

**THE MORTUARY LANDSCAPE OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup>–12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES:  
MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS, APPROACHES  
AND METHODS IN THE HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON  
THE LATVIAN IRON AGE**

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In archaeology, landscape is studied as a cultural, social, and environmental process that simultaneously influences human thinking and is impacted by human actions. From such a perspective, the establishment of cemeteries, too, results from human choice with respect to the environment, engendering a specific mortuary landscape. This is, overall, a little-studied field in the history of research on the Iron Age in Latvia. Even so, a continuous development of ideas may be traced, both in terms of the broadening of the range of issues addressed, proceeding from basic description of the cemetery's location to analysis of its significance in the landscape, and in terms of the growing diversity of approaches and methods employed, moving from simple observation of the surrounding area to interdisciplinary studies and various kinds of data analysis.

*Keywords:* cemeteries, mortuary landscape, Iron Age, present-day Latvia, history of research

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## **Introduction**

Burial sites offer some of the most widely researched archaeological evidence, underpinning the study of a wide range of questions relating to prehistory and the historical period. Thus, burial evidence provides a basis for reconstructing regional settlement density, investigating economic development, ethnic consolidation and issues relating to demography and social organisation, and inquiry into aspects of the mortuary landscape.

Landscape encompasses both an objective natural reality (the environment with its natural conditions and features) and human perception. In terms of the latter, it may be viewed as a system of human creation that functions and develops in accordance with social needs. In archaeology, too, landscape is studied as a changing pattern of culture, society, and environment, constituting both the medium and the outcome of human mind and agency in the environment.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Ashmore, Knapp 1999, 1–5.

From this perspective, the placement of a burial or establishment of a burial site is the result of choices made by individuals of a particular society in relation to a landscape they live in, thus creating a particular kind of landscape, namely a mortuary (funerary) landscape.<sup>2</sup>

The current importance of landscape studies for society at large is reflected in the Council of Europe Landscape Convention, passed in 2000 and ratified in Latvia in 2007.<sup>3</sup> The current focus on the mortuary landscape in Latvian research is reflected in several research projects. In 2022, the project “Landscapes of identities: history, culture and environment” began within the frame of a National Research Programme. Although the project deals primarily with the hillforts of Baltinava area and their identity, culture, and environment, hillforts are to be studied in the broader context of the archaeological landscape as well, which also incorporates burial sites.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, the project “Burial practices in the landscape: present-day Latvia in the Iron Age (AD 1–1200)” also commenced, funded by the Latvian Council of Science. The project employs archaeological and palaeobotanical methods along with geographical information system (GIS) tools, to investigate the significance of the landscape and environment in the location of burial site, in the internal spatial layout of burial sites and other aspects of funerary rites during the Iron Age.<sup>5</sup> However, until now the previous studies relating to the mortuary landscape of the Iron Age in present-day Latvia have not been brought together and reviewed.

The aim of this article is to examine the ways in which 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century cemeteries in present-day Latvia have been analysed in the archaeological literature in a landscape and environmental context. The 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century is a period when distinct regions with their own specific mortuary landscape may be distinguished.<sup>6</sup> The focus will be on the landscape and environmental setting of the cemeteries, without exploring their internal structure. The study identifies the major questions relating to this theme, and the main research approaches and methods,

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2 Daróczy 2012, 199–207; von Hackwitz, Lindholm 2015, 144.

3 Eiropas ainavu konvencija (Florence 2000. gada 20. oktobris) (2007). *Latvijas Vēstnesis*. 18.04.2007., Nr. 63. Accessible at: <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/220778> (viewed 01.03.2023).

4 Identitāšu ainavas: vēsture, kultūra un vide. Projekta apraksts. Accessible at: <https://lka.edu.lv/lv/petnieciba/petijumu-projekti/valsts-petijumu-programmas/identitasu-ainavas-vesture-kultura-un-vide/> (viewed 10.04.2023).

5 Apbedīšanas tradīcijas ainavā: Latvijas teritorija dzelzs laikmetā (1.–1200. g.). Projekta apraksts. Accessible at: <https://www.lu.lv/zinatne/programmas-un-projekti/nacionalas-programmas-un-projekti/flpp-2021-gada-konkurss/apbedisanas-tradicijas-ainava-latvijas-teritorija-dzelzs-laikmeta-1-1200-g/> (viewed 23.08.2022).

6 For example: Bērziņš, Vasks 2013, 70–81; Vilcāne 2013, 84–113.

from the beginnings of burial archaeology up to the present day. This review of the research history is subdivided into several stages, in accordance with the prevailing research trends in Latvian archaeology,<sup>7</sup> also seeking to trace changes and development in research on the Iron Age mortuary landscape over the course of time, highlighting key authors.

### 19<sup>th</sup> century – early 20<sup>th</sup> century

The first known description of a cemetery dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, highlighting its landscape qualities, is from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Franz Nyenstede, in his chronicle, provides a brief account of the landscape near Allaži seen in 1604, now recognised as the site of the Late Iron Age Saknītes–Atvasītes cemetery attributed to the Livs.<sup>8</sup> Nyenstede expresses surprise at the impressive sight of the more than a hundred small burial mounds placed close together, clearly visible in a field. However, this description does not consider the situation as it was in the Iron Age, and Nyenstede's chronicle was published only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The earliest general description of the Iron Age mortuary landscape in Latvian archaeological literature can be found in the first work giving an overview of Baltic archaeology – the monograph by Fridrich Karl Hermann von Kruse, published in 1842.<sup>9</sup> In the late 1830s, Kruse undertook archaeological investigation and visited several sites that are nowadays known to be cemeteries of the 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century (Kapsēde, Aizkraukle etc.). Without making any distinctions between regions or periods of the Iron Age, Kruse writes that most of the burials are located in lowland areas, with fewer occurring in higher-lying locations, and that they are generally located near the major rivers (Daugava, Gauja, and Abava) or by the sea, in many cases so close that the waters have flooded them.<sup>10</sup> He concludes that the rivers were evidently deeper and more navigable in the past, since it is inconceivable that burials would have been placed at locations where they could easily be flooded by river waters.<sup>11</sup>

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7 For example: Zemītis, Vasks u. c. 2021, 93–106.

8 Franz Nyenstädt's *Livländische Chronik* (1839). *Monumenta Livoniae Antiquae: Sammlung von Chroniken, Berichten, Urkunden und andern schriftlichen Denkmälern und Aufsätzen, welche zur Erläuterung der Geschichte Liv-, Ehst- und Kurland's dienen*, Band 2, Riga, Leipzig, Verlag von Eduard Frantzen's Buchhandlung, S. 127–128

9 Kruse 1842.

10 Kruse 1842, 5–6.

11 *Ibid.*, 6.

More detailed descriptions of the Iron Age mortuary landscape may be found in works starting from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when excavations of the archaeological sites intensify. Most often, the primary focus is on characterising the relief of particular sites as well as their proximity to waterways and waterbodies. Accounts of this kind can be found in most of the publications on investigated cemeteries. For example, in his account of an excavation at the Early and Middle Iron Age cemetery of Kalnasavēļas (Asari) in 1900,<sup>12</sup> Karl Schilling mentions that several barrows are located at the ends of a small rise on a peninsula extending into Lake Asari. In addition, Bernhard Albert Hollander observed and found it significant to mention that barrow II in Kalnasavēļas, located on the very shore of the lake, offers a beautiful view of the opposite shore.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Carl Johann Hermann Boy in his description given in 1895 of the setting of the Semigallian 10<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century Ciernalde cemetery, emphasises that a location free from flooding had been selected, next to two hillocks.<sup>14</sup> Boy also suggests that there was probably a settlement on a rise close to the cemetery, and he tries to identify the road leading to the burial site.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the placement of cemeteries in relation to other kinds of archaeological sites is one more aspect of the mortuary landscape to which attention is drawn already in this period. However, it is again mostly considered with respect to particular cases, dealing with specific cemeteries, without seeking to generalise from the observations.

An exception is Johann Karl Ulrich Bähr, who, in his study on Liv cemeteries published in 1850, gives a more detailed characterisation of the Iron Age landscape of a particular region.<sup>16</sup> He analyses the cemetery of Aizkraukle, mentioned above, as well as other Liv cemeteries along the banks of the Gauja. Bähr emphasises that most of the cemeteries were placed on flat sites by rivers. He distinguishes two forms of Liv burials, namely flat and barrow cemeteries, and strives to connect these different mortuary landscapes with the social status of the deceased, concluding that the flat graves were “ordinary” burial sites, while the barrows were battlefield burial sites, where the fallen fighters were buried.<sup>17</sup> This may be noted as one of the first attempts in Latvian archaeology to analyse the social status of the deceased not only from the artefactual remains but also by considering the overall mortuary landscape.

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- 12 Schilling 1901, 183.  
13 Hollander 1904, 106.  
14 Boy 1896, 113.  
15 Ibid., 112–113.  
16 Bähr 1850.  
17 Ibid., 3.

By 1896, when Richard Hausmann compiled his introduction to the catalogue of the 10<sup>th</sup> All-Russian Archaeological Congress, held in Riga, a considerably greater body of archaeological evidence had accumulated, and accordingly, he gives a more detailed review of the Iron Age mortuary landscape of present-day Latvia.<sup>18</sup> Hausmann is already able to note chronological differences in the mortuary landscape, and he seeks to emphasise regional characteristics. Regarding the period of the 1<sup>st</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries, he makes the well-founded observation that the forms of the graves differed between regions and offers a basic division into areas characterised by stone graves and by barrows.<sup>19</sup> With regard to the stone grave cemeteries, Hausmann writes that they were generally established on hillslopes and are reminiscent of a dry-stone wall extending in a N–S direction. By contrast, the burial sites of the Latvians (*Letten*) (meaning the Semigallians, Selonians, and Latgalians) and mixed Latvians-Livs (meaning the Couronians) of the 8<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries were predominantly large and extensive flat cemeteries without any particular outward features (e.g., Ciemalde, Čapāni, Odukalns, Pasilciems, Matkule).<sup>20</sup> In a more detailed treatment of Latgale, Hausmann notes that the major cemeteries in this area were generally sited on small hills or hillslopes, and that in certain cases small mounds were thrown up over the burials.<sup>21</sup> Cemeteries comprising numerous barrows are rare. In examining the Liv mortuary landscape, Hausmann repeats Bähr's conclusions that Liv cemeteries are located next to the major rivers.<sup>22</sup> Hausmann also observes that, on certain sites, burials from the later part of the Iron Age have been placed adjacent to burials from earlier periods,<sup>23</sup> but he does not pursue the question of repeated use or continuity of these burial sites.

A similar account of the 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century mortuary landscape is given by Max Ebert in 1913. He notes that the majority of cemeteries were placed next to waters, as well as on earlier habitation sites.<sup>24</sup> Like Hausmann, Ebert, identifying Latvians and Livs in the area of present-day Latvia in the 8<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, mentions that the Latvians were buried in large flat cemeteries, whereas the Livs buried their dead in graves with barrows and stone structures over them.

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18 Hausmann 1896, IX–LXXXV.

19 Ibid., XIX.

20 Ibid., XXII–XXIII, XLVI.

21 Ibid., XLIII.

22 Ibid., XXXIV–XXXV.

23 Ibid., XXI–XXII.

24 Ebert 1913, 552.

Ebert goes on to draw the conclusion from these differences in the mortuary landscape that the Livs constituted a higher class, above the peaceful, non-belligerent Latvians.<sup>25</sup>

## The 1920s and 1930s

Along with the establishment of the national state and the institutionalisation of archaeology, and subsequently, the significant increase in the range of archaeological evidence, in the 1920s and 1930s, the study of the mortuary landscape of the 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries in the territory of Latvia also became more detailed. As in the preceding period, nearly every publication on a particular investigated cemetery includes a description of the relief and environment. In accord with this, much more detailed consideration is given to general issues relating to the mortuary landscape of the Iron Age.

Based on all the evidence available at the time regarding the Roman Iron Age, a general characterisation of the 1<sup>st</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> mortuary landscape is given by Harri Moora in the textual part of his PhD thesis, published in 1938.<sup>26</sup> Referring to prominent studies by geologists Hans Hausen and Ernst Kraus, geographers Friedrich Mager and August Ferdinand Tammekann, as well as botanist Karl Reinhold Kupffer, Moora notes that burial sites from this period are concentrated mainly in the uplands with drier glacial till soils, providing the characteristic relatively more fertile and more easily tilled soil types. The character of the soil and its suitability for agriculture and stock-keeping is seen as a significant factor in the choice of living sites and hence also the location of burial sites. Additionally, it is suggested that the road network and accessibility of other natural resources were also significant, but this question is not examined further.

Moora clearly indicates that in the Roman Iron Age in present-day Latvia three types of burials can be distinguished, and specific features of the mortuary landscape can be identified for each of these.<sup>27</sup> Regarding stone graves and barrows, he mentions that stone graves were generally located on elevations in the relief and in open fields, while barrow graves were placed on elevations near rivers or lakes, sometimes right next to a lakeshore or riverbank, in forested areas or in recently opened clearings. As evidence of this, Moora notes that stone graves tend to be placed on the site of burials from the preceding period or right next to such

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25 Ebert 1913, 557.

26 Moora 1938, 593–599.

27 *Ibid.*, 21–22, 24–25, 41.

a burial site (e.g., Makašāni). In contrast, beneath the barrows (e.g., Slate, Ūsiņi, Gailiši in Īle, Nītaure), a general occurrence of a podsolized horizon and sandy soil characteristic of forested areas, rarely cultivated, was observed. Moreover, the mounds of the barrows themselves were formed of sand, and in various layers of the fill and at the base of the barrow large amounts of charcoal were in many cases observed, which could not always be explained solely in terms of the burial practices. Thus, Moora highlights the transformations of the surrounding area with the aim of establishing a cemetery. A similar interpretation of the charcoal-rich layers at the base of Early Iron Age barrows is also given by Francis Balodis.<sup>28</sup>

Moora also analyses differences in the Iron Age mortuary landscape within a centre–periphery context. He notes that the largest tarand graves were probably located at the habitation centres, whereas the smaller and more simply constructed stone graves occur mainly in the more remote areas.<sup>29</sup> This idea proceeds from considering the volume of work and the size of the labour force involved in creating such a burial place.

Regarding the mortuary landscape of what are known as the Roman Iron Age flat cemeteries of the coastal region, Moora makes the very general observation that the burial sites mainly occur in sandy areas.<sup>30</sup> This question is considered in more detail by Ernst Wahle, in 1928, following his excavation of Mazkatuži cemetery.<sup>31</sup> He notes that the cemetery is about 300 m from the river, on a very small rise. It is also mentioned that the soils in the environs of the cemetery are infertile, but, in contrast to the surrounding boggy areas, they are easily tilled. Researchers have been particularly interested in the barrows that Wahle observed in the cemetery. Wahle writes that “(...) the landscape of this locale is enlivened by rises akin to small barrows”.<sup>32</sup> In his view, these mounds were natural and did not resemble barrows; however, the burial places would certainly have been visually marked in some other way.<sup>33</sup> Only one of the mounds, which contained charcoal and burnt bone fragments, was interpreted as being of artificial origin. Wahle’s idea is supported by Eduards Šturms, who likewise points out that only in some cases were mounds located over the excavated graves and that they have a closer resemblance to naturally formed sand-hills.<sup>34</sup> The opposite view is expressed by

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28 Balodis, Tentelis 1938, 100.

29 Moora 1938, 7.

30 Ibid., 41.

31 Vāle 1928.

32 Ibid., 10.

33 Ibid., 52.

34 Šturms 1934, 4.



Balodis and Hugo Riekstiņš, who regarded the mounds as relating to the burial practices, marking the transition from the barrow burials of the Early Metal Period to the flat cemeteries.<sup>35</sup> They cite in support of this idea the observation of small barrows at some other Roman Iron Age coastal cemeteries (Kapsēde, Strīķi, Jaunarāji).

It may be noted that in the case of Mazkatuži cemetery, Kupffer also analysed wood charcoal from nine samples recovered in the course of Wahle's excavation, and published a detailed report.<sup>36</sup> The taxonomic composition is very mixed, including species with rather different ecological requirements (pine, spruce, alder, birch, ash, aspen, oak, and elm). Moreover, the archaeological context of these samples is unclear, and both of these circumstances make it difficult to interpret the data in ecological and environmental terms.

When it comes to the study of the Middle and Late Iron Age mortuary landscape, Balodis and Riekstiņš both offer very general characterisations of the mortuary landscape of the Late Iron Age Couronian cremation cemeteries, describing them as flat fields with no outward features.<sup>37</sup> A significant discovery in the research of Couronian burial sites came in 1927, when artefacts from Late Iron Age cremation graves were brought up from Lake Vilcumuiža in Talsi. Investigation of the lake was undertaken by Šturms and Riekstiņš, and both researchers state their opinion that this location was not previously dry land and was not subject to subsidence of the lakeshore either. Accordingly, the artefacts were interpreted as having been collected from the funeral pyre and deposited in the lake.<sup>38</sup> Thus, lakes became a focal point of the Couronian mortuary landscape.

Based on the excavation of Dreņģeri–Čunkāni cemetery in 1924, Wahle offers a general characterisation of the Semigallian mortuary landscape of the second half of the Iron Age in the Lielupe region.<sup>39</sup> He notes that the cemeteries were mainly placed by the banks of rivers, the Mēmele and the Lielupe, where they follow in succession (Čapāni, Ziedoņi, Mežotne, Ciernalde, and Dreņģeri–Čunkāni), because the rest of this area is covered by primeval forest (*Uhrwald*), in which only the river valleys “pointed the way”. He adds that the placement of the burial sites and the settlements associated with them along a riverbank is a frequently observed phenomenon in the landscape of the area inhabited by the Balts.

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35 Balodis, Tentelis 1938, 90–91; Riekstiņš 1935, 21.

36 Kupffer 1928, 65–73.

37 Balodis 1926, 85; Riekstiņš 1935, 58.

38 Šturms 1935, 109; Šturms 1936, 72–85; Riekstiņš 1935.

39 Vāle 1928, 61.

The mortuary landscape of the Latgalian-inhabited territory in the Middle and Late Iron Age is considered mainly by Balodis.<sup>40</sup> Undertaking archaeological prospection in Ludza and Rāzna areas, he observed that the flat cemeteries are often located immediately adjacent to hillforts, whereas barrow cemeteries are sited 1–3 km away from hillforts. Cemeteries were mostly located at the summit of an isolated hill (Ludza, Degteri), on a hillslope (Kazlava, Vecslabada), or in certain cases, on flatter sites with a sand or gravel layer. None had been discovered in low-lying valley locations. Balodis also notes that the Middle Iron Age flat cemeteries of the Latgaliens were in many cases established next to earlier barrow cemeteries (e.g., at Lejasokēni).<sup>41</sup> However, there is no further discussion of the choice of burial site or the question of continuity.

The mortuary landscape of the Livs received only very minor consideration in this research period. In the 1930s, Šturms, who regards the barrow graves of the Late Iron Age in the northern part of the present-day Kurzeme as possible Liv burials, explains their development and distribution largely in terms of environmental factors.<sup>42</sup> He mentions that these sand barrows represent a parallel phenomenon to stone graves and can be regarded as a local development – they emerged as an element of the cultural landscape in those areas where stone as a material was harder to gather.

## The 1940s to 1980s

During the occupation period, from the 1940s up to the 1980s, there was also an accumulation of very rich and diverse evidence about burials and cemeteries, however, the mortuary landscape continued to receive only sporadic attention in the archaeological literature. Despite that fact, acquiring of more detailed description and diverse interpretation can be seen.

For a general characterisation of the Roman Iron Age mortuary landscape during the first half of this research period, one may, as in the preceding period, refer to the studies by Moora. In the overview of the prehistory of Latvia that he published in 1952, Moora offers a similar description of the mortuary landscape to that given in his work from 1938. However, some new aspects appear in the interpretation, reinforcing the importance of economic factors. Moora emphasises that during the 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries the choice of settlement as well as

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40 Balodis 1925, 480, 483.

41 Balodis, Tentelis 1938, 119–121; Balodis 1935, 22.

42 Šturms 1934, 9.

burial sites was largely determined by the development and character of agriculture and stock-keeping.<sup>43</sup> Cemeteries were located close to settlement sites, with settlements focussing on higher and drier areas, generally with lighter soils that were more suitable for cereal crops, at a small distance from rivers and lakes. Moora also emphasises that grasslands suitable for stock-keeping are in many cases also observed near the cemeteries. Regarding the Roman Iron Age barrows with a stone circle, Moora even relates the number of barrows in a cemetery directly to the economic advantageousness of the location, and it is in these terms that he characterises the mortuary landscape of Slate.<sup>44</sup> He notes that Slate, where three groups of barrows were known at the time, is placed on an isolated rise that is enclosed like an island by forested and boggy areas that are not suitable for cultivation. In his view, this locale was inhabited by unusually large communities, as indicated by the large size of the three groups of barrows, consisting of eight, 11, and 12 barrows. Meanwhile, in those areas which had more extensive land areas suitable for cultivation in the environs, the groups of barrows are much smaller: generally two to four barrows.

As Moora had already noted in 1930s, he once again mentions that stone graves tend to be established on burial sites of the preceding period.<sup>45</sup> However, Moora does not further interpret this aspect of the choice of burial site.

Significant for the detailed characterisation of the Roman Iron Age mortuary landscape is the Plāteri–Spietiņi complex of sites, excavated in 1961–1963 by Jolanta Daiga and Māris Atgāzis.<sup>46</sup> At Plāteri–Spietiņi, for the first time, a complex of monuments was investigated, consisting of settlement sites from the Bronze and Iron Age, as well as three barrows of the 2<sup>nd</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries. This made it possible to establish that one of the barrows (Plāteri) had been placed on the site of a settlement dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, located at a high spot delimited on three sides by ravines, while two other barrows (Spietiņi) had been placed on a previously uninhabited site, with a settlement of the same period covering 2 ha, including an iron-smelting area, in a closely adjacent small hollow protected from the wind.

A general description of the mortuary landscape in the second half of the Iron Age is given by Vladislavs Urtāns in his treatment of the burial practices of the 5<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries, published in 1970: “(...) all of the ethnic groups inhabiting present-day Latvia placed their burial sites in the proximity of roads, and

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43 Moora 1952, 64–65, 66–68, 72–76, 84–85.

44 *Ibid.*, 78.

45 *Ibid.*, 80.

46 Daiga, Atgāzis 1962, 5–7; Daiga, Atgāzis 1963, 6–7.

moreover in scenic locations with light soils.<sup>47</sup> He does not, however, indicate more precisely the basis for his observation concerning the road network.

The mortuary landscape of the Couronians has mainly been viewed in the context of the settlement and administrative structure of the region. In an article from 1988 on the archaeological sites of the former Liepāja District, Andrejs Vasks focuses on the analysis of Iron Age burial, settlement and cult sites, pointing out that archaeological sites of this kind linked together are generally characteristic of the major ancient centres (e.g., Kazdanga).<sup>48</sup> In 1987, Ēvalds Mugurēvičs analysed in similar terms the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century Zviedri cemetery in Pūre.<sup>49</sup> In view of the characteristics of the surrounding sites (absence of a hillfort) and with reference to particular features of the burial practices, Mugurēvičs concludes that the cemetery belonged to a small rural community somewhat remote from the major administrative centres of the Late Iron Age and Middle Ages.

During this research period, studies on the Middle and Late Iron Age mortuary landscape of Semigallians were undertaken by Atgāzis. In the 1974 collective monograph he offers a general characterisation (mainly concentrating on the Late Iron Age).<sup>50</sup> According to Atgāzis, sites with gravelly or sandy soils were generally chosen for Semigallian cemeteries, although graves dug into clay also occur (Roķi, Mežotnes centrs cemetery), since clay soils predominate in the region of Semigallia. Since this area is characterised by flat terrain, the cemeteries, although placed on small rises, are not prominent within the surrounding landscape. In certain cases, where a cemetery has been established on a higher hill, the graves have generally been dug not at the top of the hill but on the slope (Kaijukrogs). Atgāzis also notes that the Semigallian flat cemeteries are generally sited in the vicinity of habitation sites, hillforts as well as settlements, generally no more than 1 km away (e.g., the Mežotne complex, the Grīnerti cemetery by Dobeskalns).

The mortuary landscape of the area populated by the Latgalians has been described more extensively, mainly in the frame of research by Elvīra Šnore starting from late 1950s. Primarily based on her large-scale excavations at Latgalian cemeteries of the Middle and Late Iron Age in the 1930s and later (Kivti, Nukšas, Oglenieki, etc.), Šnore notes that the large flat cemeteries were placed at locations favourable for agriculture: on lakeshores or riverbanks, in many cases on river terraces or on the slopes of substantial hills, on sandy soils, less commonly on

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47 Urtāns 1970, 61.

48 Vasks 1988, 31–44.

49 Mugurēvičs 1987, 56–67.

50 Apals, Atgāzis u. c. 1974, 211.

clay soils or pebbly gravels.<sup>51</sup> In the cemetery of Kivti, situated on the shore of Lake Cirma, the large erratic boulders that marked the former lakeshore also delineated the cemetery on the southern side.<sup>52</sup> Šnore also notes that the flat cemeteries were located near to habitation sites: some hundreds of metres from the hillfort (e.g., Asote, Jersika). However, not all of the cemeteries are accompanied by habitation sites that may definitely be associated with them.<sup>53</sup> Proceeding from the investigation of Nukšas and Kivti cemeteries, Šnore also emphasises that these burial grounds were located on the sites of earlier settlements.<sup>54</sup> The same kind of situation was identified at Jaunākēni<sup>55</sup>, Ģūģeri<sup>56</sup>, and elsewhere. However, the question of whether this marks a conscious decision in terms of site location or simply reflects the repeated use of advantageous sites was not raised.

Another aspect mentioned by Šnore with regard to Latgalian flat cemeteries and the way they were perceived in the landscape is the possibility that there were above-ground grave markers during the time of use of the cemetery.<sup>57</sup> That such markers were indeed present is indicated by the fact that only in very rare cases did later burials disturb the earlier ones, while the cemeteries do not show a pattern of developing from one particular spot and gradually extending in a particular direction.

With regard to the landscape context of the Latgalian barrow cemeteries of the Late Iron Age, Šnore notes laconically that these, like the flat cemeteries, were generally established on higher and drier sites suitable for agriculture.<sup>58</sup> In the 1980s, Arnis Rādiņš presented a more detailed characterisation of these cemeteries, analysing the situation of all 50 burial sites of this kind known at the time.<sup>59</sup> According to his observations, cemeteries with as many as several hundred barrows close together were located right next to rivers or lakes, or in some cases at the edge of a bog, while cemeteries established at some distance from waters are a rarity. In some cases, Late Iron Age barrows were placed next to a burial site from an earlier period or adjacent to one of the flat cemeteries described above. Rādiņš also notes that barrows were often erected in the immediate proximity of a habitation site, although he mentions that additional research

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51 Šnore, Zeiid 1957, 13; Apals, Atgāzis u. c. 2001, 222.

52 Šnore 1985, 7.

53 Apals, Atgāzis u. c. 2001, 222; Šnore, Zeiid 1957, 16.

54 Šnore, Zeiid 1957, 13; Šnore 1985, 7.

55 Graudonis 1973, 34–39

56 Apala 1990, 20–24.

57 Šnore, Zeiid 1957, 25; Šnore 1985, 10.

58 Apals, Atgāzis u. c. 2001, 223.

59 Rādiņš 1983, 53–57.

is needed. Another significant feature observed by Radiņš is the occurrence of concentrations of barrow cemeteries, where the distance between the cemeteries is very small (e.g., Bebri and Sigaiļi are separated by only 1.6 km). However, he does not yet provide any further characterisation of this feature of the mortuary landscape, with a consideration of intervisibility or other aspects of that kind.

A general characterisation of the mortuary landscape of the Daugava Livs has been given by Anna Zariņa starting from the 1970s.<sup>60</sup> She writes that the cemeteries were located close to villages, right next to riverbanks or lakes, as already observed by previous researchers. Now that a considerable archaeological record had accumulated, in contrast to the initial view of the Liv mortuary landscape, she emphasises the Livs' flat cemeteries, which varied greatly in extent. An interesting phenomenon is observed also in the mortuary landscape of the Gauja Livs, namely that half of all the known cemeteries are located in the vicinity of Krimulda, Turaida, and Sigulda, within an area of about 50 km<sup>2</sup>.

### The 1990s to the present day

In this period, compared to the preceding periods, more diverse analysis of the previously amassed material has been undertaken, also encompassing a mortuary landscape perspective focussed on the 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. It should be added that, starting from the 1990s, there has been a general development of research on cultural landscapes in Latvia.<sup>61</sup>

With regard to the study of the mortuary landscape of the Roman Iron Age in western Latvia, we may note that Ingrida Virse and Vasks have considered anew the landscape of the Early Iron Age flat cemeteries of the coastal belt. All the excavation records of Mazkatuži and similar coastal cemeteries have been examined, including the unpublished material, focussing in particular on the question raised in the 1930s concerning the possibility of barrows over the burials. Both Virse and Vasks, in the 2000s, like Balodis before, expressed the view that mounds most likely relate to the burial practices.<sup>62</sup> Virse even suggested that Ošenieki barrow in Vērgale, with inhumations in flat graves from the 5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries, formed through the merge of such separate barrows.<sup>63</sup> However, Vasks considers that it remains unclear whether the barrows constitute

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60 For example: Apals, Atgāzis u. c. 2001, 194, 199.

61 Melluma, Lenerte 1991, 6; Zelčs 2018, 570–571.

62 Virse 2008, 9–11; Asaris, Muižnieks u. c. 2008, 40–42; Apals, Atgāzis u. c. 2001, 215.

63 Asaris, Muižnieks u. c. 2008, 47.

a reminiscence of the traditions of the preceding periods or an independent element of Roman Iron Age burial practice.<sup>64</sup>

A general characterisation of the mortuary landscape of the Roman Iron Age barrows with a stone circle, concentrated on the eastern part of Latvia, is given by Šnore in her monograph published in 1993.<sup>65</sup> Like Moora before her, Šnore notes that the barrows occur on sandy soils, often close to waters, and that particular micro-regions can be distinguished that have a greater concentration of such cemeteries. One such area is the Sēlija Ridge, a long mound of glacial till with fertile sandy loam soils, separately analysed by Vasks in 2001.<sup>66</sup> Reviewing the 19 barrow cemeteries from the 2<sup>nd</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries identified in this area, he concludes that the barrow cemeteries were located about 100–200 m from open settlements (e.g. Plāteri–Spietiņi, Ķunci, Antuži), while the creation of barrow cemeteries next to hillforts is not characteristic.

Vasks, as well as Valter Lang, also consider the social interpretation of the Roman Iron Age barrows, through which these burial sites obtain a symbolic significance in the organisation of the landscape and territory. Analysing the number of burials, duration of use of the barrow in relation to human life expectancy and the potential community size, they calculated, in the 2000s, that in the Roman Iron Age and at the beginning of the Middle Iron Age not all members of society were buried in barrows.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, they suggest that the barrow served as a kind of territorial marker in the landscape. Such an idea is in accord with the change in the settlement structure in the area of distribution of the barrows in the first half of the Roman Iron Age, which has been analysed by correlating the archaeological data with studies on climate and vegetation in prehistory by geologist Silvija Mūrniece and palaeoecologist Laimdota Kalniņa.<sup>68</sup> The practice of establishing barrows on the site of a settlement from the preceding period, a repeatedly identified practice in the area of the barrows (Plāteri, Melderišķi, Pungas, Ūsiņi, Pāķi, etc.), is suggested by Vasks as possibly indicating a wish to emphasise a kinship link with the community formerly inhabiting the settlement.<sup>69</sup>

In connection with the study of the mortuary landscape of barrow cemeteries, we may mention the study by Juris Urtāns, in 2013, on the ancient sites of

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64 Apals, *Atgāzis* u. c. 2001, 215.

65 Šnore 1993, 23, 33.

66 Vasks 2001, 36–45.

67 Vasks 2000, 45–51; Vasks 2001, 36–45; Lang 2005, 18–22.

68 Vasks 2001, 30–31.

69 *Ibid.*, 44.



Slate forest.<sup>70</sup> Based on his fieldwork, involving prospection for Iron Age monuments and survey of the known sites, Urtāns has sought to identify habitation sites, ancient roadways, springs, etc. corresponding to the six groups of barrows known at the time. It must be said, however, that because of the lack of dating evidence for many of the sites, detailed reconstruction of the Iron Age mortuary landscape of Slate is not yet possible.

Based on the archaeological excavation of the Rubiķi cemetery, in 2012, not far from Slate, Elīna Guščika has considered anew the question of the landscape and its transformation in the Roman Iron Age, when the barrows were created.<sup>71</sup> In this case, she bases her conclusions not only on observations of the soil at the time of archaeological excavation but also on the analysis by Valdis Bērziņš of wood charcoal samples recovered from the barrows, and palaeobotanical macroremains analysis by botanist Aija Ceriņa, of soil samples from the fill of the barrows. Seven charcoal samples come from the basal layers of the barrows and may be thought to reflect the woody vegetation, with pine trees on the site before the barrows were created, this vegetation being purposefully burned for some other reason. Some additional characteristic species of dry pine forest plant communities were also discovered.

In connection with the analysis of Rubiķi cemetery, Guščika has also considered the question of the continuity of burials in the region populated by the Selonians in the Late Iron Age.<sup>72</sup> At Rubiķi, barrows were erected in the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries right next to those of the 2<sup>nd</sup>–7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Considering that the earlier barrows are clearly visible as above-ground features in the landscape even in the present day, we are seeing the conscious choice of such a site for the establishment of a cemetery in the Late Iron Age. A connection between later burials and Roman Iron Age barrows in the case of Lejasbitēni and Boķi, where flat graves from the 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century concentrate around the barrows, has also been noted by Atgāzis<sup>73</sup> and others. This question of the Selonian mortuary landscape has been studied comprehensively by Andra Simniškytė, who, like Vasks, emphasises the symbolic significance of the barrows within the landscape.<sup>74</sup> Repeated use of burial sites could indicate a particular strategy by which a society, striving to establish itself in a new territory, created a “bogus” link to the past, where the mortuary landscape had a significant symbolic role. Simniškytė notes

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70 Urtāns 2013, 22–46.

71 Guščika 2014, 42–48.

72 Guščika 2017, [143]–173.

73 For example: Apals, Atgāzis u. c. 2001, 268–269.

74 Simniškytė 2009, 99–110; Simniškytė 2013.



that such a phenomenon is observed only in the case of Late Iron Age barrows, whereas the choice of location for Selonian flat cemeteries, which appear in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, is not linked to the barrows of the preceding periods.

With regard to the study of the Late Iron Age mortuary landscape of western Latvia, in the 1990s, Velta Pāvulāne undertook a study on the population centres mentioned in historical sources in Kurzeme (Vredeturonia, Ventava),<sup>75</sup> combining archaeology, historical geography, and analysis of placenames in research on Couronian settlement pattern, including the mortuary landscape. According to Pāvulāne, Couronian settlements along with cemeteries were concentrated in the areas more favourable for agriculture: in lake and river basins and locations with more fertile and more easily tilled soils. Similarly, in an article evaluating the results of archaeological survey in the western part of Kurzeme, Bērziņš, in 1996, examines the distribution of archaeological sites in relation to the geological map and considers the influence of the natural conditions on the location of burial sites, settlements and cultivated land in the Bronze and the Iron Age.<sup>76</sup>

Also relevant to the investigation of the Late Iron Age mortuary landscape of the Couronians are palaeobotanical studies undertaken on the burial site in Lake Vilcumuiža. In the course of work undertaken in 2013, 2016, and 2018 under the direction of Kalniņa, Aija Ceriņa, and Alise Ķepīte, fluctuations in the water level and changes in sediment composition were traced in Lake Vilcumuiža as well as in the nearby Lake Talsi.<sup>77</sup> The evidence of human presence and its impact on the vegetation in the environs of the two lakes was also studied. Based on this research and correlating it with archaeological sources, Inga Doniņa-Kalniņa has analysed how the finds from the cremation graves may have ended up in Lake Vilcumuiža, questioning the idea that the cremated remains were deposited in the lake, and thus also presenting a rather different picture of this landscape in the Iron Age.

In considering the mortuary landscape of the Vends, a group identified in the Late Iron Age material from northern Kurzeme and Vidzeme, we may note the ideas that Šturms set down in his unpublished material in the 1930s and which Vasks has brought up for discussion in 2012.<sup>78</sup> Following his excavation in 1930 of Kalnenieki (Kalinieki) cemetery, located near Mežīte hillfort, Šturms

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75 Pāvulāne 1990, 18–42; Pāvulāne 1994, 151–160.

76 Bērziņš 1996, 29–43.

77 Doniņa 2016, 7–18; Doniņa, Ķepīte, Indriksone, Kalniņa, Ceriņa 2018, 15; Indriksone, Ķepīte, Doniņa, Ceriņa, Kalniņa, Pāparde, Dreimanis 2018, 89–92; Indriksone, Ķepīte, Doniņa, Ceriņa, Kalniņa, Pāparde, Dreimanis 2017, 40–46; Ķepīte, Doniņa, Ceriņa, Kalniņa 2016, 356–358.

78 Vasks 2012, 105–112.

suggests that similar cemeteries with a relatively small number of flat inhumation burials could have been established on other hills close to the hillfort as well. This idea gained new currency along with the excavation by Vasks and Guščika in 2009–2011 of the newly-discovered Mežīte cemetery, where a small number of graves characteristic of the Vends were likewise discovered. One more burial site, Kāpurkalns, is known from stray finds recovered in the vicinity.

A general characterisation of the mortuary landscape of the Semigallians in the Middle and Late Iron Age is given by Zane Buža, Jānis Ciglis, and others, published in 2003.<sup>79</sup> As in previous studies, it is stated that the Semigallian cemeteries of the 7<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries were mainly established on the slopes of sandy or gravelly hills not far from rivers or lakes. Moreover, in many cases a cemetery may be placed on both banks of a river (Dreņģeri–Čunkāni, Īslīces grantsbedres, Mežotnes centrs, etc.). It is also emphasised that the cemeteries were located close to habitation sites. More detailed analysis of the situation is given by Atgāzis, mainly on the basis of the extensive excavations in the 1980s and 1990s at Dreņģeri–Čunkāni cemetery.<sup>80</sup> Atgāzis describes the location of the cemetery on the II and III terrace of the Mēmele river, where the II terrace rises 9 m above the level of the river, and the III terrace is another 4 m higher. In this case, the choice of the burial site was not determined by the soil conditions, since the II terrace is covered by gravel, whereas the III terrace is clayey. On both terraces the dead were buried in several parallel rows, with 40–60 m long elliptical belts constituting a curved line that delimited the cemetery. Atgāzis suggests that this served to separate the sphere of the dead from that of the living, or the sacred from the profane space.

Both Atgāzis and Guntis Zemītis also note the finds of Early Iron Age material at the cemetery of Dreņģeri–Čunkāni and likewise within the area of other Semigallian cemeteries (Ciemalde, Oši, Bāļi–Šķērstaiņi), indicating that in several cases the flat burial sites of the Middle Iron Age were deliberately located beside burial sites of the 1<sup>st</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>81</sup> Evidence of this kind had been observed already since the 1930s at Roman Iron Age barrow sites elsewhere as well,<sup>82</sup> but had not been considered as a factor in the choice of location for Middle Iron Age Semigallian flat cemeteries.

A further contribution to reconstructing the archaeological landscape of the Semigallians is the master's thesis defended at the University of Latvia (UL)

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79 Banytė-Rowell, Buža u. c. 2003, 33–34.

80 For example: Atgāzis 1994, 23–30; Atgāzis 1994a, 29–40.

81 Atgāzis 1994b, 29–30; Zemītis 2004, 182–184.

82 For example: Stepiņš 1939, 48–63.

in 2022 by Ildze Mīlgrāve, on the Iron Age and medieval cultural landscape of Tērvete region<sup>83</sup> (supervisor: Andris Šnē), which is partially reflected in a publication.<sup>84</sup> Applying GIS tools, Mīlgrāve focussed her attention on what is known as central place (centrality) theory. In this case, employing locational analysis of the archaeological sites, visibility analysis, and network analysis, the Iron Age mortuary landscape in the environs of Tērvete is considered mainly in relation to Tērvete hillfort. With regard to the Iron Age, Mīlgrāve essentially sees the continuity of the landscape. She draws attention to the fact that most of the burial sites are located on the opposite bank of the Tērvete stream from the hillfort, and she further notes that, although the cemeteries (e.g., Lejniēki–Kalmaņi, Līgas, Anšķini) lie 2–2.5 km from the hillfort, analysis of the visibility of the surrounding area nevertheless permits them to be included in a unified landscape with the hillfort. Mīlgrāve's reconstruction of the landscape is based on the research by the geographers and geologists Aija Melluma, Ģederts Ramans, Valentīns Pūriņš, Ivars Strautnieks, as well as palaeoecologist Normunds Stivriņš. Importantly, Stivriņš provides the first analysis of landscape changes in central Latvia specifically during the past 2000 years, also tracing for the first time in greater detail the changes during various periods of the Iron Age.<sup>85</sup>

With regard to the mortuary landscape of the area populated by the Latgalians, Atgāzis as well as Antonija Vilcāne identify several areas with a high density of archaeological sites (e.g., the Vidzeme Uplands, the upper Dubna basin), interpreted in terms of their suitability for economic activities.<sup>86</sup> A more detailed characterisation of the Latgalian mortuary landscape, building on the ideas in his earlier works, is given by Rādiņš in the 1999 publication of his doctoral thesis.<sup>87</sup> In addition to general characterisation of the 10<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century Latgalian cemeteries, noting that they are located in the proximity of waters and were generally established on elevated, sandy sites (mainly on hillslopes), Rādiņš also sees differences in the model of the mortuary landscape between the flat and barrow cemeteries. He notes as a characteristic trend the placement of flat cemeteries on the sites of earlier settlements (Nukšas, Kivti, Kristapiņi, etc.) or in the immediate proximity of earlier burial sites (Bradaiži, Lešķi), something that is not observed for Latgalian barrows.<sup>88</sup> However, starting from the 10<sup>th</sup> century,

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83 Mīlgrāve 2022a.

84 Mīlgrāve 2022b.

85 Stivrins, Brown, Reitalu, Veski, Heinsalu, Banerjea, Elmi 2015, 377–391.

86 Apals, Atgāzis u. c. 2001, 235–237; Vilcāne 1999, 21.

87 Rādiņš 1999a, 17–19, 35.

88 *Ibid.*, 17–18.

barrow cemeteries were in certain instances created next to already existing flat cemeteries (e.g., Puncuļeva, Isnauda), separated by a distance of about 100 m. These features bring into play the question of the conscious utilisation of the mortuary landscape in a symbolic or social sense. However, such questions are not further examined in the publication.

Radiņš also looks in more detail at the Latgalian cemeteries in relation to the corresponding habitation sites, essentially explaining these connections in terms of practical considerations.<sup>89</sup> He mentions that cemeteries were most commonly located up to a couple of hundred metres from the dwelling sites, and that this distance was determined by sanitary considerations, along with the requirement that taking the deceased to the cemetery should not be a long and difficult task. However, it may be noted once again that in the case of several cemeteries no corresponding living site is known (e.g., Kivti, Kristapiņi, Nukšas) or is a matter of debate (e.g., Odukalns<sup>90</sup>).

Also relevant to the Latgalian mortuary landscape is Jānis Meinerts's master's thesis defended at the UL in 2021, focussing on the spatial structure of Āraiši and Brici lakes micro-regions from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>91</sup> (supervisor: Šnē), which has partly been published.<sup>92</sup> Based on the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental data, Meinerts has traced the changes relating to human activity within a radius of 5–8 km from these lakes where the lake dwelling sites were discovered, addressing issues of habitation site centrality. Palaeoenvironmental research on the lake sediments has been undertaken by Stivriņš, permitting the impact of human activities on the landscape to be traced during various phases of the Iron Age. In each of the investigated micro-regions, Meinerts identifies a central burial place: Liepiņas in the case of Āraiši, and Ezerbrici in the case of Brici, and models their development, where the Latgalians settled in areas previously inhabited by the people who created the barrow graves (the so-called Gauja Semigallians). Modelling of visibility shows that in both cases a visual link can be identified between the lake dwelling sites and the cemeteries; likewise, the areas potentially used for agriculture are well visible from the burial sites. As the author emphasises, it may be thought that this visual link was also significant for creating a spiritual link between the living and the dead; however, in physical terms the cemeteries constitute sacred spaces separated from the space of everyday life by natural barriers. The cemeteries were set apart from the living

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89 Radiņš 1999a, 17.

90 Urtāns 2015; Radiņš 1999b, 22.

91 Meinerts 2021.

92 Meinerts 2022, 13–14.

sites by the lakes themselves, and the broad slopes of the uplands, on which both the Liepiņas and Ezerbrīci cemeteries were established, are separated from the inhabited space by streams or low, wet hollows.

In this period, the study of the Liv mortuary landscape is focussing on the Livs of the Daugava. In the 1990s and 2000s, Zariņa and Zemītis write that there were several complexes from the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, consisting of a settlement and a cemetery located opposite one another.<sup>93</sup> Along the stretch of the Daugava from Dole Island to Ikšķīle, villages with adjacent cemeteries have been identified at intervals of 2–3 km. Regarding Laukskola cemetery in Salaspils, its location on the opposite bank from Daugmale hillfort is also emphasised.

## Conclusions

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when more extensive and systematic research on the archaeological sites of present-day Latvia commenced, cemeteries of the 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries have also been considered in the context of the surrounding landscape and environment. For the most part, this is limited to scattered references, but it is possible to trace, right up to the present day, how, along with the accumulation of archaeological evidence and the advent of interdisciplinary studies in archaeology, involving new approaches and methods of archaeological data analysis, there has been a development of ideas concerning the Iron Age mortuary landscape.

The main questions addressed relate to the location of the burial site in the landscape and its situation in relation to other archaeological sites. Right up to the 1920s, conclusions regarding the mortuary landscape of present-day Latvia in the 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries were based on articulation of the archaeological material along with general observations of the environmental setting, as well as conjecture (explicable primarily in terms of the inadequacy of the archaeological record). Only in separate instances have there been attempts to account for the emergence of the mortuary landscape of one region or another, mainly through interpretation of a particular form of burial in a social context. In later research, too, study of the mortuary landscape continues to be dominated by analysis of the archaeological material in relation to observations of the surrounding environment and landscape, although at a more detailed level. There have been attempts to analyse various patterns, both at the scale of the distribution areas of burial sites corresponding to the various ethnocultural groups,

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93 Zariņa 1996, 121; Zariņa 2006, 7; Zemītis 2004, 149.

and at a micro-regional scale, seeking to account for these patterns, for example through the perspectives of centre/periphery, sacred/profane space, the symbolic role of burial sites, etc.

Already in the 1920s and 1930s, certain studies made use of general research into the geology of the Baltic region, striving to approach a characterisation of the environment and natural landscape of present-day Latvia in the 1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries and thus explain as accurately as possible the preconditions for the choice of burial site and the transformation of the surrounding landscape in the course of establishing the cemetery. Palaeobotanical studies and methods have obtained an ever-greater role in the reconstruction of the Iron Age mortuary landscape, especially during the last two decades, involving the investigation of particular sites as well as environmental and landscape studies of various regions of Latvia, thus also enabling archaeologists to analyse in more detail the mortuary landscape in particular micro-regions.

Assessment and interpretation of the archaeological record generally involves mapping, which has allowed the sites under study to be viewed in the context of the surrounding archaeological sites and finds, as well as various natural features (hills, rivers, lakes, bogs), geology, soils and historical geography. In recent decades, analysis of the mortuary landscape has increasingly made use of GIS tools, permitting more comprehensive spatial analysis, with the creation of models of spatial distribution, density, and visibility of sites, etc.

The geological and geomorphological characteristics of particular areas have a significant role in determining the dominant vegetation, which then determines the mode of use of the landscape and land use. In addition to the mentioned palaeoecological studies on lakes Āraiši and Brici, such information has been obtained for Lake Trikāta (northern Vidzeme)<sup>94</sup>, Lake Ķūžu (central Vidzeme)<sup>95</sup>, Lake Lilaste (coastal belt in central Latvia),<sup>96</sup> Lake Ķikuri (Kurzeme), and Lake Vipēdis (Zemgale)<sup>97</sup>. In the future these results of Iron Age environment studies could also be applied in the context of mortuary landscape.

Overall, it may be asserted that landscape studies constitute one of the fields of research currently experiencing rapid development in Latvian archaeology, aiming to characterise comprehensively aspects of human–environmental interaction, the use of natural resources, etc. Alongside examination of the present-day landscape, by bringing together traditional archaeological data analysis

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94 Stivrins, Liiv, Brown, Banerjea, Heinsalu, Veski 2019, 1–19.

95 Puusepp, Kangur 2010, 259–280.

96 Stivrins, Doniņa, Auns, Blaus, Liiv, Steinberga, Jasiunas, Grudzinska 2023, 466–481.

97 Analyses are in progress.

with natural sciences and landscape research methods, researchers now also have the possibility of reconstructing the ancient landscape, thus articulating the “landscape archaeology/archaeological landscape” approach in all its diversity.

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## APBEDĪŠANAS AINAVA 1.–12. GADSIMTĀ: GALVENIE JAUTĀJUMI, PIEEJAS UN METODEDES LATVIJAS DZELZS LAIKMETA PĒTNIECĪBAS VĒSTURĒ

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apbedīšanas tradīcijas, valstiskuma veidošanās

Arheoloģijā ainava tiek pētīta kā kultūras, sociālā un vides dinamika, kas vienlaikus gan ietekmē cilvēka domāšanu, gan ir tā darbības rezultāts. No šādas perspektīvas raugoties,

arī kapulauku ierīkošana ir cilvēka izvēles rezultāts attiecībā pret apkārtējo vidi, veidojot īpašu apbedīšanas ainavu. Latvijas dzelzs laikmeta historiogrāfijā šī kopumā ir maz pētīta tēma, tomēr laika gaitā izsekojama nemitīga priekšstatu pilnveidošanās – gan jautājumu loka paplašināšanās no vienkārša kapulauku vietas situācijas apraksta līdz to nozīmes analīzei ainavā, gan lietoto pieeju un metožu pieaugoša daudzveidība no vienkārša apkārtnes vērojuma līdz starpdisciplināriem pētījumiem un dažādām datu analīzes iespējām.

*Atslēgas vārdi:* kapulauki, apbedīšanas ainava, dzelzs laikmets, Latvijas teritorija, historiogrāfija

### Kopsavilkums

Apbedījumu vietas ir vienas no visplašāk pētītajām arheoloģiskajām liecībām, kas ļāvušas risināt visdažādākos ar aizvēsturi un vēsturiskajiem laikiem saistītus jautājumus, tostarp pievērsties atsevišķiem apbedīšanas ainavas aspektiem.

Ainava ir saistīta gan ar objektīvu dabas realitāti – vidi ar tai raksturīgiem dabas apstākļiem un veidojumiem, gan ar cilvēka uztveri. Otrajā gadījumā tā skatāma kā cilvēku izveidota sistēma, kas funkcionē un attīstās sabiedrības vajadzībām. Arī arheoloģijā ainava tiek skatīta kā kultūras, sociālā un vides dinamika, kas vienlaikus gan ietekmē cilvēka domāšanu, gan ir cilvēku darbības ietekmēts rezultāts. Tas neizbēgami liek arī uz kapulauku vietu izvēli un izveidošanu skatīties kā uz apzinātu cilvēka izvēli attiecībā pret apkārtējo vidi, radot īpašu apbedīšanas ainavu (*mortuary landscape*).

Raksta mērķis ir izpētīt, kā arheoloģiskajā literatūrā skatīti un interpretēti Latvijas teritorijas kapulauki apkārtējās ainavas kontekstā dzelzs laikmetā, aptverot periodu no 1. līdz 12. gadsimtam, kad jau skaidri izdalās noteikti apgabali ar atšķirīgu apbedīšanas ainavu. Uzmanība vērsta tieši uz 1.–12. gadsimta kapulauku situāciju dzelzs laikmeta apkārtējā ainavā, neskatot kapulauku iekšējo struktūru (kapu izvietojumu kapulaukā, to orientāciju u. tml.). Pētījumā izdalīti galvenie ar šo tēmu saistītie jautājumi, izpētes pieejas un metodes no apbedījumu vietu arheoloģijas pirmsākumiem līdz mūsdienām, mēģinot izsekot dzelzs laikmeta apbedīšanas ainavas izpētes izmaiņām un attīstībai laika gaitā, iezīmējot dažādos periodos aktuālos pētījumu virzienus un tendences.

Dzelzs laikmeta kapulaukiem apkārtējās ainavas kontekstā tiek pievērta uzmanība jau kopš 19. gadsimta, kad aizsākās plašāka un sistemātiskāka Latvijas teritorijas arheoloģisko pieminekļu izpēte. Lielākoties šis jautājums ir skatīts pastarpināti, tomēr līdz pat mūsdienām var izsekot, kā, uzkrājoties arheoloģiskajam materiālam un ienākot arheoloģijā starpdisciplināriem pētījumiem, jaunām arheoloģisko datu analīzes pieejām un metodēm, pilnveidojas priekšstati par dzelzs laikmeta apbedīšanas ainavu.

Galvenie skatītie jautājumi saistās ar kapulauku vietas izvēli un to situāciju attiecībā pret citām arheoloģiskajām vietām. Līdz pat 20. gadsimta 20. gadiem secinājumi par Latvijas teritorijas 1.–12. gadsimta apbedīšanas ainavu balstīti uz arheoloģiskā materiāla apskatu un vispārīgiem vides vērojumiem, arī pieņēmumiem (kas lielākoties skaidrojams ar arheoloģisko datu nepilnīgo klāstu). Tikai atsevišķos gadījumos mēģināts skaidrot

viena vai otra reģiona apbedīšanas ainavas rašanos, pamatā interpretējot konkrētu apbedīšanas veidu sociālā kontekstā. Arī vēlākos apbedīšanas ainavas pētījumos joprojām dominē arheoloģiskā materiāla analīze saistībā ar apkārtējās vides un ainavas novērojumiem, taču detalizācija jau ir daudz lielāka. Mēģināts analizēt dažādas likumsakarības gan plašāku etnokulturālu grupu kapulauku izplatības areālos, gan atsevišķos mikroreģionos, rast tām skaidrojumu, piemēram, centra–perifērijas, sakrālās–profānās telpas, apbedījumu vietu simboliskās nozīmes u. c. kontekstos. Jau 20. gadsimta 20. un 30. gados atsevišķos gadījumos tiek izmantoti arī vispārīgi Baltijas reģiona ģeoloģijas pētījumi, mēģinot pietuvoties Latvijas teritorijas 1.–12. gadsimta vides un dabas ainavas raksturojumam un tādējādi pēc iespējas precīzāk skaidrot apbedījumu vietu izvēles priekšnoteikumus un apkārtējās ainavas pārveidi kapulauku ierīkošanas gaitā. Paleobotāniskie pētījumi un metodes dzelzs laikmeta apbedīšanas ainavas rekonstrukcijās arvien lielāku lomu ieņem tieši pēdējās divās desmitgadēs, un tie saistās gan ar konkrētu apbedījumu vietu, gan dažādu Latvijas reģionu vides un dabas ainavas izpēti, ļaujot arheologiem detalizētāk analizēt arī apbedīšanas ainavu atsevišķos mikroreģionos.

Arheoloģiskā materiāla izvērtēšanas un interpretācijas nolūkā kapulauki tiek kartografēti un šādā veidā skatīti gan apkārtnes arheoloģisko vietu un atradumu, gan dažādu dabas objektu (kalnu, upju, ezeru u. c.), gan ģeoloģijas (augšnes), gan vēsturiskās ģeogrāfijas kontekstā. Pēdējās desmitgadēs apbedīšanas ainavas analīzē arvien plašāk tiek izmantoti ĢIS rīki, kas pētījumos ļauj iekļaut daudzpusīgus telpiskās analīzes datus, veidojot objektu novietojuma un blīvuma, vietu pārredzamības u. c. modeļus, iezīmējot arvien jaunus aspektus tēmas izpētē.

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