A GPR STUDY OF THE MEDIEVAL HILLFORT IN LITHUANIA

LOCATION

Medvėgalis was a medieval hill fortress, located in present day Šilalė District Municipality, of Samogitia, Lithuania. The fortress was first mentioned in texts dating back to 1336 as one of the most important and fortified structures for the Lithuanian army due to its location along the border of Christianized Europe. When Medvėgalis stood, Lithuania had not yet been Christianized by European crusaders under the protection of Pope John XXII, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church. This made it a major target for multiple bands of crusaders who hoped to gain fame and fortune for baptizing one of the last remaining pagan states of Europe. In 1329 knights of the Teutonic order, a crusading order out of present-day Germany and Poland under the command of King John of Bohemia, swarmed throughout the Samogitia region. They conquered four towns in less than a week before arriving at the fortress of Medvėgalis. On February 17, the knights set the fortress ablaze. Facing an army several thousand strong with a reputation of slaughtering captured pagans, the fortress occupants and their prince, Margiks, surrendered in return for their lives and were baptized into the Christian faith. Because this marked one of the first instances of such conversions among any Lithuanians, yet it didn’t last long. Upon learning the Teutonic Knights had left Poland, Lithuanian ally and Polish King, Władysław I, attacked Teutonic land known as Kulmerland, located in modern day Poland. All following plans to take the rest of Samogitia were abandoned and the knights were forced to return to Poland. Without the pressure of the knights the Lithuanians quickly reverted back to paganism, remaking the last pagan nation in Europe for another fifty-eight years. Today, the hill has been converted into a tourist attraction offering stunning views of the countryside. An amphitheater for outdoor entertainment has also been added to the west of the hill.

RESULTS

A trench 8 meters South from the origin and a half meter down or 23 meters South and 2 meters down would yield the best results for future archaeological investigations conducted near the 40 meter transect.

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