

In the territory outside the 12th century burial field which was studied on the N side of the church in fields 2, 3 and 4 two ancient population periods should be distinguished. The first is to be characterized by the fireplaces once made here, ritual sacrifice pitholes and ends of poles dug in the ground. It is no longer possible to determine if all these objects have simultaneously appeared in the ground or it has happened gradually – over a longer period of time. A part of the holes and fireplaces might have arisen from the funeral rituals once organized here when the deceased was buried in the burial ground. The making of particular fires before the burial close to the burial ground is suggested by the coal found in previously described field 57. Similar fireplaces and ritual pitholes have also been found in several other pagan burial fields in Latvia. Not all of the uncovered formations we can today fully understand and explain their use and meaning in the people's life and beliefs in that time by the incomplete evidences found in the ground. Thus in excavation field 3 on the S side in the basic earth between metres 5 and 20 there was an approximately 0.5 m deep and approximately 1 m wide ditch made which bends around the area of 11 x 7 m. On its N side a decayed pole end was found. No antiquities, nor ceramic fragments were found at this site. A group of several poles could be found on the W side of field 4 between metres 37 and 44. Six pole holes here mark a curve. It is possible that the row of poles in this layer also continues also outside the excavation field in the area which has not been studied. The columns have been dug 40 to 95 cm deep and 1 m from each other. This means that there has been no thick column fence. In some holes remains of decayed wood have been preserved. They suggest that the 120 - 25 cm diameter poles had stumpy cut ends and they were dug rather than driven into the ground. The wood-pulp of one of the poles was well-preserved. It was even possible to establish the species of the tree. It had been the oak. The pulp samples taken from the poles were determined their age with the help of the radiocarbon dating method. Its age is around 900 ± 60 years (TA - 2264). The recalculated dating shows the year of cutting the trees. It is year 1050 ± 60 years. In several spots of the excavation sites fireplaces and deeper holes made in the basic ground have been found. Part of the fires have been made namely in the holes. In the most of the holes and fire sites there were no finds. However, two holes deserve special attention. The first of them is shallow and about 1 x 1,5 m big rounded hole according to the plan where a big bonfire over the hole was sustained for a longer time, maybe even repeatedly for several times, as it can be judged from the thick layer of coal and ash. On the top of the bonfire among three 10 - 20 cm big boulders there was a skull of a 10-11 year old horse without its lower jaw (the bones were identified by biologist V. Daņiļčenko in Moscow). The stones and the skull had not burnt in the fire. This means that they had been placed here after the bonfire had burnt out. The skull was laid among the stones approximately in the N – S direction. The horse skull without the lower jaw suggests that it had not been a head of a just killed horse which had been laid here, but rather the bones of the animal which had been slayered or died before that and the soft tissues had already separated from the bones. The particular placing of the skull among the stones leads to the thought about some special sacrifice ritual which had taken place here. The horse skulls as sacrifices have been repeatedly found in the excavations in Latvia. In the 12th century Rīga they were laid under the foundations of buildings (Caune A. *Celtņu ziedojumi Rīgā 12. – 16. gs. (Construction Offerings in Riga of the 12th - 16th centuries)* // *Mat.* 1978. R., 1979, pp. 19 – 22). In the Daugava River Livs' villages horse skulls were placed under the fireplace stones (Zariņa A. *Krāsni Salaspils Laukskolas lībiešu 10. – 13. gs. ciemu vietās (Ovens at the Sites of the 10th - 13th Centuries Livs' Villages of Salaspils' Country School)* //

Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija. R., 1977. 12th edition, pp. 92–96). In talsi hillfort such a skull was laid under the hillfort gate (Karnups A. Dzīvnieku galvaskausi Talsu pilskalnā (Animals' Skulls in the Talsi Hill Fort) // Senatne un Māksla. 1938. No. 2. pp. 74–93). The horse skulls found in the sites of buildings are connected with the so-called building sacrifice tradition, however, in the above-mentioned case the find in the bonfire place outside a building should be explained with the universal belief common among many peoples that a horse skull has a magic power of bringing happiness and protecting against evil spirits. Approximately 15 m NE from the described bonfire site there was another bowl-type hole – approximately 2 x 3 m big and around 0.5 m deep. The filling of the hole consisted of a thin layer of coal and ash with sterile loam soil layers. After digging out the ground filling three unburnt fishing net floats were found there cut from pine bark as well as a two-sided bone comb with broken teeth, sandstone hone and 29 fragments of raw gravel clay crockery typical for the local peoples. In the centre of the big bowl-type hole the layer of coal was more intensive. Under it there was another hole – according to the plan it was rounded, 0.6 m in the diameter and around 0.5 m deep. In the bottom of it there was a flatly laid half of a horse's lower jaw. It seems that this particular placing of the part of a horse's skull could also be associated with an ancient sacrifice tradition. In the NW corner of the big hole there was the lower end of a 30 cm diameter dug-in oak pole. Next to it there were five poles driven into the ground. The nibbled lower ends of the poles had remained in the ground. The age of the pole wood-pulp sample established according to the radiocarbon dating method is 850 ± 40 years (TA - 2103). The recalculated dating indicates the year when the tree was cut. It is year 1100 ± 40 years. The use of the oak trunk for the dug-in poles creates a certain surprise as according to the previous archaeological excavations oak was not used in the building construction in the 12th century Rīga (Цауне А. В. Жилища Риги. С. 46.). In ancient Rīga as in later ethnographic buildings in the rest of Latvia only coniferous trees were used as building materials – the pine and fir-tree. In the people's beliefs namely the oak and linden are considered the sacred trees. The selection of oak as the material for the poles in the sacrifice places of Riga leads to the idea about some particular meaning they had. Maybe the top of the pole was made as an image of a deity? The fact that the pagan Livs used to have deity images carved in wood at the end of the 12th century and beginning of the 13th is indirectly confirmed by chronicler Indriķis, when reporting a dream vision of some christened Liv from Sidgunda. The Liv man had seen his God in his dream the image of which had grown out of the trunk of a tree “starting from the chest and higher” (Indriķa hronika. X. 14. §.). It must be pointed out that in the excavations made in Riga in the previous years several small wooden sticks with carefully cut face depictions of one, two or four people on their ends had been repeatedly found in Riga. (Caune A. Rīgas 12.–13. gs. antropomorfe kokgriezumi (Anthropomorphic Wooden Carvings of Rīga in 12th - 13th centuries) // LPSR ZA Vēstis. 1981. No. 6, pp. 56 - 67). The interpretation of the meaning of these carvings can be made only based on parallels in wider archaeological materials of neighbouring countries. Thus next to the Baltic tribes multi-headed god images had been common in the lands of the Western Slavs. The most popular of them is the four-headed Sviatovit of the Arcona Temple of Rügen Island described by the chronicler Saxo Grammaticus. In the lands inhabited by the ancient Western Slavs small multi-headed wooden sculptures have also been found in the archaeological excavations. They are considered images of special household gods or individual, portable images of gods (Filipowiaķ W. Die Kultproblematik in Wolin vem 9. bis zum 12. Jh. // Rapports du III Congres International d'Archeologie Slave. Bratislava, 7 - 14

septembre 1975. Bratislava. 1979. T. 1. S 249–250.). The significance of the small wood carvings of Riga could be the same. If such small wood-carved images of gods were in use, then also the images of the most important idols must have been created similarly. Such a likely idol's image is also shown in the reconstruction of Rīga sacrifice place shown in figure 4. Next to the Idol's image, on the ends of the sticks various sacrifices could be placed. In the cultural layer of the second ancient population period which in field 3 and 4 overlaps with the previously described sacrifice holes and ritual fire sites, the remains of two burnt groups of buildings were found. The features of the former buildings continue outside the research field in the direction of NW. (A. Caune. Arheoloģiskās liecības par senāko apdzīvotību Rīgas doma baznīcas apkārtnē (Archaeological Evidence on Ancient Population in the Surroundings of the Rīga Dome Church). Latvijas Vēstures institūta žurnāls. 1992. No. 3, pp. 27– 32, pp. [21 – 38])