its own funeral traditions that are radically different from each other. Moreover, in the European Christian tradition there has developed a set of rules that can be regarded as universal and commonly accepted. The following are examples of these rules: geographical orientation of a burial, erection of a memorial sign (a cross, stone with the name inscribed etc.), fencing of the place for burial, separate burial of 'marginals' (the dead distinguished from the people buried in this place by their confessional belonging, cause of death and etc.) and other. When describing a cemetery, one has to take into account the presence of such traditions and record all deviations from them. It will allow us to notice the specifics of a given burial, reveal the conditions that have led to the occurrence of such distinctions. After that it will allow us to reconstruct the particular facts from the history, notice the peculiarities of the traditions, beliefs, ceremonials and other features of the region or locality important for a researcher.

The typological approach is also productive in the analysis of the regional peculiarities of the burial ritual and remembrance of the dead in prayer. Every region develops its own burial rules based on universal traditions, while also possessing their own modifications. These distinctions may result from the peculiarities of its region's landscape and vegetation, its polyconfessionality and polyethnicity, the level of Christianization, religiousness of its population, etc. The distinctions may reveal themselves in decoration and demarcation of the burial, layout of the cemetery, language of inscriptions, the material of its fence, location of necropolis and more. The only condition that makes it possible to reveal regional peculiarities is the presence of representative material about the burials in the given region as well as in other, not necessarily neighbourhood, and regions.

The typological approach envisages determination of uniqueness of this or that necropolis, tradition or rite. As soon as the typical (regional, micro-regional) features of a cemetery are determined, it is possible to reveal its individual and unique characteristics, marks and peculiarities.

The process of deconstructing traditional culture connected with the industrialization of economy has also produced some effect on the rural necropolises. The funeral ritual

and remembrance of the dead in prayer are getting more and more standardized, the levelling of the old rites how to form the burial places is taking place, the visual image of cemeteries is changing including the rural. Even alongside new necropolises elements of regional burial culture are preserved or possibly transformed. In this manner, interest among ethnographers and anthropologists can arise.

The condition of the cemetery often provides evidence of the extent to which the elements of traditional culture have been preserved in the given locality. Funeral ceremonies do not exist by themselves, but are one of the links on a chain of rituals that accompany a human from his / her birth till his / her death. For this reason, as a rule, one can judge about the other elements of traditional culture by the degree of preservation of traditions of worshipping the dead in the given locality.

The methodological approaches marked above underlie the descriptions of the characteristic features of the rural necropolises of the northwest part of Belarus. The typological features of the rural necropolises in the region under investigation are determined by several factors.

The Specifics of the Region

The northwest region of Belarus is polyconfessional and polyethnic, which is one of the basic factors determining specifics of its burials, image of necropolises, peculiarities of funeral ritual and traditions of remembrance of the dead by prayer. Thus, in 2012 in the Hrodna oblast there were 499 religious organisations, 17 confessions, active 471 religious communities (194 Orthodox, 1 Old Believer, 176 Catholic, 2 Greek-Catholic, 8 Muslim, 4 Jewish, 85 Protestant, 1 Krishna Consciousness). The population of the Hrodna oblast (the data as of the 2009 census) is 1.720.000 people, among them 69% are made up of city dwellers and 31% are rural residents. By national composition Belarusians make 66.7%, Poles – 21.5%, Russians – 8.2%, Ukrainians – 1.4%, Lithuanians – 0.2%, the Tatars – 0.2%, Jews – 0.1% and other nationalities.³ Polyconfessional and polyethnic composition is reflected in the layout of the rural cemeteries (separate areas for the dead of different confessions), in the monument inscriptions (in the Russian and Belorussian languages for the Orthodox believers, Polish and Latin for the Catholics).

Not least important factors determining the characteristic features of the rural cemeteries in the given area are the social composition of the population in its historical retrospect and the number and status of each locality. The northwest region of Belarus is distinguished by a great number of small and middle szlachta (gentry) landownership, a fairly large number of small towns that hold an intermediate position between a village and a town. According to the data by the Belorussian scholar Inna Sorkina, in the Hrodna guberniya in 1848 there were 84 small towns, in 1870 – 66, wherein the residents of the small towns made from 5 up to 8% of the whole population.⁴ The Hrodna guberniya was distinguished by the presence of big towns that formed the centres of the micro-regions and competed with the chief towns of the uyezd (administrative subdivision).

In the course of time, some of the small towns developed into cities, while others degraded and, as of today, have a status of a village. As the past of small towns is easily recognized in the planning of such a village, it also determines the specific features of the former small town cemetery, which is currently a rural cemetery. The most charac-

teristic thing in the given case is, in our opinion, the cemetery of the Odelsk village of the Hrodna region. The cemetery is comparatively large in size, covers about two hectares and has a stone fence with the similar stone gates. Quite often one can see rich gravestones and monuments here dated 19th – first half of the 20th century, burial vaults. The cemetery has a regular, alley type layout that is more characteristic for city necropolises.

A distinguishing feature of rural cemeteries in the northwest of Belarus that is fairly often noticed are the graves of the local gentry. Very often a rural cemetery was turned into a burial place for prominent representatives of their culture, national-liberation movement, politicians, well-known Maecenas and philanthropists whose estate was located nearby. As such burials often make these necropolises a significant place of historical memory; they acquire a safe-status, get enlisted as historic-cultural treasures as well as are frequently used in the tourist business. Thus, at the cemetery in the Nachya village of the Voronovo region in the Hrodna oblast there is a family burial of the Yudzil kin, the representatives of which had left marks in science, politics, and public movement in Belarus, Poland and Lithuania. There is also a burial of the engineer and historian Teodor Narbut. At almost all rural cemeteries in the described region there are military burials. It is noteworthy that in the postwar period there was a tendency to bury and rebury the killed during the Great Patriotic War in the graves at the edge of a village or, if the locality was big, on the central square rather than the rural cemetery. That way they were burying both the soldiers who died in war, as well as peaceful inhabitants killed by the occupiers. The graves of the last war are mainly located in the cemeteries of those villages where the hardened battles with the regular army occurred, or where there was an active partisan movement.

It should be taken into account when describing the cemeteries. One peculiarity of the rural necropolises in northwest Belarus is the military graveyards of both Russian and German soldiers of the WWI. In a number of cases either one common gravestone was erected or a sign with an inscription indicating the date of the burial. For example, at the rural cemetery in the Selivanovcy village of the Hrodna region the German military graves form a separate sector to the right of the cemetery entrance. The graves are marked by stone slabs, in the centre of the sector a memorable sign was erected – a pyramid made of boulders with the plate in the shape of a shield, the Maltese cross and the date.

The description of the rural necropolises, as well as all the rest, should be conducted according to a regular plan. In general outline, it can be defined, as Anna Czyż and Bartłomiej Gutowski put it as follows: a researcher is interested in what is there *under the earth, on the earth* and *out from the earth*⁵. In other words, when describing a cemetery it is necessary to pay attention to who is buried, how he / she is buried, to the plants used, and the bushes and trees growing in the cemetery.

Location of the Necropolis

In northwest Belarus, there have developed some firm traditions of how to locate rural cemeteries. Let us mention some of them.

A cemetery as a rule is situated on the outskirts of a village. In fact, it borders it. The remoteness of the cemetery from the locality rarely reaches 0.5 – 1 km. In some cases, the cemetery can be located next to the settlements, the so called ‘colonies’ or

farms belonging to that village, rather than at the village border. Probably such location was determined, apart from all, by the peculiarities of the land-tenure and land-ownership. The cemetery land used to belong either to the church or it was a servitude, it belonged to the common land-tenure; it was located in the area not appropriate for farm cultivation. The cemetery was established on a hilly area. The type of landscape in northwest Belarus allows one to find such places next to villages easily. In rare cases, the cemeteries were founded on a steep riverbank. A similar cemetery, for instance, has been recorded by us in the suburbs of Goluby village of the Mosty region.

It was established on the steep bank of the river Shyara though on the plain, not the hill. The cemetery, which, judging by the remaining monuments and gravestones is more than one hundred years old, has been abandoned. In former times, there was a wooden church that was burned down during the last war. It is noteworthy that this cemetery is situated fairly far away from the village, although there is a farm and an old tar-facility.

In a number of cases, should the given locality be a centre of a parish, the rural cemetery can be located near a church or cathedral. The practice of allotting land for constructing a cathedral or cemetery was a common thing in the circle of gentry and magnates on the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The tradition of burying the dead as close to the temple as possible so *that the water from the roof of the sacred place falls down onto the grave* was not common in the rural parishes. As a rule, the burials close to the walls of the church were fairly rare either due to respect for the achievements of the dead person or due to another, exceptional reason. So in the church yard of St. Josephat Kunceвич in Sopockin of the Hrodna region (Theolynska parish) there is a grave of an orthodox nun. The appearance of this grave outside the fence of the cathedral was determined by the history of this temple. In 1875, it was allotted to the orthodox monastery that was active up to 1915. In that time (as it is now too) the given area lacked Orthodox cemeteries. Probably it became one of the reasons for the burial apart from the tenets of the monastic rule.

When charting the location of a cemetery on a map it is essential to record the roads leading to it or the roads passing by. As a rule, there are a few roads leading to a necropolis, or there can be one main road to the central entrance and some paths. It is necessary to record all entrances to a cemetery including the gaps in a fence. It provides an opportunity to determine the directions from which the necropolis is visited and to record where from the inhabitants come to see the graves.

Size of Necropolis

The size of cemeteries, in particular of the ancient ones, has been changing as the time passes. As soon as the land allotted for the burials was exploited, a cemetery could get enlarged, or it could be divided into sectors with an additional fence.

A good illustration of such a case is the cemetery in the village Odelsk of the Hrodna region. In the post-war time the local cemetery, which was full of graves at that time, got overgrown with trees and bushes, so a new piece of land was adjusted for new burials. The fence of that new cemetery adjoins the old one, and there is a pathway between the two parts of the cemetery.

Fence is not regarded as a border of a cemetery, as marginals were used to be buried outside it. At the edge of a cemetery those bodies are buried who have no right for the proper funeral. These are the people who turned unsafe in the magical-religious sense and due to this they were distanced to the outside of the borders of the locality. The memoirs of the residents of the village Putrishky of the Hrodna region recall the story when a non-christened gypsy was buried in the local orthodox cemetery. After this, the local Old Believers refused to bury their relatives in that necropolis for the land was regarded 'defiled'.

Land tenure papers, kept in the corresponding organizations (village soviet, settlement soviet and etc.), cannot always provide precise data with which to determine the boundaries of a cemetery. Such documentation can provide exact data for large cemeteries situated in the parish centres, big villages and settlements. However, for the rural necropolises located in relatively small villages that are remote from the village soviet and becoming defunct and / or abandoned, the documents are either missing or contain rather vague data. To give an example, there is an old cemetery in the village Moskaly of the Mosty region. As of today, the population of the village is not more than 80 people, most of whom are elderly people. The cemetery covers about 0.7 ha, is situated in the eastern suburb of the village on a high hill and is fenced. According to the dates on the monuments, the cemetery is 150 – 170 years old. The land tenure documents available at the village soviet provide only approximate boundaries; the configuration of the necropolis is given with no precision. The village Moskaly is one of the so called 'pushyanskiye' villages located in the depths of Lipichanskaya pushya (dense forest) on the bank of the river Shyara. Its location has also determined the necessity to have its own cemetery (the remoteness and inaccessibility of a parish cemetery due to dense forest) and its comparatively fairly small area.

Layout of Necropolis

When deciding on the layout of a cemetery the following parameters should be taken into account: regular or chaotic layout, presence of particular sectors, its centre and periphery.

The layout of the rural cemeteries in northwest Belarus is not uniform. Its character depends on the cemetery size and its history. Thus, the cemeteries of small towns and the ones that appeared relatively recently (not earlier than the first half of the 20th century) are characterized by the alley type layout. A few main alleys divide the area of the cemetery into the sectors within which the graves are arranged into a few rows. This layout, in particular, is characteristic of the old cemetery in the village Odelsk, in the city type settlement Sopockin, in the village Porechye, in the city type settlement Ros, etc. As a rule, one or two alleys are distinguished from others, usually this is the alley that begins at the entrance of the cemetery and leads to the chapel, if there is one. This layout, as mentioned above, is characteristic of the city necropolises where the land was expensive, the burials were numerous and the conditions of the cemetery were maintained by the church. In relatively small rural cemeteries at the periphery of a parish, the location of graves lacks regular layout. The cemetery in the village Moskaly of the Mosty region is a good example of this. The burials here lack one particular plan. They were formed wherever there was a free piece of land. In a number of cases, the pieces of

land can be allotted to family burials, but they do not constitute an individual element of the layout, are not marked separately. In the eastern part of Belarus – in the Vitebsk oblast (Sennensky region) – we have recorded a different layout: the cemetery shows land pieces allotted to the family burials in advance. They are separated from the rest of the land pieces with broad aisles, often in a shape of a square with the land reserved for the future burials; the alleys as such are missing. While observing the layout of a cemetery, one should consider and mark its landscape. It is the landscape and its specific features that commonly determine the layout of a cemetery. In the village Komotovo of the Hrodna region, a new cemetery is situated on the high terrace over the river Neman, its western side is restricted by a steep slope.

It has determined the layout of the necropolis as far back as the first burials, according to the dates on the gravestones that had been made above the very precipice.

The polyconfessional composition of the population in the northwest region of Belarus is reflected in the occurrence of peculiar sectors at some cemeteries. It should be pointed out that it is characteristic for the localities with one confession predominating, as well as for comparatively big necropolises. Thus, in the village Sopockin of the Hrodna region, the cemetery is ‘Catholic’ because the major part of the buried there belong to this confession. A special sector allotted to the burials of the Orthodox and representatives of other confessions, as well as Atheists, appeared there at the end of the 1940s. At that time, they began to bury the dead residents of the nursing home there, placed in Svyatsk Poddubny (as of today – the village Radivilky of the Hrodna region). There was a piece of land allotted for the burials to the left from the cemetery gates. The burials of the non-Catholic were made in the given sector up to these days. The occurrence of the special sector at the given cemetery can be regarded in the context of religious situation in the Sopockin region. The cathedral there is in a very strong position with many people of strong belief. The investigations conducted here have revealed the elements of xenophobia towards adherents of different faiths. This situation, in our opinion, is reflected in the structure of the cemetery.



Picture 1. The gate to the cemetery in Sopockin. March 8, 2014.
Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

As a rule, there is one or several burials 'of honour' at the rural necropolises in northwest Belarus. The prestige of such a place may be determined by various reasons. Jan Bystron claimed that since the time of early Christianity, there has appeared a rite to erect a sacred place where the prominent people had been buried, the saints before everything.⁶ Should the necropolis be situated near the church, or if there was a chapel at the cemetery, the honorable burial would be situated, most probably, near the sacred place. It is the highest point of the landscape that can be used for the honorable place of a necropolis. The latter, by the way, should be taken into consideration when determining the time of establishment of a cemetery.

However, later on, the first burial places could be used for more recent burials, especially in the case of dead people with high social status. A good illustration of this is the cemetery in the city type settlement Sopockin of the Hrodna region. At the highest point of the necropolis, on the hill, linked with the entrance by the central alley, there are chapels-burial-vaults of the Gursky-Dzyakonsky kin, built in the 1860 – 1870s. The Gursky kin was the richest and the most respected family in the Sopockin region in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Their estate Syvatsk Poddubny was one of the most advanced and rich in the Hrodna area.⁷ This particular fact determined the choice for the location of the burial. Moreover, it can be assumed that some other burials were made in that place even earlier. By all means, down the slope of the hill much earlier graves can be found, such as the burial-vault of the Muchynsky (Mushynsky) gentry kin.

When charting the cemetery, it is necessary to mark the time of occurrence of each individual division. However, we should point out that not always it is possible, as the land previously used for the burial could be allotted for burials again. It was determined not just by the lack of land, but also by the lack of the main monuments. Most commonly a wooden cross was erected on the grave that rotted in about 20 – 30 years. New crosses were not erected as, according to the Belarusian belief, *one cannot put up a new cross on the grave when the old one rotted, otherwise you will die yourself*⁸. If a grave was not looked after, then such a burial mound was levelled to the earth in few years. In the necropolises of the cities and small towns, especially in the 19th – 20th century, there quite often were erected metal or stone crosses that guaranteed the preservation of the grave for a longer period. Location of remarkable burials is charted on the plan, including the oldest ones with unique gravestones and monuments, as well as communal graves, burials of prominent people and others.

Fencing of Necropolis

Cemetery fencing represents a fundamental attribute. In this way, the world of the living is demarcated from the world of the dead. Besides, as Sikora writes, the fence shows the area of the sanctified land where a human can be buried.⁹

At the rural necropolises in the northwest of Belarus, the fences are made of stone and wood and, in rare cases, of brick. Stone as a construction material has been broadly used in northwest Belarus since ancient times. The soil here abounds in stones left in its time by a glacier. When cultivating the fields, people were collecting stones and later used them in construction work. Household building-sites made of natural stone, as well as fences of the estates and prosperous households were well spread there. When cement and concrete became easily available at the second half of the 19th century, the

use of stones in construction began to spread. The majority of stone fences at necropolises appeared, according to our observations, at that particular time. Stone fences were commonly erected at the cemeteries of a big parish. Entrances to the necropolises are of known interest too. These were always, following the tradition, the lychgate and a door next to it. In the region, widespread elements of gate decoration were the high tetrahedral pillars with the roof in the shape of a pyramid or a capital. They were made of bricks even though the very fence was made of natural stone. The entrance to the cemetery in the village Gorodniki of the Oshmyany region and the city type settlement Sopockin of the Hrodna region have been formed.

Demarcation of Burials

The Slavic tradition since ancient times developed a peculiar understanding of the significance of a funeral ritual. It is closely connected with the rite of the ancestors. As Boris Rybakov puts it, the burial of ancestors in the ground could signify, first, as if they would protect the land areas of their tribe, and, secondly, that they, the ancestors put in the ground, contribute to the fertility power of the land.¹⁰ Demarcation of a grave, thus, was directly connected with the memory of ancestors who had to guard their kin. In the Belarusian traditional culture that has preserved a significant layer of pre-Christian beliefs and customs, the cult of ancestors makes one of the key elements. In this connection, the demarcation of a grave, the image of a monument, its shape and the beliefs connected with this element of funeral ritual have been thoroughly developed and regulated.

The main marker of a burial at the rural cemeteries in northwest Belarus is a cross. According to the tradition, immediately after the funeral a wooden cross was erected. Later it could be replaced by a stone or iron cross, or they could mount a stone monument. However, to replace the rotten wooden cross by the similar one, as mentioned before, was banned by the tradition. After mounting the monument, the wooden cross would lie near the grave for a year, and then it was either thrown away or put under the grave slab or the flower-bed on the grave.¹¹ The shape of a cross was determined by the confessional belonging.

The gravestones made of stone are quite common at the rural cemeteries. Their shape, size and material are varied, but in contrast to the crosses, one can notice here serial manufacturing. Stone monuments of the same type, an obelisk with a cross on top, were characteristic for twenty year period between the wars. Such monuments are seen in mass in the region, at the Catholic cemeteries primarily. In fact, the stone monuments and gravestones that were mounted in the rural necropolises beginning with the 20th century up to nowadays do not show any difference from the monuments in the city cemeteries.

The burials are marked not only with the help of a grave monument or a cross, but also with the help of fencing, i.e. demarcation of the boundaries of the grave with a rather low stone or concrete parapet. Fencing of a grave in Slavic tradition played a symbolic role, as it represented an analogy of the fenced yard playing the role of a house. The fencing is more common in Orthodox cemeteries, while fencing a grave in the Catholic cemeteries is a rare practice.

The inscriptions on the gravestones and crosses in the northwest region of Belarus reflect not just confessional, but also the language situation in the region. At the Catholic

cemeteries they more often use the Polish language, sometimes a local dialect, so called 'polszczyzna kresowa' [«польщизна кресо́ва»]. The latter one was actively developing in the twenty year period between the wars. It is especially common in the inscriptions of surnames and names. The inscriptions on the gravestones at the Orthodox cemeteries were mainly carved in the Russian language; to inscribe prayers and epitaphs the Church-Slavonic language could be used. The inscriptions in the Belarusian language at the rural cemeteries are solitary instances. It seems that it was determined by the fact that the funeral ritual was performed in accordance with the rules of the cathedral where the Belarusian language is not regarded a canonical language and is hardly ever used.

The traditions of remembrance of the dead in prayer in the northwest region of Belarus are different from the ones observed in its east and southeast regions. In the Homel and Mohilev areas up to these days there exists a tradition of having a meal at the graves during the remembrance days. In the Sennensky region of the Vytebsk oblast we have recorded a rite of meal at the fresh grave – funeral repast after the funeral ritual. In relation to such a tradition at the cemeteries, in these regions one can see near a grave a place specially equipped for a meal – a table and benches around it. In the north-west region such a tradition does not exist; funeral repast takes place outside the cemetery, but some ritual meal is brought to the grave – apples, bread, eggs, sometimes candies (the type of meal depends on the person who is buried). At the rural cemeteries the rite to mount rather small benches near the graves is popular, for those who have come to remember the dead. The benches can be mounted both inside and outside the fence. It is a common thing to see the objects at the cemeteries not directly connected with the funeral ritual. Before all, these are remembrance crosses, crosses-protectors, statues of the Saints, Christ and Mother of God, etc. The story of their appearance at the cemetery may provide us with additional, sometimes very valuable material for the study of traditions and history of the region. The material accumulated by a researcher in the course



Picture 2. The ornament on burial towels. The sing of 'dzjady' (Дзяды)- remembrance symbol – in the village Moskaly, Mosty district, Hrodna region.

Photo from the archive of Svetlana Selverstova

of investigation of necropolises commonly provides valuable evidence about the region which is either inaccessible or not easy to obtain by simply referring to written sources. In the case of the reconstruction of a micro-history, this material is of utmost importance as it provides data about the former inhabitants of the given locality or the people of its parish, the period of their life, blood relations, etc. On the other hand, in the course of investigation of necropolis an important role is played by oral history. Due to a scarcity of written resources or their total absence, wherein this exact situation characterizes the resources on the history of villages, the oral history provides opportunity to reconstruct much lost evidence which means reconstruction of the history of the very micro-region.

- ¹ Kopchjonova I. (ed.) *Zheludok: pamjat' o evrejskom mestechke*. Moskva: Centr "Sjefer", 2013.
- ² Sikora S. Cmentarz. Antropologia pamięci. *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*. T. 40, z. 1–2. Konteksty, 1986. – pp. 57–68.
- ³ http://www.region.grodno.by/ru/oblast/konfes_ (accessed 2014).
- ⁴ Sorkina I. Rolja mjastechak u procesah urbanizacyi w Bjelarusi w kancy XVIII – pachatku XX st. (na przykladzje Grodzjenskaj gubjerni). *Pracesy urbanizacyi w Bjelarusi: XIX – pachatak XIX st.*: zbornik navukovyh artykulaw. Grodna, GrDU imja Ja. Kupaly, 2010. – pp. 26–27.
- ⁵ Czyż A., Gutowski B. Prace inwentaryzacyjne łą cmentarzach Kresów wschodnich: założenia metodologiczne. *Ochrona Zabytków* No 56/1 (240), 2008. – pp. 21–30.
- ⁶ Bystroń J. Tematy, które mi odradzano. *Pisma etnograficzne rozposzone*. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980. – p. 220.
- ⁷ Sjał'vjerstava S. Ja., Slovik S. V. Svjack Gurskih (Radzivilki). *Sjadziby i parki Garadzjenshchyny*. Vypusk II. Grodna, 2004. – pp. 20–39.
- ⁸ *Zhyccja adujechny lad: bjelaruskija narodnyja prykmjety i pavjer'i*. Kniga 2. Minsk: Bjelarus, 2010. – p. 303.
- ⁹ Sikora S. Cmentarz. Antropologia pamięci. *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*. T. 40, z. 1–2. Konteksty, 1986. – p. 58.
- ¹⁰ Rybakov B. A. *Jazychestvo Drevnej Rusi*. Moskva: Nauka, 1987. – p. 74.
- ¹¹ Kruk Ja., Kotovich O. *Koleso vremeni: tradicii i sovremennost'*. Belarus': Minsk, 2010. – p. 217.

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Aleksandr Dobriyan, Yuliya Yurkovec

EVOLUTION OF FUNERAL TRADITIONS OF THE VILLAGE POPULATION OF BELORUSIAN PONEMANYE (ON THE MATERIALS OF THE NECROPOLISES OF THE VILLAGE KOMATAVA OF THE HRODNA DISTRICT)

Summary

The paper presents the findings of the complex investigation of the burial monuments consisting of ancient necropolis (an archaeological monument), church necropolis, Communal (parish) country cemetery and unknown burials, which allow tracing the evolution of funeral rituals and gravestones beginning with the 14th / 15th century and up to the 21st century.

Throughout many centuries the residents of the village Komatava and neighbouring villages have buried the dead in about one and the same place. Finding out the religious affiliations of the burials on the monument Komatava-5 seems impossible due to the lack of identifying artefacts.

To some extent it also refers to the early burials at the Communal cemetery. Merely by comparing the burials of the church necropolis and parish cemetery, one can claim that it is Orthodox. One can quite easily trace the evolution of the gravestone monuments throughout a few centuries. The economic and technical possibilities of the inhabitants of the village, and their outlook and concern regarding the preservation of family memory have greatly affected the modification of the funeral ritual and gravestone monuments.

Key words: artefacts, necropolis, cemetery, epitaph, church

*

In the suburbs of the village Komatava of the Obuhovo municipal council in the Hrodna region there are four known locations of the graves that are dated across various historical periods.

The earliest of them is the necropolis known in the scientific archaeological literature as Komatava-5. It is multicultural and multigenerational monument consisting of the Stone Age settlement, the Iron Age (extinct ancient not protected) settlement and a cemetery dated the 14 / 15th to the 17 / 18th century.

A fairly small necropolis is situated on the territory of the Church of Holy Transfiguration.

The main country necropolis in the village Komatava is an active Communal (in the past parish) cemetery which, according to the inscriptions preserved on the gravestones, is dated to middle of the 19th century. It is not excluded that the given cemetery was functioning also in much earlier times, beginning with the 18th century.

In 2013 graves near the road passing from the village Komatava to the village Ogorodniki were accidentally discovered. The graves are situated almost opposite the

Communal cemetery. The most ancient village necropolis – an archaeological monument Komatava-5 – is of considerable scientific interest. It has been known for a long time, repeatedly inspected and investigated. The monument was investigated in 1958 (Frida Gurevich) and in 1973 – 1975 (Jaroslav Zverugo).² In 1988 – 1989, the archaeological investigations of the monument were conducted by Alla Kvjatkovskaja, as a result of which two graves have been investigated.³

The archaeological monument Komatava-5 is situated on the right bank of the flooded land terrace of the river Neman, 150 metres to the south from the eastern suburb of the village Komatava, 100 m to the south from the church, near the mouth of the nameless stream (on its left bank), 850 m to the northeast from the mouth of Kotra. It takes a cape-shaped rise of the flooded land terrace stretched from the northwest to the southeast as long as 150 m. The width of the monument is about 60 m. The western part of the monument is covered with turf. From the eastern side since the 1990s there has been a forest plantation, as a result of which the growing layer here is damaged as deep as 0.3 m.⁴

In the northern and central part of the raised place, stones can be seen sticking out, some of which have been polished. One of the stones shows an inscription with the date 1789. Some of the gravestones might have been destroyed during the forest plantation in the 1990s or earlier. The researcher Kvyatkovska also mentions a stone cross 1.28 m high that was put up at the headstone of one of the burials⁵, however, the cross has not survived until the present. In her opinion, the cross might have been earlier a stone idol, but later it was shaped in the form of a cross.

The monuments of such type are well spread throughout the territory of Belarus. Even in the neighbourhood of the city of Hrodna there are a few such cemeteries (monuments near the villages Korobchicy, Pushkary, Naumovichy); however, no archaeological investigation has been conducted there.

The studies of the necropolis were conducted in 2010 in the large scale framework of archaeological investigations of the territories subjected to submerge during the construction of the Hrodna hydro-electro station on the river Neman; the investigations were conducted by the complex expedition (National Academy of Science, Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, Alexander Pushkin Brest State University). Over the course of the investigation, 448 m² (264 m² up to the subsoil) were excavated.⁶ The excavations were situated on the slope of the first flooded land terrace of the Neman River, in the northwest part of the summit.

During the archaeological examination, numerous human remains have been recorded (the archaeological handling was performed by Olga Yemelyanchyk). More than 300 remains had been inspected and it was found out that 48 of them belonged to



Picture 1. Necropolises of the village Komatovo, the Hrodna district, Hrodna region.

View from the satellite

children and more than 250 to adults.⁷ The preservation of human remains is very poor owing to the nearness of Neman and the recurring flooding of the slopes of the hillock. Regretfully, the major part of the burials were destroyed or shifted from their places. The major part of the skeletons have remained in fragments, and some remains show only individual bones. Some burials are represented just in the fragments of diaphysis, long tubular bones, while the rest of the bones have been destroyed. The burials were made at different depths, one above another. As most probably the burial ground was used continuously, it is difficult to decide on the number of the layers of the burials.

In the course of investigation numerous stones and boulders were discovered. In the central part of the excavations, the remains of a stone basement consisting of unpolished boulders were found. It may be assumed that the said construction functioned as a church or chapel. In the centre of the construction there was a half-rotten wooden beam and a stone crypt made of flat polished boulders found. On the top, there were bricks over the stones, and the bottom of the crypt was paved with stones. In the crypt more than five graves were discovered, many of which were destroyed as a result of new burials made. It gives the grounding to claim that the crypt was used for the burials for a long time. Apart from the crypt, numerous graves were placed inside the construction. Practically all of them had been destroyed. Inside the construction and outside it there were five stones with crosses found. Some of the stones, undoubtedly, belonged to the gravestones.



Picture 2. Burial 218. village Komatovo, Hrodna district, Hrodna region.
Picture from Yuliya Yurkovec's archive

During the excavations, a great number of social and household objects were collected (more than 10000 items). Pottery broken into tiny bits (most probably on purpose brought to the cemetery), knives, whetstones, needles, coins and adornments were also found there. These individual finds gave a possibility to establish the date of the monument. First, these are coins and adornments that help to determine the date of establishment of the first burials. The earliest coin is dated the end of 15th century, while analogical adornments, found in Lithuania, are dated the 13th–14th century.⁸ The upper

date (17th – 18th century) is known thanks to the coins – *boratinkas* and the stone with a date on top the monument.

In April 2011, a ceremonial reburial of the remains in the south-eastern corner of the excavations took place.

When the pits were filled with sand, the stones with crosses and a few boulders without crosses were put up in that place. The crosses are southwest oriented, i.e. the orientation of the gravestones which existed prior to the excavations was preserved. The place of the 2010 excavations is marked by stones. Further on, the locals put up a cross in that place which was taken from the functioning cemetery; they also brought funeral wreaths and artificial flowers. They cannot manage without this place during religious feasts related to the remembrance of the dead. They bring wreaths and light lamps or icons here.



Picture 3. Stone burial ground, reburied after archaeological investigation. Village Komatava, Hrodna district, Hrodna region. October 29, 2013. Photo by Yuliya Yurkovec

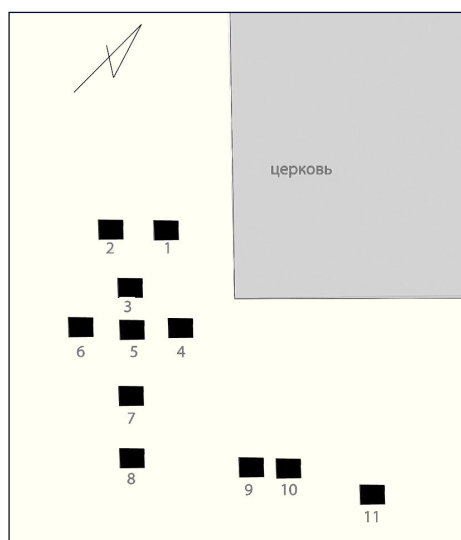
A fairly small necropolis is situated on the territory of the Church of Holy Transfiguration at the south-eastern end of the village Komatava. The very church was built from wood in 1844 – 1846 and is regarded as a monument of national architecture with the classicist elements.⁹ It was in this place, in the family of an Orthodox priest of the village Komatava, that Anthon Budilovich, a Russian philologist, Slavist and publicist, was born in 1846. In 1890 he was the rector of Warsaw University and since 1892 of the Imperial Yuriev University.¹⁰

At that time, the church parish was large. In 1899, there were 2938 parishioners from thirteen neighbouring villages: Komatava, Aleksandrovo, Vytjky, Gorny, Zagorcy, Kurniky, Mygovo, Novoselky, Ogorodniki, Plavy, Puzhychy, Sjeljuki, and Sivkovo.¹¹

At the church there was a functioning parish cemetery. Apart from the cemetery the lands right around the territory were used for the burials. Inside the church fence, priests and members of their families were buried. There were few fashionable burials. Within the church fence from the southern and south-eastern side of the church walls, there are eleven accounted graves. All gravestones have inscriptions that allowed us to identify the burials.

The graves of priests and their family members within the church fence are evidence of their tight relations to the Komatava parish. Regarding the fashionable burials, no firm statements are possible. It is only possible to assume that their burials within the frame of the church fence were established merely owing to their social status.

Communal rural (former Orthodox parish) cemetery is situated in the territory of the Obuhovo municipal council of the Hrodna region. Apart from it there is a Catholic cemetery in the village Zhytomlya and three Orthodox cemeteries in the villages Komatava, Savolevka and Sjeljuki. The cemetery in the village Komatava is the largest



Picture 4. Church cemetery. Plan of burials. Village Komatava, Hrodna district, Hrodna region.

Compiled by the authors of the paper

necropolis by area considered in the given article. It is located on the second flooded land terrace about 250 m to the southeast of the village, to the right from the road leading from the village Komatava to the village Ogorodniki. The cemetery has the shape of an irregular triangle. On its southern side it is restricted by the slope of the flooded land terrace, on its northern side, it is restricted by the road, on the west and east sides – by ravines. It appeared, probably, in the 17th – 18th century when due to frequent floods the burials at the archaeological monument Komatava-5, situated on the right flooded land terrace of the Neman riverbank, were terminated.

At present the cemetery in the village Komatava is not a parish cemetery. In 2010, it was transferred for the account to the Hrodna district unitary enterprise – Skydel housing and communal facilities. The immediate maintenance of the cemetery is

provided by the division of this enterprise run by Igor Volkov. By efforts of the workmen of the division, the territory of the cemetery was freed from the densely growing vegetation, cleaned and regularly cleared of rubbish. On the staff of the division there is a cemetery keeper's position, the person is directly responsible for the cleaning of the cemetery. As of January 1, 2014, the keeper is a villager of Komatava, Yelena Demyanova. Besides, the supervision over the condition of the cemetery is provided by Komatava's village headman, Tamara Kuzmickaya.

In the 1990s, through efforts of the local collective farm, the road leading from the village to the cemetery was asphalted, and the stone-concrete wall separating the cemetery from the road was constructed. The height of the wall is 1 m. It has two passages, one as wide as 5.6 m and the other 4.2 m. Besides that, there are two passages 1 m wide each. In the process of investigation of the cemetery at its eastern end 50 m from the side, four concrete grave pillars and a fragment of a wooden fence (probably a part of the once existing cemetery fence) were discovered.

Near this fence fragment, almost at the road, two graves were found. One in the form of an iron fence without any gravestone, which, regarding the method of its

manufacturing, may be dated the second half of the 20th century. The second one – with a gravestone in the shape of a wooden cross and a metal plate (so called – shield) indicating the surnames and the years of life. Among the locals there is an opinion that one of these graves belongs to the resident of the village Ogorodniki who had wished he was buried closer to his house. It is not excluded that the given burials are the graves of the suicides who, according to the church canon, had to be buried outside the cemetery.

According to the local resident Kuzmickaya, ever since the middle of the previous century in the centre of the very cemetery there was a fairly small wooden chapel. In the opinion of a local lore, history and economy specialist Vasily Semko, the cemetery church was built in 1860 using the funds of the parishioners of the Komatava church. It was a wooden construction covered with wooden boards – shingles. The internal and external walls were sheathed in boards and painted in oil. During the Soviet times, the chapel was not functioning; instead it was used for economic needs by the local collective farm. In the 1980s, it was burnt and new graves appeared in its place. It seems impossible to determine the exact location of the cemetery church at the present.

The oldest, well-preserved graves are found in the central part of the present day cemetery, in a rather low place 1 – 1.5 m above the level of the rest of the area of the cemetery. The oldest grave in that part of the cemetery is dated by an inscription 1868. The present day burials are missing there due to a great number of wild bushes and trees roots that made it difficult to dig new graves; the good preservation of the burials can probably be explained by this fact.

Of no small importance is the factor that the low place has never been regarded a good place for burials as it might be flooded as a result of atmospheric precipitation and melting snow. Thus, it is logical to presuppose that initially this cemetery started to be formed in a different place and, probably, on the high edge of the flooded land terrace, facing the Neman River.

There, among the modern burials, gravestones of unpolished field stones are found. Some of them have signs that are hard to distinguish or unreadable inscriptions. A part of the gravestones is thrown down or moved from their places as a result of new burials.

Over practically all the territory of the cemetery the ancient graves are placed next to the present day burials. The highest concentration of the old graves can be observed in the central and southern parts of the cemetery. In the western part the burials made beginning with the 1940s and up to nowadays prevail. Some time later, beginning with the 1950s, they began making burials in the northern part of the cemetery and in its eastern part since the 1990s. Present day graves are concentrated in the eastern part of the necropolis; this part lacks earlier burials. According to the keeper Demyanova, as the area of the cemetery is limited but the fence occurs on the one side only and separates the cemetery from the road, the suicides were also buried in the territory of the cemetery. One such burial is situated at the south-eastern edge of the cemetery, at a distance from the main burials.



Picture 5. Church cemetery. View from the East. Village Komatava, Hrodna district, Hrodna region. October 29, 2013. Photo by Yuliya Yurkovec

As far as the given cemetery is active, to find out how much the funeral ritual has been changing throughout the whole period of its functioning seems impossible. No doubt that the form of the funeral ritual, i.e. combination of its type and kind, was the positioning of a dead body into a pit (inhumation). In contrast to the earlier burials at the archaeological monument Komatava-5 where the position of the arms of the buried varied, today the dead are buried with the arms laid together on their belly.

To discuss the orientation of the buried according to the parts of the world may be possible only by observing the position of the gravestones, should one assume that they were put up solely at the head of the dead. The orientation of the burials does not manifest in any uniform way. The majority of the graves are oriented towards the paths and situated in such a way that walking down the path one can see the inscription on the monument. Moreover, the rows of the graves are oriented towards different directions.

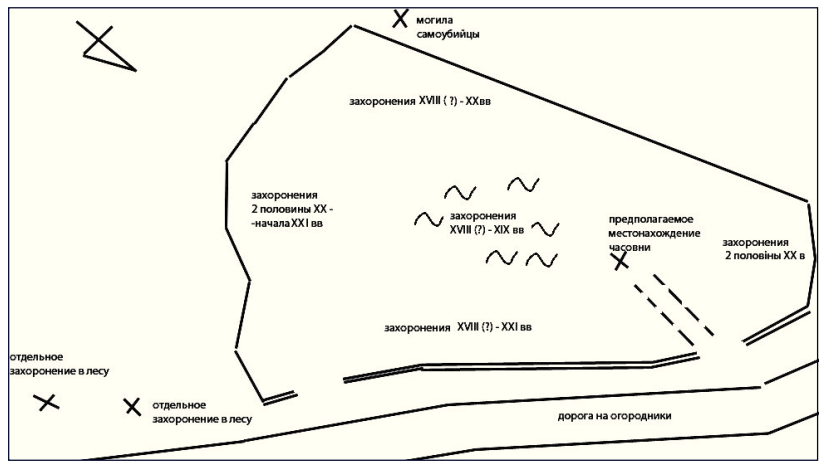
According to the locals, they used to recruit fellow villagers who were not related to the dead by blood. At present, this is done by communal services or organizations providing ritual services.

In spite of the fact that until 2010 the cemetery was regarded as an Orthodox parish, the representatives of other confessions have been buried here beginning with the 1990s. The majority of these are Catholics. All in all there are about ten burials in the territory of the cemetery with the Catholic crosses. The family grave of a father and a son behind one fence is of particular interest. The father's monument shows a Catholic cross, whereas the son's is Orthodox. One can assume that the wife and mother of the dead was Orthodox and that influenced the faith of the son. It testifies to the increasing role of women in the religious upbringing of children. Whereas previously the faith was determined by the father's religion, in recent times the religious belonging of women who are more inclined to religion has a known impact.

At the cemetery there is one family grave of Orthodox Jews. It is placed separately from the other graves in the north-eastern corner of the cemetery. Besides, with reference to Kuzmickaya, in the 1980s a Muslim – an immigrant from the Middle Asia who died during his military service in the regiment dislocated not far from Komatava in the village Aleksandrovo – was buried at the cemetery.

As it seems impossible to provide a detailed characterization of the funeral ritual of the burials at the Communal cemetery we will only point to the visual features of the burials which are most vividly manifested in the shapes of burial constructions and types of gravestones.

The Communal cemetery of the village Komatava shows two types of burial constructions: single and family. Both types are represented by the following kinds: gravestone monuments without any fence; gravestone monuments are placed inside a high open-work metal fence; gravestone monuments are placed inside a low metal fence; gravestone monuments placed inside a stone (concrete) fence; gravestone monuments put up on the massive stone (concrete) slabs.



Picture 6. Map of Communal cemetery in village Komatava, Hrodna district, Hrodna region. Compiled by the authors of the paper



Picture 7. Communal cemetery. Village Komatava, Hrodna district, Hrodna region. December 12, 2013. Photo by Aleksandr Dobriyan

In the production of the gravestones, various materials that were used to some extent reflect, so to say, the fashion trends and simultaneously technical abilities of the

masters craftsmen. The material resources of the family of the deceased in selecting the material for the gravestone and the method of its design were of no small importance either. Gravestone monuments put up at the Communal cemetery of the village Komatava can be classified as follows: gravestones of unpolished boulders lengthened in their shape; gravestones of boulders polished on one side only; gravestones of polished natural stone; concrete gravestones; different shaped gravestones of concrete with marble bits added; crosses of iron or stainless steel pipes; gravestones of granite.

The comparative analysis of the burial monuments at the Communal cemetery of the village Komatava allows us to determine some characteristic features of the burial constructions of different times of the existence of the necropolis.

With known certainty it can be stated that the first burials at the given necropolis refer to the beginning of the 19th century. This period is characterized by single burials with the gravestones in the form of unpolished boulders. This type might exist up to the middle of the 20th century. Unfortunately, to clarify whether there were any of family graves is impossible as one cannot specify who the buried belong to.

Merely in the second half of the 19th century rare inscriptions with the indication of the name of the deceased person and year of death began to appear.

Since the middle of the 19th century, the gravestones of partly polished boulders appeared. The graves within the church fence belonging to the family members of the priest can be referenced as this particular type. The boulders show the name and the year of death of the dead. There are no such gravestones in the Communal cemetery.

At the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, gravestones of polished natural stone appeared. These are represented both in the form of ordinary stone pillars covered with Orthodox crosses of cast iron, as well as complex stone compositions with an Orthodox cross at its base. On such gravestones the name of the deceased, how long he / she had lived and when he / she died were indicated but the date of birth was not there. The burial constructions of the interwar period at the cemetery have not been identified. Possibly the economical position of the parishioners did not allow to erect monuments. The burials of the war period have not been recorded either. The only burial with the indication of the year of death of the buried, 1943, is made of natural stone in a shape of a pillar. The epitaph says:

*May he rest in peace
Dear son and brother
We are standing over your remains
Sad and mournful
Mother Vera, brother Pavel, and the sisters.*

The very monument was probably built in the post-war years.

Post-war gravestones in the 1950 – 1960s were made of concrete. A compulsory attribute of the gravestone was an Orthodox cross in the shape of a top of cast iron. Later on these gravestones were painted.

In the 1960 – 1970s, the concrete gravestones of marble bits appeared. From that time until the present, the marble bits have been used as an element of decoration of the gravestones. During this period only the shapes and quality of the work have changed. The flower beds turned into an additional element of the burials that were adjusted to the gravestone and reproduced the contour of the grave pit.

At the same time, family graves fenced by a high, open-work, as a rule welded of iron armature railing, appeared. In the 1960s – 1980s instead of wooden crosses and traditional gravestones the crosses of metal pipes were started to put up. Rather often they used stainless steel pipes applied merely in a factory. The iron and stainless steel pipes were also used in the production of light fences. Verse epitaphs were characteristic of that period.

Since the 1980s, massive gravestones have been used instead of fences. They are characteristic of both single and family burials. Rather often family gravestones were made ‘with prospect’, but on the monuments the names of both the dead and the living were inscribed, the latter without indication of the date of death. The character of the epitaphs has been modified too. They became more laconic: *from wife, son and relatives; remembered by mother and son; remember, love, lament; may he rest in peace.*

At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, various shapes of gravestones of black granite in the form of massive slabs appeared.

In 2013, near the village Komatava a trench was examined that was used by the locals who were taking sand for their household needs and construction works. The trench is located on the hillock, on the right from the road passing from the village Komatava to the Communal cemetery; it almost adjoins it. The very hillock has densely planted trees and bushes, but its surface is very uneven. At the top part of the trench, in its profile, one can easily trace the remains of two grave pits, approximately oriented from west to east. During the investigation, human remains were discovered: a scalp, bones of human extremities, etc. As the locals say, there used to be more bones, but they collected some of these bones and buried in the communal cemetery. There was no mark of a gravestone construction; the funeral tools were not found either. The specifics of the funeral ritual: presence of grave pits oriented in accordance with the church canon as well as nearness of that place to the former Orthodox parish cemetery make it possible to presume that a village cemetery might have been located in that place.

But the lack of grave tombs and funeral tools does not enable us to identify confessional belonging and the date of the burial. Presumably, the said burials once used to be a part of the common parish cemetery, the earliest one, and some of the graves might have been destroyed during the road construction. Some other versions of the occurrence of the graves are not excluded either. The locals consider that there may be soldiers of the Red Army who died during the liberation of the village in 1944 and were buried there. This version requires additional investigation though. Kuzmickaya confirms that further in the woods there was a military burial, but in the 1970s the remains of the soldiers were exhumed and reburied in the Communal grave in the village Obuhovo.

Thus, the analysis of the burial monuments complex consisting of the archaeological monument Komatava-5, church necropolis, Communal (parish) country cemetery and unknown burials provides an opportunity to trace the evolution of the funeral ritual and gravestone monuments beginning with the 14th/15th up to the 21st century.

One may conclude that throughout many centuries the residents of the village Komatava and the neighbouring villages buried the dead people in about one and the same place. It seems impossible to find out the religious belonging of the burials at the monument Komatava-5 due to the lack of identifying artefacts. To some extent, it also refers to the early burials at the Communal cemetery. Merely by comparing the burials of the church necropolis and the parish cemetery one can claim that this cemetery was Orthodox.

The evolution of the gravestone monuments throughout a number of centuries is fairly well traced.

Economic and technical resources of the villagers, their outlook and concern regarding the preservation of the family memory greatly impacted how the funeral ritual was modified.

¹ Gurevich F. D. *Drevnosti Belorusskogo Poneman'ja*. Moskva – Leningrad, 1962. – p. 147.

² *Zbor pomnikaw gistoryi i kul'tury Bjelarskaj SSR. Grodzjenskaja voblast'*. Minsk, 1986. – p. 157.

³ Kvjatkovskaja A. V. *Jatvjazhskie mogil'niki Belarusi* (k XI – XVII vv). Vil'njus, 1998. – p. 21.

⁴ Lakiza V. L., Jurkavjec Ju. V., Harytanovich Z. A., Plavinski M. A. *Spravazdacha No 4 ab vykananni navukovyh arhjealogichnyh dasljedavannjaj na pomnikah arhjealogii Migova 1 – GES, Sjeljuki 1 – GES, Daroshavichy 1 – GES, Daroshavichy 3 – GES, Navasjolki 1 – GES, Daroshavichy 2 – GES, Gljadavichy 1 – GES, Komatava 5 – GES u zonje budawnictva Grodzjenskaj GES na r. Njoman u 2010 g.* Minsk, 2011.

⁵ Kvjatkovskaja A. V. *Jatvjazhskie mogil'niki Belarusi* (k XI – XVII vv.). Vil'njus, 1998. – p. 35, picture 2.2.

⁶ Lakiza V. L., Jurkavjec Ju. V., Harytanovich Z. A., Plavinski M. A. *Spravazdacha No 4 ab vykananni navukovyh arhjealogichnyh dasljedavannjaj na pomnikah arhjealogii Migova 1 – GES, Sjeljuki 1 – GES, Daroshavichy 1 – GES, Daroshavichy 3 – GES, Navasjolki 1 – GES, Daroshavichy 2 – GES, Gljadavichy 1 – GES, Komatava 5 – GES u zonje budawnictva Grodzjenskaj GES na r. Njoman u 2010 g.* Minsk, 2011.

⁷ Jurkavjec Ju. V., Jemjel'janchik V. A. Vyniki arhjealogichnaga i antropalogichnaga vyvuchennja materyjalaw pahavannjaj z pomnika Komatava-5 – GES. *Materyjaly pa arhjealogii Bjelarusi*. Vypusk 23. Minsk, 2012. – p. 161.

⁸ *Kernave – litewska Troja. Katalog wystawy ze zbiorów Państwowego Muzeum-Rezerwatu Archeologii i Historii w Kernave, Litwa*. Warszawa, 2002. – p. 193, picture, 520–521.

⁹ *Komatava. Spasa – Praabrazhenskaka carkva. Pravaslawnija hramy na Bjelarusi*. Minsk, 2011. – p. 103.

¹⁰ Pjatkjevich A. M. *Ljudzi kul'tury z Grodzjenshchyny: Davjednik*. Grodna, 2000. – pp. 36–37.

¹¹ *Grodnenski pravoslavno-cerkovnyj kalendar' ili pravoslavie v brestsko-grodnenskoj zemle v konce XIX v.* Izdanie vtoroe. Tom 1. Voronezh, 1899. – p. 139.

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