

NOT JUST UNIMPORTANT LITTLE THINGS: CHILDREN IN LATVIA'S MIDDLE AND LATE IRON AGE MORTUARY LANDSCAPE

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In recent decades archaeology has focused increasingly on various insufficiently studied social aspects such as gender, women, children, and childhood. This has led to the creation of a new branch of archaeology: the archaeology of childhood, which studies various questions about children and their life, status, and role in society. Inspired by these new developments, this paper offers an analysis of child burials in the Middle and Late Iron Age (5th–12th century) mortuary landscape, i.e. the network of cemeteries in Latvian territory, an analysis of the disposition and orientation of the child burials, and a discussion of the equal importance of children and adults in society. The paper proposes the hypothesis that age in the period under study played an important role and therefore not every child (presumably infants) was buried in the common cemetery. Older children were fully incorporated in the belief practices of the common society and as prepared for the afterlife as the adults.

Keywords: archaeology of childhood, child burials, prehistoric society, mortuary landscape, Middle and Late Iron Age.

Pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais archeologijoje vis daugiau dėmesio skiriama anksčiau nepakankamai ištirtiems socialiniams aspektams, tokiems kaip lytis, moterys, taip pat vaikai ir vaikystė. Taip atsirado nauja archeologijos šaka – vaikystės archeologija, kuri tyrinėja vaikų gyvenimą, padėtį ir vaidmenį visuomenėje. Inspiruota šių naujovių, šiame darbe pateikiama vaikų kapų viduriniojo ir vėlyvojo geležies amžiaus (V–XII a.) laikotarpiu analizė: kapinynų tinklas Latvijos teritorijoje, vaikų kapų išdėstymas ir kūno orientacija bei pasvarstymai, kad vaikai buvo ne mažiau svarbūs visuomenės nariai nei suaugusieji. Darbe iškeliami hipotezė, kad tiriamuoju laikotarpiu amžius vaidino svarbų vaidmenį, todėl ne visi vaikai (galbūt kūdikiai) buvo laidojami bendruose kapinynuose. Vyresni vaikai buvo visaverčiai visuomenės nariai ir pomirtiniam gyvenimui parengiami taip pat, kaip suaugusieji.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: vaikystės archeologija, vaikų kapai, priešistorinė visuomenė, laidojimo kraštovaizdis, vidurinis ir vėlyvasis geležies amžius.

[...] it may be that the child that had died too soon in life was buried almost anywhere, much as we today bury a domestic pet, a cat, or a dog. He was such an unimportant little thing, so inadequately involved in life, that nobody had any fears that he might return after death to pester the living (Ariès 1964, p.39).

INTRODUCTION

Children¹ have always been important members of society; they are the foundation of every generation. In fact, their education, training, and

preparation for adult life determine the future of their generation and the society. Recently this basic truth has also been recognised by archaeologists with the result that now children and their status, role, and daily activities are included in

¹ Although the term 'child' is not precisely defined in respect to age and anthropological terms like 'neonate', 'infans I', 'infans II', etc. might be more accurate, this paper consciously uses the term 'child' along with 'subadult' and 'non-adult' as a general concept to mean 'all individuals not considered as adults in the society'. When a child is analysed from a biological perspective, the term 'biological child/subadult' is used.

archaeological research and reconstructions of past societies and a new branch of the archaeology, that of children and childhood, has developed.

Although the archaeology of childhood only began to flourish in the 1990s, ethnoarchaeology had been studying children before then. Ethnoarchaeologists tried to explain miniature objects (like miniature axes and figurines) by assuming that they had been used by children, while avoiding the question of what these objects could reveal about children's daily life, status, and role in the society (Baxter 2005, p.8). Previous archaeological and anthropological research considered children's presence to be rarely recognisable in archaeological records, especially since their presence lacks regularity due to the fact that children act unconsciously, meaning any object they make is by accident and cannot be analysed using archaeological methods. Children were considered an aggregate formed from the decisions and actions of the adults and were not considered active members of the society (Baxter 2005, p.8; Wileman 2005, p.10). As is clearly shown in Ariès' citation at the start of this paper, it was believed that children in the past societies were perceived as something unimportant and ephemeral while *'dead children, [...] which had disappeared so soon in life were not worthy of remembrance'* (Ariès 1964, p.38). Furthermore, Ariès (1964) wrote that childhood did not evolve as a concept until the 19th century; up until then children were portrayed and perceived as little, incomplete adults. However, due to the development of gender archaeology, archaeologists began to focus on children and their role in society, allowing them to come forward and tell about their lives in past societies.

Although in recent years Latvian archaeology has shown increased interest in social archaeology-related questions, the notion of the archaeology of childhood is still in its infancy. In the last few years, however, some research papers that focus on prehistoric children either exclusively

(Vilka 2012; 2013; in press; Zariņa, Zariņa 2012) or among other social aspects (Radiņš 1999; Šnē 2002; Bandare 2002; 2007) have been presented. Many questions and issues still remain to be raised and answered about children in prehistoric societies.

This paper's aim is to analyse child burials in the Middle and Late Iron Age (5th–12th century) mortuary landscape, i.e. the cemetery network, in Latvian territory in order to show that children were important members of society and played a role in the society's social, ideological, and mythological life. An overview of the archaeology of childhood is presented first to form a foundation for the research into Latvian child burials presented later in this paper. Child burials were analysed as components of the mortuary landscape, i.e. their spatial distribution and orientation were analysed and how they were incorporated into the social, practical, and mythological practice common in the society was discussed.

Archaeological excavations, on a larger or smaller scale, in flat and barrow cemeteries used in the Middle and Late Iron Ages (i.e. cemeteries used during, before, and/or after the period under study), have been conducted since the 19th century and now encompass more than 300 cemeteries according to archaeological reports stored at LU LVI AMK, LNVM AN, VKPAI PDC; Jensen *et al.* 1999; Apals *et al.* 2001. A large part of the extensive excavations were conducted during the Soviet era, especially during the River Daugava hydroelectric project (1959–1974) when rescue excavations were performed at numerous sites. Unfortunately for future archaeologists and anthropologists, the main guideline in Soviet physical anthropological science was ethnic anthropology, which focuses more on craniological material and its preservation, which led to the current situation where the stored skeletal collections, even from large cemeteries with well-preserved skeletal material, can be quite small.

The analysis of child burials in cemeteries re-

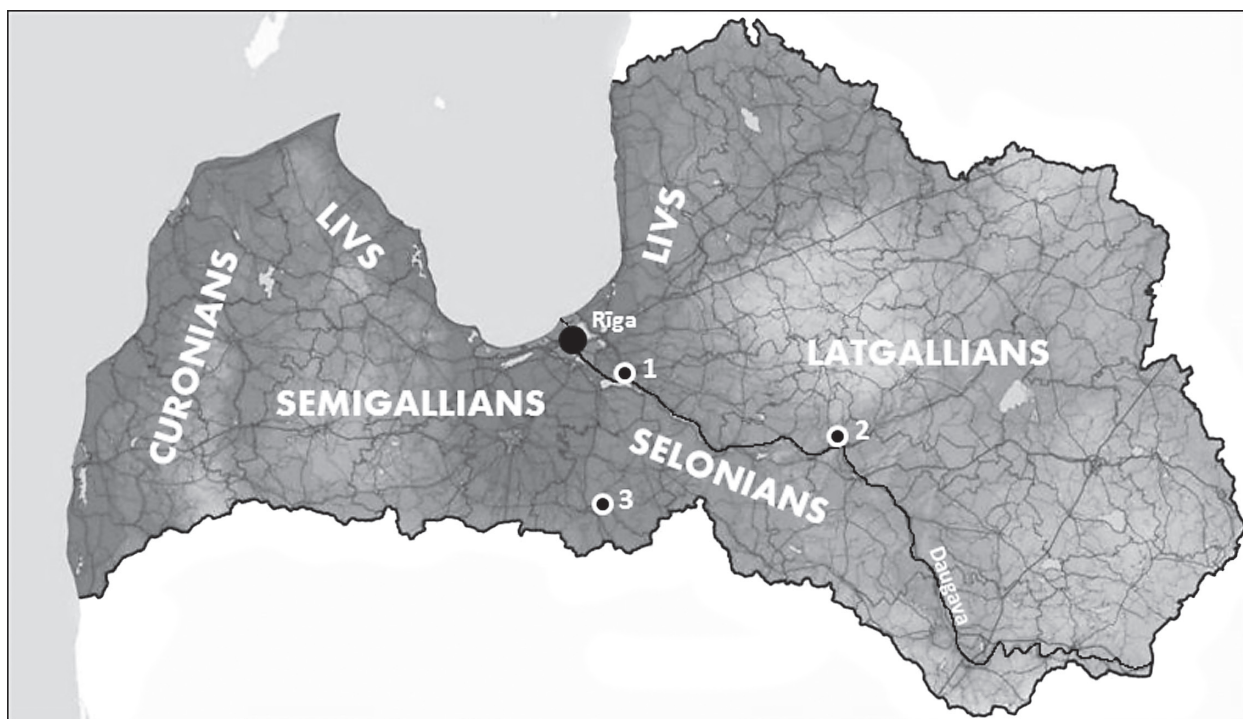


Fig. 1. Baltic and Finno-Ugric tribes in the Middle and Late Iron Age in territory of Latvia: 1 – Laukskola cemetery, 2 – Lejasbitēni cemetery, 3 – Dreņģeri-Čunkāni cemetery. Map by A. Vilka.

quires large cemeteries with extensive archaeological and (stored) skeletal material. The latter plays important role in burial studies, especially when studying child burials, because the identification of burials based on only archaeological material can be inaccurate (see Vilka 2012; in press). Unfortunately, considering all of the aforementioned aspects, only three Middle and Late Iron Age cemeteries satisfied the stated conditions and were analysed in this paper: Aizkraukles Lejasbitēni (Latgalian, 3rd–10th centuries; 459 burials), Salaspils Laukskola (Liv, 10th–13th centuries; 610 burials), and Bauskas Dreņģeri-Čunkāni (Semigallian, 8th–11th centuries; 743 burials) (Fig. 1). At other large cemeteries with large numbers of burials, e.g. Odukalna (369 burials; Radiņš, Ciglis 2001), Kristapiņi (315 burials; Kuniga 2000), Vampenieši I (198 burials; Šnore 1966; 1971; 1972b; 1973b; 1974), Kivti (175 burials; Šnore 1987), etc., the preserved and stored ske-

letal material is not extensive: Odukalna cemetery was excavated during 1890–1891, 1925, and 1938 but no information exists about the skeletal material; the skeletons of 12 individuals from Kristapiņi cemetery are stored at LU LVI BMK, collection No. 77, of 11 individuals from Vampenieši I (LU LVI BMK, collection No. 26), and 14 individuals from Kivti (LU LVI BMK, collection No. 1).

The cemeteries analysed in this paper represent three local tribes: the Latgallians, Semigallians, and Livs. Curonians buried their dead in flat graves during the Middle Iron Age and predominantly in cremations beginning in the 10th century. Since flat cemeteries have been excavated on a much smaller scale, insufficient data exist about child burials and so Curonian child burials were not analysed here. Selonian cemeteries, like their Curonian counterparts, offer insufficient information about children and so could also not

be analysed here. The included cemeteries offer a great possibility to analyse children and their role in societies, highlighting some aspects of children in the Middle and Late Iron Ages.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD: AN OVERVIEW

Theoretically, the origins of the archaeology of childhood are associated with the publication of a research paper by Norwegian Archaeologist Grete Lillehammer (1989) 'A child is born. The child's world in an archaeological perspective', which discusses the methods and theories of how children can and must be researched using archaeological methods and material. She introduced the term 'child's world', which includes two attitudes that must be included when non-adults are studied in archaeology. First, a child should not be perceived as a passive member of society, but rather as an active and self-dependent participant. Second, a child's world consists of three components: interaction with the environment, culture given to the child by the adults (interaction with adults), and culture deriving from a group of children (interaction with other children). This means that archaeologists should study not only the child, but also his/her relationships with the environment, adults, and peers. Lillehammer's paper highlighted an important problem in archaeology at this time, the conscious or unconscious disregard of the role and status of children in past societies and their omission in reconstructions of the past.

Since Lillehammer's paper, numerous research projects have started to pay attention to various aspects of childhood and the life and role of subadults in society. The new ideas, approaches, and research combined in this branch of archaeology allow the archaeological and anthropological material, the presence of subadults, and their effect and importance in past societies to be reconsidered. Although most studies see burial mate-

rial as direct proof of the presence of children in a society, many studies also try to answer questions concerning the daily life, occupation, and significance of non-adults in the domestic life and economy of the society. For example, flint knapping research suggests that inaccurate and inept blows were probably made by apprentices or children (e.g. Grimm 2000; Stapert 2007; Orzyłowska, Karolak 2013; etc.). Analyses of clay objects and the fingerprints left on them have shown that both children and adults made small clay objects and bigger clay pots (Kamp *et al.* 1999). Along with crafts and working tools, studies have also focused on specific objects associated only with children, i.e. toys (e.g. Blaževičius 2013; Gomułka 2013; Romanowicz 2013; etc.). Some archaeologists assume that miniature objects and music instruments (pipes, rattles, buzzers, etc.) can be both toys and ritual objects (e.g. Turek 2000; Ó'Donnabháin, Brindley 1990; etc.). Numerous other examples of children studies exist in archaeology, but all of them suggest that the perception cannot continue of children as passive, negligible, and helpless members of the society; they took part in the household and were active members that played, observed, learned, and worked.

As has been mentioned, most of the research uses burial material, where children can be seen directly, as well as archaeological and skeletal material to discuss children's status, society's behaviour towards them, and their place in society. Numerous papers discuss the problems of the small number of child burials in cemeteries (e.g. Turek 2000; Baxter 2005; Wileman 2005; Lewis 2007; Crawford 2011; etc.), specific child burial locations in settlement sites, 'children's cemeteries', etc. (Baxter 2005, pp.103–104; Bäcklund-Blank, Fahlander 2006; Murphy 2011; Hladíková 2013; etc.). The analysis of child burials and grave furnishings provides great possibilities for discussing questions of gender (Turek 2000; 2013; Vilka 2013; etc.), status, and roles in society (Turek 2000; Baxter 2005; Wileman 2005; Becker 2011;

Harris 2011; and many more), and other child and childhood issues.

Another important issue for the archaeology of childhood is the question of when a child becomes a social adult and how this can be traced in the archaeological material. The age limit for a 'biological child' is usually the age of consensus (often 17–19 years of age is used, but some researchers prefer 15 (e.g. Angel 1971; Zariņa 2009; etc.)). The age limits for a 'cultural child', however, can vary enormously between cultures. For example: 10-year-old children were considered legal adults in 7th century Anglo-Saxon society, 12-year-olds in the 10th century (Crawford 1993, p.17); in 18th century Iceland, children of around 6–7 played important roles in the household (Lillehammer 1989, p.93), etc.

To solve the problem of the social transition process in archaeology, the mortuary treatment can be analysed and compared to the biological age of the deceased to determine whether any changes in grave goods can be detected in connection with the age groups or whether any significant objects exist that could indicate that the deceased was perceived as a social adult. For example, Nick Stoodley (2000), after analysing Anglo-Saxon burials, created a societal division based on the social age groups. He established that the transition period from a social child to a social adult occurred at the age of 15–20. He divided the female life cycle into three stages: 1) one brooch was typical for young girls (from the age of 5, when gender-based grave goods are first seen in burials), 2) two or more brooches with a bead necklace for older girls (10–12 years old), and 3) two or more brooches with a long, expensive bead necklace for adolescence girls (15–20 years old). Laurynas Kurila (2007), after studying East Lithuanian Iron Age barrow burials, established that the transition process from social child to social adult can be seen at the age of 12–20 years.

If no significant object can be found to show that a specific individual was considered a social

adult, it can be very difficult to trace such social changes in the mortuary treatment. It must be remembered that the dead do not bury themselves, but are treated and disposed of by the living society (Parker Pearson 2000); therefore burials combine aspects of the deceased's identity with the ideology of his/her relatives and the society and may not directly reflect the deceased's social status and role. The end of 'child status' in a society, however, is one of the most important issues every archaeologist involved in the archaeology of childhood must deal with.

CHILDREN IN MIDDLE AND LATE IRON AGE LATVIA

As previously mentioned, three large cemeteries are analysed in this paper. Aizkraukles Lejasbitēni (Fig. 2) was excavated by Hugo Riekstiņš (in 1931) and Vladislavs Urtāns (during 1961–1964). Although the cemetery's early phase can be associated with barrow burials (mostly destroyed), the archaeological and skeletal material used in the subsequent analysis was obtained from 5th century and later flat burials. The cemetery has been completely excavated and child burials represent 18.5% of the total number of 459 burials (Riekstiņš 1931; Urtāns 1961; 1962b; 1963b; 1964).

Salaspils Laukskola (Fig. 3) was entirely excavated by Voldemārs Ģinters (in 1937) and Anna Zariņa (during 1967–1975). The cemetery was used during the 10th – early 13th centuries with burials from the third chronological phase (second half of the 12th – early 13th century) representing 21% of the total number of 610 burials (Zariņa 2006, p.17). Although this paper is devoted to the Middle and Late Iron Ages, no significant differences are seen in the burials dating to the early 13th century; the burial traditions, like burial types and the placement and usage of many grave goods, continued unchanged from the pre-

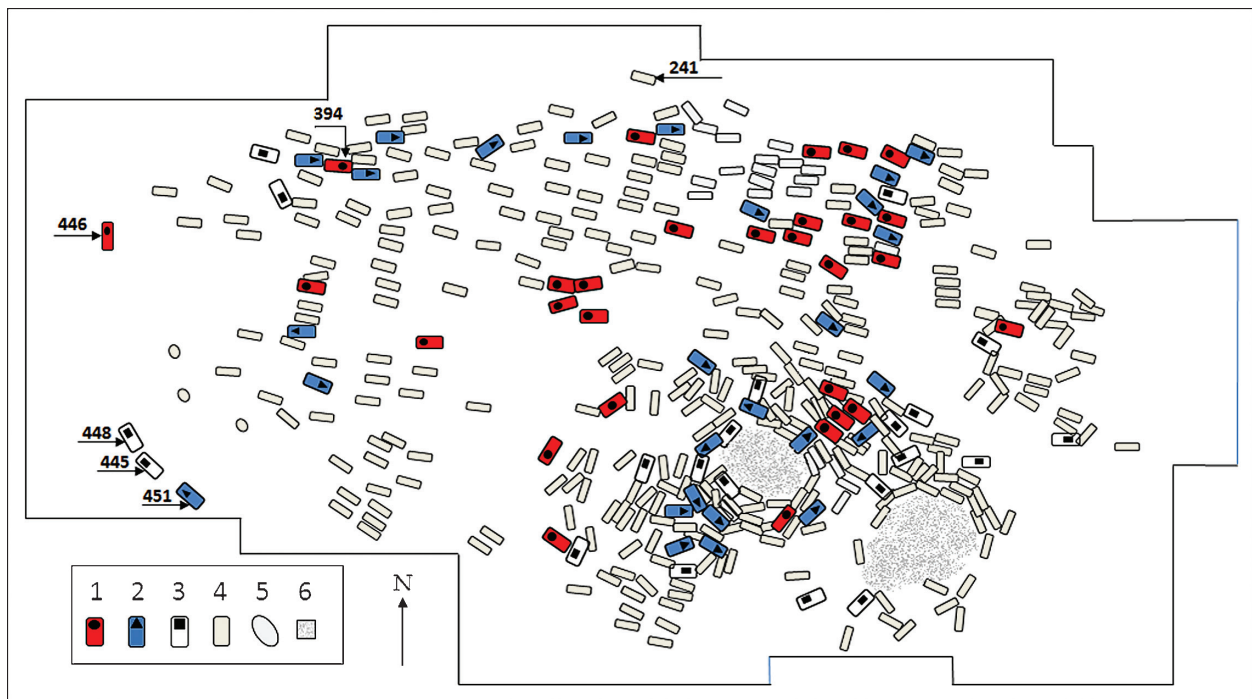


Fig. 2. Burials in the Lejasbitēni cemetery, schematic representation: 1 – girls, 2 – boys, 3 – children, 4 – adults (inhumations), 5 – adults (cremations), 6 – location of early barrows. *After Urtāns 1961; 1962b; 1963b; 1964; 1970, reproduced by A. Vilka.*

vious period. Therefore, although some Laukskola burials can be dated to the Middle Ages (13th century), they are also analysed in this paper without drawing a strict, probably artificial chronological boundary between the burials. Child burials represent 29.1% of all of the excavated burials (Ģinters 1937; Zariņa 1967; 1968; 1969; 1970; 1971; 1972; 1973; 1974; 1975; 2006).

Dreņģeri-Čunkāni (Figs. 4, 5) was explored by numerous archaeologists: by Eduards Vāle (in 1924), Voldemārs Ģinters (1928), Pēteris Stepiņš (1936), Eduards Šturms (in 1937), Ādolfs Stubavs (in 1957), Viktorija Bebre (in 1982–1984), Māris Atgāzis (in 1984–1994) and Mārtiņš Lūsēns (in 2009–2010). 743 burials were located on two terraces of the River Mēmele (second and third ter-

aces, none on the first terrace); unfortunately the skeletal and archaeological evidence from the burials on the third terrace was poorly preserved and therefore it was very difficult to identify the burials. Children, however, represented 15% of all the excavated flat burials (Vāle 1924; Stubavs 1957; Bebre 1982; 1983; Atgāzis, Bebre 1984; Atgāzis 1985; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1994a; 1994b; Lūsēns 2009; 2010).

The analysed cemeteries, compared to others during the period under study, have provided very well preserved archaeological and skeletal material that offers an opportunity to study children from biological and physiological perspectives as well as social and mythological ones. It also offers an opportunity to correlate biological and social age².

² There are at least three perceptions of age: 1) calendar age (chronological or passport age), i.e. the time since birth; 2) physiological or biological age, i.e. skeletal and dental age, which may diverge from the calendar age if the human body ages faster/slower than expected; and 3) social age, i.e. the socially constructed norms of behaviour for individuals in an age category. Social age can be very divergent from the calendar and biological ages (Halcrow, Tayles 2008, p.192).

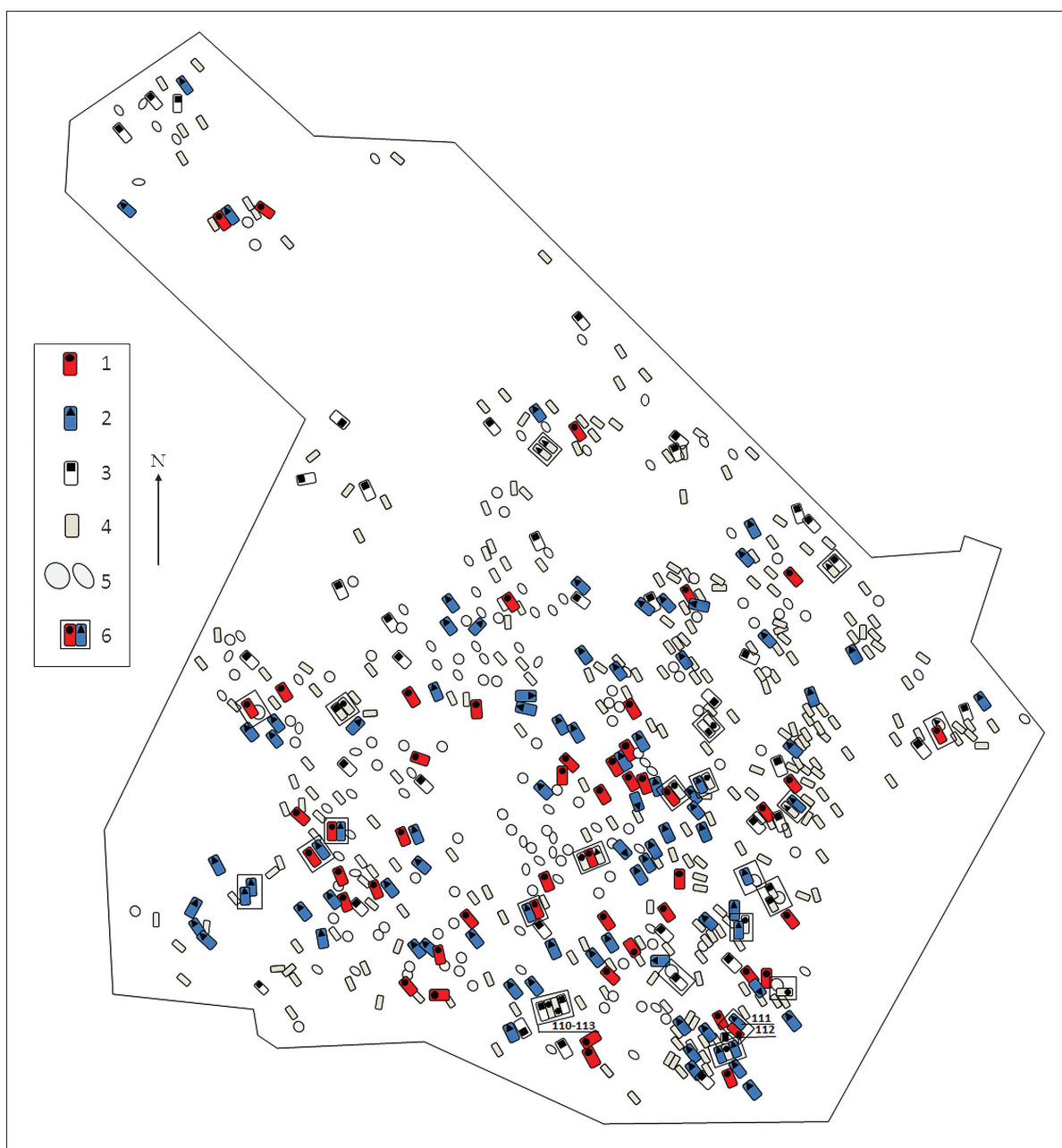


Fig. 3. Burials in the Laukskola cemetery, schematic representation: 1 – girls, 2 – boys, 3 – children, 4 – adults (inhumations), 5 – adults (cremations), 6 – double/group burials. After Zariņa 2006, reproduced by A. Vilka.

As has been mentioned, burials are the result of the mourners' practices (Lucy 1994; Parker Pearson 2000). It is likely that the decisions about the children's legacy, their burial treatment, and the grave furnishings were made by adults and

therefore mortuary studies can be considered a reflection of adult remembrances of specific children as well as the ideals and conceptions of childhood in general (Cahan *et al.* 1993). The post-processual school of thought has developed this

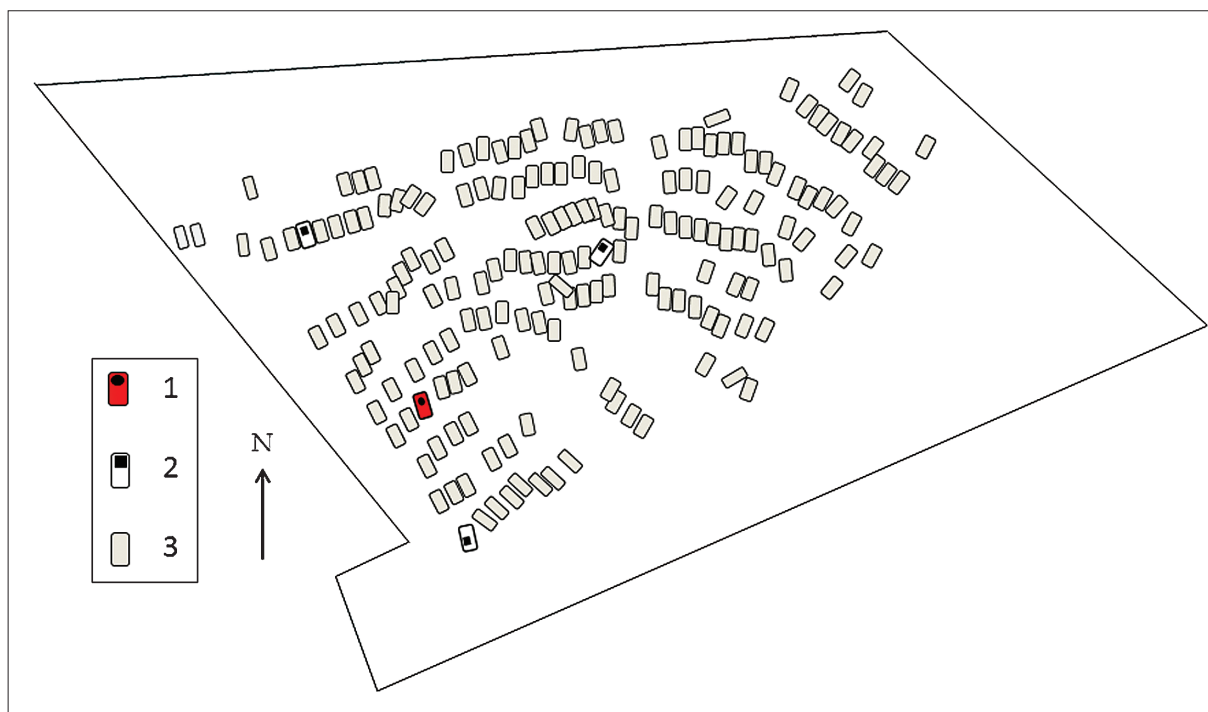


Fig. 4. Burials in the Dreņģeri-Čunkāni cemetery, Mēmele third terrace, schematic representation: 1 – girls, 2 – children, 3 – adults and unidentified burials. *After Bebre 1982; 1983; Atgāzis, Bebre 1984, reproduced by A. Vilka.*

perception further, suggesting that the children viewed through mortuary remains are not necessarily typical of all the children who lived in that society (Rothschild 2002). Burials represent the remains of children who did not live long enough to become adults, i.e. only a specific subset of children (Baxter 2005, p.94). Christopher Carr (1995) effectively demonstrated that both conceptions of mortuary data: social (Mortuary practices reflect the social organization present in the particular society.) and philosophical-religious (Mortuary remains are symbolic representations of social structures that can be and are shaped, transformed, and adapted by the living society and social actors.) are important in shaping the mortuary practices. This must be taken into account especially when studying children's mortuary remains and analysing the burial treatment of children.

The emphasis in the analysis of the Latvian child burials is on correlating the 'child' and 'adult'

categories. Although this method can sometimes be criticised (e.g. Sofaer-Derevenski 2000), it can be very useful when studying cemeteries where children and adults are buried together. In order to conduct an analysis of child burials and make suggestions about the status of children, adult burials are considered the 'normative category' and any differences in the child burials are seen as deviations. These deviations should not be regarded as failures in a negative sense and children should not be seen as something less important than adults, but a different mortuary treatment towards children might show that they are perceived differently than adults, who are full members of the society. If adult burials are presumed to be 'normative', then one can analyse child burials from that perspective, trace specific differences in the child burials, and see how child burials change in respect to the age categories and become equivalent to adult burials.

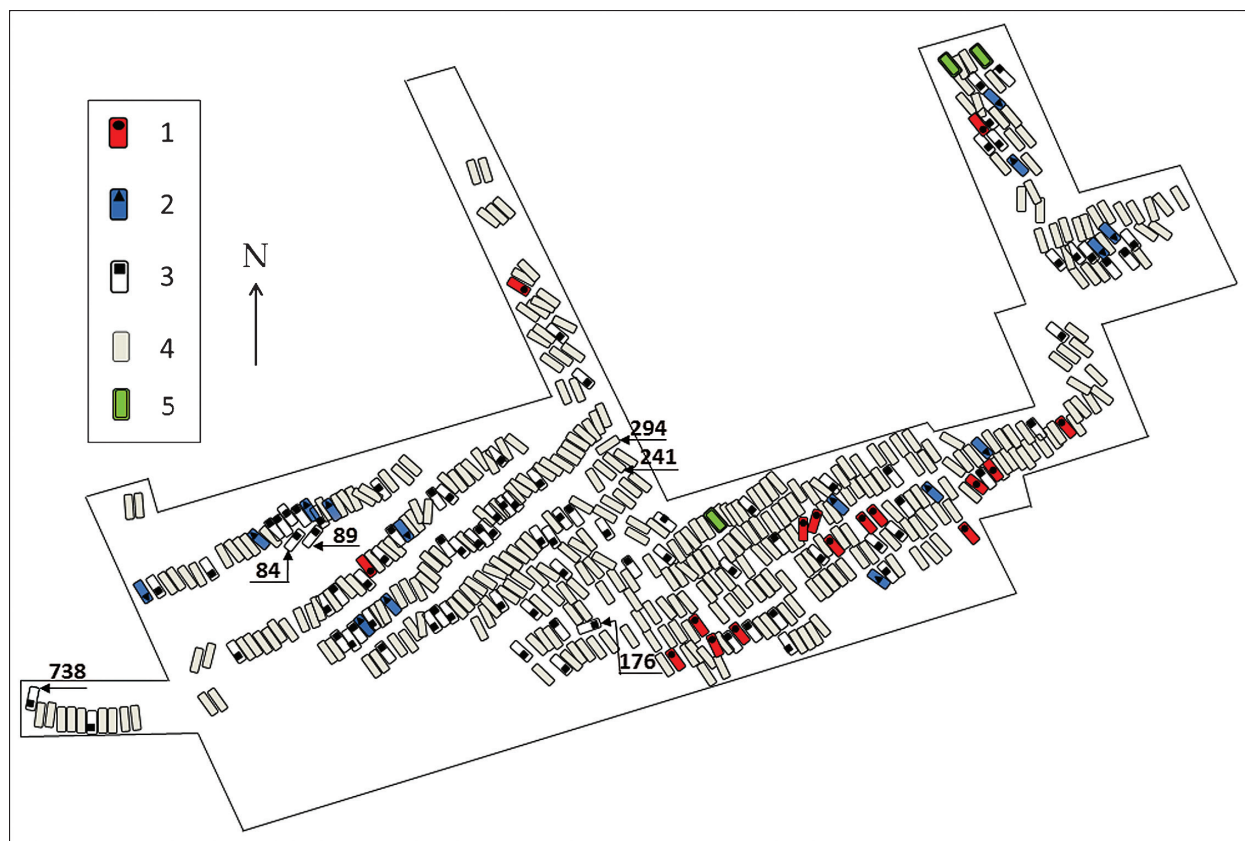


Fig. 5. Burials in the Dreņģeri-Čunkāni cemetery, Mēmele second terrace, schematic representation: 1 – girls, 2 – boys, 3 – children, 4 – adults and unidentified burials, 5 – group burials. After Atgāzis, *Bebre* 1984; Atgāzis 1985; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1994b; Lūsēns 2009; 2010, reproduced by A. Vilka.

Child burials in the Latvian Middle and Late Iron Age mortuary population

In analysing cemeteries from different historic periods, archaeologists frequently discover some discrepancies in the age group proportions, i.e. an underrepresentation of child burials. On the basis of ethnographical studies, it was established that the average child mortality rate in non-industrial societies was about 40% (see e.g. Goodman, Armelagos 1989; Crawford 1993; Buckberry 2000), but the percentage of children in cemeteries is frequently less than expected, e.g. Sally Crawford (2011) established that only 10–15% of children are represented in Anglo Saxon inhumation graves. A similar percentage of about 15–20% was

also recorded in the Latvian Middle and Late Iron Age mortuary populations (Note: these data are mostly based on archaeological material because the skeletal material was frequently poorly preserved. Therefore the data cannot be compared to the archaeological evidence. The child burials were interpreted using grave-pit measurements and the type and size of the grave goods. (For detailed data, see Vilka 2012; in press.)) A common feature of this period is the very small number of infant burials, there being only a few in the Middle and Late Iron Ages (For more, see Vilka in press). Several interpretations have been given to explain the lack of child burials such as fragile bones – bad preservation, the shallowness of the burials, adverse soil, agriculture, and distinctive mortuary

practices, i.e. children were buried in different areas or in the way that leaves no archaeologically identifiable traces in the cemeteries (For more, see e.g. Turek 2000; Baxter 2005; Wileman 2005; Lewis 2007; etc.).

Studies have shown that specific areas for child burials might exist in cemeteries (See e.g. Bäcklund-Blank, Fahlander 2006) and elsewhere, e.g. under houses, in caves, or in specific 'children cemeteries' (Baxter 2005, pp.103–104). Therefore one of the most common and popular interpretations for the deficit of child burials is the idea that children were buried in a distinct way. (Note: the word 'buried' prescribes that the deceased was buried in the ground; a more appropriate word would probably be 'placed' or 'put', which imply that the deceased was prepared for the afterlife in the different way).

No evidence exists for burials inside the settlement sites or for specific 'children only' cemeteries in Latvia during the period under study, which leads to the question of where did other children go. The solution probably lies in all of the previously mentioned aspects that cause children to be underrepresented in cemeteries, i.e. external (agriculture, fragile bones, etc.) and internal (mortuary practices that prescribed a different attitude towards young children). This idea becomes more convincing if cemeteries during other periods of history are examined; infants are found at Stone Age cemeteries (e.g. 2.8% of Zvejnieki burials were infants under one year of age (Zagorskis 1987)), Bronze Age cemeteries (e.g. 9.5% of Ķivutkalns burials were infants under one year of age (Денисова *et al.* 1985)), and Medieval cemeteries (e.g. 24.9% of St. Ģertrūdes church burials were 0–9-year-old children and 1.2% were unborn or stillborn babies (Gerhards 2008)). Unbaptised infants were usually placed at the feet of an adult (Lūsēns 2008). In many cases infant underrepresentation can be explained by an external factor, i.e. infant and children's bones really are more fragile than adult bones and are

more susceptible to adverse soil effects. This simple explanation, however, is not always applicable because examples of infant burials with well-preserved skeletal material exist from various historic periods. It is perhaps possible to talk about the performance of different burial traditions during the Middle and Late Iron Ages. A similar interpretation is also discussed by other researchers, i.e. the fact that infants and young children had a different social status (Too young to undergo the process of initiation, they were therefore not perceived as full-fledged members of the society.) might have meant that they were buried in a different way or form (see e.g. Turek 2000; Kamp 2001; Baxter 2005, p.158; Wileman 2005, p.87; etc.). Ethnographic studies have indeed shown that infants and young children can be placed in a different location and form, e.g. in some preindustrial societies young children were placed in a tree cavity, put in a river, or buried along a path so that their souls could be reborn in a passing woman (Lewis 2007, pp.9–10). Other researchers suggest that due to a persistent danger of death caused by a weak immune system, children under 2–3-years of age are not perceived as full-fledged members of society and are initiated into that society only after this age (see e.g. Turek 2000; Baxter 2005; Wileman 2005).

Of course, one cannot forget the idea of 'outside the boundaries', i.e. the possibility that child/infant burials (or anything else needed for a research project) might be located outside the explored area of the cemetery and thus the available data are incorrect. Unfortunately 'what if' is not always a viable option and the available data need to be used, which in this case suggest that infants are underrepresented in Middle and Late Iron Age cemeteries.

Although the Middle and Late Iron Age cemeteries show that some specific burial tradition could exist for children, this hypothesis can be corroborated only when children's remains are discovered in a different location or form. For now it remains only an interpretation since the main and only evidence is the absence of any evidence.

Child burials and the mortuary landscape

Christopher Tilley's (1994) phenomenological concept of landscape as a symbolic and cultural complexity can also be applied to cemeteries, which can be perceived as a mortuary landscape created, transformed, and modified by a living society and which are part of a complex cultural landscape. The organization of a cemetery as a mortuary landscape is unlikely to be accidental because a body placed there for eternal rest becomes a part of an overall system encompassing both physical and metaphysical elements: the landscape, grave constructions, human body, beliefs, ideas about the afterlife, symbols, etc. (see, for example, Parker Pearson 2000; Williams 2006; Fahlander, Oestigaard 2008; etc.) Important aspects in this system include the disposition of the burials and the orientation of the bodies which symbolise the connection between the dead, the environment, and the afterlife. Both are connected with many aspects that govern and influence them: the grave's construction, the site, the real and mythical landscape, religion, rituals, social/material status, gender, age, the movement of the sun, i.e. the location of sunrise and sunset on the horizon, etc. (Carr 1995; Parker Pearson 2000; Williams 2006).

Latvia's Middle and Late Iron Age mortuary landscape consists of flat cemeteries (and a few barrow cemeteries) with mostly inhumations (and some cremations). No archaeological evidence exists about distinct areas for the mortuary practices during this period, although earlier data suggest that some of the dead (i.e. infants and young children) may not have been buried in the common cemetery and the mortuary landscape should probably be supplemented with other mortuary or sacred places. Burials occur throughout the cemetery, sometimes in rows, as can be seen in Semigallian examples. No universal rules existed for body orientation, local tribes following their own traditions: in Liv

cemeteries the heads of both females and males lay to the NW (Apals *et al.* 2001, pp.301–302) but in Latgalian the heads of males lay predominantly to the E, those of females to the W. Although variations do occur, substantially different practices are rarely seen, i.e. in about 6–8% of the burials (Šnē 2002, pp.225–227; Radiņš 1999). Although burials in Semigallian cemeteries were made in horizontal rows and such organization would seem to provide fixed directions, a more fixed orientation (also with many variations) can be observed only in the 8th–11th century burials where females lay to the NW, males to the SE (Apals *et al.* 2001, p.303). In other burials, the head can lie to the N, S, or NW, without regard to gender.

As has been mentioned, archaeological studies provide evidence about the distinct arrangement and location of child burials, thereby suggesting that the different role and status possessed by children in society was also reflected in the cemetery. In light of this, the cemetery analysis in this paper focused more on the deviant disposition of the burials since distinctions in the common mortuary practices can be observed in these cases and could indicate a distinct attitude towards the deceased. It was determined that no specific age-related disposition existed, i.e. child burials, like adult burials, were located throughout the cemetery without being restricted to a children-only area. Child and adult burials were generally arranged and oriented according to the same universal rules used in creating the mortuary landscape. The disposition of some burials, however, can be seen as deviant.

Three child burials at Dreņģeri–Čunkāni cemetery deviated from its other burials by lying not in the traditional rows, but perpendicularly to them (Fig. 5). The first (bur. 89, a 3–5-year-old child) contained an iron crook-shaped pin, a broad combat knife, an amber bead, and an awl (Atgāzis 1985, p.88), the second (bur. 176, probably a very young child) a neck ring, a penannular brooch,

an iron knife, and fragments of bronze coil beads, chains, and a cylinder bead (Atgāzis 1987, pp.10–12), and the third (bur. 84, a 2–4-year-old child) no grave goods (Atgāzis 1985, pp.81–81). Atgāzis (1985) suggested that these could be human sacrifices. By looking at the cemetery's plan, it is seen that another burial (bur. 294, a W-oriented young female) is oriented in the same way as these three child burials (Fig. 5) and is aligned with the head of NW-oriented bur. 241, that of a very wealthy male accompanied by five spears, a narrow-bladed axe, a combat knife, a neck ring, a crossbow brooch, a 'warrior's' bracelet, etc. This is assumed to be the burial of an important Semigallian warrior and the female is thought to be his wife, mistress, or servant placed there to accompany him in the afterlife (Atgāzis 1988, pp.20–21). The mortuary treatment of this undisturbed female burial is very simple: a sickle, an awl, and two pins with a triangular head (Atgāzis 1988, p.71). This burial can in fact probably be interpreted as a sacrificial burial for the important warrior.

The question therefore arises as to whether the aforementioned deviant child burials have a sacrificial association. In fact, no connection exists between them and the aforementioned female burial, other than their deviant disposition. While bur. 84 and 89 are presumably connected with the burials above them (which are, incidentally, all child burials), no such connection could be found between bur. 176 and the burials above it in the seventh row. Although Dreņģeri-Čunkāni cemetery has not been completely excavated, it has been established that it expanded towards the E, with the burials in the W part dating to the 8th–9th centuries and those in the E part dating more to the 10th–11th centuries. Lūsēns (2010) discovered that bur. 738, which contains a child and is located on the cemetery's far W side, can be dated to the 5th–6th centuries (based on a pin with a conical head). For now, it is not entirely clear whether problems exist with the typological dating or whether the

cemetery was also used in the earlier period and expanded more to the W. It has, however, been established that no chronological discrepancies exist in the cemetery's rows, so it is likely that the dead were placed next to each other in the row. Aforementioned bur. 176 can be dated to the 9th–10th centuries, while the burials in the seventh row above it date more to 8th–9th centuries. So this case probably concerns simple spatial economy where a later burial is made in a free space close to a previous burial row.

Presumably the same explanation can also be offered for bur. 84 and 89. The sacrificial interpretation becomes unlikely in light of their mortuary treatment as no specific parameters occur that could attest to a sacrifice: pins and awls are common discoveries in child burials in Dreņģeri-Čunkāni. Pins are found in 25% of them, awls in 17%. Child burials with no grave goods (11%) are also not unusual in this cemetery (Bebre 1982; 1983; Atgāzis, Bebre 1984; Atgāzis 1985; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1994a; 1994b). These two child burials are adjacent to a cluster of six child burials, so perhaps some extraordinary event occurred that affected the mortuary quantity over a brief period of time (a famine, disease?) and caused these burials to occur in such proximity (practically adjoining) to one other and perhaps even in free spaces outside the row.

Other notable deviant burials (445, 446, 448, 451) can be seen in the SW part of Lejasbitēni cemetery (Fig. 2). An analysis of the mortuary furnishings showed that they represent another culture, the Livs. The children were accompanied by typical Liv grave goods like glass beads and pottery. The burials were oriented to the NW, the traditional Liv orientation. Three female cremations of Liv origin were found near the child burials (Urtāns 1964). These females were probably connected to the children by not only ethnic ties but also by kinship. The location of these female and child burials would suggest the strong influence of their different ethnic origin, it being as if

the dead were still foreign and could not be placed with the society's other members. But it must also be noted that these burials date to the last phase of the cemetery's use and therefore their location on the periphery could also be explained as a simple expansion of the cemetery. However, the fact cannot be ignored that these burials are actually at a distance from the other burials.

A similar peripheral disposition situation can be seen with bur. 241, that of a 40–50-year-old male accompanied by a 'warrior's' bracelet, several rings, a spear, and an ornate double-edged sword (Urtāns 1964). This can be regarded as a very wealthy burial because of the sword, which is a very rare artefact in Latgalian burials (Radiņš 1999, p.103). An osteological analysis showed that this male had recovered from a trepanation presumably performed to cure an injury (LU LVI BMK, collection No. 24, inventory No. 49). This burial is from the last phase of the cemetery's use, which is probably why it was on the periphery. The cemetery's development can be determined quite clearly. During the first phase, the dead were buried in barrows, later in flat burials around the earlier barrows, and finally in an area expanding over time to the NW (Urtāns 1962a; 1963a). So it would be incorrect to analyse this cemetery as a static landscape from a centre – periphery perspective and a peripheral location would not suggest that this male was less important than those buried at the centre.

Although the placement of the aforementioned Liv child burials could have been influenced by simple expansion, one cannot ignore the fact that these children had been prepared for the afterlife in accordance with Liv mortuary practices despite the cemetery being Latgalian and their likely membership in that community. The answer probably lies in the three Liv female cremations and their presumable connection with these child burials. Proof of kinship would provide information about marriages between different tribes and how incomers were able to preserve their origins.

If these children and women were related, it could mean that Liv females, who married into Latgalian society, kept and even passed on their origins to their children. Such cases could provide very useful material for DNA research and the examination of possible kinship connections among the dead. Unfortunately the skeletal material is very poorly preserved in these child burials, the only tooth being in bur. 451 (LU LVI BMK, collection No. 24, inventory No. 108), which impedes any further investigation or even makes it impossible.

The burials in Laukskola cemetery occur throughout the cemetery with burials from different phases of the cemetery's use being frequently adjacent. Earlier burials are found more in the W–SW, the cemetery having expanded later to the E and N (Zariņa 2006). The larger empty spaces surrounding some of the child burials in the W and NW should not be associated with a deviant burial disposition because the burials in that part of the cemetery are generally at a distance from each other (Fig. 3). A specific feature of Laukskola is the many double and multiple burials, where two or more individuals are buried simultaneously (Zariņa 2000). This could suggest a cemetery organization based on kinship, i.e. the territory is divided into areas that belong to separate families who buried their dead together. An overwhelming majority of these multiple burials are of children buried with other children or with adults. These individuals are very likely to have ties of kinship and the children were buried together with other members of their family.

An analysis of burial orientation shows that some differences can be observed in both child and adult burials. It can be asserted that traditional body orientation was also used in child burials and that their burials were governed by the common religious and mythological beliefs about the afterlife and its mythological structure, which determined the individual's position and orientation. It is clear that body orientation (if it is connected with movement of celestial bodies, es-

pecially the Sun) will change due to the winter or summer solstice, but in some cases it was possible to establish a diametrically opposite body orientation.

The best results from the body orientation analysis are from Laukskola cemetery where the dead were mostly oriented in one direction, i.e. to the NW and any significant exceptions were easily seen. However, an analysis shows that no visible differences occur in the orientation of child burials as all of the burials in this cemetery, regardless of sex and age, were overwhelmingly buried in accordance with the traditional body orientation (Fig. 6). Minor differences (orientation to the N, NE or W) can be observed in 10% of boys' burials and in 18% of girls' burials, but these should not be considered as deviant orientations because they can be connected to the movement of the celestial bodies. Significant differences (diametrically opposite orientation, i.e. to the SW or SE) were observed in 3% of the boys' burials and in 4% of the girls' burials (Zariņa 1967; 1968; 1969; 1970 1971; 1972; 1973; 1974; 1975). It is intriguing that these child burials with an opposite orientation are often adjacent to a child (or sometimes an adult) burial with the traditional orientation (Fig. 3). In one case, two contrarily oriented children (bur. 111 and 112) were found in one grave. In this case the contrary orientation was probably chosen in order to economise on mortuary space, but if a similar connection with the opposite direction were to also be established in some adult burials, could it indicate a different, i.e. family, connection between them? It is likely that the dead who are buried in double and multiple burials have family ties. But in only two cases were the individuals oriented in opposite directions: the aforementioned burial and a multiple burial (bur. 310, 311, 312, 313), where two adults (a male and a female) and two children (a 2–3-year-old child and a 7–9-year-old boy (LU LVI BMK, collection No. 42)) were buried together. In this

case, the adults were oriented in opposite directions with the male to the NW and the female to the SE while the children were placed at both sides of the adults and oriented to the NW. If other multiple and double burials yield examples of the opposite direction of the individuals, it would probably mean that in Laukskola this was a way of indicating close family ties between the individuals. But for now it must be assumed that the deviant orientation of child and adult burials could have also been caused by other reasons, e.g. influences from another tribe like the Semigallians. Double and multiple burials are frequently found in Liv cemeteries, e.g. the aforementioned cases in Laukskola cemetery; several burials in Rauši cemetery: bur. 14 (a female and a child), 23 (a female and a girl), and 44 (a female and a girl), etc. (Šnore 1968; 1972a; 1973a); and burials in Vampenieši I cemetery: double bur. 1 (a male) and 2 (a girl), double bur. 7 (a boy) and 8 (a girl), double bur. 161 (a boy) and 162 (a female), etc. (Šnore 1966; 1969; 1971; 1972b; 1973b; 1974), which suggest that these could be related burials and that the Liv mortuary practices and landscape could be more oriented towards kin and family connections than the mortuary landscapes of other tribes. But this is only a hypothesis, which, like the Liv children and female burials in Lejasbitēni cemetery, could be investigated using a DNA analysis. DNA analyses are currently a completely unexplored area in Latvian archaeology. Recently started interdisciplinary projects, however, offer hope that various genetic issues, like questions about family relations in cemeteries (These investigations would also be very important in studying earlier barrow burials and the relationships of the individuals they contain.) and about the gender and sex of children (see Vilka 2012; 2013; in press), may be analysed in the future.

The burials in Lejasbitēni cemetery (Fig. 2) were arranged in two ways: the earliest burials being located around the earlier barrows, which

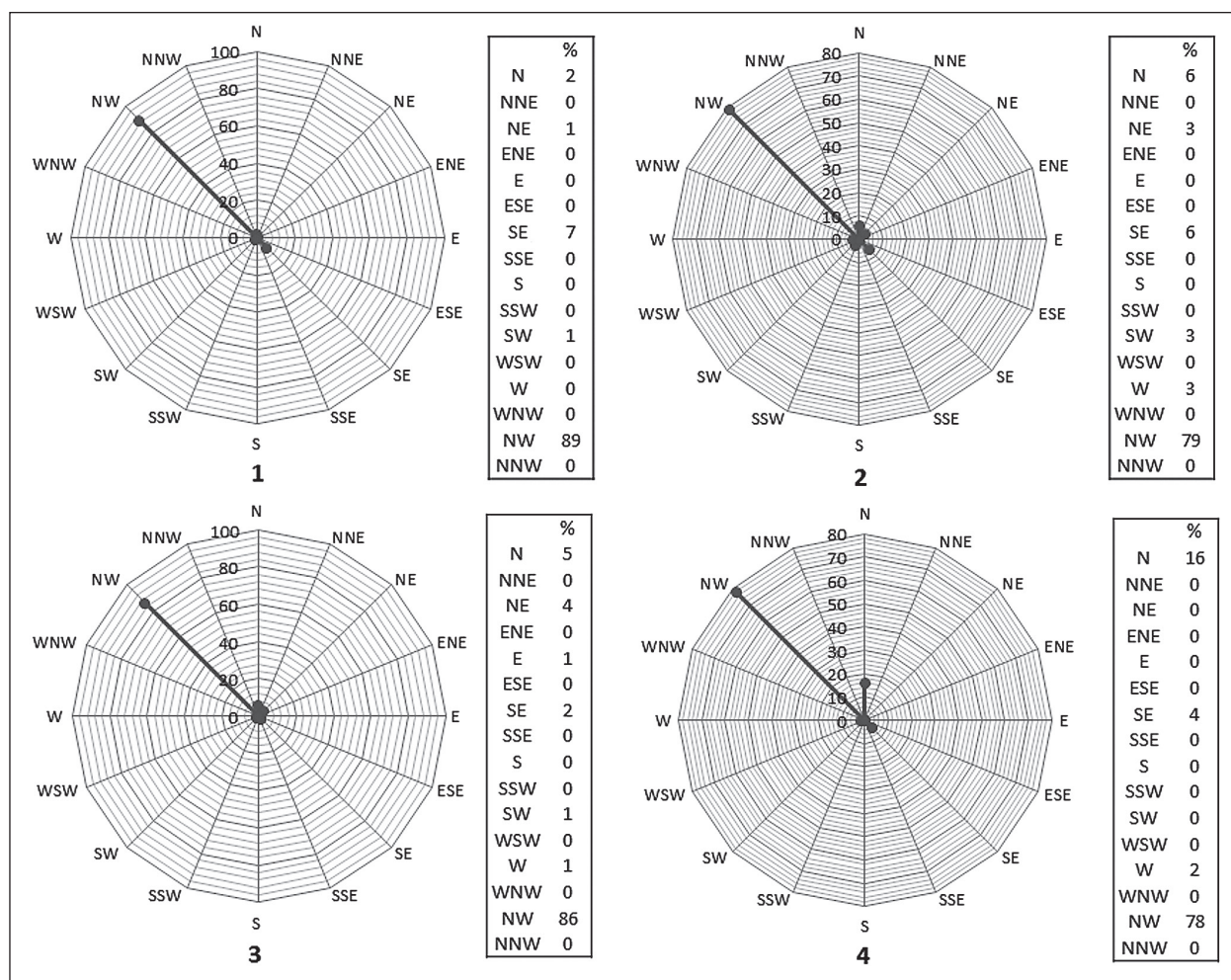


Fig. 6. Orientation of the dead in the Lauksola cemetery: 1 – males, 2 – females, 3 – boys, 4 – girls. Drawing by A. Vilka.

were presumably clearly visible at that time, and later burials throughout the cemetery. In later burials, the dead were oriented traditionally, i.e. to the W or E (although in Lejasbitēni it was more ESE – WNW, which is likely related to geographical peculiarities and the solstice). In child burials, typical gendered Latgalian body orientation (Fig. 7) can be seen, although with some variations. For example, almost all cases of essentially deviant burial orientation can be found around barrows; it seems that these earlier burials were oriented according to the barrow rather than compass points. The burials were presumably located around

barrows to legalise and legitimise their ancestors' territory and provide continuity; traditional Latgalian burial orientation stabilised only in the later phases of the cemetery's use. A similar hypothesis was presented by Kurila (2013) when he studied body orientation in East Lithuanian barrow cemeteries and established that the dead in Baliuliai and Peršaukštis, Kasčiukai II cemeteries were oriented towards a fixed point, which could indicate a way to link the dead and the living and establish legitimization.

Among the later burials, only one example, bur. 394, that of a girl (Fig. 2), is oriented due

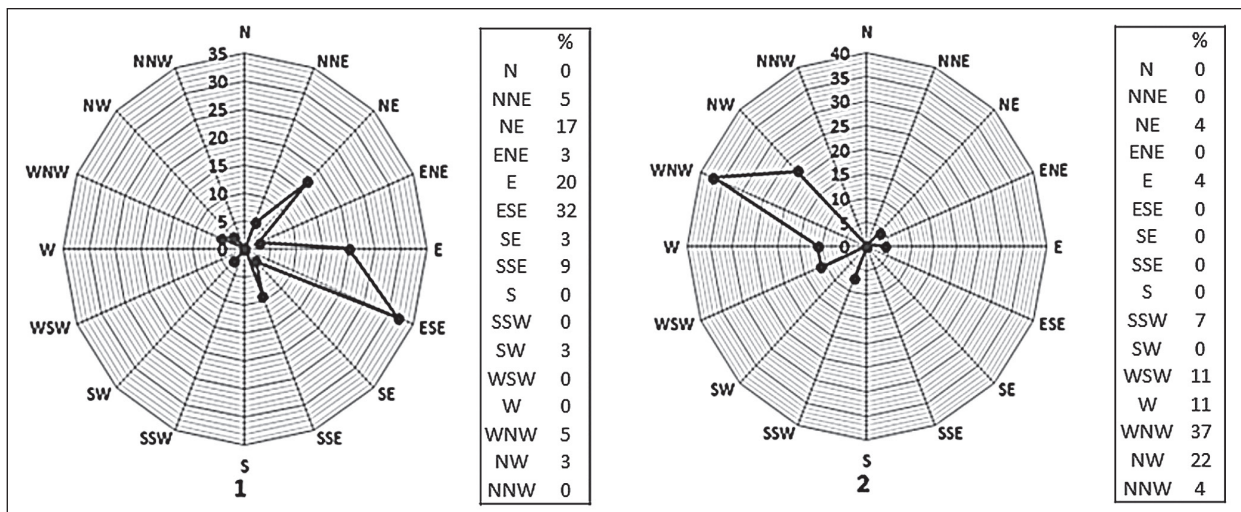


Fig. 7. Orientation of the dead in the Lejasbitēni cemetery: 1 – boys, 2 – girls. Drawing by A. Vilka.

E, the traditional orientation of Latgalian males. (This burial was identified as female based on archaeological evidence (Urtāns 1964), an osteological analysis showed the individual to be a 9–10-year-old subadult (LU LVI BMK, collection No. 24, inventory No. 87)) The other child burials were oriented according to their gender with small deviations.

A more complex situation can be observed in Dreņģeri-Čunkāni cemetery, where gendered orientation was not strictly followed. Males and girls were mostly oriented to the SE or NW, while females and boys were oriented in both directions (Fig. 8). Since the burials were arranged in rows, the prevailing body orientation was NW or SE, although the burials on the third terrace of the Mēmele were also oriented to the N. It was concluded that in most cases adjacent burials were oriented in the same direction and gendered orientation in this cemetery was not strictly followed, both child and adult burials can be oriented to the NW or SE, regardless of gender.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

The Ariés citation at the beginning of this paper showed researchers' attitude towards children in past societies, which was still true just a couple of decades ago, i.e. that children were unimportant for a society and therefore little attention was paid to properly preparing its younger members for the afterlife. This paper is devoted to refuting this erroneous thinking by showing that children were perceived as important members of society, were prepared for the afterlife with proper respect, and were incorporated into the common mortuary landscape.

It has been argued that that universal rules for a body's disposition and orientation in a cemetery were followed in both adult and child burials. Variations are observable in both cases and therefore they cannot be connected to the individual's age, i.e. no evidence shows that child burials were executed less precisely or mortuary practice rules followed less carefully in child burials than in

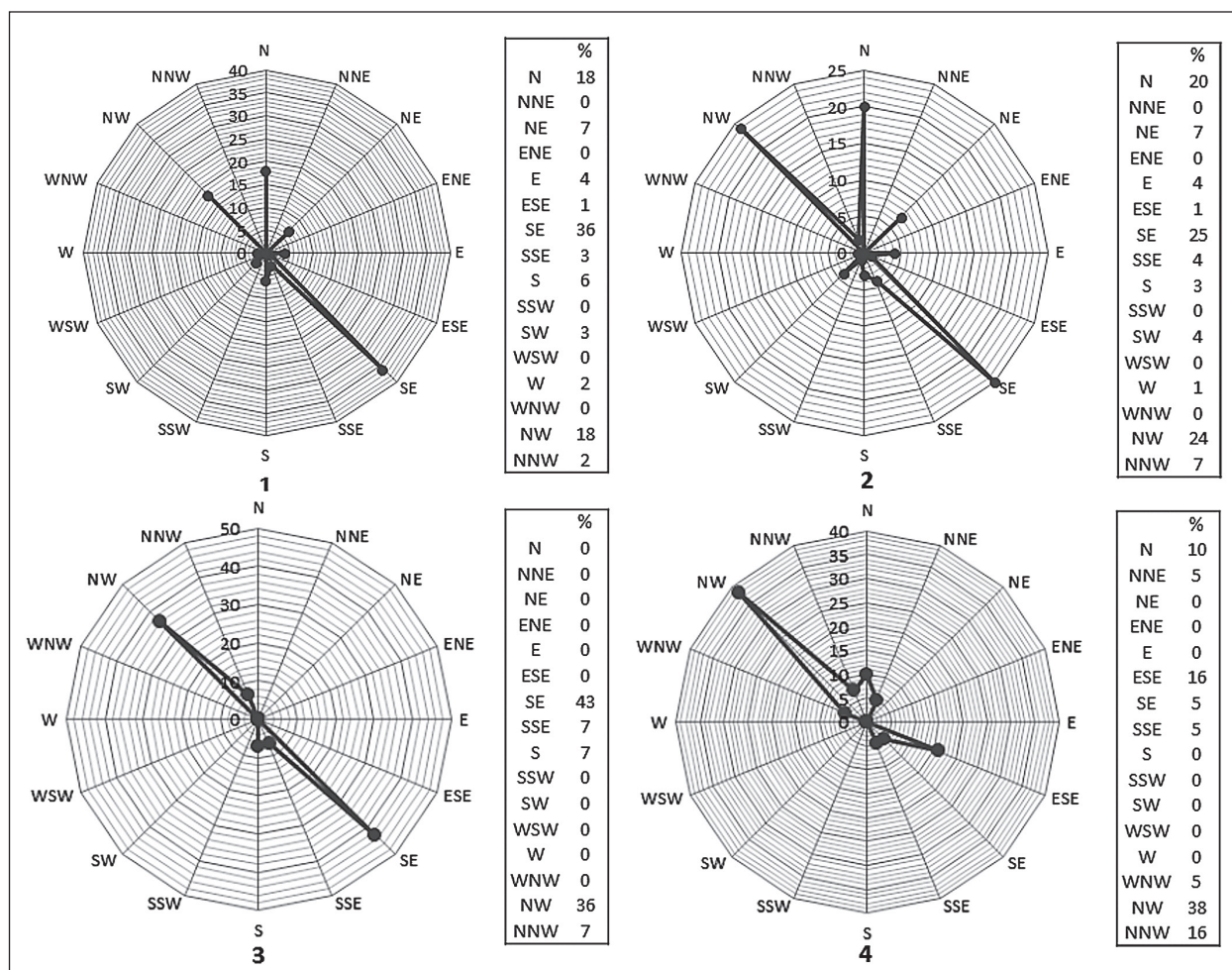


Fig. 8. Orientation of the dead in the Dreņģeri-Čunkāni cemetery: 1 – males, 2 – females, 3 – boys, 4 – girls. Drawing by A. Vilka.

adult burials. While individuals could have several roles in society as a member of the society, of an age group, of a family/clan, and/or of a profession/craft (warrior, craftsman, priest, etc.), it could be said that those children and adults who were buried in the common cemetery were equal at the 'first level' of the societal structure, i.e. as members of the society, and were cared for in accordance with the society's ideology and perceptions of the afterlife. Although no inequality is visible at this 'first level', it is argued that the analysis of the mortuary treatment and grave

goods shows that differences exist at the next levels: age, social, and material groups (see Vilka 2012; 2013; in press).

However, it must be noted that this can be concluded only about those children buried in a cemetery; the paper argues that the infant underrepresentation in Middle and Late Iron Age cemeteries could suggest a different attitude towards them. Of course, one cannot forget other external environment aspects that could affect the number of infant burials since ethnological, archaeological, and historical sources from other cultures

show that different attitudes might exist towards infants because they are not considered members of society. It is likely that children were incorporated into the society only after the initiation process and only those children who completed the transition processes were buried in the common cemetery like the society's other members.

Over the years, Latvian archaeology has accumulated a large quantity of archaeological and skeletal material that offers a wide field of study for future archaeologists. This article has highlighted one path of study, but many topics still need to be researched in Latvian archaeology. Child burials are a significant and integral part of the Middle and Late Iron Age mortuary landscape and are found throughout the cemeteries, side by side with adult burials, and yet so little is still known about them. They are mentioned in every archaeological report, but seldom analysed. Hopefully this paper will reveal the great potential that lies in children's studies in archaeology and will encourage other researchers to take a closer look at the youngest members of prehistoric societies. Children's studies will obviously raise more questions than they answer, but the use of archaeological, osteological, and ethnographical material, as well as interdisciplinary research (especially genetic investigations) about children in prehistoric and historic societies will help to answer them.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APL – Arheologu pētījumi Latvijā

JAMT – Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory

LNVM AN – Latvijas Nacionālais vēstures muzejs, Arheoloģijas nodaļa (National History Museum of Latvia, Archaeology Department)

LU LVI AMK – Latvijas Universitātes Latvijas Vēstures institūts, Arheoloģisko materiālu krātuve (Institute of Latvian History at the University of Latvia, Repository of Archaeological Material)

LU LVI BMK – Latvijas Universitātes Latvijas Vēstures institūts, Bioarheoloģisko materiālu krātuve (Institute of Latvian History at the University of Latvia, Repository of Bioarchaeological Material)

VKPAI PDC – Valsts Kultūras pieminekļu aizsardzības inspekcija, Pieminekļu dokumentācijas centrs (State Inspection for Heritage Protection, Monument documentation centre)

WA – World Archaeology

TAI – NE MAŽOS SMULKMENOS: VAIKAI VIDURINIOJO IR VĒLYVOJO GELEŽĪES AMŽIAUS LAIDOJIMO KRAŠTOVAIZDYJE LATVIJOJE

Aija Vilka

Santrauka

Darbe aptariami vaikų kapai viduriniojo ir vėlyvojo geležies amžiaus Latvijos teritorijoje, jų vieta laidojimo kraštovaizdyje bei kapinynų struktūroje. Siekiama įrodyti, kad vaikai buvo ne mažiau svarbūs visuomenės nariai nei suaugusieji. Tyrimas paremtas trijų kapinynų – Lejasbitėnių (III–X a.), Laukskolas (X–XIII a.) ir Dreņģerų–Čunkānų (VIII–XI a.) – archeologine ir osteologine medžiaga.

Vaikų archeologija – nauja kryptis, suklestėjusi tikrai XX a. 10-ajame dešimtmetyje. Jos ištakos siejamos su G. Lillehammer (1989) straipsniu. Jame pabrėžiama vaikų, kuriems iki tol buvo skirta mažai dėmesio, tyrimų svarba archeologijai. Vaikystės studijas archeologijoje galima suskirstyti į dvi grupes – tyrimus, paremtus gyvenviečių radiniais, ir laidojimo paminklų tyrimus. Šios kryptys atskleidžia skirtingus vaikų kasdienio gyvenimo, pareigų ir dalyvavimo namų ūkyje aspektus. Tyrinėjimuose pabrėžiama, kad vaikų negalima laikyti vien nepastebima visuomenės mažuma ir išteklių vartotojais, nes jie dalyvavo visuomenės gyvenime, taip pat kitose socialinėse ir kasdieninėse veiklose, užsiėmė amatais, aprūpinimu maistu. Vaikų kapams skirta daug tyrimų, kuriuose siekiama aptarti jų vietą visuomenės mitologinėje ir ideologinėje sistemoje, statusą ir suaugusiųjų požiūrį į juos. Kapų įrangos tyrimai atskleidžia, kad amžius ir lytis buvo svarbūs aspektai atliekant laidojimo ritualus, o vaikų įkapių kompleksų pokyčiai gali atspindėti socialinio statuso kaitą.

Latvijoje vaikai laidoti bendruose kapinynuose

su kitais visuomenės nariais, tiesa, rasta labai mažai aptariamuoju laikotarpiu datuojamų kūdikių kapų. Panašus kūdikių ir mažų vaikų trūkumas laidojimo paminkluose pastebimas visoje Europoje. Daugelis tyrėjų teigia, kad amžius buvo svarbus socialinis veiksnys, todėl kūdikiai iki jų priėmimo į visuomenės narius galėjo būti laidojami kitaip arba kitose vietose.

Vaikai aptariamuose kapinynuose buvo palaidoti šalia suaugusiųjų, jokie išskirtinio išsidėstymo nepastebėta. Nors kai kuriais atvejais kapų išdėstymas varijuoja, panašios variacijos išryškėja ir suaugusiųjų kapuose, taigi jų nereikėtų sieti su mirusiųjų amžiumi. Kitaip tariant, vaikų kapai buvo įrengti taip pat kruopščiai ir laikantis laidojimo papročių bei taisyklių kaip ir laidojant suaugusiuosius. Mirusiųjų orientacijos analizė verčia daryti panašias išvadas. Jei kūno orientacija tam tikrame kapinyne yra V–R (kaip kad latgalių kapinynuose, kur vyrai laidoti galvomis į R, o moterys – į V), ta pačia kryptimi laidojami ir berniukai bei mergaitės. Kita vertus, jei laidojimo krypties, atsižvelgiant į lytį, nebuvo griežtai laikomasi, tas pat pasakytina ir apie vaikų kapus. Geras to pavyzdys yra Dreņģerų–Čunkānų kapinynas, kuriame abiejų lyčių mirusieji laidoti ta pačia kryptimi (dažniausiai ŠV–PR). Vaikų ir suaugusiųjų kapų išsidėstymas ir orientacija rodo, kad ir vieni, ir kiti buvo įtraukiami į visuomenės mitologinę bei socialinę sistemą, todėl kaip lygiaverčiai visuomenės nariai į pomirtinį pasaulį buvo išlydimi laikantis tų pačių papročių.

ILIUSTRACIJŪ SĀRAŠAS

1 pav. Baltu ir finougru gentys viduriniajame ir vēlvajāme geležies amžīje Latvijas teritorijoj: 1 – Laukskolas kapinynas, 2 – Lejasbitēniū kapinynas, 3 – Dreņģerū–Čunkānū kapinynas. *A. Vilka žemēlapis.*

2 pav. Lejasbitēniū kapinyno kapai, schematinis vaizdas: 1 – mergaičiū, 2 – berniukū, 3 – vaiķū, 4 – suaugusiūjū (griautiniai), 5 – suaugusiūjū (degintiniai), 6 – ankstyvūjū pilkapiū vieta. *Pagal Urtāns 1961; 1962b; 1963b; 1964; 1970, A. Vilka reprodukcija.*

3 pav. Laukskolas kapinyno kapai, schematinis vaizdas: 1 – mergaičiū, 2 – berniukū, 3 – vaiķū, 4 – suaugusiūjū (griautiniai), 5 – suaugusiūjū (degintiniai), 6 – dvigubi/grupiniai. *Pagal Zariņa 2006, A. Vilka reprodukcija.*

4 pav. Dreņģerū–Čunkānū kapinyno kapai,

Memēlēs trečioji terasa, schematinis vaizdas: 1 – mergaičiū, 2 – vaiķū, 3 – suaugusiūjū ir nenustatyti, 5 – grupiniai kapai. *Pagal Bebre 1982; 1983; Atgāzis, Bebre 1984, A. Vilka reprodukcija.*

5 pav. Dreņģerū–Čunkānū kapinyno kapai, Memēlēs antroji terasa, schematinis vaizdas: 1 – mergaičiū, 2 – berniukū, 3 – vaiķū, 4 – suaugusiūjū ir nenustatyti kapai. *Pagal Atgāzis, Bebre 1984; Atgāzis 1985; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1994b; Lūsēns 2009; 2010, A. Vilka reprodukcija.*

6 pav. Mirusiūjū orientacija Laukskolas kapinynē: 1 – vyrai, 2 – moterys, 3 – berniukai, 4 – mergaitēs. *A. Vilka brēž.*

7 pav. Mirusiūjū orientacija Lejasbitēniū kapinynē: 1 – berniukai, 2 – mergaitēs. *A. Vilka brēž.*

8 pav. Mirusiūjū orientacija Dreņģerū–Čunkānū kapinynē: 1 – vyrai, 2 – moterys, 3 – berniukai, 4 – mergaitēs. *A. Vilka brēž.*

Vertē L. Kurila