

CIVITAS RUTENICA IN EARLY VILNIUS IN THE 14TH AND 15TH CENTURIES. THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT

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Abstract

The Civitas Rutenica area, inhabited by Orthodox believers, emerged in Vilnius in the late 13th century and early 14th century. The development of this part of the city can be traced all through the 14th century. The cemetery that was discovered in the central part of Civitas Rutenica reflects cultural and social changes in the Orthodox community. Christian burial rites were practised in this cemetery. Several graves contained luxurious grave goods, including jewellery, some of which was common to the Slavs, and some of which had local origins. As an integrated approach to burial traditions indicates, people of the Orthodox faith were buried in this cemetery. According to written sources, the elite from Rus' arrived in Vilnius at that time. An analysis of anthropological material reveals some features of the social structure of the Orthodox community.

Key words: Civitas Rutenica, Medieval cemetery, jewellery, Christianity, anthropology, sociology.

Introduction

The Russian town Civitas Rutenica was mentioned for the first and only time in the chronicles of the Teutonic Order in 1383 (Marburgietis 1999, p.185). It was a separate part of Vilnius, settled by Orthodox incomers. This mention allows the importance of this part of the town to be highlighted. It demonstrates the fact that Crusader forces, although small, were sent to destroy Civitas Rutenica. However, it leaves unanswered the question whether Civitas Rutenica, such as we understand it now, was mentioned by Wigand of Marburg. There is a possibility that the entire city was described as Civitas Rutenica, since Orthodox believers made up a large part of the townspeople. Half of the population of Vilnius was baptised in 1387, since the other half was already Christian, the majority of them Orthodox (Baronas 2005, p.164).

The emergence of Civitas Rutenica leaves another big question. It is assumed that the first incomers began to settle here in the late 13th and early 14th centuries (Jonaitis 2009, p.414). However, recent archaeological data allows us to speak about the last quarter of the 13th century.

Who were the first newcomers, what were their customs and their social structure, and what was their world-view, and their attitude to the family? An analysis of material from the cemetery at Bokšto St 6 allows us to speak about the formation of Civitas Rutenica. This data reflects the socio-cultural changes that took place in Vilnius' Orthodox community.¹ The aim of

¹ Apart from the cemetery on Latako St (where 114 graves were found), the cemetery on Bokšto St is the only almost fully investigated cemetery in Vilnius from the time. It

this article is to understand the culture and the social structure of the Civitas Rutenica community. They can be traced through the funeral customs, anthropological data, and grave goods.

A brief overview of the emergence and development of Civitas Rutenica

As has been mentioned above, the emergence of Civitas Rutenica is not clear, as we are unable to specify the exact time of the arrival of the first members of the Orthodox population in Vilnius. Recent archaeological data allows us to date the existence of Civitas Rutenica to the last quarter of the 13th century. It is unlikely that Orthodox newcomers settled here before this date, because Vilnius, as the capital of the grand duke, did not exist yet (Vaitkevičius 2010, p.64).

The earliest cultural layer in the area of Civitas Rutenica was traced to the area of Latako and Bokšto streets (Jonaitis, Viazhiavichiene 2009, p.95). It can be dated to the first half of the 14th century (Katalynas 2009, p.53). At the time, it was the most practical and strategically important place around the Old Town of modern Vilnius. To the west of it there existed a specific corridor between the second and third terraces of the River Neris; the current Pilies and Didžioji streets are now located in it (Valionienė 2009, p.443). This corridor was one of the crossroads between major trading routes. The position was also good due to the fact that it was a safe distance from the pagan areas. Besides, the high groundwater was important.

has to be mentioned that the graves were rescued from the excavator's bucket on Latako St, and this disturbance possibly affected the information received.

The clearer expansion of Civitas Rutenica can be traced from the middle of the 14th century. It can be characterised by the rapid increase in the number of Orthodox churches. The construction of the churches was greatly supported by Maria of Vitebsk and Julijona of Tver, the two wives of Algirdas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, who were both of the Orthodox faith. At the end of the 14th century, the development of Civitas Rutenica increased at an impressive speed. By that time, it had already expanded to the west, partly including the current areas of Savičiaus and Augustijonų streets. According to available data, at the beginning of the 15th century, Civitas Rutenica had reached an area of about ten to 12.5 hectares.

Archaeological, historical, topographical and hydrographical data helps us to define the chronological and spatial development of Civitas Rutenica. These aspects are important in evaluating the role of the Russian town in the process of Vilnius' growth.

This article will focus on the cemetery at Bokšto St 6, for it is located in the central part of Civitas Rutenica. The cemetery was used for a long time, from the end of the 13th century to the middle of the 15th century. The very good survival not only of osteological material but also of grave goods is significant. Thus, thanks to this cemetery, we can identify social and cultural changes that took place in the Orthodox community over approximately 150 years.

The Bokšto St cemetery

A comprehensive analysis of research into cemeteries dated to the end of the 14th century to the 18th century was made by E. Svetikas (Svetikas 2002; 2003), and renewed in 2009 (Svetikas 2009a, footnote 1). Therefore, only historiography related directly to our subject will be used.

The cemetery at Bokšto St 6 was excavated from 2006 to 2011, with the exception of the year 2008 (Kvizikevičius, Sarcevičius 2006; Jonaitis 2009; Jonaitis, Kaplūnaitė 2010; Jonaitis, Kaplūnaitė 2011). During the investigations, a cemetery with inhumation burials was detected at a depth of 250 to 350 centimetres from the existing ground surface. A total of 448 burials have been found so far. The cemetery is located on one of the upper terraces of the River Vilnia. The presumed area of this cemetery is about 2,473 square metres. About 850 square metres are left to explore: hence, up to now, about 65% of the presumed burial site has been explored.

According to currently available data, the area and the limits of the cemetery were strongly influenced by

natural conditions and by the terrain. Attempts were made to use the complicated terrain to the full: for example, in the eastern part of the cemetery, the graves are located on the very edge of a steep slope. Several graves or parts of graves were even found a few metres lower down from the upper terrace, to the left of it. The eastern boundary of the river's terrace is well traced through the entire plot at Bokšto St 6, and it also marks the eastern boundary of the cemetery. The other three boundaries of the cemetery are not so clear. The western boundary reaches the current Bokšto St, while the northern boundary (in the western part of the area) reaches the current Išganytojo St. These two streets are among the oldest streets in Vilnius, and already existed in the 14th century. It is unlikely that the cemetery extended further. However, this theory cannot be proven until archaeological investigations under these streets have been performed. The southeast boundary of the cemetery can be traced reasonably well by the arrangement of the graves. This boundary still remains hypothetical, and will so until archaeological investigations (planned for the future) are carried out in this part of the area (Fig. 1).

All the burials in the Bokšto St cemetery were at a depth of up to only 50 centimetres from the former ground level. The structure of sterile soil is threefold in the area. The upper layer consists of yellow sand. Below the first layer, sandy gravel was detected. The burials were discovered just above this layer. Only one exception is known, when three graves were detected in white sand. This white sand layer is below the gravel. A survey of the cemetery's geology helps us to make some noticeable conclusions: it is clear that the graves were dug in soft, easy-to-dig soil, as no burial was detected in natural gravel.

The graves

Only inhumation graves were detected in the Bokšto St cemetery. All the graves were oriented in an east-west direction, with marginal error, with the head to the west. Only three graves, detected in the east of the cemetery, do not fit this pattern (Plate I.1). It seems that a family (husband, wife and child) were buried here.² The adults are oriented in an east-west and northwest-southeast direction, while the child is oriented in a north-south direction. No conclusion can be made so far as to why these people were buried so differently, on the slope, beyond the boundary of the cemetery.

² All the osteological material is stored at the University of Vilnius, in the Faculty of Medicine; some of the material is still under investigation.

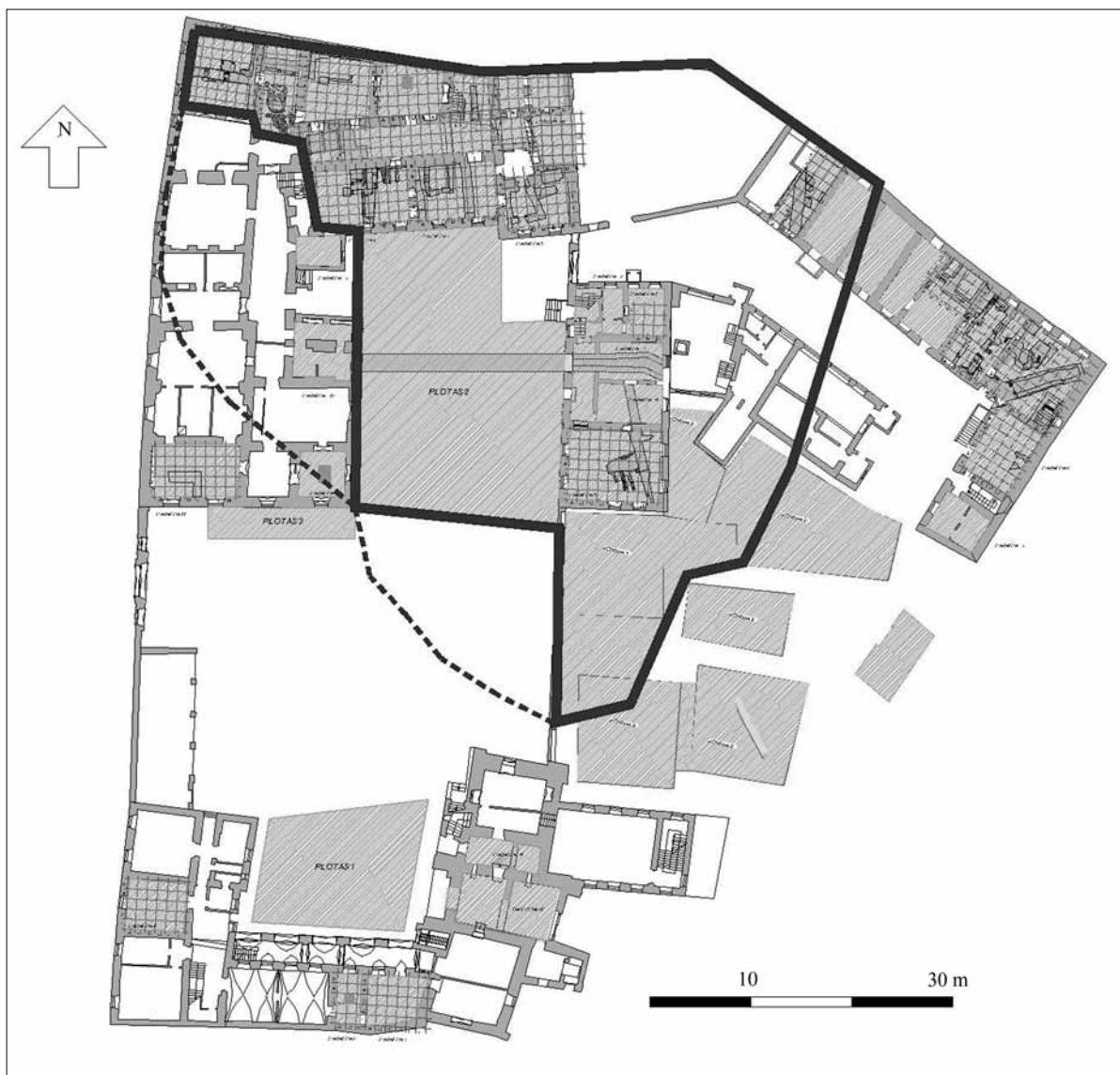


Fig. 1. The plan of the excavated area at the Bokšto St cemetery. Bold line: the area with graves. Dotted line: the presumed southwest boundary of the cemetery (map compiled by O. Valionienė and I. Kaplūnaitė).



Fig. 2. Grave 347 (photograph by R. Jonaitis).

The dead were buried in wooden coffins, on their backs. Only one exception is known so far of a burial in a prone position (face down) (Fig. 2). Large stones and rotten wood were found on both sides of the buried individual. Apparently, some wooden structures were constructed in this grave. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that the deceased was not pushed into the grave, as, for example, in Kriveikiškės Kernavė (Vėlius 2005, p.38). On the contrary, the individual was buried with care, in a coffin. The question remains as to why he was buried face-down. Several theories can be suggested. According to folklore, buried individuals were buried face-down because of the fear that they might rise again (Vėlius 2010, p.66). Eugenijus Svetikas gives another interpretation. He describes such burials as graves of very pious people (Svetikas 2003, p.151).

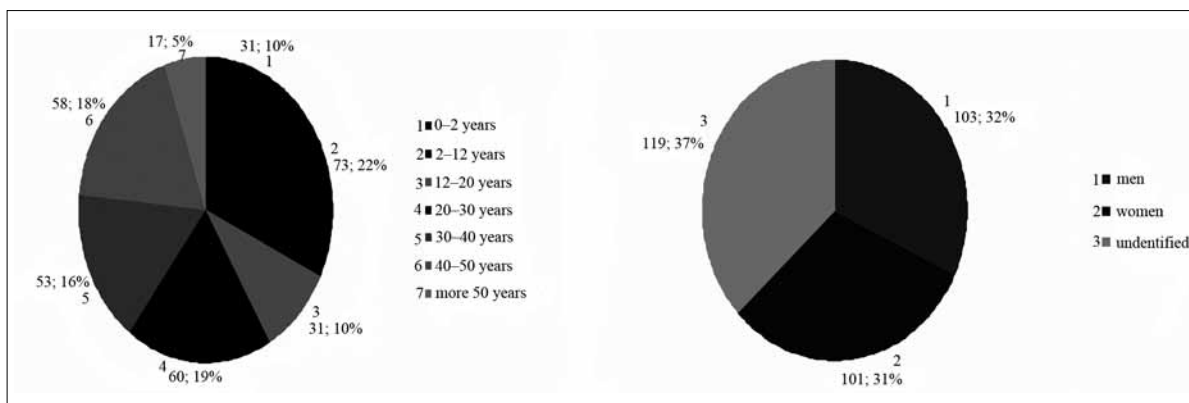


Fig. 3. Statistics: 1 according to age; 2 according to sex (compiled by the author).

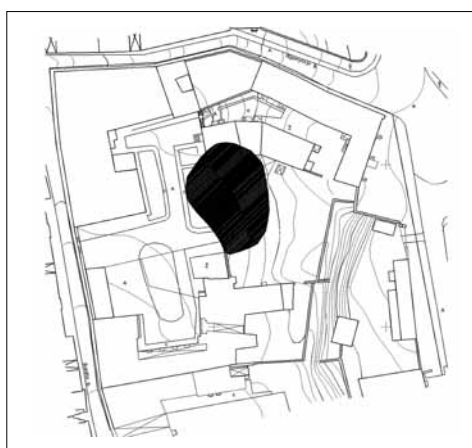


Fig. 4. A plan of the Bokšto St 6 area. Marked in red: the area of the presumed earliest part of the cemetery (map by R. Zilinskas and I. Kaplūnaitė).

Iron nails, found in several graves, can be considered evidence of the use of coffins. Although only a few nails were found, traces of wooden rots were observed in the majority of the burials. Accordingly, the conclusion might be made that the individuals were buried in coffins or coffin-like wooden structures (they could have been constructed out of unattached planks).

As is mentioned above, 448 burials have been found so far (the archaeological excavations are not finished yet). For statistics, 323 burials were selected, considering the skeleton or part of it fixed in an anatomical position as a burial. This number comprises 31 infants, 73 children, 31 adolescents and 188 adults (Fig. 3.1). We can speak about 103 men, 101 women, and 119 burials which remain unidentified (Fig. 3.2). The large number of children's and adolescents' graves is significant in this cemetery. Individuals under 20 years old make up 42% of all the burials. We should draw attention to the concentrations of children's graves in the cemetery, such as the area in the central part of the cemetery.

The pattern of burials allows us to make an analysis of the development of the cemetery. The earliest graves

are concentrated in the central part of the plot, near building 3, around it, and to the south side (Fig. 4). These graves, according to the artefacts and stratigraphy, date from the last decades of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century. It has to be noted that the cemetery expanded to the north, as well as to the northwest, from the middle of the 14th century. This conclusion was made based on the decrease in the number of grave goods in the burials on the periphery of the cemetery.

A consolidated plan of the graves showed that the direction of the earliest burials indicates the presence of some kind of reference point to the southeast of the cemetery. This could have been, for example, a house of worship, such as the Church of the Nativity, which has not yet been located precisely. Later graves were related to some sort of reference point to the north of the cemetery. It could have echoed the direction of the current Išganytojo St.

Burial traditions

A large proportion of burials, laid one on top of another, were observed in the cemetery, especially in the central part. This allows us to draw the conclusion that an effort was made to bury individuals in the same pits. Besides, several graves are found with what appear at first sight to be family members buried in them. This suggests the existence of strong family relationships. The surface of the earth should have been marked with signs indicating the locations of the graves. These could have been crosses or stones. Paths could have been arranged on the surface of the ground, like nowadays. But so far no such signs have been discovered during excavations.

The distribution of the graves in the cemetery indicates the absence of social differentiation in the burial rites of the Orthodox community. For example, burials without grave goods are found next to ones containing

grave goods. No concentration of rich burials is noticeable in the cemetery.

A large number of graves with stones and stone structures were detected in the cemetery, especially in the central (eastern) part. Such burials can be divided into several groups.

The first group consists of graves with four or more stones neatly laid around the buried individual. Grave 226, uncovered in the northern part of the cemetery, deserves some attention. The deceased was buried without grave goods, oriented in an east-west direction, with the hands placed in the abdominal area. The arrangement of the grave is unique. There are neatly laid stones: seven small stones on each side of the deceased, two large stones at the foot, and one stone at the head (Plate VII.2.1). The latter stone is flat and triangular, it was probably shaped. Near grave 226, about 30 to 40 centimetres to the north, child grave 225 was discovered. This child was buried on his left side, in a sleeping position (Plate VII.2.2). The grave was laid with medium-size stones, three on the south side and two on the north side. These two graves are located on the periphery of the cemetery, but most graves with such stone arrangements were discovered in the central part of the cemetery. The number of stones varies from four to 18. This tradition is known to have existed in Jotvingian lands (Kviatkovskaya 1998, p.40) and in Novgorod and its surroundings (especially around Lake Ilmen). The tradition is called *zhalnik* in Russia. I believe it reached Vilnius from the lands of Novgorod, as the cemetery at Bokšto St 6 is in the area occupied by Orthodox believers. Furthermore, some of the jewellery found in the cemetery has analogies in Russia.

The second group consists of graves in which one or a few stones are laid on the skeleton (Plate VII.3). The concentration of these graves is significant in the south and southeast parts of the cemetery, although this type of grave was also found in other places in the cemetery. The stones in such burials were laid at different positions. Several stones were laid on skulls and on feet, although the majority of them were found on the pelvis and the abdominal region of the deceased. Several theories could be proposed. Firstly, the stones could be signs, as I mentioned earlier, that marked the locations of the graves. As the coffin collapsed, the stones dropped right on to the skeleton. It has to be remembered that all the graves were discovered at a depth of only up to 50 centimetres below the former ground level. Secondly, as is mentioned above, a gravel layer with large stones was detected below the yellow sand (almost all the graves were discovered in this sand layer). There is a possibility that the stones, found in sterile soil during the digging of the grave, could

have been dropped into the same pit. Thirdly, since the graves were dug to a shallow depth, the stones may have been placed on the coffins in order to protect the buried individuals from wild animals. And finally, the stones may have been placed on the graves out of fear that the deceased would rise and disturb the living.

In conclusion, it can be said that not one of these groups dominates in this cemetery, but all four are reflected. Stones in graves could be associated with an approach to the dead and to the burial rites of those who bury, rather than with pagan traditions.

The third type has elements from both the first and the second group. Several burials have been excavated which had stones around the grave and also on the skeleton (Plate VII.4).

Grave goods³

Some of the burials in the Bokšto St cemetery contained grave goods. Jewellery made up a significant part of them: headdresses such as chaplets, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings of various types.

Chaplets made of tin plates are not frequent in archaeological material. Data from 45 areas of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the neighbouring lands has so far been used (Svetikas 2009a, p.34). It has to be mentioned that this does not include the latest findings in Vilnius from Verkiai and Bokšto St. One burial was uncovered in Verkiai. The head of the dead woman was adorned with a chaplet, made from quadrangular metal plates, and decorated with a swastika. The plates were made of copper and tin alloy, with zinc impurities (Žukovskis 2009, p.174ff). The largest number of tin plates (in 35 burials) found so far was in Kernavė, in the Kriveikiškės cemetery (Vėlius 2005, p.42).

Up to now, nine burials with chaplets made from tin plates, and two burials with chaplets made from woven textile strips with metallic thread, have been discovered in the Bokšto St cemetery (Fig. 5). A comprehensive analysis of chaplets, classifying and separating them into different groups and types, has been made by E. Svetikas (Svetikas 2009), although the majority of the plates discovered at Bokšto St are not included in these types, and form separate groups.

All the chaplets discovered at the cemetery varied in shape (triangular, square, quadrangular, pentagonal, heraldic lily), and in decoration (floral, geometric, heraldic lily). They were probably all gilded, made of silver from a thin cast sheet, domed using dapping punches. Analogies in archaeological material were found only for the pentagonal plates from grave 15 and

³ Preliminary material (the research is still in progress).

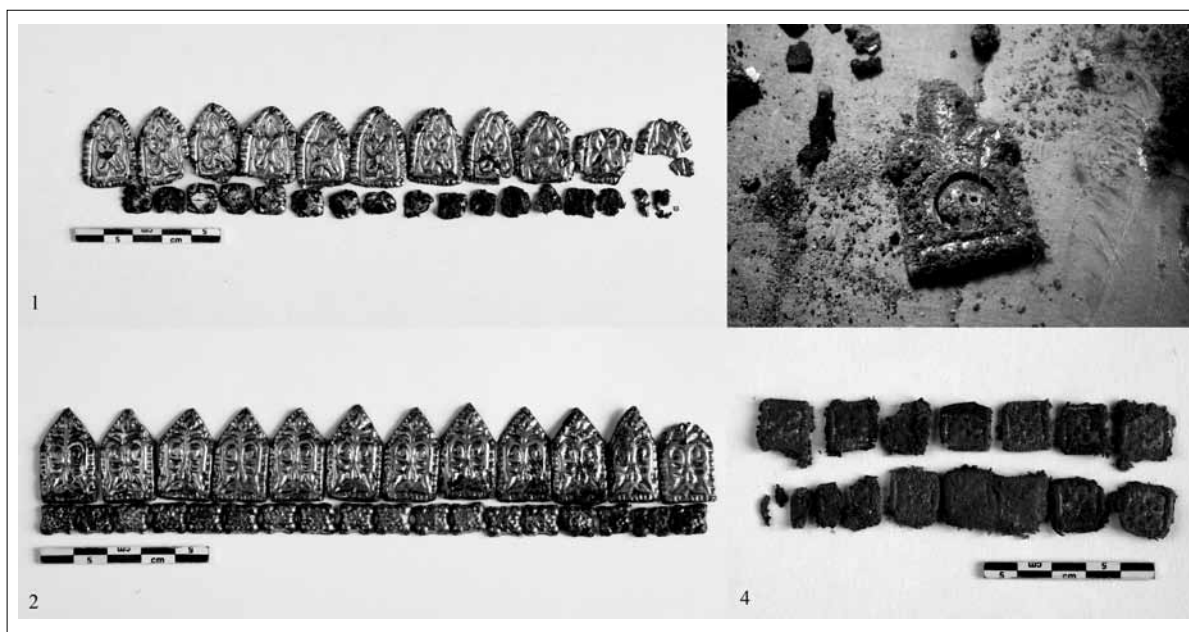


Fig. 5. Chaplets: 1 grave 15; 2 grave 21; 3 grave 106; 4 grave 188 (photographs 1, 2, 4 by A. Blažys, 3 by R. Jonaitis).



Fig. 6. Earrings: 1 three beads, grave 179; 2 looped, grave 9 (photograph 1 by A. Blažys, 2 by I. Kaplūnaitė).

the square plates from grave 21. Similar plates were discovered in Kriveikiškės and Markiniatai (in the Grodno district of Belarus). The other plates have no analogues. The uniqueness of these plates allows us to suggest that fragile matrices were used for making the plates. The idea might be put that such matrices were used for making only a few plates.

Several types of earring were found in the cemetery on Bokšto St: several-bead, three-bead, looped, and one question-mark shaped (Fig. 6).

Most similar earrings with several beads were found in the lands of Novgorod, in the *Vodskaja piatina* (Svetikas 2001, p.8; 2009, p.50). That was why V.V. Sedov interpreted this type of earring as an ethnic characteristic of Voda, without paying attention to the finds in

the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Svetikas 2001, p.8). At least 45 earrings with several beads have been found in 19 areas of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Svetikas 2009a, p.51, footnote 239). Earrings with several beads have been discovered in 13 areas of present-day Lithuania. Eight earrings from destroyed graves have been found accidentally in five areas (Svetikas 2001, p.11). Apart from the cemetery at Bokšto St, earrings with several beads have been discovered in the Latako St cemetery in Vilnius (Gendrėnas 1981). This type of earring dates from 1281 to the first third of the 15th century (Lesman 1990a, p.70; 1990b, p.100).

The earrings with several beads that have been found in Lithuania are dated differently. O. Kuncienė dates the earrings discovered in Sariiai to the 13th and 14th centuries (Kuncienė 1974, p.72); while E. Svetikas

indicates a different date, the second half of the 14th century to the first quarter of the 15th century (Svetikas 2009a, p.53); and G. Vėlius relates these findings to the period from the last quarter of the 14th century (Vėlius 2005, p.57). Taking into account the pattern of the graves in the Bokšto St cemetery, we date these earrings to the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries and the first half of the 14th century. The conclusion can be drawn that the earrings with several beads do not indicate ethnicity (Lesman 1990b, p.101). Rather, they show a religious affiliation. The possibility cannot be denied that such jewellery reflects the confessional orientation of its owner (Svetikas 2001, p.18). Therefore, women wearing earrings with several beads could possibly be of the Orthodox faith.

Apart from the cemetery at Bokšto St 6, other three-bead earrings were found in only two places in Lithuania, the cemetery at Kriveikiškės and a homestead in the upper town of Kernavė (where a fragment of an earring was found). These findings are dated to the 13th century (Vėlius 2005, p.56ff). Three-bead earrings were discovered in Panemunė (Kviatkovskaya 1998, p.72). Twenty earrings found in Novgorod date from the years 989 to 1382 (Lesman 1990a, p.70). According to M. Sedova, this is typical urban women's jewellery, and it is dated to the 12th or 13th centuries (Sedova 1981, p.13ff). The three-bead earrings discovered at Bokšto St can be dated to the 13th or 14th century.

One looped earring discovered in the Bokšto St cemetery deserves special attention. The earring was decorated on the fastening with the head of a mystical animal (a dragon?) with an open mouth (Fig. 6.2). This type of earring appeared with the Golden Horde.⁴ The fashion for wearing these earrings could have arrived together with the newcomers from Rus'. Loop-shaped earrings were worn for a long period, from the 13th century to the first half of the 14th century (Vėlius 2005, p.57). The earrings from Bokšto St could be dated to the first half of the 15th century.

According to the classification of E. Svetikas, one question-mark shaped earring discovered at Bokšto St belongs to type 2, and is dated to the late 15th century or the early 16th century (Svetikas 2009, p.62ff). As the findings from Kriveikiškės show, this type of earring started to be worn in the last quarter of the 14th century (Vėlius 2005, p.57). We presume that the earring found in the Bokšto St cemetery could be dated from the end of the 13th century to the middle of the 15th century. The arrangement of the graves with earrings is similar

to that at Kriveikiškės. The graves with typologically earlier several-bead and three-bead earrings are located in the central (the earliest) part of the cemetery, while the graves with looped and question-mark shaped earrings were discovered on the periphery.

It is accepted that the earrings have a Slavic origin (Kuncienė 1974, p.73; Vėlius 2005, p.59; Sedova 1981, p.9). However, the earrings found at Bokšto St could have been produced locally by the craftsmen of the newcomers from Slavic countries, or by local craftsmen who were greatly influenced by the traditions and the experience of the Slavs. We believe that the earrings found in Lithuania show a religious connection rather than an ethnic one (as well as with several-bead earrings).

One well-preserved necklace and also some fragments were detected at the Bokšto St cemetery. They consisted of crotals, glass beads, cowrie shells and diamond-shaped bronze plates. The necklace from grave 114 is exceptional in its beauty and luxuriance. As the context of the grave indicates, this necklace could date from the end of the 13th century to the mid-14th century.

Bracelets are not common finds in cemeteries from that time. They have been discovered in 42 graves in 20 cemeteries in Lithuania (Svetikas 2009a, p.247). Three bracelets were found in the Bokšto St cemetery. They were all in one grave, grave 114, on the right arm of a dead teenager (Fig. 7). Two of the bracelets were braided, one was cast with an imitation of twisting. The cast bracelet had tapering ends. The braided bracelets were different, one was braided with three, and another with four wires. All the bracelets were made of brass.

Many braided bracelets have been found in different areas of Rus'. In Lithuania, apart from Bokšto St, 11 braided bracelets have been found in burials and hoards, and nine have been found in other places (Svetikas 2009a, p.247). The braided bracelets from the Bokšto St cemetery ended with loops. According

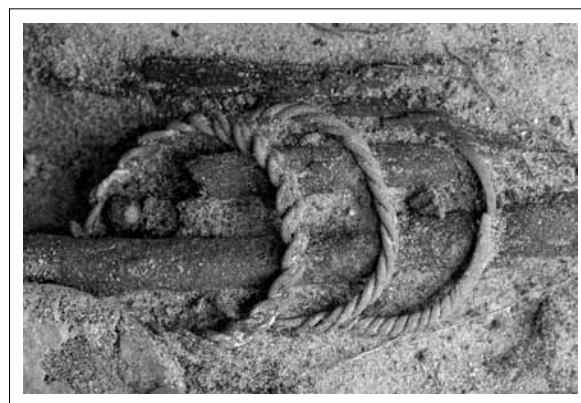


Fig. 7. Bracelets, grave 114, *in situ* (photograph by A. Baltėnas).

⁴ Verbal information from J.M. Lesman PhD, a senior research fellow at the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, Russia.

to E. Svetikas, the only other such bracelet was found at Šeimyniškiškėliai hill-fort (Svetikas 2009, p.253). The dating of these bracelets varies: the late 14th and early 15th century (Svetikas 2009a); the 13th to the first half of the 14th century (Vėlius 2005); the 13th to the 15th century (Sedova 1981); 1055 to 1395 (three wires), and from 1197 (four wires) (Lesman 1990a).

No analogues of the cast bracelet were found in Lithuania. Similar ones were discovered in Kriveikiškės, grave 12 (Vėlius 2005, p.66, illustration 29). The dating varies: the late 14th to the first half of the 15th century (Svetikas 2009); the 13th to the first half of the 14th century (Vėlius 2005); the early 13th to the 15th century (Sedova 1981); and from 1224 (Lesman 1990a).

According to the burial topography and other artefacts, we would date the bracelets found in the Bokšto St cemetery to the period from the late 13th to the early 15th century.

The largest group of grave goods from the Bokšto St cemetery consisted of various finger-rings (Plate I.5): braided, encrusted with glass, with a wide head, and with hollow hulls (box).

The braided rings make up the largest group. Ten finger-rings have been found so far. All these finger-rings (except from grave 93) belong to type III according to E. Svetikas, and are dated to the late 14th or the 15th century. A total of 209 finger-rings from 76 areas were known in the territory of Lithuania by 2009. This type is also known from Livonia, the lands of the Teutonic Order, and Novgorod (Svetikas 2009, p.301). The majority of the finger-rings found at Bokšto St are made of silver, others are made of brass.⁵

Similar finger-rings from Kriveikiškės are dated to the first three quarters of the 14th century, though some of them could have been made as early as the 13th century (Vėlius 2005, p.71). The finger-rings discovered in Novgorod date from the 12th to the middle of the 14th century (Sedova 1981, p.127). M.J. Lesman gives an accurate date for the braided rings from Novgorod: 1161 to 1382 (Lesman 1990a, p.51). According to the context (the arrangement of the burials, the correlation with other grave goods), the finger-rings found at Bokšto St could be dated to the 13th or the 14th century.

The second largest group consists of rings encrusted with glass. According to their structure, the rings can be divided into two types: simple rings, and rings with hollow hulls soldered from twisted wire (Vėlius 2005,

p.73). The rings of the second type echo the shape of a hollow box. Six finger-rings encrusted with glass were found in four graves at the Bokšto St cemetery.

Rings of the second type have been discovered in Kernavė, in burials of the Yotvingians, in the churchyard of St Nicholas' (Uspeniya) Church in Vilnius, and in the Šilėnai cemetery (Svetikas 2009a, p.356ff). The chronology of rings encrusted with glass is as follows: the early 15th century in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Svetikas 2009a, p.356ff); the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century in the lands of the Yotvingians (Kviatkovskaja 1998); the 14th century in Kriveikiškės (Vėlius 2005); the mid-12th to the 14th century in Novgorod (Sedova 1981); and 1161 to 1382 (Lesman 1990a). The rings from the Bokšto St cemetery are dated to the late 13th or 14th centuries.

The third largest group consists of rings with a wide head, or signet rings (Plate VIII.3–8). All these rings from the Bokšto St cemetery are different. One ring of a similar shape was found in the Kriveikiškės cemetery (Vėlius 2005, Fig. 37), although it was cast, with tracery on the loop. A finger-ring with a silver swastika on a white enamel background was found in child's grave 92 at the Bokšto St cemetery. Several analogues were found for this ring (Svetikas 2009a, Fig. 365). Ten rings cast from brass were found in goldsmiths' workshops (dated to the last two decades of the 14th century) in Novgorod. A similar ring was also discovered in another plot, in a cultural layer dating from 1319 to 1323. Some analogues are known from Novgorod barrows of the 13th and 14th centuries, and from the surroundings of the River Kama (Sedova 1981, p.135). Closer to the Bokšto St cemetery, similar rings were discovered in the area of Vilnius' Lower Castle and the Pajauta Valley in Kernavė.

One finger-ring from grave 315 had a hollow square head. It was decorated from top to bottom with relief decoration, a cone in the centre and rollers at the sides. No analogues for this ring have been found. Finger-rings of a similar shape were discovered in the Kriveikiškės cemetery (Vėlius 2005, p.73) and the Stakliškės hoard (Daugudis 1968, p.30). A fragment of a similar ring was found in the homestead of a jeweller in Kernavė (Vėlius 2005, p.73). The researcher of Kriveikiškės cemetery dates this type of ring to the 14th century, while the Stakliškės hoard is dated to the 13th or 14th centuries. The finger-ring found in the Bokšto St cemetery could be dated to the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries.

Apart from jewellery, other grave goods were also found at the Bokšto St cemetery. These were three symbolic keys made of tan, and one piece of a key (graves 93 and 114). According to the classification of

⁵ The chemical composition of the metal and inlays of finger-rings found in 2011 is not clear, as they are still at the National Museum of Lithuania's restoration centre.

E. Svetikas, the symbolic keys discovered in grave 93 belong to the first type. The ring found in grave 114 belongs to the same type. According to the handle which survives from the second key, it can be matched with the third type. E. Svetikas dates the symbolic keys to the late 14th century or the early 15th century (Svetikas 2009a, p.400). He indicates 56 areas in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania where 220 symbolic keys have been discovered (Svetikas 2009a, p.400).

Several knives were found in the cemetery. They were all found in the pelvic area of the dead, and were worn on a belt. Knives are relatively frequently found in old town cemeteries. For example, 61 knives or pieces of knives were found in Kriveikiškės.

In summarising all the burials and the grave goods, several features of the Bokšto St cemetery emerge. Most of the jewellery is common to the Slavs rather than to the Lithuanians. However, it was influenced by local traditions. The chaplets' plates can be taken as an example. Chaplets of Slavic origin were usually made of square-shaped plates, while plates found in Lithuania had a pentagonal or a pentagonal and square shape. The ornamentation and the arrangement of the plates also differ (Kuncienė 1974, p.70). Earrings with several beads were popular not only in the Vodskaja piatina in the lands of Novgorod, but also in northern Estonia, Latvia, the lands of Pskov, Panemunė (in the stone barrows of rural people, as well as in Drogičinas), near Moscow, and in a few other areas (Lesman 1990b, p.100). Rejecting ethnicity, the great probability of confessional alliance of this type of jewellery is assumed. In general, the earrings should be considered as goods of Slavic origin (Vėlius 2005, p.59). Rings encrusted with glass (the second type) were certainly made by local craftsmen. No analogues for these finger-rings were found in Russian archaeological material. One similar finger-ring of this type is known from a Yotvingian cemetery (Kviatkovskaja 1998, p.93). However, large-scale immigration of Yotvingians into Lithuania has not been traced in written sources (Nikžentaitis 1996, pp.18-24).

Pagan or Christian?

Burial traditions in Lithuania in the 13th and 14th centuries cannot be described in one sentence, since the issue has not been fully investigated. It has caused a lot of debates over the main question: did Lithuanians cremate their dead in the 13th and 14th centuries, or did they practise inhumation (Urbanavičius 1966; Zabiela 1998; Luchtanas, Vėlius 1996; Vėlius 2005)? The cemetery at Bokšto St sheds some light on this question. Individuals were buried here with the head oriented in

a westerly direction. The cemetery is in the central part of Civitas Rutenica. It is agreed that foreign merchants and craftsmen who lived in centres in pagan Lithuania practised inhumation (Kuncevičius 2005, p.112). A cemetery of non-Baltic origin with inhumation burials was discovered and investigated on Latako St in Vilnius, in the Civitas Rutenica area (Gendrėnas 1981). A similar cemetery of an ethnically mixed community, culturally oriented towards neighbouring Slavic towns, was investigated in Kriveikiškės. Therefore, three urban cemeteries are known so far, with inhumation traditions existing before the official baptism of Lithuania in 1387.

The latest findings in Lithuania help us to explain the burial rites of pagan Lithuania. Recently, a hypothesis posed by Vytautas Urbanavičius about 13th and 14th-century burials in water (Urbanavičius, Urbanavičienė 1988, p.45ff) was favourably received. The cemetery at Bajorai (in the Kietaviškiai parish of the Elektrėnai district) was investigated from 2006 to 2011.⁶ Part of the cemetery is located in a bog; finds from it have been dated to the 14th century and the first half of the 15th century. A total of 11.42 kilograms of cremated bones were collected during the investigations between 2006 and 2010 (Vaitkevičius 2011, p.122). The Semeniškių cemetery was discovered in 2009, in the Kernavė State Cultural Reserve.⁷ It was noticed during the excavations that all the finds related to burials were discovered on the bed of a stream, in a layer with a thickness of approximately ten centimetres. A total of 14 kilograms of cremated bones were collected. Apart from other finds, about 40 decorated bindings made of horn were discovered. It has to be noted that this material is identical to what was collected in the homestead of a bone craftsman in the Pajauta Valley (Vengalis 2011, p.126). Thus, a link between the cemetery and the town is evident. As the stratigraphy and the location of the finds indicate, the dead were buried in water, in the bed or an old bed of a stream (Vengalis 2011, p.126). The hypothesis could be put that in the 13th and 14th centuries, the pagan townspeople of Kernavė buried their dead in water, while Christians (in this case Orthodox) practised inhumation in cemeteries. Therefore, the assumption cannot be rejected that pagans in Vilnius also practised burial in water.

Burial customs are reflected by the totality of inter-related features, combining the form and method of burial, the construction of the grave, the grave goods,

⁶ For this, see Grinkevičiūtė, Vaitkevičius 2007, pp.146-153; Vaitkevičius, Grinkevičiūtė 2008, pp.192-198; Vaitkevičius 2009, pp.134-140; Vaitkevičius 2010, pp.128-135; Vaitkevičius 2011, pp.116-124.

⁷ See Baltramiejūnaitė, Vengalis 2010, pp.99-105; Vengalis 2011, pp.124-127.

and their location in the burial. Only an integrated approach can tell us who was buried in the Bokšto St cemetery, pagans or Christians. One very important detail of burial rites must not be forgotten: the totality of factors related to the burial traditions characterises primarily the attitude of those who bury, instead of the deceased (Musin 2002, p.40).

As most of the research indicates, inhumation is the most important burial requirement in Christianity (Musin 2002, p.39). In Russia for example, inhumation became dominant not because of the Orthodox Church and the state, but because of Christian ideas spreading through missionary work and social relationships (Musin 2002, p.39).

Apart from inhumation, burial in a grave pit reflects another influence of Christianity in burial traditions (Musin 2002, p.40). The same should be noted about the orientation of the deceased. As the majority of contemporary archaeologists rightly indicate, orientation in an east-west direction (with the head to the west) is related to the spread of Christianity (Musin 2002, p.42). Grave goods related to faith are reliable evidence of Christianity. In this case, crosses have to be mentioned, no matter what they are made of, whether it is stone, silver, or something else. In Rus', burials with crosses become regular from the 16th century onwards (Musin 2002, p.47). Therefore, the absence of a cross in a cemetery dating from the late 13th to the 15th centuries does not prove that Christianity was absent. To be fair, it should be noted that only one child's grave with a cross on the chest was found in the Bokšto St cemetery.⁸

There is another important factor: grave goods, especially jewellery, are a characteristic feature of pagan burials. However, in our case, the situation of Civitas Rutenica should be analysed in the context of Vilnius. Pagans and Orthodox believers were neighbours. It can be assumed that the cemetery on Bokšto St reflects the transition from paganism to Christianity, with the local population as well as incomers being buried there. The combination of the two religions is reflected in the burial traditions on Bokšto St, as the Christian attitude had not yet fully penetrated, and the pagan beliefs had not disappeared.

We can analyse the Bokšto St cemetery by determining the criteria of Christian burials. As is mentioned above, only inhumation burials were found. The orientation of the deceased is with the head to the west. We believe that Christians who belonged to the Orthodox community were buried here. Local people, after adopting the Orthodox faith, could have been buried in this cem-

etry as well as newcomers from Slavic lands. The location of the cemetery should be kept in mind, as this area was the earliest part of Civitas Rutenica.

The first Orthodox in Vilnius. Who were they?

There are limited historical sources available to answer this question. To summarise these sources, three ways that Orthodox believers could have arrived in Vilnius can be identified. Firstly, they could have been drawn by the court of the grand duke. Secondly, they could have been merchants and craftsmen drawn by trade. Thirdly, part of the Orthodox population of Vilnius could have been made up of prisoners (Baronas 2005, p.163). There is also another way, though it is not directly related to Vilnius. Annals mention pagan Lithuanians and Orthodox Russians who were held in the prisons of the Teutonic Order at the end of the 14th century. Russian lands which were ruled by Lithuania, or which were under its influence, were required to send warriors to fight against the Crusaders. It can be assumed that some of them settled in Lithuania, possibly in Vilnius (Baronas 2005, p.163). A fifth reason for settling in Lithuania may originate in the situation in the lands of Rus' in the middle and late 13th century. The biggest towns of Rus', Ryazan, Vladimir, Chernigov and finally Kiev, fell to the Tartar-Mongol invasion of 1237–1240 (Fennel 1989, pp.115-130). Therefore, another reason for settling in Lithuania could have been to flee the Tartar-Mongol invasion. We believe that the elite of Rus', including merchants, craftsmen and priests, fled the Tartar Mongols at that time to find more peaceful lands. Vilnius could have been the choice for at least the first two reasons listed above. Interdisciplinary research of osteological material from the Bokšto St cemetery is planned for the future. It is possible that this data could help answer the question where the first Orthodox believers arrived from.

According to the archaeological material, wealthy town-dwellers lived in Vilnius among other Orthodox. Material traces of Russian warriors have not so far been found in the Bokšto St cemetery. Apart from one spearhead with a sleeve found in a mixed layer, no other finds related to weaponry have been found. Perhaps Russian warriors were buried separately, or without characteristic grave goods such as weapons? Furthermore, no previous injuries that had healed before death, typical of warriors, have been detected in anthropological material from the Bokšto St cemetery so far.

⁸ At the moment, the cross is at the National Museum of Lithuania's restoration centre.

Anthropology⁹

The townspeople buried in this cemetery suffered from diseases that were common to urban populations in the Medieval period, such as anaemia (especially among children and young women), periostitis, arthritis (especially among men), and osteochondrosis. Anaemia occurs when the body does not get enough iron with its food. Arthritis is a disease of the joints, which may be associated with heavy physical work. Nine remains of men under 40 have so far been identified with signs of diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (Jankauskas *et al.* 2010; Mitokaitė *et al.* 2011). This suggests a good diet, and may be associated with obesity.

Three graves can be highlighted (2,¹⁰ 52, 99), where men with head injuries were buried. They differ in age: 30 to 35 (grave 2), 35 to 40 (grave 52), and 12 to 15 (grave 99). On the skull from grave 2, seven injuries received from sharp metal were detected, all incurred before the time of death. Nine such injuries were observed on the skull of the deceased in grave 52. It has to be mentioned that the remains of a newborn under two months old were detected between the legs of the deceased. Perhaps his newborn was buried in the same grave? Two cavity injuries were observed on the skull from grave 99 (Meržvinskaitė 2011, p.11). By referring to the shape and the nature of these injuries, it was possible to identify the weapon. It was a sword with a long thin blade (Meržvinskaitė 2011, p.11).

The number of injuries is very high, and may represent injuries received in battle. This may be considered a sign of a lack of good armour. It also suggests that the deceased were not professional warriors. This idea is confirmed by the absence of previous healed injuries relating to military activities (Meržvinskaitė 2011, p.17). These three graves are located separately from each other. Grave 2 was on the periphery of the cemetery, on the northern side; graves 52 and 99 were in the central part. It may be assumed that these graves reflect at least two different attacks. An anthropological analysis of the cemetery reveals that Orthodox townspeople could have participated in defending Vilnius from attackers.

Grave 33 (2006–2007 excavations) should be singled out. A 25 to 30-year-old invalid with severe physical disabilities was buried there (Fig. 8). He had to be cared for and looked after as if he had lived to an old age. Also, the nature of the woman's injuries from grave 252 is surprising. Healed fractures in the right pelvic bone and the thigh-bone were detected. It must have been a very complicated injury, perhaps a fall

⁹ Preliminary information, since some of the osteological material has not yet been put in order.

¹⁰ Excavations in 2006 and 2007.



Fig. 8. Grave 33, seen from the south (photograph by R. Jonaitis).

from a height (self-inflicted?). Amazingly, the woman survived (Mitokaitė *et al.* 2011, p.508). The question remains what caused such an injury in the 14th century? The woman continued to live after the injury. This shows care and attention from other members of the community. It reflects a slightly different approach to the position of women in society in pagan Lithuania to what data found in written sources indicates (Nikžentaitis 1996, p.26ff).

Conclusions

It was probably the first half of the 14th century when Civitas Rutenica, inhabited by Orthodox believers, emerged at the most practical and strategically important place in the Old Town of modern Vilnius, on a crossroads of major trading routes. The development of this part of Vilnius is traceable throughout the 14th century.

In 2005, a cemetery dated to the 13th and 14th centuries was discovered in the central part of Civitas Rutenica. Its investigation began from this date, providing valuable information about the Orthodox community that lived here. The area and the limits of the Bokšto St cemetery were strongly influenced by the terrain. The east and part of the southeast boundaries have been identified, as has the presumed area of the cemetery, which was approximately 2,473 square metres.

Only inhumation was practised at the Bokšto St cemetery. The deceased were buried on their backs, in wooden coffins, or coffin-like wooden structures. The graves were oriented in an east-west direction, with marginal differences, and with the head to the west. Three exceptions have to be mentioned, where the dead were buried outside the boundaries of the cemetery; and also in a different orientation, in northwest-southeast and north-south directions. The reason for this exclusiv-

ity remains unidentified. Another exception is known where the deceased man was buried face down.

A high mortality of individuals under 20 years old was observed. They make up 42% of all the burials. Some parts of the cemetery with a concentration of child graves were detected. The burial rites observed in the cemetery suggest the existence of strong family relationships in the Orthodox community. According to the arrangement of the graves in the cemetery, the surface of the earth must have been marked by signs indicating the exact place of the burials and the existence of paths.

Graves with stones or stone structures were divided into three groups: graves neatly laid with stones, graves with stones laid on a skeleton, and graves with elements of both the first and the second group. This tradition may be related to burial rites brought from the native lands, as well as to practical reasons.

The main and the largest group of grave goods consists of jewellery: various chaplets, earrings, necklaces, bracelets and rings of various types. Some of the jewellery is common to Slavs (earrings with several beads and three beads), and some has local origins (rings with hollow boxes and encrusted with glass). The chaplets were probably made locally, although under the influence of Slavic traditions. All the grave goods indicate a high standard of jewellery making. According to the complex of artefacts, the cemetery on Bokšto St has more similarities with the lands of the Slavs than with the Yotvingians.

The first incomers were certainly members of an elite: merchants, craftsmen, priests and warriors. Several factors relating to the burial traditions of Christians allow us to draw the conclusion that Orthodox believers were buried in the Bokšto St cemetery. Local people, after adopting the Orthodox faith, could have been buried in this cemetery, as well as incomers from Slavic lands.

The anthropological material reflects the daily life of the community. The townspeople buried in the cemetery suffered from diseases that were common to urban populations in the Medieval period. An analysis of the burials shows that social differentiation was not reflected in the burial rites. Wealthy, well-nourished townspeople were buried next to poor people who had engaged in hard physical work and had health problems because of their poor nutrition. The existence of disabled members of the community indicates some social responsibility. Members of the Orthodox community also participated in the defence of the town.

The cemetery on Bokšto St represents an ordinary community of Medieval townspeople. No weapons or typical elite grave goods were found. It is also possi-

ble to talk of the confessional affiliation of the people buried here. By systematising all the existing material, it is possible to consider that Orthodox citizens of Vilnius who retained their ethnic burial traditions were buried in the cemetery on Bokšto St. This is shown by inhumation, the orientation of graves in an east-west direction, and the relatively low number of burials with grave goods. More grave goods were found in the graves from the early period of the existence of the cemetery, while there are no such finds from the end of it, the late 14th century and the middle of the 15th century.

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Abbreviations

ATL – *Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje* (Archaeological Investigations in Lithuania) (Vilnius, since 1967)
Lietuvos arch. – *Lietuvos archeologija* (Vilnius, since 1979)
MADA – *Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademijos Darbai, A Serija* (Vilnius, 1955 to 1998)

LII – Lithuanian Institute of History
LIIR – Lithuanian Institute of History, Manuscripts
LNM – Lithuanian National Museum, Vilnius

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„CIVITAS RUTENICA“
ANKSTYVAJAME XIV–XV A.
VILNIUJE. SOCIOKULTŪRINIS
ASPEKTAS

RYTIS JONAITIS

Santrauka

„Civitas Rutenica“ XIV a. pabaigoje buvo svarbi Vilniaus dalis, tačiau tikslus jos atsiradimo laikas kol kas nežinomas. Šio straipsnio tikslas yra mėginti suprasti „Civitas Rutenica“ gyventojų kultūrą ir socialinę šios bendruomenės struktūrą. Tai bandysime atsekti per kapinyno Bokšto g. laidosenos, įkapių, antropologinės medžiagos analizę (1–13 pav.; VII–VIII iliustr.).

Naujausi archeologiniai tyrimai įgalina kalbėti apie „Civitas Rutenica“ egzistavimą jau XIII a. paskutiniame ketvirtyje. Šios Vilniaus dalies plėtra vyko visą XIV a.

Bokšto g. kapinynas geriausiai reprezentuoja stačiatikių bendruomenės Vilniuje kasdienį gyvenimą. Iki šiol iširta apie 65 % visos spėjamos kapinyno teritorijos. Pavyko tiksliai nustatyti kapinyno rytinę ribą – ji sutampa su Vilnios terasos rytiniu šlaitu. Visi kapinyne aptikti kapai yra griautiniai, mirusieji palaidoti karstuose arba medinėse karstus imituojančiose konstrukcijose. Mirusieji orientuoti V–R kryptimi su kelių laipsnių paklaida. Iš šio konteksto iškrenta trys kapai, aptikti už kapinyno ribų – jų orientacija skiriasi nuo likusiųjų. Mirusieji laidoti aukštiekninkai, išskyrus vieną atvejį, kai mirusysis palaidotas kniūbsčias. Pastebimas didelis individų iki 20 metų mirtingumas – 42 % palaidojimų. Vaikų kapai koncentravosi keliose kapinyno vietose. Pagal kapus galima atsekti kapinyno plėtrą. Kapų geografija leidžia kalbėti apie stiprius bendruomenės giminystės ryšius. Kapai turėjo būti pažymėti žemės paviršiuje. Kapinyne išsiskiria kapai su akmenimis, akmenų konstrukcijomis, ypač rytinėje (centrinėje) jo dalyje. Akmenimis buvo apdėti kapai, akmenų buvo ir ant skeleto. Tai sietina tiek su atsineštomis laidojimo tradicijomis, tiek su praktiniu požiūriu į akmenų dėjumą mirusiajam. Kapų analizė rodo kapinyno plėtrą – nuo centro į Š, dabartinės Išganytojo gatvės link.

Kapai neišsiskiria įkapių gausa. Tačiau aptiktos įkapės yra originalios, beveik neturinčios analogijų. Įkapes sudaro auksuotos apgalvių plokštelės, įvairūs auskarai, kaklo vėriniai, apyrankės, įvairių tipų žiedai. Dalis papuošalų būdingi slavams, dalis originalūs, vietinės gamybos, dalis, veikiant slavų juvelyrikai, gaminta vietoje. Pagal radinių kompleksą, kapinynas Bokšto g. turi daugiau bendrų bruožų su slavų žemėmis negu su jotvingiais.

Apžvelgus visumą krikščioniškajai laidosenai būdingų bruožų, įtraukus naujausių Lietuvos viduramžių kapinynų tyrimų duomenis, galima teigti, kad kapinyne yra palaidoti krikščionys stačiatikiai. Pirmieji atvykėliai slavai, be abejonės, buvo to meto elitas – pirkliai, amatininkai, dvasininkai ir kariai. Antropologinė medžiagos analizė parodė, kad kapinyne palaidoti miestiečiai sirgo to meto miesto gyventojams būdingomis ligomis. Stačiatikiai turėjo dalyvauti Vilniaus gynyboje – aptikti trys miestiečiai, žuvę veikiausiai prieš antpuolio metu. Čia palaidotiems žmonėms nebuvo svetimo skausmo – jie mokėjo rūpintis neįgaliais ar po sunkių traumų atsigavusiais savo bendruomenės nariais.

Kapinyno planigrafija rodo, kad stačiatikių bendruomenė socialinės diferenciacijos laidosenoje nedemonstravo, nes šalia palaidotų su turtingomis įkapėmis mirusiųjų aptinkama kapų be įkapių. Kartu palaidoti ir miestiečiai, vartoję gerą maistą ir galbūt dėl to turėję antsvorio problemų, bei miestiečiai, turintys sveikatos sutrikimų dėl sunkaus fizinio darbo ir prasto maisto.