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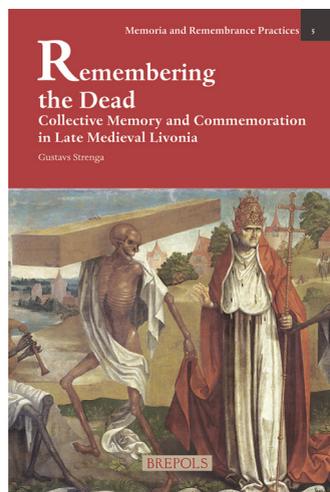
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Gustavs Strenģa.

Remembering the Dead. Collective Memory and Commemoration in Late Medieval Livonia. Turnhout: Brepols, 2023

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Gustava Strenģas monogrāfija “Remembering the Dead” (Miruso pieminēšana) ir pirmais visaptverošais viduslaiku Livonijas atmiņu un piemiņas kultūru pētījums. Autors koncentrējas uz memoria kā kolektīvās atmiņas formu un sociālo praksi, kam bija ievērojama loma grupu identitātes izveidē un attīstībā un kas ietekmēja arī politiku. Izmantojot lielu apjomu avotu no dažādiem arhīviem, īpaši Rīģas un Tallinas, viņš aplūko vairākas Livonijas grupas un institūcijas: Rīģas (arhi-) bīskapus ar to domkapituliem un Vācu ordeņa vadošās amatpersonas (1., 2. un 4. nodaļa), reliģiskos ordeņus (3. nodaļa), Rīģas un Tallinas pilsētas elites (5. nodaļa) un pie elites nepiederošos rīdziniekus (6. nodaļa). 7. nodaļā pētīta protestantiskās Reformācijas ietekme uz pilsētu memoria. Šī grāmata kalpo gan kā pamats tālākai citu Livonijas sociālo grupu izpētei, gan arī kā vispārējs salīdzinošā reģionālā pētījuma modelis.

Over the past decades, research on collective memory and remembrance, or *memoria*, has significantly enriched historical understanding of past societies. In recent years, this has been also the case for the studies of the *memoria* of Medieval Livonia, with Gustavs Strenga emerging as the most active and consistent researcher in this field. His dissertation on the remembrance cultures and practices of various Livonian social groups, completed in 2013,¹ forms the basis for the monograph discussed here. Over the following decade, Strenga has expanded his studies on Livonian *memoria*, and this book offers a comprehensive result of his research until 2023.² Furthermore, as the author rightly points out, his book is not only unique for its focus on Livonia but also makes a broader contribution to memory studies: to date, there are few comparative studies that examine *memoria* of different social groups within a region (35).

One of the strengths of Strenga's monograph is its exhaustive discussion of theory and methodology (particularly, 17–35), which provides an opportunity for those not daily engaged in *memoria* studies to gain insight into the inner workings of this field. Additionally, the reader is given an overview of both past and current research on Livonian memory and remembrance. For Strenga's work, two particularly important scholars seem to be the 19th-century Baltic German scholar Hermann von Bruningk (1849–1927) and the contemporary Estonian historian Anu Mänd (b. 1968).

As a key distinction in his work, Strenga emphasises that unlike many other studies, he examines the remembrance of the dead not solely from a religious perspective but also as a practical social phenomenon that played a significant role in the formation of group identity: “*Memoria* as a form of collective memory and social practice, created groups, shaped their identities, helped to remember the past, and created relationships between individuals and groups” (18). Strenga approaches remembrance of the dead from both group and individual perspectives, exploring various practices, including producing and consuming texts and art, as well as performing both sacral and secular rituals. More specifically, he examines *memoria* in terms of its role in forming groups and shaping their internal and external relationships; maintaining group identities; its use by elites for self-legitimation and the consolidation of power, and its impact on relations between different groups (20). A key focus of the study, particularly relevant for historians, is

1 Gustavs Strenga. *Remembering the dead: collective memoria in late medieval Livonia*. Queen Mary University of London, 2013.

2 Probably most important of his recent activities is the following co-edition: *Doing Memory: Medieval Saints and Heroes and Their Afterlives in the Baltic Sea Region (19th–20th centuries)*. Ed. by Cordelia Heß and Gustavs Strenga. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2024.

how social groups perceived, performed, and enacted the past, as well as how they structured the information they wished to transmit to future generations (23).

As with most research fields concerning medieval Livonia, it must be acknowledged that the available information on *memoria* is much sparser than in Western or Central Europe, making it impossible to provide a comprehensive overview of memory cultures of all Livonian social groups. Instead, Strenga focuses on these groups for which more information is available and which illustrate well various aspects of Livonian remembrance culture. The author examines (Arch)Bishops of Riga with Riga's cathedral chapter as well the leaders of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order (chapters 1, 2, and 4); the memorial networks of monastic orders, particularly the Cistercians (chapter 3); and the urban elites of Riga and Tallinn (chapter 5). He also investigates the non-elite groups of Riga: the guilds of Beer Carters and Porters (chapter 6). The final, seventh chapter, gives an overview of the impact of the Reformation on the remembrance culture of these two Livonian cities.

The temporal scope of Strenga's study extends from the emergence of medieval Livonia in the late 12th century to the beginning of the Reformation in the 1520s. The main focus is on the second half of the 15th and the early 16th century, as the available source material from this period is more abundant and continuous than in earlier times (20). Strenga has used a wide range of sources from various archives, particularly from the Latvian National Archives in Riga and Tallinn City Archives. He has also used multiple archives outside the former borders of medieval Livonia, mostly in Germany, especially regarding Teutonic Order's memory culture, about which there are numerous sources from former Order's bailiwicks of the Holy Roman Empire. And furthermore, Strenga has effectively used comparisons with the memory cultures of other regions, especially in Germany and Scandinavia, to fill the information gaps left by the lack of Livonian sources.

Strenga's monograph is well-structured and thoughtfully organised, which certainly enhances the reader's ability to engage with its content. Most chapters begin with a brief introduction to a group or organisation, followed by a detailed description of their *memoria*, and end with a concise summary. The author's writing style is generally clear and accessible, and the text contains only a few typographical or factual errors.³

3 One of the few include: Archbishop Johannes of Riga ruling from 1294/95–1300 was not Johannes II but Johannes III (p. 134); Novgorod was annexed by Muscovy in 1478 and not 1484 (p. 241). Also, some historical German names for Latvian places are usually written differently than in Strenga's book: Dünamünde instead of Dünamunde (Latvian: Daugavgrīva) and Uexküll or Üxküll instead of Üxkull (Latvian: Ikšķile).

In examining the *memoria* of the church of Riga (i.e. archbishops and canons), and the Teutonic Order in Livonia, Strenga highlights significant differences. For the church, the primary site of memory was the city of Riga, particularly the tombs of the first bishops in the cathedral. In contrast, for the Order, the most important attributes of memory seem to have been textual, such as the lists of fallen Livonian brothers, which were also distributed to the convents in Central and Western Europe, as well as narrative sources like the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle from the 1290s. While the tradition to produce the lists of fallen brothers discontinued after the 13th century, the Order continued to build its legitimacy and collective memory through chronicles also later. The church of Riga, however, appears to have been much more restrained in this regard. Even the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia, written in praise of bishop Albert of Riga (1199–1229), does not seem to have been used by later Archbishops of Riga as a source of legitimation and remembrance.

The Battle of Durbe (1260) was according to Strenga also an important site of memory for the Order (63–67). It ended in a devastating defeat for Livonian branch, and was remembered in many convents outside Livonia. However, comparison of the battle of Durbe with the battle on the Ice of Lake Peipus (1242) (63) seems rather unwarranted. The latter only gained political significance centuries later, when it was amplified by the Russians; its contemporary importance, especially for the Order, was relatively marginal. A more appropriate comparison would be with the Battle of Karuse (1270), as both battles of Durbe and Karuse were fought against the Lithuanians and resulted in devastating losses for the Order. In the latter battle, Livonian Master Otto, Count of Lauterberg, also lost his life. Furthermore, the claim that Livonian Master was appointed by the Grand Masters until the battle of Tannenberg in 1410, after which the right to choose him supposedly passed to the Livonian brothers (80), is not entirely accurate. Johannes Götz has established that Livonian brothers had some influence in the selection process already in the 13th century, while the decisive authority of the Grand Master only diminished after the 1430s, following the so-called *Zungenstreit* – a conflict between the Westphalian and Rhineland factions in the Livonian branch.⁴

In addition to highlighting differences in remembrance practices of the leaders of the Church of Riga and the Teutonic Order in Livonia, Strenga also brings out the similarities. When an individual leader was commemorated,

4 Johannes Götz (2019). Die Wahl des livländischen Meisters: Ein Indikator für das Verhältnis zwischen Zentrum und Provinz im Deutschen Orden. *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte*, 14, pp. 11–70, esp. 41–45.

their predecessors and the entire organisation were usually remembered as well. Chantries with regular masses and vigils were frequently established to ensure the continuation of this remembrance, and some of them were even founded with the intention of commemorating not only past leaders but also future ones. Strenga further notes that remembrance practices were often employed to reinforce political narratives and positions. A good example is Dietrich Nagel (d. 1469), provost of the Riga Cathedral chapter, who established chantries and composed various texts to perpetuate the memory of those 15th-century archbishops who had pursued anti-Order policies (95–101). Also, the annals of Dünamünde which recount the history of the Cistercian monastery sold to the Teutonic Order in 1305, depict events from the Teutonic Order's perspective (120–130).

Strenga's book, particularly its fourth chapter, depicts intense controversies between the church of Riga and the Teutonic Order over the memory politics. These disputes seem to have been so pronounced that they made the creation of common memory sites and shared *memoria* in Livonia virtually impossible. The only exception presented by Strenga is the battle of Smolino in 1502 fought by the Livonians against the common enemy, the Russians (241–243). One might question whether Smolino truly was the only shared site of memory and speculate that some common memory sites may have emerged after the Reformation, but this requires further research. Additionally, Strenga's text might leave a false impression that the conflict between the Order and the Church of Riga was resolved for good by the end of the 15th century (39, 150). However, new controversies emerged from 1525 onward and persisted until the Livonian War.

The most detailed and information-rich part of Strenga's book is undoubtedly the one concerning the urban *memoria* of Livonia's two largest cities: Riga and Tallinn. The *memoria* of the city councils, guilds and the Brotherhood of Black Heads was in a great part similar to those of Livonian ruling elite and involved primarily establishing chantries, organising clerical and secular memorial services, and commissioning memorial church art. For members of the city councils and their families, the legitimisation of their status as the ruling elite via *memoria* was particularly important. Interestingly, it appears that city councils might have only preserved the memory of a family while one of its members remained in the council. This is exemplified by the dissolution of the chantry in 1518, which was founded by councillor of Tallinn Cord Visch around a century earlier (195).

The Dominican and Cistercian convents were closely linked to urban *memoria*, as they provided various social groups with the opportunity to conduct *memoria* within their monasteries – establishing chantries, altars, and performing memorial services. The monastic institutions frequently formed religious confraternities amongst themselves and also with secular social groups, whose

one function was to commemorate the deceased members from both groups. A particularly notable cooperation occurred in 1495, when the Cistercian nuns of Riga were accepted as members of the Guild of Beer Carters. This partnership was mutually beneficial: the nuns provided memorial services for the carters, while the carters participated in the nuns' funerals by carrying their coffins and also probably supported the nuns in resisting the city council's demands to reform the monastery (118–119). By that time, either Beer Carters or Porters, the other guild of transport workers in Riga, was not merely an occupational organisation. From the middle of the 15th century until to the Reformation, both guilds included members of the elite: city councillors, wealthy merchants, nobles and canons. The participation of elites elevated the prestige of the guilds and supported their memorial activities. In return, the elite likely hoped to receive spiritual benefits, as aiding the "poor" (i.e. the transport workers) was considered a good deed helpful for salvation according to Medieval Catholic teachings.

During the Reformation, urban *memoria* in Livonia underwent significant reorganisation, with many memorial practices, such as chantries and continuous memorial services (masses and vigils) for the dead, were discontinued. The most notable changes appear to have occurred with the transport workers' guilds in Riga, which lost their elite members and became purely occupational organisations, now largely composed of non-Germans (i.e., Latvians). However, Strenga acknowledges that it remains unclear how much and how quickly the former memorial practices changed in Livonia (252–253). The potential impact of the Reformation on Livonian ruling elites, such as the Church of Riga and the Teutonic Order, is not explored in the monograph, and investigating this would likely be challenging due to the scarcity of sources.

Gustav Strenga's *Remembering the Dead* is undoubtedly one of the most significant contributions to the research of medieval Livonia published in recent years. His extensive research on various social groups, particularly urban *memoria*, employing up-to-date methodology and a wide variety of sources, deserves high praise. The book offers valuable opportunities for comparing the memorial cultures of different Livonian social groups and institutions, highlighting both similarities (of which using chantries as a tool for medieval remembrance is unsurprisingly the most common), and differences (especially evident in the *memoria* of the Archbishopric of Riga and the Teutonic Order). Furthermore, the monograph could serve as an example for studying Livonian social groups not covered in there, but for which many untapped sources likely remain, such as the Livonian lay nobility (or vassals), the canons of Tallinn and Osilia, and possibly the secular clergy of Riga and Tallinn, or for examining Livonian *memoria*

from the start of the Reformation to the Livonian War and perhaps even beyond.⁵ And lastly, as mentioned in the beginning, the significance of Strenge's work extends the borders of medieval Livonia, serving as a general model for comparative regional research of social groups in the field of international memory and remembrance studies.

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5 E.g., the *Rigsarkivet* in Copenhagen contains sources about the Bishopric of Osilia (mostly about the 16th Century), and there are local archives in Westphalia that contain information about noble families whose members were in Livonia.