

Līgo or Jāņi festivity (Midsummer Eve) is an ancient celebration of many Indo-European nations. According to the local history researcher Viktors Grāvītis, the most Midsummer Eve traditions have been preserved with the Belarus people. The second to follow are the Latvians. For our ancestors the Midsummer Eve was a service to God in its own way – in accordance with the good nature spirits, with all the united, unseparable and fruitful nature pulsating in mysterious sounds and reflections. To celebrate the Midsummer Eve our ancestors assembled in an open air in the hills with a peculiar form – Jānis hills. The closest Jānis Hill to Riga is situated on the NA of the Dole island on the bank of the Daugava River. 150 m from the Jāņkalni homestead, at the intersection of forest roads. The approximately 4 m high and 25 metres wide hummock has overgrown with forest. The first news in the literature about the hill are provided by Edit Kurtz in her book “Verzeichnis alter Kultstätten in Lettland” (1924). The rare book represents a peculiar catalogue of the ancient cult sites of Latvia. The author considers that the Jānis Hill is an ancient assembling place for celebrating the Midsummer Eve. She has gained the information from Bielenstein’s manuscript “Onomastisches Material” which before the war was in the stock of Riga City Library. The archive of the History Museum of the Republic of Latvia stocks the report of the local history researcher K. Rozītis of year 1942 on the Jānis Hill. People say that the middle of the hummock is empty and when somebody hits the hill with a foot it drones. Ambiguous stories about discovered bones,” is a mysterious comment by K. Rozītis. It is possible that the “ambiguous stories” are rather well-founded as in 1942 the plants characteristic to the ancient graves had grown on the hummock. Jānis Hill could have been the shrine of the drowm Ķivutkalns Hill – the hillfort flooded when constructing Riga Hydropower Station. (In „Latvijas Padomju enciklopēdija” Ķivutkalns is said to date back to the first millennium before Christ). The researcher of the archaeological monuments of Riga district J. Graudonis has noticed that the top part of the hummock has been artificially modified. Unfortunately this is not the only “modification” made by people in the lonely hummock. On the slopes of the Jānis Hill, especially in NE filled up excavations can be noticed. Some of them have appeared when taking materials for building the road. However, Jānis Hill has had a happier fate than the neighbouring Karātavu kalns (Gallows Hill): this archaeological monument is covered by arbitrarily arranged family gardens (A. Plaudis, 1992).