

320, 326, 396, 397, 398; Kruglov, Y. *Russkie obryadovye pesni*. Moscow, 1989, No. 118.

³²See Note 31, Kruglov, No. 326.

³³AIMEF, f 8, sp. 78, d. 151, III, p. 14, No. 145.

³⁴See Note 30. *Lirika...*, p. 149, No. 291.

³⁵See Note 30, *Lirika*, No. 287, 396, 398; see Note 29, Kruglov, p. 164, No. 124; p. 166, No. 129; p. 171, No. 151, etc.

³⁶See Note 29, No. 288.

³⁷See Note 25, No. 632.

³⁸AIIIFE, f 8, o 78, d 151, III. p. 28, No. 15.

³⁹*Smolensky etnografichesky sbornik*. II. Moscow, 1893, p. 71.

⁴⁰Meletinsky, E. *'Edda' i rannie formy eposa*. Moscow, 1968.

⁴¹See Note 31, Kruglov, p. 194, No. 107; p. 196, No. 115; p. 205, No. 144; p. 208, No. 160; see also Note 29, p. 146, No. 61; p. 176, No. 171.

⁴²AIIIFE, f. X, o. 78, d. 151, III. p. 39, No. 160.

⁴³See e.g. *Vyaselle pesni*. I. Malash, L. (ed.). Minsk 1980, No. 244; see Note 30, No. 155; Note 24, II, No. 1037.

⁴⁴See e.g. Note 31, Kruglov, p. 207, No. 155.

⁴⁵See Note 30, p. 146, No. 287.

THE 13-17TH CENTURY VILLAGE CEMETERIES OF SOUTH ESTONIA IN FOLK-TRADITION AND BELIEFS

Heiki Valk. Tartu, Estonia

In spite of Christianisation of the country and the establishment of the Church organisation in the beginning of the 13th century, the deceased were buried simultaneously at churchyards and local village cemeteries in Estonia up to the late 17th and early 18th centuries.¹ The local grave-fields are usually situated on small sand or gravel hills, not far from medieval and also contemporary villages. The distance between them and the cultural layers of medieval settlement places is mostly between some 100/200 and 600/700 metres. Though some of the village cemeteries have grown out of Late Iron Age ones, most of them have still been founded in the Christian period – in the 13th century or later. The village cemeteries are very numerous in Estonia, particularly in the

southern districts of the country. According to oral folk-tradition and archaeological data 785 village cemeteries are known in South Estonia² – an area situated south of the rivers Navesti and Emajõgi and comprising 25 parishes.³

According to archaeological data the burial customs of the village grave-fields correspond in the main features to the Christian traditions: there are no bigger grave-goods, as a rule, and the deceased are mostly directed with the head towards the direction of sunset.⁴ Still, the presence of heathen features – small grave-goods and in South-East Estonia (Võrumaa district) also non-Christian grave-orientation can be observed. In rare cases even cremation burials occur until the 16th century.⁵

Folk tradition about village cemeteries comes from the end of the 19th and from the 20th century. By that time the local graveyards had been deserted for more than 200 years already. The second half of the 19th century was the time of a rapid collapse of the traditional way of thinking in the Estonian villages. Because of that the folklore data do reflect only the remains of former beliefs and tales. However, oral tradition can still provide a survey about the character of the beliefs connected with the village burial grounds. Probably beliefs of similar kind were also known in the medieval and the post-medieval period.

Firstly – how does the oral tradition date the village cemeteries? In 199 cases (25,4 %) the village burial grounds are known as war burials; in 71 cases the ‘Swedish War’ is mentioned. The word *Swedish* occurs also in several other relations, in 116 cases altogether (14,8 %). The tradition talks about Swedish War graves, burial grounds of the ‘Swedish Age’, the Swedes or the Swedish soldiers, etc.⁶ In 63 cases (8,0 %) village cemeteries are considered to be burials of plague victims, in 4 cases famine ones. These datings correspond to the data of the written and archaeological sources about the latest use of the cemeteries. The events of the Nordic or Swedish War, which marked also the end of the Swedish rule, took place in Estonia in 1700-1710. The famine that the tradition refers to is apparently the Great Famine of 1695-1697,⁷ the plague was that of 1710-1711. During these years the population of Estonia decreased from about 350,000-400,000 to about 130,000-150,000 persons.⁸ Probably most of the victims of these times were buried in the village cemeteries. Sometimes quite detailed information of this tragic period is preserved in the people’s memories. In some cases even the names of the persons connected with the last burials are remembered. On the basis of oral tradition, the latest burials on the village cemeteries belong to the late 18th or early 19th centuries. Usually they are children or persons standing outside the normal village society - beggars, soldiers, gypsies, wandering workers. In one case also witches are mentioned.

According to oral tradition, the village cemeteries have sometimes been associated with cult places and activities. Toponyms show that many of them –

particularly in the Tartumaa district – were connected with Catholic chapels. The places are often known under the name of *Kabelimägi* ('Chapel Hill') or *Kabeliase* ('Chapel Site'), sometimes also as cemeteries of small wooden churches. The respective tradition is met in 224 cases (28,5 %) for the whole area, including 110 cases (44,7 %) for South-Tartumaa. The coexistence of medieval village grave-fields and chapels is reflected in the shift of meaning of the word *kabel* ('chapel'). Even nowadays in the Tartu dialect the word means both a chapel and a burial ground. The meaning-shift has sometimes caused quite strange place-names. For example, the burial place of the dead manor oxen is called *Härjakabel* ('Oxen Chapel')⁹, a grave of a dead horse – *Märakabel* (Mare's Chapel)¹⁰.

The names of the chapels connected with the village cemeteries are sometimes also known in the folk tradition. The name of Tõnis/Tiinus/Tennüs (St. Anthony) occurs in 9 cases, Anne/Anna in 6 cases, Kadri (St. Katherine), Jüri (St. George) and Jaan (St. John), in 5 cases, the Cross in 3 cases, the Holy Remains and Toomas (St. Thomas) in 2 cases, Mihkel (St. Michael), Märten (St. Martin), Maarja (St. Mary), Niklus (St. Nicholas), Siim (St. Simon), Olev (St. Olaf), Markus (St. Mark), Andres (St. Andrew), Laurits (St. Lorenz), the Holy Ghost and the Lord in one case each¹¹. Half-pagan nature of peasant cultic activities and offerings at the chapels made the Church uneasy about the situation already in 1428.¹² In the 17th-18th centuries the Lutheran Church repeatedly demanded the destruction of the old Catholic chapels because of the peasants' superstitious activities.¹³ Sometimes the folk tradition knows the chapel or small wooden church to have been destroyed in the Nordic or Swedish War. The toponym *Ristimägi* ('Cross Hill'; 14 cases) refers probably to Medieval stone crosses or to big Catholic cultic crosses mentioned repeatedly in the 17th century as objects of idolatry. So, at Naha cemetery a big wooden cross was still standing in the first half of the past century¹⁴. On the Ristimägi Hill of Noodasküla also a big cross has stood under a pine-tree¹⁵. The name Meieristi or Meieristi mägi (the Hill of Our Cross;¹⁶) at Karjatnurme may also refer to a cult cross.

Some of the village cemeteries seem to have been connected directly with cultic activities of evidently pre-Christian nature. There are data about holy or votive trees concerning 31 burial grounds. In 8 cases pines, in 4 cases lime, in 3 cases juniper and spruce, in 2 cases birch and oak occur. As we see, mostly coniferous trees are mentioned. The cult of the dead is connected with conifers also in the Setu and Votian tradition.¹⁷ Although the initial meaning of the word *hiis* (holy grove) is considered to have designated in Estonia both the deceased and the burial ground,¹⁸ the toponym occurs at village cemeteries only in 12 cases. At the same time folk-tradition knows many *hiis*-places that are not bound

with medieval village burial grounds or the Late Iron Age burial grounds. In this way the folk tradition does not support the theory of the identity of *hiis*-places and pagan cemeteries.

Data about offerings, in some cases of clearly pagan nature, concern 43 village cemeteries. At the Tabina burial ground there have grown 3 holy oaks where offering to the god Taara is mentioned.¹⁹ At Ihte offerings were given to the god Tooro or Toori.²⁰ At the foot of the Linnamäe grave-field there stood a sacred Uku-stone.²¹ The cult of the deity Uku has also been known in pre-Christian Estonia.²² On the Linte Maarjamägi ('Mary's Hill') butter, meat, porridge, eggs and cheese were offered to the gods at midsummer night.²³

In Mammaste, Alaküla, Vanaküla, Ihte, Mõniste, Villa, Kamali and Reintse offerings are connected with the cult of Tõnn or Tõnis²⁴ – a creature joining probably both the features of St. Anthony and a pre-Christian deity. In Vanaküla, Alaküla and Mammaste the offered items were taken to holy trees, in Villa to a stone called Tõnn's stone (*Tõnnikivi*), in Mõniste into a deep hole. On St. Anthony's Day (January 17) in Reintse bagpipe was blown, in Mõniste and Ihte pig heads were offered. In the last mentioned case they were given to an old woman who cooked them. Some of the food was given to the spirits, some of it was eaten by the offerers themselves. At Mammaste the offerings were accepted by Tõnis himself who waited for them with a small dog. It is characteristic that no other saints, except the half-pagan Tõnis, are mentioned as receivers of offerings. Thus, the folk-tradition seems to reflect the pre-Christian nature of the custom of offering. Offerings were probably made also to the souls of the ancestors. Eating on the grave as part of the funeral ceremony and also taking food to the grave on commemoration days are customs with very deep roots. Sporadically they existed in Southern Estonia until the late 19th century.²⁵ The conservative Setu ethnic group has preserved some of these traditions up to nowadays. Offering is also reflected in the archaeological material of the village cemeteries. In this way the pot-sherds found from Makita, Roiu, Mäletjärve, Vooreküla, Ervu, Tilga and Mammaste cemeteries can be interpreted. Fragments of animal bones have been found from Vaabina, Makita and Vana-Kuuste grave-fields. Coins occurring near the earth surface at the burial grounds of Makita, Tääksi, Koikküla and Kõrgpalu can also be treated as offered items.²⁶ Coin offering has been particularly widespread in Estonia during the 16th and 17th centuries.

In folk tradition the village cemeteries are quite often connected with supernatural phenomena. In 66 cases (8,4 %) *vaimud* (ghosts) have been met on the deserted burial grounds – mostly in the darkness and in the shape of human beings. At Pragi, Kerita and Lahmuse ghosts have wrestled with people who happened to pass the old burial-places at night.²⁷ At Ruudi, Uusna and Kärksi

ghosts appeared in farm-houses built on the village graveyards.²⁸ In the last-mentioned case they troubled animals, let them loose from the bridle and threw bunches of straw at people. The phenomena vanished after the place was consecrated. In Tagula the appearance of ghosts predicted the death of some village inhabitant.²⁹ In 31 cases (3,9 %) data about groaning of unburied bones occur. The voices disappear when the bones are buried. Both traditions – that of the ghosts and of the groaning bones – reflect the belief of an enduring connection between the dead person and the remains of the body.

The village burial grounds were sometimes known as sacred areas where, for example, the felling of trees was prohibited. Analogical tradition can also be met among the Ingrian Finns and the Vepsians.³⁰ Causing damage to old burial grounds – particularly the first ploughing – has in some cases brought along a supernatural punishment. At Mustajõe the lightning set fire to the new rye field and the farm-house, and at Kõlitse the farmer's threshing-house with the new rye cut from the cemetery-place burned down.³¹ The man who ploughed up the Kuressaare grave-field had to die already the same night.³² At Kaprali the ploughman lost all his children. According to one version they died of a throat disease, according to another they were throttled by the Pell-demon.³³ After a house was built on the Polli grave-field and skulls were placed on standing sticks, it was the children again who had to die. Before that knocking was heard at nights.³⁴ At Uderna the skulls had been put under a small railway bridge after gravel-taking in the 1930s. After about half a century an old woman – the only local inhabitant from those times – was sure that she had remained alive only because she had never walked over the skulls. All the others who had not cared about the bones and walked across the bridge had died before her.³⁵ In some cases the results have not been so drastic. At Laguja strange grey animals appeared when the place was being ploughed, and begged to stop the work. Still, nobody cared about it.³⁶ At Riisa a tremendous crowd of people dressed in white had been seen working in the field after the first ploughing.³⁷

Also taking anything away from the graveyard area is in some cases re-venge. In Vanaküla picking up anything – even a bundle of straw dropped down from the waggon – caused a serious disease.³⁸ The malady retreated only after returning the thing. When a stone cross was carried away from the Võmmorski burial ground and walled into the manor cowhouse, the cattle began to die. The dying stopped only after taking the cross back.³⁹ In some cases the dead have appeared in a dream and demanded their things back. At Soeküla and Anikatsi the bones and skulls of the dead have pursued the disturbers of their peace.⁴⁰ It is characteristic that the supernatural phenomena at old village grave-fields seem to be connected with the deceased buried there, and not with the Devil or evil forces. Only at Kaprali according to folk-tradition the corpses

buried at plague-time had been eaten up by somebody. A farmer keeping vigil over his wife's grave had heard a voice saying that it was not the bear who ate the bodies, but God's rage.⁴¹ Songs or music were heard from old grave-yards in Orava at Christmas, in Külitse at Easter, in Arula at the time of souls' wandering in autumn, in Kastre on New Year's Eve and midsummer night, at Uue-Kariste on Thursday evenings.⁴² In Uderna and Keisriküla fires of hidden treasures were seen.⁴³

Folk-tradition and beliefs concerning village cemeteries reflect the coexistence of pre-Christian and Christian beliefs in the Estonian village mentality during the medieval and post-medieval period – up to the 19th century. According to oral tradition in such double or syncretist religion the pre-Christian features have played quite an important part.

Sources

AA – Topographical archive of the Estonian Centre of Archaeology
E, ERA, H, RKM – the folklore collections of Estonian Folklore Archives of Estonian Museum of Literature
KM KO – the descriptions of Estonian parishes of the Archives of the History of Estonian Culture of the Estonian Museum of Literature
Mss – the collection of letters sent to J. Jung in the archives of the Estonian Centre of Archaeology
SbGEG – Sitzungsberichte der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft
TATÜ – Proceedings of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. Social Sciences

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¹Valk, H. Hedniskt gravskick ger rikaste fynden. In: *Populär arkeologi*. 1990, No. 4, pp. 9-11; Valk, H. The Burial Grounds of Estonian villages from the 13th to the 18th century: Pagan and Christian? In: *Tor. Tidskrift för arkeologi*. Vol. 24. Uppsala, 1992, pp. 203-228.

²The data about the number of cemeteries come mostly from the archives of the Estonian Centre of Archaeology and the Tartu Literature Museum (both collections of the Folklore Archive and Archives of Estonian Culture). Also collections of toponyms of the Institute of Estonian Language, the materials of the Estonian National Museum and local museums and the results of the author's fieldwork in 1984-1993 have been regarded.

³The parishes of Saarde, Halliste and Karksi in the Pärnumaa district, Suure-Jaani, Kõpu, Viljandi, Paiatu, Tarvastu and Helme in the Viljandimaa district, Rannu, Puhja, Nõo, Kambja, Võnnu, Rõngu, Otepää and Sangaste in the southern part of the Tartumaa district, Kanepi, Põlva, Räpina, Urvaste, Hargla, Karula, Rõuge and Vastseliina in the Võrumaa district. Also the western parts of the Setumaa district will be considered.

⁴Hausmann, R. Grabfunde aus Fierenhof und Kawershof. In: *SbGEG* 1902. Jurjew (Dorpat), 1903. pp. 128-133; Hausmann, R. Ausserkirchliche Begräbnisplätze im Estenlande in christlicher Zeit. In: *SbGEG*. 1902. Jurjew (Dorpat), 1903, pp. 134-153; Hausmann, R. Grabfunde aus Mekshof. In: *SbGEG*. 1907. Jurjew-Dorpat, 1908, pp. 114-119; Molvygin, A. *Raskopki srednevekovogo derevenskogo mogilnika v Loku*. In: TATÜ 1978, No. 1, pp. 99-101; Aun, M. Mogilnik Voorekyula. In: TATÜ. 1981, No. 4, pp. 416-419; Valk, H. Der Dorffriedhof von Mäletjärve. In: TATÜ. 1985, 4, pp. 376-379; Valk, H. Der Dorffriedhof von Vaabina. In: TATÜ. 1986, 4, pp. 389-393; Valk, H. Die Steinsetzung und der Dorffriedhof von Makita. In: TATÜ. 1987, 4, pp. 380-385; Valk, H. Novye otkrytiya na mogilnike Makita. In: TATÜ. 1988, No. 4, pp. 364-370; Valk, H. Nakhodki na mogilnike i poselenii Myaksa. In: TATÜ. 1989, No. 4, pp. 341-344; Valk, H. Rettungsgrabungen auf dem Dorffriedhof von Ervu. In: TATÜ. 1991, No. 4, pp. 378-382; Valk, H. Reflections of Folk Religion and Beliefs in the Estonian 13-19th Century Burial Customs: Archaeology, Written Sources And Oral Folk Tradition. In: *Proceedings of the 2nd Swedish-Estonian Archaeological Symposium* (Sigtuna, 1991). Stockholm. In print; Sokolovsky, V. *Srednevekovoe derevenskoe kladbishche v Tyaeksi*. In: TATÜ. 1990, No. 4, pp. 418-422; Sokolovsky, V., and Sokolovsky, M. *Raskopki srednevekovogo derevenskogo kladbishcha v Kyarevere*. In: TATÜ. 1986, No. 4, pp. 385-389.

⁵Valk, H. Põletusmatustest keskaegses Lõuna-Eestis. In: *Kleio*. Ajaloo ajakiri. No. 7. Tartu, 1993, pp. 5-13.

⁶All the numerical data about the folk-tradition presented in the article should actually be considerably larger: the archaeological archives include folklore data only in rare cases. Even nowadays it is possible to get 'new' folk tradition concerning the antiquities described already in the 1920's or earlier.

⁷Liiv, O. *Suur näljaaeg Eestis 1695-1697*. Akadeemilise Ajaloo Seltsi Toimetised IX. Tartu, 1938.

⁸Palli, H. *Estestvennoe dvizhenie selskogo naseleniya Estonii 1650-1799*. Vols I-III. Tallinn, 1980, I Vol., pp. 11, 81-98, 133, II Vol., pp. 79-120; Vahtre, S. Jooni eesti rahva demograafilisest arengust ja vaimse palge kujunemisest feodaalajal. In: Etnilised ühendusest sotsialistliku rahvuseeni. Eesti NSV ajaloo küsimusi X. *Tartu Riikliku Ülikooli Toimetised*. Vihik 789. Tartu, 1987, p. 29.

⁹Kurista (Võnnu): local tradition from 1988.

¹⁰Laguja (Otepää): ERA II 241, 277/78 (1).

¹¹A survey of the Estonian medieval chapels dedicated to the Catholic saints is provided by L. Vahtre (Vahtre, L. Keskaegsete maakirikute ja -kabelite nimipühakute kajastumine eesti rahvakultuuris. In: *Kleio* 1, 88. Tartu, 1989, pp. 38-45.)

¹²*Liv-, Ehst- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch*. Bd. VII. Riga, Moscow, 1881, p. 690.

¹³Sonntag, K. G. *Die Polizei für Livland von der ältesten Zeit bis 1820*. Riga, 1821, pp. 106-109; Köpp, J. *Kirik ja rahvas: Sugemeid eesti rahva vaimse palge kujunemise teelt*. Lund, 1959, pp. 218-240.

¹⁴Naha (Räpina): AA 79:9, 1.

¹⁵ERA II 244, 299, Vastseliina.

¹⁶Jung, J. *Muinasaja teadus eestlaste maalt II*. Kohalised muinasaja kirjeldused Liivimaalt Pernu ja Viljandi maakonnast. Eesti Kirjanduse Seltsi Toimetused IV. Jurjev, 1898, p. 145.

¹⁷Ariste, P. Vadjalaste puu- ja metsakultusest. In: *Etnograafiamuuseumi aastaraamat XXX*. Tallinn, 1977, pp. 150-153.

¹⁸Loorits, O. *Grundzüge des estnischen Volksglaubens*. Uppsala-Köpenhamn. I - 1949, pp. 121-122; III - 1957, pp. 11-19; Koski, M. *Itämerensuomalaisten kielten hiisi-sanue*. Semantinen tutkimus. Turun Yliopiston Julkaisuja. Sarja A, Series C, Tom 5. Turku, 1967, pp. 79-81, 171.

¹⁹KM KO f. 200, m. 6:2, 19, Vastseliina. The theonym Taara evidently belongs to pseudo-mythology and has entered the oral tradition in the second half of the 19th and in the 20th century (Loorits, O. *Estonische Volksdichtung und Mythologie*. Tartu, 1932, pp. 36-37; Loorits, O. *Grundzüge des estnischen Volksglaubens*. Uppsala-Köpenhamn. II - 1951, pp. 35-42; Viires, A. Taara avita!. In: *Looming*, 1990, No. 10, pp. 1410-1421). Still, on the grounds of folklore data a god with a similar name (Tooru, Toori, Toari etc.), apparently related to the Scandinavian Thor, has been known in ancient Estonia.

²⁰Ihte (Hargla): H II 32, 211/12 (25).

²¹Linnamäe (Urvaste): local tradition, heard in 1985.

²²The attempts to disprove the existence of Uku as a deity (Loorits, O. Uku. In: *Virittäjä*, 40, 1936, pp. 256-267) have not been so convincing as in the case of Taara.

²³Linte (Räpina): E I 58 (402); E X 4 (10).

²⁴Mammaste (Põlva): ERA II 245, 307 (6); Alaküla (Põlva): E 544624; Vanaküla (Põlva): E I 50 (359); Ihte (Hargla): H I 9, 677 (106); Mõniste (Hargla): H I 9, 709/10 (13); Villa (Rõuge): KM KO f. 199, m. 25, 32; Kamali (Halliste): see Note 16, Jung, p. 15; Reintse (Halliste): see Note 16, Jung., p.15.

²⁵RKM II 64, 101 (6) Rõuge; E 54460/1, Halliste; ERA II 274, 646 (71), Räpina; E XIII 21 (119), Tartumaa; H I 7, 166 (7), Valga; ERA II 282, 337 (155), Viljandi.

²⁶In most cases the upper layers of the archaeologically investigated cemeteries have been destroyed by road-constructing and melioration or mixed by ploughing. The materials of older excavations do not include data about the location of stray finds.

²⁷Pragi (Põlva): H I 9, 870 (183); Kerita (Suure-Jaani): Jung, 1898, 216; Lahmuse (Suure-Jaani): see Note 16, Jung, p. 217.

²⁸Ruudi (Viljandi): see Note 16, Jung, p. 109; Uusna (Viljandi): see Note 16, Jung, p. 107/8; Kärksi (Viljandi): H I 9, 161/2 (2). Supernatural phenomena – footsteps and self-opening doors occur even nowadays in a house built in the 1960's on and old village grave-field in Silmsi, North Estonia, Harjumaa district. Also dogs sometimes start suddenly barking at invisible creatures. Heard from local inhabitants in 1984.

²⁹Tagula (Sangaste): AA 84:2, 33.

³⁰Lukkarinen, J. Inkeriläisten vainajainpalveluksesta. In: *Suomalais-ugrilaisen*

seuran toimituksia XXXV. Kansatieteellisissä tutkielmia, omistettu Kaarle Krohnille. Helsinki, 1914. No 7, p. 13. Information about the Vepsians was kindly provided by M. Joalaid.

³¹Mustajõe (Põlva): KM KO f. 199:1, 17; Külitse (Nõo): Mss 115 m.

³²Kuressaare (Tarvastu): see Note 16, Jung, p. 214.

³³Kaprali (Karksi): E 10235/6, RKM II 94, 32 (53).

³⁴Polli (Karksi): ERA II 236, 568.

³⁵Local tradition, heard in 1985.

³⁶Laguja (Otepää): Mss 113.

³⁷Riisa (Suure-Jaani): see Note 16, Jung, p. 214.

³⁸Vanaküla (Põlva): H, Mapp 655 (1-4); H, Mapp 656 (5); Miiaste (Põlva): E 72240 (2).

³⁹Võmmorski (Setumaa): local tradition from 1984.

⁴⁰Soeküla (Urvaste): ERA II 245, 167; Anikatsi (Paistu): E 45229.

⁴¹Kaprali (Karksi): E 10235/6.

⁴²Orava (Räpina): KM KO f. 200, m. 8:5, 10; Külitse (Nõo): Mss 115m; Arula (Otepää): KM KO f. 199, m. 42, 9/10; Kastre (Võnnu): ERA II 240, 637 (48), ERA II 240, 715 (34-36); Uue-Kariste (Halliste): see Note 16, Jung, p. 13.

⁴³Uderna (Rõngu): KM KO f. 200, m. 12:1, 29; Keisriküla (Helme): see Note 16, Jung, p. 143.

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE ESTONIAN MARTINMAS SONGS

Ülo Valk. Tartu, Estonia

On the 10th of November Martinmas was celebrated in Estonia and it was based on the memorial day of Saint Martin. It is an important date in the Estonian folk calendar that marks the beginning of winter and end of autumn works. Masked minstrel-beggars (originally only boys and men) used to visit farmhouses in Estonia, asking for alms and blessing people, animals and fields. The minstrel-beggars made up a whole family that consisted of a father, a mother and children. Martinmas is one of the holidays of the souls visiting time in autumn, during which the departed ancestors were believed to visit their homes. It was often regarded as its end-date. The minstrel-beggars songs constitute a whole cycle which is one of the longest and most numerous Estonian runo-songs. The report is based on the analysis of