

THE MEDIEVAL PEASANTRY: ON THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS POSITION OF THE RURAL NATIVES IN SOUTHERN LIVONIA (13TH–15TH CENTURIES)

Andris Šnē

The Baltic Crusades of the thirteenth century reshaped the social, political, economic and cultural structures on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, in what is present-day Latvia and Estonia. From the end of the twelfth century, missionaries from Germany and Denmark began to preach Roman Catholicism to the inhabitants of these territories: Latgallians, Semigallians, Selonians, Curonians, Livs and Estonians. These peoples organized themselves through various chiefdoms, although some researchers continue to seek a more centralized state organization.¹ In addition to Christianity, the crusades introduced literacy, medieval towns, feudal relations and a conception of statehood to the territory of Livonia. In this article I will attempt to provide a general overview of the conditions of the peasantry by examining its social, political and religious position in Livonia during the Middle Ages. Archaeological sources will provide the most substantial evidence about the inhabitants of the countryside during the medieval period, since written sources only reflect certain aspects of local conditions. The thirteenth century is taken as a point of departure for it saw the emergence of medieval society and culture in Livonia, which eventually replaced the egalitarian native chiefdoms. But we may note that when we study villages and countryside, the chronological boundary

¹ For a discussion of the political and social structures in the Baltic during the Late Iron Age see: Andris Šnē, *Sabiedrība un vara: sociālās attiecības Austrumlatvijā aizvēstures beigās* (Rīga, 2002); Andris Šnē, “Understanding Power: On the Study of Late Prehistoric Social and Political Structures in Latvia”, *Culture and Material Culture. Papers from the first theoretical seminar of the Baltic archaeologists (BASE) held at the University of Tartu, Estonia, 17–19 October, 2003*, *Interarchaeologia*, 1, ed. by Valter Lang (Tartu, Riga, Vilnius, 2005), 53–70.

conventionally used to mark the end of the Middle Ages, the Reformation, is scarcely relevant and influenced the countryside only in the long-term perspective so we may expect to find medieval features in the peasant communities also in the Early Modern Age.

Settlement and ethnic structures of the Livonian countryside

The Baltic Crusades of the thirteenth century integrated the Eastern Baltic into Western Christendom. Local prehistoric chiefdoms, with their egalitarian social and political organization, were gradually transformed according to an imported hierarchical model of feudal estates, though their agrarian communities did not yet lose their agrarian character in the Middle Ages. Along with the castle, the town was an absolutely new element in the landscape of medieval Livonia, although urban patterns of settlement can be found as far back as the tenth century. However, the so-called 'early towns' of the 10th–12th centuries that functioned as socio-economic centres (in the Baltic early towns lacked ties to political centres), played no role in the further urbanisation of the eastern Baltic.² Beginning in the thirteenth century these sites (for example, Daugmale, Mežotne, Tērvete, Aizkraukle, Jersika) were gradually abandoned. The new urban pattern derived from a medieval tradition that was based on legal criteria, namely town privileges (15 towns were established during medieval period in Livonia). Although the towns, with the exception of Riga, Reval and Dorpat, did not play an important economic and political role in Livonia, they attracted newcomers from Central Europe and became the centres of imported Western culture while the agrarian countryside was left to the natives and their cultural traditions.³

² See, for example, Andris Šnē, "Emergence and Development of Early Urbanism in the Late Prehistoric Latvia", *Riga und der Ostseeraum. Von der Gründung 1201 bis in die Frühe Neuzeit*, hrsg. von Ilgvars Misāns and Horst Wernicke (Marburg, 2005), 24–36. But compare this approach with the following literature indicating the political meaning of the economic centres: Valter Lang, "On the Formation of Power Centres in Estonia. An Introduction", *Keskus – tagamaa – ääreala. Uurimusi asustushierarhia ja võimukeskuste kujunemisest Eestis. Centre – Hinterland – Margin. Studies in the Formation of Settlement Hierarchy and Power Centres in Estonia*, ed. by Valter Lang (Tallinn, Tartu, 2002), 17–25; Arnis Rādiņš, "Daugmale, Jersika, Riga. The development of economic and political centres along the lower reaches of the Daugava", *Lübeck Style? Novgorod Style? Baltic Rim Central Places as Arenas for Cultural Encounters and Urbanisation 1100–1400 AD*, ed. by Muntis Auns (Riga, 2001), 89–94.

³ Ilgvars Misāns, "Riga, Dorpat und Reval im Spannungsfeld zwischen den wendischen und preußischen Städten vom Ende des 14. bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts", *Prusy i Inflanty między średniowieczem a nowożytnością. Państwo - społeczeństwo -*

The main actors in the Christianization and conquest of Livonia were the aristocracy and merchants of Northern Germany. But the newly converted lands of Livonia were quite far away and alien so they escaped the agrarian colonization that characterized eastern colonization (known also as the *Drang nach Osten*) into the lands of the Prussians and eastern central Europe. Also, it does not seem quite correct to call Livonia a German colony in the Middle Ages⁴ for it bore the mark of many different forms of social and cultural life of Western Christendom. The frontiers of medieval Christendom underwent social, political and cultural change due to contact with different cultures in the course various crusades, conversions, and colonizations. In Livonia, for two centuries the only intrusion of the newly established Christian society into the lives of the indigenous people was the forced resettlement of locals to dangerous borderlands regions in the south and east and the abolition of paganism.⁵ The complete or even partial disappearance of entire ethnic groups and cultures in Livonia did not occur. In other words, Livonians retained an independent identity and did not share the fate of their Prussian neighbours, who became Germanized. There are fifteenth-century references to Curonians, Livs and Latgalians. Even chronicles from the following century (like those by Johann Renner and B. Russow) note that the Curonians still spoke their own language.⁶

The Crusades caused a demographic decline in the several regions of Livonia. For example, in the lands of the Semigallians an increase in population can only be found in the second half of the fifteenth century and sixteenth century. There are indications that the population of Semigallia underwent several changes in composition in the period under consideration. Some Vots occupied the lands around Vecsaule in 1445, but in 1469 the people from Dobele and Tervete regions were moved to the

kultura, ed. by Bogusław Dybaś and Dariusz Makieła (Torun, 2003), 29–43; Ilgvars Misāns, “Wolmar. Eine hansische Kleinstadt im mittelalterlichen Livland”, *Aus der Geschichte Alt-Livlands*, ed. by Bernhart Jähnig and Klaus Militzer (Münster, 2004), 39–54.

⁴ See, for example, Indriķis Šterns, *Latvijas vēsture 1180–1290: Krustakari* (Rīga, 2002).

⁵ William Urban, “The Frontier Thesis and the Baltic Crusade”, *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500*, ed. by Alan V. Murray (Aldershot, 2001), 62.

⁶ Ēvalds Mugurēvičs, “Etniskie procesi baltu apdzīvotajā teritorijā un latviešu tautas veidošanās 6.–16. gadsimtā”, *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls* (henceforth – *LVIŽ*), 2 (Rīga, 1998), 26.

uninhabited regions along the southern border.⁷ Also the Curonians who had kept much of their original administrative structure migrated south and southeast after 1260; the only stable populations can be found in the northwestern regions of present-day Latvia, where the inhabitants of settlements and hill forts stayed put until the establishment of a manorial system in the fifteenth century.⁸ But at the same time it is possible to find an important degree of continuity in the burial grounds, as Late Iron Age cemeteries continue to be used in the 13th–14th centuries and later.

According to the results of archaeological excavations, the local population continued to occupy late prehistoric settlements, including hill forts, long after stone castles appeared in the Baltic. Often the castles and forts were located quite close to one another. In Jersika, hill fort fortifications and settlements are mentioned as late as 1375.⁹ Also, Cesvaine, Asote, Tanisa kalns etc. were inhabited during the 13th–15th centuries. The Sabile hill fort was used until the late thirteenth century but the accompanying settlement (called *pylsahten* in a document from 1422), was inhabited until the seventeenth century. From the fourteenth century onward a stone castle with its own settlement also occupied the site, so both forms of settlement co-existed.¹⁰ The co-existence of prehistoric and medieval structures may be found in several other sites, too, for example, in Talsi, Mārtaņšala, Lokstene etc. This suggests that the conquest did not precipitate a total break in settlement pattern, but that inhabitation continued along traditional lines.

Villages consisting of several farmsteads formed the world of the countryside inhabitants. Their number and size differed from region to region but almost everywhere agrarian communities proved stable and durable. The study of a small area in north-eastern Kurzeme, Dundaga (*regio Dondange*), shows that the number of villages increased from 16 to 21 during the Livonian period, but only one village was deserted between 1290 and 1582/1583; at the same time, the number of farmsteads in many villages remained almost intact until the eighteenth century.¹¹

⁷ Rasa Banyte-Rowell, Zane Buza, Jānis Ciglis et al., *Zemgaļi senatnē. Žiemgaliai senoveje* (Rīga, 2003), 101–103.

⁸ Jānis Asaris, "Pilskalnu loma Kurzemes viduslaiku centru izveidē", *Ventspils Muzeja Raksti*, 2 (Rīga, 2002), 121; Vladas Žulkus, *Kuršiai Baltijos jūros erdvėje* (Vilnius, 2004), 193–206.

⁹ Antonija Vilcāne, "Jersikas pilskalna apdzīvotība", *LVIŽ*, 3 (Rīga, 2003), 5–22.

¹⁰ Ēvalds Mugurēvičs, "Burg und Burgsiedlung Sabile (Zabeln) im 11.–16. Jh.", *Lietuvos archeologija*, 21 (Vilnius, 2001), 63–71.

¹¹ Muntis Auns, "Ziemeļkurzemes apdzīvotība 16.–18. gadsimtā. Dundagas piemērs", *Ventspils Muzeja Raksti*, 5 (Rīga, 2006), 123–129.

Social and political status of the native peasants

The thirteenth century saw the reform of power and social relations when imported structures and cultural values replaced traditional networks. But throughout the Middle Ages there were regions in Livonia, mainly in peripheral areas, that lacked centralized administrative and military control and where local centres of power continued to exist, even after the Crusades. In particular, the eastern borders of Livonia were fortified quite late: the castle in Ludza (*Ludsen*) was first mentioned in 1433, but the castle in Vilaka (*Marienhausen*) only appears in the early sixteenth century. The colonizers replaced central power structures very early on, while on the local level different structures coexisted; the break was not total.

Among the first steps in converted areas were appointments of judges and priests to obtain both ideological and legal control. By 1230 the new administrative system in the conquered territories of eastern Baltic was firmly in place.¹² Some researchers claim that the introduction of the system of *Vogts* (in German) or *advocatus* (in Latin) was a great success in the first years of Livonian Christendom.¹³ But also later in the villages local authorities continued function as judges and chiefs.¹⁴ The traditional laws of the native people with minor additions of the Christian and Germanic common law were codified for three regions of Livonia already in the thirteenth century; these were the so-called codices or laws of peasants of the Latgallians (Riga bishopric), the Curonians and Semigallians.¹⁵ These laws were passed to organize social and economic life of the natives and establish fixed legal norms and structures among communities in rural areas while it seems they mostly preserved local traditions. This legislation was in use until the late sixteenth century. According to the legislation, natives did not lose their personal freedom, their right to move, their right to keep and bear arms, their right to possess movable and immovable property, their right to inheritance, and their right to trade. They even kept their local municipalities and right of appeal in judicial matters.¹⁶ In the Mid-

¹² Tiina Kala, "The Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands into the Western Christian World", *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500*, ed. by Alan V. Murray (Aldershot, 2001), 3.

¹³ Torben K. Nielsen, "Mission and Submission. Societal Change in the Baltic in the Thirteenth Century", *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, ed. by Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen and Kurt Villads Jensen (Helsinki, 2005), 221.

¹⁴ Indriķis Šterns, *Latvijas vēsture 1290–1500* (Rīga, 1997), 519–539.

¹⁵ *Latvijas tiesību avoti. Teksti un komentāri. 1. sējums: Seno paražu un Livonijas tiesību avoti 10. gs.–16. gs.*, ed. by Edgars Melķiņš (Rīga, 1998), 26–45.

¹⁶ Šterns, *Latvijas vēsture 1180–1290*, 577–581, 611ff.

dle Ages, widows and daughters also had the right to inherit the house and land. Though male heirs received priority, a daughter could still inherit if there was no male offspring in the family, while a widow could head the household until her own remarriage or until her offspring came of age.¹⁷

The burials traditions retained the custom of putting grave goods (we will turn to this question in greater detail later on). Weapons were the most common status symbols. Although not too common among grave goods, weapons continue to turn up at burial sites until the beginning of the sixteenth century when the provincial diets (*landtags*) prohibited natives from bearing arms.

Under German influence, the administrative and social structures of the countryside became a feudal system with fief relations. Personal ties linked each suzerain to his vassals, and constituted the basis for chivalric relations among descendants of the crusaders as well as newcomers from Germany. In the Baltic where the idea of the fief was imported in the course of the thirteenth century, representatives of social groups other than the nobles, such as wealthy native peasants (in sources called *Undeutsche*), participated in these relations. In its early phases, the feudal system allowed for the participation of local individuals; in the territory of Latvia during the thirteenth century the majority of vassals were natives while in the fourteenth century there were 28 native manors. Only in the fifteenth century did the manors of the descendants of crusaders and immigrants from Germany become more numerous than those of natives (there were 41 German manors as well as 61 vassals without the land and 17 native vassals in the second half of the fifteenth century).¹⁸ These were the lands of the Archbishopric of Riga where the feudal system developed earlier and was more widespread than in the regions under the control of the Livonian Order. A unique status, resembling that of freeholders, was granted to several locals in western Latvia (Curonia), who in their fief books were named *konig* and who kept their privileges for several centuries.¹⁹ They possessed the right to work the land, exempt from taxes and labor dues, but these *konig* had other obligations, including military service. Vassals of native origin continue to appear in the records as late as the middle of the sixteenth century (then there were at least 25 of these kins in western

¹⁷ Vija Stikāne, "Lauku sabiedrības sievietes sabiedriskajā sfērā viduslaikos un jauno laiku sākumā", *LVIŽ*, 4 (Rīga, 2001), 63–64.

¹⁸ Šterns, *Latvijas vēsture 1290–1500*, 432–518.

¹⁹ Šterns, *Latvijas vēsture 1180–1290*, 127–142.

Latvia). Later they were transformed into the free peasantry (*Fraybauren*), a designation of status that endured until the seventeenth century.²⁰

The production of material goods in Livonia was mostly in the hands of the natives, except in towns, where the German crusaders or their descendants (Livonians) engaged in several different crafts. But in the countryside (where natives constituted the majority of the population and production was concentrated) the main producers were natives; they formed the social layer of peasants. In fact there was an important distinction in Livonia between the lands of the Order and lands of the Church (the Archbishopric of Riga and the bishoprics). In the former the feudal system was not particularly highly developed and the social stratum of the vassals was very small, so agriculture did not undergo important changes until the 15th–16th centuries (for example, the ancient kind of plough-shares continued to be used).²¹ In Livonia, agrarian structures changed very slowly, and until the establishment of serfdom in the fifteenth century it was almost the same as before the crusades. The native peasants remained free persons until the fourteenth century and their relations to the lords were merely economic and judicial. In the fifteenth century labour duties increased drastically (in the 14th–15th centuries by as much as 20 times) because the landlords changed their financial policies; they were no longer satisfied with collecting income from their fiefs, but sought maximum profits by restructuring the economy of their manors. These shifts in economic thinking resulted in the beginnings of strict legal, economic and political control of the native peasants. After 1422, when the provincial diet (*Landtag*) ruled that peasants who were unable to repay their debts had to be returned to their creditors, serfdom developed gradually but constantly in Livonia.²²

Religious syncretism: paganism and Christianity among the rural population

The conversion of the native people to Christianity was an attempt to change the religious landscape of medieval Livonia. Since the primary concern of dominant social classes is the maintainance of their social

²⁰ Agris Dzenis, "Vietējas izcelsmes lēņa vīri Kurzemes un Zemgales hercogistē", *Ventspils Muzeja Raksti*, 5 (Rīga, 2006), 70–88.

²¹ Ēvalds Mugarēvičs, "Vidus- un Austrumlatvija 13.–14. gs.", *Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija*, 10 (Rīga, 1973), 27–39.

²² Šterns, *Latvijas vēsture 1290–1500*, 564–597.

order in the whole area under their control, then the newly established Christian church tried to create a network of Christian churches in Livonia. The first churches date back to the 1180s when Christian missionaries reached the lower reaches of Daugava River.²³ In the following centuries the building of churches accompanied the enlargement of the controlled regions. In the medieval period more than 30 churches were established in the lands of the Livonian Order, 23 in the territory of the Archbishopric of Riga, and 9 in Bishopric of Curonia.²⁴ Only very seldom have the medieval churches of Livonia been studied archaeologically: those that have, have mostly been churches in Riga and other towns (like Cēsis, *Wenden*), but not in the rural religious centres that can be identified with the help of the written sources. We may assume that in the medieval countryside the church became the centre of everyday life and at the same time an important tool for the ecclesiastic and social elites to gain control over the people.

Burial rites consist of symbolic behaviors particularly well-designed to legitimize the social interests and order of the prevailing elites. Medieval and early modern cemeteries are recognized in more than 400 sites in rural Latvia. Archaeological research shows that majority of the medieval burials are organized according to the Christian traditions while some third of the burial sites from the medieval period still reflect the previous heathen beliefs and traditions or at least vestiges of them. In some cemeteries (for example, Jaunpiebalga) it is possible to observe the transition from burial mounds of the 12th–13th centuries to the flat graves of the 13th–14th centuries. In Western Latvia the Curonians used cremation in the fourteenth century (for example, Roņi and Vedgas Cemeteries) while the Livs still buried their dead in barrows (i.e. under large burial mounds). In Eastern Latvia, too, several examples of cremation have been found during the excavation of medieval cemeteries. For example, two cremation burials were discovered in Slutišķi Cemetery (used from the fifteenth until seventeenth century).²⁵ All these examples would suggest that western burial practices slowly but surely became widespread by the sixteenth or seventeenth century.²⁶

The quantity and quality of grave goods sharply decreased from the thirteenth century onwards (this is very evident, for example, in Latgallian bur-

²³ *Heinrici Chronicon. Indriķa hronika*, ed. by Ēvalds Mugurēvičs (Rīga, 1993), I, 5–7.

²⁴ Šterns, *Latvijas vēsture 1290–1500*.

²⁵ Tatjana Berga, *Augšdaugavas 14.–17. gadsimta senvietas no Krāslavas līdz Slutišķiem* (Rīga, 2007), 88–89.

²⁶ Mugurēvičs, “Etniskie procesi”, 26.

ials²⁷). Even when grave goods had more or less disappeared from burials by the 16th–17th centuries, everyday utensils and coins still accompanied the dead into the afterlife. Among the more widely excavated cemeteries is Mārtinsala (*Holme*) Cemetery where the excavated area comprises about 2/3 of the cemetery. It was used from 1197 until the early seventeenth century. About half of the burials (800 out of a total 1808 excavations, i.e. 46%) had some grave goods. The most common grave goods were jewelry (for example, fibulas are found in 304 burials), knives (372 burials), and coins (142 burials). Weapons, however, turned up only in two male burials from the 13th–15th centuries.²⁸ Lejaskroga Cemetery in Curonia, which was used from the early fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, is a very unusual case. Archaeological excavations revealed grave goods in 124 or 84% of the excavated burials, mostly jewelry, but also weapons like axes or spears were found in 8 male burials.²⁹ Recent evidence from the medieval cemeteries of southern Estonia also suggests the persistence of the archaic burial traditions.³⁰ In addition, written sources of the Middle Ages mention the practice of heathen rites. In the 1220s a chronicler refers to the cremation of the dead among a heathen people, the Curonians,³¹ and a Christian knight Guillebert de Lannoy who travelled in 1413–1414 through the western parts of Livonia wrote that the Curonians richly decorated the dead and then cremated the corpse.³²

Pagan burial customs were practised also in cemeteries of the 14th–15th centuries but in the sixteenth century this custom became less frequent. Still, records of church visitations show that as late as the seventeenth century a lot of burials were organized in cemeteries not recognized by the Church.³³ According to some researchers, new artefacts appeared during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the western regions of Livonia (Curonia and Semigallia), including, for example, bear claw pendants

²⁷ Arnis Radinš, 10.–13. *gadsimta senkapi latgaļu apdzīvotajā teritorijā un Austrumlatvijas etniskās, sociālās un politiskās vēstures jautājumi* (Rīga, 1999).

²⁸ Vitolds Muižnieks, “Mārtiņsalas kapsētas apbedījumi ar kapa inventāru”, *LVIŽ*, 2 (Rīga, 2006), 22–42.

²⁹ Vitolds Muižnieks, “Arheoloģiskie pētījumi Puzes Lejaskroga kapsētā un viduslaiku apbedīšanas tradīcijas Ziemeļkurzemē”, *Ventspils Muzeja Raksti*, 3 (Rīga, 2003), 102–106.

³⁰ Heiki Valk, *Rural Cemeteries of Southern Estonia 1225 – 1800 AD*, CCC papers 1404–2665; 3 (Visby, Tartu, 2001).

³¹ *Heinrici Chronicon*, XIV, 5.

³² Arnolds Spekke, *Latvieši un Livonija 16. gs.* (Rīga, 1995), 94–97.

³³ Bolislavs Brežgo, *Baznīcu vizitāciju protokoli* (Rīga, 1933).

with bronze coverings. These may be related to a revived interest in heathen rites and probably inspired by the Lithuanians.³⁴

The natives of Livonia also managed to preserve some other pagan cults despite Church attempts to eradicate them. In 1589 Salomon Henning wrote that the inhabitants of Curonia worshiped the Sun, Moon, stars, different waters and trees and believed in sacred forests; in 1544, Sebastian Münster wrote something very similar (we may find comparable claims in other sources from the sixteenth century).³⁵ Living pagan traditions can also be found in ancient and heathen cult sites, which retained their symbolic value for the natives throughout the medieval period. The most important archaeological research on this topic was done in the so-called *Libiešu Upuralas* (in English translation, Sacrificial Caves of the Livs) situated in northern Latvia, on the bank of the Svētupe River (the Holy River). The caves are mentioned several times in records of church visitations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a site for peasant offerings and rituals. Archaeological research revealed about 0.85 m deep cultural layer containing a lot of charcoal, organic material (fish bones, egg-shells, pieces of wax) and small artefacts (fingerings, fibulas, beads, belt coverings etc.). There were found 628 coins and 35 artefacts dated from the fourteenth to early nineteenth century but offered continuously during the late 15th – late 17th centuries.³⁶

The Christian elites clearly recognized their failure to convert the natives in the Baltic. So in 1261, the vice-master of the Teutonic Order wrote to the town council of Lübeck, expressing the cultural ideology of the ruling class with a rhetorical flourish: “Many who had learned to shun the errors of paganism and to adore the name of God have turned back to their cult of vain idols.”³⁷ Similarly, according to the synodal statutes of the archbishop of Riga, Henning Scharpenberg, preserved from 1428 and 1437, and the synodal statutes of the bishop of Ösel-Wiek, Johannes Orgas, from 1505, the habits of the local people remained clearly pagan. Despite the struggle against heathen traditions, these Church materials from late Middle Ages did not differ essentially from those of the twelfth and thir-

³⁴ Guntis Zemītis, “Kuršu reliģiskie priekšstati pēc rakstītajiem avotiem un arheoloģiskajām liecībām (10.–15. gadsimts)”, *Ventspils Muzeja Raksti*, 2 (Rīga, 2002), 94; Guntis Zemītis, *Ornaments un simboli Latvijas aizvēsturē* (Rīga, 2004), 68–71.

³⁵ Spekke, *Latvieši un Livonija* 16. gs., 229.

³⁶ Juris Urtāns, “Svētupes Libiešu Upuralu arheoloģiskās izpētes rezultāti”, *Latvijas PSR Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis*, 11 (Rīga, 1980), 71–84.

³⁷ Kala, “The Incorporation”, 17.

teenth centuries.³⁸ The new Christian ideology very gradually and slowly (but in the long-term perspective still successfully) transformed both the power structures and landscape of Livonia, but its impact on the mentality of the heathens in the countryside proved less profound. As has been noted in recent research, the attitude towards the local people was at least partly determined by the tradition inherited from the crusaders; local people remained neophyti, they were ignorant of religion, they spoke different languages, they had different traditions and folklore etc.³⁹

Conclusions

The Baltic Crusades, involving political, social and cultural transformations on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea established medieval Livonia. Despite the many transformations it underwent, Livonia escaped agrarian colonization. The integration of local power systems into that of the conquerors' did not take place and thus two parallel societies emerged, each with its own answers to political, economical, legal, social and ethnic questions. Though they only very seldom confronted each other, both these societies were Christian (or at least locals were deemed to be converted and thus an integral part of Western Christendom). In the countryside native peasants continued to live much as they had prior to the crusades, but imported structures like fiefs, towns and castles co-existed and overlapped with native traditions. The native people kept their local heritage of the late pagan (prehistoric) periods throughout the Middle Ages, of which the best example probably is the use of pagan rites (pendants-amulets and old burial rites). The worship of different natural forces and deities is recorded until the nineteenth century, suggesting that syncretism occurred, and that elements of both paganism and Christianity were combined in native beliefs. Thus, politically (landlords and vassals versus natives), economically (crafts versus agriculture), militarily (castle versus town versus village) and ideologically (Christianity versus paganism) Medieval Livonia remained a profoundly dualistic society.

ANDRIS ŠNĒ (b. 1972) is Associate Professor in the Faculty of History and Philosophy at the University of Latvia

³⁸ Kala, "The Incorporation", 17–18; Zemītis, "Kuršu reliģiskie priekšstati", 88–89.

³⁹ Kala, "The Incorporation", 19–20.

KOKKUVÕTE: *Keskaja talupoeg: Lõuna-Liivimaa maarahva sotsiaalsest ja religioosest seisundist (13.-15. sajandil)*

Läänemere idakalda (praeguse Läti ja Eesti ala) sotsiaalseid, poliitilisi ja kultuurilisi struktuure muutsid põhjalikult 13. sajandi ristisõjad. Piirkonnas, mis sai hiljem tuntuks Liivimaa nime all, elasid tollal mitmed paganlikud balti (latgalid, semgalid, seelid ja kuralased) ning soome-ugri (liivlased ja eestlased) rahvad. Käesoleva artikli eesmärgiks on anda ülevaade nende rahvaste sotsiaalsest, poliitilisest ja usulisest olukorrast, keskendudes eeskätt Liivimaa Läti aladele 13.-15. sajandil.

Liivimaa ristiusustamise ja vallutamise peategelased olid Põhja-Saksamaa kõrgaadid ning kaupmehed. Äsja vallutatud alade kaugus Saksamaast tähendas aga agraarse kolonisatsiooni ärajäämist. Ei ole tõendeid ühegi Liivimaa etnilise grupi täielikust kadumisest enne 16. sajandit.

Agraarsed struktuurid muutusid Liivimaal väga aeglaselt. Kuni pärisorjuse kehtestamiseni 15. sajandil jäid need põhimõtteliselt sarnasteks valituseelsete struktuuridega. Kuni 14. sajandini olid kohalikud talupojad vabad ning nende suhe oma härraga oli puhtalt majanduslikku laadi. Ent 15. sajandil talupoegade teokoormised mõisnike uue finantspoliitika tõttu tõusid. Majandusliku mõtlemise muutused tõid kaasa rangema õigusliku, majandusliku ja poliitilise kontrolli kohalike talupoegade üle.

Liivimaa talurahval õnnestus säilitada mitmeid paganlikke usutavasid, hoolimata katoliku kiriku katsetest neid välja juurida. Arheoloogilised uuringud näitavad, et ehkki suurem osa maapiirkondade matuseid olid kristlikud, peegeldab umbes iga kolmas matus varasemaid paganlikke uskumusi ja traditsioone. Hauapanuste hulk ja kvaliteet langes küll järsult juba 13. sajandil, ent isegi veel 16.-17. sajandil pandi surnutele kaasa igapäevaseid esemeid ning münte.

Liivimaal ei toimunud kohalike võimustruktuuride integreerimist valitajate omadega, mistõttu kujunes kaks külge kõrval elavat paralleelset ühiskonda nii poliitilises, majanduslikus, õiguslikus, sotsiaalses kui ka etnilises mõttes. Näib, et maapiirkondades elasid kohalikud enamjaolt samamoodi edasi nagu enne vallutust, ent imporditud struktuurides (nagu mõisad, linnad ja linnused) segunesid lääneeuroopalikud jooned kohalike traditsioonidega. Kohalikku päritolu rahvad säilitasid oma eelajaloolise, paganliku pärandi läbi keskaja kuni uusajani välja.