

## Summary

### **Practice of horse burials, and elements of horse harnesses found within human graves of the Western Balts, dating to the early Middle Ages, on a comparative background**

Custom of horse burial and placing horse harnesses in human graves of the Western Balts was a cultural phenomenon. Many works have been written on this topic. There is, however, lack of a collective describing all of these customs. The goal of my doctoral dissertation was to collect representative examples and compare them with graves from other cultures. The chronological range of this work includes the period from turn of the seventh century up to the thirteenth century. After this period the custom gradually disappeared.

Analyzing samples from graves of Western Balts and comparing them with objects from territories of Eastern Balts, the lands of Northern Europe and the Great Steppe. I interpreted several different aspects of the burials - constructions of the tombs, methods with which the dead were arranged in burial pits, the numbers of those buried and compositions of their inventories. The layout and quantity of horse remains within graves was also considered. Whether it was a burial accompanying human remains or secluded, was also taken into consideration. I researched funerary equipment, taking into account primarily the horse harnesses and elements of weapons. I analyzed symbolic horse burials as well.

The main territorial scope of this dissertation covers the lands inhabited in early Medieval Ages, by the Western Balts. Accordingly, I include all the peoples and tribes then inhabiting today's Northeastern Poland and Sambia peninsula. Within these territories, limited by Wisła river from the west and Niemen river from the east, I include both Prussian and Yotvingan tribes.

This dissertation is separated into five main chapters. The first one deals with the titular topic of horse graves and elements of horse harnesses uncovered inside human graves of the Western Balts. The second one describes the horse graves of the Eastern Balts. In the following chapter, I analyze the Northern European cemeteries, and in the fourth, the necropolises of the Great Steppe. The concluding chapter deals with the issue of the presence of horse burials in the Slavic territories. This is the shortest section of the thesis, due to the lesser degree to which the horse burial practice developed in Slavic cultures. The first four chapters are divided into sub-chapters. I examined individual horse burials, graves of people and horses together, and graves of people in which no horse remains were found, except for elements of horse harnesses.

The first chapter deals with horse graves and elements of horse harnesses found in the territories of Western Balts. This part was separated into four sections. The first is *Human graves containing complete horse skeletons*. The second talks about *Human graves with fragmentary horse*

*skeletons*. The third section describes horse skeletons buried without presence of human remains and, the last sub-section, *Human graves with the horse harnesses* but without horse's remains are showcased.

Topic of the second chapter of my doctoral thesis is about *human graves and horse harnesses found within the otherwise human graves of the Eastern Balts*. This chapter is separated into three sections. The first one concerns human graves with horse skeletons, the second *human graves with horse skulls and limbs*. Final sub-section deals with dedicated horse graves and the symbolic horse burials.

The third chapter analyzes horse burial and human graves with horse harnesses in the territories of the Northern Europe. This part is separated into three sub-sections too. The first sub-chapter again, concerns the human graves containing horse skeletons or parts of horse remains, while the second describes graves with only horse remains. Due to extant written sources left by Scandinavians, this chapter additionally elaborates on Scandinavian beliefs connected with horses. These written sources and art pieces are explained within third sub-section.

The fourth chapter continues to detail horse graves and human graves containing horse harnesses in the region of the Great Steppe. It once again, is separated into three sub-sections. The first dealing with human graves containing horse skeletons, second about dedicated horse graves and the last about human burials with horse harnesses but with no horse remains present.

The concluding chapter outlines the issue of horse burial practices in Slavic cultures. It is the shortest section, due to the underdevelopment of the practice in comparison to the other described cultures. Accordingly, this part contains no separation into sub-chapters.

The first four chapters were analyzed on the comparative background. I researched an issue within similar categories – human graves containing horse burials, dedicated horse burials and human graves with only horse harnesses present. In some cases, this was not possible. I analyzed the following issues: 1. Relationship between cremation and inhumation rites, 2. Number of buried dead and their sex, 3. Type of burial structures and method with which the cemetery had been founded, 4. number of horse skeletons and remains present in graves, and their arrangement in the burial pits 5. grave equipment focusing especially on presence of horse harnesses and elements of weapons.

My analysis shows that the most similarity is visible between the graves of Western Balts and Scandinavians. It is known that Scandinavians and Balts had trade contacts, so Scandinavian influence on Baltic and Western Baltic cultures, can be plausibly hypothesized. It is possible that the custom of horse burials and human burial including horse harnesses in Western Balts had origins in Scandinavian culture. However, this topic requires further research.