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EVIDENCE OF THE REFORMATION
AND CONFSSIONALIZATION PERIOD
IN LIVONIAN ART

INTRODUCTION

The singular transitional period that led from the slowly evolving medieval vision of the world to a new perception of life with its dynamic expression in works of history and art history texts has been given labels that reflect its chronological evolution, as well as the epithets referring to its philosophical and aesthetic content. To illustrate the variety of the social and spiritual aspects of European spiritual life in the second half of the 15th and the 16th century, literature in the humanitarian spheres exploited concepts from the Renaissance, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Concepts of both humanism and hedonism were used to characterize the domestic cultural content and form. However, they fail to reveal the development of the new historical period and contradiction-rich diversity of the material and spiritual life in the 15th and 16th centuries, when the growing dominance of economic expansion and the endeavours to acquire new knowledge along with the awareness of the tangible benefits and spiritual advantages of a university education was so characteristic of European culture.

The history of spiritual evolution, with the variations related to the Reformation and confessionalization, is characterised by local regional contexts and forms of expression, but it also has a mandatory synchronicity with the processes of European political and intellectual life. Looking forward to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation initi-

ated by Martin Luther, it is worth examining the Renaissance-marked fine arts testimonies from the central part of the Livonian confederation – the present-day territory of Latvia. Like sensitive indicators, the artefacts reacted promptly to changes in the state of spiritual affairs. They demonstrate the controversy of opposing views, and perpetuate the clashes of once implacable doctrines.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE REFORMATION

The Baltic lands that the German Crusaders conquered and named Livonia existed for over 350 years. It was subordinated directly to the Pope as *Terra Mariana*, under the tenure of the spiritually united Catholic Church. However, administratively it was not an indivisible formation; rather it was a confederation of Teutonic Order states and bishoprics, which were formally integrated into the German economic space of the Holy Roman Empire. Its considerable remoteness was the decisive factor in the late Christianization of the Livonian territory. It also caused political insecurity in the tribal lands conquered by external enemies. This could not be prevented by either the Pope or the Holy Roman Emperor of the German nation. Neither could they reconcile the individual Livonian rulers who constantly wrangled, unable to agree either on a common economic policy, or common defence. Under such unstable internal and foreign policy conditions, Livonia was threatened by all its strong neighbours, who, after the decline of the Hanseatic League, claimed the leading role in Baltic Sea trade ("*Dominium maris baltici*") and sought access to the ice-free ports in the Gulf of Finland and Gulf of Riga. The Dutch soon usurped the German traders' monopoly of transit trade in the Baltic, and from the turn of the 16th century English ships also called at the ports favoured by German ships.

On the eve of the Reformation the confederation of the Teutonic Order states and bishoprics in Livonia experienced political and spiritual turmoil that was similar to the events occurring in the heart of Europe and its northern countries. The repercussions of the decisions taken by the German Order and the Pope's court primarily impacted the city of Riga, which wished to break free from the domination of the two feudal seigneurs. Although Riga was nominally under the Archbishop's rule, in fact, the Teutonic Order played the decisive role. The two political rivals

– the Teutonic Order and the bishops – used both political and spiritual methods in their battle for economic power in Riga. However, starting in the second half of the 15th century, reformist beliefs were used in these conflicts to weaken the opponent. On 15 March 1422, Paul von Rusdorf, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, called on Riga to fulfil its obligations to the Order and urged the Archbishop to cease hostilities. In turn, Henning Scharpenberg, the Archbishop of Riga (1424-1448) responded in the spring of 1428 with a proposal from the Provincial Council to reform the weakened Church of Vidzeme and actively involve it in their fight against the Teutonic Order.¹ These perpetual conflicts marked the political climate between the Livonian feudal state with alternating periods of conciliation and distancing. After the Riga City Council had taken steps to establish closer relations with Prussia and its urban union, the Teutonic Order and the bishop started to fear that Riga, like Danzig, could take the lead in the union of Vidzeme cities. To thwart Riga's efforts to gain autonomy, the Salaspils (Kirchholm) Treaty on 30 November 1452 spelled out Archbishop Sylvester Stodewescher's call for the Teutonic Order to form an alliance and subject Riga to the government of the two feudal seigneurs. The city was forced to comply, and on 17 January 1453, the Pope confirmed the Salaspils Treaty as valid.² Although the treaty stipulated Riga's neutrality in the conflict between the Archbishop and the Teutonic Order, in reality the Order tried to get the city on its side and, if possible, to use it in its fight against the Archbishop. On 10 October 1472, based on the petition (*Gnadenbrief*) by Johann von Mengede, the Master of the Teutonic Order's (d. 1469), his successor Bernd von der Borch reached a political compromise with the archbishop and the Teutonic Order, which resulted in monocracy in Riga for the next 60 years.³

Neither the Order nor the city could enjoy the fruits of the imposed truce, because Archbishop Sylvester Stodewescher, who was exiled to the Koknese Castle, was threatened with Pope Sixtus IV's bull of damnation and an interdict – an order on the property agreement. However, through diplomatic means, the Master of the Teutonic Order secured

1 *Stadt und Orden. Das Verhältnis des Deutschen Ordens zu den Städten in Livland, Preußen und im Deutschen Reich. Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*, Bd. 44, ed. by Udo Arnold, (Marburg: Elwert, 1993), 25-27.

2 Constantin Mettig, *Geschichte der Stadt Riga*, (Riga: Verlag von Jonck & Poliewsky, 1897), 135.

3 *Stadt und Orden*, 28.

the cancellation of the bull and the interdict. Furthermore, the Order under Master Bernd von der Borch's leadership entered into open confrontation: the forces besieged the manors of the archbishop's liegemen, appointed priests of the Teutonic Order as Deans of the Chapter, as well as pastors of the St. Peter's and St. Jacob's churches in Riga. These conflicts between the Order and the bishops reflected the administrative and spiritual weakness of the Catholic Church; its inability to use papal authority and policy, as well as clerical influence, to predominate over the real power of the Teutonic Order and the cities. The Riga City Council was effectively held hostage by the two warring factions, sometimes joining with one and sometimes the other party, just like the two opposing camps in the city were trying to subjugate the city.

Stefan Grube, who was appointed Archbishop of Riga by the next Pope, was more aggressive and threatened to apply papal sanctions on the Order and Riga, thus prompting the city to prepare for a possible attack by the archbishop's allies. The new threat caused the City Council to turn against the Order. This resulted in open battle, whereby the Order's mill at Bukulti and a number of other properties within the city limits were destroyed. On 19 December 1481, the townsfolk encouraged by Archbishop Stefan Grube besieged Riga Castle and in subsequent years gained victories over the Teutonic Knights in a number of open battles, occupying the Daugavgrīva (Dünamünde), Koknese (Kokenhusen) and several other Teutonic castles. After the defeat of the Order on 22 March 1484, the City of Riga occupied the Teutonic castle on 18 May and started demolishing the walls already on 21 May.⁴ The militant mood of the townspeople at this time has been captured in two sandstone stelae in the Riga Town Hall – on the *Beischlagsteine* (so-called “entry sidestones”) at the foot of the stairs facing the Market Square. One of the shallow carvings depicts the Virgin Mary – patron saint of Christianized Livonia and East Prussia and the other features the Archangel Michael. The fact that the stelae were made at a time when the city was celebrating the victory over the Teutonic Order is proven by a political slogan-like inscription at the top of the stelae: “*Quis contra nos, Si Deus pro nobis*”,⁵ in which the City Council identified itself with the Archangel Michael who managed to banish Lucifer from Heaven.

4 *Stadt und Orden*, 30.

5 Ojārs Spārtiis, *Riga's Monuments and Decorative Sculptures* (Riga: Nacionālais Apgāds, 2007), 11.

A few years later the political balance of power between the Order, the Archbishop and the city changed again and, on 30 September 1489, the Teutonic Order under field marshal Walter von Plettenberg declared war on Riga as a result of which the Archbishop's and the city's resistance was suppressed. The warring parties reconciled at the Landtag of Valmiera (Wolmar) on 31 March 1491 and confirmed their neutrality in 1492 with an oath of allegiance to the Teutonic Order. The oath prescribed that over the next six years the city would restore the destroyed Riga Castle at their expense. In 1494, the militant field marshal Walter von Plettenberg was elected Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia, and under his leadership the combined forces of the order and the archbishop defeated the army of Prince Ivan III of Moscow near Lake Smolin on 13 September 1502. However, the turn of the 16th century marked the decline of the military, economic and religious power of the feudal Livonian confederation. Even the 60-year peace that was signed with the defeated Prince of Moscow was no guarantee for the trouble-free future development of Livonia, but only provided some respite before the events of the Reformation.

The creation of two late Gothic sculptures that are important in the context of Latvian art is associated with this period of relative peace after the restoration of Riga Castle and the cessation of external aggression. These are the sculptures of the Virgin Mary and Walter von Plettenberg (Fig. 1) that were installed over the gate to the castle courtyard in 1515. The artist's hand and the iconography of the sculpture of the Virgin Mary point to the artist's inspiration coming from the lands of the Teutonic Order. The Virgin Mary appears in the traditional aureole, with the Infant Jesus in her arms. As the patroness of East Prussia and Livonian "*Terra Mariana*", the Virgin Mary is the most exploited iconographic image associated with the Christianization of the lands and peoples on the Baltic Sea. This is why the sculpture of the Virgin Mary above the castle gate has the ideological impact of a political poster. The case of Walter von Plettenberg's image is a different case. He is depicted in a realistic manner as the actual ruler of the land – the armour-clad Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia. The iconography of the sculpture is quite ordinary. It is found in 15th century compositions of memorial sculptures and features a full-length historical person wearing armour. The expressive modelling of the face depicts a middle-aged warrior and allows the viewer to associate the sculpture incorporated

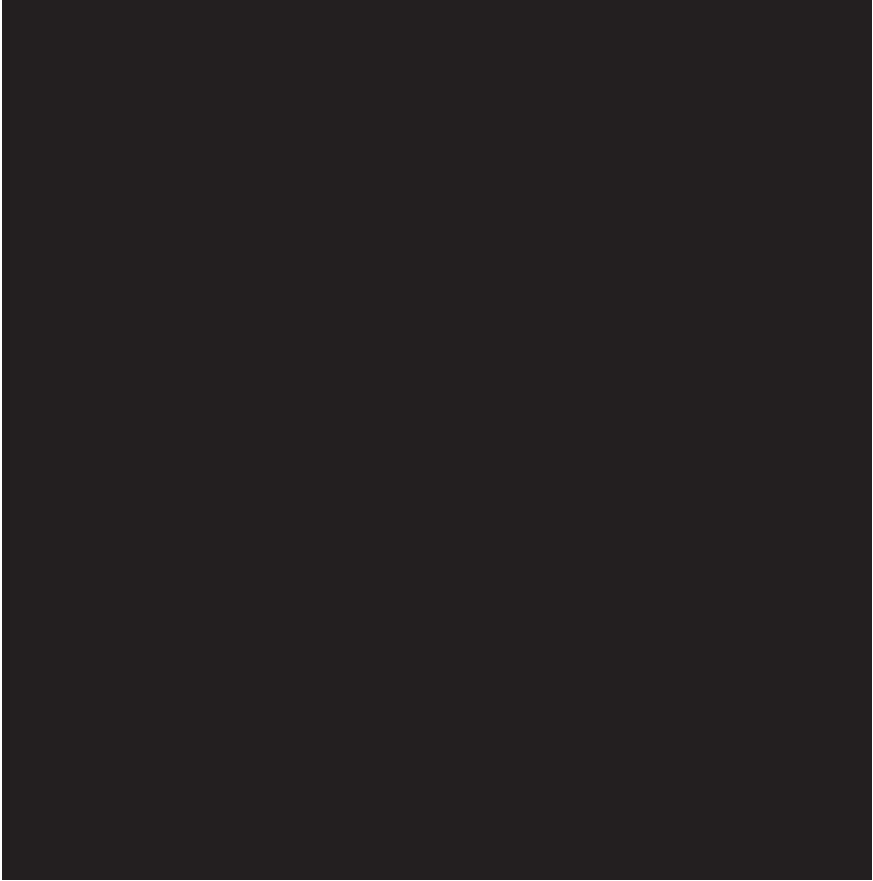


Fig. 1. Sculptures of the Virgin Mary and Walter von Plettenberg in a wall of the Riga Castle, 1515. Photo: Vitolds Mašnovskis.

into the façade with a particular secular ruler. A touch of Renaissance humanism can be found in the attempt to realistically portray an important historical person from the Baltic region.⁶

The collapse of the Teutonic Order's military power caused global consequences. With a view to acquiring the Livonian lands, ports and roads, the territory was surrounded by the mutually competing coastal states in the vicinity: Poland, Lithuania, and Russia. The Teutonic Order's lands in East and West Prussia became feudally dependent on the Polish crown starting in 1466, and totally by 1525. The political ac-

6 Spārītis, *Riga's Monuments and Decorative Sculptures*, 12.

tivity of Albrecht the former Grand Master of the Teutonic Order and later Duke and the adoption of the Reformation allowed the previous structure of East Prussia to be preserved which, after the adoption of Lutheranism, transformed into a secular Protestant duchy. This process was facilitated by both Martin Luther and Philipp Melancthon, who encouraged the Brethren of the Order to renounce celibacy and exploit the Order's former manors to achieve secular welfare.⁷ Duke Albrecht also had other intentions – to annex Livonia and Courland to the Teutonic Order's lands in East Prussia. To achieve this end, in the summer of 1525, he sent his advisor Friedrich von Haydeck to Vidzeme, where he urged Walter von Plettenberg to capitulate to the King of Poland.⁸ Johann Lohmüller, the Riga City Councillor and Secretary, spoke in unison with F. von Haydeck. Being a farsighted politician, he made a proposal to the Teutonic Order to take the initiative and, while remaining at the forefront of the political leadership, to reform the Livonian confederation of feudal states, and thereby deprive the Catholic bishops of both their power and property.⁹ To realize this goal, Duke Albrecht appointed his brother Wilhelm of Brandenburg to the post of Archbishop of Riga.

The ideas of the Reformation most certainly affected the representatives of the Teutonic Order. The Masters' actions during the decades that the Reformation spread and the Order declined help to trace the gradual diminishing of loyalty to the Pope and the Catholic Church. Walter von Plettenberg was aware of the administrative and military weakness of the Livonian Order, and tried to follow the example of Duke Albrecht in East Prussia. On 21 September 1525, he annulled the Salaspils Peace Treaty and, as the real ruler of Livonia, waived his feudal seigneur's right to the administration of Riga. He gave the Kīši estate to the City Council and granted a series of city rights, including the right to reli-

7 Boockmann Hartmut, *Der Deutsche Orden*, (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1981), 218-219.

8 Juhan Kreem, "Der Deutsche Orden und die Reformation in Livland", *The Military Orders and the Reformation. Choices, State building, and the Weight of Tradition*, ed. by Johannes A. Mol, Klaus Miltzer, Helen J. Nicholson (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren BV, 2006), 47.

9 "Das aber der lobliche deutsche orde hir ins land gefurdert, ist on zweifel auß gotlicher vorsehung und orderunge und nicht auß irem willen herkommen. – Es kan von Gots gnaden der Hochwerdige her mester meyn g.h. zusamt seynen wirdigen hern gebitigern Leifland wol regiren, schutzen und beschirmen ane sulich larven und gokelfursten", cited in Hans Quednau, Johannes Lohmüller, "Stadtsyndikus von Riga, ein Träger deutscher Reformation in Nordosteuropa. Mit einer Auswahl aus seinen Schriften", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 36 (1939), 65.

gious freedom.¹⁰ The historian Leonid Arbusow has described him as a liberal administrator who allowed evangelism for the members of the Blackheads Compagnie, who had formerly served in the castles of the Teutonic Order.¹¹

The activities of the future Masters of the Teutonic Order also contributed to the spread and consolidation of Protestantism in Livonia. On the one hand, Master Hermann von Brüggeneu tried to maintain the Order as a Catholic structure, while on the other he supported the Protestant preachers coming into office, as evidenced by Stephen Kramer's appointment as the pastor in Tukums.¹² Johann von der Recke stimulated the Protestant preachers' migration from Germany to Vidzeme. Heinrich von Galen, the penultimate Master of the Order, was such an ardent propagator of Protestantism in Estonia and Vidzeme that in 1551 he gave his oath of office in Reval during an evangelical church service. A year later, Heinrich von Galen proclaimed the Reval syndic's Jost Clodt regulation making Protestant schools mandatory, but in 1554 he also ordered the publication of a catechism in Estonian.¹³

THROUGH ICONOCLASM TO NEW TOPICS IN ART

In 1520, the Bishop of Dorpat (Tartu) had already recognized that Martin Luther's theses and articles, which had reached Livonia, had a polarizing impact on the society of his diocese. By this time, the new trends had certainly also reached Riga. Andreas Knopken, who was born near Küstrin and was Johann Bugenhagen's pupil and a follower of Erasmus of Rotterdam, arrived in Riga in the summer of 1521 to visit his brother. He began preaching and, with his moderate views, quickly gained favour with Riga's mayor, Conrad Durkopp, and town councillor Johann Lohmüller. He did not promote the closing of churches and did not speak against the pardon for trading in or worshipping sacred images. Instead,

10 This historical event has been immortalized in the so-called Eck chapel's stained glass window of the Riga Cathedral. It was donated by Riga's Town Councillor J. T. Kuchinski in 1884. Designed by Anton Dietrich, professor of Dresden Art Academy, the stained glass window was made at the Munich Royal painted glass workshop. Ojārs Spārtis, *The Riga Dom Cathedral Stained Glass* (Riga: Premo, 1997), 25-33; Mettig, *Geschichte der Stadt Riga*, 195.

11 Leonid Arbusow, *Die Einführung der Reformation in Liv-, Est-, und Kurland* (Leipzig, Riga: Deubner, 1919), 439-444.

12 Leonid Arbusow, "Livlands Geistlichkeit vom Ende des 12. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert", *Jahrbuch fuer Genealogie, Heraldik und Sphragistik 1900-1902* (1904), 566.

13 Juhan Kreem, "Der Deutsche Orden und die Reformation in Livland", 53.

he encouraged everybody to recognize the meaning of life, unmask the idols in their hearts through spiritual power, and find their own way to Christ. Since Riga's society had already begun to divide into the old church adherents and the followers of the new teachings, two years later, on 12 June 1522, a public debate was held at St. Peter's Church, in which Andreas Knopken convincingly defeated the representatives of the Catholic Church. In the spirit of Luther's, Melanchthon's and Bugenhagen's beliefs in the modern 24 Theses, he analyzed the thoughts of the priestly mission and meaning of life as expressed in the Book of Romans.¹⁴ On October 23 of the same year, Andreas Knopken, then already the archdeacon of Riga's St. Peter's Church, delivered the first sermon which was permeated with Lutheran teaching. On 30 November, Sylvester Tegetmeyer, another immigrant from Hamburg, preached the new beliefs in Riga's St. Jacob's Church, and during the following year, in Valmiera and Cēsis.

Today it is hard to imagine the speed with which public opinion circulated in Renaissance Riga, with its almost ten thousand traders, craftsmen, servants and officials who, following the movement of goods and money, were involved in active information exchange process. It is conceivable that the port and the exchange of goods with other European cities enabled ideas to be adapted in Riga at an intellectual level that the city's public opinion could embrace. These ideas were also reflected in the material world that changed as new concepts entered the spiritual domain. Starting in the 15th century, a popular decorative element for the façades of benches or stairs in the Hanseatic cities of Northern Europe were vertical stone stelae at the entrance, so-called "sidestones" (*Beischlagsteine*). They featured the landlords' insignias or armorial bearings, allegorical inscriptions and symbols that not only indicated the ownership of the property, but also illustrated the modern corporate and individual spiritual values and established the landlord's place in the social hierarchy of the city, as well as indicated the stance of a Renaissance individual.

The Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation has a fragment of a destroyed sidestone. In keeping with the classical principle of composition, it offers a contemporary interpretation of the scene of Adam

14 Otto Pohrt, "Zur Frömmigkeitsgeschichte Livlands zu Beginn der Reformationszeit", *Abhandlungen des Herder-Institutes zu Riga*, I, 4, (1925), 22-26.

and Eve's temptation (Fig. 2).¹⁵ There is a couple in luxurious contemporary clothes under the "the tree of knowledge of good and evil", i.e. Paradise apple tree, and its roots and the ownership insignia are intertwined. Both the man and woman are stretching their hands towards the branches of the tree. Their voluntarily submission to the temptation to pick the "forbidden fruit" and the smile on the woman's face lead to the interpretation of a Biblical plot that reflects the new era, by depicting curiosity, which was considered reprehensible by the Church, in such a declarative artwork. The shallow stone carving of the laconic two-figure composition and its provocative plot are akin to the mood in Flemish artist Jan van Eyck's portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his bride from 1434,¹⁶ which asserts an affinity for a contemporary perception of life combined with a certain touch of hedonist philosophy. Both works of art contain era-dictated parallels in their plots and emotional content, openly favouring the burghers' growing self-confidence and aspirations for a full-blooded life. Therefore, looking for a condemnation of "original sin" in the Riga stone stela relief with the new "Adam and Eve" would prove a vain effort, although visually its composition repeats the traditional interpretation of the "Temptation" story.

Fresh winds, inspired by pragmatic considerations, opened the hearts and minds of the population in Riga and Livonia to the Reformation. Pastor Balthasar Russow's *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt*, published in 1578 and 1584, says the following about this time: "In 1522, the light of the gospel began to shine in Livonian cities, and the people, convinced of the nonsense of the Pope, began a war against icons; they occupied churches, threw the idols out of them and took the church vessels, and no one knew where they ended up."¹⁷ These words most directly refer to the events of 10 March 1524, when the journeymen of the Blackheads Compagnie decided to eliminate the chantry chapel in St. Peter's Church, which had been installed in 1481, and transfer the altarpiece, silver tableware, chandelier and other objects to the Blackheads House. The Riga historian Constantin Mettig described the events as follows: "On 15 March, an angry mob broke into Peter's and Jacob's churches, shattered

15 Sidestone with a composition of Adam and Eve's Temptation, RVKM Inventory No. 53825.

16 *Die Kunst der Gotik*, ed. by Rolf Toman (Köln: Könemann Verlag, 1998), 412.

17 Baltazars Rusovs, *Livonijas kronika (Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt)* (Riga: Valters un Rapa, 1926), 48 ff.



Fig. 2. Scene of the Temptation of Adam and Eve from a so-called "sidestone". Beginning of the 16th century. Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation. Photo: Mārtiņš Lablaiks.

the altars and crosses, destroyed the relics and broke the tombstones."¹⁸ According to him, the same fate befell other churches where members of the Blackheads Compagnie had installed altars. With the call to get rid of Catholic "idolatry blindness", the scope of Livonia's fanatic dem-

18 Mettig, *Geschichte der Stadt Riga*, 187.

olition of icons, sculptures and altars far surpassed that in the other European countries overpowered by the Reformation. An article called “Die reformatorischen Bilderstürme in den Baltischen Landen zwischen 1524 und 1526” by the Polish art historian Sergiusz Michalski is among the most important publications in recent years dedicated to the history of iconoclasm and includes a description of the riot in Riga on 8 August 1524.¹⁹ The frenzied townspeople demolished the furnishings in the Cathedral, cast the main altar sculpture of the Virgin Mary into the Daugava River and subjected it to the “test by water”, otherwise used to identify witches.

Several late Gothic monuments of sacred art, the property of the Blackheads Compagnie, have survived to the present day in the collections of Bremen and Latvian museums as witnesses of the turbulent changes. And their form and content demonstrate their affiliation with the waning Catholic cultural layer. The pride of the Bremen Museum’s Roselius-Haus exhibition is the silver collection of the Riga’s Blackheads Compagnie. Its most valuable object is the work of the Lübeck silversmith Bernd Heynemann – a Gothic statuette of St. George, which was made in 1507 as a reliquary. Until the Reformation it adorned the altar of the Blackheads in Riga’s St. Peter’s Church.²⁰ In addition, in remembrance of the Reformation-devastated altar of St. Catherine’s Church, the Blackheads Compagnie preserved the statues of St. George, Gertrude and Mauritius (c. 1431). Unfortunately, the sculpture of St. Mauritius has been lost, but the exhibition at the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation includes the images of St. George and St. Gertrude (marked “AH”), which are excellent examples of late Gothic sculpture with the unambiguous features of the Lübeck school of sculpture.²¹

The shift in the traditional concepts related to the regulatory role of the Church in the life of Riga’s inhabitants is documented in other works of art as well. In the context of the troubling spiritual changes in the citizens’ minds, in 1518, the Blackheads Compagnie decided to adorn the entry stairs of their house facing the Market Square with

19 Sergiusz Michalski, “Hölzer wurden zu Menschen. Die Reformatorischen Bilderstürme in den Baltischen Landen zwischen 1524 und 1526”, *Die Baltische Lande im Zeitalter vder Reformation und Konfessionalisierung* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2012), 150-151.

20 *Der Silberschatz der Compagnie der Schwarzen Häupter aus Riga. Katalog zu den Ausstellungen in Bremen, Roselius-Haus 23. März - 1. Juni 1997* (Bremen: Verlag H.M. Hauschild GmbH, 1997), 32-37.

21 *Das Schwarzhaeupterhaus in Riga* (Riga: Rigas Nami GmbH, 1995), 196-197.

two monumental sidestones in the form of narrow and tall reliefs. The polychromatic stelae of Saaremaa (Ösel, Estonia) limestone with relief images of the Virgin Mary and St. Mauritius, the patron saints of the Blackheads Compagnie, were made in 1521 and 1522. Their author was the “Riga painter” and sculptor Reincke with his apprentice, whose commissions include similar works in Rostock and other Livonian towns.²² The relief with the image of the Virgin Mary is complemented by Riga’s coat of arms; the Blackheads Compagnie’s coat of arms was added to the relief of St. Mauritius. Both saints appear in shallow relief and are surrounded by stylized late Gothic columns and branches (*Astwerk*), which, from the viewpoint of the history of ornament, are associated with turn of the 15th century and often present in the prints by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

The integration of Renaissance elements in the images of both the Virgin Mary and St. Mauritius is a novelty of the era. The stone carvings are characterized by fine details. The form of the Virgin Mary’s crown and cloak pins indicate that modern ornamentation was borrowed from the culture of adornments and these motives could have been transfer onto the master Reincke’s work. The borrowing of typical household elements of Albrecht Dürer’s era is evidenced by the vitality of the Infant Jesus. The image bears little resemblance to the typical static representation of the Son of God typical of the medieval era. Instead of a frontal composition, we see mischievousness and the natural movements of a child as the Infant Jesus tries to grab the rosary in Mary’s hands. In the relief, St. Mauritius looks more like a lance-knight officer in secular dress or an armed guard who is keeping watch at the entrance to the Guild House. His Phrygian cap with slits and a peacock’s feather, a posh sword handle, the independent and stately posture are a personification of the Blackheads Compagnie’s corporate spirit that is embodied in the relief at the entrance to the building. The members of the Blackheads Compagnie who travelled extensively in order to conduct their commercial transactions were vigorous supporters of progressive change, which explains the emergence of modern trends in these works of art.

22 Constantin Mettig, *Führer durch das Haus der Compagnie der Schwarzen Häupter zu Riga* (Riga: Verlag von Jonck & Poliewsky, 1910), 14-15.

A TIME OF CONFRONTATIONS AND THE POLARIZATION OF SOCIETY

The Czech reformer Jan Hus's categorical demand for reforms and the ruthless response of the Catholic Church to the Hussite rebellion in the early 15th century identified the weak points in the Church's organization of spiritual life. Disturbances of a social nature in the Czech lands and Germany created a national resistance to the unifying policy of the Catholic Church and served as a catalyst for oppositional activities among the burghers and the nobility of central and northern Europe, as well as in the most radical part of society – among the poor, the peasantry and the representatives of the lower clergy. The first protests were based on social discontent interwoven with demands of a reformist nature. The emergence of Martin Luther, the next-generation reformer, at the forefront of the protesters initiated a radicalization of the large landowners and the upper ranks of the aristocracy, university intellectuals, the traders and urban population, which called for broad changes in the legal and social, as well as spiritual and cultural, life. The townspeople's reaction to the Reformation slogans which, from 1521 on, caused unrest in Livonia was based on local antagonisms and corporate ambitions and aggravated by ethnic and social contradictions.

There are no direct appeals for uncompromising iconoclasm in Martin Luther's teachings, but his verbal attacks on Catholic ritual symbols and the sacred cultural traditions personified by material objects stirred an avalanche of violence. It started with a public debate on the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" and Martin Luther's article "On Good Deeds" (*Von den guten Werken*),²³ which contemplates the traditional religious attributes: the building of churches, monasteries and altar installations, their adornment with bells and expensive things; as well as singing, reading of the Proclamation of the Word, playing the organ and other pleasant activities, as being association with the Devil's urging for people to "build nice churches, donate, play the pipe, read and sing, conduct a lot of worship and have plen-

23 *Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 6 (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1888), 196-276.

ty of absurd decoration.”²⁴ Given its vulgar interpretation against the background of social tension, this position used the text of the First Commandment to challenge the typically sumptuous Catholic Church ritual objects and often provoked public aggression. Along with a rejection of the worship of images and sculptures that had been created in artists’ workshops, iconoclasm swept away a large amount of church inventory. Different views have been expressed concerning this loss: regret for the heritage ravaged by an emotional outbreak,²⁵ as well as the idea that iconoclasm was able to shake the sacral culture out of stagnation and thus contributed to new forms of art.²⁶ However, it is undeniable that the aggression against church art robbed European art history of a significant number of artefacts.

Before Walter von Plettenberg, the Master of the Teutonic Order, proclaimed his tolerance edict on 21 September 1525, many excesses occurred, which were impacted by the ideas of the Reformation and divided society based on confession. Printed sources single out unmarried merchants and the Blackheads journeymen as particularly extreme supporters of the Reformation. They were supported and incited by some of the Teutonic Order members who sought to achieve their own selfish goals, including Riga’s *Komtur* Herman Heyte, who sent the journeymen a letter calling for rioting and including a symbolic whip to drive the Catholic monks out of the city.²⁷ On Good Friday 1523, in order to strengthen their diminishing number of their adherents and demonstrate their moral strength, the Pope’s followers exited the gates of Riga with relics and church flags in the hope that this public gesture would arouse compassion and induce the townspeople to call the Catholic monks back. The theatrical gesture did not have the expected effect and

24 “Hübsche Kirchen bauen, viel stiften, pfeifen, lesen und singen, viele Messen halten und ein massloses Gepränge treiben”, *Bildersturm. Wahnsinn oder Gottes Wille?* (Bern, Zürich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2000), 296.

25 Among the Reformation-period leaflets, there is a wood etching illustration made c. 1530 in Gotha with a versed text (*Klagrede der armen verfolgten Götzen und Tempelbilder über so ungleich urtayl und straffe*) and a picture of a pogrom, with Martin Luther and a mob frenzied by his teachings demolishing a church, smashing and burning sculptures of saints. See: Max Geisberg, *The German Single-leaf Woodcut: 1500-1550*, III, rev. by Walter L. Strauss, (New York: Hacker Art Books Inc., 1974), 1092.

26 Petra Bahr, “Von der Befreiung der Bilder - ein etwas anderer Blick auf den reformierten Bildersturm”, *Johann Calvin und die kulturelle Prägenkraft des Protestantismus* (Zürich: VDF Hochschulverlag AG an der ETH, 2012), 46.

27 Quote: “This dangerous disease can be cured by violent remedies.” Mettig, *Geschichte der Stadt Riga*, 185.

the participants of the procession returned to the city with their flags lowered. As a reminder of the early Protestant adherents' moral victory, the Blackheads Compagnie kept the whip in their collection of relics until late 18th century.²⁸ A drawing of the whip (dated 1682) is preserved in the Latvian State Historical Archives.²⁹ An iron plate is stored in the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation with an explanatory memorandum³⁰ that confirms the role of the Blackheads Compagnie in the Reformation events.

Other historical evidence includes the stone sculpture of a Franciscan monk in the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation, featuring a self-flagellating Catholic monk in a cassock tied with a rope and a rosary (Fig. 3).³¹ The year "1523" carved on the base of the sculpture clearly refers to the Catholic and Lutheran confrontation, but as a work of art it can be dated to the turn of the 17th century. The programmatic content of the sculpture illustrates the mood in Riga. Although the Franciscan monk in the sculpture is barefoot, his stately bearing, his sideburns and respectful posture with his hand on his heart show a stoic calm. In the context of the Counter-Reformation the sculpture acquires political meaning: public understanding and sympathy for the injustice inflicted on the Catholic Church and the clergy. The encyclopaedist Johann Christoph Brotze notes that the sculpture had been set in the wall over the Bishop's Gate and appeared there only during "Russian times", i.e. after 1710, when an earlier stone relief, which illustrated the Reformation-era eviction of the monks in Riga, was replaced.³² Thus, the iconography of the monk's image somewhat modifies the Lutheran emotional enthusiasm of the Riga townspeople and complements it with compassion and sympathy for the values represented by Catholic Church.

NEW ART FORMS, TOPICS AND GENRES

As a time of intense spiritual searching, the Reformation period tended to assign artistic forms to the new content that demonstrated an individ-

28 Gotthard Tielemann, *Geschichte der Schwarzen Haeupter in Riga, nebst einer Beschreibung des Artushofes und seiner Denkwuerdigkeiten*, (Riga: W. F. Häcker, 1831).

29 LVVA, 214 f., 6. Qpr., 376 l., 6 lp.

30 RVKM, Inv. No. 50951.

31 RVKM, Inv. No. VRVM-53854.

32 Johann Christoph Brotze, *Zeichnungen und deren Beschreibungen in fünf Bänden*, Bd.1, (Riga: Zinātne, 1992), 405.



Fig. 3. Stone sculpture with self-flagellating monk. Probably early 18th century. Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation. Photo: Mārtiņš Lablaiks.

ual's active position, convictions or emotions. The novelty of the content is not always expressed through innovative forms, because traditional time-tested forms existed to perform certain functions and, in principle, corresponded to the desired content. Therefore, new content came into artwork slowly, along with some changes in the form, iconography or ornament until the obtained quality convincingly revealed the emergence of a new type of composition, a new iconography or genre.

Change first affected traditional burials – a masonry tomb under the church floor covered by a plaque with an inscription or image that provided information on the social status of the deceased. Caring for the soul of the deceased was an organic part of the Catholic vision of the world. Therefore the monuments of memorial culture encouraged church visitors or ministers to devote a prayer to the deceased. A slab with a shallow carving of the “social profile” of the deceased – a monk, a nun, a secular male or female, a knight or a bishop – prompted an office for the dead. The novelty of Reformation pragmatism was the simplified doctrine of the salvation of the soul by the sacrament of baptism, promising resurrection as a prize to every follower of Lutheranism, in an analogy to the Resurrection of Christ. The potential reward of eternal life offered by Protestant ideologues as fulfilment of human life absolved the deceased person's loved ones and the community from the obligation to continually pray for the dead, while the preservation of collective remembrance was transposed into memorial art. Protestant ideas inspired those commissioning the artwork to expand their choices beyond the parables of the New Testament, episodes in the life of Christ, and instead, enrich creative ingenuity with parallels from the secular world. Thus, even a domain as restricted as memorial culture could generate significant thematic diversity, which was expressed by new iconography, a new sign language. To evaluate this, it is worth analyzing the aesthetics of memorial monuments of the feudal seigneurs – archbishops and Masters of the Order – and then focus on the examples of burial culture dedicated to humanists, the patriciate and landed gentry.

Published sources make reference to a brass slab covering the tomb of Archbishop Jasper Linde (in office 1509-1524) in the altar part of the Riga Cathedral.³³ However, it has not survived, nor is its appearance known.

33 “... begrabenn am abennde Kiliani (7 Juli) im dhom im kor unnder des messing steine”, *Mitteilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands*, Bd. XVII (1900), 90.

Conceivably, the cast-metal tomb memorial could have been imported from Lübeck and designed to suit Jasper Linde's status – an appropriate memorial inscription and a carved picture of the Archbishop in his vestments. There are many examples that prove that this was the tradition. The iconography of the Piltene Bishop Heinrich Basedow's tomb slab in the Aizpute (Hasenpoth) Lutheran Church conforms to this type of traditional memorial art. A shallow engraving features the deceased bishop under a Gothic canopy, his hands folded in prayer.

Wilhelm of Brandenburg (in office 1539-1563), the last Archbishop of Riga, was given a traditional barrel-type tombstone in the Riga Cathedral, on the top of which a plaque showed the deceased church administrator.³⁴ With the help of the realistic image in high-relief, the sculptor tried to convey the credibility that was inherent in Renaissance art. The deceased archbishop is dressed in a dalmatic and a chasuble, hands folded in prayer. The archbishop's head lies on a pillow of soft forms, covered with a richly ornamented embroidered ribbon. Although the sandstone of tombstone with the reclining archbishop depicted in high relief has been significantly eroded, this has not damaged the impression of materiality in the representation of the archbishop's body, its outlines and details. Both of the bishop's staffs – one with a cross, the other with a traditional curved handle – are placed beside the deceased. Neither the maker nor precise date of Wilhelm of Brandenburg's tomb slab is known, but every detail of the monument, which was created after 1563, testifies to the advent of a new stylistic concept and the emergence of a humanism-inspired Renaissance language of form in Livonian art.

The humanist Patrizius Andreas Nidezki (1522-1587, in office 1583-1587) had lived in Livonia less than a year when the King of Poland appointed him administrator of the renewed Catholic bishopric in Riga and Vidzeme in 1583. He was given a wall tomb monument with simplified Italian Renaissance forms in the altar part of St. John's Church in Cēsis. Moved to the chapel on the north wall of the church, as a valuable work

34 *The Dom Cathedral: Architectural Ensemble in Riga*, ed. by Yuri Vasilyev (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1980), fig. 73.



Fig. 4. Tomb slab of Johann Freitag von Loringhoven, the Master of the Livonian Order (d. 1494). Drawing by Johann Christoph Brotze. Sammlung verschiedener Liefplaendischer Monumente, Bd. 1, No. 209 A, Academic Library of Latvian University.

of art it now decorates the confirmands hall.³⁵ The architectural structure and shape of the monument suggest the characteristic Italian-type monuments for humanist burials had arrived in Livonia through Krakow and Vilnius, as the Polish king's political and spiritual centres of power. Eighty years had passed since 1507, when Andrea Sansovino made a wall tomb monument for Cardinal Askanio Sforza in Santa Maria del Popolo Church in Rome, and Patrizius Nidezki's death and the artistic idea of including a full-length image of the deceased in architectural design arrived in Cēsis in the wake of the Counter-Reformation. The relief representation of the reclining Bishop Patrizius Nidezki is placed in an architectural monument niche. The bishop, in vestments and with a staff on his chest, is depicted in slumber with a slight smile on his lips. The psychologically motivated emotionality in the bishop's portrait is combined with the philosophical idea of death as a moment compared to eternity, which will be followed by revival on Judgement Day and one's work will go on. This genre nuance, the presence of time and materiality in the composition of the relief are introduced by the priest "sleeping" a latent sleep of death, head supported by his elbow, and by the significant material details: the staff of office, the pillow with the impression of the bishop's elbow, as well as the book next to his pillow. It is not the classical posture of the deceased lying on his or her back with hands folded in prayer; instead there is slumber, partial wakefulness, and the anticipation of the dawn of resurrection. In terms of the history of art it can be interpreted as a regional version of the high reliefs and sculptures of the deceased bishops and kings created by the

35 During the church reconstruction in late 19th and early 20th centuries P. Nidezki's monument and tomb plates of the Masters of the Livonian Order were moved to the chapel at the north wall or fixed to the walls of the parish space and tower. Ojārs Spārītis, "Renaissance-Wandgrab des katholischen Bischofs Andreas Patrizius Nidezki (1522-1587) in der St. Johannis-Kirche in Wenden (Cēsis)", *Die baltischen Lande im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung*, Teil 2 (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2010), 142-132.

Italian sculptors Bartolomeo Berrecci, Jan Maria de Padova, Hieronim Canavesi and Santi Gucci.³⁶

Tomb slabs and monuments made for the representatives of the chivalry fall into another category of memorial art. During the first few decades of the Reformation, probably as a prudent reaction to the politically turbulent era, the traditional tomb slab design of the 15th century memorial culture was employed. The individual tombs of the masters of the Livonian Order in the St. John's Church in Cēsis, as well as in other places, were covered with sandstone tomb slabs featuring shallow engraved images. A remarkable slab on Johann von Freitag Loringhoven's tomb (Master of the Livonian Order, buried in 1494), retains the rectangular composition typical of the Gothic tradition (Fig. 4). It is characterized by a scroll along the perimeter, four-leaf medallions at the corners with the engraved symbols of the Evangelists, while the central field is filled with a luxurious canopy of late Gothic forms under which there is the image of the deceased master like a secular king, wearing a coat and holding a rosary in his hand. The engraving technique used for the memorial scene on the stone surface allowed for only a stylized representation of the deceased, because the linear nature of the engraving and the ornament-like execution only made it possible for the most essential features to be represented. This typical late Gothic tombstone composition continued to be used for several centuries and became a cliché, the repetition of which was associated with loyalty to tradition. This is reflected in the German historian Klaus Graf's article "Style as Memory", in which he considers it within a retrospective study of art trends and recommends an interdisciplinary approach as a prospective method.³⁷

Heinz Loeffler, the greatest interwar period authority on Baltic memorial culture, carried out an in-depth study of the evolution of iconography and stylistics of medieval and Reformation art monuments. He made

36 From the early 16th century several Italian sculptors worked on the invitation of Polish King's court and administration of the Catholic Church. They created a number of excellent Renaissance wall tomb memorials to the royalty as well as to the representatives of the higher clergy. P. Nidezki's wall tomb memorial in St. John's Church in Cēsis with the image of the deceased bishop follows the tradition of the realistically idealized portraits of the Polish noblemen. Illustrative of this evolution is the sculptor Bartolomeo Berecci's wall tomb memorial (1532-1533) to Piotr Tomicki in the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków, sculptor Jan Maria Padovano's wall tomb of bishop Mikołaj Dzierzgowski (1554) in the Gniezno Cathedral, as well as Hieronim Canavesi's wall tomb of bishop Adam Konarski in the Poznań Cathedral. Helena Kozakiewiczowa, *Rzeźba XVI wieku w Polsce. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe*, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1984), ill. 73, 75, 150, 151, 191.

37 Klaus Graf, "Stil als Erinnerung", *Weg zur Renaissance* (Köln: SH-Verlag, 2003), 21.



Fig. 5. Tomb slab of Walter von Plettenberg, the Master of the Livonian Order (d. 1535). Photo: Ojārs Spārtiis' archives.

precise observations based on the differences of the formal features. When comparing the tomb slabs of Johann von Freitag Loringhoven and Walter von Plettenberg, the next Master of the Livonian Order (in office 1494-1535. Fig. 5), he wrote, "It is apparent that in Vidzeme as well, the Renaissance broke into the kingdom of late Gothic and a place had to be found for both a new perception of personality and new formal features."³⁸ The tomb slab of the best known Master of the Livonian Order has survived only in pictures, yet it speaks of the power of tradition by featuring the outstanding military officer in full height, wearing armour, with a long sword in his right hand, a shield in his left, and a helmet at his feet. There is a cross on the master's chest. Identical crosses have been carved in the circular medallions in the corners of the slab. At shoulder height on both sides of the slab, there are carved consoles with capitals of acanthus leaves, which form a niche over the master's head. The master's body is surrounded by a narrow frame-like inscribed column on the outer edge complemented by a band of stylized flowers and leaves. When comparing the late Gothic decorative detail-abundant tomb slab of Master Johann von Freitag Loringhoven with the considerably less decorated one of Walter von Plettenberg, it can be concluded that the carved image of a knight in stylized form carries a message related to the social status of two historical persons, but fails to indicate anything about their personalities. The novelty in the composition of Walter von Plettenberg's tomb slab is the change of ratio in favour of the Master's figure compared to the ornamental frame. This can be regarded as an artistic technique used to highlight personality, which is borrowed from the Renaissance portrait genre, since the ornamental canopy in Johann von Freitag Loringhoven's tomb slab still predominates over the proportions of the deceased master's body.

In terms of its artistic concept, the iconography of the tomb slab of Herman von Bruggeney, the next Master of the Livonian Order (in office 1535-1549), in St. John's Church in Cēsis is yet another step forward as a work of memorial art as compared to Walter von Plettenberg's image. While von Bruggeney was in office, new means of formal expression continued to develop in Livonian Renaissance art, almost simultaneously with the trends in the other central European countries. The tomb

38 Heinz Loeffler. *Die Grabsteine, Grabmaeler und Epitaphien in den Kirchen Alt-Livlands vom 13.-18. Jahrhundert* (Riga: Löffler, 1929), 32.

slab, produced by an unknown stonemason, suggests the abandonment of a shallow engraved image in favour of a deliberate tendency to display the forms of a person similarly to expressive sculpture and enable the viewer to perceive not only the contours of the image, but also its size. The slab with the surrounding scroll, the round medallions and evangelist symbols in the corners form a semicircular arch that encompassed the full-length image of a warrior-knight's body. With the insignia of the Cross on his chest, his right hand supporting himself on a long sword and a shield featuring Renaissance heraldic designs in his left hand, sporting long hair and rectangular sideburns, H. von Bruggeney's portrait illustrates a self-confident Renaissance personality. This is also achieved by artistic techniques, although they are naïve in terms of mastery. Both the arch and the Master of the Order are carved in relief, gradually penetrating the background and clearing the surface for the modelling of the key components. The attempt to portray the deceased in relief contributes to the spatial perception of the face, hands, sword and shield, chest and shoulders, which is a completely innovative approach for focusing attention on the person to be displayed. This has been achieved by inserting the relief picture of the master in an arch-shaped niche and using the scroll to create a frame in which the viewer can perceive a lot of detail and, what matters most, identify the image of the deceased.

THE EXPANSION OF RENAISSANCE ICONOGRAPHY IN MEMORIAL ART

A large part of the new genre and thematic discoveries born of the spiritual quest of the Reformation reflect the clichés of aristocratic culture transformed into works of art, which are adapted to the civil society and clearly demonstrate the influence of Renaissance forms and humanism ideas. One could even argue that 16th century civil society, with its social and spiritual searching, was extremely creative, and within a short time produced new forms of communication in the works of art.

The transition from the traditional image of a warrior-knight dressed in armour to an iconography of contemporary sculptural forms is seen in the tomb slab of Dirick Lode, a knight who was buried in the St. John's Church in Cēsis in 1518. Installed in the church wall at the turn of 20th



Fig. 6. Tomb slab of Gerhard von Nolde and his two wives in Gramzda Church, after 1567. Photo: Marburg, Germany.

century, the tomb slab had originally been a cover for a tomb beneath the floor. We see an engraved knight in motion with a coat of arms at his feet surround by a Gothic band. The novelty lies in the artistic attempt to portray movement, which adds liveliness and dynamism to the image. D. Lode's tomb slab speaks of a wish to solve the problem of suggesting motion in the representation of a three-dimensional human image.

The removal of the chantry chapels from the Catholic churches and monasteries, whose servants were obliged to regularly pray for the souls of the deceased while paying much less attention to the dead bodies. During the Reformation in Livonia a new civil burial practice emerged. It encouraged a spiritual leap from the typical medieval neglect of the dust to an opposite trend – the increasing reverence for the memory of the deceased, through more ostentatiously furnished tombs, burials and memorial signs in churches. There was an increasingly marked tendency to record the deceased individual's personality, their secular merit, as well as to depict figurative or portraiture features. The shallow-carved tomb slabs above the burial sites under the floors of the churches were trans-



Fig. 7. Tomb slab of Georg von Fircks and Anna von Rosen in Nurmuiža Church, after 1600. Photo: Vitolds Mašnovskis.

formed into medium-high or full high-relief images of the dead. These tomb slabs could not be walked on, so a new place had to be found for them in the interior of the churches. The representatives of the highest social strata could afford to reserve a place in the floor directly in front of the altar where, respecting the memory of the deceased, neither the members of the parish nor the clergy stepped on the new type of tomb slabs. Yet other solutions show that the burials in Latvia were inspired by the Italian Renaissance technique of mounting architectural and artistic monuments – epitaphs and cenotaphs – on the church walls to honour the deceased. In Livonian memorial culture, these differed greatly in terms of scale and quality from their prototypes, which originated in Catholic culture and were adapted to Lutheran culture.

The oldest Reformation period tomb slab with a representation of the deceased, dated 1567 from the church in Gramzda (Gramsden)³⁹ did not survive the devastation of World War II. The heavily trampled tomb slab with a relief of three figures of the deceased was installed into a floor of clay tiles in front of the altar. The frame of the rectangular plate was surrounded by a smooth band; in the middle, between the reproductions of the two wives, there was a full-length figural depiction of the Gerhard von Nolde, the landlord of the Gramzda estate, wearing armour (Fig. 6). The deceased were depicted lying on their backs with

³⁹ Loeffler, *Die Grabsteine, Grabmaeler und Epitaphien in den Kirchen Alt-Livlands vom 13.-18. Jahrhundert*, 102.

hands folded in prayer, and replicated the position of a body in a coffin or on a hearse, which the anonymous sculptor had tried to convey by naively carving the toes of the women's shoes beneath the hems of their bell-like dresses. A simplified rollwork cartouche containing an almost faded-out memorial text was located at the feet of G. von Nolde and his two wives, while the corners of the plate were adorned with the nobles' coats of arms.

The iconography of the realistic representation of deceased nobles in Livonia's churches in the 16th century is indicative of rapid evolution. It is manifest in the realistic portrait, body shape and physical appearance of the individual, while seeking to integrate spiritualist nuances and non-material details of the content in the work of art. In the altar floor above the burial crypt in the Nurmuiža (Nurmhusen) Church, there is a sandstone tomb slab with sculptural relief images of a couple. Anna von Rosen (d. 1600) and her deceased husband Georg von Fircks, who died several years later, are depicted with their hands folded in prayer (Fig. 7). The full-length figure of the nobleman, G. von Fircks, has a sword at his side, is clothed in Renaissance armour decorated with ornamentation, and has a helmet placed at his feet. The sculptor has portrayed his wife, A. von Rosen, in a long dress of luxurious thick fabric, thus creating a perfect impression of the material. The image of Christ – Saviour of the World (*Salvator Mundi*) – surrounded by a spiral of clouds appears in the upper part of the slab between the heads of the husband and wife. The noblemen's social status and ability to follow the fashions of the era is evidenced by the fine ruffled collars, their form highlighting the two portraits of the dead. The tomb slab is surrounded by a text in German and the extended family coats of arms, but the carved cartouche holding the dedicatory text is placed under the feet. The bodies of the landlords, full-faced and proudly rising in relief, appear in contrast to the smooth background surface, creating the illusion that the couple had been portrayed while still alive. If the plate were inserted vertically on the wall, the two standing persons could even be perceived as a painting or companion portraits, since the portrait genre was flourishing at the time. An image in a Renaissance wall tomb, cenotaph, epitaph, or tomb slab had a dual nature, combining explicit information about the facts of the deceased's death with a desire to portray the dead "as alive", since a realistic portrait advanced life after death. The fact that noble persons were prepared to accept this is evidenced by the fact that

Georg von Fircks's and his wife's, Anna von Rosen's, eyes are open. The attempt to achieve a dimensional representation of the body, as well as minor details – the eyes – suggest that memorial sculpture was distancing itself from the medieval conditionality of stylized shapes through engraved lines, and was approaching a full body depiction in a realistic portrait. A recognizable representation of the deceased was regarded as a guarantee of resurrection, just like public sculptures in the urban space continued to enhance the merits of the deceased.

The seemingly trivial matter of the representation of the deceased in a standing or lying position on the horizontally inserted slab became a function of composition and plot development, something to be solved not only with simplified graphic drawing tools, but with the techniques of spatial modelling. This required that the gender, social status and portrait features of the deceased person be taken into account and that a literal compliance with the liturgical formulas of the burial ritual be created. According to the procedures of the church service, the pastor pronounced words of farewell to the deceased, wishing that they “rest in peace”, thus evoking the idea of the deceased lying on their backs or the thought of them appearing “before the Lord”. This could lead to the illustration of these words in compositions that depicted the deceased kneeling, or standing on the threshold of life and death, and asking for the grace of eternal life. In this way the two opposites – “lying” or “standing” – become key factors in the selection of the iconographic type for the image of the deceased. The selection can be complicated because of the multitude of compositional features of 16th and 17th century memorial sculpture in the tomb slabs, the stonemason's craftsmanship, as well as the degree of conservation that often interfered with the identification of the portrait and other essential details of the message. In this context, mention should be made of another three-figure relief on the tomb slab of Anna Dorothea Thiesenhausen in the Dobele church (Doblen, 1648). In this case, images of two children, a girl and a boy, lying (or standing) next to the mother are included, thus allowing for both interpretations of the composition.

There are two more monuments that feature different representations of reclining aristocrats as two motifs of iconographic composition and are significant for Latvian memorial culture. The first is the sandstone monument to Georg von Rosen (d. 1590) in the chapel of the Straupe Castle (Gross-Roop. Fig. 8). The evangelist symbols in the corners of the



Fig. 8. Tomb slab of Georg von Rosen (d. 1590) in the chapel of Straupe Castle. Photo: Vitolds Mašnovskis.

slab, the helmet at the resting place and the family coats of arms on the sides of the slab, all correspond to a horizontal composition and allow one to assume that the plate might have been intended for a wall tomb in a horizontal position as a part of architectural construction. G. von Rosen's body, armour-clad and depicted in high relief, is lying on a tasselled blanket that is slipping down under its own weight. The figurative relief of the nobleman is enriched with utilitarian details. The client's specific expectations concerning the artistic quality is evidenced by the detailed portrait with smoothly combed beard and hair, the glove in the right hand, the sword belt around the waist and the sword handle at the side. G. von Rosen's relaxed posture with his knees bent and the helmet placed next to the resting place are in sharp contrast to the fact that the viewer is viewing a deceased person's image. This mood is enhanced by the realistic details of the image of a knight, lying with his eyes closed with his head resting on his hand, as if the desired resurrection was being bestowed on the slumbering Christian. In addition, the eloquent details of the garment and the deathbed provide the memorial scene with certain literary content and augmented expression.



Fig. 9. Memorial sculpture of Nicholas Ecke (d. 1623), the Mayor of Riga, in the Riga Cathedral.
Photo: Uldis Muzikants.

Another monument with a supine depiction of a aristocrat, Nicholas Ecke's tomb slab (1541-1623) in the Riga Cathedral, differs from similar slabs with images of reclining noblemen in that the full-length figure of the deceased is represented in a high-relief sandstone sculpture (Fig. 9).⁴⁰ Dressed in fashionable garments befitting his high social status, the sculpture of N. Ecke, protégé of Stefan Bathory and Sigismund Augustus, the kings of Poland, and subsequently mayor and town councillor of Riga, is placed on a stone pedestal with sleeping accessories – a feather bed and a pillow on the upper plaque. A talented but unknown sculptor has portrayed the deceased mayor in the typical outfit of the Polish nobility and senior functionaries at the turn of the 17th century – a long fur-trimmed coat with decorative sleeves, knee-length trousers of soft fabric, socks and a camisole, and a ruffled collar. During the restoration of the Cathedral in 1883, the sculptor August Volz restored the head and hands in sandstone⁴¹ – originally made in alabaster, what had been destroyed in the end of 18th century. The reconstruction of the lost parts plays an aesthetic role in the interior of the church, and a medal with N. Ecke's portrait made in 1601 was used as the model for the mayor's head, while the composition of hands in prayer was logically derived from the position of the sleeves and the arms. N. Ecke's tombstone is a unique Latvian art treasure. It reflects the cultural enrichment of the Counter-Reformation period with its new artistic impulses; which arrived in Livonia from Kraków and Vilnius owing to the administrative contacts with the King of Poland and brought modified Italian Renaissance art forms into the Protestant environment.

A popular iconography type of memorial monuments is the representation of the deceased kneeling in front of a crucifix. Its origins and wide popularity in the Protestant environment are associated with the contribution that Lucas Cranach the Elder and the Younger made to the design of Lutheran iconography types, as well as with the thematic evolution of the epitaphs in St. Mary's Church in Wittenberg. The artists' prints spread rapidly through the lands of northern Germany, Scandinavia, Prussia, and also Livonia. A much-worn tomb slab is preserved in the wall of the Bauska's (Bauske) Church of the Holy Ghost that memorialises Dietrich von Grotthuss (d. 1599), the owner of Rundāle

40 *The Dom Cathedral: Architectural Ensemble in Riga*, 76.

41 "Die Geschichte der Cathedral-Kirche zu Riga," *Rigasche Stadtblaetter*, 14 (1896), 110.



Fig. 10. Adoration composition on tomb slabs of Solomon von Henning (d. 1589) and his spouse Margaret Sophia von Dobbin (d. 1590) in Vāne Church. Photo: Vitolds Mašnovskis.

Castle and his wife Catherine von Grotthuss, born Kriedener. The slab is surrounded by a rectangular frame with a scroll, which makes it similar to a painting. In the centre of the composition is the crucified Saviour, flanked by the kneeling husband and wife. The three-quarter pose of both spouses kneeling at the foot of the cross was an artistic novelty in 16th century Livonian art. D. von Grotthuss is depicted as a nobleman in armour with a sword with a helmet on the ground, while C. von Grothuss's is wearing a coat open to reveal her hands in prayer, a cap and wide ruffled collar.

The representation of a human kneeling with hands folded in front of a crucifix or an image of the Virgin Mary in the composition of a work of art is called an adoration posture (*adoratio* – prayer). A popular technique for figurative compositions in Christian iconography, it illustrates a humble person's dialogue with religious authority. A person depicted in the adoration posture in Catholic works of art may appear to be approaching the crucified Saviour with a prayer, or at the feet of the Virgin Mary, Christ or a regionally honoured saint. In Protestant iconography, adoration images are less frequent and are usually limited to

scenes depicting the resurrected Christ, a crucifix or Calvary. However, in a rationally designed work of art, the object of worship can be absent and the artist may indicate the situation of worship solely by depicting the person in prayer.

A very early example of an adoration composition in Livonian art is the images of Solomon von Henning (d. 1590), Chancellor to Gotthard Kettler, the Duke of Courland's Chancellor, and his wife Margaret Sophia von Dobbin (d. 1589) in the Vāne (Wahnen) Church (Fig. 10).⁴² Although each was given a separate tomb slab, they form a deliberate diptych. The deceased husband and wife are shown in a three-quarter view, facing the centre – where the crucifix is located according to iconographic tradition and the logic of composition. The portraits of the kneeling Courland nobles possess a high degree of individualization. If the sculptural mastery in Margaret Dobbin's portrait causes admiration for the contrast between her slender body and the low background, and the plasticity of the pleated dress, then S. Henning's outfit with a short cape and balloon-shaped trousers suggests the provincial aristocracy's quality of life and their opportunities to follow the modern trends of Spanish fashion. Also from a stylistic point of view, the *mezzo rilievo* tomb slabs are masterpieces. They combine the technique of carving the framing memorial text in Gothic majuscule with the new trend of sculpturally strengthening the effect of spatial depth and introducing modern cartouches with text in the capital lettering.

Following the thematic line of tomb slabs with adoration scenes, the Nereta church (Nerft) memorial monuments form a separate typological group, serving the functions of wall tombs or epitaphs. When building the Nereta church in 1593, its altar space was divided into two areas. The lower part or the crypt was constructed as a mausoleum for the von Effern family to hold tin sarcophagi and wooden coffins. Therefore, the floor of the altar space became significantly higher. This stage design technique highlights the altar and the memorial art works in the altar space.

The epitaph to Gotthard von Effern who died a tragic death in 1595 when only 15 years of age (Fig. 11) is bricked into the north wall between the pulpit and the sacristy door of the Nereta Church. It was intended to be viewed from the front, and therefore, was deliberately designed as a

42 Loeffler, *Die Grabsteine, Grabmaeler und Epitaphien in den Kirchen Alt-Livlands vom 13.-18. Jahrhundert.*, 101, Abb. 29, XVI. After relocation the tomb slabs were placed in the collections of the Rundāle Palace Museum and are displayed in the Bērstele (Bersteln) Church, Inv. No. 1344.



Fig. 11. Epitaph of Georg von Effern (d. 1595) in Nereta Church. Photo: Vitolds Mašnovskis

vertically positioned sculptural work. G. von Effern's epitaph consists of two parts: a rectangular slab and a pediment set off with a cornice. The bottom of the pediment contains a scroll. This commemorative mark is very similar to the humanist German epitaphs from the turn of the 16th century. Of the latter, the most similar in composition to the Nereta example is the epitaph to Johannes Spießheimer (also known as Cuspinian) (1473-1529), installed after 1529 in Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral.⁴³ The high relief slab with G. von Effern's portrait and the family coats of arms created by an unknown stonecutter corresponds to the memorial works of art of the epitaph genre, which, in Latvian sculpture, belong to the wall tomb type of monuments. The slab composition is architectural in structure. There are pilasters with Tuscan orders on the sides that support the pediment above the rectangular plate. The middle of the epitaph is divided into three parts by an arcade motif, G. von Effern's paternal and maternal coats of arms are on the sides and the relief portraiture of the tragically deceased son in the adoration posture is in the centre. Distinguished artistic features of the epitaph include the depiction of the young man's costume and the genre features: the voluminous laced-up pillow with a realistic indentation left by the young man's knees, the hat removed before God, as well as a closed book – the symbol of a life cut short. In commemoration of the deceased student's tragic and untimely death, the book in its allegorical form represents the young person's membership in the humanist community, while all the accessories are generally suggestive of the iconographic parallels of an epitaph in the still-life genre and the mood of a *vanitas* theme.

The young man's finely articulated face and hands allow us to assume that the portrait is a likeness of the deceased. However, it was not characteristic of fine art in 16th century Livonia to delve into the nuances of the identity or psychology of the model. Therefore, the issue of lifelikeness is highly questionable, because the customer's expectations and the stonecutter's working methods focused on documenting sex, age and differences in rank in a relatively idealized form. Identification was secured by the coat of arms and the memorial inscription with the person's name, age and title. According to the tradition of the Renaissance epitaph composition, a personalized memorial inscription in Latin, typical

43 Ute Versteegen, "Die Grabdenkmäler der humanistischen gelehrten - Antikrezeption im Norden", *Wege zur Renaissance* (Köln: SH-Verlag, 2003), Abb. 3, 297.

of humanist rhetoric, was inserted in the space under above the decorative arcade.⁴⁴ At the bottom of the pediment, decorated with stylized obelisks, there is the dedication of the anguished father, and the other mourners, to his son.⁴⁵ The sum of all the architectural, ornamental, iconographic and artistic components of G. von Effern's epitaph defines this monument of Latvian memorial culture as an outstanding art treasure in the Baltic art context.

Another vertical wall epitaph in the Nereta church altar wall is dedicated to Wilhelm von Effern, Burgrave of Courland and Gotthard von Effern's deceased father (1612) and other members of the family: his two wives and two juvenile children. The epitaph, framed by architectural motifs – pilasters and a pediment – is a slab with a graphical information-rich relief. On it, echoes of archaic tomb slab composition are interspersed with features of the new memorial culture. The circular medallions with evangelist symbols in the corners are joined by a scroll along the perimeter. The slab contains horizontal lines of engraved commemorative text in German with the names of the deceased and years they lived. Another important composition element above the epitaph text is the arcade with a rich crown of acanthus spirals surrounding the coats of arms of the von Efferns and the von Lvdingkhavsen-Wolffs at the viewer's eye level.

THE EROSION OF POLITICAL STABILITY AS REFLECTED IN ART

From the perspective of social evolution, the 16th century was a time of rapid changes caused by the sign of both political and spiritual confrontation. The reasons for this were active political, economic, social and cultural processes, catalysed by the advent of Lutheranism after three centuries of Catholic domination. When assessing the evolution of me-

44 Inscription above the arcade: *SVRCVLVS VNVS ERAM EFFERNAE DE STEMMATE GENTIS, GOTHARDVS PATRIS ET MAXIMA SPES PATRIAE IMAQUE MEVM IESVM ET MVSAS SOPHIAM[QUE] MSR' SEQUEBAR AD RIPAS MISSVS BREGELA CLARE TVAS.*

Inscription below arcade: *INTEREA' MIHI RVPERVNT FATALIA PARCAE STAMINA POST VITAE MOX TRIA LVSTRA MEAEA HIC MEA IMAGO QVIDEM SAXO EST INSCVLPTA CADVCO MENS VIGET IN COELO, PRVSSIA CORPVS HABET, MOX ADERIT IESVS PATRIA IVNGEMVR IN VNA TVNC BONVS IN VESTRVM ME DABIT ILLE SINVM.*

45 Inscription on the bottom of the pediment: *VNICO ET CARISSIMO FILIO GOTTHARDO PATER GUILIELMUS AB EFERN CVRLAND BVRGGRAB AMARI DOLORIS PLENVS ANNO 1595.*

morial sculpture from the perspective of Renaissance humanism and Reformation processes, a certain expansion of typological and thematic diversity as well as departure from genre limitations can be identified. However, the awakened spiritual activity did not increase along an even curve. Given the administrative, ideological and clerical counteractions, the spiritual enlivenment in Livonia could only produce untraditional forms of thought now and then. These brought new content into everyday conversations, provided refreshing novelty to the arsenal of common cultural clichés as well as stimulated new forms and nuances in the content of art. The specific weight of cultural phenomena at the time is not large. The uneven artistic quality and controversial content mirror the spiritual pulsations of the turbulent 16th century.

As the confederation of Livonian states collapsed, an administrative and economic split remained in Vidzeme, Estonia and Courland. The masters and rank-and-file of the Teutonic Order wished to establish a feudal system of governance in conquered Livonia, with vast landed property, similarly to East Prussia. Therefore, the activity of the Teutonic Order in the first post-Reformation decades was directed at taking over and dividing the property of the Catholic Church and monasteries. In face of these privatization efforts, all the social strata of Livonia – house-owners, merchants, administrators of the bishoprics and the nobility – demonstrated total particularism. Since the Teutonic Order was weak and disintegrating, and there was no other stabilizing force, each social group tried to protect its own interests with the help of a foreign protectorate.

The ambitions of Russian foreign policy grew considerably as a result of the expansionist policies of Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible, 1533-1584). He conquered territories up to the Black Sea and concluded trade agreements with England, for which he needed access to the ice-free ports on the Baltic Sea. Neither the Hanseatic League nor the Teutonic Order could defend Livonia from being invaded by Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible) in 1558. In this situation the representatives of each of the crumbling administrative segments turned for help to their supposed protectors – be it Poland, Denmark or Sweden.

In the situation of a political vacuum, to avoid parts of the Livonian coast and Saaremaa falling into Russian hands, Bishops Johann von Münchhausen and Moritz von Wrangel sold these territories to the King Friedrich II of Denmark, who bought the land for his younger brother,

Duke Magnus, for 30,000 thalers, as compensation for his share of their inheritance.⁴⁶ As a result of this lucrative deal, in 1559, part of the Estonian coastal territory with the Saaremaa-Wiek and Reval (Tallinn) bishoprics, as well as the Piltene bishopric in Courland, came under Danish rule. After the defeat at Ērgeme on 2 August 1560, the Estonian knighthood asked King Eric IV of Sweden for help, and his army occupied the northern part of Estonia at Tallinn.⁴⁷ The same year, Riga and all of Vidzeme came under the rule of the Polish king as did Latgale in 1560. Starting in 1559, Gotthard Kettler, the last Master of the Teutonic Order, had repeatedly appealed for help to the Keiser Ferdinand I of Germany and the Reichstag of Augsburg, but he was forced to solve the problems of defence funding and concluded the peace only with the support of the King of Poland.⁴⁸ Because Gotthard Kettler did not receive either military or financial support from the *Generalkapitel* (general chapter) of the Teutonic Order or from the German Keiser in 1561-1562, it can be concluded that these feudal seigneurs considered the Livonian territories to be lost, just like as they had accepted the loss of East Prussia in 1525. The establishment of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, a Polish-dependant Protestant vassal state, on 5 March 1562, was the only positive result of this collapse.⁴⁹

A number of military invasions by Ivan IV (the Terrible) formed a special historical background for the development of the Reformation in 1558-1582. A confessional and ethnic containment area was established on the border between Russia and Livonia with both Slavic and Estonian villages and churches of different denominations. Since the 15th and early 16th centuries, the territory up to Tartu (Dorpat) had been an area of interest and conflicts for the Teutonic Order in Livonia and Tsar Vasili III of Russia, which echoed the repercussions of the iconoclasm. On 10 January 1525, Melchior Hofmann, a Swabian journeyman of a radical furrier master, who had been banished from Valmiera for incitement against the Church, initiated riots in the city and pogroms of the churches in Tartu (Dorpat), a city with a large number of Russian merchants and artisans. These actions resulted in churches being demol-

46 Gert von Pistohlkors, *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Baltische Länder* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1994), 162.

47 Ernst Seraphim, *Baltische Geschichte* (Reval: Verlag Franz Kluge, 1908), 165-172.

48 Bernhard Demel, *Der Deutsche Orden im Spiegel seiner Besitzungen und Beziehungen in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2004), 205-210.

49 *Ibidem*, 201.

ished and icons being damaged in the Orthodox St. Nicholas Church.⁵⁰ Several decades later the Russian Orthodox patriarchate exploited the religious conflict to revive the ancient battle for access to the Baltic Sea. When the Livonian War broke out, the tsarist propaganda justified it with the fight against the Lutheran iconoclasm. This is evidenced by a letter, written in 1567 by Philip, Patriarch of Moscow, in which he says: “The Godless Crimean Khan Devlet Giray together with the Mamelukes and Latinists, as well as the Lithuanian King Sigismund Augustus and the disgusting Germans, have fallen victim to various heresies, mainly the fallacies preached by Luther, and [they] ravage the holy churches and blaspheme revered images”.⁵¹ From the aggressor’s point of view it was natural that the Russian tsar and his clerical elite justified the invasion of Livonia with anti-Western rhetoric. The aggression against Livonia was based on yet another frontier conflict. Since 1578, Ivan the Terrible had cooperated with the Swedes to carry out aggressive policies against the Danes and Poles. In the conquered Estonian lands around Lake Peipsi and in Vidzeme up to Koknese, he implemented several administrative anti-Lutheran reforms. The Russian patriarch founded an Orthodox diocese in Tartu (Dorpat) and even built several churches. This “Orthodoxicalization” of the borderlands was followed by the methodical annihilation of the local German, Estonian and Latvian populations and their deportation from the borderlands to inland Russia, which brought misery and left memories of the experienced atrocities for several generations to come.

In the European Lutheran cultural space and in Vidzeme, wrath against the Russian political aggression, which involved ethnic cleansing and denominational religious antagonism, was growing. A response was provoked by a leaflet, printed in 1561 in Nuremberg, which illustrated the torture of Christians in Livonia⁵² and helped to instigate anti-Russian hysteria and threatened the European nations with Tatar cruelty. In order to maintain the image of the enemy of faith both in Europe and Livonia in the second half of the 16th century, and even in the 17th century, the motif of “the Muscovite” or “the Turk” was widely disseminated.

50 Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), 132.

51 August W. Fechner, *Chronik der evangelischen Gemeinden in Moskau*, Bd. 1 (Moscow: Deubner, 1876), 56-57. Cited from: Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe*, 210.

52 Von Pistohlkors, *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Baltische Länder*, 178.

In urban folklore this phobia was fixed by the following inscription on the bell in Riga's St. Jacob's Church: "God, protect us from the plague, fire hazard, and the Russians." In literature, this function of historical memory was also performed by the hymn-like "Song of Praise to Riga", written in Latin by Livonian humanist Basil Pliny and published in a book in Leipzig in 1595.⁵³ In it the image of "a Muscovite" was complemented by associations with the Turks attacking Vienna, and the imminent burden of tyranny and misery.

The warning and reminder of the emotional trauma that could be inflicted on a region's cultural traditions by dissimilar and alien phenomena, has been documented in works of art. A small sandstone sculpture in the Latvian National History Museum shows a mustached "non-Christian" wearing distinctive Muslim headgear. Another painted woodcarving features a grotesque Turkish soldier with a fish tail, a bleeding chest wound and a sword in his hand. The common feature in these works of art is their grotesque attitude that generalizes the emotionally negative message contained in the sculptures. It also shows the clichés of the collective fear-generated image of the enemy that were common among the long-suffering European nations, as well as in Livonian society.⁵⁴

The turning point in the Livonian War was not reached until 1581 when the two political opponents, Johan III, King of Sweden and Stefan Bathory, King of Poland, agreed on a common policy against Ivan the Terrible. The Treaty of Yam-Zapolsky on 15 January 1582 stipulated that the Tsar's troops would retreat from Vidzeme in favour of the Polish king's interests. Soon after, Ivan the Terrible had to cede the territories in Northern Estonia up to Narva, which he occupied in August 1583, to his former ally – Sweden. The result of the settlement of the conflict was that each of the winning parties pursued a different religious policy

53 "Deiner brennenden Kriegskunst, Türke, als Schild und Europas Bollwerk ist die Stadt Wien gegenübergestellt.

Ihr jedoch stehet zur Seite als weiterer Schutzwall Europas,

Hier gegen russischen Sturm, Riga, niemand als du.

Wenn Moskowiter ich nenne, erbebe ich schier vor Entsetzen,

Da ein erschütterndes Bild, Heimat, mir wiederersteht.

Auf die entsetzlichste Weise verwüstet, lagst du darnieder,

Als ein übler Tyrann räuberisch dich unterwarf."

See: *Bazilija Plinija slavas dziesma Rīgai. 1595. Der Ruhmgesang auf Riga* (Riga: Jumava: Latvijas Kultūras Fonds, 1997), 189.

54 CVVM-30399, VL-4568; CVVM-175848, VS-200.

in their part of Livonia. The Swedes supported the logical continuation of the Reformation and focused on strengthening Lutheranism, while Stephen Bathory of Poland, understanding that the Catholic Church also needed change invited the Jesuit Order to impose spiritual subordination on the conquered territories. For the next 40 years, the political and religious climate in the Vidzeme region of Livonia was dictated by the administrators appointed by the King of Poland, and they predominated, while the supporters of Lutheranism in Livonia tried desperately to defend their chosen spiritual platform and not to betray their beliefs in sometimes quite hopeless situations.

The one hundred years from the early decades of the Reformation to the victory of Swedish King Gustav Adolf in Riga and Vidzeme in 1621 was characterised by numerous conflicts between the adherents of Catholicism and Lutheranism. In view of such confrontations, which were adverse for the Protestants in Riga and Vidzeme, a special sign language for spiritual resistance developed and this was demonstrated in works of art.

The doctrinal orientation of Lutheranism on the New Testament as a theological framework document with the true word of God (*sola scriptura*), on the promises of God's grace and the salvation of the soul (*sola gratia*), which could be achieved by the individual's faith in the grace of Christ and the salvation of the mankind (*sola fide*), prompted the creators of sacral art to address new thematic and iconographic motifs to express the new world outlook. It is no coincidence that, in Livonian sacred art, the earliest composition with an engraved representation of the Resurrection of Christ is found on church pastor Andreas Knopken's (d. 8 February 1539) tomb slab in St. Peter's Church in Riga (Fig. 12). Since he was one of the Livonian preachers most knowledgeable about theoretical theological issues, it is possible that the iconography of his tomb slab reflects Martin Luther's early views, which allowed the illustration of scenes from Christ's life for didactic purposes.⁵⁵ An arch supported by two pilasters and featuring an empty tomb is at the centre of the composition on A. Knopken's tomb slab (damaged by fire in 1721 and 1941). Christ is holding the victory flag *labarum* which is piercing Satan, who is

55 The fact that Martin Luther himself selected the illustrations for the 1529 Latin-German prayer book is mentioned in Gerlinde Strohmaier-Wiederanders, "Bilder mag ich wohl haben oder machen, aber...", *Die Reformation und die Künste. Wittenberger Sonntagsvorlesungen Evangelisches Predigerseminar* (Wittenberg: Elbe-Druckerei, 2003), 47.



Fig. 12. Composition of Christ's Resurrection on Andreas Knopken's tomb slab (d. 1539) in St. Petri Church in Riga. Reproduction from Constantin Mettig, *Geschichte der Stadt Riga* (Riga: Jonck & Poliewsky, 1897), 202.

personified by the image of a dragon at Christ's feet. The two engraved scrolls in Latin surrounding the tomb plate, as well as the iconographic political-poster-like language, previously unknown in Riga, are indicative of the advent of new content and new images in art that is related to the afterlife and the promise of resurrection. The first paintings commissioned by Cardinal Albrecht for the Stiftskirche in Halle – a series



Fig. 13. Fragment of Pastor Christian Michaelis's (d. 1552) tomb slab with the composition of Christ – Lord of the World. Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation. Photo: Mārtiņš Lablaiks.

on the life and Passion of Christ – were completed by the workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder in 1520-1525 and created the iconographic model for all Protestant culture.⁵⁶ Therefore A. Knopken's tomb slab, dated 1539, is a unique early Protestant cultural monument in Northern Europe. The composition called *Resurrection*, which is the final painting in the series, is largely in tune with the picture on the Livonia reformer's tomb slab, which was created by an anonymous stonecutter.

The *Resurrection* theme, as an encouraging theme for the Lutheran community, can be identified in several examples of Livonian memorial art. Among them, a plaque donated in 1589 by the town councillor Lulof Holler to commemorate the consecration of the annex of Riga's St. John's Church is worth mentioning. The rectangular plaque with text on the north wall of the church is complemented by a triangular pediment and a small bronze sculpture depicting the Resurrection of Christ. After the Polish king's confessional and political reforms in Livonia, the Lutheran St. John's parish demonstrated active opposition to the Catholic administration and its orders. In confrontation-ridden Riga, this symbol, even in a small work of art, was proof of active religious protest, and in a Lutheran-oriented society it, served as a secret password to indicate solidarity.

On display at the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation is a fragment of a tomb slab with an unmistakable transfer of the iconographic composition "Christ - Lord of the World" onto a sandstone relief

56 *Cranach und die Kunst der Renaissance unter den Hohenzollern. Kirche, Hof und Stadtkultur* (Berlin, München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009), 213-219.



Fig. 14. Fragment of Pastor Christian Michaelis's tomb slab. Drawing by Johann Christoph Brotze. *Sammlung verschiedener Liefplaendischer Monumente*, Bd. 2, No. 015 A, Academic Library of Latvian University.

(Fig. 13).⁵⁷ It features Christ depicted in profile, in his left hand holding an orb. A late 18th century drawing by Johann Christoph Brotze, encyclopaedist and rector of the Riga Cathedral School, shows a larger fragment of the same slab with a memorial inscription and the image of Christ (Fig. 14). Clearly visible is Christ's right arm raised in blessing. Over two centuries the tomb slab was considered lost until archaeologists found it in 1980, although with significant losses. Identification of the relief fragment with the help of the ancient image proves its association with the tomb slab of a Latvian Lutheran pastor named Christian Michaelis (d. 1552), from Riga's St. Jacob's Church.⁵⁸ The pastor's profile, modelling of clothing and the composition of the relief is close to Hans Holbein the Younger's drawing of *Christ – Lord of the World*⁵⁹ on the pages of *Praise of Folly*, a philosophical pamphlet by Erasmus of Rotterdam. The

57 RVKM, Inv. No. VRVM-183833; Johann Christoph Brotze, *Sammlung verschiedener Liefplaendischer Monumente, Prospecte, Muenzen, Wappen*. Bd. 2, No. 015 A.

58 After the Reformation, the first Latvian Lutheran parish was in St. Jacob's Church. Starting in 1582, the patron of Riga was the King of Poland who succeeded in turning St. Jacob's Church into a Jesuit residence, but the administration of Stephan Batory assigned St. John's Church to be the parish church of the expelled Lutherans. The origin of tomb slab from the St. Jacob's Church certifies that the first Latvian Lutheran parish church was the place where Christian Michaelis worked and was buried. See: Friedrich Brunstermann, *Die Geschichte der Kleinen oder St. Johannis Gilde* (Riga: A. Stahl, 1902), 51.

59 Roterdaamietis Erasmus. *Mulķibas slavinajums (Praise of Folly)* (Riga: Latvijas Valsts izdevnieciba 1959), 143 ff.



Fig. 15. Stone relief with a composition of Christ – the Lord of the World (1616) in the portal of the residence at No 1, Laipu Street in Riga. Photo: Vitolds Mašnovskis.

original with ink illustrations is preserved in the Kupferstichkabinett Collection in Basel. It is highly improbable that H. Holbein the Younger's drawing from Erasmus of Rotterdam's work could have served as the inspiration for the Lutheran pastor's tomb slab in Riga. However, the apparent parallels in the sculptural work suggest that familiarity with the printed philosophical treatises, historical chronicles and literary compositions by Renaissance humanists in the European cultural space was a feature of general intelligence. The ideas found in books, as well as concepts in the form of symbols, allegories and images, left an ever greater impact in art.

The disparity of opinions in the spiritual life the Lutheran Duchy of Courland was not as polarized, since the matters of religious affiliation were decided by the German nobility, and therefore, an escalation of conflict among the Latvian serfs did not make sense. Some families of the gentry who converted to Catholicism in the 17th and 18th century – the von Schwerins, the von Rappes, the von Platers-Sybergs – have left no memorial monuments that could be assessed in the context of the Reformation era and confessionalization. However, the Lutheran nobles commissioned their tomb slabs with the iconographic motif of Christ – the Lord of the World, as a sign that they adhered to a certain

system of beliefs. Stylistically and compositionally similar tomb slabs were built for the von Fircks and von Berg families in the Nurmuiža (Nurmhusen) Church in the first decade of the 17th century. A spiral of clouds surrounds the image of Christ – the Lord of the World, who is depicted frontally, with an orb in his left hand and with his right hand raised in the gesture of blessing.

In Riga, where differences in opinions were motivated by orientation towards certain political forces, i.e., protection of the rulers of Catholic or Lutheran lands, denominational conflict grew mainly in German environment where the differences of faith were also rooted in the social and occupational distinctions. In the denominationally restless last decades of the 16th and early decades of the 17th century, house owners has signs installed on the façades of their houses as visible declarations of their religious belief. A decorative stone slab on the façade of the building at No. 8, Vecpilsētas Street in Riga indicates – like a business card – the house owner's orientation to Christ as a ruler of the world, and uses the corresponding sign language to express affiliation with Lutheran values. A similar attitude was demonstrated in 1616 by the house-owner of No. 1, Laipu Street, who had inserted the iconographic composition of Christ – the Lord of the World in the portal of his house (Fig. 15).

The language of allegory, imagery and symbols in art, developed by the Reformation culture, allowed quite a clearly distinction to be made between groups and individuals with different religious or occupational affiliations. However, a collective orientation to a certain system of values is not identifiable by such elementary methods, either then or now. The 1575 Renaissance relief on the façade of the building at No. 25, Rīdzenes Street depicts the scene of Adam and Eve's temptation (Fig. 16)⁶⁰. Its iconography does not indicate anything related to the religious orientation of the house owner, although it might express his affinity with the values of the new era. By depicting the bodily beauty of the first humans in a deliberately visible form, both the client and the maker made it clear to the passers-by that the house owner does not hesitate to decorate the façade of his house and expose his personal tastes and beliefs for public assessment. Such courage was not characteristic of

60 Paul Campe, *Lexikon Liv- und Kurlaendischer Baumeister, Bauhandwerker und Baugestalter von 1400-1850*, Bd. 1, (Stockholm: Humanistiska fonden, 1951), 12.

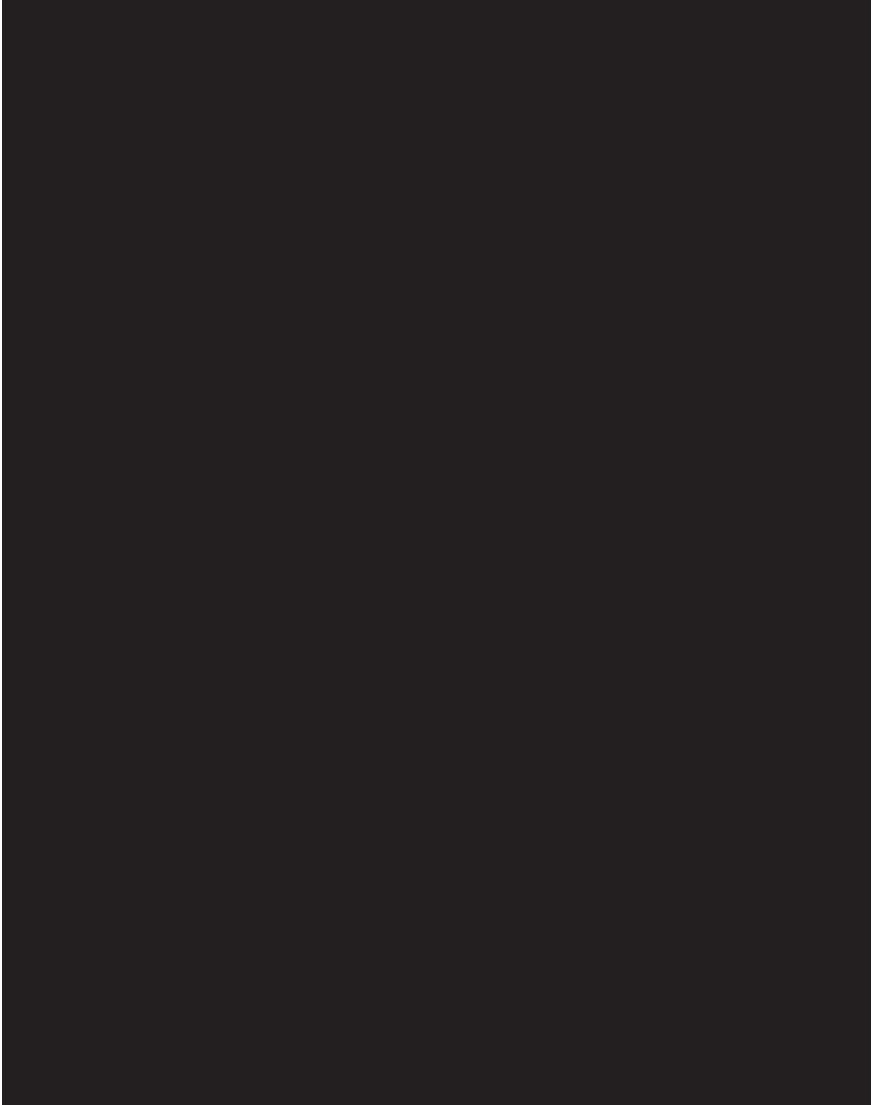


Fig. 16. Stone relief called Adam and Eve's Temptation (1575) on the facade of the residence at No. 25, Rīdzenes Street in Riga. Photo: Vitolds Mašnovskis.

medieval individuals whose collective consciousness was governed by the Church-propagated notion of the sinful nature of corporeal beauty.

Just as neutral though not devoid of semantic message attitude of Hinrik Sloetthel, the master of the glazier's guild, toward collective



Fig. 17. Mighty Angel – stone relief on the facade of the residence at No 1, Laipu Street in Riga. Photo: Vitolds Mašnovskis.

opinion⁶¹. He demonstrates his personal conviction in the façade slab of his residential building with the image of the “mighty angel” in a Renaissance arch (Fig. 17). From 1566 to 1588, when Hinrik Sloetthel owned the house at No. 5, Laipu Street, Riga was undergoing a maelstrom of controversial political and confessionalization changes. At this turbulent time many citizens of Riga felt insecure about the present and just as unsure about the future. Even a well-established glazing master could only wish for peace and stability, to ensure work for any craftsman and prosperity for his family. During a time when administrative power in Riga, through the good offices of the Polish King Stephan Bathory, was in the hands of the Catholics, the “mighty angel” image merely expressed reliance on the protection of heavenly powers without making any specific reference to the house owner’s denominational preferences. In war it could crush the city’s enemies as well as the master’s personal adversaries, just like the Archangel Michael’s angels had banished

61 H. Sloetthel held the post of the Elder in the glaziers’ guild twice – from 1566 to 1568 and from 1574 to 1576. See: Wilhelm Stieda, Constantin Mettig., *Schragen der Gilden und Aemter der Stadt Riga bis 1621*, (Riga: W. F. Häcker, 1896), 293; Brunstermann, *Die Geschichte der Kleinen oder St. Johannis Gilde*, 331.

Satan from heaven. By stretching both arms above the property marks in the stone relief Hinrik Sloetthel's "mighty angel" protected the master's and his wife's property, peace and welfare. One could say that the seemingly ornamental composition of the façade reflects the emotional state that prevailed in the minds of Riga's house owners through associative religious imagery in the form of an allegory.

CONCLUSION

The careful re-evaluation of Livonia's cultural heritage of the 15th and 16th century reveals a surprisingly wide range of artefacts in the present-day territory of Latvia. The most significant samples of sculpture and memorial art have been mentioned and analyzed in this article to illustrate the political and spiritual change which made it possible for all social classes of Livonia to gain knowledge about Renaissance humanist values. The Reformation and the subsequent confessionalization processes generated new ideas that were reflected in fine arts through the discovery of new themes, content and means of expression.

In the end, a number of conclusions need to be drawn. First, disappointingly little progress has been made in Baltic cultural heritage research that deals with the dynamic era of change from the end of the 15th century until the early 17th century and includes the Renaissance, Reformation, confessionalization and several other historically significant social and spiritual stages of change. Second, the complexity of the historical and religious background of the period promoted the creation of works of art with new means of artistic expression and new art language. Their interpretation today requires in-depth historical, theological, philosophical, cultural and art knowledge. The conclusions need to be constantly contrasted with facts of social history and complemented with multi-disciplinary observations, also involving the natural sciences in the research of art processes. Thirdly, assessing the preserved artefacts in the territory of Latvia in a new light reveals unexpectedly impressive potential for research and the examination of details that have been unnoticed to date. This serves as encouragement for further work and justifies the need to update the research of art monuments as well as to provide a modern evaluation thereof within an international context of the history of culture.

OJĀRS SPĀRĪTIS: EVIDENCE OF THE REFORMATION AND
CONFESSIONALIZATION PERIOD IN LIVONIAN ART

KEYWORDS: RENAISSANCE; REFORMATION; EARLY PROTESTANT
ICONOGRAPHY; TOMB STONE; SCULPTURE; ICONOCLASM

SUMMARY:

The article deals with the problems of the history of early Protestant art in Livonia (contemporary Latvia) during the 16th and first half of 17th centuries. The short survey on historical background of the approaching Reformation includes the political and economic contradictions among German (Teutonic) Order, the Archbishop of Riga, the Protestant clergy, the local nobility and the citizenry. The change in the people's world outlook succeeded the new expressive approach in the traditional iconology of tombstones, reliefs and stone sculpture that emerged simultaneously, or immediately after, the iconoclasm in Livonia (1521-1523). The Livonian War and battles against Tsar Ivan, the Terrible of Russia weakened the military resistance of the former mosaic of feudal states. The territory of Livonia was occupied by the Swedish and Polish armies, which did not hesitate to institute the political division of the country under the slogan of confessional polarisation. Part of contemporary Estonia became a Swedish province, but part of contemporary Latvia was subordinated to the King of Poland. Under Polish rule, the processes of confessionalization were instituted and, for about 40 years, the Nordic part of contemporary Latvia, which was called Livland, experienced the politics of an aggressive Counter-Reformation. This resulted in the appearance of a new iconography, new topics and genres. Indirect inspiration from Italian art can be perceived in the memorial monuments of the nobility and new genres – wall graves and wall epitaphs – appeared. The confessional and political instability provoked a kind of stagnation in the birth of new forms of art inspired by early Protestant ideology, but it also stimulated an increase in the secret language of symbols, iconographic variations and metaphoric expression.

CV:

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