

The exhibition "Stories of Krape Cemetery: Religious Beliefs in Krape Parish Based on Archaeological Material" is dedicated to a little- studied period in the region's ancient history.

The development of religious beliefs in the territory of modern-day Latvia can be divided into two stages – the period before Christianisation, which began at the end of the 12th century, and the centuries that followed the expansion of the German Crusaders into the Baltic region. Until the beginning of Christianization, the mythological system of the Latvian ethnic groups was based on sun worship, which was typical among farmers. The arrival of Western European Catholicism was a turning point. Although the local peoples were baptized, Christianity took root very slowly as a religion. Archaeological finds both in Latvia and the parish of Krape indicate that over the following centuries, syncretism took place in the territory of modern-day Latvia – a fusion of Christianity and the religious beliefs that already existed there. Christian traditions gradually took root among the local population even though this was not a Latvian initiative, but rather the result of the religious policies of Christians – Catholics, Lutherans, and Orthodox Christians.

Archaeological evidence in Krape Parish consists of finds from three ancient burial grounds (Lejasokēnu, Siliņu, Aulaku) and three medieval cemeteries (Ādmiņu, Šultu, Rogu), as well as individual finds. None of these burial grounds were associated with a church, and therefore their contents reflect the traditions practiced by the people. Analysis of the archaeological finds shows how elements of paganism intertwined with Christian symbols, gradually replacing the former. The chronological framework of the exhibition corresponds to the dating of the aforementioned burial sites in Krape Parish, beginning with the 4th century in the Lejasokēni ancient burial grounds and ending with the 17th/18th century in the Rogu medieval cemetery.

The various grave goods tell us that death in Krape Parish was seen as a transition from one state to the next, and until the Reformation, the dead were considered as full members of the family. They were given various tools and weapons that would be useful to them in the

afterlife, as life after death was seen as very similar to life in this world. The deceased were dressed in their best clothes and decorated in various ways, and offerings were placed in the graves to appease mythological creatures. Certain items, such as coins, were included to protect against the resurrection of the dead and the persecution of the living, which was apparently considered a significant problem. By the 18th century, grave goods had declined sharply, and in many places were not included at all, as Christian traditions began to dominate.

A significant turning point for Krape Parish was the decision by the Swedish authorities that the pastor of Koknese should also hold services in Krape. The spread of Christianity was also promoted by the use of the Latvian language in churches – sermons were increasingly heard in the native language, and since the end of the 17th century, E. Glika's translation of the Bible into Latvian, who was also the provost of Koknese at the time, had been available. In 1802, construction began on an Evangelical Lutheran church in Krape, which in a sense completed the process of Christianisation in the parish of Krape.

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