

# The Lithuanian Cross-crafting Tradition during the Period of National Revival (1988–1991): Reclaiming Memory

**Skaidrė Urbonienė**

*Senior researcher at the Department of Sacral Art Heritage, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, Vilnius, Lithuania*

*E-mail: skaidreu@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** The article examines the Lithuanian cross-crafting tradition during the period of National Revival (1988–1991). The primary objective is to reveal how cross-crafting served as an expression of the prevailing societal sentiments, values, and topical issues of the time. The main focus is on an analysis of the intentions and occasions for erecting crosses during the period of National Revival. The article determines the dominant intentions for building crosses: commemoration of the victims of Soviet repression, specifically fallen partisans and deportees; the rebuilding of crosses that had been destroyed by the Soviet regime; to thank God for regained freedom and to seek divine protection for the nation and the state, which had had independence restored. The study concludes that the cross-crafting tradition during the National Revival reflected the most significant issues of that period, i.e. reclaiming historical memory and the aspiration for freedom and independence.

**Keywords:** commemoration, cross-crafting, national aspirations, religiosity, traumatic experience

## Introduction

The Lithuanian tradition of cross-crafting, originating with the introduction of Christianity, reached its zenith in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had become a prominent symbol of national identity by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Crosses and other forms of religious monument were erected as expressions of piety in all Christian, especially Catholic, countries, with Lithuania standing out for its abundance and variety of forms<sup>1</sup>, something that was noticed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century not only by Lithuanians but also by foreign travellers and researchers<sup>2</sup>. Due to the abundance of cross-crafting, which give the Lithuanian landscape a distinctive character, Lithuania was already being called the ‘land of crosses’ by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Jaksztas 1891: 153).

Crosses and shrines were built by individuals, families or communities, as well as by community groups (youth, women’s, men’s) and organisations. As in other Catholic countries, crosses built by individuals or families were intended to satisfy individual spiritual needs and commemorate family life events (weddings, child baptisms, housewarmings), while those built by communities or organisations had more general intentions or reasons, addressing collective needs or commemorating special events in the history of the village, parish, state, or Church.

The development of cross-crafting was uneven. This tradition went through very difficult periods when people were forbidden from erecting religious monuments. The first restriction on the cross-crafting tradition was during the years of Tsarist Russian occupation in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and especially after the suppression of the 1863–1864 uprising. However, the Tsarist government’s prohibitions and restrictions on erecting crosses were inconsistent and were often ignored or circumvented, so they did not fundamentally disrupt the cross-crafting tradition. The most difficult period for cross-crafting began after the Second World War when the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania. In the first post-war years, as the repressive apparatus of the occupying power began to operate, restrictions on religious activities and the introduction of atheist ideology took hold. At this time the Soviet authorities began destroying visual signs of religious faith and many churches were closed and turned into warehouses or secular institutions. Cross-crafting, especially crosses in public spaces, also attracted the attention of the Soviet authorities, and they began to be removed

with the erection of new crosses no longer tolerated. Persecution of those who made and erected crosses was carried out in various ways through penalties (warning letters, fines), hospitalisation in psychiatric hospitals, prohibition of obtaining a higher education diploma, etc.

However, despite prohibitions, deliberate destruction, and repression, crosses appeared here and there throughout the Soviet period. The existence of the cross-crafting tradition during the Soviet era can be illustrated by material from museum curator Vytas Valatka's expedition to Samogitia in 1964 (ŽAM MA, f. 652). During the expedition through the Telšiai, Plungė, and Šilalė districts, Valatka recorded all the crosses, shrines, and column shrines seen by the roadside, in homesteads, and in town and village squares. He registered a total of about 564 crosses. Of these, 122 objects were built during the Soviet era. Thus, this material recorded by Valatka testifies to an unbroken, albeit greatly suppressed, cross-crafting tradition.

On what occasions and with what intentions did people, albeit rarely, still erect a cross during the Soviet era? As my research has shown, during the Soviet period, the tradition of marking the place of a sudden or tragic death with a cross or erecting a cross near a home in memory of a loved one was continuous. A cross would also be erected to fulfil a vow (especially when asking for good health) or as an offering to God, when asking for some grace or when giving thanks for it. However, there were not many such cases. Those who decided to erect a cross or shrine tried to place it near their home so that it would be less noticeable to passing Soviet officials, or they would choose a secluded spot nearby or in a forest. It was almost impossible for communities to erect a cross in a public place, so sometimes parishioners would build a monument in a churchyard or cemetery, as the authorities interfered less in these spaces. During the Soviet era, the cross-crafting tradition was also maintained by restoring old monuments or moving them from public places to safer ones (cemeteries, churchyards, near homes) (Urbonienė 2014: 36–39).

More favourable conditions for the cross-crafting tradition emerged in 1985 when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev initiated a programme of economic, social, and political reforms (Rus. *perestroika*)<sup>3</sup>. The implementation of *perestroika*, and especially the policy of publicity (Rus. *glasnost*)<sup>4</sup>, contributed to local authorities having a more liberal attitude towards the erection of crosses and encouraged more masters to engage in this activity. The revival of cross building was already felt on the eve of *perestroika* when, in 1984, to commemorate

the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the patron saint of Lithuania, prince of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, St Casimir, multiple monuments were erected in churchyards (Urbonienė 2015b: 75). And just three years later the spiritual liberation of society inspired by *perestroika* was significantly reflected in the cross-crafting tradition. Nineteen-eighty-seven became exceptional in the development of Soviet-era cross-crafting as in that year, to commemorate the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the baptism of Lithuania, a wave of cross-building swept across the country. Almost every churchyard was then adorned with a cross dedicated to this jubilee (Urbonienė 2015b: 84).

Nineteen-eighty-eight was especially important for Lithuania and the development of the cross-crafting tradition as the social and public political Lithuanian Reform Movement (*Sąjūdis*) was founded and the National Revival period began, leading to the restoration of independence on March 11, 1990 and widespread international recognition of Republic of Lithuania in 1991. During the Revival period, with the prevailing mood of freedom and re-independence felt in society, religious life and religious practice<sup>5</sup> also intensified. The population took the initiative to make crosses and to rebuild or restore those destroyed during the Soviet era. This four-year period significantly revitalised the cross-crafting tradition. During this revival, hundreds of crosses were erected. This short but significant period of cross-crafting development from 1988 to 1991 is the chronological framework of this article. The object of the article is the crosses erected during this period. These are taken as a visual expression of religious feeling and as ‘memory aids’, following the concept of social anthropologist Elisabetha Viggiani (Vigiani 2016: 55–56). Drawing on the insights of Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, Hastings Donnan, and others, Viggiani describes memorials to violent events as having the function of *aide-mémoires*, which these monuments acquire by “recalling the sights, sounds, and smells of former time and providing frameworks through which people perceive and engage with the present and the future” (Vigiani 2016: 55).

The primary objective is to reveal how cross-crafting served as an expression of the prevailing societal sentiments, values and topical issues of the time. To this end, the study aims to analyse the intentions for and occasions of erecting crosses during the National Revival period and to determine the dominant reasons for making crosses at that time. To highlight the specificity of the cross-crafting tradition during the period in question, the reasons for making crosses

will be compared with those of the Soviet era. The study employs quantitative and qualitative analysis, interpretative and historical comparative methods.

The cross-crafting of the National Revival period has not yet received detailed study. The attention of ethnologists and art historians has mainly focused on the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as earlier periods. The situation of the cross-crafting tradition during the Soviet era has been discussed by only a few researchers (Skaidrė Urbonienė, Vacys Milius, Gražina Marija Martinaitienė). There are only a few publications relevant to the article's problem, and they are intended to review the crosses built in a particular district at the time of Revival (Milius 1997; Lazdauskas 2000; Varkalienė 2003). In addition, some publications on the 20<sup>th</sup>-century cross-crafting tradition in local areas mention one or other cross from the 1988–1991 period. These articles provide empirical data about the motives, intentions, locations, and artistic features of the crosses of the research period.

The research source is photographic material stored in the manuscript section of the Library of the Lithuanian Institute of History (LII BR), and published material such as albums of crosses, as well as local history articles and publications in the periodical press and on the internet. The research also drew on material collected by the author during field research since 2003 (people's memories, testimonies of craftsmen), which was collected through semi-structured and unstructured interviews (the informant survey material is stored in the author's personal archive). During the field research, photo documentation and descriptions of crosses were also made (photo material with descriptions is stored in the author's personal archive). The field research material collected between 2013 and 2015 during a research project<sup>6</sup> on the cross-crafting tradition of the Soviet era is particularly important for the article's problem. When talking about their experiences during the Soviet era, informants remembered the National Revival period better, which they already associated with a free, independent Lithuania and unsuppressed religious life. Therefore, the facts related specifically to the rise of cross-crafting during that period remained more vivid in their memory.

For the study, 398 crosses built in various parts of Lithuania during the 1988–1991 period were selected; the descriptions of these monuments record the intentions, motives, and occasions of erection. A significant number of crosses built during the research period have been recorded, although they were not included in the study if their descriptions did not indicate the inten-

tions or motives for erection, which is important information for analysing the research problem.

Of the 398 monuments built during the studied period, 14 were built in 1988, 122 in 1989, 164 in 1990, and 98 in 1991.

We can assume from the figures presented that fewer crosses were built in 1988 because *Sąjūdis* began to operate publicly in June, and crosses are usually built from late spring (when the ground is no longer frozen) to late autumn. In addition, the monument must be ordered from the craftsman in advance, and the necessary materials must be acquired. These circumstances probably contributed to the seemingly small number of crosses built in 1988.

In 1989, a significant increase in the erection of crosses was observed, which intensified further in 1990 when the independent state of Lithuania was restored. We can assume that some of the monuments erected in 1989 (or even 1990) were commissioned as early as 1988. According to one wood carver from Kupiškis, he received so many orders for crosses at that time that he was unable to fulfil them all on time (personal communication, 2012). In 1991, as the young state was establishing its regained freedom, the number of recorded crosses was similar to that of 1989.

An analysis of the collected field research material and the published iconographic and ethnographic material revealed the main intentions and occasions for erecting crosses during the Revival period.

## Crosses commemorating individuals

The majority of the crosses I have studied consists of crosses dedicated to the memory of individuals (131 items). Among them, crosses dedicated to the memory of fallen partisans, victims of the Soviet era, and deportees prevail. These are signs commemorating painful, traumatic experiences related to the post-war resistance against the Soviet occupiers, the partisan struggle, and the mass deportation of Lithuanians to Siberia.

Armed resistance to Soviet occupation began in 1944 and continued until 1953. During this period, about 50,000 people participated in active combat, and another 100,000 provided support and were members of underground organisations (Vervečkienė 2024: 1313). During this period, the Soviet authorities suppressed the resistance movement using various means and methods: they

repressed or even killed the families of those who helped partisans, infiltrated partisan groups and underground organisations, imprisoned and tortured captured resistance participants, and fought battles with partisans. Many resistance participants, if they were not killed, were sentenced and deported to Siberia. During the armed resistance, 20,000 partisans died, whose remains, taken from their places of death or burial, were secretly reburied by relatives or comrades in the nearest cemeteries or near homesteads, in forests (Trimonienė 2009: 182). So that the place of death or burial would not be forgotten, relatives would mark them with a small cross or a miniature shrine in a tree, on which there were no inscriptions (Čepulytė 2011: 117). Usually, only the person who left that sign would know about such a place. When the National Revival began, the act of marking the sites of partisan's deaths became publicly possible. Older people, witnesses to the tragic events of that time, retained in their memory the places where partisans were killed or died, so from the founding of *Sąjūdis*, those who knew these places hastened to erect memorial crosses there. In addition, during the Revival, many forgotten and unknown burial places of killed partisans were discovered and marked with crosses.



Figure 1. A column shrine built in 1991 marking the place where four partisans died. Kepaliai village (Kelmė district). Photo by Vacys Milius, 1992. LII BR F73, neg. 85332

For example, a cross erected in 1988 at a homestead in Kurkliečiai village (Rokiškis district) commemorates the events of July 14, 1945, when five partisans were killed in a battle with a Soviet military punitive unit, and eight villagers were murdered (Kurkliečių kaimas, <https://www.genocid.lt>). In 1991, a column shrine was erected near the Kražantė river at the place where four partisans died in 1949 (Fig. 1).

In 1991, Apoloniya, the sister of fallen partisan Petras Gasčiūnas, erected a cross in Dimšišiai forest (Pakruojis district), where her brother and three other partisans died in June 1945 (PRSVB KE 2019: 428). Crosses erected in commemoration of partisans always have inscriptions with the names and dates of the fallen, and often the circumstances of their deaths.

Crosses also commemorate the memory of innocent civilians, whose lives were taken by the violent actions of Soviet military punitive units. Wood carver Petras Pranckevičius dedicated one of his crosses to the “Memory of Murdered Innocents”, which he erected in 1989 in Klepočiai village (Alytus district) (Pranckevičius 2016: 5). With this cross, he commemorated the memory of the villagers of Klepočiai who were killed in 1944, and also the memory of the violent event itself, which happened when, during a punitive operation by the Soviet military that aimed to destroy partisan supporters and intimidate the local population, 12 villagers were killed, 21 homesteads were burned and property was looted (Jankauskienė & Trimonienė 2014).

In Christian countries, places of violent, as well as unexpected or premature, death, are often marked with crosses with the aim of cleansing and sacralising that place. By erecting a cross at the place of someone’s death (which marks the boundary where good and evil symbolically collide) relatives not only commemorate the deceased but also sacralise the site of violent death, transforming it into a ‘sacred’ place towards which people show respect as they do for all that is regarded sacred in the Durkheimian sense (Durkheim 1948: 317). For a believer, a sacralised place is equivalent to the holy ground of a cemetery where the deceased rest.

When a cross is put into ground that is itself part of the event being referenced, it not only commemorates the deaths of the individuals but also draws attention to the reasons for their deaths, as with spontaneous shrines (Santino 2011: 99–100). Thus, in these cases, when the memory of those who died for freedom is commemorated with a cross at their places of death, the



place itself becomes important for memory. As Hastings Donnan has noted, “by evoking past events, landscapes serve as aide-memoirs” (Donnan 2005: 75).

Moreover, by marking that place with a sacred sign, by honouring the memory of the deceased with flowers and lit candles, that place of tragic death, as Hege Westgaard pointed out, is aestheticised, it is redefined and reclaimed. It changes from being a place of horror to a place of recall (Westgaard 2006: 170).

Such crosses, erected through the efforts of communities and individuals at the places where partisans died or were buried, not only give meaning to the memory of a specific family or community’s post-war tragedy but also to the tragedy of the entire nation.

Crosses commemorating the fallen members of the resistance are erected not only at their places of death but also in public places, to remind passers-by or a specific social group (for example students) of the Lithuanian people’s struggle for freedom. For example, to establish historical memory for the younger generation, a cross in memory of the victims of the resistance was erected in the garden at Pakruojis 1st Secondary School on June 14, 1991 (Vanagienė & Žvikas 1994: 15). It should be noted that this date was chosen for its symbolism. June 14 is widely commemorated in Lithuania as Mourning and Hope Day, marking the beginning of the mass deportations during the first Soviet occupation in 1941. Cross builders often chose this day for the ceremonial consecration of crosses as well. In one such case in 1989 a cross was built in Plaučiškiai village (Pakruojis district) and dedicated to the victims and sufferings of the Soviet era. It was consecrated on June 14, 1991 (PRSVB KE 2019: 420). By choosing this memorable day for cross-building or consecration ceremonies, the message conveyed by the cross is strengthened.

During the National Revival period, a number of crosses were also erected in memory of deportees. The Soviet government began carrying out the mass deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia in 1940, as well as during the post-war period (1948–1951) (Anušauskas, <https://www.vle.lt>). Even during the Soviet era there were isolated cases in which deportees who returned from exile would gather and erect a cross in a cemetery or churchyard in memory of loved ones who died in exile. Although the intention behind their erection was not publicly declared, such crosses were called Deportees’ Crosses by local residents. One example is the cross erected in 1970 in Obelynas village (Šilalė district) by those who had returned from exile (personal communication, 2003).

During the National Revival period, crosses dedicated to the memory of deportees became a common phenomenon. They were built by individuals, communities, or community groups, often deportees' clubs. The location for a cross which commemorates the memory of all the deported people of that locality (village, town, parish) would be in a public space (squares, churchyards, near public buildings), where people could gather during national holidays and other commemorations. Crosses erected in memory of deportees usually bear particular inscriptions. For example, a column shrine in the centre of Darbėnai town (Kretinga district) has a dedicatory inscription that reads, "Their suffering – the nation's pain / 1941–1953 / To the deportees / 1989" (Paulikienė 2007: 28). The inscription on the cross ("To the martyrs of the nation / 1989 / 06 / 14") in the old cemetery of Joniškis (Vičas 2010: 17) and the date of its erection (June 14) indicate that it is dedicated to the memory of victims of mass deportations. These and similar inscriptions send a message not only to remember the deportations of people from a local area but also the tragedy of mass deportation as experienced by the entire nation. They, like the inscriptions on the crosses at the sites of resistance fighters' deaths, are an important element in maintaining memory and giving crosses the *aide-mémoires* function.



Figure 2. A column shrine in memory of the Deportations at Biržai railway station. Photo by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2011.

In some cases, crosses in memory of deportees are erected in a place associated with the deportation. For instance, a cross was erected at Kulūpėnai (Kretinga district) railway station in 1990 to commemorate the deportation of local people from this railway station to Siberia in 1949. Every year on June 14, the commemoration of Mourning and Hope Day takes place at the cross (Galuškinienė 2010: 5). In 1990, the deportees and political prisoners of the Biržai region also erected a column shrine in memory of the Nation's Deportation at the Biržai railway station, from which people were taken to Siberian exile (Fig. 2). In these cases, the memorial cross as well as its surroundings (the railway station) become an important element for establishing historical truth and maintaining memory. According to Donnan, the concreteness of place and the materiality of the signs within it projects people's memories onto the landscape in a way that can then be read back as 'history': as neutral, self-evident, and true (Donnan 2005: 98).

Crosses in memory of a family member who did not return from Siberian exile were also erected by individuals at that person's homestead. For example, in 1991, a daughter erected a cross to her father, a deportee who never returned from Siberia, at his homestead in Laimučiai village (Pakruojis district). The inscription on the cross specifies not only the father's memory but also the location of his death in a specific Gulag camp ("Aleksas / Petraitis / 1901–1953 / Inta Gulag camp / Komi ASSR") (PRSVB KE2019: 55). In 1990, children erected a shrine at their parents' former homestead in Kulūpėnai village in memory of their parents, who were deported to Siberia in 1948 and died there (Galuškinienė 2010: 14). In 1990, a woman in Darbėnai erected a column shrine near her home in memory of her husband, who died under tragic circumstances in Siberia in 1945 (Paulikienė 2007: 35).

Crosses were also erected to commemorate other victims of the Soviet genocide or those who suffered the regime's repressions. In 1989, crosses dedicated to the victims of the Stalinist era were erected in the Jonava cemetery (Kasperavičiūtė-Karaliūnienė 2006: 10), and also near the Lukšiai (Šakiai district) church (Dėdynas 2009: 53). A cross dedicated to the victims of Soviet repression, carved by craftsman Vytautas Ulevičius, was unveiled on June 14, 1989, in the central part of Kaunas Street Cemetery in Kėdainiai (Banys 2014: 7).

In the summer and autumn of 1991, following the events of January 13<sup>7</sup>, crosses were erected to commemorate those who died on that day. One such

cross, made by cross crafter P. Pranckevičius and other masters, was erected in Alytus city park in 1991. The same Pranckevičius also erected a cross in memory of the victims of that day near the Vidzgiris' church in Alytus. The master recalled that on the night of January 13 he did not sleep, followed the events on the radio, and "when I found out that people had died, the thought stirred in me that I would like to commemorate them. And that night, I created a cross in my mind" (Pranckevičius 2016: 14). But he took time to solve the technical and organisational issues of the construction, and erected the cross only in 1992 (ibid.: 14). Crosses in memory of the events and victims of January 13 were most often erected in public spaces so that there would be enough room for people to gather for the commemorations of that day. However, crosses in honour of the victims of January 13 were also erected by individuals in their private spaces, as the Puidokai family did on their homestead in Pročiūnai village, Joniškis district (Vičas 2010: 91).

During the Revival period, crosses also began to be used to mark the memory of prominent Lithuanian state figures, clergy, scientists, and individuals who had contributed to culture, for example writers or artists. Such crosses were most commonly erected at the person's birthplace. For example, in 1991, a roofed pillar-type cross with an inscription was unveiled at the site of the birthplace of Lithuanian statesman Antanas Merkys (1887–1955) in Bajorai village (Kupiškis district) (Jonušytė 2015: 39). In Joniškis, a memorial cross was erected in 1989 near the house where the famous interwar émigré artist Adomas Varnas (1879–1979) was born (PA Photo). A tall wooden roofed pillar-type cross was erected in 1990 at the site of the former family homestead of the famous interwar émigré writer Marius Katiliškis (1914–1980) in Katiliškės village (Joniškis district) (PA Photo).

As before, crosses were erected on homesteads to commemorate family members on the anniversaries of their birth or death, or on the occasion of a child's birth or wedding. The tradition of erecting a small memorial cross at the places of a sudden death (traffic accidents) was also continued. However, there were few crosses built with such intentions; they were greatly outnumbered by the already discussed crosses dedicated to the memory of partisans, victims of Soviet genocide, and deportees.

One of the intentions that emerged during the National Revival period was to erect memorial crosses or shrines at the sites of vanished homesteads or villages (27 items). Crosses erected with this intention are partly related to

crosses in memory of individuals, as they are connected to the memory of the residents of a vanished homestead or village.

During the Soviet era, many homesteads disappeared after their owners were deported to Siberia, or were forcibly abandoned due to the ongoing programmes of land reclamation and collectivisation. Therefore, with the beginning of the National Revival, people took the initiative to mark the sites of vanished homesteads with monuments, thus honouring the memory of their family homesteads, parents, and grandparents. For example, Kazimieras Griškėnas erected a cross with the inscription “God, bless the fields of my homeland” in 1991 in Pasodninkai village (Rokiškis district) in memory of his vanished family homestead (personal communication, 2004). Dalia Liorentaitė-Viltrakienė erected a cross in memory of her family homestead in 1990 in Kumečiai village (Vilkaviškis district) (Valuntaitė-Mickevičienė 2007: 118). The family of Jonas Vrašinskas erected a cross in 1991 in Gudupiai village in memory of their family homestead, which was destroyed in 1948 (Katkuvienė & Linionis 2007: 98).

During the Soviet era, entire villages were moved to newly created settlements. In the National Revival period, residents of former villages began to gather for village commemorations, and during these events would often erect a cross in memory of a vanished village. For instance, the residents of the former Sidaugai village (Pakruojis district) erected a cross in 1991 in memory of the village and its residents (PRSVB KE 2019: 282). The residents of Gikoniai village (Pakruojis district) erected a cross on the occasion of a community meeting in 1991, dedicating it to the memory of the village and also to Lithuania with a plea for God’s protection (PRSVB KE 2019: 396).

## Rebuilding crosses

The second largest group (96 items) of crosses I have researched consist of rebuilt crosses that were destroyed or fell into disrepair during the Soviet era. The rebuilding of these crosses had already begun even before the establishment of *Sąjūdis*, but with the start of *Sąjūdis’* activities, the rebuilding of crosses intensified. People began openly and fearlessly to express their religious feelings and views, spurring them to rebuild crosses or shrines that had once stood in private or public spaces. As one respondent who repaired crosses in the 1980s said, he always felt fear at that time, but “during the *Sąjūdis* period, although it

was still the Soviet era, it was already different as no one was hiding anymore, they weren't afraid" (personal communication, 2013). Another family from Taujėnai (Ukmergė district) also stated that when *Sąjūdis* began, "we were no longer afraid, we built crosses in 1989" (personal communication, 2004).

People would rebuild crosses that had stood near their or their parents' homes, trying to keep the location the same as the old cross. Additionally, people often had several intentions when rebuilding a cross near their homestead. For example, one woman in Paberžinė village (Utena district) pointed out that in 1989 she and her husband rebuilt a cross in the same spot where her husband's grandfather's cross, built in 1889, had stood (it had fallen from old age in 1983, but they had not dared to rebuild it then). The family rebuilt the cross not only as a testimony to the memory of their grandparents and parents but also in the hope that God would protect them from misfortune (personal communication, 2013).

Crosses built by communities during the interwar period were also rebuilt. For example, in Aukšėdis village (Kretinga district), a cross built with youth funds in 1921 was demolished during the Soviet era. In 1989, the local community commissioned a new one from craftsman Albinas Gričius and erected it at the same crossroads where the old cross had stood (Paulikienė 2007: 59). The residents of the neighbouring Nausėdai village did the same, collecting funds and rebuilding a cross and a shrine at the village crossroads that had been demolished in 1959 (ibid.: 67).

Sometimes, rebuilt crosses were given an intention that was relevant at the time. For example, the community of Tetirvinai village (Pasvalys district) rebuilt a cross and dedicated it to departed villagers (those who died in Siberia or in Lithuania during the Soviet era, and those who left their native village). As the wood carver who made the cross recounted, the location at the edge of the village was chosen according to an old tradition to protect it from evil spirits (personal communication, 2011).

One after another, crosses that were built in 1928 and 1938 to commemorate the ten-year anniversaries of the First Republic of Lithuania were rebuilt. These symbols of statehood were especially undesirable during the Soviet era, so most of these crosses were demolished. In the 1989–1991 period, wooden crosses commemorating the anniversaries of Lithuanian independence were rebuilt in Pravieniškės (Kaišiadorys district), Naujasodis (Jonava district), Kalvarija, Kalnaberžė and Šėta (Kėdainiai district), Betygala (Raseiniai district),

Slavikai (Šakiai district), Uplyna and Vytogala (Šilalė district), Bartninkai and Virbalis (Vilkaviškis district); roofed pillar-type crosses were rebuilt in Žeimiai (Jonava district), Jonava, Svėdasai (Anykščiai district), Širvintos, and elsewhere (Krikštopaitytė-Urbonienė & Smilingytė-Žeimienė 2018; Vaidotas 2018).



Figure 3. People celebrating the rebuilding of a cross on Pakalnių hill on July 26, 1989. Unknown photographer. Private archive

At the beginning of the National Revival, not everything went smoothly. In some places, the local authorities were not yet sure that a separation from the Soviet Union was coming, so they were displeased when crosses were rebuilt, especially those that marked the anniversaries of the First Republic of Lithuania. Such crosses were a clear sign of the memory of the independent Lithuanian state, so they particularly annoyed Soviet officials. For example, a tall cross commemorating the first decade of independence was built on Pakalnių hill (Utena district) in 1928 but was demolished during the Soviet era. With the start of *Sąjūdis*' activities, the local community rushed to rebuild this cross. The master who made the cross in 1989 said that he received threats from the local authorities that he “would go to Siberia” for making the cross (personal communication, 2013). However, the initiators of the reconstruction were supported by some members from the local Soviet body, and so the cross was successfully erected on the same site as its predecessor (Fig. 3).



## Crosses commemorating Lithuania's freedom

The third largest group (66 items) consists of crosses dedicated to the Lithuanian National Revival, freedom, and independence. They were erected in gratitude to God for regained freedom and restored state independence, and as a plea for God's protection for the country during this politically tense period. Such crosses also marked important events of that period, symbolising the history of those days, thus leaving signs of memory for the younger generation.

At the beginning of the National Revival period, in 1988–1989, crosses that were erected to ask for God's help in regaining freedom and restoring state independence were dominant. For example, a cross in the churchyard of Gelgaudiškis has the inscription: "Protect, Most High, our beloved country. 1989" (PA Photo). The same appeal is inscribed on a cross erected in 1989 in the churchyard of Griškabūdis (PA Photo). In Butėnai village (Kupiškis district), a roofed pillar-type cross was erected in 1989 with the inscription "Lithuania pleads, God, have mercy on her children" (Jonušytė 2015: 51). In 1989 in Vaišvydava (Kaunas district), a cross was erected on the initiative of the residents with an appeal to God: "Do not forsake us, Most High, nor our dear Homeland" (Poškaitienė & Vaičius 1992: 3). Individuals also built crosses with this intention on their private land. For example, a resident of Maželiai village (Joniškis district) erected a cross at his homestead with the inscription "Please, Lord, grant us peace and unity. 1989" (Vičas 2010: 100). In 1989, a resident of Kapčiamiestis erected a cross on his homestead with the dedication "Lord, be with us. For the glory of Lithuania" (LII BR F73, neg. 85467, 85468).

The Baltic Way<sup>8</sup> also inspired people to erect memorial crosses along the road where people stood holding hands during the event. As a woman from Vadai village (Ukmergė district) recalled, there were a lot of crosses along the Baltic Way: "The Baltic Way was here – oh my God, so many of those crosses were built!" (personal communication, 2004). These were often quickly built, unstable crosses that did not last long, and are classified as temporary monuments. But there were also more durable, quite tall oak crosses commemorating this event, such as the cross erected by residents of Jonava city who participated in the Baltic Way, at the 91.1 kilometre mark on the Vilnius Panevėžys highway (Karaliūnienė 1998: 20). Residents of Jonava still commemorate the Baltic Way every year at this cross.





Figure 4. A cross to the glory of Lithuanian independence built in 1990 in Sartininkai. Photo by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2012.

On March 11, 1990, the Act on the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania was adopted, and that summer crosses began to emerge in gratitude to God for the restoration of independence. For example, the residents of Duokiškis parish erected a cross in 1990 in the town to thank God for their regained freedom (personal communication, 2005). The residents of Sartininkai erected a cross in 1990 dedicating it to the glory of Lithuanian independence (Fig. 4). The community of Morkakalnis village (Pakruojis district) erected a cross at the village crossroads in 1991, dedicated to “Reborn Lithuania” (PRSVB KE 2019: 292).

However, the tense political situation, with a strained relationship with the Soviet Union and the continued presence of its military units in Lithuania, caused anxiety and uncertainty among the residents, and overshadowed the joy of regaining freedom. Therefore, it is not surprising that the crosses erected during this period were predominantly inscribed with pleas to God to protect Lithuania and its people: “Protect us, O Most High, and our beloved country”, “Lord, protect our Homeland Lithuania”, “O God, protect reborn Lithuania”, “God, protect us and Lithuania”.



Figure 5. A cross dedicated to the nations that recognised Lithuanian independence, built in 1991. Kaunas. Photo by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2020.

In 1991, as other countries began to recognise Lithuania as an independent state, crosses appeared to commemorate these events. The first such cross, a temporary memorial dedicated to Iceland, was erected in Vilnius near the parliament building shortly after the events of January 13, when, on February 4, Iceland was the first country to officially recognise the Republic of Lithuania as a sovereign state (Urbonienė 2024: 187–188). In the summer of that year, a tall wooden cross with the inscription “To the nations that recognised Lithuanian independence” was erected on a hill of crosses in Kaunas near the Sixth Fort (Fig. 5).

Another specificity of the period in question is that there were many cases where a cross was erected with multiple intentions, combining family or community events with state events. For instance, children erected a cross at the former Simonaitis homestead in Gačioniai village (Pakruojis district) in memory of their parents, who were deported to Siberia, and at the same time dedicated it to reborn Lithuania. This double intention is testified by the inscriptions on the cross: “Lithuania, having endured the years of Golgotha, be blessed. 1991” and “In memory of our dear parents” (PRSVB KE 2019: 52). Another family

erected a cross in 1990 near their home in Juodupė town, dedicating it to the memory of their parents, and to commemorate the Revival, because, according to the daughter's testimony, her parents, who were deportees, did not live to see the restoration of independence (personal communication, 2004). In Smėlynė village (Anykščiai district), Steponas Šerelis erected a cross at his homestead in memory of his parents with an appeal to God: "O God, protect us and Lithuania. 1990" (Zabulytė 2018: 243). A cross erected in 1990 to commemorate the vanished Juškaičiai village (Joniškis district) was also a plea for God to protect the Homeland (Vičas 2010: 99).

## Other intentions

During the period in question, a more significant community activity in erecting crosses is noticeable. In addition to the aforementioned initiatives, local communities or community groups also built crosses to ask for God's protection for their communities during that politically unstable period. Such community crosses often have dedicatory inscriptions. For example, the 1990 cross in Ūdekai village (Pakruojis district), built on the initiative of the villagers, serves as an offering to God for the community's protection, with the inscription "God, protect the people of Ūdekai" (PRSVB KE2019: 231). The cross in Virbališkiai village (Kupiškis district) was also erected to seek God's blessing for the villagers. This is apparent from the inscription: "Lord, bless Virbališkiai and their people. 1991" (Jonušytė 2015: 22). The residents of Tumasoniai village (Kupiškis district) inscribed on the cross: "Bless us, Lord, and may your blessing remain with us always. Residents of Tumasoniai village. 1991" (ibid.: 57).

Sometimes the communities of two villages would build a cross, seeking God's intercession for the residents of both villages. This is illustrated by some examples, such as a cross erected in 1990 with funds from the communities of Dailučiai and Staugaičiai villages (Vilkaviškis district), with a plea for God to protect them from various misfortunes (Valuntaitė-Mickevičienė 2007: 110). Similarly, the residents of Pyragiai and Plundakai villages (Kupiškis district) jointly erected a cross in 1990 asking for God to protect them from misfortune (Jonušytė 2015: 24).

Continuing the earlier tradition, a community or a group within it would gather for the construction of a cross to commemorate a date or a memora-

ble event important to that group. To illustrate this, the staff of the school in Reškutėnai village (Švenčionys district) erected a cross in 1990 to commemorate the school's anniversary (Lapėnienė 2005: 92). Parishioners would also collect funds and commission a cross to commemorate an important date or event for the parish. In one such case, the people of Girkalnis parish (Raseiniai district) erected a cross in 1991 to mark the beginning of the construction of the new St. George's Church in Girkalnis (Tarvydienė & Kantautienė 2016: 75). The residents of Marijampolė city erected a cross in 1989 when the city returned to using the name Marijampolė<sup>9</sup> (Katkuvienė & Linionis 2007: 25).

During the Revival period, people continued to erect crosses for personal reasons or occasions, a tradition that had persisted even through the Soviet era.

A number of cases show that a cross was erected due to a person's religious convictions (49 items). Respondents explained their motivation for this by saying that they could not, or were afraid to, build a cross during the Soviet era, but always wanted to have one or a shrine near their home because they were religious. As soon as a politically and ideologically freer time arrived, they erected a cross near their home. The owner of a homestead in Pakruojis, who erected a cross in 1990, stated that "Lithuanians are Christians, so they must have a cross" (PRSVB KE 2019: 267). A woman from Klausgalvai-Medsėdžiai village (Kretinga district) said similarly: "we are Christians, so let's build crosses and pray for health and happiness." She had always wanted to have a shrine near her home, so made her dream come true in 1990 (Galuškinienė 2010: 28). A woman from Kulbiai village (Panevėžys district) said that she erected a cross near her home in 1991 because her husband had always wanted a cross near the house. They built the cross to seek God's protection for their home (personal communication, 2014). Another woman, living in Peluodžiai village (Pakruojis district), erected a cross near her home in 1991, believing that God would give her a happy life in a liberated Lithuania (personal communication, 2006). A family living in Butniūnai village (Pakruojis district) erected a cross near their home in 1991 because they "wanted to have their own cross, so they would have a place to pray" (PRSVB KE 2019: 12). At the request of an old, sick mother, in 1990, children erected a column shrine near her house in Kulūpėnai village so that she could see it from the window of her room. This was a great comfort to the elderly woman, who was unable to go to church due to her health and would pray at home by the window with a clear view of the column shrine (Galuškinienė 2010: 11).

A few traditional cases were recorded where a cross was built to seek God's help for health. For example, in the non-operating cemetery in Nevočiai village (Šilalė district), a father mourning his deceased baby erected a shrine in 1989 so that the Mother of God would protect babies from death (personal communication, 2003); in 1990, a cross was erected at a homestead in Nasrėnai village as an offering to God so that a sick son would recover (Galuškinienė 2010: 19).

Some cases testify that people continued the tradition of erecting a cross to fulfil vows made to God. In 1990, a family in Kaltanėnai village (Švenčionys district) erected a cross near their home, fulfilling a vow they had made when their son went to serve in the Soviet army. The son returned unharmed, and so the parents erected the cross (Lapėnienė 2005: 27). Another family, living in Sartininkai (Tauragė district), erected a cross near their home in 1990 when their son was serving in the Soviet army. After the Act on the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania was announced on March 11, 1990, young men began to flee the army and try to return home. That time was especially tense for the parents, so they erected a cross and prayed to it for their son to return safely and also dedicated the cross to commemorate the restoration of state independence (personal communication, 2012).

There were also cases where a long-held vow to build a cross to thank God for a grace received could only be fulfilled with the start of a freer period. Thus, one man erected a vow cross in 1990, thanking God for keeping him alive during the Second World War (Valuntaitė-Mickevičienė 2007: 134). Or a former Siberian deportee living in Skaborai village (Rietavas municipality) promised to build a cross to thank God for surviving the deportation. She was afraid to do so during the Soviet era, but in 1990, her daughter helped her fulfil her vow (PA IV 2013: 6). These cases, and other similar examples, show that the second and third generations are also affected by the traumatic experiences of their parents and grandparents. By erecting a memorial cross, they not only help solidify family memory but also actively maintain it themselves.

## Conclusions

This study of Lithuanian cross-crafting during the period of National Revival (1988–1991) showed a significant resurgence of this tradition compared to the Soviet era. The cross-crafting tradition of the National Revival period reflected the prevailing public sentiment and values.

Although some individuals erected crosses for personal reasons or to celebrate personal occasions, priority during the Revival period was given to intentions that expressed the interests and aspirations of society and the state. A notable specificity of this period was the erection of crosses with a dual intention combining personal and public motives.

One of the main intentions for erecting crosses was to honour those who died fighting for Lithuania's freedom (partisans), as well as those who perished in exile in Siberia or suffered from Soviet repression and public commemoration of these people was impossible during the Soviet era. These crosses were not only a means of showing respect for those who died for freedom but also a way for individuals, communities, and society as a whole to reclaim historical memory, one of the most significant issues of that period. The aspiration to reclaim memory is also evidenced by a large number of rebuilt crosses that had been destroyed during the Soviet period, especially those dedicated to commemorate important dates in Lithuanian state history.

Meanwhile, crosses erected to commemorate fallen resistance fighters or victims of Soviet repression, even when they mark individual, personalised suffering and loss, simultaneously reflect the suffering or traumatic experience of the community or society as a whole.

Crosses erected to commemorate the Lithuanian Revival period, the *Sąjūdis* movement, the March 11 Act of Independence, and the January 13 events, as well as those built to thank God for regained statehood or to seek divine protection in the pursuit of an independent state, expressed the most important value of Lithuanian society at that time, i.e. the aspiration for freedom and independence. These crosses also bore witness to the patriotism and religiosity of Lithuanian society.

It is notable that the vast majority of crosses erected during the Revival period have inscriptions indicating the intentions or the reasons for their construction. These inscriptions specify the commemorated date or event, thereby helping to solidify historical memory. Without such inscriptions these crosses are indistinguishable from other crosses erected for various non-commemorative purposes, remaining merely a visual expression of religiosity. When there are no longer individuals who can remember or recount the events commemorated by the cross, the inscription preserves that memory and strengthens the power of the message being conveyed. As *aide-mémoires*, the inscriptions on

these crosses link the present with the past and help to reconstruct traumatic memories and historical events.

In some cases the location of crosses is also important for preserving and maintaining memory, as it is associated with the commemorated events and serves as an *aide-mémoire*. It is precisely the site of the event that, as Donnan put out, “gives them their power” (Donnan 2005: 91).

Crosses in which the expression of religiosity was intertwined with the manifestation of traumatic memory and the commemoration of the most significant events of the Revival period, transformed the landscape into a living testimony of the nation’s struggle for freedom and aspirations for the future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The forms of cross-crafting monument are: crosses, roofed pillar-type crosses, column shrines, and shrines (standing on the ground or hung in trees). The term cross is most often used in the article because this form was dominant during the period in question. In cases where the form of the monument is important, it will be specified, i.e. either roofed pillar-type cross, column shrine, or shrine.

<sup>2</sup> Priests Liudwik Adam Jucewicz (1813–1846), Bonawentura Butkiewicz (1795–1871), judge Michael Gadon (1807–1855), traveller and physician Teodor Tripplin (1812–1881), and forester Aleksander Połujański (1814–1866) are worthy of mention (Urbonienė 2015a: 29).

<sup>3</sup> The *Perestroika* programme aimed to revitalise the slowly and inefficiently developing economy and attempted to introduce elements of a market economy (encouraging self-financing, increasing the autonomy and profit of enterprises). Residents were allowed to set up small businesses (Pertvarka, <https://www.vle.lt>).

<sup>4</sup> With the slogan of publicity (Rus. *glasnost*), more political freedoms and opportunities for criticism emerged, and later even a certain political pluralism; political prisoners were released, censorship was limited, and state structures began to be democratised. The democratisation of the totalitarian regime highlighted previously suppressed aspirations for independence in the occupied Baltic states. The policy of *glasnost* was one of the most important achievements of *perestroika* greatly accelerating the collapse of the communist regime and the Soviet Union itself as more and more people became involved in the reform process and a legal opposition formed, seeking to create a Western-style liberal society. Taking advantage of *glasnost*, public political movements and organisations were created in the Baltic states (the Estonian Popular Front, the Latvian Popular Front, and Lithuanian Reform Movement *Sąjūdis*), which spread ideas

of national revival and thanks to which the Baltic states finally became independent (Pertvarka, <https://www.vle.lt>).

<sup>5</sup> Sociological studies of religiosity conducted between 1990 and 1997 showed that the changes that began after the collapse of the communist regime led to an increase in the religious activity of the Lithuanian population, which continued throughout the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Juknevičius 1998: 297–299). This led to a religious revival: people started attending church more, and religious rituals began to be considered more important (Žiliukaitė 2000: 249).

<sup>6</sup> The Lithuanian Cross-crafting during the Soviet Era: Ideological, Socio-cultural, and Artistic Aspects project carried out by Dr Skaidrė Urbonienė, funded by the Research Council of Lithuania (2013–2015).

<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of January 1991, the Soviet Union sent in special military units in order to restore Soviet rule in Lithuania. On 11 January, Soviet troops occupied the buildings of the Department of National Defence and the Press House in Vilnius. Tanks appeared on the streets of Vilnius on the evening of 12 January. The intention was to seize strategic objects such as the Television Tower, the Radio and Television Committee building, and the Supreme Council of Lithuania (the parliament). People all over the country gathered at these buildings to defend them. Soviet military forces began a crucial crackdown on the night of 13 January. Fourteen civilian protesters died, and hundreds were injured. Although some objects were seized, the ultimate aims of the operation were not achieved. Military raids continued for several months following the attacks, but no large open military encounters took place after the January events. January 13 became an official commemorative day, the Day of the Defenders of Freedom.

<sup>8</sup> The Baltic Way was a peaceful mass demonstration organised by the national movements of the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) on August 23, 1989. It was intended to condemn the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (August 23, 1939) and to express a unified aspiration for liberation from the Soviet occupation regime. On that day, the residents of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia formed a human chain, holding hands on the Vilnius–Riga–Tallinn highway, stretching for about 650 kilometres. About 1 million people from Lithuania participated in the manifestation, with a total of about 2 million residents of the Baltic states (Baltijos kelias, <https://www.vle.lt>).

<sup>9</sup> During the Soviet era, the city of Marijampolė was renamed Kapsukas, the pseudonym of interwar communist party activist Vincas Mickevičius (1880–1935).



## Sources

- LII BR – Manuscripts of the Library of the Lithuanian Institute of History  
PA IV 2013 – material collected by local ethnographer Irena Vaizgirdienė in 2013, kept in the author's personal archive  
PA Photo – author's personal photography archive  
PRSVB KE 2019 – Public Library of Pakruojis District Municipality, collected material titled “Where the Crosses Mourn at the Roadside” from a regional history expedition of the same name, pp. 1–565  
ŽAM MA – Scientific archive of the *Alka* Samogitian Museum

## References

- Anušauskas, Arvydas. Lietuvos gyventojų trėmimai (Deportations of Lithuanian Residents). *Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija* (Universal Lithuanian Encyclopaedia). <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/lietuvos-gyventoju-tremimai/> (accessed 06/08/2025).
- Baltijos kelias (The Baltic Way). *Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija* (Universal Lithuanian Encyclopaedia). <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/baltijos-kelias/> (accessed 06/08/2025).
- Banys, Vaidas (ed.) 2014. *Žemėlapis “Laisvės kovų paminklai ir atmintinos vietos Kėdainių krašte” aprašas* (Description of the “Monuments and Memorable Places of the Struggles for Freedom in the Kėdainiai Region” Map). Kėdainiai: Spaudvita.
- Čepulytė, Aistė 2013. Partizaninio karo vietų įpaveldinimas: besikeičianti vertybės samprata (Heritagisation of the Sites of the Partisan War: The Changing Conception of Value). *Acta humanitarica universitatis Saulensis*, Vol. 16, pp. 206–220.
- Dėdinas, Vidmantas (ed.) 2009. *Zanavykų krašto mažoji architektūra* (Small Architecture of the Zanavykai Region). Kaunas: V3 studija.
- Donnan, Hastings 2005. Material Identities: Fixing Ethnicity in the Irish Borderlands. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol. 12 (1), pp. 69–105. DOI: 10.1080/10702890590914320
- Durkheim, Émile 1948. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. London: George Allen & Unwin LTD.
- Galuškinienė, Rima 2010. *Kulūpėnų ir aplinkinių kaimų mažoji architektūra* (Small Architecture in Kulūpėnai and Surrounding Villages), pp. 1–33. Available at [https://www.kretvyb.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/etnografija\\_kulupenu\\_kaimu\\_mazoji\\_architektura2.pdf](https://www.kretvyb.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/etnografija_kulupenu_kaimu_mazoji_architektura2.pdf) (accessed 21/07/2025).

- Jaksztas, Adomas 1891. Keletas žodžių apie mūsų Kryžius (A Few Words about our Crosses). *Žemaičių ir Lietuvos Apžvalga*, No. 20, pp. 153–155.
- Jonušytė, Aušra (ed.) 2015. *Mediniai kupiškėnų paminklai. Mažoji architektūra* (Wooden Folk Monuments of the Kupiškis Region: Small Scale Architecture). Kupiškis: Kupiškio etnografijos muziejus.
- Jankauskienė, Edita & Trimonienė, Rūta 2014. Klepočių žudynės (The Klepočiai Massacre). <https://www.partizanai.org/index.php/kalendorius/6452-klepociu-zudynes> (accessed 06/08/2025).
- Juknevičius, Stanislovas 1998. Religingumo raida posovietinėje Lietuvoje (1990–1997) (The Development of Religiousness in Post-Soviet Lithuania (1990–1997)). *Kultūros istorijos tyrinėjimai*, Vol. 4, pp. 289–299.
- Karaliūnienė, Regina 1998. *Jonavos krašto kapai ir paminklai* (Graves and Monuments in the Jonava Region). Ukmergė: Ukmergės spaustuvė.
- Kasperavičiūtė-Karaliūnienė, Regina 2006. *Jonavos krašto kryždirbystė ir kryždirbiai. Atgimimo paminklai* (Cross-Crafting and Cross-Crafters in the Jonava Region: Monuments of the Revival Period). Jonava: Linotipas.
- Katkuvienė, Danutė & Linionis, Romas (eds.) 2007. *Mažoji medinė Marijampolės krašto architektūra* (Small Scale Wooden Architecture in Marijampolė District). Marijampolė: Piko valanda.
- Krikštopaitytė-Urbonienė, Skaidrė & Smilingytė-Žeimienė, Skirmantė 2018. *Paminklai Lietuvos valstybingumui įamžinti: tarpukario kryždirbystė* (Monuments Commemorating Lithuania's Statehood: Cross Crafting in the Interwar Period). Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas.
- Kurkliečių kaimas (The Village of Kurkliečiai). [https://www.genocid.lt/Statiniai\\_Vietos/Paminklai/Rokiskis\\_paminklai.htm](https://www.genocid.lt/Statiniai_Vietos/Paminklai/Rokiskis_paminklai.htm) (accessed 07/23/2025).
- Lapėnienė, Viktorija 2005. *Kryžių sakmė: Švenčionių rajono kryžių katalogas* (The Legend of the Crosses: A Catalogue of Crosses in Švenčionys District). Vilnius: Firidas.
- Lazdauskas, Vaidas 2000. Atgimimo ir atkurtos nepriklausomybės laikotarpio paminklai Raseinių rajone (Monuments of the Revival and Restored Independence Period in the Raseiniai District). *Kultūros paminklai*, No. 6, pp. 160–202.
- Milius, Vacys 1997. Atgimimo ir atkurtos nepriklausomybės laikotarpio paminklai Tauragės rajone (Monuments of the Revival and Re-independence periods in Tauragė District). *Kultūros paminklai*, Vol. 4, pp. 200–204.
- Paulikienė, Danutė 2007. *Darbėnų apylinkės architektūriniai, archeologiniai ir gamtos paminklai* (Architectural, Archaeological and Nature Monuments in the Darbėnai Area), pp. 1–78. Available at [https://www.kretvb.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/krastotyra\\_darbenu\\_apylinkes\\_architektūriniai\\_archeologiniai\\_gamtos\\_paminklai.pdf](https://www.kretvb.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/krastotyra_darbenu_apylinkes_architektūriniai_archeologiniai_gamtos_paminklai.pdf) (accessed 21/07/2025).

- Pertvarka (Reform Programme), *Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija* (Universal Lithuanian Encyclopaedia). <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/pertvarka/> (accessed 10/07/2025).
- Poškaitienė, Vidimanta & Vaičius, Antanas 1992. *Iš užmaršties sugrįžę* (Returned from Oblivion). Kaunas: Šviesa.
- Pranckevičius, Petras 2016. *Ranka rankon su medžiu* (Hand in Hand with the Wood). Kaunas: AB KOPA.
- Santino, Jack 2011. Between Commemoration and Social Activism: Spontaneous Shrines, Grassroots Memorialization, and the Public Ritualesque in Derry. In: P. J. Margry & C. Sánchez-Carretero (eds.) *Grassroots Memorials. The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Death*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 97–107.
- Tarvydienė, Vita & Kantautienė, Lina 2016. *Pietryčių Žemaitijos kryždirbystės savitumo bruožai* (Distinctive Features of Cross-crafting in South-eastern Samogitia). Vilnius: Žuvėdra
- Trimonienė, Rūta 2009. Paminklai sovietinio genocido aukoms ir rezistencijos dalyviams atminti Lietuvoje (1941–1953, 1988–2009) (Monuments Commemorating the Victims of Soviet Genocide and Resistance Participants in Lithuania). *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, No. 2, pp. 180–202.
- Urbonienė, Skaidrė 2014. Kryždirbystė XX a.: sovietmečio patirtys (Cross-Crafting in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Experiences from the Soviet Era). *Liaudies kultūra*, No. 3, pp. 35–43.
- Urbonienė, Skaidrė 2015a. *Religinė liaudies skulptūra Lietuvoje XIX a. – XX a. I pusėje* (Folk Religious Sculpture in Lithuania from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century). Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla.
- Urbonienė, Skaidrė 2015b. Sovietmečio kryždirbystės meninės raiškos bruožai (Some Features of the Artistic Expression of Cross Crafting in the Soviet Period). *Menotyra*, Vol. 22 (1), pp. 73–90.
- Urbonienė, Skaidrė 2024. Memorialising Historical Events in the Urban Space: Temporary Memorials, Monuments and Rituals. In: I. Stahl (ed.) *The Ritual Year 13: City Rituals 1*. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, pp. 178–188. DOI: 10.7592/RV13.13
- Vaidotas, Edvinas 2018. *Žuvusiems už Lietuvos laisvę* (To Those Who Died for Lithuania's Freedom). Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo karo muziejus.
- Valuntaitė-Mickevičienė, Aušra 2007. *Vilkaviškio krašto kryžiai ir kryždirbiai* (Crosses and Cross-Makers of the Vilkaviškis Region). Paežeriai: Vilkaviškio krašto muziejus.
- Vanagienė, Birutė & Žvikas, Klemensas (eds.) 1994. *Pakruojo krašto paminklai* (Monuments of the Pakruojis Region). Šiauliai: Saulės Delta.
- Varkalienė, Laimutė 2003. Atgimimo ir atminimo paminklai (Monuments of Revival and Remembrance). In: I. Seliukaitė & L. Varkalienė (eds.) *Kuršėnai*. Klaipėda: S. Jokužio leidykla-spaustuvė, pp. 478–484.

- Vervečkienė, Liucija 2024. Remembering the Anti-Soviet Partisan War in Lithuania, 1944–1953: The Effects of Heroization at Different Levels of Remembrance. *Memory Studies*, Vol. 17 (6), pp. 1311–1326. DOI: 10.1177/17506980231184577
- Westgaard, Hege 2006. 'Like a Trace': The Spontaneous Shrine as a Cultural Expression of Grief. In: J. Santino (ed.) *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 147–175.
- Vičas, Darius (ed.) 2010. *Medinis Joniškio krašto mažosios architektūros paveldas* (Wooden Heritage of Small Architecture in the Joniškis Region). Šiauliai: Liucilijus.
- Viggiani, Elisabetta 2016. *Talking Stones. The Politics of Memorialization in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.3167/9781782384076>
- Zabulytė, Jolanta 2018. *Anykščių krašto kryždirbystė: Mediniai paminklai* (Cross-Crafting in the Anykščiai Region: Wooden Monuments). Vilnius: Savastis.
- Žiliukaitė, Rūta 2000. Religinių vertybių kaita Lietuvoje 1990–1999 metais (The Dynamics of Religious Values in Lithuania: 1990–1999). *Kultūrologija*, Vol. 6, pp. 213–251.

**Skaidrė Urbonienė**, PhD, is a senior researcher at the Department of Sacral Art Heritage, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. Her main research interests are the cross-crafting tradition; the heritage, socio-cultural, artistic and identity issues of folk art; and folk art in migration.

E-mail: [skaidreu@gmail.com](mailto:skaidreu@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0001-5827-2218