

Linguistic-lexical approach to cultural aspects of death in the Old Frisian writings

Katarzyna Buczek (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

Death as a phenomenon and event was in the Germanic culture both feared and celebrated. Personalized, it was supposed to take the deceased to the afterlife world. Therefore, the way how somebody has lost his life or the circumstances of his death were very significant at that time.

The main task of my study constitutes the linguistic analysis of the notion of death on the basis of the Old Frisian texts. The first part of the paper will focus on the understanding of death by Frisians in the past. Here, the death as an ultimate and natural end of life will be counterpoised to the death that is conceived as a consequence of punishment. Furthermore, the attitudes of Frisians towards death, which might be deduced from the existing writings, will be presented against the background of burial practices and traditions.

The second part of the paper will provide the analysis of the vocabulary taken from Old Frisian writings connected with the narrative account of death. Here, the preference for the choice of lexical means, which are present in Old Frisian texts, will be detected and estimated from the axiological point of view. Expressions referring to the death as a punishment are to be compared with those connected with the natural decease of family members or nobilities.