

# THE LITHUANIAN MUMMY PROJECT: A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

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*Within the framework of the Lithuanian Mummy Project, a scientific investigation of the mummified human remains found in Lithuania, the authors of this paper attempted to gather as much information as possible in order to promote and expand the knowledge about the corpses held in the crypt of the Dominican Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius. The data collected enabled the history of the church and its burials over the course of time to be reconstructed, providing an original and unique window into Lithuania's past.*

**Keywords:** mummies, anthropology, palaeopathology, history, Lithuania.

*Šio straipsnio autoriai bandė surinkti kuo daugiau informacijos, kuri papildytų turimas žinias apie Vilniaus Šventosios Dvasios bažnyčioje rastus mumifikuotus palaikus ir projekto, skirto Lietuvoje rastų mumijų tyrimams, rezultatus. Surinkti duomenys padėjo atkurti bažnyčios ir joje rastų palaidojimų istorinę raidą bei atvėrė naują langą į Lietuvos praeitį.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** mumijos, antropologija, paleopatologija, istorija, Lietuva.

## INTRODUCTION

The Dominican Church of the Holy Spirit (Fig. 1), well known for its Late Baroque style and Rococo elements, is one of the architectural masterpieces of Vilnius (Zahorski 1927; Spurgevičius *et al.* 1988). This impressive building, located in the heart of the Old town, overlies a number of subterranean chambers that hold mummified and skeletonised human remains belonging to both the clergy and the laity as well as wooden coffins and precious textiles most likely dating to the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These individuals belonged to the middle-upper social echelons, based on the crypt burial custom widespread in Europe (Ariès

1998; Frick 2013). Today, access to the cellars is via an entrance under the altar of Christ beside a column in the right aisle and via an external door that opens onto Šv. Ignoto Street.

Since 2011, the authors of this paper have been involved in the study of these mummified remains (Piombino-Mascali, Jankauskas 2014). In order to create a solid basis of investigation for the current project as well as for future scholars, a collation of the historical sources appeared to be necessary. This paper gathers information about the crypt during different periods that was mainly obtained from the Parish Archive and provides a plan of research for this precious anthropological and palaeopathological resource.



Fig. 1. The Dominican Priory and the Church of the Holy Spirit. Photo by D. Liekis.

## HISTORICAL NOTES

This important church is believed to have been built during the early 14<sup>th</sup> century and the rule of Grand Duke Gediminas. The original wooden structure, later destroyed by a fire, was rebuilt with brick in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century by King Casimir Jagiellon. A putative early 16<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction by Grand Duke Alexander was followed by the construction of a priory for some Dominican friars. Further damage to the church occurred during a 1610 fire and the Deluge (Russian occupation from 1655 to 1661), after which only the bare walls remained. The subsequent reconstruction produced a small church, which was later expanded between 1679 and 1688 (Valužytė 1990).

The fires of 1726, 1737, 1748, and 1749 further affected the structure, its current appearance being the result of the reconstructions conducted prior to 1770 (Spurgevičius *et al.* 1988). The Russians and French inflicted additional damage

in 1793–1795 and 1812, respectively (Valužytė 1990).

During the great retreat of Napoleon's army, the priory was requisitioned as a military hospital and its crypt allegedly used for the burial of soldiers (Kviklys 1985). This seems plausible, since documentary sources mention that the vaults of Vilnius were full of dead bodies at this time (Briedis 2009).

The annexed Dominican Priory, dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was occupied by the Russians in 1844 and transferred to the city authorities. It was later used to imprison the rebels, including the patriot, Konstanty Kalinowski, of the January uprising of 1863–1864, under the order of the Vilnius Governor General Mikhail Muravyov.

Although the church's renovation was documented throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, no major alterations were made to the edifice after 1844 (Valužytė 1990). The last restoration activities during this period were conducted in 1899 (Kviklys 1985).

### A romantic vision

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the rule of the Russian Empire, the cultural influence of Romanticism and the rise of a national identity nurtured interest in the site's history, albeit with some nuances of superstition (Vovelle 2009). The crypt became ingrained in local folklore, including ghostly tales and other anecdotes, which were circulating by the mid-1800s.

The oldest description of the cellars appears to be that of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Dominican friar, Wojciech Wincenty Bagiński, which was published in 1854 (Čaplinskas 2008). In the course of reconstructing the site's history, parishioners provided the names of some of the aristocrats buried there, such as members of the Sapieha family. Some of these, to name but a few, include Aleksander Pocij, Palatine of Trakai (1771), and Józef Ogiński, Captain of Darsūniškis (1776). Ludwik Pocij and his wife, Wiktoria Potocka, who supported the friars in reconstructing the building after the 1748–1749 fires, were also buried there (1773). Bagiński added that the contents of the entire cellar were destroyed by a fire, which has yielded a record of the crypt's status during the late 1700s.

During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, consultations between Governor General Ilya Bibikov and Bishop Wacław Żyliński led to the accumulation of human remains in two side cellars and their subsequent walling up, as well as the closure of the main access to the crypt. However, visits to the underground areas continued, as evidenced by the names inscribed on the walls (Legaitė 1963).

In 1858, Archaeologist and Ethnographer Eustachy Tyszkiewicz described his visit to the crypt in order to ascertain whether Grand Duke Alexander, a Dominican supporter, was buried there. With the permission and assistance of the friars, he descended into the subterranean rooms, noting blocks formed by many coffins piled one atop another, in addition to heaps of bodies, including

a number of unburied soldiers from 1812. He also observed that Napoleon's army had used coffin boards as fuel, leaving various vestiges scattered in the crypts. Apparently, some of the soldiers had died on the priory's grounds, others in the streets (Bulota, Šalūga 1960; Legaitė 1963).

An additional source of information about the Dominican Church is Historian Adam Honory Kirkor, author of an 1859 book considered to be the first city guide (Kirkoras 1991). He described the presence of hundreds of preserved bodies, two rows of which were strangely leaning against the walls, and attributed the process of their mummification to environmental factors.

Over four decades later, in the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Historian Władysław Zahorski visited the crypt, noting that he could not find any remains of the French soldiers (Zahorski 1906). The author, who provided a description of the bodies, the textiles, and the coffins, proposed a rational explanation for the paranormal phenomena attributed to the crypt, which he described as a labyrinth composed of two floors.

Nevertheless, the popular view of the site as a spectral and macabre place remained. This is evident in the description provided by Jonas Bulota and Romualdas Šalūga several years after the end of World War II; the authors, a journalist and a historian, had encountered piles of coffins, some of which were made of oak (Bulota, Šalūga 1960).

### Polish explorations

An early 20<sup>th</sup> century attempt to reorganise the cellars was carried out by pupils at Nazarene Gymnasium (Legaitė 1963). In 1901, they put two crypts in order and placed some of the scattered bones in coffins. However, it was only during the interwar period and Poland's occupation of East Lithuania, that a more widespread interest in these subterranean chambers developed.

In the 1930s, Polish students at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius attempted to tidy the cellars

by moving the remains, removing the rubbish, and destroying the barriers. During this, they moved coffins from the side rooms to the main area. Furthermore, they gathered some historical data, including the dates on coffins from the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Legaitė 1963). Sources indicate that they started in 1934, as members of a student association called *Włóczęgi*, and had stopped by 1936 (Čaplinskas 2008).

However, their mission was not fully accomplished. The authors were unable to locate any written record of their activities, except two inscriptions on wooden boxes containing collected skeletal elements and some numbers written on the coffins or indicating various rooms in the crypt (Markulis 1963). They nicknamed the chamber with the largest number of mummies 'Hades'.

These students were eager to find the crypt's presumed lower level. They were convinced that burials in the crypt included victims of epidemics, given that one body wore hospital clothes impregnated with lime. Reports indicate that they eventually managed to find some additional chambers demonstrating the existence of a lower level, although the newspaper accounts of their findings should be treated with caution. The investigation was terminated shortly afterwards, for fear of a plague epidemic. Today, their work is documented merely by a 1935 map and some photographs, all of the other records having been lost (Čaplinskas 2008).

### A Nazi bomb shelter

In 1941, National Socialist Germany occupied Lithuania (Eidintas *et al.* 2013). Sources from 1944 indicate that during this period the crypt was considered to be a strategic bomb shelter. A subterranean hideout was in fact built by the company *Bauhutte Litauen*. During its excavation, the crypt's foundations were found. These were dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and therefore deemed to be of no historical value. Some archaeological arte-

facts were also observed, which attest, together with the charcoal and ashes, to the fires that once scarred Vilnius. Measurements and photographs were taken, but no alterations were made to the structure (Parish Archive, April 24, 1944). It is also reported that the crypt's door facing Šv. Ignoto Street was reopened at this time (Čaplinskas 2008).

### Soviet revival

Another wave of historical interest in the crypt occurred in the early 1960s during the Soviet occupation of Lithuania (Parish Archive, November 2, 1962). In 1944, the Red Army managed to reoccupy Lithuania, resulting in its integration into the Soviet Union. However, despite external control and limitations, the era was characterised by elements of a national revival, including interest in historical monuments (Eidintas *et al.* 2013).

In late 1962, a committee of government officials, as well as experts on architecture, culture, and tourism, reported that the bodies were in bad condition, which they attributed to contact with the air. The presence of a storeroom for vegetables seemed to be the cause, and there was a fear of contagion given the presence of mice and flies. They came to the conclusion that, in order to avoid an epidemic, a room containing the majority of bodies should be 'hermetically' isolated behind glass and all of the other coffined bodies should be buried as soon as possible. A general cleaning of the rooms and the installation of electricity were also recommended in preparation for converting the site to a museum, following medical, historical, ethnographic, archaeological, and architectural investigations.

The following year, several institutions including the ministry of culture, the offices of tourism, museums, and hygiene, as well as the university, the restoration centre, and the museum society participated in a debate regarding the future of the Dominican Church (Parish Archive, March 13,

1963). It was finally established that a multidisciplinary research project, involving several experts and local institutions, should be conducted in the crypt. The archaeological value of the site and its artefacts was clearly recognised and careful documentation as well as security controls and the installation of lighting were demanded. It was also decided that the bodies should not be buried, but rather exposed in illuminated niches or located behind a wall and be visible through glass. Shortly afterwards, two of the entrances were closed (Parish Archive, March 18, 1963).

The documents reviewed so far raise matters of politics as well as history. The committee in charge of the project was convinced that the crypt must contain documents from 1916–1944 as well as explosives and partisan weapons from World War II. The project's participants were warned that both the church and civilians may have created potential dangers by spreading rumours and falsities, even microorganisms. Among the possible adverse scenarios, threats, rackets, aggressive behaviour, and even attempts to access the crypt and remove evidence were anticipated. Therefore, special recommendations were made, including the use of locks for each room, seals at night, and the isolation of any secret passage from the church to the crypt. Protection was requested for the entrance and special controls and permits were to apply to researchers. Special measures for disinfection before and after working in the crypt were also proposed. Finally, as the church was managed by Polish priests, neither Poles nor Catholics were allowed to participate in the project (Parish Archive, 1963).

### **An architectural masterpiece**

During 1963–1964, two architectural experts, Romanas Jaloveckas and Žybartas Simonavičius, conducted a number of inspections and drew up a plan of the crypt (Parish Archive, March 24, 1964). 150 pictures were taken and 140 samples were col-

lected from the walls. Archaeology students excavated 37 test pits, only 17 of which yielded significant information (Daugudis 1964). In order to better understand the building's chronological phases, analogies were sought with other Lithuanian and Polish churches dating to the 13<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The survey concluded that the church had been significantly rebuilt at least five times, while on two occasions minor reconstructions had been made. These activities included rebuilding the foundations at least four times. The last building work could be dated to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The original wooden church was probably replaced by a solid wall structure in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, while the second church dated to the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which was associated with historical sources mentioning the 1441 construction of a church by Casimir Jagiellon.

Further additions were made in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The main subterranean area was created under the central nave, additional cellars under the aisles. As sources indicate that this reconstruction occurred in 1627, the study's authors speculated that it was necessitated by the fire of 1610. The architectural style shifted at that time from Gothic to Renaissance. The most important reconstruction was the fourth phase, which radically altered the building's appearance in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, minor changes being made later as a consequence of the fires of 1748 and 1749.

The experts also suggested that the installation of a new organ, completed in 1776, made it necessary to create some building supports in the crypt. One of the pillars in the vault showed the date of 1753 and bore the name of the presumed architect (Zahorski 1927). It was noted that initially, each of the cellars had a separate entrance, but that all of these were later sealed, leaving only one point of access. During the excavations, headed by Archaeologist Vytautas Daugudis, fragments of burnt coffins were found, indicating that a fire had reached the crypt (Daugudis 1964).

## An ethnographic treasure

In the spring of 1963, historians and ethnographers collaborated with forensic scientists to shed light on the nature and value of the artefacts held in the Dominican Church. The artefacts were carefully inspected, collected, and dated (Parish Archive, March 24, 1964). It was discovered that some of the mummies' clothing, notably that associated with children, were made from a thin textile manufactured specifically for burials. Items such as footwear, military shoes, hats and belts, as well as some religious objects including rosaries and stoles, were gathered for exhibition. Metal objects, coffin-related textiles, and various coffin feet were also recorded. The clothing materials included leather, silk, and tulle. Some of the coffins appeared to be decorated, at times with floral patterns. Black or brown inscriptions, such as *IHS*, *M*, or *obiit anno* were inscribed on them. Finally, it was observed that some coffins were covered in red textiles and some bore evidence of wax stains. Although not detailed, these notes create a basis for funerary archaeologists to reconstruct Lithuanian burial practices (Litten 2002; Tarlow 2011).

## THE FIRST MUMMY MARATHON

Within this context, the crypt's human remains were investigated by Forensic Scientist Juozas Albinas Markulis, a former MGB agent. An educator at the Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University, Markulis directed a group of medical students to briefly analyse over 500 individuals in order to understand whether the remains were only historical or included some 20<sup>th</sup>-century war victims and, in the latter case, whether evidence of torture, injuries, or other relevant features existed (Markulis 1963; 1966).

Within the total sample, around 200 individuals were mummified, the rest being partly or completely skeletonised. All of the age classes

appeared to be represented. Although the precise number of individuals was difficult to count, a rough calculation indicates that half were males, a third females, and the rest subadults. The males were around 165–170 cm tall, the females 152–158 cm. The palaeopathological evidence consisted of healed fractures, some examples of carious lesions, and severe dental wear.

It was also established that the preserved corpses had been spontaneously mummified through a low and constant temperature and environmental ventilation (Aufderheide 2003). However, some of the bodies had been affected by early decomposition, while others showed evidence of adiopocere and bloating. Only very few exceptions, which bore signs of evisceration and the use of aromatics, were noted. Craniotomies were also apparent, indicating the occurrence of dissection practices (Quigley 2012). Cadavers were generally buried with crossed arms or the arms extended along the side. It was noted that the facial expressions of the bodies were unrelated to any emotion at the time of death, and that some bodies, such as an adult female embracing a child, were deliberately positioned post-mortem. According to Markulis, only one body still had hair. Unaware of the importance of his contribution to the field, Markulis initiated mummy studies in Lithuania, providing a detailed account of the Dominican assemblage (Markulis 1963; 1966).

Notwithstanding these encouraging scientific results, by 1967 the condition of the crypt had deteriorated. A few years after his initial survey, Markulis visited the site again and felt that its humidity had increased considerably: he noted that fungi were attacking the corpses, leading to the decay of the soft tissues (Parish Archive, January 3, 1967). He presented a dramatic address to the ministry of culture, emphasising the necessity of re-establishing the original environmental conditions by reinstating airflow. Despite his alarming letter, it seems

that no substantial action was taken to rescue the mummies. One can speculate that the previous relocation of most of the remains to a single cellar, the climatic changes brought about by the installation of a glass window, and other structural changes to the building were the primary causes of the mummies' damage. Additional factors must have included water infiltrating from damaged pipes, visitor vandalism, and the manipulation of the remains by the custodians (Čaplinskas 2008). All these elements led to the inevitable closure of the site.

Little is known of the crypt after this point until the post-Soviet period. In 2004, an anthropological survey of the room containing the greatest number of corpses revealed that all of them were decomposing, emphasising the fact that the decision to seal them behind a glass window was more a political and ideological move than a professional one (Jankauskas 2004). On that occasion, bacteriological tests revealed no risk of pathogens. The following year, new archaeological excavations were conducted in the main room, as well as in the cellar leading to Šv. Ignoto Street, in order to find the crypt's earliest surface. Four pits were excavated and both complete and partial skeletal remains were recovered (Žukovskis 2006). It was concluded that burials, whether primary or disturbed, were present in virtually every area of the site, a point already understood by Zahorski (1906).

Only in 2008 were further efforts initiated to preserve this historic site, but at the time few mummies could be retrieved. Then a collection of invertebrates common in urban subterranean habitats, mainly three species of *Coleoptera* beetles, and some dead arachnids were found in the crypt by a member of the Lithuanian Entomological Society (Daumantas Liekis, personal communication, 2014). As most of them were covered with mould, it was speculated that some sudden changes had occurred in the microclimate (i.e., the installation of a heating system).

## THE CURRENT MUMMY PROJECT

In 2011, at the request of the church's officials, an investigation enabling the documentation, analysis, and preservation of this historic material commenced with the study of 23 human mummies (Fig. 2, 3): 15 adults (VD 1 through VD 15) and 8 subadults (VD 16 through VD 23) and a number of isolated body parts (Jankauskas, Piombino-Mascoli 2012). Following an external inspection, each mummy was carefully recorded and tissue and bone samples were obtained from those subjects displaying a loss of substance as a con-



Fig. 2. Adult mummies. Photo by A. Urbanavčius.



Fig. 3. Subadult mummies. Photo by A. Urbanavičius.

sequence of natural decay or other post-depositional changes. The palaeopathological conditions visible with the naked eye consisted of dental calculus, caries, periodontitis, attrition, and enamel hypoplasia. Arthritis and bone deformations were also recorded. Further observations included the imprint of textiles on the mummies' skin, a wart, and even a possible earring hole.

Additionally, seven such bodies selected because of their remarkable preservation were CT-scanned at the central branch of Vilnius University Hospital (namely: VD 3, 9 10, 12, 14, 16, 17). Such imaging studies, considered to be the best non-invasive technique in mummy studies, revealed that these mummies were quite well-preserved, including some internal organs and fatty structures, and had been affected by bone and soft tissue pathologies that shed light on their individual biohistories and are briefly described be-

low (Panzer *et al.* 2013; Piombino-Mascali *et al.* 2014a; 2014b).

Mummy VD 3, an obese adult male (164 cm), exhibited arthritis of the spine, pelvis, and both knees. He also had a trauma in the form of a healed fracture of the fourth rib on the right side, two infected teeth, and a missing tooth with alveolar atrophy indicating ante-mortem loss. Additionally, he possessed anatomical variations in the form of a split spine, a hole in the body of the sternum, and a left bipartite acromion. A soft tissue examination showed calcification of the aortic valve leaflets and the mitral anulus and calcifications in the region of the abdominal aorta, indicating that he suffered from atherosclerosis. Finally, his enlarged thyroid gland revealed a possible case of goitre.

Mummy VD 9, an obese adult female (142 cm), exhibited a spine with slight arthritis, a marked right convex scoliosis with left stabilising spondylophytes, and arthritis of the posterior facets and the costovertebral and costotransversal joints. Ossification between the spinal processes was also observed and asymmetry of the thorax was apparent. Likewise, arthritis had affected the sterno-clavicular joints and the manubrio-sternal joint. The pelvis also displayed evidence of this disease, while bilateral gonarthrosis was diagnosed in the knees. Finally, she showed a case of a benign tumour called a haemangioma in the fifth lumbar vertebra. In addition, the soft tissue examination revealed distinct coronary atherosclerosis along with calcification of the mitral anulus, suggestive of an atherosclerotic condition.

Mummy VD 10, an obese young adult female (152 cm), exhibited a bilateral bunion while her enlarged thyroid gland revealed an additional case of goitre.

Mummy VD12, an adult male (148 cm), exhibited arthritis of the cervical and thoracic spine. Moreover, he had a herniation pit on the right proximal femur, a dental infection, the ante-mortem loss for four teeth, and a slight asymmetry of



the thorax with a reduced volume of the left apical part. The remnants of his soft tissue showed calcification of the aortic valve leaflets as well as arterial vessel atherosclerosis.

Mummy VD 14, another adult male (156 cm), exhibited three dental infections and a sacrum with an incomplete fusion of both neuroforamina of the third sacral vertebra, which can also be a sacro-caudal transitional vertebra.

Finally, mummy VD 16, a female child (74 cm), exhibited skull disproportion with a widening of the parietal, occipital and temporal bones and a thinning of their tabula interna as well as a thickening at the frontal and parietal eminence, indicating hydrocephalus. The neck of her femora was bent downwards and these bones also showed lateral bowing. Lastly, the tibiae and fibulae were anteriorly and laterally curved, indicating a clinical history of rickets.

A parasitological investigation was conducted on 10 abdominal samples, but only one child, VD 20, was found to have parasitic infections. This study revealed evidence of both trichuriasis and ascariasis in the individual. Parasite egg concentrations were higher for *Trichiuris trichiura* than for *Ascaris lumbricoides*. The fact that these samples came from an intestinal sample, along with a substantial egg concentration, shows that the individual had a true infection. The other nine samples tested negative for helminthiasis (Morrow *et al.* 2014).

In summary, the investigations revealed that even the higher social classes of 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup>-century Vilnius were affected by health problems related to poor nutrition and insufficient exposure to sunlight in childhood, gastrointestinal parasites, etc. Among the adult samples, nutrition-related problems, such as obesity and atherosclerosis, as well as dental problems arising from disease and an absence of treatment seem to have been most common. The deformation of the feet observed in some cases suggests the cost of uncomfortable footwear. This precious information was vital to

understanding the lives and lifestyles of the people concerned and ongoing research is currently investigating their respiratory systems, which were probably affected by pulmonary tuberculosis (Dario Piombino-Mascalì, original data, 2013). Further studies in cooperation with international institutions will include pollen investigations, a biodegradation assessment of the remains, a histologic and histopathology examination of soft tissue samples, and an ancient DNA analysis (Aufderheide 2003).

In addition to these bioanthropological studies, the National Museum of Lithuania has conducted a preliminary investigation of the textiles recovered during the current mummy mission, which included more than 100 items spanning the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most of the well-preserved finds were pieces of male, female, and juvenile clothing, including head- and footwear, and the remains of sacramentalia and coffin furniture (e.g. cushions and upholstery). Some of these artefacts were made of silk, others embroidered or made of metal thread. In some cases, it was even possible to appreciate the materials' original colours, such as red, blue, or green (Simona Matuzevičiūtė, personal communication, 2013). As in the former 1960s investigation, it could be speculated that some of the clothes, perhaps mostly for children, were made specifically for burial since only the front of each dress, with pins to fasten it to the coffin, was discovered.

In conclusion, the crypt of the Dominican Church of the Holy Spirit provides a unique insight into the rituals, beliefs, and living conditions of past Vilnius residents, and it is hoped that this research will restore a neglected, yet significant chapter of Lithuanian history.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

VAA – Vilniaus apskrities archyvas (Vilnius County Archive)

## LIETUVOS MUMIJŲ PROJEKTAS – ISTORINĖ APŽVALGA

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### Santrauka

Vilniaus Šventosios Dvasios bažnyčioje slypi požeminių kriptų labirintai, kuriuose yra daug XVIII–XIX a. datuojamų skeletuotų ir mumifikuotų palaikų bei medinių karstų su prabangiomis tekstilės dekoracijomis. Pagal tuo metu Europoje vyravusius papročius, šiuose rūsiuose palaidoti to meto pasauliečiai ir dvasininkai, priklausę viduriniajam ir aukštesniajam socialiniams sluoksniams.

Rūsiai ir su jais susijusios istorijos yra ir neatsiejama tautosakos dalis, todėl daugybė legendų apie vaiduoklius išpopuliarėjo XIX a. viduryje. XX a. 4-ajame dešimtmetyje Vilniaus Stepono Batoro universiteto studentai pradėjo rūsio tvarkymo darbus, bet jų nebaigė ir nepaliko jokių rašytinių šaltinių apie vykusias talkas, išskyrus du įrašus ant medinių

dėžių apie jose sukrautas skeleto dalis, kelis numerius ant pavienių karstų ir kriptų numerius ant sienų.

Išsamesnius mumijų tyrimus 1963 m. atliko teismo medicinas Juozas Markulis. Vilniaus universiteto Medicinos fakulteto dėstytojas apžiūrėjo per 500-us palaikų, bandydamas nustatyti, ar tarp jų nėra XX a. aukų su kankinimų ir sužeidimų žymėmis. Taip J. Markulis davė pradžią mumijų tyrimams Lietuvoje. Iš jo paliktos informacijos žinome, kad palaikai mumifikavosi natūraliai ir tik nedaugelis jų buvo apdoroti aromatinėmis medžiagomis.

Nuo XIX a. bažnyčios rūšiai buvo naudojami skirtingiems tikslams, o mumijų buvimo vieta keitėsi. Manoma, kad 1812 m. čia buvo laidojami Napoleono kariai, o Antrojo pasaulinio karo metu

įrengta nacistinės Vokietijos pajėgų slėptuvė nuo bombų. Sukrovus didžiąją dalį palaikų į vieną kriptą pasikeitė vėdinimo sąlygos ir prasidėjo irimo procesai. Todėl iki 1-ojo šio amžiaus dešimtmečio išliko tik nedaugelis mumijų.

Bažnyčios vadovybės prašymu, 2011 m. buvo pradėti tyrimai, dokumentacijos ir 23-jų mumijų (iš kurių 15 – suaugusių individų ir 8 – vaikų) bei atskirų mumifikuotų kūno dalių apžiūros, viskas detaliai aprašyta, paimti suirusių ir pažeistų palaikų audinių bei kaulų mėginiai. Septynios geriausiai išlikusios mumijos buvo iširtos kompiuterinės tomografijos metodu. Šio straipsnio tikslas – surinkti anksčiau nepublikuotą istorinę medžiagą, susijusią su mumi-

jomis ir jų palaidojimo vieta, kuri pasitarnautų tyrimams ateityje.

*Vertė J. Kozakaitė*

## ILIUSTRACIJŲ SĄRAŠAS

1 pav. Dominikonų vienuolynas ir Šventosios Dvasios bažnyčia. *D. Liekio nuotr.*

2 pav. Suaugusiųjų mumijos. *A. Urbanavičiaus nuotr.*

3 pav. Paauglių mumijos. *A. Urbanavičiaus nuotr.*

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