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Latgale region in Latvia, Panevėžys, Utena, Vilnius, Alytus and Kaunas counties in Lithuania, as well as Vitebsk, Mogilev, Minsk, Grodno oblasts and the city of Minsk in Belarus take part in the Programme. The Joint Managing Authority of the programme is the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. The web site of the programme is www.enpi-cbc.eu

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METHODS AND SOURCES OF RESEARCH IN URBAN NECROPOLISES (CASE OF HRODNA)

Summary

The research studies on the history of the development of necropolises demonstrate that the concepts related to them are closely connected with people's religious beliefs. Belief in God, Christ gives people the belief in resurrection. Funeral turns out to be a symbol that distinguishes man from the animal world. At present, representatives of various religious confessions should address a complex issue – what type of burial to choose (cremation or traditional burial). During the Soviet period, an established tradition of burials (rituals) was gradually lost; there appeared some peculiarities connected with perpetuation of memory in cemeteries. And it originated under the influence of not only cultural and religious factors, but of social and political factors as well.

Key words: necropolis, cemetery, burial site, sarcophagus

*

Urban necropolises are an integral part of the historical and cultural landscape of a town and they are closely connected with the material culture and spiritual life of its inhabitants. In the modern humanities, in order to reconstruct the evolution of funeral rite, as well as traditions and stages of the formation of sacred space an integrated method of analysis of archaeological, documentary, narrative and cartographic sources is being used. It allows for more comprehensive research of the history of the micro-region in a wide chronological range.

Rare medieval urban burial grounds have remained until the present days, while towns have been growing continuously. Accidental findings during construction work and archaeological excavations of the cultural layers of a town shape the mostly known information about urban gravesites.

Burial sites near temples have provided a lot of information, but, for the most part, they have been destroyed during reconstruction and repair work. In the city of Hrodna, the first burial sites were located around temples and in their undergrounds. Noteworthy among those is a burial place in the sanctuary of the temple of St. Boris and Gleb, where in 1513 there was buried the governor of Trock, Bogush Boguvitsinovich, who donated the village of Cheschevlyany to church. It was a big brick crypt chapel, later used for the burial of Princess Anne Golovin – Golitsyno, who died in 1784 (the gravestone), made in the main apse, in the central nave and in the central part of the underground. According to Bishop Joseph (Sokolov), in 1864 in the undergrounds, the remains of many human bones could be seen. They were preceded by the burials in the Lower and Upper churches, found during the archaeological excavations conducted in the 1930s.¹

According to the medieval ideas of the futility of earthly life no steps were taken to ensure that the memory of the deceased would be kept as long as possible (however, a tradition of monetary donations for a memorial service for the dead to be held was widely spread among the Szlachta and the richest town-dwellers). The Roman Council of 1059 prescribed the location of a cemetery around a temple at a distance of 60 steps. The bodies of the dead were not buried deep enough, being tightly piled up. They could be piled upon each other several dozen deep. Medieval coffins did not contain any inscriptions that in exceptional cases could be placed on the walls of churches. Not every grave had a cross.² A similar situation is observed in the parish cemeteries of Hrodna, when a high level of overcrowding, a state of neglect, the use of the land for the urban development, the increase in the number of graves due to epidemics and wars led to the situation, when there arose a question about the closure of the cemeteries and their relocation beyond the city borders. In 1782, Hrodna Fara's Catholic church was damaged by fire; what is more, the technical condition of the church left much to be desired. In 1783, it was decided to move the Fara's Catholic church into a vacated building of Jesuit church. Old cemetery existed until 1804.³



Picture 1. Hrodan Fara's Catholic church. Burial crypt. The coffin of an unknown. The 18th century. Photo from the archive of Sergey Omelk



Picture 2. Catholic cemetery in Hrodna. October 15, 2013. Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

In post-war years, most of the churches were closed and the buildings were used by various kinds of institutions⁴, for example, Bridgettine monastery in Hrodna was closed in 1950.⁵ The remains of those buried in the crypts of the former Church of the Annunciation were taken away to an unknown direction. Founded in 1634, it became the resting place of the family members of its founders, the richest town-dwellers. Judging by the bone remains, there were children's graves as well. These could be the remains of orphaned girls who were raised by the nuns. The basement area of the building of the church is divided into four parts, the first of which is at the main entrance into the church. The ceiling height is 2.5–3 m. Three other rooms have vaulted ceilings in the form of cylinders. They were opened during the research carried out by the eighth expedition of the State Art Museum of the BSSR in 1966. The leader of the expedition, Helen Aladova, recalls that the entrance into the crypt was completely filled with the rubbish: [...] *there, behind a row of mangled coffins, at the black damp wall, something similar to pictures could be seen* [...].⁶ At present, in the undergrounds, there is a museum exhibition.

Among the preserved in the temples monuments of sacred art there are rather valuable monuments of ancient art and culture, which, at the same time, are important sources for heraldry, genealogy and epigraphy. Unfortunately, they have been neglected for a long time. In addition, in some cases we can witness their direct destruction. This happened in all the parish churches of the city without any exception. To date, in the lateral nave of Hrodna Fara's (Jesuit) church, the funerary slab of Frantisek Doroshkevich Boufal has been preserved with an inscription in Latin: FRANCISKO DOROSZKIEWICZ BOUFFAŁŁ // VENATORI CURIAE M.D.LITH. 1773 – 1790 PRAE // FECTO WIERZBOVIENSI MARSCHALCO SOCOLS //CENSI COMMISSIONIS BONI ORDINIS GROD//NENSIS BENE MERITO PRAESIDI VIRO // CLARISSIMO HUMANISSIMO GRATA POSUIT PROLES A.D.MCMXIII.

It can be read as follows: *Frantisek Doroshkevich Boufal, court stalker of G[rand] D[uchy] of Lith[uania] 1773 – 1790, elder of Verzhby, marshal of nobility of Sokolka, commissar of the Commission on streamlining of Hrodna district, honourable man good and educated, is buried [here] by grateful descendants, the year 1913.*

Besides the inscription it is also important to mention the portrait of the deceased, made in the so-called 'Sarmatian' style: a bust portrait of Frantisek Doroshkevich Boufal in armour, with a ribbon of the Order of Saint Adam Boniecki:

Frantisek, guard and scribe of the town of Hrodna 1766, assistant stolnik 1770, stolnik and elder of Verzhby, Lithuanian court stalker and a Commander of the Order of St. Stanislaus 1777. In 1776 and 1778, he was an elected ambassador to the Sejm. In 1786, he applied for the position of the elder of Hrodna, and in 1793 – Castellan of Hrodna (after Hrodna Voivodeship had been created). He belonged to the political party of the Lithuanian Court Treasurer, Antoni Tyzenhaus, and then of the Kossakowski. In 1913, his grandson Bronislaw received permission to place a memorial plank; though only in 1924 a table stored in the undergrounds of the church was embedded into the wall.⁷

In the same period, the Psezdecki, the heirs of Count Tyzenhaus, get permission to place a marble monument devoted to their famous ancestor in the walls of the church (by Tomasz Dykas, Lviv sculptor). In the middle part of the monument, there is a bronze medallion with the image of Tyzenhaus and the inscription placed below the table:

ANTONI HR. TYZENHAUZ., STAROSTA GRODZIENSKI, PODSKARBI W. KS. L., UR. 1733 – 1785. MARJA Z HR. TYZENHAUZOW ALEKSANDROWA HR. PRZEZDZIECKA, SPELNIJAC WOLE OJCA I BRATA, POMNIK TEN WZNIOSLA. At the base of the monument, there is a bronze gold-plated figure of a woman.

Among the gravestones of interest, there is one noteworthy monument devoted to Kazimir Micuta, Court Chamberlain of Hrodna, participant of the Northern War; in 1733, he took part in the elections of the King:

VRGITE ADIUDICI MORTUI ... UM DE DOMIECZNOŚCI POZNYM WIEKOM GROB OTWORZI ŻE GRODZIENSKI PODKOMORZY KAZIMIERZ NA WAHANOWIE MICUTA PO ZMARŁEY GŁOWIE TU NAZNACZYŁ PLAC POKOJU ZAWSZE W RADACH MĘŻNY W BOIU SWIADCZĄ DZIEŁA DZIAŁA GROTY IAKIEY W WOYSKU MAŻ OCHOTY ZA DWÓCH KRÓLÓW CNY WOIOVNIK DZIELNY ŻOŁNIERZ Y PUŁKOWNIK ZBROYNYPH HUFCEW WRAZ Z OREŻEM WRAZ PRZY WIERZE SŁAWNYM MĘŻEM NA SEYM POSŁEM Z WOLNYM GŁOSEM W TRYBUNAŁACH PRAWDY LOSEM SDZIA ZAMKNAŁ WIEK ZRENICĄ Z KOŁŁATAIOW ŻYŁ KOTWICĄ IMIĘ SAMEY EUFROZYNA SŁAWĄ Y CNOTĄ HEROINA LEŻĄ W PARZE KTO IE MIJA PROSIM O ZDROWAŚ MARIA HOC CI US OBIT MEN AO DIE ... 17... .. AM SSS TRIGA... UM... UPPEDITATUR HONORE.⁸



Picture 3. Hrodna Fara's Catholic church. Burial crypt. The coffin of Kazimir Micuta. The 18th century. Photo from the archive of Sergey Omelko

In the underground of the altar of the temple, in a separate room, there is Micuta's coffin. In the coffin, he lies dressed in a coat with a birch log under his head. The gravestone, located next to the altar of St. Casimir, is decorated with the coats of arms and divided into two parts (in the left part, there is the Gozdawa coat of arms, in the right – a coat of arms is erased), the inscription in bronze letters has been badly damaged.

Ksenz Y. Muchinsky, Canon of Smolensk, was the initiator to open a cemetery outside the city. For this reason, the initial cross was established. Later, he Orthodox would be buried there. The Orthodox part of the cemetery, divided by the Cemetery Street, appears in the beginning of the 19th century.⁹

The origins of the parish cemetery in Zaneman suburb of the city are connected with the construction of a Franciscan monastery and a temple on the donations of Eustachius Kurcz, the elder of Upitè, and his wife, Suzanne (née Tyszkiewicz) in 1635. In 1697, a newly erected temple became a parish church. Over the next hundred years, the area around it became a parish cemetery. In the second half of the 1790s, the burials started to be made outside the city boundaries. For the first time at the Council of Trent, it was decided to keep registers of births and baptisms in all Catholic parishes.

Only almost 50 years later, in the countries of Western Europe (in 1614) and in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (in 1631) the rite of baptism appeared. They later began to appear regularly only in the second half of the 18th century. First, it was a financial interest aimed to obtain the highest possible income. There is no doubt that until the end of the 18th century a custom to bury the wealthiest deceased people in the under-grounds of a temple was widely spread. Less wealthy people were buried around the temples, at a location nearby. During epidemics, those who died because of the disease (and due to overcrowding in the cities) were buried outside the city boundaries. The need of such a type of gravesites was brought about by epidemic diseases. The plague that befell the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1708 – 1710, the epidemics of the 1850s and the early 1860s in the Hrodna region caused a substantial reduction in the number of parishioners up to 70%. By all means, this was reflected in the records kept in the parishes. In the 1880s in Hrodna Franciscan parish, which comprised the neighbourhood villages, a parish priest had to submit an application to the authorities to open a separate cemetery in Pyshki tract, where those who died of contagious diseases could be buried. However, he received a categorical refusal to his request. The oldest remained marked burial in the Franciscan parish cemetery is dated 1842. This grave belongs to Leokadia Kollontai, 7 years old, with an epitaph from the parents.

In 1854, with the donations from Jakov Rummel a chapel-shrine was built. In 1881, the City Council decided to extend the territory of the cemetery. Peter Stetskevich, abbot of Hrodna Franciscan monastery, notes:

The cemetery due to its long standing and small size is filled with the bodies of the dead so that there is a necessity to dig out almost fresh graves that corresponds neither to the Christian respect for the dead, nor to sanitary rules.¹⁰

It should be noted that in Pyshki tract there was the second military cemetery adjacent to the city area. The soldiers of Russian garrison, Catholics, were buried there.

From January 7 to December 18 of 1881, about 30 recruits, soldiers and non-commissioned officers of 101st Perm Infantry Regiment, 102nd Vyatka Infantry Regiment, 103rd Petrozavodsk Infantry Regiment and other units of Hrodna garrison, the parishioners of the Bernardine Church were buried in this cemetery. Among the major diseases resulted in death there were pneumonia, typhoid, pox, erysipelas, edema, purulent infections.¹¹

In the modern military cemetery on Belusha Street, among the oldest graves there are some graves of Orthodox soldiers. However, some representatives of other religions were buried there – one may see a shrine of Major-General Alexander Alexandrovich Russau (1843 – 1896), who was a Lutheran.¹² Presumably, the first graves appeared in the early 1880s (at that time it was Forshtadt Street).



Picture 4. Orthodox cemetery in Hrodna. October 3, 2013. Photo by Irina Pivovarchik

Durability of mental heritage in trans-boundary areas had a strong impact on the formation of certain categories that characterize nepotism, collectivism, pragmatism and social activity. However, the first definition rather accurately reflects (identifies) family ties. Public / state and private / family sectors delineation is clearly observed in the 2nd half of the 19th century, when the effects of the 1863 – 1864 uprising bring to an almost complete exodus from public life. It is a family and the life biography of some of its members that become an example for compensation in business development, in economic sphere. However, it helps to focus on attempts to understand the history, culture and one's own place in the complex social and political processes.¹³

This is reflected in sacred complexes that appear in parish cemeteries. Nikodem Kiersnowski, chairman of Hrodna Chamber of Civil Court, died in Druskieniki in 1881; he was buried in a companion crypt together with his 3-year-old grandson, Georgy, who died there as well (a nameless grave, it contains an inscription: Grob rodziny Kiersnowskich).

The noble Nikodem Ivanovich Kiersnowski died of inside inflammation on January 17, 1881 in the town of Druskieniki, received Holy Communion. The former Chairman of Hrodna Civil Chamber, widowed after the death of his wife Loiza née Pilecka. Has left behind his sons Ivan Kazimir and Genrik, and daughters Irena and Jelena, 87. His body was buried by the Chaplain of Druskieniki R.-C. Chapel, ksenz Jozeph Majewski in Druskieniki R.-C. cemeteries on January 20, 1881.¹⁴

Their ashes rest next to other members of this family. Nepotism, which was particularly valued by the people, who had endured the years of exile for being involved into the uprising, is preserved there.

Druskininkai, founded as a state resort (in 1862, there was a discussion whether it could be transferred to private ownership), was 'colonized' by Hrodna dwellers in the 1830s – 1840s. Houses and villas for holidaymakers from different social classes were built there. However, the death and the resort could not accompany each other. Therefore, the grave of a famous poet, Jan Chechot, who died there in 1847, is located in the

village of Rotnitsa (a suburb nowadays). It was only later, in the 2nd half of the 19th century, when the shrines of the representatives of the local aristocracy appeared there (O'Brien de Lassi, Butowt-Andrzejkowicz, De Nizo, Princess Massalsky, Erbstein, Krusenshtern, Kiersnovskis, Pilecki, Grudzinski, etc.).

The existing rules related to the procedures of burial and exhumation of bodies in forensic investigation required permission (presence) of the parish clergy. According to the circular of Wilno Roman-Catholic Spiritual Consistory of May 3, 1903, Ellert, Hrodna Dean, was in charge of the following:

Widespread instances of burial in catacombs and crypts are dangerous with regard to sanitary issues and that, in accordance with Article 712 of Medical bylaws, volume XIII, Chapter laws, published in 1892, the bodies of the dead should be buried in the specifically set cemeteries, so that the clergy, having preliminary agreed on burials not in accordance with the rules prescribed by the law, seek the consent of the local authorities.

In view of the aforementioned decision the Consistory proposes to make a resolution in the diocese that the clergy carrying out the burials of those dead in the cemetery catacombs and crypts under the churches each time requests for a permission of the local authorities.¹⁵

Changes in socio-political situation in the Russian Empire determined the character of burial ceremonies carried out in parish cemeteries. On March 13, 1905, baron Ropp, bishop of Wilno, invited Hrodna dean to make some commitments concerning the burials of the Orthodox in the Catholic cemeteries of Wilno diocese. It resulted in rather frequent disagreements and conflicts between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox clergies, which is why the Consistory was proposed to set some areas in all Roman-Catholic parish cemeteries meant for the burials of those, who according to the statute of the church, could not be buried in the common cemetery. For this reason, these specifically set areas were separated by a ditch or a fence and had a separate entrance.¹⁶

The very procedure of death registration had a well-defined structure and was unconditionally enforceable (in contrast with the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, when the priests often did not register death in the registers desiring to conceal a part of their earnings).¹⁷ Legal revisions of the registers of death required an unsworn examination of the circumstances of the case, when there was conducted an interview of the relatives of the deceased, engaged in the funeral arrangements, concerning when and where, from which illness he died, when, in what cemetery, by which ksendz he was buried, which class he belonged to, what his name, patronymic and surname were, whether he was single, married or widowed, how old he was, in which church he was a parishioner, who from his family he had left behind, i.e. his wife and children, and why an entry in the register of death had not been made on time. There was a decision made on the procedure of the investigation and the list of required documents.¹⁸

At present, there rises an issue of giving old cemeteries the status of state protected objects of historical and cultural heritage, with a possibility of their further use as tourist attractions, which at the same time would carry out spiritual-moral functions, acting as a link between generations. We can note their artistic value.¹⁹ However, it should not be forgotten that necropolises are not static objects, but a 'living' organism, which exists independently and can fade away into the past.

- ¹ Cherepica V. N. *Grodnenskiĭ pravoslavnyĭ nekropol' (s drevnejshih vremen do nachala XX veka)*. Grodno: GrGU, 2001. – p. 23, pp. 27–28.
- ² Skrok Z. *Wykopalska na pograniczu swiatow*. Warszawa: Nasza Ksiegarnia, 1988. – pp. 89–90.
- ³ Gardziejew Ju. *Magdeburgskaja Garodnja*. Garodnja-Vroclaw, 2008. – pp. 101–104.
- ⁴ By the decision of Hrodna City Executive Committee of 26 April, 1990 Bridgettine church was handed over to believers. On 13 September, 2008 in the undergrounds of the church, there was opened a permanent exhibition devoted to the history of the church; the preserved relics were displayed there.
- ⁵ Gremza A. Ekspozycja w kryptach kościoła Pobrygidzkiego w Grodnie. *Rocznik Grodzienski* No 2, 2008. – pp. 135–142.
- ⁶ Paintings discovered there are from the first half of the 17th century. The findings were proved to be a part of the interior of the church, hidden during World War II. By 25 March, 1950 the remaining paintings and other objects were moved by the nuns to Bernardine church.
- ⁷ Gardziejew Ju. Materyjaly da gjenjealogii i epigrafiki u garadzjenskim farnym kasecele. *Gerol'd Litherland* No 1–2, 2004. – pp. 27–29.
- ⁸ Jodkowski J. *Grodno*. Wilno, 1923. – pp. 104–105.
- ⁹ Rozmus J., Gordziejew J. *Cmentarz Farny w Grodnie. 1792 – 1939*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP, 1999. – pp. 9–15.
- ¹⁰ Gardziejew Ju. Z gistoryi pomnikau francishkanskaj parafii g. Grodna. *Krajaznauchyja zapiski* No 4, 1997. – pp. 66–78.
- ¹¹ *National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno*. F. 259. Op. 3. D. 1. Metricheskie knigi o rodivshihsjja, brakosochetavshihsjja i umershih za 1881 g. – pp. 126 – 143.
- ¹² Cherepica V. N. *Grodnenskiĭ pravoslavnyĭ nekropol' (s drevnejshih vremen do nachala XX veka)*. Grodno: GrGU, 2001. – pp. 68–70.
- ¹³ Krysztofika K. (ed.) *Szlachcicowa I. Swoi i obey Orientacje mentalne a obraz kulturowo Innych na pograniczu*, in: *Pogranicza i multikulturalizm w warunkach Unii Europejskiej. Implikacje dla wschodniego pogranicza Polski*. T. 1. A. Sadowskiego. Bialystok, 2004. – pp. 279–300.
- ¹⁴ *National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno*. F. 259. Op. 3. D. 1. Vypisi metrisheskoj knigi Rimsko-katolicheskaj (prihodskoj cerkvi) Druskeniskoj kaplicy. Chast' tret'ja. Ob umershih s 1 janvarja po 31 dekabryja, 1881 g. – pp. 577–578.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* F. 886. Op. 3. D. 1. Cirkuljary Vilenskoj r. k. konsistorii. – p. 5.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* F. 886. Op. 1. D. 5. O predostavlenii nastojateljami kostelov grodnenskomu dekanu vedomostej o rodivshihsjja, brakosochetavshihsjja, o porjadke pogrebenija umershih katolicheskogo veroispovedanija i po drugim voprosam. – p. 60.
- ¹⁷ Kuklo C. *Rodzina w osimnastowiecznej Warszawie*. Bialystok, 1991.– pp. 142–143.
- ¹⁸ *National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno*. F. 886. Op. 3. D. 1. Cirkuljary Vilenskoj r.k. konsistorii. – p. 9.
- ¹⁹ Kulajchuk S. Nekropol' kak jekskursionnyĭ ob'ekt. *Borko A. I. (ed.) Nauka*, GrGU im Ja. Kupaly. Grodno: GrG, 2008. – pp. 162–165.

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