

THE OGRESGALA ČABAS CEMETERY AND HORSE SACRIFICE

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Abstract

Briefly presented in this paper are the results of the 2007 and 2008 excavations at the complex of ancient sites at Ogresgala Čabas. Particularly significant discoveries were made in the Liv cemetery site, which presented a surprising diversity of grave practices, among which particularly significant are the stone circles surrounding the graves, the offerings of artefacts, the sacrifice of a horse and possible sacrifice of a woman. Considering the horse graves at Ogresgala Čabas, in the cemetery adjacent to Daugmale Hillfort and the offerings of horse body parts at cemeteries in the Lower Daugava area, it seems that the horse played a greater role in Liv mythological belief and ritual than has been assumed hitherto.

Key words: Livs, cemetery, grave inventory, sacrifice, horse grave, rituals.

Written sources and archaeological material both provide important evidence concerning the horse cult among the ancient Livs. The Liv horse cult is discussed more extensively in the contribution to this volume by PhD Guntis Zemītis. This paper focuses on one find of a horse sacrifice, discovered at the cemetery of Ogresgala Čabas in 2007. It is necessary to begin, however, with a general description of the site and the excavation results.

The complex of ancient sites at Ogresgala Čabas. Location and history of research

Nowadays, most of the ancient sites along the lower course of the River Daugava/ Western Dvina have been flooded. One of the locations not submerged includes the settlement and pre-Christian cemetery of Ogresgala Čabas (Plate VI.1). These sites lie on the flat right bank of the Daugava by the farmstead of Čabas, 37.5 km from Riga. Located on the opposite bank of the river is the cemetery of Tomes Nariņi. The settlement site at Ogresgala Čabas occupies a belt about 600–800 m long and 50–100 m wide along the right bank of the Daugava. Right next to the western and eastern limits of the settlement there are two corresponding grave sites. The site is being damaged by erosion of the Daugava riverbank: since the creation of the reservoir for the Riga Hydro-Electric Power Station in the 1970s, a 5–10 m wide belt of the riverbank has been lost.

In 1984, archaeologist Anna Zariņa of the Institute of Latvian History undertook a rescue excavation here. Two areas, measuring 4–5×50 m and 4×40 m with extensions, were excavated along the eroding bank of the Daugava, with a third area measuring 4×24 m at

a distance of 6–8 m from the bank. The total area uncovered at that time was 440 m². However, most of the excavated area was taken up by a First World War trench, so that the undisturbed area was actually much smaller: about 190 m².

The oldest finds from the settlement site, namely flint tools, indicate that this location was inhabited already in the Final Palaeolithic or Early Mesolithic. However, the artefacts and pottery making up the largest part of the collection are of 11th–13th century date and are characteristic of the Livs. The material recovered shows that this site was a centre for the Daugava Liv territory between Ikšķile and Lielvārde (Zariņa 1986).

In connection with planned construction work in the central part of the site, excavation was undertaken in 2007 and 2008 by the Institute of Latvian History. Altogether during these two seasons, an area of 7000 m² was excavated. The excavated area was on the gentle western slope of the highest point in the area, between A. Zariņa's excavation Areas 1 and 2 of 1984. It should be added that in the course of Zariņa's excavation a high concentration of settlement features was discovered in Area 1, located at the highest point in the vicinity, right on the bank of the Daugava, and graves were uncovered in Area 2, located at a lower point on the bank. Likewise, in the eastern part of the area excavated in 2007, features relating to a Liv settlement were found. The central part was poorer in finds, while in the western part, over an area of 800 m², the east margin of a cemetery was revealed.

Within the settlement, the cultural layer had been disturbed by ploughing, so that it survived only in the hollows and deep features. The southern part, along the bank of the Daugava, had been disturbed with the digging of a trench during the First World War. The

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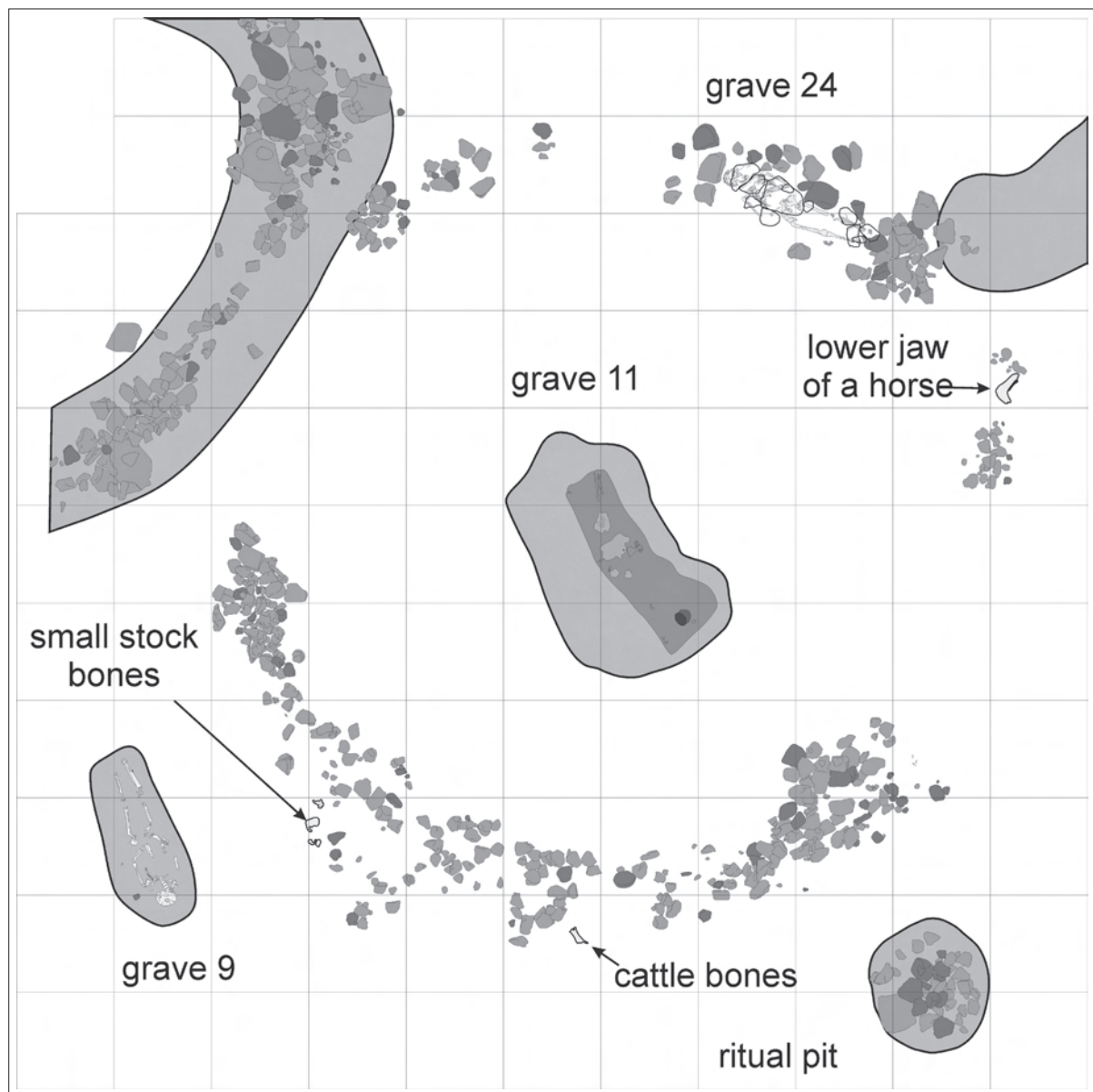


Fig. 1. Area of the cemetery excavated in 2007 surrounding graves 11 and 24 (plan prepared by author).

majority of the features uncovered in the settlement are stone-lined hearths. Two forms can be distinguished: above-ground and sunken hearths. The above-ground hearths were circular or oval, sometimes with a small depression at the centre. The diameter varied between 0.8 m and 2 m. The sunken hearths were similar in size, with sloping sides, and reached a depth of 0.5 m, not including the topsoil. Horizontal layers observed in the cross-sections of some of the hearths indicated that they had been in use for a long period.

A total of 1072 artefacts were found in the course of the settlement and cemetery excavation. The earliest finds, the flint blades and scrapers, date from the Final Palaeolithic or beginning of the Mesolithic. The finds of stone axes and chisels, flint tools, as well as Comb Ceramics, Corded Ware and Striated Pottery, indicate that the settlement site was in use in the Neolithic and

Early Metal Age. On the settlement site, only a few features produced 10th–14th century Liv artefacts.

A richer corpus of artefacts was recovered from the cemetery (Fig. 1), where in 2007 and 2008 a total of 35 graves were unearthed (making a total of 38 together with those excavated by Zariņa). These include ten adult females, eight adult males, six children aged 1.5–6, three juvenile females aged 15–19, two boys aged 4–5 and 12–13, one young male aged 17–22 and one girl aged 11–13. Mean adult male stature was 171.6 cm, and mean adult female stature 158.5 cm.¹

The deceased had been placed in an extended supine position, with the exception of one unfurnished grave that had been placed on the left side. The graves were mostly oriented with heads to the north or north-west,

¹ Osteological material analysed by PhD Gunita Zariņa.

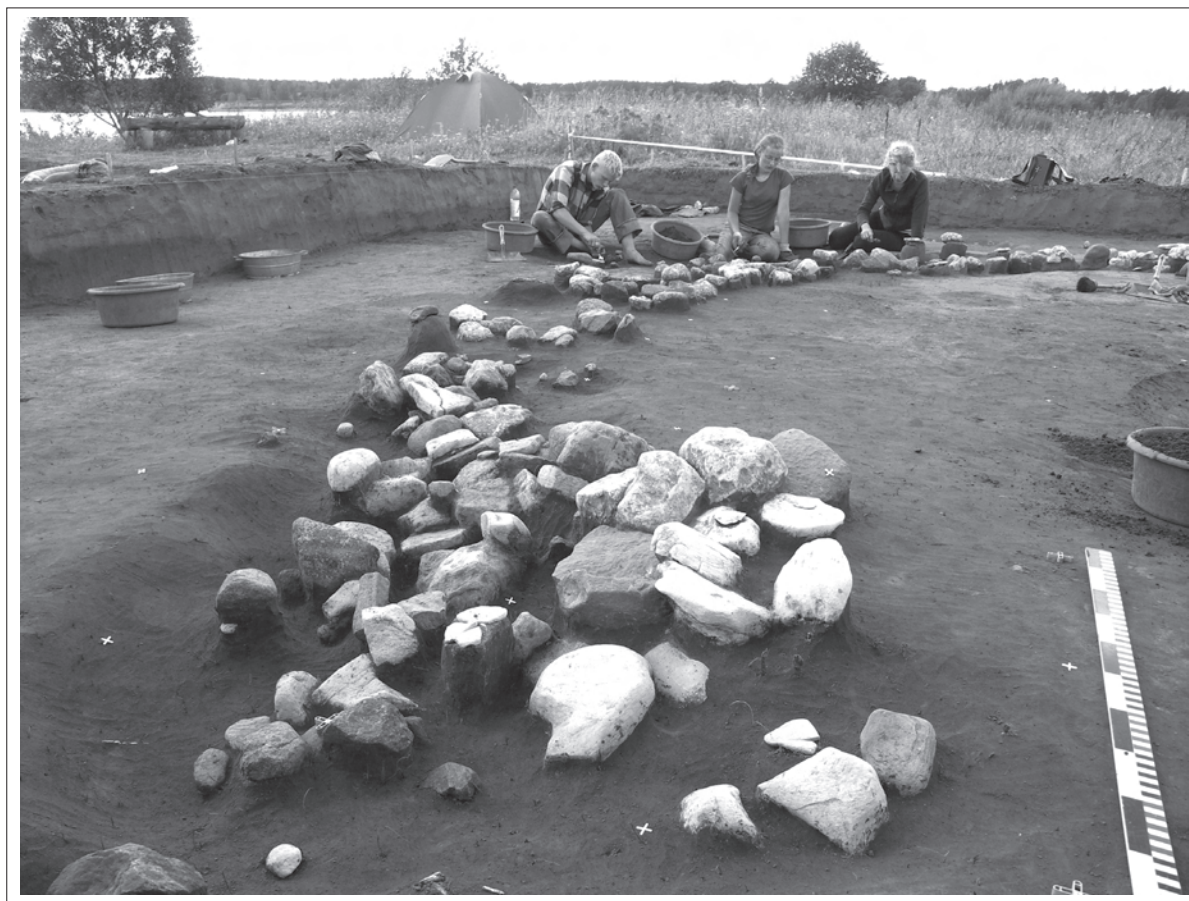


Fig. 2. Peristalith around grave 11 (photograph by Spirgis).

as is characteristic of the Livs. In two cases only were they oriented with heads to the north-east, and in single cases with the head to the south and to West-North-West. The arm position could be securely determined only for five graves, showing a variety of positions: bent at the elbows with hands over the pelvis, or with one arm placed over the middle and the other hand over the chest or by the shoulder.

The excavation showed that there had been a barrow cemetery on this site. The barrows were no longer visible in the relief, having been ploughed out, but their presence was indicated by the sparse distribution of graves and by the presence of ditches and stone circles from the barrows. Ten barrows could be securely identified, five of them with two graves each. The barrows reached a diameter of 5–9 m. One barrow, enclosing a double grave of children, could have been about 3 m in diameter. The deceased were buried in nailed plank coffins, in graves dug to a depth of 20–40 cm, after which the barrow was thrown up on top. Over the course of time, the barrows have become levelled out, raising the level of the ground surface, so that now the graves are at a depth of 0.7–1.1 m.

Stone settings and circles in the cemetery

Particularly important are the stone settings surrounding the former barrows. Four almost completely preserved circles could be identified among the excavated stone settings. Possibly, some of the other barrows also had stone circles, but these have been disturbed and are only partially preserved (Fig. 1). For the most part, light-coloured, almost white dolomite stone has been used for the circles. In terms of form and size, three kinds of stones can be distinguished. First, there are irregular, angular blocks measuring some 30×20×15 cm; secondly, up to 30×35×3 cm slabs with irregular margins; and thirdly, there are less irregular dolomite blocks and fragments of large slabs. The stones were usually found at the base of the barrow ditches, and in some cases it was observed that the stones lying closer to the centre of the barrow were at a higher level than those on the outside (Fig. 2). In other words, the stones had been placed on the rim of the barrow, following the sloping surface of the barrow.

It should be noted that only two barrow cemeteries have been preserved up to the present day in the Lower Daugava area: Ogresgala Lielpēči, with 16 barrows,

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and Ikšķiles Kābeles, with approximately 80 barrows. In these cases, stone structures are not visible above the ground. At several flat cemeteries too, namely Salaspils Laukskola, Salaspils Vējstūri, Salaspils Lipši, Aizkraukle, Lielvārdes crossing, etc., indications of formerly existing barrows have been found in connection with certain 12th–13th century graves: the sparse distribution of the graves themselves, as well as barrow ditches and hearth features (Zariņa 1996, p.124; Zariņa 2006, p.24). Stone circles are much less common. These were first uncovered in the first half of the 19th century following the spring floods of the Daugava at Aizkraukle (Kruse 1842, p.9 plate 59.11, 60: 4; Bähr 1850, p.2 plate 1.1) and at the farmstead of Bajards on the left bank of the river (Bähr 1850, p.2 plate 1.3). One more stone circle has been excavated under the direction of Valdemārs Ģinters at Salaspils Laukskola in 1936 (Ģinters 1938). This structure was revealed at a depth of 0.7–0.8 m beneath the present ground surface. The stone circle, 10 m in diameter, consisted of medium-sized stones placed above a shallow hollow resembling a ditch that had been filled with black earth showing traces of burning. However, no graves were found within the area delimited by the stone circle. Instead, only a few irregular burned areas were found, and some potsherds between the stones, as well as an iron sword pommel.

In later years, no more stone circles were found, even though large-scale excavation of Liv sites was undertaken in the 1960s and 70s in connection with the building of the Riga Hydro-Electric Power Station. At some cemeteries, stone kerbs and packed stones have been identified. In some cases, separate medium-sized stones had been placed in a more or less regular row supporting the head of the deceased, or by the feet or the side. Secondly, in some cases several layers of densely packed stones were found covering the body. Since neither kind of stone structure resembles a circle, in the research literature the opinion has become established that the regular stone settings seen in 19th century publications should be regarded as inept and careless reconstructions, which were not substantiated later, when more precise recording methods had come into use (Latvijas 1974, p.195).

A stone circles around a still-existing Liv barrow was discovered for the first time in the course of the excavation directed by Roberts Spirģis at Ikšķiles Kābeles in 2000 (Spirģis 2002a; Spirģis 2002b). Stones had been placed all along the margin of one of the two excavated barrows, which was 1.43 m high and 12 m in diameter, forming a fairly regular stone circle with a diameter of 9–10 m. The grave in the barrow had been very seriously disturbed: only the leg bones of an adult male remained at the base of the disturbed area. The

grave goods included a small broad-bladed iron axe, a tanged iron spearhead with two barbs, an amber pendant, an unworked piece of amber, four rosette-shaped bronze belt fittings and a delicate plaited silver finger-ring with soldered ends. The remains of a dog sacrifice were also recovered. Considering that the artefacts and bones had been placed at different levels, it is possible that this was a double grave. The discovery of a stone circle at Ikšķiles Kābeles in 2000, and likewise the evidence found in the 2007 excavation at Ogresgala Čabas, provide definite proof that stone circles in the flat Liv cemeteries are the remains of former barrows.

Returning to the results of excavation at Ogresgala Čabas, it should be mentioned that there were flat graves between the barrows and along the northern margin of the excavated area. The flat graves are generally shallower than the barrow graves, lying at a depth of 0.35–0.75 m below the present ground surface. Several of these flat graves lack indications of a plank coffin. Stone kerbs have been found in association with flat graves and barrow graves. Particularly interesting is the grave structure of an adult male barrow grave 32. In this case, pairs of stone slabs, measuring on average 20×15×6 cm were found at the head and foot of the grave. Three of these had fallen inwards, while the fourth had retained its original vertical position. Hitherto, no parallels have been found at Liv cemeteries for this kind of grave, reinforced at the corners with vertical dolomite slabs.

Three graves had packed stones above them, forming two to six layers of stones over the chest area. However, considering that the grave goods beneath the stones had been plundered and the bones disturbed, it might be thought that the stone packings are not connected with the burial rites, but instead constitute the backfill of pits dug by grave robbers in antiquity. Similar stone packings above disturbed graves are known from the cemetery of Ikšķiles Rumuļi (Graudonis 1987, p.91). The packing of stones in the fill can be explained in terms of the grave robbers' wish to prevent the souls of the dead from rising up and avenging the desecration of the graves.

Grave inventory and offerings

Already in antiquity, the richly furnished Liv burials attracted grave robbers. As a result, the majority of graves had been plundered long ago, and only 12 completely undisturbed graves were revealed. The presence of the barrows, clearly marking the grave locations, simplified grave-robbing. It can be ascertained, that grave-robbers knew the placement of artefacts in the graves hence usually only the upper part of graves was

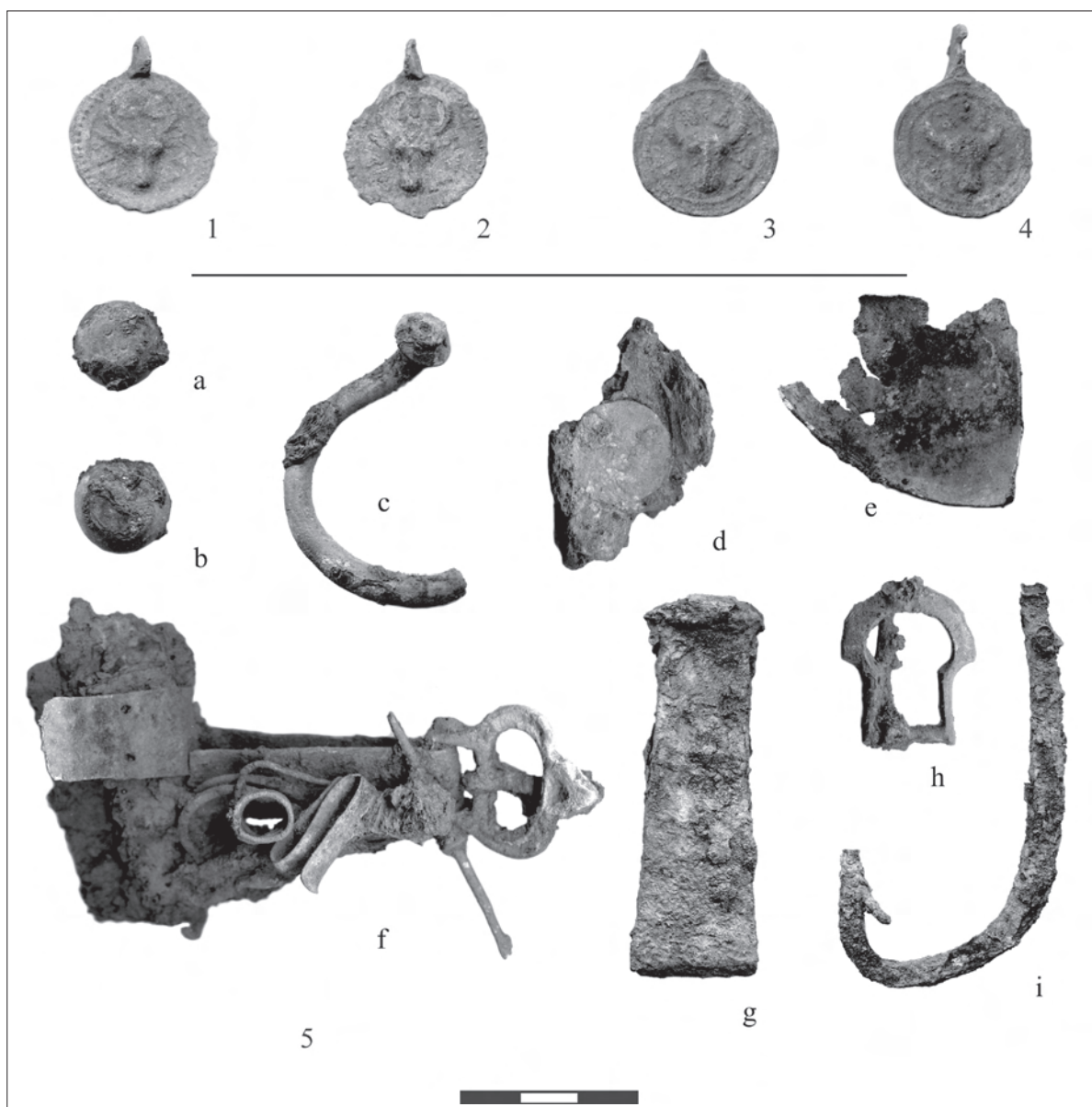


Fig. 3. Artefacts from Ogresgala Čabas: 1-4 circular bronze pendants with a bull's head image from grave 34; 5 group of artefacts given as an offering at the foot of grave 12: a bronze-plated iron weight; b bronze-plated iron weight; c fragment of bronze penannular brooch with poppy-head end; d silver coin corroded to the fragment of an iron artefact; e fragment of a cup to hold bronze weights; f a group of iron and bronze objects stuck together; g iron chisel; h bronze belt buckle; i iron fish-hook (photograph by Spirgis).

dug over - there was concentrated great amount of the artefacts, but the bed-foot remained untouched. Apparently, grave-robbers expected just for one grave in each barrow. For that reason, among all investigated double graves, only one had been disturbed, but the other remained untouched.

The deceased had been buried in festive dress, and female graves contain ornaments: tortoise brooches with attached chain ornaments, finger-rings, and necklaces of glass beads with coin pendants, tinklers and crosses. Particularly interesting is a necklace found on the grave of a 12-year-old girl (grave 34), which had four round pendants with a bull's head representation (Fig. 3. 1-4). Male graves generally produced weap-

ons: iron axes and spears. The most popular ornaments were penannular brooches with rolled-back or polyhedral terminals and leather belts decorated with bronze. Apart from weapons, various household utensils also occurred: an iron knife, a striking iron and flint. Two graves of merchants had coins and weights for scales. Tools were less common in female graves. They include iron shears, spindle whorls and needles in needle-cases. An item frequently occurring in Liv graves, irrespective of gender and age, is a pottery vessel with food. The grave goods are dated to the 12th-13th century.

One male grave had an unusual set of grave goods: three iron knives, as well as three iron staples arranged

in a compact group by the left knee. In addition, it has been observed that in male graves such small objects as a striking iron, flints, amber, a slate whetstone and damaged bronze ornaments had been placed in purses. The purses were closed by means of large beads of amber, bronze or pink slate.

Offerings of artefacts constitute a special category of grave furnishing. Thus, grave 12, a 12–13-year-old boy, had at the foot of the grave a group of objects arranged in a compact pile: (Fig. 3.5.a–i) two iron knives, a fragmentary bronze cup, three scales weights, a silver coin, an iron padlock, an iron key, an iron chisel, an iron fish-hook, two bronze belt buckles, bronze belt fittings and a belt divider, a socket for an iron object, three pieces of flint, an iron ring and several other fragmentary artefacts. Grave 38, a 17–22-year-old youth, presents a similar situation: placed in a purse at the foot of the grave were two damaged bronze penannular brooches, one of them with rolled-back tubular terminals and a bow of T-shaped cross-section, the other with a twisted bow, along with two pieces of flint and two bronze spirals.

Found at the edge of the barrow ditch of a male grave 32, was an offering of women's jewellery, (Fig. 4) consisting of two pairs of tortoise brooches and chain-holders, one chain-divider, broken double-link bronze chains, two hollow bronze armbands, six bronze spiral finger-rings and one silver finger-ring. At the edge of this same barrow, beneath three dolomite stones, only two metres from the find of women's jewellery, another offering was discovered, consisting of 22 unworked pieces of flint (the largest measuring 7×5 cm) and 24 pieces of amber.

Similar examples of the deposition of more or less complete sets of women's jewellery are known from Latgallian and Selonian sites, although here the artefacts had been placed directly in the graves. A total of nine cases are known of women's jewellery placed in male graves. The practice is generally explained in terms of offerings and presents. In the view of Arnis Rādiņš, these may be graves of people from the top stratum of society (Rādiņš 1996, p.102).

It should be added that in the Liv area finds of women's jewellery with male graves are extremely rare. The author is aware of only one similar case: in the cemetery of Salaspils Laukskola, two tortoise brooches with an iron chain of S-shaped links were found in the barrow ditch associated with male graves nos. 558 and 559 (Zariņa 2006, p.145). At the edge of another barrow, an offering was found consisting of a finger-ring along with tools that occur in female graves, namely an awl and a billhook (Zariņa 2006, p.24). Likewise, male graves in some of the barrows of the Gauja Livs con-

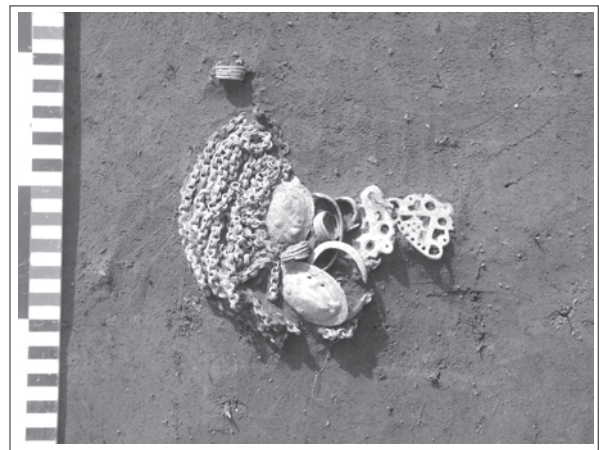


Fig. 4. Offering of female ornaments found at the edge of the barrow ditch of male grave 32 (photograph by Spirgis).

tained separate finds of tortoise brooches, chain-holder or chain fragments (Tönnisson 1974, p.120).

Offering pits

In the eastern part of the cemetery, between the graves and the settlement, several steep-sided circular pits were discovered (Fig. 1; Plate VI.3), between 0.8 and 1.0 m in diameter and up to 1.8 m deep. Some of the pits had been filled with erratic stones of various sizes, while one had a fill of dark earth from an occupation layer, covered with dolomite blocks. Only some of the pits contained separate artefacts: a glass bead, a bronze ring, a bronze spiral ring, a fragmentary silver armband, an iron spearhead, potsherds, etc. One of the pits was rich in finds: a crushed pottery vessel, iron shears and a decorated antler axe. These pits might have been excavated in order to provide more earth for the barrows, after which they could have been used for ritual offerings. The largest concentration of ritual pits was found in the north-eastern corner of the cemetery, where a large number of such features were concentrated within an area of 300 m² on a small rise. Here, 41 features of different kinds were uncovered, for the most part circular pits, measuring 1–2 m in diameter and 0.6–1.3 m in depth, not including the topsoil. Some of the pits touched at the edges or else cut earlier filled-in pits. Usually, one or more layers of brown earth were found in the lower parts of the pits, covered with mixed light-coloured sandy loam corresponding to the subsoil, and with a dark cultural layer at the top.

Parallels for such ritual pits are known from the cult site of Strazdes Baznīckalns in the northern part of the Kurzeme region, excavated by Eduards Šturms in 1937 (Šturms 1938). On this cult hill, 10 pits of this kind were excavated, between 0.9 and 1.75 m deep. These pits, funnel-shaped or trough-shaped, were filled with charcoal-rich dark brown gravel. In the lower parts of

the pit cross-sections, several dark layers were visible: in the view of E. turms, these could have come about from repeated extinguishing of a fire. In the pits were burnt bones of humans and various animals, including horses, as well as broken 11th–14th century ornaments.

The horse sacrifice

At the base of one such pit at Ogresgala Čabas, measuring 1.7m in diameter and 1.6 m in depth, a horse skeleton was discovered, covered by 0.6×0.5 m dolomite slabs (Plate VI.4). It had been placed compactly into the circular pit, laid on the left side, with legs to the south-west. The horse skeleton was preserved in its entirety, except for the bones of the tail. The length of the skeleton was 1.8 m, its height 1.4 m.

The horse grave was uncovered 1.5 m south-east of female grave 7, at the foot of a former barrow. The horse's head had been turned back to the north-west, facing the female grave. Unfortunately, grave 7, at a depth of 0.60 m, was disturbed. Judging from the presence of iron nails, the woman had been buried in a plank coffin. The preserved grave goods in the disturbed part of the grave include fragments of a double-link bronze chain, a fragmentary iron knife, a fragment of a small bronze armband, and pendants of amber and animal tooth. Found *in situ* at the foot of the grave was a small pottery vessel with the top broken off. That the grave had once been covered by a barrow is indicated by the presence of a semicircular ditch and stones belonging to a circle. Including the ditch and stone circle, the barrow would have measured 7 m in diameter. On the north-western side, the circle stones adjoin the circle of the barrow over grave 32.

The horse sacrifice unearthed in the 2007 excavation at the Čabas cemetery is not the only example of ritual sacrifice of animals. Thus, a dog skeleton was found at the edge of grave 32, a male grave. Separate finds of horse teeth have also been made in the cemetery. Animal bones have also been found in the ditch fills of some of the barrows. It should be added that in 1984 one half of a horse mandibula was discovered under one of the stone settings (perhaps part of a barrow stone circle).

The 'Valkyrie' of Ogresgala Čabas

Particularly significant are the ritual offerings inside the stone circle of the barrow of grave 11 (Fig. 2). The symbolic grave 11 itself consisted of a nailed plank coffin placed in a grave oriented to north-east. The arrangement of the artefacts in the coffin was as it nor-

mally would have been for an inhumation: a pottery vessel at the foot of the grave, two iron spears at the head of the grave and in the middle an iron axe and painted wooden fragments, which could be the remains of a shield. Above this symbolic grave a barrow had been thrown up, as indicated by the presence of a stone circle, which had a diameter of up to 9.5 m. On the south side of the circle between the stones, bones of sheep or goat and cattle were found, and on the eastern side half of a horse's mandibula. On the north-eastern side beneath the stones of the circle, the undisturbed grave of a 40–50 year old woman was discovered, oriented with the head to West-North-West. This grave 24, was the only completely unfurnished grave among those excavated in 2007–2008 (Plate VI.2). Since the symbolic male grave, the stone circle, the offerings of animal parts and the female grave in the stone circle all present the impression of being a synchronous complex, it is possible that the woman was sacrificed in the course of a funeral ceremony.

Symbolic graves, or cenotaphs, are usually interpreted as the symbolic graves of people who had died in foreign lands or had disappeared without trace. Evidently, in this case a man could not be buried in the appropriate manner, and this was the reason for the complicated grave ritual, involving the offering of animal parts and sacrifice of a woman. It is accepted that the stone circle of grave monuments symbolises the boundary between the living world and the world beyond, so the woman buried under the stone circle would have had the role of an intermediary between this world and the world of the dead. Thus, at this unusual funeral, where the body of the deceased was absent, her task in the sacrificial rite was to ensure that the soul of the dead man reached the world beyond. The sacrificed, or self-sacrificed, woman, as the guardian of the fallen hero, corresponds to the functions of a valkyrie. The valkyries of Scandinavian mythology (literally, 'choosers of the dead') accompanied the souls of warriors fallen in battle to Valhalla, where they also appear as participants in the feasting.

Interpretation of horse sacrifice

The excavation at Ogresgala Čabas has provided much new and important evidence concerning Daugava Liv grave practices during the Late Iron Age. The diversity of the grave practices observed here is surprising, especially considering that only a fairly small peripheral area of the cemetery has been excavated, with relatively late graves of the 12th–13th century.

The evidence of animal sacrifice is an indication of complicated rituals, and the horse sacrifice is an im-

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portant discovery. Graves of whole horses are very rare in Latvia. Single horse graves have been found at the cemeteries of Aizkraukles Lejasžagari, Sēlpils Lejasdopeles, Betēļi and Jersika. In addition, the archive of the National History Museum of Latvia contains information about a grave of a horse and rider at the farmstead of Rites Dīvuļi in the Aug zeme region. These are generally examples of horses in rider graves, located within the area populated by the Selonians or at the border of the Selonian area, and the practice is interpreted in the literature as reflecting the influence of Lithuanian customs (Šnore 1987, p.78).

The find at Aizkraukles Lejasžagari deserves special mention: in this case, a whole horse skeleton was found above a male grave 29, oriented E–W, as is characteristic of Latgallian graves, and with Latgallian style bronze armbands with animal head terminals. By the horse's head was a bronze buckle (Urtāns 1972, p.28ff).

The general view expressed in the literature is that in the Late Iron Age the area around Aizkraukle Hillfort had a mixed Liv and Latgallian population (Zariņa 1996, p.121), but there is also evidence of Selonian presence here. It should be added that in the Late Iron Age Latgallian and Selonian material culture was very similar and is difficult to separate. The presence of Selonians on the right bank of the Daugava is documented in the historical sources. Thus, the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia tells that Latgallians lived together with Selonians at Koknese (IH 1993, Chapter XI.9), while the Rhymed Chronicle states that the Selonians were the neighbours of the Livs, with the Latgallians living beyond the Selonians (AH 1998, Lines 143, 144, 341 and 342). Evidence that Selonians were living on the right bank of the Daugava comes from the archaeological finds at the cemeteries of Aizelkšņi, Aizkraukles Lejasbitēni, Oliņkalns, Lokstene and Pļaviņu Radzes (Mugurēvičs 1977, p.105). Apart from this, certain features of the graves at Aizkraukles Lejasžagari, namely the finds of hollow armbands with broadened, hollow terminals and a plait design, and the frequent occurrence of awls and billhooks with female graves, as well as the presence of certain forms of neck-rings and other ornaments, show a similarity with the material from the barrows at Sēlpils Lejasdopeles (Vilcāne 2006, pp.127 and 133), which suggests that Selonians were also living at this location on the right bank of the Daugava. This means that the possibility cannot be excluded that the grave of a horseman here is a Selonian grave.

Horse graves occur widely in Western and Central Europe, and appear sporadically from the Danube right up to Scandinavia. In the Baltic Sea region in the Late Iron Age they are widespread in the area of present-day

Lithuania, from where they then spread to Selonia up to the right bank of the Daugava. However, horse sacrifices and horse graves are also known among the Finno-Ugric peoples. Thus, for example, at the cemetery of Bezvodninskij in the Western Volga area in Mordovia, dated to the sixth–eighth century AD, a Volga Finno-Ugrian grave site, six complete horse graves have been discovered and 15 graves of horse body parts (Krasnov 1980, p.33). The legends of the Finno-Ugric Muromians also tell of the sacrifice of horses in memory of deceased relatives (Krasnov 1980, p.34).

In contrast to all previously discovered horse graves, the find from Ogresgala Čabas is distinguished by the good preservation of the horse skeleton, its placement in a circular sacrificial pit, the covering of dolomite slabs and its location at the foot of the barrow of a female grave. An undisturbed horse grave was also discovered in the course of excavation by Radiņš and Zemītis in the cemetery adjacent to Daugmale Hillfort in 1987 (Fig. 5). It was situated about 5 m from the nearest graves, in a rounded pit filled with charcoal-rich earth, 1.75 m in diameter. The original depth of grave cannot be determined, since in this part of the cemetery the topsoil had been removed in the course of land improvement work, as a result of which, at the time of excavation, the horse skeleton extended only 0.25 m into the subsoil. The skeleton was oriented N–S, and the bones were fragile. The horse had been laid on its left side, the neck extended upwards and the head turned back, while the legs were bent and tucked under the stomach (Radiņš, Zemītis 1987, p.17).

The horse grave was devoid of grave furniture, and in the absence of any precedent, the excavators regarded it as chronologically recent, on account of which it has not previously been mentioned in the archaeological literature. However, its location, in a cemetery among human graves, and the similar placement in a round pit indicates a strong parallel between the horse graves at Daugmale and at the cemetery of Ogresgala Čabas.

It should also be mentioned that offerings of horse body parts are quite common in Liv cemeteries. Thus, grave 17 in a barrow at Turaidas Pūteļi in the Gauja Basin, a male inhumation with a fragmentary iron sword and iron coffin nails, had a horse scapula (Tõnisson 1974, p.76). A horse tooth has been found in a ritual pit in the Vendic cemetery of Cēsis Railway Station (Spirģis 2004, p.37). A horse mandibula came to light 50 cm from the northern end of Grave 133 at Doles Rauši (Šnore 1973, p.10). At Doles Vampenieši I, part of a horse's spine was recovered from a pit 1 m in diameter and 15 cm in depth, at the foot of a double grave (graves 161 and 162) of a boy and an adult female (Šnore 1972, p.10). Another horse bone was also

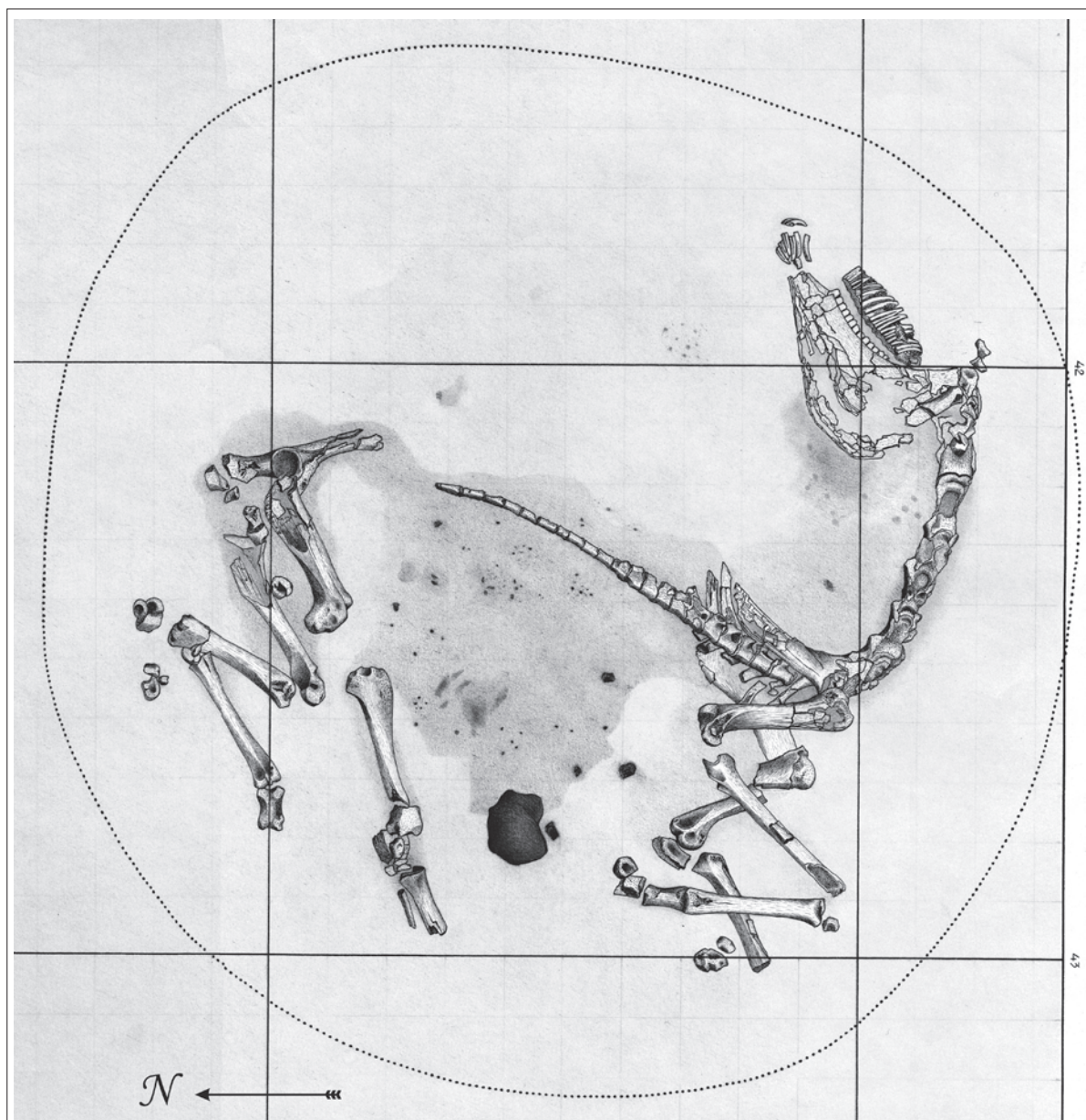


Fig. 5. The horse sacrifice from cemetery of Daugmale hillfort.

found, possibly also in a pit, which measured 1 m in diameter and 0.8 m in depth, located 0.5 m from Grave 5, the grave of a child; a horse tooth was found in another similar pit (nore 1966, 5); another ritual pit contained a whole horse skull (nore 1996, p.127). A single horse tooth, suspended from a chain ornament attached to tortoise brooches, was recovered from Grave 24 at Salaspils Vējstūri (Zariņa 1987, p.27).

At Salaspils Laukskola fragments of horse body parts have been found in or near eight graves. Thus, Grave 186, a male grave, had fragments of a horse skeleton and dog teeth in the surface layer. Fragmentary lower leg bones of horse were found by male cremation grave 392, and a mandibula was recovered from a fire pit measuring 0.5×0.5 m in area and 0.2 m in depth, lying 0.6 m south-east of male cremation grave 437. A horse

skull fragment and some pieces of plaster were found at the southern end of a pit measuring 1×3 m with a depth of 0.3 m, 1 m south-west of the disturbed inhumation 563, possibly a female grave. A horse mandibula was found 1 m north of inhumation No. 222, the grave of a girl, and another in a fire pit measuring 1.3×2 m with a depth of 0.2 m, located 1 m south-east of inhumation 227, the grave of a boy. Horse teeth have been found together with a bronze belt fitting in a fire pit measuring 2×2 m with a depth of 0.4 m, the nearest grave being 230, the inhumation grave of a girl aged 8–9, 6 m further north-east. A burnt horse tooth was discovered by the right elbow of inhumation grave 519, the grave of a boy (Zariņa 2006, pp. 66, 78, 74, 76, 114, 122, 139 and 146).

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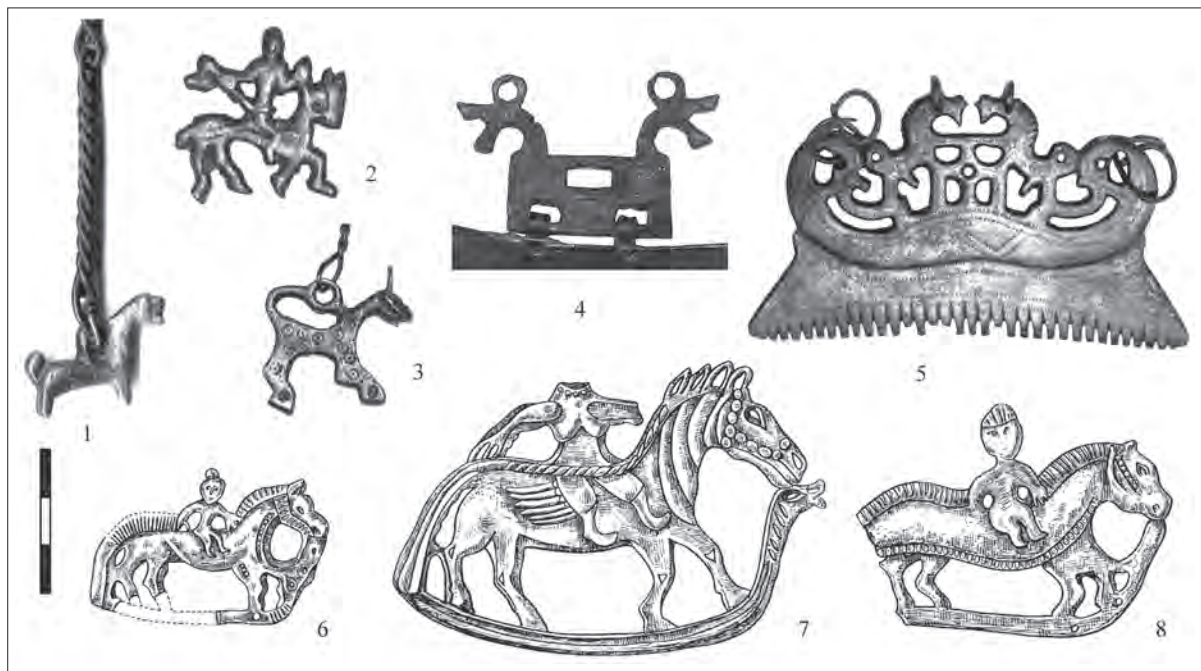


Fig. 6. Liv pendants showing horse images, and pendants of the Kama and Ladoga Finno-Ugrians showing a 'woman riding a snake'. 1 three-dimensional horse pendant from cemetery of Salaspils Laukskola, grave 570; 2 bronze rider figure from cemetery of Salaspils Laukskola, grave 480; 3 flat bronze horse pendant from the cemetery of Salaspils Laukskola, grave 480; 4 knife sheath holder from the cemetery of Ikšķiles Tīnūži; 5 comb-shaped pendant from cemetery by crossing in Lielvārde; 6 pendant 'woman riding a snake' from the district Glazovskii in Russia; 7 pendant 'woman riding a snake' from the district Glazovskii in Russia; 8 pendant 'woman riding a snake' from Dondy-Kar in Russia (after Golubeva 1979, tab. 16.1,2,4).

As mentioned above, there are also several finds of horse teeth and mandibula fragments from the cemetery of Ogresgala Čabas. Thus, horse mandibula fragments were found in the stone circle and packing of grave 11, and possibly in the remaining section of the stone circle associated with grave 1. Six horse teeth have been recovered from the barrow ditch of graves 4/5, one in the ditch associated with grave 32, two in a barrow ditch with stone circle that extended beyond the excavated area and two more in a stone packing that had possibly been created at the western margin of the barrow of graves 13/17. About 150 more horse teeth have been found in various pits or in the mixed earth under the topsoil very near to the eastern limit of the cemetery.

In the Lower Daugava area, we have a parallel for the large number of horse tooth finds from cemetery of Ogresgala Čabas at the Bronze Age barrow cemetery of Salaspils Reznas. Here, back in 1936, when barrow 1 and three quarters of barrow 2 was excavated, horse teeth were found in 128 locations, for the most part outside of the graves, and horse manibulae were also recovered (turms 1936, p.82). It has been suggested on the basis of these finds that the barrow cemeteries also served as shrines (Moora 1952, p.50).

As is known, a variety of horse pendants (Fig. 6.1-5) were very widespread in the Late Iron Age the material

culture of the Finno-Ugric peoples, including the Livs. A connection between the horse cult and the woman in Finno-Ugric mythology is very clearly illustrated by one perhaps less well known pendant type, occurring at 9th–11th century sites of the Kama and Ladoga Finno-Ugrians. These are known as 'woman riding a snake' pendants (Fig. 6.6-8). The snake in this depiction can be identified with an evil chthonic deity, fought by a woman on a winged sun horse. A total of 28 such pendants are known, most of them found in female graves, having served as protective amulets (Golubeva 1979, p.41ff).

It seems that both the possible female sacrifice and the horse sacrifice at Ogresgala Čabas reflect the Liv beliefs relating to the journey of the soul after death from this world to the world beyond. This is well illustrated by the tradition commonly practiced by the Livs of placing a pottery vessel in the grave (Zemītis 2004, p.117). Evidently, in particular cases a special companion was required on this journey. The finds of horse body parts and the offerings of female ornaments symbolically represented a whole horse or woman.

In ancient belief, the horse was credited with fertility-enhancing power, as well as being a solar symbol and a chthonic means of transport for the soul to the world beyond. The discovery in 2007 of a horse sacrifice at the foot of the barrow of a female grave at Ogresgala

Čabas suggests that the horse played a considerably more important role in Liv mythological belief and ritual than has hitherto been assumed.

Translated by Valdis Bērziņš

Abbreviations

AE – Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija, Rīga
 APL – Arheologu pētījumi Latvijā, Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds.
 LNVM – Latvian National Museum of History
 LVI – Institute of Latvian History

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OGRESGALA ČABAS KAPINYNAS IR ŽIRGŲ AUKOJIMAS

Rūdolfs Brūzis, Roberts Spirgis

Santrauka

Ogresgala Čabas archeologinis kompleksas yra 37,5 km nuo Rygos, Dauguvos kairiajame krante, šalia Čabas sodybos. Komplexą sudaro gyvenvietė ir du kapinynai (VI: 1 iliustr.). Pirmuosius kasinėjimus jame 1984 m. vykdė Ana Zarinia (Anna Zariņa). 2007 ir 2008 m. Latvijos istorijos institutas čia vykdė didelės apimties kasinėjimus, kurių metu buvo iširtas 7000 m² plotas.

Kasinėjimų metu paaiškėjo, kad gyvenvietės kultūrinis sluoksnis išliko tik įdubose ir kitose gilesnėse vietose. Ankstyviausi radiniai – titnago nuoskalos ir gremžtukai, datuojami finaliniu paleolitu – ankstyvuoju mezolitu. Yra duomenų, rodančių gyvenvietės egzistavimą neolito ir ankstyvuoju metalų laikotarpiu. Didžioji dauguma radinių siejami su lyvių kultūra ir datuojami X–XIV amžiais.

Gausiai archeologinės medžiagos aptikta pilkapyne, kuriame kartu su A. Zarinios tyrinėjimais atidengti 38 kapai. Pilkapiai buvo nuarti – sulyginti su žemės paviršiumi, tačiau identifikuoti pagal kapų pasiskirstymą ir pilkapius juosusius griovius bei akmenų konstrukcijas (1; 3 pav.). Pilkapiai buvo 5–9 m skersmens. Tyrinėto ploto šiauriniame pakraštyje ir tarpuose tarp pilkapių aptikta plokštinių kapų.

Ypatingo dėmesio nusipelno aptiktos keturios gerai išlikusios pilkapius juosusios akmenų konstrukcijos. Joms daugiausia naudoti šviesūs, beveik balti dolomito luitai. Panašios konstrukcijos užfiksuotos Aizkraukle ir Salaspils Laukskola plokštiniuose lyvių kapinyuose bei Ikšķiles Kābeles pilkapyne.

Mirusieji buvo palaidoti puošniais drabužiais, su ginklais ir įvairiais įrankiais. Ypatingą grupę sudaro įkapės-aukos. Vieno iš pilkapių griovio pakraštyje aptikta auka – moteriškų papuošalų rinkinys (3; 4; 6 pav.).

Rytinėje pilkapyne dalyje, tarp kapų ir gyvenvietės, rasta keletas apskritų apeiginių duobių. Didžiausia jų koncentracija (41) užfiksuota šiauriniame kampe, neaukštoje 300 m² pakilumoje. Panašių duobių aptikta Strazdes Baznīckalns apeiginėje vietoje, tyrinėtose 1937 m. E. Šturmo (E. Šturms) (šiaurinė Kuržemė). Ogresgala Čabas kapinyne tokios duobės dugne rastas žirgo skeletas (VI: 3; 4 iliustr.). Žirgų kapų Latvijoje

aptikta labai nedaug sistemingai vykdytų kasinėjimų Aizkraukles Lejasžagari, Sēlpils Lejasdopeles ir Betelī bei Jersika vietovėse metu. Dauguma šių žirgų palaidota raitelių kapuose ir sietina su sėlių apgyvendinta teritorija bei su ja besiribojančiais regionais. Toks reiškinys aiškinamas Lietuvoje paplitusių papročių įtaka. Ogresgala Čabas atvejis išskirtinis: gerai išlikęs žirgo skeletas aptiktas apeiginėje duobėje, uždengtas dolomito luitais, duobė iškasta šalia pilkapio, kuriame palaidota moteris. Lyvių apgyvendintoje teritorijoje dar vienas nesuardytas žirgo kapas aptiktas 1987 m. kapinyne greta Daugmale piliakalnio, kur taip pat buvo rasta paaukotų žirgo kūno dalių (5 pav.).

Ogresgala Čabas kapinyne žirgo auka nėra vienintelis apeiginio aukojimo pavyzdys. Pilkapio-kenotafo akmeninės konstrukcijos šiaurės rytinėje dalyje po akmenimis aptiktas 40–50 m. amžiaus moters kapas be įkapių (VI: 2 iliustr.). Tikėtina, kad šis kapas liudija moters paaukojimą ir, kaip ir anksčiau minėta žirgo auka, atspindi lyvių tikėjimą vėlių kelione į pomirtinį pasaulį. Greičiausiai tokiai kelionei buvo būtinas ypatingas palydovas. Ogresgala Čabas žirgo auka rodo, kad žirgas lyvių mitologijoje vaidino kur kas svarbesnį vaidmenį, nei buvo manoma iki šiol.

Vertė Jurgita Žukauskaitė