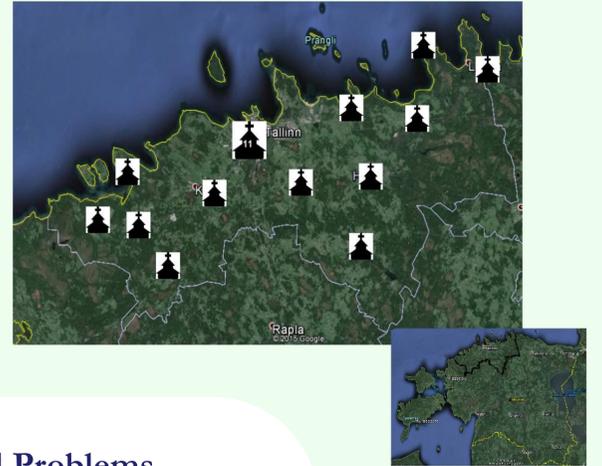


Latin Epigraphs in Estonian Churches I: Tallinn and Harjumaa

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In 2014, the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Tartu started the systematic collection and study of Latin epigraphical material in Estonian churches. The objectives of the project are to compile the illustrated database of all inscriptions up until 1918 (both those that have been preserved as well as those that have been destroyed, but were described in earlier manuscripts and books), to translate these into Estonian and to comment on these from different aspects, e.g., linguistic, paleographical, metrical, prosopographical, etc.



20th c. St Peter and St Paul's Cathedral



18th c. Sarcophagus of Samuel Greigh



17th c. Church bell in Harju-Risti



16th c. Epitaph of Johan Hob(b)ing



16th c. Grave slab of Johannes Ballivi



15th c. Altar in the Church of the Holy Ghost

Research of Epigraphs. The Main Facts and Problems

- 27 churches and monasteries, findings in 23
- more than 150 epigraphs in Latin on grave slabs, church bells and silver icons, sarcophagi, epitaphs, altars, chancels, crucifixes etc from the 14th century to 1918
 - today located in Estonia, but some produced elsewhere in the Baltic Sea region
 - mostly anonymous authors
 - on stone, metal, wood and canvas
 - numerous lost and fragmentary materials (Livonian War 1558–1583, Great Northern War 1700–1721, World War II; fires, thievery, vandalism)
 - some of the epigraphs are inaccessible
 - a lot of false readings in circulation

Visual pragmatics

- large scale of paleographical variety (e.g., Gothic minuscule and majuscule, uncial, Antiqua and other fonts)
- common practice to use just one font within the entire item, yet there are some examples of epigraphs where fonts varied
- remarkable creativity in marking abbreviations, ligatures and punctuation
- source of aesthetical pleasure



Church bell in St. Nicholas Church (1795)

Identification of versified and poetic texts

- verse texts on bells and tomb monuments from the 16th–17th century
- representative churches only in Tallinn (Dome Church, St. Nicholas' Church)
- offer testimonial of the spread of the Renaissance humanist erudition and reception of Antiquity both in pictures and textually, for example:

Local knowledge of Latin

- epigraphs mostly follow the language norms of the era
- few deviations from the language norms of the era reflect an insufficient knowledge of contemporary Latin (e.g., *Verbum Domini manet in aeternam pro aeternum; hodie michi [pro mihi], cras tibi* 1588), actual pronunciation (*me fecit pro me fecit, sessavit pro cessavit*) or the pursuit of orthographic ideals (*caussa pro causa*)
- large proportion of formulaic phrases in medieval epigraphs (*Anno Domini, orate pro eo, requiescat in pace* etc) and from the 17th century on (*INRI, Soli Deo gloria* etc)

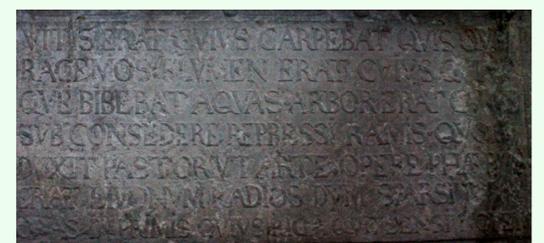


De Wacke family's gravestone in the Dominican Monastery (the second half of the 14th c.): combination of Antiqua and Gothic majuscule



Sarcophagus of Pontus De la Gardie and Sophia Gyllenhielm (1588, Dome Church)

- 1) verse metre is usually the elegiac distich
- 2) motifs from ancient funeral poetry, for example, *sta viator*
- 3) citations from Ovid's and Virgil's poetry
- 4) puns with the name of the deceased (von Ramm – *ramus*; Pontus De la Gardie – *pontus/sea/*)



The first part of the epitaph of Thomas Ramm (died 1632) in Tallinn Dome Church, written in elegiac distichs, *in continuo*