



**ПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ ЛИВОНИИ:
ТЕКСТЫ И ОБРАЗЫ**

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LEMBITU: A MEDIEVAL WARLORD IN ESTONIAN CULTURE*

The 13th century was undoubtedly a period of upheaval in Baltic history. The crusading conquest of Estonian and Latvian territories resulted in the creation of medieval Livonia, the conglomerate of ecclesiastic states, which for their part perished during the Livonian War in the 1550s and 1560s. From the point of view of modern national historiographies,

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the 13th-century conquest constitutes the end of the «Estonian» or «Latvian» prehistory and the start of the «German» medieval period¹.

From the traditional «Estonian» point of view, between 1208 and 1227 ancient Estonians heroically defended their political and personal freedom and native religion, but unfortunately they had to surrender to German invaders and the Catholic Church. This interpretation was adopted by the Estonian audience by the end of the 19th century; after the Estonian War of Independence in 1918–1920, the ancient and modern fights for freedom became combined as the start and finish of the unfortunate intermediate period in the history of the Estonian people². However, there were not many individual historical heroes to find in medieval history who could fit the national narrative. The 13th-century sources mention very few Estonians by their names, and in most cases the name of a person is the only information we have. Nevertheless, there is one exception: Lembitu³.

The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia⁴, written in the 1220s, refers to Lembitu⁵ (*Lembitus*, *Lembito*, *Lambito*) several times. In 1211, the army from the South Estonian province of Sakala, led by Lembitu and Meme, invaded and devastated the Ymera parish in North Latvia, burning down the church where Henry was the priest⁶. Later on in the same year, the troops of the Crusaders, Livs, and Letts invaded Sakala and located their camp in the village of Lembitu⁷. In 1212, a group of Estonians led by Lembitu killed Catholic priests who missionized Sakala⁸, and then made a rapid raid on Pskov in Rus⁹. In 1215, the Leole¹⁰ hillfort of Lembitu surrendered to the Crusaders. Lembitu was baptized and his son or sons were taken

¹ *Kaljundi L., Klavinš K.* The Chronicler and the Modern World: Henry of Livonia and the Baltic Crusades in the Enlightenment and National Traditions // *Crusading and Chronicle Writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier. A Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* / Ed. Tamm M., Kaljundi L., Jensen C. S. Farnham, 2011. P. 409–456; *Selart A.* Historical Legitimacy and Crusade in Livonia // *Crusading on the Edge. Ideas and Practice of Crusading in Iberia and the Baltic Region, 1100–1500* / Ed. Nielsen T. K., Fønnesberg-Schmidt I. Turnhout, 2016. P. 29–54; *Jensen C. S.* Appropriating History. Remembering the Crusades in Latvia and Estonia // *Remembering the Crusades and Crusading* / Ed. Cassidy-Welch M. London, 2017. P. 231–245; *Selart A.* 700 Years of Slavery — A View from Estonia // *Controversial Histories — Current Views on the Crusades* / Ed. Hinz F., Meyer-Hamme J. London, 2021. P. 89–90.

² *Selart A.* Muistne vabadusvõitlus // *Vikerkaar*. 2003. Nr 10–11. Lk. 108–120. — See also: *Tamm M.* History as Cultural Memory: Mnemohistory and the Construction of the Estonian Nation // *Contested and Shared Places of Memory. History and Politics in North Eastern Europe* / Ed. Hackmann J., Lehti M. London, 2020. P. 116–133.

³ Cf. on Latvia: *Misāns I.* «Wir waren immer ein Kriegervolk». Die Darstellung der ostbaltischen Kreuzzüge in der lettischen Geschichtsschreibung // *Lippe und Livland. Mittelalterliche Herrschaftsbildung im Zeichen der Rose* / Ed. Prieur J. Bielefeld, 2008. S. 185–207.

⁴ *Crusading and Chronicle Writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier. A Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* / Ed. Tamm M., Kaljundi L., Jensen C. S. Farnham, 2011.

⁵ *Oad K.* Lembitu. Juhtimiskunsti meistriklass vastsel Maarjamaal // *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*. 2017. Kd. 23. Lk. 26–48.

⁶ *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae* / Ed. Arbusow L., Bauer A. Hannover, 1955. S. 86. § XIV.12.

⁷ *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae*. S. 94. § XV.7.

⁸ *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae*. S. 99. § XV.9.

⁹ *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae*. S. 100. § XV.10.

¹⁰ Most probably modern Lõhavere (*Tõnisson E.* *Eesti muinaslinnad* / Ed. Mäesalu A., Valk H. Tartu, 2008. Lk. 271–273).

hostage¹¹. The agreement did not last, the war started again, and in 1217 the Estonian army led by Lembitu and the army of Germans, Livs, and Letts met on 21 September near Viljandi¹². The Estonians were defeated, and Lettish noble Veko «recognized Lembitu, pursued him, and killed him. Veko took his garments, and the rest cut off his head and brought it back to Livonia with them»¹³. Leole as a political centre ceased to exist and gave way to the Suure-Jaani church and parish centre nearby.

Obviously, Lembitu became the Estonian historical hero. Numerous artistic presentations have popularised his person and shaped the public image of Lembitu as a king-like leader of the resistance in the name of freedom and independence. He received manifold cultural representations, through decades and changing political circumstances. Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882), the author of the Estonian national epic «Kalevipoeg», also composed the epic poem «Lembitu» (1885)¹⁴, a free adaptation of «Buddha» by Swiss author Joseph Victor Widmann (1842–1911). Several other authors portrayed Lembitu¹⁵, most influentially, probably, Karl August Hindrey (1875–1947) in his novel «Lembitu» (1938), and Mait Metsanurk (1879–1957) with the novel «At the Ümera River» (1934). In the latter, Lembitu, albeit a secondary figure in the narrative, is portrayed as a far-sighted, respected, and maybe even authoritarian politician and war leader¹⁶. The final chapters of the book by Hindrey describe the fate of Lembitu's severed head: his son, a hostage in Riga, saves the head and cremates it according to the ancient rites¹⁷. Unsurprisingly, even the first Estonian (short) opera in 1908 was «The Daughter of Lembitu» (*Lembitu tütar*) by Artur Lemba (1885–1963)¹⁸. Another «Lembitu» opera was composed by Villem Kapp (1913–1964), premiering in 1961¹⁹. It is worth mentioning that Villem Kapp was a native of Suure-Jaani.

In Estonian visual arts, the person of Lembitu had to connect the ancient and modern freedom of Estonia. Sculptor Amandus Adamson (1855–1929), who had planned an equestrian statue of Lembitu in 1919–1921, some years later materialised the monument of the Estonian War of Independence in Suure-Jaani, in the «home parish» of Lembitu²⁰. It depicts Lembitu wounded and has two dates engraved, 1217 and 1918–1920²¹, connecting in this way symbolically the wars of the 13th and 20th centuries²². After the Soviet conquest of Estonia, Lembitu

¹¹ Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae. S. 120. § XVIII.7; S. 122. § XIX.1.

¹² Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae. S. 141–143. § XXI.2–3; S. 180. § XXV.2.

¹³ The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia / Transl. Brundage J. A. New York, 2003. P. 162.

¹⁴ *Kreutzwald Fr. R. Lembitu. Kreutzwaldi usulis-filosoofiline maailmavaade. Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald 200 / Ed. Sutrop U. Tallinn, 2003.*

¹⁵ *Kalda M. Lembitu kuldne karikas // Looming. 2003. Nr 12. Lk. 1882–1894.*

¹⁶ *Metsanurk M. Ümera jõel. Tallinn, 2008. Lk. 255–268.*

¹⁷ *Hindrey K. A. Loojak II: Lembitu. Tartu, 1938. Lk. 187.*

¹⁸ The first version of the music by Lemba composed a few years earlier, based on the poem «Sabina» (1859) by Russian poet Afanasy Fet (1820–1892) (*Hirvesoo A. Esimese rahvusoperi tulek meie lavale // Teater, Muusika, Kino. 1986. Nr 8. Lk. 69–75*).

¹⁹ *Tõnson H. Villem Kapp. Tallinn, 1967. Lk. 117–131.*

²⁰ *Kaljundi L., Kreem T.-M. Ajalugu pildis — pilt ajaloos. Rahvuslik ja rahvusülene minevik eesti kunstis. Tallinn, 2018. Lk. 174–181.*

²¹ The monument was opened in 1926, destroyed by the Soviets in 1941, restored during the German occupation in 1942, destroyed again during the second Soviet occupation in 1950, and restored again in 1990.

²² *Kaljundi L., Kreem T.-M. Ajalugu pildis... Lk. 76, 321.*

as depicted in art began to fuse with the mythological Kalevipoeg in the 1940s and 1950s, both fighting against the Teutonic knights — «Germans» — now²³.

After 1850, the propaganda of «Lembit» as an Estonian native male name began, and the peak of its popularity remains in the 1930s and 1940s²⁴. The first vessel of the freshly established Estonian navy in 1918 — expectedly — received the name «Lembit» (formerly «Bobr» of the Russian imperial navy)²⁵. «Lembit» was the name of one of the two submarines built in England for Estonia in 1935–1937. Remarkably, the other one was «Kalev» — thus, the names of the real historical person and mythological hero stood on the same level. The decision on the submarine names was personally made in March 1936 by the commander-in-chief of the Estonian armed forces, Johan Laidoner (1884–1953)²⁶, and it fit well with the naming traditions of Estonian military vessels of the interwar period, which preferred names both from mythology and deeper history.

It is noteworthy that when the «Lembit» submarine was taken over by the Soviet navy in 1940, it preserved its name — most probably due to its obvious anti-German connotations. Lembit(u) was the name of the Second World War Soviet Army tank group (1945), a garment factory in Tallinn (1961), and the name of several streets, parks, cinemas, and even kolkhozes. In the Estonian toponymy of the Soviet period, the Lembitu name was possibly a way to avoid locally the use of names of Russian or communist heroes directly allegiant to the regime. Estonian writer Juhan Smuul (1922–1971), however, noted ironically in the 1960s that «Tallinn fashion house got the name of the first Estonian *polkovnik* who fell in the Assamalla²⁷ battle»²⁸. The same garment factory name issue was sarcastically addressed in 1974 by stage director Voldemar Panso (1920–1977), who briefly added regarding the theatre presentations of Lembitu: «Only a favourable personality, buckles (of the costume. — *A. S.*), and hundred kilograms (weight of the actor. — *A. S.*)»²⁹. «The thinking routine (which derives from the 19th century. — *A. S.*) and theatre-dusty black-and-white primitive technique stop our original ideas»³⁰.

This was first of all an ironic reflection of the Soviet naming policy, but also a turn towards more playful treatment of the person of Lembitu and his heroic historical role. Decades later, when the perestroika era also popularised every kind of esotericism, the Estonian youth magazine «Noorus» published in 1991 a detailed description of Lembitu and his life by «medium Viktor» (Viktor Tõnissoo, 1931–2010)³¹. In the best-selling novel «Rehepapp ehk November» («Old Barny, or November», 2000) by Andrus Kivirähk, an ironic insight into popular presentations of the Estonian «national character», a manor house valet legitimises his thefts: Lembitu, the king of Estonians, was ignobly murdered by ancestors of German manorial lords; «Despite everything, I am the successor of the Estonians' king Lembitu, and consequently, the

²³ *Kaljundi L., Kreem T.-M.* Ajalugu pildis... Lk. 108–109, 148–150, 336.

²⁴ *Rajandi E.* Raamat nimedest. Tallinn, 1966. Lk. 106–108.

²⁵ *Dunn S. R.* Battle in the Baltic. The Royal Navy and the Fight to Save Estonia & Latvia 1918–20. Barnsley, 2020. P. 62.

²⁶ National Archives of Estonia. ERA.2553.1.2. Sõjavägede ülemjuhataja päevaraamat 1934–1938. Lehed 94–95.

²⁷ Assamalla battle — mythological battle mentioned in the «Kalevipoeg».

²⁸ *Smuul J.* Muhu monoloogid. Polkovniku lesk. Tallinn, 1968. Lk. 127.

²⁹ *Panso V.* Portreed minus ja minu ümber. Tallinn, 1975. Lk. 184.

³⁰ *Panso V.* Portreed minus... Lk. 188–189.

³¹ *Maiberg T.* Uskuda või mitte? // Noorus. 1991. Nr 6. Lk. 29, 32.

underpants of the baron belong to me!»³² In this way, the topic of historical injustice in the Estonian past received an explicitly absurd presentation. The most significant indication of changing attitudes towards the heroisation of 13th-century history was the movie «Malev» («Men at Arms», 2005), authored by «Õ-Fraktisoon». The latter is a creative community established in ca. 2000 by a group of University of Tartu students of the political sciences. «Malev», a semi-professionally produced comedy, uses a method that exaggerates the stereotypic presentations of Estonian past into absurdity³³. Lembitu, played by actor Ain Mäeots, is a true, stereotypical «ancient Estonian» there: fair-haired and uncombed, he spends his time singing, dancing, and practising the *ius primae noctis*, and goes into battle against German knights with his war-cow and gigantic box zither.

A new turn in the presentations of Lembitu in Estonian media happened in the 2010s. The topic then became connected to a perhaps unexpected and certainly an odd issue — the fate of the skull of the medieval warlord. Namely, in Estonia in the 1960s, a report began to circulate that somewhere in Poland the head of Lembitu still existed. As it often happens in the case of these kinds of reports, there are at least two versions about the origin of the story.

One of them is connected to the Estonian man of letters, Aleksander Kurtna (1914–1983)³⁴. After completing his secondary school education in 1932, he studied in Petseri Orthodox Theological Seminary. After conversion to Catholicism, Kurtna left Estonia and continued his studies in 1935 in the Papal Eastern Seminary in Dubno, then Poland. A bit later, Kurtna proceeded to Rome and spent 1936–1940 at the Gregorian University and in the *Collegium Russicum*. He also started historical research at the Vatican archives, receiving from the Estonian state a scholarship for this purpose, and graduated from the Vatican School of Paleography, Diplomats and Archivistics in 1944. After visiting Estonia and Moscow during late summer and autumn of 1940, when Estonia was already occupied by the Soviet Union, he was able to return to Rome, but very probably from then on at the latest as a Soviet agent. In 1942, Kurtna simultaneously started cooperation with the German intelligence in Rome. Arrested by British and American counterintelligence officers in 1944, he was released into Soviet custody and transported to Moscow³⁵. After years in the GULAG in 1945–1954, Kurtna returned to Estonia, where he became polyglot translator of belles-lettres and a central figure in Estonian cultural life. He was particularly eminent in his role as a translator of Polish literature.

Allegedly, Aleksander Kurtna reported³⁶ that somewhere in Poland he had seen a medieval skull of Estonian origin. After his time in Dubno, Kurtna visited Poland several times, both

³² Kivirähk A. Rehepapp ehk november. Tallinn, 2006. Lk. 76.

³³ Kaljundi L. Malev // Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte. 2007. Bd 2. S. 219–225; Mazierska E. Postsotsialistlik Eesti filmikunst kui rahvusülene kino // Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi. 2011. Nr 3–4. Lk. 166–191 (here lk. 169–172).

³⁴ Kivimäe J. Aleksander Kurtna ja Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia // 50 aastat Eesti Teaduste Akadeemiat / Ed. Käärna A. et al. Tallinn, 1989. Lk. 187–190.

³⁵ Graham R. A. Un agente sovietico in Vaticano. La leggenda di «don» Alessandro Kurtna // Studium. 1981. Vol. 77. P. 11–24; Alvarez D. Spies in the Vatican. Espionage and Intrigue from Napoleon to the Holocaust. Lawrence (KS), 2002. P. 224–236; Alvarez D., Graham R. A. Nothing sacred. Nazi espionage against the Vatican 1939–1945. London, 2003. P. 117–135; Добровольская Ю. А. Post Scriptum: Вместо мемуаров. СПб., 2006. С. 131–133; Ereht P. Surnud luuraja tagasitulek. Spioonilugusid Eestist ja eestlastest. Tallinn, 2013. Lk. 125–134; Schütz E. Alma Kurtna. Unustamatu lauluõpetaja. Tartu, 2018. Lk. 42–59.

³⁶ Kärmas M. Eesti ja Poola ülikoolid uurivad legendi Lembitu pea kohta, 20.09.2017. URL: <https://www.err.ee/619687/eesti-ja-poola-ulikoolid-uurivad-legendi-lembitu-pea-kohta> (last visited — 01.06.2021).

before, during, and after the World War³⁷. Thus, he potentially had the possibility to see the item somewhere — if it really exists or existed, indeed.

An alternative version tells about a group of Polish art students (or artists, or museum employees) who visited Estonia at some point in the 1950s and told a story about a skull in some Polish museum, labelled as *Caput Ducif[s] Estoniae* or *Rex Estoniae*. Most likely, the origin of this information³⁸ in Estonia goes back to Voldemar Miller (1911–2006)³⁹. Miller, a historian, bibliographer, archivist, and children's author, worked in 1937–1950 in the archive in Tartu. To avoid political arrest, he laboured in 1950–1952 as a miner in oil shale production in North-East Estonia. In 1952, Miller became a staff member of the Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR in Tallinn. Several memoirs indicate Miller as the teller of the story about the skull⁴⁰.

Estonian historian Enn Tarvel had the possibility to visit Poland and tried to check the facts behind the story already in 1969, but without any success⁴¹. The tale continued to circulate during the following decades, but mostly in the academic environment⁴². Only the popularising monograph about the 13th-century conquest of Estonia by Mart Helme which mentioned the fable in 2010⁴³ made it more broadly familiar. Hillar Sein, then a functionary in the Estonian Ministry of Culture and himself a native of Suure-Jaani parish, initiated in 2014 contact between the Estonian and Polish ministries of culture, which resulted in some investigations in Polish museums with the aim of locating the artefact⁴⁴. The initiative was renewed in 2017, and in 2018–2019 the Estonian Ministry of Culture funded the research of *Estonica* in Poland with 10,000 euros⁴⁵.

Is the story about the skull just an urban legend? In the Middle Ages, removing the head of a defeated enemy as a sign of victory was not an uncommon practice⁴⁶. Even in the case of the Russian Emperor Nicholas II (1868–1918), the tale exists that after the execution in Yekaterinburg his head was removed and taken to the Moscow Kremlin⁴⁷. However, in the case of the «skull of Lembitu», the main — and actually the only — argument for the reliability of the story is that the head is allegedly located in Poland. In the mid-16th century, when the

³⁷ *Graham R. A.* Un agente sovietico in Vaticano... P. 13; *Alvarez D., Graham R. A.* Nothing sacred... P. 118; Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum. EKLA f. 299 s. m29:13: Poola RV-i sõidu avaldus ja ankeet [1968, 1970].

³⁸ *Erelt P.* Poolas otsitakse eestlaste kuninga Lembitu pealuud // Eesti Ekspress. 06.09.2017. Nr 36 (1448). Lk. 7; *Kärmas M.* Eesti ja Poola ülikoolid...

³⁹ *Pillak P.* Voldemar Miller 90 // Tuna. Ajalookultuuri ajakiri. 2001. Nr 2. Lk. 121–128.

⁴⁰ *Kärmas M.* Eesti ja Poola ülikoolid...

⁴¹ *Kärmas M.* Eesti ja Poola ülikoolid...

⁴² Cf.: *Vedler S.* Kus asub Lembitu pealuu? // Eesti Ekspress. 28.04.2005. Nr 17 (803). Lk. A 11.

⁴³ *Helme M.* Lembitu. Eesti kroonimata kuningas. Tallinn, 2010. Lk. 136–137.

⁴⁴ *Erelt P.* Poolas otsitakse... Lk. 7; *Priks Ü.* Kas Lembitu pea on poolakate käes? // Sakala. 04.02.2021. Nr 23. Lk. 9; *Kärmas M.* Eesti ja Poola ülikoolid...

⁴⁵ *Himma M.* Kultuuriministeerium toetab Lembitu pealuu otsinguid 10 000 euroga, 24.01.2018. URL: <https://novaator.err.ee/676986/kultuuriministeerium-toetab-lembitu-pealuu-otsinguid-10-000-euroga> (last visited — 01.06.2021).

⁴⁶ *Schmitz-Esser R.* Der Leichnam im Mittelalter. Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des Körpers. Ostfildern, 2016. Lk. 641–644.

⁴⁷ *Бегунов Ю.* Участь царской головы. Следы ведут в Кремль // За русское дело. 1996. № 2 (34). С. 1, 7.

post-medieval Livonia collapsed, the Archbishopric of Riga and the Teutonic Order in Livonia were secularised and became subjects of the Polish-Lithuanian state. A large number of historical materials, including the documents from the archive of the archbishopric⁴⁸, were removed to Poland. As a result, Poland really is the country where one can discover medieval and early modern *Livonica* unknown until now⁴⁹. When the story about the skull was just invented, its author(s) would have been well familiar with the history of Livonia and Livonian historical records. Nevertheless, the episode with the head of Lembitu could have been familiar also to a broader audience than professional historians. Although the Estonian translation of the Chronicle of Henry was outdated⁵⁰ and had only very limited circulation in the 1950s and 1960s⁵¹, the story about the severed head of Lembitu had been told by Hindrey⁵² and briefly mentioned in several popular history books as well⁵³.

Although the aim of the research of *Estonica* or *Livonica* in Poland that was funded by the Estonian state was defined broadly and had real scholarly results⁵⁴, for the media and public audience it was definitely the project «searching for the skull of Lembitu». It provided material for humourists⁵⁵, as well as for uncomfortable questions about the (in)appropriate use of money requested from politicians⁵⁶. The topic was also exploited sometimes in an unexpected way by journalists and politicians. Left-wing columnist Ahto Lobjakas, after demonstrating his very limited knowledge about the scholarly understanding of Estonian history, feared that if the skull would be discovered, the members of the Estonian political and cultural elite would use the DNA data to measure their proximity to Lembitu and start to create some kind of blood-based aristocracy, «although he [Lembitu] was just a random

⁴⁸ Götz J. Das Archiv des livländischen Deutschordenszweiges. Eine archivgeschichtliche Untersuchung // Die Kirche im mittelalterlichen Livland / Ed. Biskup R. et al. Toruń, 2019. P. 9–77 (here p. 10).

⁴⁹ Tarvel E. 1) Estica Vanade Aktide Peaarhiivis Varssavis // Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised. Ühiskonnateaduste seeria. 1960. Kd. 9. Lk. 292–304; 2) *Estonica*’t Poola arhiivides ja raamatukogudes // Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised. Ühiskonnateaduste seeria. 1972. Kd. 21. Lk. 152–162.

⁵⁰ Läti Hendriku Liiwi maa kroonika ehk Aja raamat / Transl. Jung J. Tartu, 1881–1884.

⁵¹ The translation published in exile was not publicly available in the Soviet Union (Henriku Liivimaa kroonika / Transl. Mägiste J. Stockholm, 1962). The situation changed only in the 1980s (Henriku Liivimaa kroonika / Transl. Kleis R. Tallinn, 1982).

⁵² See also: Kalda M. Lembitu kuldne karikas. Lk. 1888–1894.

⁵³ Luiga J. Lembitu surm // Eesti Kirjandus. 1921. Kd. 15. Lk. 106–115 (here lk. 106); Kruus H. Eesti ajaloo lugemik. Kd. 1. Valitud lugemispalad Eesti ajaloo alalt 1561. aastani. Tartu, 1924. Lk. 31; Eesti ajalugu. Kd. 1: Esiajalugu ja Muistne vabadusvõitlus / Ed. Moora H., Kruus H. Tartu, 1935. Lk. 320; Eesti NSV ajalugu. Kd. 1: Kõige vanemast ajast XIX sajandi 50-ndate aastateni / Ed. Naan G., Vassar A. Tallinn, 1955. Lk. 139; Eesti NSV ajaloo lugemik. Kd. 1 / Ed. Kahk J., Vassar A. Tallinn, 1960. Lk. 34; Tõnisson E. et al. Kui Lembitu kutsus... Tallinn, 1968. Lk. 81.

⁵⁴ Selart A., Mäesalu M. Die estnischen Kopffäger in Polen. Eine Archivreise // Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte. 2019. Bd 14. S. 197–205.

⁵⁵ Juur M. Kuningas Lembitu tagasitulek // Postimees. Arvamus / kultuur. 03.02.2018. Nr 455. Lk. 12; Poolast leiti Lembitu pealuu // Eesti Ekspress. 01.04.2020. Nr 14 (1582). Lk. 6.

⁵⁶ Kuula järele: peaministri ülevaade arengutest Lembitu pealuu otsimisel, 01.01.2019. URL: <https://www.err.ee/888857/kuula-jarele-peaministri-ulevaade-arengutest-lembitu-pealuu-otsimisel> (last visited — 01.06.2021).

warlord from the periphery»⁵⁷. Most probably, he had taken the topic of DNA relatives of Lembitu from the parody by historian Kaarel Vanamölder, a fantasy of what would happen in Estonia when the skull would be discovered⁵⁸. Anyway, the subject had entered the media to remain there. In December 2020, the liberal opposition in the Estonian Parliament began a massive obstruction campaign to stop a referendum about the heterosexual-only definition of marriage, proposed by the government. The opposition members presented almost 10,000 alternative referendum questions, often of an absurd or irrelevant nature. Parliament member Jaak Juske of the Social Democratic Party, himself a history teacher and creditable populariser of history, proposed 57 versions of questions for the public referendum, mostly about history, including «Does the skull of Lembitu exist?»⁵⁹.

All in all, the «skull of Lembitu» has become a catchphrase used in both relevant and irrelevant cases⁶⁰. Journalist Andrei Hvostov hyperbolised some years ago already that some traditionalist views on medieval Estonian history could only find proof after directly connecting to Lembitu in some esoteric way, but «We reached the Age of Aquarius, where the New Age rules and paranormal sciences spread. There is no need to be ashamed of or deny belonging to this camp»⁶¹. The public need for a historical hero, local patriotism combined with tourism marketing⁶², and at least during the last decades the playful handling of history or historical stereotypes shape in combination the presentations of Lembitu in Estonian media and culture today.

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Заголовок: Lembitu: A medieval warlord in Estonian culture [Лембит — средневековый вождь в эстонской культуре]

Резюме: Тринадцатый век был периодом великих перемен в Балтийской истории. С традиционной для эстонской историографии точки зрения, в 1208–1227 гг. древние эстонцы героически защищали свою политическую и личную свободу и автохтонную религию, но им пришлось признать господство немецких захватчиков и католической церкви. Эта интерпретация стала среди эстонской аудитории преобладающей к концу XIX века. В то же время в эстонском нарративе существовал дефицит

⁵⁷ *Lobjakas A.* Lembitu kolp ja valju saatuse nooled / *Lääne Elu.* Nr 12. 30 jaanuar 2018. Lk. 2.

⁵⁸ *Vanamölder K.* Lembitu pealuu on leitud! Stsenaariumivisand olukorra puhuks, kui Sakala kuninga pealuu Poolast üles leitakse // *Sirp. Eesti kultuurileht.* 03.02.2018. Nr 5 (3676). Lk. 10–11.

⁵⁹ *Juske J.* Muudatusettepanekud Riigikogu otsuse «Rahvahääletuse korraldamine abielu mõiste küsimuses» eelnõule (288 OE). URL: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/download/9728992e-689e-444b-9d13-1fc937b905d5> (last visited — 03.03.2021).

⁶⁰ For example: Helme Pätsi monumendi võidutööst: see meenutab Lembitu pea maharaiumist, 01.07.2020. URL: <https://www.err.ee/1107841/helme-patsi-monumendi-voidutoost-see-meenutab-lembitu-pea-maharaiumist> (last visited — 04.03.2021).

⁶¹ *Hvostov A.* Kureperspektiivi põlastamine ehk Kes on sündinud roomama, see ei hakka lendama // *Sirp. Eesti kultuurileht.* 05.04.2013. Nr 14 (3436). Lk. 4–5.

⁶² *Kenk O.* Galerii ja video: Suve mastaapseim vabaõhuetendus hargneb Lõhavere linnamael, 15.08.2017. URL: <https://kultuur.err.ee/613153/galerii-ja-video-suve-mastaapseim-vabaohuetendus-hargneb-lohavere-linnamael> (last visited — 04.03.2021).

исторических героев, источники XIII в. зафиксировали очень немного имен эстонцев. Существует одно исключение — Лембит — вождь северной части территории Сакала. В 1217 г. он был убит в бою с крестоносцами. Как сообщает современная хроника, голова Лембита была отрезана и забрана победителями. В XIX–XX вв. создавались многочисленные художественные образы Лембита. Это способствовало популяризации образа народного героя, схожего с образом короля, борющегося за свободу и независимость. В начале 2000-х гг. получило развитие ироничное или критическое отношение к традиционному образу Лембита. Новое обращение к образу национального героя в эстонском медиапространстве произошло в 2010-х гг. и было связано с вопросом о судьбе черепа лидера древней Сакалы. Еще в 1960-х гг. в Эстонии стали распространяться сообщения о том, что где-то в Польше находится голова Лембита. В 2014 г. Министерства культуры Эстонии и Польши инициировали поиск артефакта в польских музеях. В 2018–2019 гг. Министерство культуры Эстонии финансировало научный проект по поиску и изучению источников по эстонской истории в Польше. Не смотря на то, что цели исследования были определены достаточно широко, в средствах массовой информации и среди общественности проект воспринимался как «Поиск черепа Лембита». Сегодня в культуре и медиа сфере Эстонии обращение к образу Лембита и его презентация определяются такими факторами как потребность общества в наличии собственного национального исторического персонажа, локальный патриотизм, развитие туризма и обыгрывание исторических сюжетов в туристических объектах.

Ключевые слова: средневековье, исследования средневековья, средневековая Ливония, эстонская историография, историческая имагология, исследование культуры

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Information about the article

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Title: Lembitu: A medieval warlord in Estonian culture

Summary: The 13th century was undoubtedly a period of upheaval in Baltic history. From the traditional «Estonian» point of view, between 1208 and 1227 ancient Estonians heroically defended their political and personal freedom and native religion, but unfortunately they had to surrender to German invaders and the Catholic Church. This interpretation was adopted by the Estonian audience by the end of the 19th century. However, there were not many individual historical heroes to find in medieval history who could fit the national narrative. The 13th-century sources mention very few Estonians by their names. There is one exception: Lembitu, the leader of Sakala province. In 1217 he was killed in battle; his head was cut off and taken away by crusaders. Numerous artistic presentations popularised the person of Lembitu in the 19th and 20th century and shaped the public image

of Lembitu as a king-like leader of the resistance in the name of freedom and independence. At the same time, in the early 2000s parallelly an ironic or critical attitude towards traditional presentations of the medieval warlord developed. A new turn in the presentations of Lembitu in Estonian media happened in the 2010s. The topic then became connected to the question of the fate of the skull of the medieval warlord. In Estonia in the 1960s, a report began to circulate that somewhere in Poland the head of Lembitu still existed. The Estonian Ministry of Culture initiated in 2014 contact between the Estonian and Polish ministries of culture, which resulted in some investigations in Polish museums with the aim of locating the artefact. The initiative was renewed in 2017, and in 2018–2019 the Estonian Ministry of Culture funded the research of the sources of Estonian history in Poland. Although the aim of the research in Poland was defined broadly and had real scholarly results, for the media and public audience it was definitely the project «searching for the skull of Lembitu». The public need for a historical hero, local patriotism combined with tourism marketing, and at least during the last decades the playful handling of history or historical stereotypes shape in combination the presentations of Lembitu in Estonian media and culture today.

Keywords: medievalism, Lembitu, medieval Livonia, Estonian historiography, historical imagology, cultural studies, medieval studies

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