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Introduction

Hegemonic Confessions at the Baltic Periphery

Religious Contact in the Early Modern Baltic Region

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ABSTRACT The Baltic region has always been situated on the crossroads of the three main branches of Christianity: Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism. As such, it has provided ample material for studying religious contact. This special issue brings together four contributions analysing such cases in this region during the early modern period. It shows the value of the Baltic region as a multi-ethnic melting pot of different Christian denominations, held together primarily by the change-resistant land-owning class of Baltic Germans.

KEYWORDS Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Baltic, Orthodox Church, Catholicism, Protestantism

The Baltic region, i.e., the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, represents a fascinating case study for religious contact throughout history. Up to now, however, it has only rarely been examined as such a zone of contact. While studies on particular religious traditions and their development in the region are not lacking, the situations of contact between traditions and their specific synchronic and diachronic effects have not been in the focus of scholarly interest. The present special issue intends to take a first step in this direction. [1]

The key issue of the contact-based approach to the examination of the history of religions has been characterised by Volkhard Krech as follows: [2]

> Within the religious field, religious diversity as well as religious contacts and transfer processes enabled as a result thereof are key conditions for triggering dynamics in the history of religions. A plural situation can arise or actively be promoted either through the import and export of religious traditions, for instance as part of [3]

> trade relations, during imperial expansion, or through religious innovation and reformation from the inside outwards. Religious contacts challenge religious traditions to differentiate themselves, position themselves, […] and thus promote the controversy of the religious field inwardly and outwardly as well as the demarcation of boundaries. But equally, religious contacts can also lead to an explicit or creeping amalgamation of elements from various traditions. (Krech 2015, 64)

Trade, imperial expansion, and reformation are indeed important aspects of the history of the Baltic region in early modern times. In many regards, in its particular way of exemplifying Krech's general assertions on the dynamics in the history of religions, the Baltic region presents a special case in the religious history of Europe. It was the last part of the continent to be Christianised (except for the northernmost Arctic fringes), with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania officially becoming a Christian society only in 1387. IN this year, King Jogaila of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania accepted Christian baptism, a prerequisite to be able to marry the Polish regent Hedwig (Jadwiga). At the same time, Christianisation in this region was rather superficial, with pre-Christian traditions and rituals remaining common until the early nineteenth century, providing ample opportunity for religious contact. Because of this, earlier scholarship of religion considered the Baltic region a place of conservation of archaic religion, maintaining a chthonic quality (see Eliade 1983, 3:39). Additionally, the region was situated on the boundary between Eastern and Western Christianity, meaning that Christianisation was attempted both from the Eastern Orthodox and the Latin Catholic side. This competition allowed for Lithuanian paganism to endure by taking advantage of the contest of the missionary traditions, playing them off against each other. However, in the end, the Catholics were successful, partly because their brand of Christian mission involved the sword to a greater extent than the Orthodox approach, which relied more on monasticism. [4]

However, the idea that the Baltic region can historically be characterised as a clear-cut region is anachronistic. In fact, the contemporary region of the three Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, is a rather young construct, dating from the early twentieth century, when these three states first achieved political independence as modern nation states. Before then, one must always distinguish between the southern part of this region, encompassing the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Niendorf 2018), and the northern part, dominated by the Baltic Germans who had arrived on these shores in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Selart 2018). Whereas the former was a political entity in its own right that aligned itself more or less with its Polish neighbour, the latter never had a unified political structure. Instead, the medieval patchwork of independent cities, episcopal domains, and territories of the Teutonic Order eventually gave way to first Swedish and later (from 1721) Russian rule. [5]

One of the main reasons for the collapse of this patchwork order was the Protestant Reformation, which from an early stage encompassed the northern Baltic region and created a power vacuum in those areas previously controlled by religious actors. The resulting power grab exercise again created favourable conditions for various religious contacts, especially between the two branches of Latin Christendom—Catholicism and Protestantism and among the diverse denominations of the latter, such as pietism in various manifestations (Hallensian, Moravian/Herrnhut, or radical pietism). [6]

Last but not least, in the later phases of the early modern period, the Baltic region served as an important relay point for the enlightenment movement from Germany to Russia. The enlightenment considerably impacted the internal development of the region's religious traditions. The cities in the region, in particular Riga and its ruling class, proved to be of salient im- [7]

portance for the spread of enlightenment ideas. In many cases, the threat that enlightenment posed to revealed religion may even be considered as constituting a silent but influential third participant in situations of contact between the Christian denominations and non-Christian religious traditions.

This special issue of *Entangled Religions* originates from a workshop organised by the editors at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg Bochum in September 2019. We have gathered four papers that illustrate the various religious contact situations that occurred in this region—especially its northern part—in the early modern period, i.e., from the Reformation to the beginning of the nineteenth century. For the early modern period in this region, all social analysis must take the Baltic Germans into account. This included the upper class and city burghers all over the northern half of the Baltic region—today's Estonia and Latvia—as well as the coastline further south, all the way to East Prussia with its capital Königsberg. The Baltic Germans controlled the local administration—regardless of whether the political rulers were Swedes or Russians or Poles—, the court system, and the local Lutheran Church. It is thus impossible to analyse this region without scrutinizing the role of the Baltic Germans, who were mostly stern promoters of the Lutheran faith. [8]

The first contribution, by Sebastian Rimestad (2023), takes a look at the border area between the two halves of the Baltic region—the Baltic German Protestant north and the Lithuanian Catholic south—from the end of the sixteenth century. He traces the various contacts described in the annual reports of the Jesuit Mission at Dünaburg (Latvian: Daugavpils), characterising the Jesuits as a stabilising factor for the area of Latgale in the east of current-day Latvia. [9]

Piret Lotman (2023) analyses another border area within the Baltic region over the seventeenth century, namely Ingria in the north. Today, this includes the area around the city of St. Petersburg, a city that was founded in 1703 to become the new capital of the Russian Empire. Before then, it belonged to the Baltic part of the Swedish Empire. Lotman shows how the contact between the Lutheran Swedes and local Baltic German nobility, on the one hand, and the Orthodox village dwellers, on the other, was a struggle for religious hegemony. While the Swedes wanted to make the whole area Lutheran, the local actors employed a variety of approaches to this task, which resulted in different success rates. Obviously, the success and external perception of this religious contact also varied due to the wider political context. [10]

The two remaining contributions cover religious contact that did not occur on the margins, but in officially Lutheran areas. In both cases, the focus lies on the link between pre-Christian religious and cultural traditions and Lutheranism, but in different ways. Knut Martin Stünkel (2023) provides an overview of the perspective of Johann Georg Hamann, an unorthodox Lutheran thinker from the city of Königsberg, who in his early years as a tutor travelled the country and interpreted the folk songs of the Latvian peasants as an authentic expression of religiosity unspoiled by philosophical sophistication. As an opponent to enlightenment thought, Hamann portrayed the Latvian peasants as 'religiously complete' individuals who would not gain anything by enlightenment generalisation. Thus, Hamann posits contact between the universal (crypto-)religion of enlightenment ideology and individually localised religious conscience, exemplified in the Latvian peasant. [11]

Gvido Straube is one of the foremost experts on the Pietist Moravian (Herrnhut) movement in the Baltic region from 1729 onwards. In his contribution (2023), he conceptualises this movement as a contact situation between the mainstream Lutheran Church dominated by the Baltic Germans and the new Pietist consciousness and missionary zeal coming from Germany. [12]

To a certain extent, this resulted in a clash of religious worlds, which led to the official ban of the Moravian Church from the Russian Empire in 1743. However, as Straube shows, the ban did not stop the movement, and it continued to involve the Latvian peasants in a religious contact situation that made them more aware of their own religious agency and self-worth.

While the four contributions approach the question of religious contact in the Baltic region from a variety of angles, they show at least one similarity across the region: the conservative nature of the Baltic Germans, who would have prefered things to stay the way they were, especially in the religious domain. In the contributions by Straube and Rimestad, this attitude is depicted as the 'enemy' to missionary efforts by outsiders. In Stünkel's contribution, it is the position of the protagonist's employers, whereas Lotman positions it as an example of inertia both Swedish and Orthodox actors had to deal with. The idea of the conservative Baltic German feudal master survived until into the twentieth century, which complicated the transition to democratic nation-states after World War I all the more, but that is a wholly different topic for another publication. [13]

In any case, as the articles show, the Baltic region provides ample opportunities to study situations of religious contact. The present special issue on the early modern period is nothing but a beginning that will hopefully trigger further studies to come. Contact-induced processes of demarcation and intensification contribute significantly to the religious and also to the political history of this region. Regarding the effects of situations of contact, the area is far from marginal, but rather presents itself as an important node or hub of religious traditions (Glei and Jaspert 2017, 2–3), which in many aspects dynamically mediates between East and West, Christian and non-Christian religion, as well as religion and enlightenment. [14]

One of the participants of the workshop was Stefan Donecker, an eminent scholar of early modern Northern Europe, especially with regards to the mythical origins of the indigenous peoples in this region. He also wanted to contribute to the special issue, but health problems hindered him from completing a text. While finishing the revisions of the texts, we learned of Stefan's untimely death on September 1, 2022, at only 45 years of age. To honour his contribution to the field of Baltic history and join the commemoration, this special issue is dedicated to the memory of Stefan Donecker (1977–2022). [15]

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The Christian Church, Spoken Language and Written Word

Confessional Tensions in Ingria Between the Swedish Lutheran and the Russian Orthodox Church during the Seventeenth Century

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ABSTRACT Ingria, a region that came to the Swedish Empire in the seventeenth century, showcases an interesting instance of religious contact between Swedish state Lutheranism, Russian Orthodoxy, and the grassroot Lutheranism of the local German merchants. The contact affected all three religious communities over the course of the century, especially Swedish attempts to integrate the population in the Swedish state church. These attempts initially failed, until Heinrich Stahl became superintendent and decided to conduct missionary work in Russian and combine it with education, a programme his successor Johannes Gezelius continued. While promising, these efforts were continuously impeded by Russian policies and wars.

KEYWORDS Ingria, Sweden, Lutheranism, Russian Orthodoxy, mission, conversion

Introduction

On the eastern edge of the Swedish Empire in the seventeenth century was Ingria, the region around current-day Saint Petersburg. Its indigenous inhabitants—the Finno-Ugric Izhorian and Votian tribes—had been converted to Russian Orthodoxy in the thirteenth century during the Russian conquest, but priests would go on to fight their pagan customs for centuries to come. Before coming to Sweden, the region was subjugated by the Grand Duchy of Moscow in 1478, and the targeted consolidation of Eastern Orthodoxy began in Ingria (Västrik 2007, 49–51). During a time in which Reformation thought proliferated in Europe, the pro-Muscovite archbishop Macarius focused on the mission in Ingria in order to liberate the Izhorians and Votians from the sphere of influence of their pagan teachers—the sorcerers (Kabanen 2016, 52–54). In order to consolidate their power, the central government settled Russophone Eastern Orthodox in the area. After the Treaty of Stolbovo in 1617 that concluded the Ingrian [1] war, predominantly Eastern Orthodox Ingria was transferred under the rule of the Lutheran Kingdom of Sweden for nearly a century (Isberg 1973, 9–10).

The acquisition of this region with an extensive Eastern Orthodox population created a complicated situation in Sweden, which identified itself as a champion of Lutheranism. On the one hand, Sweden was a strictly Lutheran state in which other confessions had been outlawed. On the other hand, keeping in mind the political interests of the state, it was necessary to assure the loyalty of the local population and the economic function of the region. The complex confessional situation in Ingria has been a source of interest for a great number of historians. It has been most thoroughly examined by Carl Öhlander (1900) and Alvin Isberg (1973). The most recent in-depth analyses of the Swedish state's efforts to convert Russian Orthodox believers are by Mika Sivonen (2007) and Kari Tarkiainen (2017). The problem has also been discussed in several articles by Kasper Kepsu (2017a, 2017b, 2019). [2]

The prevailing opinion among scholars is that Sweden's far too rigid church policy did not sufficiently consider the religious sentiments of the local population, which was also the reason for their disloyalty. Heinrich Stahl, who was appointed in 1641 to be the first superintendent of Ingria, has been rather unanimously criticised for overstepping his authority and thereby exacerbating the situation (Öhlander 1900, 32; Naber 1995, 70). [3]

Such a critical evaluation of the attitudes of Ingria's Lutheran superintendents towards the local Russian Orthodox population largely rests on the premise that the church policy of the state self-evidently followed the internal and external political goals set by the temporal powers and was subordinated to them. However, it is difficult to argue that this was the case already during the first half of the seventeenth century. In this paper, an attempt is therefore made to comprehend the endeavours to achieve religious uniformity during the period of Swedish rule by Ingria's Lutheran superintendents based on their goals in terms of transcendence instead of immanent political gains. [4]

The paper traces the religious contact between Lutheran Swedes and Orthodox Ingrians with a focus on the theological background to the strategies the Lutherans employed as they approached the local population, trying to integrate it into the mainstream Swedish Lutheran context. How did Swedish Lutheran concepts of transcendence interact with the way the local population viewed religious truths? [5]

The church policy in the Swedish Baltic Sea provinces was focused on the religious education of the indigenous people through catechetical literacy in their native languages (*Eesti kiriku- ja religioonilugu* 2018, 131–33). Since this strategy worked in Estonia and Livonia, it was also attempted in Ingria. Thus, the conversion of the Orthodox believers consisted essentially in their catechisation. This article examines the methods used by the Swedish authorities to achieve this goal and attempts to analyse the reasons for its failure, without going into the details regarding the resistance of the orthodox peasants, since it has already been covered by other scholars (Isberg 1973; Sivonen 2007). Conflicts that arose on the national level of the Lutheran Church in Ingermanland are also briefly examined. [6]

The article is based on a critical analysis of archival sources, thus following the historical-critical method. It focuses only on the superintendency of Ingria and does not include the county of Kexholm, which belonged ecclesiastically to the diocese of Viborg. The Swedish ecclesiastical policy had a similar effect in both ecclesiastical provinces on the local people (see Laitila 2020). Local differences in the implementation of this policy were minor; for example, in 1640 Orthodox clergymen were paid in grain for teaching Luther's catechism only in Kexholm (2020, 41–42; Isberg 1973, 41). However, the Swedish government's church policy in [7]

Ingria is more clearly evident, especially in the case of superintendents who were especially committed to converting Orthodox believers. Russian influence on the local population in Ingria is also more clearly visible, particularly because of its connections with the Russian citizens in Ivangorod.

The Russian Orthodox Church from the Perspective of Swedish Lutheranism

By the time of the Swedish conquest, the concept of Moscow as the third Rome—a transcendental reality—had already become deeply rooted in Russia. The conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 was decisive for this concept, although the Slavic tradition had upheld the idea of the Eastern Church as the sole, true Christian Church already at least from the thirteenth century. Beginning from the coronation of Ivan IV as tsar in 1547, the concept acquired a political dimension—the tsar personally conducted theological debates with representatives of Western Christianity. The overtly disapproving attitude of the despot determined state attitudes towards the Western Church (Benz 1949a, 116–18). [8]

After the Reformation, representatives of the Protestant Church, who considered their principal enemies to be the Catholics, made attempts to find common ground with the Eastern Church. The efforts were foremost directed towards Constantinople and the South Slavs but led to no results (Benz 1949b, 59–93). Interconfessional dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church was ruled out by the latter's profoundly rooted awareness of its Christian mission and its insular nature along with a fear of foreign ideas (Steinwand 1962, 114–16). [9]

In Sweden, which bordered Russia, the Russian Orthodox were regarded as pagans during the Middle Ages, against whom military expeditions were orchestrated in order to Christianise them. Following the Reformation, a deeper interest towards Greek Catholicism developed in Sweden. Johan III even considered it possible to unite the Church of Sweden with the Russian Orthodox Church (Tarkiainen 2017, 228–30). This idea, along with the search for a middle ground between Lutheranism and Catholicism in the Church of Sweden, originated from the king's interest in theology and relied on knowledge attained in that field (Lindhardt 1983, 33–35). By contrast, his heirs Karl IX and Gustav II Adolph took a pragmatic approach towards Russian Orthodoxy, with the political interests of the state in mind. Already in 1606, Karl IX promised religious freedom to those Russians who sought refuge in Swedish territory. After conquering Novgorod in 1612, King Gustav II Adolph pledged to let the Greek Catholics retain their faith, churches, and monasteries (Tarkiainen 2017, 231–32, 234). The political decisions of the government, however lacked theologically justification. In order to find an intersection between Lutheranism and Russian Orthodoxy, two Swedish military clerics, Johannes Rudbeckius and Jonas Palma, met with Orthodox priests in Ivangorod[1] in 1614. The Lutheran clerics acknowledged that there was no difference in principal questions of faith and that the Eucharist was an important sacrament in the Russian Church, too. Like in the Lutheran Church, the service was conducted in the vernacular in the Russian Church. What was considered unacceptable was the Russians' limited familiarity with Scripture, their concepts of absolution, exculpation, good works, their cult of saints and icons (Isberg 1973, 20–22). Petrus Petrejus's [10]

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[1] Ivangorod Fortress was founded in 1492 during the reign of Ivan III, opposite the town of Narva. Ivangorod acquired a town charter in 1617, but it was conjoined with Narva in 1645. Ivangorod's citizens, who were also Russian merchants, were in contact with Russian authorities. The authorship of the letters of complaint from Ingria's Russian Orthodox to the Swedish government lies with them.

Swedish-language masterpiece, the sixth volume of *Regni Muscovitica Sciographica*, published in 1615, gives an overview of the organisation of the Russian Orthodox Church, the feast days of the liturgical calendar, and the primary dogmatic positions (Tarkiainen 1986, 57–78).

The Church of Ingria Under the Rule of the Bishop of Vyborg (1617–1641)[2]

In 1617, following the signing of the Treaty of Stolbovo, the question of whether the Russian Orthodox should be classified as Christian once again became relevant. In 1620, Johannes Bothvidi defended a thesis at the University of Uppsala entitled “Are Russians Christians?” (*Theses de questione, uturme Muschovitae sint Christiani*). After a thorough analysis, Bothvidi concluded that since Russian Orthodoxy practices the sacraments—Baptism and Eucharist—the Russians are undeniably Christian. However, they live in complete ignorance and follow superstitious customs (Tarkiainen 2017, 237–39). Based on this, the government of Sweden adopted the position that the poor and blind people, who are nevertheless Christian in a transcendental sense and who are in accord with Lutherans in the main questions, must merely be helped to reach the correct understanding of bliss (Holmquist and Plejel 1938, 134). Although Russians were promised religious freedom based on considerations of *realpolitik*, their long-term conversion into Lutheranism was set as a goal. Based on the terms of the peace treaty, the clerics were allowed to move to Russia, and at first the Metropolitan of Novgorod was empowered to ordain new priests. Due to his presumed political influence, clerics were however soon forbidden to visit Novgorod (Isberg 1973, 28–29). Had the conversion program been a success, there would have been no need for new Russian Orthodox clerics. [11]

In ecclesiastical matters, Ingria was integrated into the Bishopric of Vyborg and Bishop Olaus Elimaeus was tasked to combat the misconceptions and blind superstitions of the Russians. According to the instructions given to the bishop in 1622, the Russian Orthodox were required to listen to the preaching of Lutheran clerics, who had been exhorted to be patient and friendly towards the Orthodox. In order to solve the language problem, the bishop needed to find Russophone Finns who would teach the catechism, New Testament, psalms, and the Book of Sirach to Russians (Öhlander 1900, 13). This, however, presumed the translation of these books into Russian. In 1625, Peter Van Selow acquired printing privileges in Stockholm to print texts in Cyrillic, and in 1628 the Catechism was printed there (Tarkiainen 2017, 243). Unfortunately, no progress was made in converting the Russians, neither under Elimaeus nor under the two bishops succeeding him, Nikolaus Magni Carelius and Gabriel Melartopaeus (Öhlander 1900, 13–17). In order to enact the conversion program, a new strategy as well as willing and able people were needed. [12]

The Superintendency of Ingria During the Years 1641–1657

In June 1637, the Privy Council decided to separate Ingria from the Diocese of Vyborg and add Alutaguse and Narva to the new diocese. Narva was to become the residence of Ingria’s superintendent. Heinrich Stahl, the former provost of the Cathedral of Tallinn, who had been [13] appointed superintendent of Ingria, assumed this position in the autumn of 1641. The new head of the church faced two great challenges: to build up a Lutheran church organisation in Ingria and to convert the Russian Orthodox to Lutheranism (Isberg 1973, 39). The appointment of Heinrich Stahl as superintendent also marked the inclusion of Ingria's inhabitants in the catechism programme of the kingdom. The purpose of this popular education programme was not merely to inculcate Lutheran doctrine, but also to elevate the educational level of society and the sense of social responsibility. The methodology wherein the teaching of the catechism provided reading proficiency was applied systematically in the entire state, including in the provinces across the Baltic Sea. The instruction was carried out in the vernacular, which presupposed that clerical literature be translated and printed, even for peoples who had heretofore only had oral cultures (Berntson, Nilsson, and Weird 2012, 173–74; Berntson 2017, 255–58). The creation of clerical literature in Estonian gained momentum due to a visitation in 1627 from Johannes Rudbeckius, the bishop of Västerås. Johannes Rudbeckius was one of the founders and ardent implementers of the popular education method that was operating successfully in Sweden (Hall 1919, 115). During the visitation, Heinrich Stahl, who had been promoted to provost of Vironia, likely compiled a manual, presumably inspired by Rudbeckius, in four volumes with parallel texts in Estonian and German as well as an introduction in Estonian. At the time of his appointment as superintendent of Ingria, Stahl, being provost of the Cathedral of Tallinn, was the right-hand man of the Bishop of Estonia, which indicates his administrative capabilities (Lotman 2014, 62–87).

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[2] The reformation did not interrupt the continuity of Swedish church organisation and the episcopal model of the church government was preserved—in Sweden, the church head retained the title of bishop. Superintendents were, by German example, appointed only to the newly founded dioceses like Göteborg, Livonia, and Ingria.

Stahl probably acquired the required background knowledge for his new responsibilities from a treatise published by Johannes Rudbeckius and Jonas Palma in 1640, called *Een kort Berättelse och Undervisning om Vår Christeliga Troo och Gudztienst i Sverige. Ther uthi ock the groffeste Vilfarelser som äre uthi the Ryssars Religion varda kortheligan förlagde och tillbaka dreffne.*[3] The book was intended to give the Swedish clergy a general idea of the nature of Russian Orthodoxy and at the same time to be a handbook for teaching Lutheran doctrine (Tarkiainen 2017, 236). [14]

Heinrich Stahl started in his new role by familiarising himself with the circumstances of the Ingrian church. According to him, the situation of the Lutheran Church was dire: there were few church buildings as well as a lack of church organisation and of competent teachers. No Russian Orthodox had been converted to Lutheranism; quite the contrary, a number of Lutherans had converted to Russian Orthodoxy instead (Isberg 1973, 43). Stahl's opinion of the Russian Orthodox coincided with that of Johannes Botvidi: they are baptised and follow the Nicene Creed, but they know neither the Bible nor the fundamental articles. A similar conclusion was reached following a disputation led by Heinrich Stahl held during the synod of 1642 (Stahl 1643). [15]

Stahl believed that the entire Ingrian Church was therefore in need of reform—both the Lutheran and the Orthodox communities. According to his proposal, the Lutheran Ecclesiastical Consistory of Ingria was founded, together with the office of provost. Moreover, the local pastors had to visit their congregations twice a year and the superintendent should carry out a General Visitation annually. In order to ordain, examine, and educate the clergy, the superintendent organised synods which took place twice a year. However, his principal task was converting the Russian Orthodox population to Lutheranism (Isberg 1973, 43–45). [16]

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[3] "A short report and instruction on our Christian faith and divine service in Sweden. Therein are briefly explained and dispelled the crudest aberrations that exist in the Russian religion." Translation by the author.

According to Stahl, reforming the Orthodox congregations in Ingria should not take place in a violent manner; the natives should receive instructions and be convinced through the question-and-answer method, using both sermons and printed material to this end. At Stahl's suggestion, a printing press would be established at the consistory in Narva, with the capability to print texts in Swedish, Latin, and Russian. In his opinion, there was also need for a library where the Russian books that were lying around in deserted churches and an abandoned monastery could be gathered (Svenska Riksarkivet = SRA, Livonica II:202, Heinrich Stahl 27.02.1642). [17]

As a convinced follower of the Aristotelian method, Stahl believed that religious truth would become apparent through logical debate based on the Bible and other clerical books. In his opinion, the Russian Orthodox would convert to Lutheranism as a result of the advocacy of religious education. Based on experiences attained from Estonia he acted on two fronts—by communicating with Russian Orthodox and their clerics during visitations and by preparing a special catechism for Ingria. He communicated with the locals with the help of an interpreter because he did not know Russian and did not have the time to learn it. The fact that many Orthodox Finns and Izhorians did not speak Russian either was considered by Stahl to be a factor favourable to conversion (Lotman 2000, 113). [18]

In 1644, Stahl's catechism was printed, written for Ingria in Swedish. It was entitled *Förnufftennes miölk*—the Milk of Reason. The title of the catechism refers to Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it" (1 Cor. 3,2). In this catechism, the questions and answers are written in three different variations so that the catechised would be able to learn the religious principles by progressing from simpler to more complicated versions. Stahl had *Förnufftennes miölk* translated to Russian as well, but it was never printed (Lotman 2014, 135–36). There was no printing press established in Narva during his lifetime and Peter Van Selow's printing press in Stockholm had ceased operating (Tarkiainen 2017, 252). [19]

All of Stahl's activity in converting Russian Orthodox to Lutheranism was based on his conviction of the power of language, especially that of written language. He displayed a sincere interest towards Russian Orthodoxy, but his viewpoint was that of a Lutheran. His inability to understand the worldview of the Russian Orthodox entailed two major conflicts whose aftermath had deleterious effects on the conversion plans. Stahl had noticed books lying about already during his first visitation in the abandoned Jelissei monastery in Kattila parish. The superintendent brought the 35 books—written in Church Slavonic and in a semi-decomposed state—to Narva to inventory them and to add them to the library of the consistory. According to Stahl, the books mostly contained liturgical and hagiographical texts and were well kept, in his opinion. The Orthodox did not consider him to be the saviour of the books; a Lutheran cleric acquiring holy books was unforgivable. They would rather have had them destroyed (Lotman 2014, 125). For them, Scripture was not a text to be read or studied, but a sacred artefact that could not be defiled by a person of another religion. [20]

A similar misunderstanding happened when Stahl wished to conduct a sermon at the church in Ivangorod on October 31, Reformation Day. Most likely, he intended to introduce the catechism of Martin Luther to the people. A riotous mob forced the superintendent to vacate the church and the incident was discussed at the Swedish Privy Council due to complaints by the citizens of Ivangorod. Just as he was unable to perceive the sanctity of Orthodox books, Stahl was also unable to perceive the sanctity of the church space. He wished to enter the sacred room behind the iconostasis out of ignorance, not out of malice. For Lutherans, [21] transcendental qualities were attributed to the Word of God, items or buildings were not sacred (Lotman 2014, 126–27).

Stahl perceived the Russians' different understanding of holiness as idol worship, from which he hoped to 'liberate' them with the help of correctly transmitted written language. According to him, Russians ought to have mastered the five chapters of the catechism, the morning, evening, and grace prayers. The Russian Orthodox priests ought to have been compelled, under penalty of fines, to teach the Lutheran catechism and read the litany to their congregation every Sunday. The non-Russophone Finno-Ugric Orthodox should also have been compelled to attend the Lutheran church services on prayer days or face fines. In Ivangorod, the government should have hired a Finnish-speaking Russian cleric, who would have been able to translate texts clarifying the Gospel for use in the congregation. In addition to the catechism, the collection of sermons should also have been translated into Russian. To find translators, Finnish and Swedish students should have been sent to Russia to learn the language and Russian boys should have been enrolled into school in Narva where they would have received, among other things, a religious education (SRA, Livonica II:202. Heinrich Stahl 1645(?)). Unfortunately, no Russian boys expressing such interest could be found (Tarkiainen 1972, 515). [22]

Stahl obviously based the design of these measures on his experience in Estonia, which must be judged as successful even in hindsight. The creation of a body of Estonian religious literature gave the Estonians a written language as well as a national and Lutheran identity which was to last even during the two centuries of Russian occupation following the Great Northern War (1700–1721). Why was Stahl's catechetical project not successful in Ingria? [23]

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Estonians' understanding of religion was not more advanced than that of the Ingrian natives. Lutheran ideas reached Estonian towns as early as the second quarter of the sixteenth century, but the indigenous Estonians clung to their ingrained religious customs that mixed Catholic practices with superstition (Eesti kiriku- ja religioonilugu, 98-99). The main prayers had already been translated into Estonian during the Catholic period (Põld 1996, 40–45), but it was only through writings in their mother tongue that they gradually came to understand the nature of Christianity. [24]

The situation was different in Ingria, where the magical worldview of the indigenous people was mixed with Russian Orthodox mysticism. Western Christian rationalism was alien to their deeply rooted mystical sense of God. Attempts by the superintendent—who took literary culture for granted—to enter into dialogue with the Russian Orthodox were doomed due to a lack of common ground. [25]

In addition, Stahl has been criticised by historians and his contemporaries alike for his staunch Lutheran unwillingness to make pragmatic concessions to the conversion of Orthodox believers. For example, in 1639 the governor-general of Vyborg and Kexholm County, Per Brahe, promised grain to those Russian clerics who taught the catechism to their congregations (Isberg 1973, 40; Laitila 2020). According to Ingria's governor-general Carl Mörner, the theological aspect of the Russian Orthodox problem should simply have been discarded and the inhabitants should have been linked to the Swedish state by means of economic privileges. Mörner believed that "the more they fast, the more they can pay taxes" and "once they receive money from the Swedish state, they will forget their gods" (SRA, Livonica II: 171. Carl Mörner 02.09.1650, Öhlander 1900, 73–74). As superintendent and a devout orthodox Lutheran, such concessions were not possible for Stahl. The lack of adaptability did not stem from Heinrich Stahl's character, but rather from the theology of orthodox Lutheranism, which [26] was different, for example, from that of the Jesuits, whose key to success was finding the common ground with the beliefs of the indigenous peoples (Mungello 1989, 14–15). The Eastern Church's cosmological perception of the world and the responsibilities of the individual to the community remained incomprehensible to the Lutherans, who focused on written language and an individual perception of God (Steinwand 1962, 16–17). However, Heinrich Stahl's conversion programme ran into more concrete problems, too. The superintendent's desired printing press was only established in Narva on the eve of the Great Northern War, with the government lacking the pecuniary means for a library and gymnasium as well (Küng 2005b; Lotman 2014, 100, 2119).

Heinrich Stahl succeeded in creating a Lutheran church organisation in Ingria. The congregations were organised in four provostships to be visited twice a year by the provosts. A clerical consistory was established in Narva, and synods took place under the chairmanship of the superintendent (Väänänen 1987, 36–41; Isberg 1973, 50–51). However, whereas Russian Orthodox faithful formed a unitary community in Ingria regardless of their mother tongue, the conflict between the German and Swedish Lutheran congregations took place on the grounds of national identity. The right of patronage over the German congregation in Narva belonged to the city council, who did not recognise the superintendent's right to inspect their church and who refused to adhere to the Swedish church ceremony. The conflict escalated to such a level that Heinrich Stahl was forbidden to enter the church of Narva's German congregation (Isberg 1973, 72–73). In a letter to Lord High Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, the superintendent acknowledged that the conflict with the German congregation even had adverse effects on the conversion of the Russian Orthodox (SRA, E-732. Heinrich Stahl to Axel Oxenstierna 23.04.1645). [27]

According to the historian Jaak Naber, Heinrich Stahl's aim was to gain control of the material situation of the German congregation, and in doing so he acted in the economic interests of the state. There existed an economic aspect in this conflict: as representatives of the city's merchant class, the city council could afford to ignore the superintendent's orders because the mercantile development of Narva was extremely important to the Swedish state (Naber 1995, 70–71). However, Stahl was not driven by economic interests, but was dedicated to his theological mission, which was also tied to state loyalty. Protestant faith and loyalty to the Kingdom of Sweden went hand in hand (Montgomery 2002, 71). As representative of the Church of Sweden, Stahl had embraced the aim of implementing a common church ceremony, using the 1614 Swedish Church Manual (Öhlander 1900, 46–48). [28]

Needless to say, there were no dogmatic differences between the German and Swedish Lutheran Churches, but there existed differences in liturgy, feast days, the order surrounding weekly church services, and other non-theological questions due to historical developments. They became important in concrete practice because they related to the identity of the congregations. The superintendent's endeavours to subject the entire church organisation of Ingria to the consistory was, on the one hand, an expression of official church policy during Axel Oxenstierna's reign, but on the other, it was Stahl's personal conviction that secular power must be subservient to clerical power. However, he lacked a mechanism to implement this power because the economic and social position of the Germans allowed them to simply ignore these ambitions (Lotman 2014, 98–99). [29]

The first stage of the Ingrian church reforms ended with the Russo-Swedish war of 1656–1658. The war showed the complete failure of the conversion programme and revealed the political dimension of Russian Orthodoxy. Whereas the identity of Ingria's Lutherans was [30] based on the local level, rather than on the level of the Swedish state, the Russian Orthodox faithful defined themselves as Russian subjects regardless of their place of residence. During the war, they defected to the enemy, killing Lutherans and raiding their dwellings. Around 7500 Orthodox fled to Russia and 1000 Lutherans were probably deported (Tarkiainen 2017, 254). Most Lutheran clerics fled to either Germany or Sweden due to fear of the Russians. Ingria's first superintendent did not abandon his congregation, dying in Narva in 1657 (Lotman 2014, 134, 144–43). In spite of this war, Ingria remained part of the Swedish domain.

The Church of Ingria From the Russo-Swedish War to the Great Northern War

Russia had never actually forfeited either Ingria or its inhabitants and utilised all available means to reinforce their religious identity. Clerics who secretly crossed the border and residents of Ivangorod who maintained a constant correspondence with the Patriarch kept the inhabitants of Ingria in Moscow's sphere of influence. Russia's interest towards the residents of Ingria was purely political; they were regarded as incomplete Orthodox influenced by Lutheran thought (Lotman 2014, 130–32). While the Russian Orthodox Church saw Catholics as schismatics, Lutherans were deemed heretics (Scheliha 2004, 278). [31]

As part of the church reforms of Patriarch Nikon, initiated in 1652, the Russian Orthodox Church assumed a more publicly hostile position towards members of other religions. Nikon's removal from office in 1666 further increased the dependence of the Church on the Tsar of Russia (Isberg 1973, 81). [32]

The Russian Orthodox of Ingria had also lost most of the clerics during the war, but they did not allow Lutheran pastors to conduct marriages or baptise children. The activities of the Lutheran Church in Ingria were not interrupted; the clerics who had fled during the war had largely returned and new clerics were ordained to fill up the vacant positions. The administration of Orthodox sacraments was delayed until the arrival of a Russian priest who had managed to cross the border. The non-Russophone Ingrians and Votians acted in a similar manner whenever Lutheran church leaders ineffectually tried to convince them to attend Sunday service in Lutheran churches (Öhlander 1900, 120–21). Both Stahl's method of conversion, which was based on Lutheran written texts, and the limited gains attained in this field had been lost. [33]

After the war, Ivangorod's Russian Orthodox obtained the right to freely express their religious customs (SRA Livonica II: 678. Kunglig resolution för Ivangorod 29.11.1664). Plans to convert the other Russian Orthodox of Ingria had not been abandoned, but no progress was made towards this goal during the reigns of the following five superintendents of the Ingrian church. Hopes for success were placed in governmental decrees, interdictions, and orders, but to no avail (Isberg 1973, 79–87). [34]

A shift in the conversion of Russian Orthodox came along with Karl XI of Sweden, who ruled from 1660 but came of age only in 1672. He consistently practiced a policy of a unitary state church and prepared church laws which would give the king the right to decide over religious matters (Montgomery 2002, 140–42). The subjugation of the church to the secular ruler of the state was not a particularity of Sweden but was reflective of late seventeenth century Protestant political theory. A church without a firm, legitimate leader had turned out to be too insecure and vulnerable (Hope 1995, 74–75). In order for Karl XI's church policy to be implemented, the confessionally and linguistically fragmented Ingria needed a [35] competent church leader with a clear vision. Herbert Ulrich, who was the pastor for the German congregation of Narva, wanted to become the superintendent, but he did not have the favour of governor-general Johann Jakob Taube because he did not speak Finnish. Taube was of the opinion that Ingria's governor-general should be an ethnic Swede who spoke Finnish and who would furthermore be respected by the Swedish and German pastors who were in conflict with one another. These conditions were satisfied by Petrus Bång, a professor of theology at the University of Turku (Åbo) who assumed his new position in the summer of 1679 (Isberg 1973, 87).

Bång was a theologian of a new generation, a thinker of Swedish ecclesiastical history and an ardent patriot. Inspired by the Gothic ideology of the closing decades of the century, he wrote the first systematic history of the Swedish church, going back to the antediluvian era (Lindroth 1989, 298–99). For a convinced Lutheran, Bång's theological views were liberal (Simolin 1912, 66–68, 190). His understanding of the Russian Orthodox Church was broader than that of Ingria's preceding superintendents. Bång highlighted both the intersection of the two confessions and the strengths of each that the other should learn from. In his opinion, the Lutherans were more educated and more conscious of their faith, whereas the Orthodox were more devoted. Unlike the Lutherans, the Russians received the Eucharist once per year, but they prepared for it for a whole week. Their version of Lent could be a model for Lutherans, too. According to his proposal, both the Ingrians and the Russians should attend the sermons at the Lutheran church during the feast days. What should be prevented was the border crossings of Russian clerics as well as the peasants having their children baptised in Russia (Tarkiainen 1986, 247–48; Laitila 2020). In Bång's opinion, conversion to Lutheranism would be justified in the case of the Finnish-speaking Ingrians and Votians (Sivonen 2007, 72). [36]

Bång was critical of the Lutheran Church of Ingria. He outlined his proposals for improving the situation in a thorough memorandum presented to the government 1680. According to this, the use of the Swedish church manual, Swedish liturgy, and the celebration of Swedish feast days ought to be implemented everywhere, both in urban centres and rural areas. Bång separately highlighted the divergent liturgy of Narva's German congregation and their disregard for Swedish feast days and also accused Nyen's city council of usurping the church's right of patronage, arguing that there ought to be no German pastors in rural congregations because not a single German peasant remained in them, while local nobles and officials spoke either Finnish or Swedish. A whole array of the superintendent's proposals was concerned with improving the economic situation of the church, particularly by eliminating the inequality between the incomes of the Swedish and German parishes and the salaries of the pastors (SRA Livonica II: 202. Petrus Bång Gravamina, Simolin 1912, 183–97; Isberg 1973, 88; Laitila 2020). [37]

The attempts to make the Lutheran Church of Ingria more unitary resulted in an acute confrontation between Petrus Bång and the German congregations both in Narva and Nyen. Nyen was founded in 1632 as a town for mercantile purposes in the location of present-day St. Petersburg. In the closing decades of the century, Nyen had evolved into a prosperous mercantile town whose most influential social stratum was composed of German merchants who had settled there (Küng 2005a; Kepsu 2019). The German congregation of the city considered the superintendent's propositions to be unjust and the participation in his general visitation to be degrading (Simolin 1912, 194). In a letter of complaint to the king they accused the superintendent of political ambitions and thereby damaging the mercantile interests of the town (SRA, Livonica II:207. Nyen's city council and magistrate 5.02.1681). Petrus Bång's con- [38]

flict with Nyen's German congregation ended when he was appointed Bishop of Vyborg in 1681 (Väänänen 1987, 167).

[39] Johannes Gezelius the Younger, who had studied in the Netherlands, England, and Germany, was appointed superintendent after Bång. He professed a Pietist theology and took a special interest in the comparative study of languages. For decades he was engaged in the new critical Swedish translation of the Bible, which later came to be called the Karl XII Bible (Lindroth 1989, 105–6; Tarkiainen 2017, 257). A growing interest in history and linguistic studies among Swedish scholars is reflected in Gezelius's activity as superintendent. Like his predecessor, he thought it right to convert the non-Russian speaking Ingrians and Votians to Lutheranism, but he also provided a theological explanation for this. He concluded from his research that the language of the Ingrians and Votians was related to Finnish. In his opinion, Estonian was a corrupted version of Finnish, too. Gezelius inferred from this that the Ingrians and Votians travelled to Ingria either from Estonia or Finland after the last Russo-Swedish war and that they were originally Lutheran. In Ingria they adapted to witchcraft and superstition due to the influence of Russian clerics. This was encouraged by many landowners as well, so that their assimilation would be easier. In addition to their language, the Finnish ancestry of the Ingrians and Votians was also attested by their choice of habitat near bodies of water, their dress, and customs. The Russians held them in disdain and considered them impure, but Russian priests tempted them into their religion for their own interests, although they regarded them as pagans in their hearts. Allegedly, this could also be determined by reading the Russians' own books. This factor also provided justification for the conversion programme: the Finno-Ugric tribes must return to their original religion (Mägiste 1956, 201–7; Sivonen 2007, 94–106).

[40] According to Karl XI's resolution of 4 May 1683, the Ingrians and Votians were segregated from the Russians based on their religious affiliation in order to bring them into the Lutheran Church of Ingria. Already by the fall of the same year, Johannes Gezelius drafted a detailed manual for pastors so that they could implement the programme. The task of the pastor was to determine who was Votian and Ingrian and to teach them Lutheran doctrine at least once a month. Should the pastor have plans to conduct a lesson on the catechism in a village, he was required to notify the local landowner three weeks in advance so that they could ensure the participation of all the peasants. Ideally, this would take place in the village chapel, in which all the catechised would form a circle, at the centre of which were all the young people. The presence of the lord of the manor or at least an *Amtmann* was also desirable. The catechism lesson was to begin with the singing of a Finnish-language psalm, followed by a brief prayer in Finnish. One learned the chapters of the catechism by memorising questions and answers and additionally practiced reading from the ABC books. At the end of the lesson, a prayer from the Finnish prayer book was read again, as well as the Lord's Prayer and a psalm in Finnish. The main duty of the pastor was the cultivation of love for the word of God. Of course, he had to have impeccable manners and a pleasant comportment (Öhlander 1900, 126–29, SRA, Livonica II:202. Johannes Gezelius 2.11.1683).

[41] The teaching of Lutheran doctrine in Finnish to the Russian Orthodox who spoke Finno-Ugric languages solved the problem posed by the dearth of clerical literature in the mother tongue of the conversion subjects, which had significantly impeded the success of Heinrich Stahl's conversion programme. The catechism did exist in the Finnish language during the founding of Ingria's superintendency, but Stahl had attempted to teach Lutheran doctrine in Russian, for which he lacked the instruments. In addition, Lutheran popular education

had made great progress in Finland by the time Johannes Gezelius the Younger became superintendent of Ingria. The superintendent's father Johannes Gezelius the Older published a catechism for children in 1666 which also contained an alphabet book. He even devised a method for learning to read faster, according to which those who had obtained the skill were meant to help the slower students. Children, being the most capable, were supposed to teach their parents (Laine 2017, 41–45). There is no doubt that the superintendent tried to apply the instructions formulated by his father, as is evidenced even by his order pertaining to young people in the aforementioned instruction. Therefore, there was no further need to translate catechisms and sermons into Russian nor to find a printing press with Cyrillic types. However, it was expected that the local pastor would speak Finnish. The success of Johannes Gezelius's conversion programme would have entailed the Fennicisation of Ingria (Sepp 1934, 87).

Gezelius's zeal in teaching Lutheran doctrine to Ingrians and Votians became evident during a general visitation he undertook during the summer of 1684. In a short time, surprisingly good results had been obtained. The historian Alvin Isberg points to cases where the villagers fled into the woods upon seeing the visitators, simply did not show up, or acted in an antagonising manner (Isberg 1973, 98–99). Nevertheless, the visitation journal does not document a great number of such cases. During the visitation, which lasted from July 25 to August 24, people in more than thirty villages demonstrated benevolent interest, took part in prayer and singing and attempted to repeat back the chapters of the catechism (SRA Livonica II:202. *Diarium Visitationis Ingro-Wadiaca. Anno 1684*, Öhlander 1900, 140–46). The superintendent considered the visitation to be a success, acknowledging that the Ingrians and Votians have an inner conviction that they are not part of the Russian community (Mägiste 1956, 205). [42]

The most cogent piece of evidence supporting the promising perspective of the conversion programme is the reaction of the Russian government to it. Already during a meeting with Swedish delegates in Moscow in the summer of 1684, representatives of the Russian side accused the Swedes of persecuting the Russian Orthodox in Ingria. It was not difficult for the superintendent, who was acquainted with the local conditions, to recognise in this accusation Moscow's desire to keep the citizens of Ingria under their influence. Therefore, he referred to the events of the last war. For his part, Karl XI cautioned the superintendent in a letter against using violence in conversion (Isberg 1973, 100–101). From the same year (1684), a document detailing the process of a conversion from Lutheranism to Russian Orthodoxy was translated into Swedish (Öhlander 1900, 196–98). The practice that had been established earlier in the seventeenth century in the Russian Orthodox Church (Tsvetaev 1890, 352) made such converts recite curses for both the Catholic and Post-Reformation Churches, along with the theologians Johannes Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. Moreover, they had to curse Martin Luther's written works, particularly his catechism for children and the Lutheran school. Although it is difficult to gauge the reach of this document in Sweden, one can presume that the threats of damnation from the Patriarch also reached the Ingrian peasantry via the Russian clerics, but it is not known whether and to what extent the fear of excommunication affected their wish to convert to Lutheranism. In any case, by the spring of 1685, the superintendent was no longer so optimistic about the success of the conversion programme. Apparently, only a few families had made sufficient progress as to receive the Eucharist in the Lutheran Church (Isberg 1973, 104). [43]

The Russian authorities, who were carefully monitoring the situation in Ingria, nevertheless feared the influence of the Lutheran Church on the population. In a letter sent to the [44]

Swedish king during the fall of 1685, the Russian government accused Sweden of violently converting Orthodox Christians and demanded this to immediately cease while referring to the peace treaty (Isberg 1973, 105). One by one, Gezelius refuted the Russian accusations and argued that although the Russian clerics in Ingria were uneducated, mean, without virtue, and constantly drunk, their activities constituted no basis for them to complain. The Russian clerics had only been required to celebrate all days of prayer and repentance, to recite certain psalms on those days, and to educate themselves in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. In addition, no physical work was to be done on Sundays and feast days. It was forbidden to curse the Evangelical religion, to hold the Lutheran Church in contempt, and the Lutheran visitators must be allowed into Russian churches. The priests who had been ordained outside of Ingria had to give a pledge of allegiance to the king of Sweden (Öhlander 1900, 150–54). Ingrians and Votians, although Orthodox, were not subjects of the Russian tsar. The basis of their religious affiliation was wrong because their ancestors had presumably been baptised into the Evangelical religion. Because they had been baptised, they were Christian, but they lacked the slightest understanding of Christian doctrine, partly due to their ignorance of the language and partly due to the carelessness of the Russian clerics (Öhlander 1900, 160; Isberg 1973, 108–9).

In correspondence with the government, Gezelius repeatedly emphasised that he did not undertake the conversion of the Russian Orthodox by his own initiative and that it had proceeded successfully. The data presented to support this claim—that several thousand had apparently mastered the Lord's Prayer and several hundred had mastered the chapters of the catechism, that Lutheran clerics had baptised around 1000 children and married 200 couples—is not considered reliable by historians (Sivonen 2007, 106; Tarkiainen 2017, 260; Isberg 1973, 114–15). But even if the true figures were much smaller, it indicates that the right solution had been to focus on conversions in the Finnish mother tongue. One must agree with Hendrik Sepp in his claim that if Gezelius's programme had gone ahead, at the very least the central and western parts of Ingria would have transitioned to Lutheranism (1934, 86). [45]

The forceful intervention of Russian authorities into the ecclesiastical life of Ingria had two consequences. First, it motivated the opponents to conversion to actively respond. Second, the superintendent lost the favour of both governor-general Göran Sperling and the king himself (Isberg 1973, 109–20). The theological arguments of Gezelius did not outweigh the political considerations of Karl XI. [46]

However, the king did not abandon the attempt to establish church law in the Baltic Sea provinces, including Ingria, which increased tensions with the German congregations. Jaak Naber has called Gezelius a fervent supporter of unitary Swedish church organisation, explicitly hostile to Germans, referring to the superintendent's memorial of 1684. In the memorial, Gezelius relates the implementation of church law in the provinces with patriotism, with love of the Swedish fatherland (Naber 1995, 134–35). This idea was worded even more clearly by Gezelius during his sermon that solemnly introduced the Swedish church law in Narva on 14 February 1688, during which Ingria's nobles, clerics, and citizens swore allegiance to the king. According to Gezelius, no other people on earth lived in such harmony with the Bible and Lutheran confession as the Swedish. No other state had such a God-fearing king who had taken responsibility for the pure and correct teaching in Sweden among its subjects (Isberg 1973, 112). Here, Gezelius was not expressing his personal stances, but rather the viewpoints of theology and constitutional law dominant in Sweden during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. [47]

During this period, monarchy was regarded from the perspective of both theology and constitutional law as the best form of government across Europe. The theoretical justification of the monarch's power derived from natural law doctrine, which was given a rational framework by Samuel von Pufendorf, invited to a professorship in Lund University in 1667. According to his theory, members of society voluntarily forfeited power to the ruler, who had a moral responsibility for the welfare of the state and all its members. During the *Riksdag* of 1682, the estates renounced legislative power as belonging to the king. A political doctrine based on natural law also had a theological justification: the king had acquired his state from God and was responsible only to God. The church law of 1686 saw the almost complete subjugation of the Church of Sweden to the king. The church law legitimised the Church of Sweden as a national orthodox unitary church, based on the Augsburg Confession and Book of Concord. It was precisely religious unity that should eliminate the differences between the motherland and the new provinces (Montgomery 2002, 140–46; Lindroth 1989, 362–66). "Fatherland" and "love of Fatherland" were terms often used in Swedish rhetoric at the end of the century. It is debatable what exactly was meant thereby—whether it was a drive to Swedify the entire state. Were residents of conquered provinces expected to ethnically assimilate or merely to be loyal to the Kingdom (Östlund 2007, 93–99)? [48]

In the case of Ingria, the second option seems more likely due to the fact that Karl XI's priorities were the interests of the state and that he was prepared to make concessions in religious questions in the name of political considerations and economic benefit (Montgomery 2002, 143). The German congregations who had built their own church thus retained the right of patronage over the church and divine services could be conducted in German (*Kirchengesetz Und Ordnung* 1796, 42). Due to economic considerations, governor-general Sperling recommended granting religious freedom to the Reformed Dutch merchants and the Anglican English merchants in Narva. The king's position was hesitant, but permission was not granted to the Dutch due to Gezelius's opposition. The superintendent took a different stance towards the Anglican Church, whose approach to the Eucharist was, to his knowledge, different from that of the Lutheran Church, but whose church organisation and liturgy were more similar to the practices of the Church of Sweden than those of some German churches. The members of the Anglican Church could therefore take part in divine services held in private houses. Karl XI accepted Gezelius's proposal on the grounds that only the English would participate in the Anglican church services held in private houses and that it would constitute no threat to the Lutheran Church of Ingria (Isberg 1973, 128–30; Küng 2005a). [49]

The political considerations of the king become apparent in the questions of attitudes towards Old Believers. The Old Believers, who had fled Russia after Nikon's reforms, mostly settled in Sweden's Baltic Sea provinces, foremost in Estonia and Livonia, but partly in Ingria as well. As was his habit, Gezelius formulated his stance towards Old Believers after extensive research. Among the positive aspects, he emphasised their profound piety and the fact that they followed the rite that had already been accepted by Gustav II Adolph in 1617. They also despised drinking vodka, fasted strictly, did not swear nor steal, and were in this sense suitable settlers. However, their ascetic lifestyle created social problems because they were not able to live in the same village with other Russians or even to drink water from the same stream. Their nightly religious gatherings and contempt towards marriage were deplorable since they led to grievous sin. What was downright dangerous was their zeal in converting proselytes, which is why the superintendent did not support their staying in the region. The governor-general in turn considered them harmful to economic affairs on account of their [50] strict fasting and opposition to marriage. In the end, the king found that people who had fled from Russia were of no threat to Sweden and that every individual was necessary in the sparsely populated region. Their religious life was no more heretical than that of other Russian Orthodox, and hostility between the two currents would rather foster their conversion to Lutheranism (Isberg 1973, 124–27).

The plan to convert Russian Orthodox had been hindered by Moscow's active intervention, but it was not yet buried. A new approach to the problem was introduced by Nikolas Bergius, appointed as Ingria's superintendent in 1700. Like Gezelius, he delved into the religious and ethnic problems of the region with the curiosity and meticulousness of a scholar. Unlike Gezelius, he learned Russian so that he could study books in the Russian language and debate with Russian clerics. Like Ingria's first superintendent Heinrich Stahl, he too collected Russian books circulating in Ingria and thought it important that the printing press in Narva be able to print books in Russian (Tarkiainen 2017, 263–65). The capacity to print in Cyrillic was never achieved in Narva, but a catechism translated by Bergius with parallel texts in Swedish and Russian was still printed in Johann Köler's printing press there (Küng 2005b). The Russian text had been transcribed into the Latin alphabet (Isberg 1973, 138). Unfortunately, this publication only has significance in cultural history, as attempts to convert Russian Orthodox came to an end with the Russian forces crossing the border at the start of the Great Nordic War later in the year 1700. The most considerable result of the final act of the conversion programme remained Nicolaus Bergius's two-part doctoral dissertation "De statu Ecclesiae et Religionis Moscoviticae" (Tarkiainen 2017, 266). [51]

Conclusion

During the Swedish reign of Ingria, the biggest problem was perceived to be the affiliation of its indigenous inhabitants with Russian Orthodoxy. This was in conflict with the Lutheran confession imposed in the Kingdom of Sweden and put the loyalty of the Ingrian inhabitants to the Swedish state in question. Actively attempting to persuade Russian Orthodox faithful to convert could have entailed them fleeing to Russia. For the already sparsely inhabited region, this would have meant economic calamity. The long-term nonviolent conversion of Ingria's inhabitants to Lutheranism was thus the only viable tactic. The attempts to convert Ingria's indigenous inhabitants to Lutheranism over the course of nearly 75 years were not successful. In Robert Scribner's appraisal, that was precisely the amount of time necessary—roughly three generations—for some social cohorts to adapt to the changes brought on by the Reformation (Scribner 2001, 80). In Estonia and most of Livonia, the church and educational programme of the Swedish state worked successfully: both Estonians and the majority of Latvians adopted Lutheranism, and a basis was established which brought a literary culture and a national identity to these peoples. A national identity relying on the written language saved these groups from being Russified in the two hundred years following the Great Northern War and enabled them to achieve independence after the fall of the Russian Empire. [52]

Why was it unsuccessful in Ingria? Does the reason lie with the wrong decisions and practices made by individual rulers and church actors or were there other reasons at play? [53]

One can distinguish three longer periods of time in the endeavours of the Swedish state to convert Ingrian's Russian Orthodox into Lutheranism: 1. From the Treaty of Stolbovo to the foundation of the superintendency in Ingria (1617–1641); 2. From the superintendency's foundation to the outbreak of the Russo-Swedish War (1641–1656); 3. From the end of the [54]

Russo-Swedish War to the beginning of the Great Northern War (1659–1701). Already the dating itself indicates the constant presence of Russia. Although Russia ceded territory to Sweden, it did not cease treating the Russian Orthodox faithful living there as its subjects.

The Swedish theologians recognised the baptisms of the Russian Orthodox Church but deplored its religious customs and liturgy as well as, above all, the limited knowledge of clerics and congregation members of the Bible and religious doctrine. The conversion programme was indeed based on the presumption that knowledge of the transcendent catechismal truths would serve to liberate the people from belief in immanent magical rituals and guide them into the arms of the Lutheran Church. During the period where Ingria belonged to the Diocese of Vyborg, the conversion of Ingria's indigenous inhabitants turned out to be too difficult a task for the bishops due to the size of the Diocese as well as the lack of a definitive methodology. Therefore, Ingria was reorganised into an independent superintendency. The appointment of Heinrich Stahl, who had proven himself to be a successful catechiser in Estonia, as superintendent was a sign that there were plans to convert the Russian Orthodox by consistently teaching them Lutheran catechism. [55]

Based on experiences attained in Estonia, Stahl linked the conversion of the Russian Orthodox with the vernacular written language. Although most of the Votians and Ingrians understood Finnish better than Russian, Stahl attempted to create clerical literature in Russian for this purpose. The catechism he compiled and translated into Russian was nonetheless never printed, and the superintendent's wish to establish a printing press in Narva only became reality in the closing decade of the century. Stahl's zeal in converting the Russian Orthodox to Lutheranism highlighted the downsides of the Swedish conversion programme in the face of Russian influence. [56]

The conversion programme took into account the attitudes of Lutheran theologians towards Russian Orthodoxy but neglected the strongly developed religious identity of the Russian Orthodox faithful in Ingria. In Estonia, where paganism had become intertwined with elements of Catholicism, the indigenous people accepted the Lutheran doctrine based on the written vernacular more easily. Nor was there a dearth of educated and motivated clerics in Estonia, unlike in Ingria, and the government supported the printing of clerical literature in Estonian. In Ingria, Swedish authorities did not find the means to accomplish either. Even more strongly than the linguistic barrier, the message of the Lutheran clerics towards the subjects of conversion was impeded by a divergent perception of the world. The superintendent considered the religious tradition of the local population merely to be blind superstition that could be eliminated with access to transcendental Scriptures. Unlike the Lutheran one, the Russian Orthodox identity in Ingria was not based on the mother tongue, though; many non-Russophone Ingrians considered themselves to be Russians based on religious affiliation. The unity of the Lutheran Church of Ingria, on the other hand, was unravelled specifically by the split linguistic identity, which also did not make the work of conversion any easier. The influence of the Metropolitan of Novgorod and Ivangorod's Russian residents, who consistently undermined the efforts of Lutheran clerics, surfaced acutely during the Russo-Swedish war in 1656-1658. [57]

Since the Ingrian people's loyalty to the government was evidently linked to their confessional beliefs, the continuation of the conversion programme was deemed essential. The need for a new strategy was also clear. The conversion programme of Johannes Gezelius, who was the most active superintendent during the subsequent period, focused only on the Ingrians and Votians who spoke a Finno-Ugric language. Like Ingria's first superintendent, Gezelius's method of catechism teaching was based on the catechism being in the vernacular, but it now [58] included the teaching of literacy, including more immanent concerns. His activities reflect an interest towards history and linguistic studies that had appeared in Sweden in the seventeenth century as well as the evolution in popular education. The teaching of Lutheran doctrine to the Russian Orthodox was not successful in every parish, but the intensified reaction of its adversaries confirms the validity of the chosen approach. Whereas Moscow acted silently and secretly during the first half of the century, Russian intervention concerning the conversion of the Orthodox in Ingria appeared at the governmental level after the war of 1656–1658.

As with earlier instances, Swedish church policy contradicted the economic and political interests of the state during the latter decades of the century, and it could not be consistently carried out. Ingria functioned as a sort of litmus paper which, through the oppositions of ethnic groups with different religious affiliations, highlighted both the ambitions of Sweden's Lutheranism and the weaknesses in realising them. Politico-economic concessions to German urban congregations and to Narva's Anglican congregation were inevitable. The concessions of Karl XI curtailed the conversion programme, although it continued. However, it lacked tenacity and, although it was politically calculated to appease Russia, it did not accomplish its goal considering the following events. [59]

The conversion of the indigenous inhabitants to Lutheranism failed initially due to a lack of financial resources, competent clerics, and methodical consistency. When a working strategy finally appeared, there was a decisive lack of time. The Lutheran clergy's dialogue with the local Orthodox population was hampered by their diverging worldviews and philosophical bases. All the while, Ingrians had confessional ties to Russia, which kept them in the latter's political sphere of influence for an entire century. [60]

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Spreading the Catholic Faith in the Periphery. Jesuit Mission in Polish Livonia (1625–1772)

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ABSTRACT The region of Latgale/Polish Livonia lies at the intersection between the Lutheran northern half of the Baltic region and the Roman Catholic southern part. Almost all of the local German nobility had accepted Lutheranism by the seventeenth century, but the region was politically a part of the Roman Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Jesuit missionaries tried to re-Catholicise this region. The religious contact between the Catholic missionaries and the surrounding Lutheran and pagan countryside was diligently noted in the Jesuit reports, which became less polemical during the time period as the region's inhabitants turned to the Catholic Church. While the missionaries were solitary fighters for Catholicism in 1625, they had become ordinary representatives of the local elite by 1772, when the region was ceded to the Russian Empire.

KEYWORDS Latgale, Polish Livonia, Jesuits, mission, Roman Catholicism, paganism, Lutheranism

Introduction

The region of Latgale, currently in East Latvia, is located on the crossroads between the core lands of three Christian confessions—Russian Orthodox to the east, Catholics to the south and Lutherans to the north. The region is still multi-religious, with all three confessions—in addition to the Orthodox Old Believers—visibly present, even though Latvia is a largely secular country (Rimestad 2021). The origins of this multi-confessional landscape lie in early modernity, when the region transferred from Baltic German to Polish and eventually Russian control. This article traces the role of the Jesuit missionaries who came to what was then called Inflanty in 1625 and their encounters with local heterodox believers and communities until the incorporation of the region into the Russian Empire during the first Polish partition in 1772. The focus is on how the Jesuit missionaries presented the region, since there are few non-Jesuit sources available for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moreover, the historiography of the territory that eventually became Latgale is particularly flawed because [1] of its historical trajectory as a plaything between three empires—Sweden, Poland-Lithuania, and Russia.

The article focuses on the way the arrival and presence of the Jesuits contributed to establishing a balance between dynamics and stability in the region. The Jesuits clearly sought to bring the inhabitants back to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. In the tumults of the previous century, most of them had welcomed the Lutheran Reformation or even reverted to paganism due to a lack of priests. The Jesuits had come to re-establish order in a war-torn and desolate region, as the opening sentence of the very first surviving annual report of the Daugavpils[1] Mission from 1634 shows: [2]

> Dunenburgensis arx et ager Livoniae, ut amplitudine terminorum longe lateque diffusus, sic senticeto labis haereticae altaque ignorantia divinarum rerum horridus, quotidie se praebet subigendam mitius. (Kleijntjenss 1940, 261) [3]

> Dünaburg and the region of Livonia every day becomes easier to subdue, even though it extends widely within its ample borders and is cluttered with the thorn bushes of heresies and the deepest ignorance in things divine.[2] [4]

In other words, the Jesuits seemed to have a lot of work to do in this region, which the reports of the following centuries show. This article presents an insight into what the Jesuits termed “the thorn bushes of heresy and ignorance of things divine,” highlighting the religious contact in Polish Livonia. The first section sets the scene by introducing the region and the Jesuit order. In a second section, the struggle with paganism and Lutheranism over the seventeenth century is analysed. The third section details the way the Jesuits helped establish a lasting tradition of Catholicism in Polish Livonia during the eighteenth century, whereas the final fourth section brings the analysis together in a conclusion. [5]

Polish Livonia and the Jesuits

The modern city of Daugavpils is situated on the Daugava river (Düna in German, Dźwina in Polish), some 200 km upstream from the Latvian capital of Riga. The place was first mentioned in writing in 1275, when the Livonian Order built the Dünaburg stone castle (Selart 2018, 201–2). The Livonian Order was a missionary order from Northern Germany which had vowed to Christianise the Livonians. The Livonian and Lithuanian tribes were the last people of Europe to be Christianised, with the Lithuanians officially accepting Christianity only in 1386. The Dünaburg castle was erected to protect the Livonian order from the pagan Lithuanians, who repeatedly attacked and besieged the castle, until the region was more or less subdued by 1313 (Selart 2018, 205). [6]

On the eve of the Reformation, all of what is today Latvia and Estonia was firmly in the hands of German feudal lords, while the political rule of so-called medieval Livonia belonged variously to independent cities, the Livonian Order, the Bishops, or the Danish and Swedish king. By the sixteenth century, all territories were loosely gathered together in the Livonian Confederation. However, the Reformation, which spread very quickly in the Livonian cities, [7] spelled an end to the rule of both the bishops and the Livonian Order, leaving a power vacuum which the kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as the Principality of Muscovy attempted to fill during the Livonian War (1558–1582). Livonia changed hands several times. Most of the region ended up under the Polish Crown, but in 1621 the latter lost it again to Sweden. That is, all but the region around the fortress of Dünaburg. After a century of war and upheavals, Polish Livonia (Inflanty in Polish, Latgale in Latvian) was to remain Polish for the next century and a half, even if Russian troops occasionally passed through on their way to attack Sweden (Dybaś and Jeziorski 2021).

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[1] This is the current Latvian name of the capital of Latgale. From its foundation in the Middle Ages, it was better known by its German name Dünaburg (or Latinised “Dunenburg”). In Polish, it is called Dyneburg or Dźwińsk.

[2] All translations are the author’s own, unless otherwise indicated.

Legally speaking, however, Polish Livonia only officially became a regular part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after the treaty of Oliva from 1660, and the region was incorporated into the Commonwealth as one of its 33 *województwo* (counties) with the treaty of Andrusowo of 1667. From 1620 to 1667, it had been part of the Wenden *województwo*, which also encompassed the Livonian regions that had been lost to the Swedes. So, for half a century, it had been a kind of no-man's-land without a formal administration. However, due to wars and the concomitant epidemics and famine, it was a very sparsely populated region in the seventeenth century, with a population estimated at only around 50000 inhabitants for an area of 15000 km^2 (about the size of Northern Ireland, Dybaś and Jeziorski 2021, 227). The city of Dünaburg, which had received city privileges in 1583, is estimated to have had 400–500 inhabitants in 1710 (Dybaś and Jeziorski 2021, 231). [8]

Even though they did not leave any archival traces before 1634, we know that three Jesuit missionaries arrived in the region in 1625—Petri Culesius, Joannes Stribingius, and Joannes Schwartz (Kleijntjenss 1941, 345–50; Bogdanoviča 2018a, 47). All three originated from Livonia and were proficient in the local language. Moreover, they had all previously been working at the Jesuit college in Riga, which had been evacuated to Wenden (Cēsis in Latvian) when the Swedish army approached in 1621. When the Swedes occupied Wenden four years later, the Jesuits were sent to the last remaining part of Livonia under Polish rule. However, it took them five years to find a permanent residence in the city of Dünaburg and another five years before the Dünaburg Mission was upgraded to become a Residency by the Jesuit Order. The report from 1634, cited above, is therefore most likely the first official report to Rome, as they finally had settled in enough to report about successes. By then, they had also opened a school for which they had requested the help of three more Jesuits. [9]

The Jesuit Order was established in 1540 in the wake of the Reformation by the Basque nobleman Ignatius of Loyola as an order of learned monks that would enter into dialogue with common people in order to benefit their souls (Friedrich 2016). The order grew quickly—from ten monks in 1540 to more than a thousand 15 years later. When establishing the order, which he called Society of Jesus, Ignatius envisaged it to spread knowledge among the peoples in the form of teaching in schools and carrying out mission. This innovative vision acted as a magnet for many young Catholics, who saw the order as a way to share their passion for knowledge with the world and help the spread of Christianity. Within a few decades, there were Jesuit missions all over the globe, acting as a catalyst for globalisation (Banchoff and Casanova 2016). But the Jesuits were also active within Europe, primarily in the peripheries, where they opposed Reformation theology, winning regions back to the Catholic Church, loyal to the Roman Pope. This role had been carved out for the Jesuits especially during the three sessions of the Council of Trient (1545–1563), at which leading Jesuits had been important participants. [10]

So, when the King of Poland-Lithuania, Stefan Bathory (r. 1576–1586), requested help from [11] the Catholic Church to develop the newly conquered Livonian provinces, ten Jesuit monks were sent to Riga in 1583 and opened a college there (Runce 2021, 305). The Jesuits were not only active in the newly conquered Livonian provinces, but all across Poland-Lithuania, where they were very influential in educating noblemen, future politicians, and priests, even more so than in other European regions (Butterwick-Pawlikowski 2014, 51). The Jesuits were paramount in shaping Early Modern Polish religious consciousness within the Roman-Catholic frame. At the same time, Poland-Lithuania was a multi-religious society where Christians from different confessions lived alongside Muslims and Jews. Protestant protests and disputes over the royal succession had led to the Warsaw Confederation of 1573, which proclaimed freedom of confession in Poland-Lithuania (Kowalski 2001, 489). However, at the end of the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church, with the help of King Sigismund III (r. 1587–1632), regained predominance and pressured non-Catholic Poles into converting while nominally accepting the religious tolerance enshrined in law. The Jesuits, who had been invited to the Commonwealth on various occasions, were one of the main tools for this pressure (Bogdanoviča 2018a, 45), but reformed Franciscans and Capuchins also played a role (Kowalski 2001).

As mentioned above, the Jesuit college in Riga was evacuated to Wenden in 1621 and closed down four years later after the Swedish army had conquered almost all of Livonia, forcing the three remaining Jesuits to look for a new mission field, which they found in the Dünaburg region. Due to a generous gift by a high-ranking nobleman, Aleksander Korwin Gosiewski, they were able to buy the Auleja manor, some 60 kilometres from Dünaburg, setting the foundation for a stable income and permanent residence in the city (Kleijntjenss 1940, 244; Bogdanoviča 2018a, 46). The report from 1650 states that Gosiewski had vowed in 1626 to fund a Catholic Church should the Swedes fail to take Dünaburg. Since they did, he donated the money to the Jesuits that had just arrived (Kleijntjenss 1940, 264). Instead of building a church, though, they purchased the Auleja manor instead. By 1630, a church for the Jesuits in the city of Dünaburg had been built, with funds provided by the city *starosta* (royal administrator), Alphonsus Lacki (Kleijntjenss 1940, 244; Bogdanoviča 2018a, 46). The same Lacki donated another manor to the Jesuits in 1643, further securing their educational activities financially and warranting the upgrade from Mission to Residency status. A Jesuit Mission is a group of Jesuit missionaries in a non-Catholic environment depending on external help, whereas a Residency is a more self-sufficient structural unit within the Society of Jesus, often including an educational institution, which can eventually become a Jesuit College. The Dünaburg Residency achieved this status in 1761 (Kleijntjenss 1940, 255, 441–42). [12]

Because of continuous wars over the following centuries as well as other tragedies, many of the original sources on developments in the Dünaburg region have not survived. However, the main source material, the annual reports of the Jesuit missionaries, still exist, providing a fascinating glimpse into the religious life of the region. The reports survived primarily because the Jesuit emphasis on hierarchy and accountability ensured that all documents and reports were triplicated: one copy for the local archive, one for the Vatican, and one for the Jesuit province, in this case in Vilnius. Only because of the existence of three copies of every document do we still have them, because the archive from Dünaburg itself burnt down in the early nineteenth century (Bogdanoviča 2018b, 30). Moreover, all the documents from these archives were published by Jozef Kleijntjenss (1940, 1941), a Dutch Jesuit priest, also including the documents from the other Jesuit Houses in Livonia. They are therefore more easily accessible than most Jesuit histories from Poland-Lithuania which are not edited (Bogdanoviča 2018b, 30). [13]

Included in the sources are two sets of annual reports—the *Historia Residentia Duneburgensis S. J.* (Kleijntjenss 1940, 261–343) and the *Litterae annuae Residentia Duneburgensis S. J.* (1940, 343–432). The former are economic reports, detailing transactions, construction projects, and war activities, but also information about the local inhabitants and incidences when influential people converted to Catholicism. The latter, which cover more spiritual matters, contain statistics of the administration of the sacraments and the total number of conversions. Besides these reports, which vary widely in their scope and explanatory power, Kleijntjenss included 16 documents from 1640 to 1810 (1940, 433–56) as well as the obituaries of 18 Jesuit fathers working in Dünaburg over the years (1940, 456–65). [14]

This source corpus is the main available source for religious, cultural, and even architectural developments in Polish Livonia over the seventeenth century, as significant complementary sources only appear at a later stage. Using only Jesuit sources as unbiased accounts of the religious contact in such a war-torn region is a dangerous undertaking, as the reports are extremely one-sided and most certainly embellished or tweaked by the chronicler for various reasons. However, as they often provide the only source available, there is no way around them, and they do provide some interesting insights into the everyday life of the Jesuits encountering more or less religiously literate heterodox inhabitants in their quest to re-Catholicise Polish Livonia after a century of war and reformatory upheavals. [15]

Encountering Pagans and Lutherans

The main problem for the Catholic Church in Polish Livonia was that the region had been ravaged by wars and destruction, leaving very few churches open, and even less available priests. Moreover, the German landowning class that remained in the province had all accepted Lutheranism. Because of Polish religious tolerance, according to which the nobility was free to choose their religion, there was nothing the Church could do about this, but it argued that it still had the right to continue to serve the peasantry. Therefore, the Jesuit missionaries in Polish Livonia were first and foremost concerned with providing religious service in the "true" religion—i.e. Roman Catholicism—to the peasants in the countryside. And there, they encountered on the one hand "Lutheran heretics" in the form of the manor lords, and on the other many pagan traditions that had survived both the Livonian Order and the Reformation turmoils. [16]

The Jesuits repeatedly report having to destroy "holy trees." In 1673, for example, a Jesuit missionary decided to cut down a "holy" lime tree. It was only after it became clear to the spectators that nothing bad happened to the missionary that some brave locals helped him finish the job (Kleijntjenss 1940, 247, 355–56). This episode, which employs rhetorical elements also encountered elsewhere, tells the story of an asymmetric religious contact. The Jesuits were eager to preach "pure" Christianity, where elements such as "holy trees" had no place. In the annual reports, the words used to denote these trees are "infernales cacodaemon"—devils from hell—which are hidden from the missionaries and difficult to find because of the boggy landscape and deep forests. [17]

Already the opening sentence of the Jesuit report, referring to the thorn bushes of heresy and deepest ignorance, allude to the "impurity" of the region, which was in dire need of religious decluttering. The Jesuits arrived in Dünaburg precisely in order to help with this cleaning—or controlling—to "subdue the region." In conclusion to the story about the "holy [18] tree” mentioned above, the chronicler voices the desire that the heretics may be purified (*expiaretur*) through the Catholic rites.

The other religious contact, between Catholics and Lutherans, was also asymmetrical, but in a completely different fashion. For the Lutherans were the German-speaking nobility of the region, which in part was theologically literate (Jeziorski 2019). The Jesuits rarely mentioned their encounters with the Lutheran nobility directly. Two official disputes between Catholic and Lutheran theologians are mentioned, in 1641 and 1671, but both ended in the Jesuit side winning because the Lutherans decided to give up before the dispute started. According to the reports, the Jesuits had become recognised as the religious virtuosi of Polish Livonia, even among Lutheran city burghers. Moreover, the reports are eager to state the number of returnees from Lutheranism (and Calvinism) to the “true” faith, numbers that grew steadily from 28 in 1645 to 660 in 1695 (Kleijntjenss 1940, 249), even if it is possible that these numbers are exaggerated. [19]

The encounter between Lutherans and Catholics is not only captured in Jesuit sources, but can also be grasped, for example, through the testament of Fabian Borch, the manor lord of the Preiļi estate, from 1649. Borch was a stout Lutheran and in his testament, he stipulated that there should never be a non-Lutheran service in the Preiļi estate church and that Catholic missionaries should forever be banned from the estate grounds (Norkārkls 2011, 157). By the end of the century, however, the entire Borch family had become Catholic and Fabian’s testament provisions were not upheld any longer. After Johann Dominik (or Jan Andrzej Dominik) Borch converted to Catholicism, he is reported to have personally visited the peasants of his estate to convince them of returning from the Lutheran errors to the Catholic truth (Kleijntjenss 1940, 296–97). This happened to several of the Lutheran manor lords, and by the end of the seventeenth century, almost all Polish Livonian nobility had become Catholic—not by mission and physical pressure, but by living in a political environment that favoured Roman Catholicism (Jeziorski 2019, 134–40). [20]

Before this, according to the Jesuit reports, things were not as rosy. In 1677, following peasant complaints that the feudal lord of the manor of Subate forced his peasants to go to the Lutheran Church, a royal commission confiscated the Subate church and handed it over to the Catholics, who asked a Jesuit priest from Dünaburg to celebrate masses there. In the report, the priest explained how the peasants at first only visited the church under cover of darkness and in secret. The manor lord attempted to dissuade them from visiting the Catholic church by threatening them with imprisonment, expropriation, and fines. However, “the more their master oppressed them, the more fervent they became in their faith. They came openly to the church, lit candles, saying ‘even if the manor lords would burn us alive, we would not renounce the true Catholic faith!’ ” (Kleijntjenss 1940, 246, 270). Since we do not have any accounts of this case from the Lutheran side, it is difficult to ascertain how much of it is actually verifiable and how much is Jesuit rhetorical exaggeration and grandiloquent narrative. [21]

The Jesuits clearly saw the Lutherans as a heretic sect (the words used are “haeretica secta lutherana”) with which they had to reckon for political reasons. According to the classical scholar of Polish religious tolerance Janusz Tazbir (1977, 55), the powerful nobility in Poland had decided to place political issues above confessional ones, thereby avoiding the religiously motivated bloodshed that happened in Western Central Europe. This made Poland a special case of inter-confessional tolerance, a tolerance even most of the Catholic bishops supported. In the course of the seventeenth century, the Polish tolerance started to crumble, in conjunc- [22]

tion with the success of (primarily Jesuit) re-Catholicisation efforts, but religious pluralism still surpassed that of the lands further west.

It is also in this context that we should see the gradual turn towards the Catholic Church among the Polish Livonian nobility. Throughout the seventeenth century, the confessional climate in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth grew harsher, and the influence and political prestige of the Catholic Church increased. The Polish Livonian nobility also grew more diverse, as Catholics from other parts of the Commonwealth settled in the region (Jeziorski 2019, 144–45). The wars of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had left numerous estates without owners, and the newcomers were integrated into the hierarchy of the nobility at the lower end (Zajas 2013, 129–35). Nevertheless, as Catholics, they were increasingly favoured for political positions and offices, especially after Polish Livonia was integrated as a separate *województwo* (county) in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth in 1667. The long-established Livonian nobility of German descent did not want to be excluded from these positions, so by the end of the century, most of them had converted to Catholicism.[3] These conversions were not purely opportunistic, though, as several of them clearly had a theological foundation. [23]

A third occurrence of religious contact in Polish Livonia in the seventeenth century was constituted by the Russian Orthodox who lived beyond the eastern borders of the region. In the years 1656–1667, Polish Livonia was officially ruled by Muscovy, and there are no Jesuit reports from these years. It is not clear whether any Russian Orthodox settlers actually came to Livonia during those years, but a garrison church was built for the passing soldiers on their way to fight the Swedes. In any case, there was no stable Orthodox community till the end of the century, although occasional mentions of the Orthodox do appear. In 1667, the Jesuits reported nine conversions of heretics (Protestants) as well as four of schismatics (Orthodox) (Kleijntjenss 1940, 351). Such conversions are also reported in the following years, as well as the occasional conversion to Catholicism from the "ritus Roxolanus"—the Russian Old Believers. There are also mentions of Orthodox priests who roam the border regions, with local peasants turning to them because there was no Catholic priest available (Kleijntjenss 1940, 355; Litak 1998, 147). [24]

Other than that, there are hardly any mentions of Orthodox believers during the seventeenth century. However, the Jesuit sources should not be overestimated. The reports are short and often missing. For 1681 and 1682, for example, the Jesuit reports claim that "apart from the daily work, nothing happened nor was seen that is worth mentioning" (Kleijntjenss 1940, 271) ("Nihil momanteneum seu tulit, seu vidit, praeter quotidiana quaedam ne quidem memoranda multo minus in fastos referri digna"). It is only possible to get a glimpse of the religious contact that was happening and most everyday interactions do not figure in the available sources. Even the Union of Brest from 1596 between Orthodox and Catholics in the Commonwealth is hardly mentioned in this peripheral region, where the Catholic Church was too busy fighting paganism and Lutheran feudal lords while (re-)establishing ecclesiastical structures to conduct elaborate theological work. [25]

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[3] Krzysztof Zajas (2013, 304–5) claims that "for the most part, old knightly families from Polish Livonia converted to Catholicism only in the second half of the 18th century, practically after this territory was already separated from Poland, i.e. when there was a growing threat of Russification." It is possible that he is referring to families that had heretofore identified as Courlanders but were forced to re-affiliate due to the Polish partition of 1772.

Establishing a Lasting Catholic Tradition—the Eighteenth Century

Throughout the seventeenth century, the Jesuits were eager to establish a dominance of the Catholic tradition in this region, which they had considered unwelcoming. By the turn of the eighteenth century, they had appropriated the region to the extent that Catholicism dominated, and the Jesuits were seen as the hegemonic religious authority. After a fire destroyed much of the Jesuit college in Dünaburg in 1749, for example, donations came from all over Livland, expressly even from several Lutheran manor lords (Kleijntjenss 1940, 254). Such donations are even asserted at the end of the seventeenth century (Norkārkls 2011, 158; Jeziorski 2019, 139–40). Moreover, the Jesuit school in Dünaburg became increasingly attractive, even to Lutheran Courlanders, who sent their sons to Dünaburg to learn "properly" (Norkārkls 2011, 160n66; Mariani 2012, 133). This often resulted in their conversion to Catholicism, but the parents accepted this in return for a good education. This was, for example, the case with 12- and 14-year-old Georg and Mathias Korff[4] in 1748, who, "while in our school, devoted themselves to studying the rudiments of Latin and linking them to the Catholic faith, to the extent that they were admitted to the Eucharist with the consent of their non-Catholic mother" (Kleijntjenss 1940, 410). [26]

In order to establish a tradition, one must show innovative potential. This was, inter alia, realised in the Catholic restructuration efforts from the end of the seventeenth century. As mentioned above, the Catholic bishops, most importantly the Archbishop of Riga, had been part of the ruling elite of the region until the Protestant Reformation degraded episcopal power. When the Polish-Lithuanian crown captured almost all of Livonia in 1561, it established the Diocese of Wenden (north of Riga) in 1582 and established Jesuit colleges in Riga and Dorpat (Tartu) in order to re-Catholicise Livonia. This failed, and most of the region came under Sweden by 1621. The Bishop of Wenden (which by then was called the Bishop of Livonia) went into exile—to become an auxiliary to the Archbishop of Warsaw. In the following decades, three different bishops held the title "Bishop of Livonia," but none of them ever visited Polish Livonia, which became a sort of missionary territory without an established Catholic Church, served primarily by the Jesuits. The Roman Curia considered Polish Livonia as "in partibus infidelium" ("in the regions of the infidels", Litak 1998, LXXVIII). [27]

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the Jesuits repeatedly petitioned for a bishop to take better care of Livonia, as the region differed greatly from the rest of Poland-Lithuania and required a particular approach. The first bishop to take up residence in Polish Livonia was Mikołaj Korwin-Popławski (1685–1710). He took over the main Jesuit church in Dünaburg to convert it into a cathedral in 1690, heralding a new era for the Catholic Church in Polish Livonia (Manteuffel 1902, 409; Kleijntjenss 1940, 275). However, he also appropriated the Auleja manor, the main source of income and the countryside residence for the Jesuits, which they were not happy about (Kleijntjenss 1940, 274, 365–66). Nevertheless, they remained loyal to the bishop. The economic report from 1690 recounts how a local Lutheran nobleman exclaimed "Now I see that you are rightly called Jesuits: Just like Jesus, you defend even those who take away your belongings and properties!" (1940, 367). The Jesuits brought the matter to court, though, especially as one of the two Pilten Canonicals that had taken up residence in the manor, Stephano Dębkowski, had shown rather un-Christian behaviour towards them (1940, 438–39). [28]

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[4] The Korff family were among the last Lutheran landowning families in Polish Livonia. See also below.

The case was handed from court to court and dragged on for a decade until it suddenly stops appearing in the annual reports after 1700. The case reappeared in 1718 (Kleijntjenss 1940, 296) and by 1721, “the case of Auylmuyža [Auleja Manor], which has been neglected for decades, is again to be reviewed in the nunciature this year, and after a long wait we expect a crowning end to this story” (1940, 300). In 1724, the courts decided in favour of the Dünaburg Jesuits, but the saga does not end there (Kleijntjenss 1940, 304). Only in 1727, with the help of the Catholic parish priest Joachim Gönner from Courland, did Bishop Adam Wessel finally give up his pretensions to the manor (Kleijntjenss 1940, 306–7; Mariani 2012, 128). In return, Gönner was honoured with his own commemorative plaque when the new Dünaburg Jesuit church was constructed in 1737 (Kleijntjenss 1940, 318). [29]

Once a regular Catholic diocesan structure was established, the dominance of the Jesuits diminished. However, the tradition they had initiated remained substantial. The historian Gustaw Manteuffel, whose family converted only in the 1820s as the last Polish Livonian noble family, starts his 1902 article on Livonian Church History with a praise to the Jesuits: [30]

> Everything that was done at the end of the sixteenth, beginning of the seventeenth century in Livonia and Courland to bring the inhabitants back into the bosom of the universal Church was almost exclusively the effort and work of the Jesuits. They travelled, fought, and reigned so independently that it does not surprise when, in the works on Livonian history written by Protestants, the words Catholicism and Jesuitism are almost synonymous. (Manteuffel 1902, 401) [31]

With the existence of a local diocese also followed a diversification of the Catholic landscape, with Dominicans, Lazarists (Mariani 2012, 131), Bernardines, and individual missionaries also being invited to the region. Unfortunately, no archival materials are available to any of these orders, so we still rely primarily on the Jesuits, whose reports get longer and longer into the eighteenth century. They stayed in the region, helping out in the parishes and continuing their missionary work among the peasants. They held sermons in four languages (Latvian, German, Polish, and Lithuanian) throughout the eighteenth century, which made them superior to most parish clergy, who were limited to one or two languages. The network of Jesuit mission stations that had been built up over the previous century was therefore rather expanded instead of establishing an exhaustive net of parishes (Mariani 2012). [32]

This was not without controversy, as the reports from the mid-1740s show (Kleijntjenss 1940, 323–25). One of the main avenues for innovation within the Jesuit-induced Catholic tradition in Polish Livonia was the founding of churches and endowment of parishes. The manor lords, often themselves recent converts from the Lutheran Church or even still Lutherans, happily donated money and land for the erection of parish churches and other houses of worship, thereby inscribing themselves into a tradition (Zajas 2013, 147). The most famous of these magnates was the head of the influential Plater family—Jan Andrzej—the *starosta* of Dünaburg, who converted in the 1690s (Manteuffel 1902, 409–10; Mariani 2012, 130–31; Jeziorski 2019, 135–36). He then donated part of his lands, including buildings, as a residence for the bishop. Similarly, he made several endowments from his estates across the province over the following years in order to build and maintain parish churches. [33]

Besides the Jesuit reports, there is another important source available, as there was a canonical general visitation of the Livonian Diocese in 1761, whose acts have been published (Litak 1998). The visitation acts nicely show how the religious situation in Polish Livonia became more stable, even though it was hardly a wealthy diocese, with less than 20 parishes—and [34] some 30 additional houses of worship for around 80,000 believers. The Jesuit reports are more focused on the local missionary work and the activities of the Jesuits themselves than developments in the region as such. The religious contact they report differs only marginally from the previous century. There are still cases of pagan encounters, and these are even more decisively combated than before. Instead of describing the individual events, the Jesuits now report statistically: For example, ten “holy trees” were cut down in 1728, and 21 in 1740. In 1742, 661 individuals were “driven away from paganism” (*gentilismo absterriti*, see also Manteuffel 1902, 404). In later years, there are annually up to a dozen people “recalled from superstition” (*superstitionibus revocati*) or “discouraged from divination” (*divinationibus deterriti*). These are often qualified as “simple Latvians” (*simplices Lotavi*). The Latvians receiving the sacrament of the last anointment are reported to enthusiastically refer to it as “the great sanctification” (Kleijntjenss 1940, 397).

The conversions from Lutheranism decreased steadily, and the remaining Lutherans were often migrants from neighbouring Courland, which was still majority Lutheran. Between 1700 and 1768, a total of about 900 persons converted from Lutheranism (Kleijntjenss 1940, 254; Norkārkls 2011, 163). The visitation acts claim that Lutheran peasants only lived in the manor of the Korff family in Kryżbork (Krustpils), where the only remaining Lutheran parish was also situated (Litak 1998, 4; Norkārkls 2011, 163; Jeziorski 2019, 141–44). Neither the Jesuits nor the bishop had much to do with this group, though. In the visitation acts, the Lutherans are only mentioned in connection with tithe collection from the Korff estates, which did not benefit the Catholic Church (Litak 1998, 180). The Korff family, while remaining steadfast in the Lutheran faith, did entertain friendly relations with the Catholic clergy, though (Jeziorski 2019, 143–44). Other than that, no contact between the confessions is detectable in the sources. [35]

All the more so, there is the contact with representatives of the Orthodox Church. These are, on the one hand, the occasional roaming priests, especially in the Marienhausen *starostwo* in the north. In the visitation report, we read that “since the population, which had poor knowledge of God and used to be pagans and sacrifice to ‘holy trees’, should not have to turn to the Russian popes in order to save their souls, it was decided to build a church here” (Litak 1998, 147). On the other hand, there were individual Orthodox faithful, who came to the region for various reasons and accepted conversion to the Catholic faith. According to the Jesuit reports, there were 1683 conversions from Orthodoxy between 1634 and 1768 (Norkārkls 2011, 171). Although the Orthodox Church had no legal status in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth after the union of Brest (1596), pockets of Orthodox believers had survived in Polish Livonia. With the establishment of a more stable diocesan structure in the early eighteenth century, even a few Greek-Catholic churches were opened here, which naturally integrated these Orthodox pockets. A small Greek-Catholic monastery (or rather, mission station) was even established in Jakobstadt directly on the border between Polish Livonia and the Duchy of Courland, with the financial support of the recently converted noble family Borch from the Polish Livonian side (Rączka-Jeziorska and Jeziorski 2019). However, the Greek-Catholics hardly ever turn up in the documents, since they are already Catholics, even though they possibly did not themselves notice (Norkārkls 2011, 172; Mariani 2012, 132–33). In the visitation acts, they are simply part of the statistics, without any further mention. [36]

Another rather important religious contact in the eighteenth century is the one with the Old Believers, who were mentioned briefly above. This group, which had fled the Russian Empire in the second half of the seventeenth century in protest against the liturgical reforms [37] of Patriarch Nikon, preferably settled directly beyond the borders, many in Polish Livonia. The Old Believers tended to isolate themselves in the deep forests and were thus not seen as a threat by the Catholic Church (Kleijntjenss 1940, 315–16; Norkārkls 2011, 173). By 1744, however, as their numbers had risen to several thousands, the Catholic Church started to officially warn against too much contact with Old Believers, even calling for their eradication. In the visitation acts, inter-marriages involving Old Believers are strictly forbidden (Litak 1998, LXXXVI, 42, 153; Norkārkls 2011, 175). However, the nobility's indifference to orders from the Catholic Church ensured that the Old Believers were left alone (Norkārkls 2011, 176; Mariani 2012, 129).

Finally, over the course of the eighteenth century, there were also a few thousand Jews that settled in Polish Livonia. They, however, are only mentioned in passing in the visitation acts, promulgating a recent decree from Pope Benedict XIV banning forced baptism of Jewish children. It is very unlikely that this had been practiced in Polish Livonia, as the Jews were scarce and reportedly only lived in private estates, where the Catholic Church had no access anyway (Litak 1998, LXXXVII). In the first census of the region from 1766, there were some 3000 Jews in Polish Livonia. From 1764, they had their own *kahal* in the region, in Krāslava (Levins 1999, 29). The Jews do not turn up in the Jesuit sources, with the exception of the rare occasion of a conversion, which is recorded under the number of baptisms. There seems to have been no noteworthy religious contact with Jewish inhabitants in this region, in contrast to the south-eastern parts of Poland (Teter 2006). [38]

In the first partition of Poland in 1772, Polish Livonia became part of the Russian Empire, changing the political and religious scene considerably. Subsequent events have little resemblance to the developments described above, even though the Jesuits stayed in the region until well into the nineteenth century. Unlike in the rest of the world, where the Jesuits had been persecuted since the 1750s and finally abolished by a papal *breve* in 1773, the Russian government of Empress Catherine II refused to follow through and left them thriving (Zajas 2013, 305; Friedrich 2016, 560). The reports of the early nineteenth century are mere statistics and list of visitors, though, except the last report from 1808 (Kleijntjenss 1940, 428–32). It laments the end of the Jesuit order outside Russia and the consequences that entailed for the spiritual life of a number of former Jesuits, many of whom had migrated to the Russian lands, where the order continued to exist (Friedrich 2016, 561). [39]

Analysis and Conclusion

In general, it is possible to divide the history of the Jesuit encounters with heterodox faithful into two distinct periods. There is the seventeenth century, when they arrive to the region and set out to 'subdue' it. Their initial successes may seem negligible, but they slowly come to grips with this unorderly and hostile environment. A comparison between Polish Livonia and neighbouring Courland, separated only by the river Düna, reveals an unbridgeable chasm: on the one hand a civilised, highly organised Lutheran state with a strong confessional identity (Courland) and on the other an almost anarchic, loosely structured peripheral region without much central governance (Mariani 2012). Certainly, the Jesuits exaggerate the barbarity of the region in their reports, but the river Düna clearly demarcates a significant cultural divide. [40]

The religious encounters of the seventeenth century in Polish Livonia also differed considerably from the peripheral regions further north, such as Ingermanland (Lotman 2023) and Kexholm County (Laitila 2020), both on the Finnish/Russian border within the Swedish Em- [41]

pire. In these regions, the state-sponsored (Swedish) Lutheran Church encountered a more or less organised Orthodox population. The official Swedish policy was to approach the heterodox cautiously and try to co-opt Orthodox priests to spread Lutheranism. The Jesuit mission in Polish Livonia did not have this kind of government backing, nor was most of the heterodox population it encountered organised in any way. Their endeavour was thus more akin to colonial mission than what the Jesuits encountered in most parts of 'civilised' Europe. A similar kind of situation was the Jesuit encounter in Corsica in the late sixteenth century, where they faced a largely illiterate and religiously ignorant population (Leone 2010, 244–45).

In the eighteenth century, the pendulum swings from a dynamic development towards the stability side, with the Catholic Church becoming the norm in the region, which makes it possible to concentrate on creating stable structures and using harsher methods towards non-Catholics. The Catholics, most importantly the Jesuits, had successfully incorporated Polish Livonia into the Catholic world by suggesting stability and strength. Nevertheless, Polish Livonia never became a fully integrated part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and neither did it retain its separate identity in the way the Duchy of Courland did. According to the Polish scholar of literature Krzysztof Zajas, "Livonian culture did not come into existence because it could not fully fit into any of the communal discourses which were imposed on it from without" (Zajas 2013, 23). The fact that Polish Livonia did not interest the Polish-Lithuanian central authorities much ensured that the Jesuits remained important actors in the region, also exemplified by their four decades long legal struggle with the diocesan authorities. [42]

With the more organised Catholic structures of the eighteenth century, however, the region was no longer a no-man's-land, and the Jesuits could become bolder in their encounters with the heterodox, which they aggressively sought to convert to Catholicism. The encounters with Lutherans and heathens diminished, as most of the population had been turned Catholic. Instead, the "others" were now the Orthodox, either migrants and settlers from the East or roaming priests and Old Believers. Nevertheless, religious contact was no longer the main topic of the Jesuit reports, which focused on descriptions of church buildings, social relations, and political and climatic events. The religious situation had stabilised and was therefore no longer worth focusing on. [43]

In the nineteenth century, there were efforts to Polonise and Russify the region, whereas the early twentieth century sought to Latvianise it. After World War II, it was part of the Soviet brand of internationalism and only in the post-Soviet era has it been possible to freely claim a distinct regional identity for Latgale. One of the elements that characterises Latgale today is the clear visual marks that Catholicism has left in the region. It is much more religiously vital than the rest of Latvia (Rimestad 2021, 594–95), even though Roman Catholicism is only the most prominent of the various religious communities in the region. The influence of the Jesuit missionaries from the early seventeenth century was of paramount importance for this state of affairs. [44]

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“Only a single cadence of a few notes”? Johann Georg Hamann’s Religious Contact With the Baltic Region

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ABSTRACT In his early years as a tutor, unorthodox Lutheran thinker Johann Georg Hamann travelled the Baltic countries. In his own work, in particular in the *Aesthetica in nuce*, he interpreted the folk songs of the Latvian peasants as an authentic expression of religiosity unspoiled by philosophical sophistication. As a radical critic of enlightenment thought, Hamann portrayed the Latvian peasants as religiously complete individuals characterized by their particular locality. Thus, they would not gain anything by generalisation, suggested by proponents of popular enlightenment, such as Gotthard Friedrich Stender (1714-1796). Thus, Hamann posits a contact between universal (crypto-)religion of enlightenment ideology and individually localised religious conscience, exemplified in the Latvian peasant.

KEYWORDS Popular Enlightenment, language, Latvian poetry, Dainas, Riga, Mitau, Johann Georg Hamann, Gotthard Friedrich Stender

> *In fact, it would be difficult to find a people in Europe that deserves the name of a land of poetry as much as the Latvian people and the land of the Latvians. (Johann Georg Kohl)*[1]

Introduction: Local and Individual Nodes[2]

In many regards, the following lines are a marginal contribution to the general subject of religious contacts in the Baltic region in early modern times. This is in particular because of their main protagonist and his intellectual position and geographical place. The following is an examination of the case of contact between religious traditions that mainly took place in [1] an intellectual sphere centred in the city of Königsberg, and more precisely within the works of a particular individual who, during a certain period of his lifetime, had lived in Courland and Livonia, in Riga, in Mitau (present-day Jelgava), and in several manors in the Baltic countryside. To the present subject of study, this particular *locality* (*Lokalität*) is of foremost importance.

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[1] “In der That möchte jetzt schwerlich ein Volk in Europa zu finden sein, das so sehr den Namen eines Landes der Dichtung verdiente, als das lettische Völkchen und das Land der Letten.” All translations from German by the author unless indicated otherwise. (Original quote from the title: “[…] nichts als eine Cadenz von wenig Tönen […].”)

[2] The author wishes to thank the two anonymous reviewers of this article for their contructive critique.

In order to describe the particular setting of this situation of contact, we first turn to Königsberg. A cursory look at maps of early modern Germany show the city depicted at their very eastern margin. If, on the other hand, one is to examine the Baltic Region, the city would appear on its southern and western margin. The marginality of the city, however, is dependent on the cartographer's, or rather, the viewer's perspective. Around the year 1750, with about 55,000 inhabitants (garrison included), Königsberg was among the biggest German cities, maintaining the largest river port of the German speaking world. However, as Joseph Kohnen, the eminent scholar of Königsberg, put it, the city never truly overcame its insularity; a fact that had two main results: first, it suffered from a collective feeling of independent socio-political self-reference, and second—as is often the case with islands—it enjoyed a general openness to the world (Kohnen 1996, 335). Particularly suitable for commerce, in fact, Königsberg maintained close ties to the northern and eastern countries by acting as a transfer point between east and west. The city can be described as trilingual, including German, Polish/Masurian, and Lithuanian inhabitants, and furthermore exhibiting a strong Yiddish element (Schröder 2022, 101).[3] [2]

This special position had effects on the locality of the city, not least on its localization within the religious field. As such, Königsberg was a particularly dynamic place in the history of religions, namely as a node or a hub, permanently mediating western and eastern influences. In the introductory remarks to the edited volume on *Locating Religions*, Reinhold Glei and Nikolas Jaspert describe nodes and hubs in their function as catalysts in the history of religions as follows: "Transmission and transformation processes, not least the spread of religions, are based on such nodes of interaction that are interconnected by capillary routes. These dynamic points of confluence where religious traditions meet, interact and mutually influence each other deserve our attention" (Glei and Jaspert 2017, 3). This is not least true in the particular case of Königsberg. Moreover, as a node or hub of religious traditions, the city became a major representative and prime example for the Baltic region in general. The Baltic region worked as a specific node mediating Scandinavian, Russian, South-Eastern European, and "Western" influences—not to forget particular chthonic elements—that all made the Baltic region a special case in the dynamics of the history of religions (see Luven 2001, XV-XVI). [3]

The same, one could say, also holds true for the main protagonist of this contribution: Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), a radical Königsberg citizen (*Radikalbürger Königsbergs*), as one author characterized him (Manthey 2005, 184–85). Hamann in some degree epitomizes the particular locality of his hometown. Not only can he be described as a Königsberg patriot, but also as someone who elevated his individual locality to a personal *Weltanschauung* and made it a hub of intellectual discourse. In most works on German intellectual history, Hamann appears as a kind of strange curiosity: as the *Magus in Norden* (magus in north) and as a striking and somehow anachronistic contrast to his lifelong friend and philosophical op- [4]

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[3] Schröder summarizes the linguistic situation in Königsberg as follows: "Das Königsberger Sprachenkaleidoskop lässt zunächst einmal die Bedeutsamkeit der Nachbarsprachen Polnisch und Litauisch erkennen, Sprachen, die man lernte, um einen Alltag zu meistern, in dem ein hohes Maß an gesellschaftlicher und individueller Mehrsprachigkeit gegeben war und der damit weniger monolithisch deutsch ablief, als es der deutsche Nationalismus des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts später wahrhaben wollte" (Schröder 2022, 113).

ponent Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). All this has made him a marginal figure in the eyes of the afterworld. Hamann opposes the intellectual mainstream of his own time, the "Enlightenment Project" (Sparling 2011), by means of obscure, complicated, condensed, and therefore almost unreadable writings. These writings were not conceived as general considerations on overarching topics. Rather, they were casual works that had an immediate concrete cause to which Hamann felt personally challenged to react. The often obscure context that triggered his texts and his particular style of writing gained him the reputation of being the founding father of "German irrationalism" (Isaiah Berlin). But nothing could be more misleading than that. What makes Hamann's writings a worthy object of study, not least in the present context, is his willingness to perceive, to absorb, to collect, to rethink, and to use all kinds of influences in his work, making him a *fundamentally contact-driven thinker*. His line of thought ultimately follows a religious aim, that is, to interpret the diversity of human utterances as a manifestation of God's presence in history, of his condescendence (*Kondeszendenz, Kenosis*).[4] God's presence in the individual sternly opposes all human attempts to establish general ideas that, according to Hamann, would destroy man's basic *individuality, personality,* and *locality*.

The quintessence of Hamann's philosophy of the individual can be found in some confessional lines that appear in a footnote from his work titled *Ein fliegender Brief*, in which he describes the house of his birth and the neighbourhood: [5]

> The most dilapidated treasury of the Altstadt, the barber-building situated between the rivers Pregel and Katzbach, once sold, was turned into an oil- and pearl-barley storehouse, the small garden and the sheds of my youth [having transformed] into a comfortable free passage from the wooden bridge to the Mönchshof, from the Altstadt into the Krumme Grube and Löbenicht. I cannot but oppose the general prattle and the pointing index finger of a political fellow traveler, conveniently pointing from far away, with the most precise locality, individuality, and personality, saying Quod petis HIC est or Hic niger est, HUNC [Quote from Horace, Epist. I, 11,29: What you desire is HERE and Satires 1, 4, 85: Here is the black (soul), THAT (you have to avoid)].[5] [6]

The focus is on the most precise individual and personal locality (*die genaueste Lokalität, Individualität und Personalität*), while at the same time avoiding generalization. For Hamann, however, this does not mean immovable fixation in a particular place. In another significant opposition to Immanuel Kant, who, in his book on anthropology, famously considered staying in Königsberg to be the proper way of procuring knowledge of the world,[6] Hamann was [7] comparatively far-travelled. He journeyed to Berlin, Frankfurt/Main, and Basel, and even performed a secret mission to London. Repeatedly, he visited and even had his place of residence in different locations in the Baltic area, above all in Riga and in Mitau. Hamann died on his last journey, which led him to the circle of Princess Gallitzin in Münster in Western Germany, where he is buried. Moreover, he was interested in all kinds of intellectual adventurous endeavours, devouring books on any subject imaginable and taking great interest in cultures and languages. Kant, in turn, conveniently let the world come to him and replaced journeys and most other intellectual areas by reading travel reports.

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[4] On the key concept of condescendence in Hamann's thinking, see Gründer (1958, 85–86).

[5] N III, 350, 36-40 and 352, 23-28: "Das am Pregel und Katzbach gelegene höchstbaufällige Kämmereygebäude der Altstädtschen Badstube, ist nach dem Verkaufe nunmehr in eine Öl- und Graupenniederlage, das Gärtchen und Luftbüdchen meiner Kindheit und Jugend in einen bequemen freyen Durchgang von der Holzbrücke nach dem Mönchenhofe, aus der Altstadt in die krumme Grube und Löbenicht, verwandelt worden. Ich weiß dem allgemeinen Geschwätze und schön aus der Ferne her, in die weite Welt hinein zielenden Zeigefinger eines politischen Mitlauters nichts bessers als die genaueste Lokalität, Individualität und Personalität entgegen zu setzen, mit einem—quod petis HIC est oder Hic niger est, HUNC."

[6] "Eine große Stadt, der Mittelpunkt eines Reiches, in welchem sich die Landescollegia der Regierung desselben befinden, die eine Universität (zur Kultur der Wissenschaften) und dabei noch die Lage zum Seehandel hat, welche durch Flüsse aus dem Inneren der Landes sowohl, als auch mit angrenzenden, entlegenen Ländern von verschiedenen Sprachen und Sitten, einen Verkehr begünstigt,—eine solche Stadt, wie etwa Königsberg am Pregelflusse, kann schon für sich einen schicklichen Platz zu Erweiterung sowohl der Menschenkenntnis als auch der Weltkenntnis genommen werden; wo diese, auch ohne zu reisen, erworben werden kann" (Kant 1983, 400).

As an intellectual hub in his own right, Hamann served as a catalyst of diverse ideas, religious and intellectual currents, many of which were not among the most popular during his lifetime nor, in fact, in later times. As such, his writings provide a particular space of contact that caused important effects on how readers perceived the diverse participants of contact situations in this space. This holds especially true for the inhabitants of the Baltic region and their religiosity. [8]

Hamann's Sojourns in the Baltic Region in the Years 1752–1759 and 1765–1767

Hamann himself described his scholarly education as a preparation for travels and adventures—at least intellectual ones.[7] He was born in Königsberg, but to a non-local family. His father, son of a Lutheran pastor, was a non-academic, a *Bader* and *Wundarzt* (barber-surgeon). Hamann took great pride in his father's profession and repeatedly used it in his self-descriptions. He joined the university of Königsberg in 1746, studying various subjects, from theology to natural sciences. As such, his studies were clearly not aimed at a particular profession. As a student, he co-edited a journal, *Daphne*, which followed the ideas of popular enlightenment philosophy. His fellow students and co-editors of the journal, above all the Riga patrician Johann Christoph Berens (1729–1792), later played an important role in his life and intellectual development. Without taking exams, Hamann left the university in 1752. As his career opportunities were limited and in order to follow his desire to travel, Hamann went to Livonia as a private tutor, relying on the habit of the Baltic nobility to recruit their tutors from Königsberg University.[8] However, his own later judgement of this period of his life is strict and gloomy: [9]

> With as little skill as good fortune I spent some years in Livonia and Courland as a tutor of noble youth.[9] [10]

Hamann's later self-evaluation notwithstanding, to contemporary academics and non-academics in general, the Baltic Provinces of the Russian Empire, including the semi-independent Duchy of Courland, provided "a land of unlimited possibilities," not least with [11] regard to their potential function as mediators of enlightenment thought (Bosse 1996, 176). They were, however, commonly perceived as barren and unattractive: in travel reports of the time they are associated with mere indifferent emptiness (apart from the few cities), Riga being the sole focus of attention and, thus, *pars pro toto* associated with the experience of the Baltic region (Griep 2001, 286).[10]

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[7] In a letter to his father from November 1752 Hamann writes: "Ich habe diesem Triebe zu reisen gemäs mein Studium eingerichtet, v mich daher nicht so wohl auf eine besondere Wißenschaft, die mir zum Handwerk dienen könnte, sondern vielmehr auf einen guten Geschmack in der Gelehrsamkeit überhaupt gelegt" (1955–1979, I:9).

[8] See, on Hamann's time as a private tutor, Graubner (2011).

[9] "Mit eben so wenig Geschick als Glück habe ich einige Jahre in Liefland und Kurland vom Hofmeister adelicher Jugend zugebracht" (Hamann 1999, III:333). On Hamann's nevertheless considerable pedagogical talents and achievements as opposed to the enlightenment attitude, manifested in the ideas of his friend Kant, see Graubner (1990).

The void was to be filled by academic newcomers with theological and didactic enthusiasm. Some material aspects also may have played a role, as country pastors were better off in the Baltic region than those in Germany proper, enjoying bigger houses, many servants and even equipages to cover the vast distances in their parish (Lenz 1956, 115). In most cases, the private tutor counted among the strata of the nobility and was provided with ample servants. No wonder then that (German) academics, either as pastors or as private tutors, considered Livonia as a place to stay (*Livland* becoming *Blivland*), just as in medieval times (von Pistohlkors 1994, 299; Tischer 2022, 59). Statistics show that at least half of Livonia's clerics in the eighteenth century had migrated there (Bosse 1996, 190). Königsberg provided the prime place of education for the clergy of the Duchy of Courland.[11] [12]

This special relationship between Königsberg and the Baltic lands proves to be significant, in particular regarding the situation of religious contact. The Baltic German elite in this region ensured that the prodigy would retain their intellectual and spiritual level. Because of the variety of languages spoken in the region, linguistics were developed and thinking on language became a prominent issue. The clergy took on an important mediating function by learning the spoken vernaculars and translating between them and German (Sproģe 2015). It is not by chance, then, that language as a medium became the main focus of the situation of contact that is represented in Hamann's writings. He shared this focus on linguistic matters, not only with regard to his sojourn in the Baltic lands. [13]

According to an autobiographical account, Hamann had a very positive opinion on Livonia and the Livonian way of life. This, however, obviously refers to the way of life of his German friends who lived there.[12] On the other hand, there were also a considerable number of Germans who betrayed his positive opinions.[13] His first position, in the northern Livonian manor house Kegeln (Kieģeļmuiža) near Rubene, with the Baroness Barbara Helena von Budberg (1716–1781), was an utter disappointment, as Hamann was confronted with the epitome of rudeness, arrogance, and stupidity among contemporary Baltic nobility in the person of the Baron and, in particular, the Baroness, "a coarse, brutal and ignorant mother"—*eine unschlachtige, rohe v unwissende Mutter* (Hamann 1993a, 325), who were not as interested in the education of their son as an academic would expect. Within half a year, Hamann left this unsatisfactory post and lived in Riga for some time until he found a new job with the Courlandian general Count Witten at Grünau, who had established a household inspired by French culture. Here he stayed—though often traveling the country to the other estates of the family[14]—until 1755, leaving for Riga due to struggles and depression. In Riga, he stayed [14] with his friend Johann Georg Lindner (1729–1776), and with the family of Johann Christian Berens, who later involuntarily laid the ground for the decisive experience of Hamann's life.

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[10] On Hamann's ambiguous relation to Riga, see Graubner (1994).

[11] Up to the 1780s, 60% of the clergy in Courland had an academic background in Konigsberg (see Tering 1998, 132).

[12] „[…] da ich ohnedem ein sehr günstig Vorurtheil vor Liefland v die Lebensart der Liefländer weg[en] einiger Freunde, die ich unter denselb[en] hatte, hegte" (Hamann 1993a, 324).

[13] On Hamann's contacts with the Baltic nobility, see Graubner (Graubner 2012, 315).

[14] His biographer Josef Nadler characterizes Hamann's situation as follows: "Grünhof hatte mehr als eine Fakultät. Man wechselte mit der Familie den Aufenthalt auf den Gütern. Man war in Mitau und Riga. Soviel Bewegung am Ort hat Hamann in seinem ganzen Leben nicht mehr gehabt. Sein Körper und sein Geist hätten beinahe auf ihre Milzsucht vergessen, wenn nicht doch der Briefwechsel mit dem väterlichen Bader das Gespräch immer wieder auf Befunde, Ratschläge und Rezepte gebracht hätte" (Nadler 1949, 51).

For the future author and religious thinker he would become, Hamann's stay in Courland and Livonia had important intellectual results. Here he wrote what Josef Nadler has called the great outline of philosophy of culture that grounded his life's work (Nadler 1949, 67). Hamann translated a French work on economics, the *Remarques sur les Avantages et les Desavantages de la France et de la Grand Bretange par rapport au commerce et aux autres sources de la puissance des Etats* by Plumard de Dangeuil, and added an essay of his own. In the so-called *Dangeuil-Beylage* (see Meineke 2012) by means of a "liberal-commercial utopia," he decidedly turned common evaluation of the classes of society upside down and degraded nobility in favour of merchants whom he praises as the true nobility of mankind. To him, trade—and not war—is the truly ennobling human activity, as it connects peoples and countries to mutual profit and understanding. The merchant, therefore, is the decisive motor of progress (Graubner 1994, 522). This is well in accord with reports of the time on the social situation in Riga. To the amazement of the contemporaries, the city had impressively turned the usual feudal order upside down by letting the exchange of products decide social status (Griep 2001, 288). Riga, thus, pointed towards a possible opposition to the absolutistic order of the state that Hamann encountered at home in Königsberg.[15] Situations of contact inaugurated by trade, thus, were of great importance to Hamann—not only regarding economic, but also intellectual and, ultimately, religious and irenic profit. [15]

As Raivis Bičevskis has put it, it was in Riga that Hamann experienced his "Seelenmanumission"—a life-changing process of transcending one's self-reflection in order to see oneself and the world in a different perspective (2012, 355). To elaborate on his later religious position, one must consider Hamann's intellectual career up to this point. In his case, the biographical context is of superior importance, but not only as an indispensable context of the emergence of his philosophical and theological work. Rather, it also serves as a particular method of argumentation (*Lokalität, Individualität, Personalität*) that Hamann employed to set himself apart from the supposedly a-historical, a-linguistic and non-experience based thinking of contemporary Enlightenment philosophy in its French and German version. In a nutshell, Hamann juxtaposes the idolized ideal of the Enlightenment as a generally acceptable human being following universal rules of logical and ethical conduct with the prevailing concrete, contingent individual with a unique personal background—i.e., a locality—and persistently argues for the latter. [16]

In the year 1757/1758 Hamann dwelt in London on a mission that still largely remains a mystery to posterity and became a mystical experience of clarity for Hamann himself. He was sent there by his friend Johann Christoph Berens from, and most likely on behalf of, Riga.[16] As a wealthy merchant and head of an important trading company, Berens wished to accomplish aims of his own, that is, most probably to negotiate a treaty of "armed neutrality" for the Baltic cities and their trading fleet in times of the Seven Years War 1756–1763 (Fischer 2012, 166–69). At the same time, he also intended to patronize his friend into finding a place in life, something the student without a degree had not achieved yet.[17] Above all, he wished [17] his home city to gain a special status that would allow both to continue commerce and to mediate in political conflicts (Bičevskis/Taimiņa 2013, 129).[18]

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[15] On Hamann's relation to Riga in general, see Fischer (2012); on Riga as a republican 'alternative' to Konigsberg, Fischer (2012, 157).

[16] On Berens' political struggles against Russian officials and the Baltic nobility, see Graubner (2012, 316–17).

[17] "Berens hatte offenbar vor, ihn [i.e. Hamann, KMS] zu einer Art handelspolitischen Vordenker und Hof-Schreiber seines Hauses zu machen" (Graubner 1994, 521).

Berens was a devout follower of the Enlightenment movement and, in that capacity, to a good part responsible for making Riga an important station on the “road of enlightenment”, leading from the German intellectual centres to St. Petersburg and Moscow (Angermann and Brüggemann 2018, 177). In the Baltic region, the rise of the Enlightenment, as Heinrich Bosse has put it, was less connected to print media but rather to personal relations and constellations (1996, 200), and Berens was willing to use the circle of his Königsberg student friends to establish new forms of thinking in his hometown by providing them with rewarding jobs and good positions. However, his good-willed help had effects on Hamann’s intellectual development he could not be too happy with. Unwillingly, he had provided Hamann with the biographical presupposition for his embrace of religion in the form of Lutheran Christianity.[19] Hamann, though deeply interested in commerce and economic theory, failed his mission in London and, additionally, got off the straight and narrow, wasting his money and health there. As he found himself close to rock bottom he decided to turn around, and started an intensive re-lecture of the Bible. Here, he experienced what he later described as a “descent into the hell of self-recognition” (*Höllenfahrt der Selbsterkenntnis*), which ultimately led to his conversion experience. This particular experience is dated to March 31, 1758 and is intensely described in his papers. [18]

Hamann’s conversion took the form of a pietistic self-exploration in the shape of a confessional autobiography and a documentation of his Scripture readings as a personal commentary of biblical verses which follow the order of the biblical books themselves. This is far from unusual at his time, but his findings and, above all, the way he applies them make him an exceptional figure and the source of some annoyance for his contemporaries. [19]

Now, admittedly, this story so far seems to indicate a subsequent history that can only be described as boring; it seems to prepare for some edifying, saintly, and eventless life without intellectual and physical excesses. However, this was clearly not the case with Hamann. From his conversion experience as described in the London writings, he drew conclusions that are far from ascetic and are very likely to embarrass those people whose form of narration he used to describe his own conversion. For Hamann, embracing Christianity meant embracing the body in all its functions—because of theological reasons (see Stünkel 2019).[20] As W. N. Alexander has put it: [20]

> As a Christian, Hamann repudiates a strong tradition within Christianity, the Greek-Christian suspicion of the physicality—in effect, sexuality—of man, the tradition which even from the New Testament cultivated a non-sexual origin of Jesus, recommended a non-sexual Christian life, and exalted a non-sexual clergy. It was a natural reaction to the Dionysian divinization of sex which gripped the Roman world into which Christianity was born, and which was itself a cult born of a reaction to an over-rationalistic Apollonian divinization of reason. Hamann’s view of man places a radical question mark over these conceptions of man and removes [21]

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[18] On Berens’s influence on Hamann’s philosophical-cameralistic ideas providing a “far-reaching perspective of a commercial city and an enlightened society […] in fragments,” see Bičevskis (2022, 150).

[19] As Hans Graubner put it, Hamann’s new perspective allowed him to remain close friends with Berens and other proponents of the enlightenment movement in the Baltic region and to fight them uncompromisingly at the same time (Graubner 2012, 321).

[20] Thus, Hamann would have appreciated the manifold sexual allusions in the Latvian folksongs (see Huelmann 1996, 65).

> all basis for moralizing by reaction, however justified otherwise. (Alexander 1979, 87)

Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, Hamann came to the conclusion that the Enlightenment movement is far from enlightened about its own aims and therefore in severe danger of becoming a "hybrid usurpation of God's position" (Graubner 1994, 524). As a consequence, it visibly turns into a hypocrite religion with priests, dogmas, rituals, holy scriptures, and false idols. [22]

Apart from the commercial city of Riga, Hamann also got to know the other important educational centre of the Latvian country, the city of Mitau (Jelgava) that was characterized by the nobility (Schröder 2022, 115). After his conversion experience he returned to Riga where he planned to marry Berens' sister but was not given permission by her brother. Hamann came back to Königsberg, where he wrote his first writings in the complicated and allusive *Cento*-style that became notorious to contemporaries and posterity alike. However, in order to make a living, he once again returned to the Baltic Lands. Hamann took up a secretarial position attached to the office of the *Hofrat* and lawyer Christoph Anton Tottien (1721–1790) at the court of the Duke of Courland in Mitau—and intensely used the latter's large library for his own studies. He stayed in the Baltic region from 1765 to 1767, interrupted by a five-month sojourn in Warsaw. In this time, starting from autumn 1766, he also edited a journal devoted to popular enlightenment, the German speaking first Mitau newspaper, the *Mitauische Nachrichten von Staats-, Gelehrten- und Einheimischen Sachen.*[21] Frustrated, either by boredom or surfeit, he returned to Königsberg in January 1767 to remain there until his final journey to Münster in 1787/88. [23]

Hamann as an Exponent of Situations of Contact

Throughout his life, Hamann was immersed in situations of religious contact, or rather, struggles. Opposing premature identification or covering of differences, Hamann argued from a decidedly biblical position (von Lüpke 2012, 180). Most prominent are his struggles with Pietism, Lutheran Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Freemasonry, and the *Haskalah* (above all, in person of its main proponent, Moses Mendelssohn). In these struggles, he looked for unusual allies.[22] To him, however, the most important arena that shaped his religious position was the struggle with his sovereign and employer, the *Salomon de Prusse*, Frederick the Great (1712–1786). To Hamann, the king was a *menetekel* of the enlightenment project in general. Whereas Frederick seemed to have taken no notice of his intellectually unruly subject and civil servant, the *roi philosophe* cast a superior shadow on Hamann's intellectual life, forcing him to withstand at almost any cost. In this struggle against the Enlightenment, which, to his mind, had become a theocratic religion, Hamann mobilized possible allies that were likely to withstand the generalizing ideas of the ruler and his philosophical helpers, above all, his major propagandist, prophet and high priest (in Hamann's eyes)—Voltaire (1694–1778) (von Lüpke 2012, 176). [24]

The Baltic lands and peoples were part of this struggle. Hamann was well beyond the idea [25] of interpreting the situation in the Baltic states as a mere contact, or even a clash between east and west. Rather, he tended to interpret the topological situations of the Baltic countries as a hub of diverse ideas, each one locally contributing to the prevailing individuality and personality of peoples, individuals, and places. Fittingly, Raivis Bičevskis and Aija Taimiņa have situated the emergence of Hamann's thinking "within the northern European topographical triangle of Konigsberg, Riga and London" (2013, 128).

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[21] Jørgensen dryly remarks on Hamann's activities in Mitau: "Hamann […] ging im Juni 1765 nach Mitau zu Tottien, wobei aus den Briefen nicht zu erschließen ist, welche Aufgaben er anderthalb Jahre in diesem Haus erfüllte, nur, daß er immer noch ein Opfer seiner ‚Launen' war" (1976, 63–64).

[22] Hamann's occupation with Islam and the Arab language in the context of his philological crusades, mainly aimed at the Enlightenment movement, has been recently analyzed by Natalie Chamat (2020).

The history of the Baltic region cannot be written without regarding the manifold influences that penetrated the region from all sides. This also holds true for the individuals intellectually dealing with the area in terms of their basic aims and motivations. To many, the Baltic lands became *a sign of a certain possibility* in an overarching struggle of opinions and ideas. It is well known that Hamann much preferred English and Scottish philosophy, in particular the writings of David Hume,[23] being based on empirical observation and common reason, rather than French or German rationalistic thinking. His preference for the seafaring and trading nations thus met with the status of the Baltic major cities, such as Riga, as centres of trade. [26]

There is, however, also another major influence on the Baltic region and, likewise, possibly on Hamann's thinking that opposes the French and German impact. Thus, Russia might have provided an enticing option for Hamann throughout his life. Apart from the opportunity to work in the Baltic provinces as a private tutor, there were others, such as Berens' plan to send Hamann to St. Petersburg on behalf of his trading company (Nadler 1949, 57). Moreover, when Hamann had his life-changing religious experience in London, his home country of East Prussia was, in fact, a Russian province, as Tsarina Elisabeth II had annexed the (at least not overtly reluctant) country in optimistic anticipation of the peace treaty following the expected defeat of Prussia in the Third Silesian War. The later Seven Years War ended, in fact, with a different result, but the time of the Russian occupation from 1758 to 1762 had a strong impact on the country, its capital, and its inhabitants. Not least, the Great King, annoyed by the infidelity of his East Prussian subjects, who had sworn loyalty to the Tsarina (on his birthday, of all times…), never again honoured the region with his enlightened presence after the war was finally over. Somehow, thus, the Russians proved to be instrumental in getting rid of the presence of the king and the ideas he stood for, at least for his opponents, such as the civil servant Johann Georg Hamann.[24] Perhaps motivated by this experience, Hamann dealt intensely with the land, the history and the peoples of Russia.[25] If Joseph Kohnen is right in arguing that the East Prussians habitually met their neighbours (Poles, Latvians, and Lithua- [27]

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[23] See, on Hume's impact on Hamann's writings from his Baltic period, Graubner (2011, 95).

[24] See Kohnen (1996, 336): "Ja, das nur allzu spürbare Gefühl politischer Vernachlässigung durch die Zentralgewalt im fernen Berlin und kulturellen Vergessenseins im weltmännischen Westeuropa veranlaßte viele Ostpreußen, nach dem weitgehend noch unbekannten Osten zu blicken und die Zukunft des östlichen Europa in verschwommener Ahnung von dieser Seite zu erwarten."

[25] Hamann‘s interest in Russia was well shared by the most important protagonist of popular enlightenment, August Wilhelm Hupel, not least with regard to the thought of the common Russian people (see von Pistohlkors 1994, 303). However, as Hans Graubner points out, Hamann did not share Herder's positive view of Peter the Great; rather, he described him as an example of human hybris that does not take the essential locality of human existence into account: "Er [Hamann, KMS] nahm das Rigaer Wort von Peter als 'Schöpfer Rußlands' auf und zeigte in ironischer Polemik gegen die Vorstellung von Peter als 'Gott seines Volks' oder als 'Schöpfer seines Volkes', was es heißt, wenn der Mensch sich als Schöpfer aufspielt. Sein begrenztes, zeitgebundenes Bild von den westlichen Errungenschaften definierte Peter als 'richtig', aber er musste es rücksichtslos und menschenverachtend durchsetzen, indem er Alternativen ausschloss, Traditionen abbrach, Landschaften wie Livland verwüstete und—wie Hamann an Peters Ukas zum gewaltsamen Abscheren der Bärte deutlich macht—sein Volk nicht aus Eigenem wachsen ließ. Peter I. war für Hamann deshalb nicht ein Schöpfer, sondern ein Zerstörer seines Volks" (Graubner 2022, 63–64).

nians) with some contempt[26] and the Russians with sympathy, the Baltic lands might have served Hamann in their capacity as Russian provinces and as a token of another possibility or orientation apart from Berlin, and, ultimately, Paris.[27] The official alliance between Prussia und Russia from 1764, into which Frederick entered out of necessity, further opened the East to the province of East Prussia.

Therefore, the east displayed some deeper attraction on Hamann. His bible-centrism was the main source and reason for his deep interest in oriental languages and literature, as Hamann regarded it both as the Word of God and the most poetic of books (see O'Flaherty 1968, 85), serving as a collection of model forms (*Formulare*) to all kind of human expression (see Stünkel 2018, 179–202). To Hamann, Oriental languages and Oriental poetry ought to be studied to fully understand the Bible, as they possess a magical quality as "a genuine attempt to see life steadily and to see it whole, and to avoid the disastrous separation of the 'architectures of things natural and civil,' that is, of the separation of man from nature, which is encouraged by an excessive emphasis on the theoretical aspect of cognition" (O'Flaherty 1968, 87). In his *Aesthetica in nuce,* Hamann famously accused the enlightenment philosophers of having "pushed nature aside" by means of their "murderous and lying philosophy": [28]

> Your murderous and lying philosophy has removed nature—and why do you claim, then, that we have to imitate it?—Because you could be able, then, to renew the pleasure to become murderers of the students of nature as well. (Hamann 1993b, 113)[28] [29]

Thus, nature—or rather, natural expression—was something to be cared about, not least for the intellectual observing his particular environment. [30]

Religious Contact Via Poetry: Hamann and the Latvian Songs

> *Every Latvian is a born poet.* (Johann Georg Kohl)[29]

Given his perpetual interest in finding potential allies for his intellectual struggles, the Baltic lands should and could have provided Hamann with valuable support. Surprisingly, however, in the letters of young Hamann during his time as a private tutor, either addressed to his parents or to his friends, there is little consideration of the situation of the Latvian people. Though he claimed in his later *Dangueil-Beylage* that the academic scholar should be the confidant or [31] even a pupil of the peasant (*ein Schüler, ein Vertrauter des Bauren*),[30] during his time as a private tutor he was mainly concerned with a somewhat personal matter, namely the Baltic nobility and its struggle against academics[31] and the urban patriciate, prominently manifested in his friend Johann Christoph Berens. Later on, after his London conversion experience, Hamann focused on the self-contradictory attitude of the Baltic Enlightenment regarding the tension between the proposed general love of humanity and the love of privilege and the reverence of an absolutistic ruler.[32] However, he did realize the indentured condition of the Latvian peasants,[33] as can be concluded from the fact that the only article of the famous *Encyclopédie* he considered worthy of translation was the one on *Corvée* (that is: on serf-labor/*Fronarbeit*). The author of this article, as Hamann writes in a letter to Immanuel Kant on July 27, 1759, shows compassion with the serfs, and the article would be instrumental to sensible people in their aim to improve the situation of serfs (Graubner 2011, 84).[34] Proponents of the Enlightenment in the Baltic lands, on the other hand, such as August Wilhelm Hupel and, above all, Johann Christian Eisen (1717–1779)[35] and Garlieb Merkel (1769–1850), were more prolific in their criticism of the social and political conditions of the peasants and their suppression by the manor lords (see Angermann and Brüggemann 2018, 179).

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[26] See Kohnen (1996, 336): "Es ist immerhin für unsere von westlicher Geschichtstradition geprägte Mentalität erstaunlich, wieso durchs ganze Jahrhundert hindurch den Russen mit ihrem militärisch und wirtschaftlich noch schlafenden Riesenreich und ihrem unausschöpflichen Menschenpotential in Ostpreußen grundsätzlich verhaltene Sympathien entgegengebracht wurden, während man den unmittelbaren Nachbarn, den Litauern Kurländern und Polen, aus unterschiedlichen Gründen oft mit Abneigung begegnete."

[27] With regard to the milieu of the Baltic Germans under Russian rule von Taube, Thomson, and Garleff stress the opposition of their way of life to that of the Prussian subjects: "Aus der Abwehrhaltung gegenüber möglichen Eingriffen des andersnationalen Staates in die gesellschaftliche Sphäre bildeten die baltischen Deutschen Kräfte der nationalen Selbsthilfe aus und wiesen der Gesellschaft Funktionen zu, die anderswo staatlichen Organen zukamen. Man könnte von einer fruchtbaren Antithese zum Preußentum sprechen, ohne damit ein Werturteil zu verbinden" (von Taube, Thomson, and Garleff 1995, 59).

[28] "Eure mordlügernische Philosophie hat die Natur aus dem Wege geräumt, und warum fordert ihr, daß wir selbige nachahmen sollen?—Damit ihr das Vergnügen erneuern könnt, an den Schülern der Natur auch Mörder zu werden."

[29] "Jeder Lette ist ein geborener Poet."

Hamann's interest in Latvia and the Latvian people was not primarily motivated by social or political considerations. It was not triggered by expressions of religiosity he might have encountered during his sojourn in the Baltic region either. The eighteenth century was more interested in collecting curiosities of folklore than despising and violently abolishing expressions of popular 'paganism'—though even the more enlightened minds among the clergy reportedly still had to cut down sacrificial trees (Neander 1956, 140; cp. Luven 2001, 286). Hamann could have encountered and registered religious customs that contradicted official theological teachings. He could even have entertained Eliade's famous idea that the Baltic peoples had preserved their old pre-Christian heritage and thus would provide an exceptional [32] source for the study of traditional religion (Eliade 2002, 3:36).[36] Moreover, the pietist *Herrnhut* movement (Moravian Brethren) had considerably impacted the region since a visit of the Count Zinzendorf in Livonia and Estonia in 1736.[37] It had gained special importance for the Estonian and Latvian population of the area, allowing for active participation in the life of the Christian communities and, thus, strengthening their self-confidence and leading towards a national awakening (von Taube, Thomson, and Garleff 1995, 1995, 61; Angermann and Brüggemann 2018, 174–75; see the contribution of Gvido Straube in this special issue, 2023). However, in Courland, as the main place of Hamann's activities in the Baltic lands, the influence of Pietism was only marginal (Tering 1998, 137). This fact, though, had greatly influenced Hamann's perspective on the Latvian people. The Lutheran orthodoxy, less challenged than in other parts of the region, was less obliged to adapt to the spiritual needs of the Latvian population, leaving them and their particular forms of expression (for example, the folk songs) alone. In contrast, Hallensian Pietism caused a kind of "social revolution" in Livonia, where, due to the Pietist efforts, the peasants counted among the most educated in Europe (Kreslins 1998, 151). Perhaps pietist education thus allowed for the spread of enlightenment ideas with the effect that traditional elements were neglected.

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[30] N IV, 232: "Die Philosophie ist keine Bildhauerkunst mehr. Der Gelehrte ist aus den spanischen Schlössern der intellektualistischen Welt und aus dem Schatten der Büchersäle auf den großen Schauplatz der Natur und ihrer Begebenheiten, der lebenden Kunst und ihrer Werkzeuge, der gesellschaftlichen Geschäfte und ihrer Triebfedern zurückgerufen; er ist ein aufmerksamer Zuschauer, ein Schüler, ein Vertrauter des Bauren, des Handwerkers, des Kaufmanns, und durch gemeinnützige Beobachtungen und Untersuchungen sein Gehülfe und Lehrer geworden."

[31] Graubner characterizes Hamann‘s exchange of letters with his first employers as a private tutor as follows: "Diese beiden Briefe stellen eindrucksvolle Dokumente dar für den unvermittelten Zusammenprall des Bildungsstrebens als Aufstiegsmittel des Bürgers mit der noch herrschenden standesbewußt-souveränen Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber solcher Bildungsauffassung beim eingesessenen baltischen Landadel" (Graubner 2011, 91).

[32] See Graubner (1994, 525): "Für Livland aber zeigte das Akzeptieren und dann die Ablehnung Hamanns, wo die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der von allgemeiner Menschenliebe diktierten ökonomisch-politischen Aufklärung Rigas, eingeklemmt zwischen Privilegienliebe und Absolutismusverehrung, lagen."

[33] The population of the Duchy of Courland in 1750 is estimated at about 160 000 to 180 000 people, the Latvians holding the overwhelming majority of about 90% but having no rights of their own and sustaining the political and economic power of the Duke, the nobility and the urban citizens, who were mostly Germans (see Oberländer 2001, 229). As Oberländer stresses, the distrust between Germans and non-Germans was mutual (2001, 231).

[34] See Hamann (1955–1979, I:374): "Es ist angenehm und nützlich, eine Seite des Pope zu übersetzen […] Eitelkeit und Fluch hingegen einen Teil der Encyclopedie durchzublättern. […] Der Artikel über das Schöne ist ein Geschwätz und Auszug von Hutchinson. […] Bliebe also noch einziger übrig, der würklich eine Uebersetzung verdiente. Er handelt von der Schaarwerk und Gehorcharbeitern. Jeder verständige Leser meines Heldenbriefes wird die Mühe derjenigen aus der Erfahrung kennen, über solche Leute gesetzt zu sein, aber auch das Mitleiden mit allen Gehorcharbeitern haben, was der Verfaßer meines Artikels mit ihnen hat, und die Mißbräuche zu verbeßern suchen, wodurch es ihnen unmöglich gemacht wird gute Gehorcharbeiter zu sein" (also compare Hamann 1999, IV:232).

[35] On Eisen's reform work in particular, see Blumbergs (2008, 87–88).

Strangely, there are almost no references to the religious ideas and practices of the Baltic people to be found in Hamann's work. However, his silence on Latvian religiosity does not render him irrelevant for an examination of a situation of religious contact. This is mainly because of his thoughts on language. To Hamann, language is the basis and the most important perspective allowing for an insight into and an acknowledgment of another culture. Ultimately, he does not talk about language as such, but rather about *language as a religious matter*. During his time in Mitau, he at least made some serious, though self-sceptical, efforts to learn the Latvian language,[38] perhaps motivated by the example and the visit of his most famous pupil, Johann Gottfried Herder.[39] In a letter to Herder from June 30th, 1765, Hamann writes: [33]

> I like your intention to learn the Latvian language, dearest friend; I myself have chosen pastor Stendter's grammar for that purpose as well, though I doubt that I, except for extraordinary reasons, will get very far with it.[40] [34]

Hamann's choice of material for studying the Latvian language is significant. Pastor [35]

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[36] On the particular inertia of Latvian religiosity, see Muižnieks (2018, 599): "Die relativ späte Christianisierung dieser Region (im Laufe des 13. Jahrhunderts), das eigenartige Ständesystem, wo die wichtigste Rolle Ausländer und ihre Nachkommen spielten, sowie der Mangel an Geistlichen, die die christliche Lehre in einer verständlichen Sprache erklären konnten, verursachten die Formung einer synkretistischen Weltanschauung, die die Kirchenpraxis und ältere Traditionen kombinierte. Das spiegelte sich sowohl in Familienfesten (Taufen, Hochzeiten, Beerdigungen) als auch in den Festen im Jahreslauf (Weihnachten, Ostern, Johannisfest und anderen Gedenktagen) wider. Das Beharrungsvermögen der synkretistischen Weltanschauung ist sogar bis in die Neuzeit hinein zu beobachten. Das beweist, dass die Letten nach den Veränderungen des 16. Jahrhunderts nicht sofort für eine andere Art des religiösen Lebens bereit waren. Die im Zeitalter der Reformation und Gegenreformation entstandenen Formen protestantischer und katholischer Religiosität begannen sich im Bewusstsein der Letten erst im Laufe des 18. Jahrhunderts durchzusetzen."

[37] On the Herrnhut mission in the Baltic Countries after 1736, see Webermann (1956, 158).

[38] See, on the Latvian language in Mitau in Hamann's times, Schröder (2022, 123–26).

[39] See Herder's letter to Hamann from May 21, 1765 (Hamann 1955–1979, II:336): "Wohl! aber will ich mich aufs Lettische legen, ohngeachtet ich mich etwas davor ziere […]." On the dangers of interpreting Hamann as a mere predecessor regarding the Latvian Poetry of Herder compare Bičevskis (2012, 351 and 353).

[40] "Ihr Vorsatz die lettische Sprache zu lernen, liebster Freund, gefällt mir; ich habe mir gleichfalls des Pastor Stendters Sprachlehre dazu ausgesucht, zweifele aber daß [ich] außer besondern Veranlaßungen weit darinn kommen werde" (Hamann 1955–1979, II:339).

Stendter's *Sprachlehre*, through its author, provides a significant combination of religiosity and enlightenment. The self-proclaimed Latvian (Daija and Briežkalne 2015, 163) Gothards Frīdrihs Stenders (Gotthard Friedrich Stender) (1714–1796), was a scholar and parish priest, and is credited as the founder of Latvian written language. He was a member of Berens' enlightenment-circle in Riga (Sproģe 2015, 544) and "one of the most peculiar disseminators and adepts of Western European thought in the Baltics" (Grudule 2021, 395). In 1765 and 1766, Stender lived in Mitau as well, and Hamann might have had the opportunity to meet him in person. His influence on the future Latvian literature was paramount, offering the Latvian peasants "a new type of reading" (Daija 2017, 38) in the sense of a popular enlightenment (*Volksaufklärung*) (see Blumbergs 2008, 85–87).[41] Stender's writings themselves became folklore, although his approach was basically patriarchal and somewhat top-down.[42] Nevertheless, his popular works were intended to strengthen the peasant loyalty (Daija 2017, 38). Hamann's reluctance to learn from Stender's enlightened didactics could have arisen from uneasiness, as the Latvians did not have their own voice in this particular grammar of their language. A special reason (*besondere Veranlassung*) to start learning, however, was the "desperation" he felt waiting and longing for Herder's visit; a longing that even his beloved books could not allay:

> I rummage in a number of books, but I do not find anything that satisfies my desire. Out of desperation, since Easter, I also started with Latvian; so, we can mutually test each other in Stender's fables.[43] [36]

Perhaps Stender's preface to his fables also made some impression on Hamann and Herder, for it argues for fraternal love to the Latvians and the need to lead them to a higher level, and [37] ultimately ‘to lead them from darkness to the light of God.’[44] It is uncertain, however, if this impression was an entirely positive one.

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[41] Ineta Balode summarizes Stender's achievements as follows: "Gotthard Friedrich Stender stellt eine der herausragenden Persönlichkeiten der lettischen Kulturgeschichte der Aufklärungszeit dar. Zu seinen Verdiensten zählt auch die Tatsache, dass er die fortschrittlichen pädagogischen Ideen seiner Zeit aufgriff, den lokalen baltischen Verhältnissen und vor allem den aktuellen Bedürfnissen der lettischen Bauern anpasste und somit eine qualitativ neue Etappe im Prozess der Volksbildung einleitete" (2015, 131).

[42] "Die frühe lettische, maßgeblich von Stender geschaffene Literatur entstand nicht auf Nachfrage der Letten selbst hin, in keinem Fall spiegelte sie deren Geschmack wieder, aber unbestreitbar beeinflußte sie wesentlich die künftigen in lettischer Sprache geschriebenen Werke, denn im großen und ganzen wurde diese Dichtung vom Volke angenommen, sogar folklorisiert und nachgeahmt. Die Autoren standen im engen Kontakt mit der deutschen Literatur. Sie sammelten ihre Erfahrung hauptsächlich in Deutschland und kamen zu der Überzeugung, daß sentimental-rationalistische Werke notwendig seien, um das lettische Volk für Bücher zu interessieren. An Zerstreuung wurde wenig gedacht, hauptsächlich sollten die Gedanken der Aufklärung verbreitet und die Menschen erzogen werden, daß sie besonnener würden und ihr Leben besser gestalten könnten" (Frīde 2001, 222–23). Also see on Stender's enlightenment attitude towards his flock Kreslins (1998, 153).

[43] "Ich wühle unter einer Menge von Büchern, ohne etwas zu finden, daß meinem Verlangen angemessen wäre. Aus Verzweifelung habe ich das Lettsche auch angefangen seit Ostern; wir werden uns also die Stenderschen Fabeln überhören können" (Hamann 1955–1979, II:366).

In any case, in order to support his studies in Latvian, Hamann ordered and read the Latvian Bible, as his biographer put it, so as to “hear how God’s word sounds in this elemental and unspoiled language” (Nadler 1949, 164). However, for Hamann, all human language, elemental as it may be, is characterized by refractions and reversals that is, human language is never a pure and unspoiled medium. The more obvious reason, therefore, was Hamann’s aim to learn the language expressly on the basis of the *biblical text*. To him, learning the language by reading the Bible in the language in question was a religiously significant enterprise. It was the very fact that it provided a translation of the Word of God that made the Latvian Bible important to Hamann. In a letter to his father from May 15, 1766 Hamann asked: [38]

> If you would be so kind as to bring me a Latvian or Courish Bible from Zeise’s bookshop, bound in black leather with a golden trimmed edge but without clausura, then it could perhaps be helpful to me in order to learn this language, in which I’ve made a slow start. […] At least, this translation of the bible is that praised that I—even if I have no further profit from my idea—may be content with that.[45] [39]

If the Latvian Bible did not enable him to learn the Latvian language (due to Hamann’s own failure), it was nevertheless a remarkable translation of God’s word that as such satisfies Hamann’s idea of the religious importance of the diversity of languages and the intellectual effort of *translation*. To Hamann, after the tower of Babel recounted in the Bible,[46] translation is nothing less than a theological necessity. As a consequence, the (religious) situation of contact that is manifested in the process of translation plays a significant role in Hamann’s theological considerations. [40]

His father had provided Hamann with the books he had asked for, as an expression of gratitude in his letter from August 10, 1766 shows, although he admits that he did not use them very often. However, as his situation allowed for much leisure, he expressed his hope that the initial attempts in the study of language were not futile—he even stressed his determination to continue his work. In a significant addition, he also referred to his plan of trusting divine providence, regarding himself as a “ball that only lives due to the power of its [i.e. provi- [41]

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[44] In his preface to his collection of fables Stender writes that ”we have to love the Latvians as brothers” and “sie aus Finsternis zum Lichte Gottes zu führen uns eifrigst bestreben. Dahin gehen unsere Bemühungen, und eine höhere Stufe in der zukünftigen Verklärung wird der Lohn unserer Treue sein“ (Stender 1766, XXX). Daija and Briežkalne (2015, 166) comment on the importance of Stender’s book:”The main reason for the significance of Stender’s book was that it was intended for Latvian peasant readers. A string of secular texts written in Latvian existed before Stender, but they were addressed to Latvian speaking Baltic Germans instead of Latvian peasant readers, and the Latvian language there had more exotic than communicative functions (for instance, devotional poetry which was meant to be used exclusively in the circles of the upper class). By speaking directly to peasants in his book and enjoying success later and inspiring several generations of followers, Stender was the first to change the literary communication system, to create preconditions for the emergence of secular reading public and thereby the first generation of Latvian peasant intelligentsia at the beginning of the 19th century.”

[45] “Wenn Sie so gütig seyn wollten mir eine lettische oder kursche Bibel aus dem Zeiseschen Buchladen in schwartz Leder mit goldnen Schnitt eingebunden aber ohne Clausuren zu besorgen; so würde es mir zur Erlernung dieser Sprache, in der ich einen langsamen Anfang gemacht, vielleicht behülflich seyn. […] Diese Übersetzung der Bibel wird wenigstens so gelobt, daß, wenn ich auch niemals mehr als einigen Vorteil hierinn von meinem Einfall habe, ich damit zufrieden seyn kann“ (Hamann 1955–1979, II:369).

[46] On the Tower of Babel as a key narrative in Hamann’s understanding of both reason and God, see von Lüpke (2012, 180–83).

dence's] hands."[47] Concerning the Latvian language, one could say that Hamann was willing to hear if God's voice had been audible to him via this particular medium.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Latvian language had much to offer to Hamann in this regard, in particular concerning poetry. Hamann's attempts at the Latvian language were not only a way of passing the time in Courland, but rather made him attentive to its particular features as a medium of expression of a particular individuality that emerged from a certain locality. [42]

Accordingly, Hamann's earlier experiences had some long-term effects in his writings. At a conspicuous place in his most famous work, the *Aesthetica in Nuce* (1762), later to be published in his collection of essays titled *Kreuzzüge des Philologen* ("Crusades of the philologist"), Hamann famously referred to his Livonian experiences. The collection title already suggests the religious aims and implications of Hamann's philological efforts. Within the *Aesthetica*, Hamann referred to his sojourns in the Baltic region in a significant context, relating literary form to the individuality of a people. Closing his discussion in the main text, Hamann includes the songs of the common Latvian people into a discussion on Homer and the 'German' Pindar, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock. The salient passage, simultaneously instrumentalized in identity politics, solidified, and mythologized even within Latvian national culture" (Bičevskis 2022, 151), is worth quoting in length: [43]

> Homer's monotonous metre ought to strike us with at least as much paradox as the free rhythms of our German Pindar. My surprise at our ignorance of the causes for the Greek poet's use of the same metric throughout was moderated during a journey through Courland and Livland. In these regions, there are certain areas where one always hears the Latvians or non-Germans ('Undeutsche') singing during their work, singing only a single cadence of a few notes, which greatly resembles a poetic metre. If a poet was to emerge from among them, it would be quite natural for him to tailor all his lines to the metre of their voices. It would take too much time to illuminate this small fact (pleasing those of misguided taste – who want to make it [the things written] frizzy with their curling iron), to compare it with several other phenomena, to scrutinize the reasons for it, and to elaborate on the fertile consequences. (Hamann 1993b, 143–45)[48] [44]

It should be stressed that regarding his interest in Latvian songs, Hamann by no means [45] devoted himself to a marginal issue of the indigenous culture. Quantitatively as well as qualitatively, the Latvian folk songs are a unique phenomenon in European cultural history, presenting a tradition of about 1.5 million variants of partly very archaic motives (Luven 2001, 27).[49] However, despite their eminence as a historical source regarding their content, Hamann was mainly interested in a particular formal aspect of them, the simple, laconic musical metre (*eine Cadenz von wenig Tönen*) and its possible desirable effects on the content of the future Latvian poetry. To him, as Raivis Bičevskis put it, monotony did not unify and universalize, but rather stresses distinction and individualization (Bičevskis 2022, 149). Latvian songs were the extensive product of an oral tradition dating far back in time. As the four-line songs were first documented in 1584 and first printed in 1632, scholars assume that the songs were quite commonly sung among the Latvian population (see Oberländer 2001, 233). Part of the songs, Oberländer suggests, served to strengthen the self-esteem and self-confidence of the Latvians as something that was not shared with the German elite and the official church (2001, 236–37). This aim for authenticity is also present in Hamann's considerations on the Latvian songs.[50]

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[47] "Für die curschen Bücher statte [ich] Ihnen meinen herzlichsten Dank ab. Aus meiner Vergeßenheit deßselben, liebster Vater, können Sie leicht erachten, daß ich selbige noch wenig gebraucht habe. Ich denke aber noch hier so viel Zeit und Gemächlichkeit zu haben, daß ich diesen Anfang nicht umsonst gemacht, sondern gehörig werde fortsetzen können. Umstände du Verdruß sind an diesem unterbrochenen Unternehmen schuld; ich werde selbiges aber nicht aufgeben. Meine Flucht in diese Gegenden, bey den betrübten Umständen meines Vaterlandes, wird ohnehin nicht so bald endigen, und nicht ohne Abwechselung seyn. Ich überlasse alles der Göttl. Vorsehung, und sehe mich als ihren Ball an, der durch nicht anders als die Kraft ihrer Hände lebt" (Hamann 1955–1979, II:376).

[48] "Homers monotonisches Metrum sollte uns wenigstens eben so paradox vorkommen, als die Ungebundenheit des deutschen Pindars. Meine Bewunderung oder Unwissenheit von der Ursache eines durchgängigen Sylbenmaaßes in dem griechischen Dichter ist bey einer Reise durch Curland und Liefland gemäßigt worden. Es giebt in angeführten Gegenden gewisse Striche, wo man das lettische oder undeutsche Volk bey aller ihrer Arbeit singen hört, aber nichts als eine Cadenz von wenig Tönen, die mit einem Metro viel Ähnlichkeit hat. Sollte ein Dichter unter ihnen aufstehen: so wäre es ganz natürlich, daß alle seine Verse nach diesem eingeführten Maasstab ihrer Stimmen zugeschnitten seyn würden. Es würde zu viel Zeit erfordern, diesen kleinen Umstand (ineptis gratum fortasse—qui volunt illa calamistris inuere) in sein gehöriges Licht zu setzen, mit mehreren Phänomenen zu vergleichen, den Gründen davon nachzuspüren, und die fruchtbaren Folgen zu entwickeln." The Latin quote is taken from Cicero's *Brutus*:"…pleasing those of misguided taste—who want to make it [the things written] frizzy with their curling iron."

Latvian songs of work have been intensely analyzed by Magdalene Huelmann, who stresses the rhythmic function of the song that is used to structure the working process (Huelmann 1996, 14). Accordingly, the songs Hamann heard emerged from a concrete situation in reality and were strongly connected to their origin in the process of work. Here, ploughing is of particular significance, that is, the farmer's work with the soil (1996, 29 and 33).[51] Collective work (*talka*, see Grudule 2021, 399) and its particular mode of communication holds a central position in the songs (Huelmann 1996, 104 and 123). Latvian songs display an impression of concreteness to the hearer, a display of a particular *religious* perspective on reality[52] in which mythological figures are included (1996, 205). Most prominently, in the songs, the human and the divine sphere are communicatively interconnected (1996, 292). All these elements strongly resonate with Hamann's thinking. Moreover, the formal elements of the Latvian songs, most of them alliterative and unrhymed four-liners in trochees or dactyls, were in his time under polemical attack by philologists influenced by enlightenment ideas. One of them was Stender, who aimed at abolishing these songs, which were, to his mind, 'useless songs,' instead replacing them with something more fitting to his—and thereby to enlightenment's—poetological ideas (1996, 283). [46]

Hamann's few lines therefore deserve some closer consideration. They allow portraying him as a proto-dainologist (Bičevskis 2012, 352). As was usual in his writing practice, Hamann's text is full of hidden quotations and intertextual allusions. This also holds true for the seemingly insignificant or perhaps even excluding word *undeutsch* (non-German) that is used to characterize the people singing during work.[53] The contrast *Deutsche-Undeutsche* already ap- [47]

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[49] On the salient role of singing in the process of confessionalization in Latvia, see Grudule (2018).

[50] On the possible subversive effect of the songs with regard to official church discipline, see Neander (1956, 144).

[51] On the importance of soil and earth to Hamann's thinking, see Stünkel (2018, 158).

[52] "Die lettischen Volkslieder, und die hier untersuchten Arbeitslieder […] sind darüberhinaus in ihrer Gesamtheit intensiv mit mythologischen Vorstellungen durchwoben; religiöse Vorstellungen durch ziehen jeden Lebens- und damit Liedbereich. […] In den lettischen Liedern ist häufig das Bewußtsein spürbar, daß der Mensch Teil eines größeren Prinzips ist. Göttliche Figuren, Feen, Hexen und Geister greifen in das Geschick des Menschen ein; von ihrem Wohlwollen ist der Mensch abhängig, unter ihrer Mißgunst leidet er" (Huelmann 1996, 291).

[53] On the kind of work Hamann might have witnessed see Jaremko-Porter (2008, 106): "In this famous narrative account of field laborers in Kurland Hamann did not specify which agricultural tasks were at hand, although it is probable that he would have heard melodic formulas that accompany straw making,

pears in medieval Livonian sources (Lele-Rozentāle 2001, 212). According to August Wilhelm Hupel, the term refers exclusively to the peasants (see Tischer 2022, 55–56).[54] However, in this context, the contrast does not primarily refer to social realities[55] and their possible critique (see Lele-Rozentāle 2012, 215), but rather to poetological considerations of the time. Hamann alludes to the title of a German book on Latvian poetry, "benevolently" written by Johann Wischmann (1650?–before 1703), that was published in Riga in 1697, titled *Der unteutsche Opitz oder kurtze Anleitung zur lettischen Dichtkunst wohlmeinend abgefaßt von Johann Wischmann Pastor zu Dondangen*. Wischmann was part of a movement ultimately resulting in the establishment of Latvian literature, mainly conducted by German pastors (von Wilpert 2005, 86). Hamann was well acquainted with the efforts of these literary pioneers.[56] He took notes of Wischmann's book in his notebook. He explicitly noted the titles of the chapters, explicitly also the title of the fourth chapter *Von der Art lettische Verse zu machen.*[57] Wischmann, parish pastor in Dondangen, put his theory in practice by actually writing Latvian hymns. Here, he took issue against using non-Latvian words, in particular against borrowings from the German language (Vanags 2022, 173).[58] He also paralleled his work to the most important German textbook on poetry of his time, Martin Opitz' *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* (1624).[59] As the editor of the modern edition of his work remarks, Wischmann makes the brave attempt to mediate two different cultures, though 'with asymmetric force' (see Wis-

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muck spreading, or flax, potato, and rye picking. These prescribed seasonal tasks differentiate the practice of customs, dances, and songs in specific regions."

[54] "Ohne auf die verschiedenen Stände zu sehen, theilt man des Landes Einwohner in zwo Hauptklassen, in Deutsche und in Undeutsche. Unter den lezten versteht man alle Erbleute, oder mit einem Wort die Bauern. Wer nicht Bauer ist, heißt ein Deutscher, wenn er auch kein deutsches Wort sprechen kann, z.B. Russen, Engländer […] Zu dieser Klasse gehören der Adel, die Gelehrten, Bürger, Amtleute, freygebohrene Bedienten, auch sogar Freygelassene, sobald sie ihre vorige Kleidung mit der deutschen verwechseln." (Hupel 1774, 215 f.). Compare Grudule 2013, 159: "This often-cited judgement seems inadequate to me. As already stated, the term Latvian is predominant in the titles of books at an early time, such as the above mentioned Mancelius (1638). To my mind Hupel with Unteutsche means the usage of the term in everyday communication and not in printed texts dealing with the investigation of Latvian and Estonian culture and language."

[55] See Tischer (2022, 56): "Die besondere regionale Verwendung der Begriffe bedeutete, dass ein Bauer per Definition kein Deutscher war, eine Gleichsetzung, die in Livland weitgehend zutreffend gewesen sein dürfte, mit der Begriffsverwendung vor allem in Deutschland selbst aber natürlich nicht übereinstimmte. Die besondere regionale Verwendung von ‚deutsch' und ‚undeutsch' bedeutete per Definition zugleich, dass Letten und Esten als Bauern galten, als nicht privilegiert und als unzivilisiert. Höhere Bildung und sozialer Aufstieg machten sie per Definition zu Deutschen. Es gab also nicht nur den sozialen Druck, sich der kulturellen und politischen Elite der ‚Deutschen' anzupassen, sondern auch Definitionen und Wahrnehmungskategorien, die Aufsteigern kaum eine andere Möglichkeit als die der Germanisierung ließen."

[56] In his notebook notice on Wischmann's book, Hamann also mentions the famous "ungerman" poet Fürecerus, who actually was the pioneer of Latvian Language and poetry Christoph Fürecker (around 1615–1680). He was married to a Latvian woman and lived among free Latvian farmers. With his Latvian hymns, Fürecker became the founding father of Latvian artistic poetry. As Vanags (2022, 169) puts it, Fürecker created a system of writing for the Latvian language, thus emancipating it from the German orthography and, as a consequence, representing its individuality as a autonomous language—an attempt at individuality that Hamann must have appreciated.

[57] *The art of making Latvian verses* N V, 247 (10-22).

[58] "Man soll sich für fremden Un=Lettischen Wörtern in VERßen hüten […] ich verstehe durch die fremden Wörter etliche abgeschmackte neue NOMINA und VERBA, die einige gantz aus dem Teutschen nehmen/ da sie die doch gnug Unteutsch geben könten […]"

[59] On the relation of Wischmann's work to Opitz' book, see Grudule (2013, 156–57 and 163): "Der *Unteutsche Opitz* is Wischmann's attempt to adapt German poetry theory and criticism to the qualities of Latvian language. Opitz in his theoretical discourse appealed to the use of pure German language, whereas Wischmann is much more involved in this issue and devotes a separate chapter to the process of text adaption for Latvian, where he first of all mentions the pure Latvian language and then introduces Latvian proper names, Latvian traits, and cultural realia. This discussion, however, seems to be purely decorative, and he stays a

chmann 2008, XXX). Ultimately, the German language displayed a considerable influence on written Latvian, though not on spoken Latvian (see Vanags 2019, 292 and 297).[60] However, the book, and Hamann's reference to it, is an object-language document of a situation of contact. In Hamann's case, moreover, the reference also introduced the particular *poetry* of the Latvian people into a discussion of poetry that may earlier have disregarded it as a suitable participant.

Furthermore, the passage taps into the contemporary discussion on literature as it reacts to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's remark about the poetic quality of songs of the Baltic peoples in the 33rd of his *Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend* (Jørgensen 1993, 189). Here, Lessing reports about his delight in the rare "naivety of wit" and the "stimulating simplicity" of the "Dainos" sung by the common maidens of the country, and quotes two of them in length. Lessing concludes somehow condescendingly that poets can be found everywhere and that vivid sentiment is not a privilege of so-called civilized (*gesittet*) peoples.[61] In any case, for Lessing as well as for Hamann, locality is no obstacle for poetic excellence. [48]

Now, what was Hamann's poetic and linguistic point with this passage in the *Aesthetica*? Above all, the sound of the Latvian songs most clearly represents the particular context from which they emerge. Christina Jaremko-Porter has put it in corresponding poetical terms: "Hamann's reminiscence evokes a landscape of continuous and repetitive sounds—of sowing, haying, or mowing in Kurish farmlands" (2008, 102–3). Poetry thus corresponds to *locality*. Content-wise, Latvian folk and working songs furthermore cover a variety of actions, of *individual* concrete parts of rural work that are put into song (Huelmann 1996, 10). Moreover, in Hamann's presentation, it turns out that Greek 'continuing metre' (*durchgängiges Sylbenmaaß*) is not as unique as he himself—and also many of his educated contemporaries—had previously thought. On a trip through the country (Courland and Livland), perhaps in his capacity as a private tutor, Hamann had the opportunity to witness an astoundingly concordant phenomenon: the Latvian peasants singing in a cadence consisting of few notes, that appeared to him to be strikingly similar to an orderly metre. A poet emerging here in this context and among these people, Hamann concluded, surely would elaborate his verses using this metre suiting the voices of his people. Poetry, thus, was for Hamann dependent on local history and language, that is, on *contingent individualities*. It is not dependent on general content or mandatory form, but rather on personal expression. [49]

This insight had some important theological consequences that Hamann was not reluctant to draw: In his book *Aesthetica in nuce,* Hamann claimed that *poetry is the mother tongue of the human race* ("Poesie ist die Muttersprache des menschlichen Geschlechts"). The original language is poetry—in more than one sense: The Creator himself became a poet in the first place (*Da Er Selbst ein Schriftsteller geworden*, Hamann 1993b, 25); Creation itself is a speech to creature through creature (*eine Rede an die Kreatur durch die Kreatur*, Hamann 1993b, 87). *God an author!* ("Gott ein Schriftsteller!") is Hamann's famous insight guiding his London con- [50]

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stranger to the spiritual world of the Latvians. On the whole, many pages of the book appear to be just a game and reveal the colonial system existing in the Baltic areas of that time in its entirety."

[60] "German influence, of course, was felt not only in religious texts but also in the Latvian language in general. This strong influence contributed to the fact that the religious written language was rather different from the spoken Latvian" (Wischmann 2008, 297).

[61] "Sie würden auch daraus lernen, daß unter jedem Himmelsstriche Dichter geboren werden, und daß lebhafte Empfindungen kein Vorrecht gesitteter Völker sind. Es ist nicht lange, daß ich in *Ruhigs Litauischem Wörterbuche* blätterte, und am Ende der vorläufigen Betrachtungen über diese Sprache, eine hierher gehörige Seltenheit antraf, die mich unendlich vergnügte. Einige Litauische *Dainos* oder Liederchen, nämlich, wie sie die gemeinen Mädchen daselbst singen. Welch ein naiver Witz! Welche reizende Einfalt!" (Lessing 1996, 106)

version experience.[62] As a consequence, the contingent and concrete individuality of Latvian oral poetry is not simply a remarkable (or neglectable) historical fact, but rather a genuine and authentic sign and repetition of God's presence and actions in the world.[63] Accordingly, the contact with Latvian oral poetry, the working songs heard by Hamann, not only triggered a significant poetological insight that was important in the contemporary discussion of his time, but they even manifested or revealed a religious truth that was likely to repudiate any idea of general poetic rules supposedly valid for any place at all times. Individual language is the medium of the divine. This holds true not least regarding the enlightenment idea (i.e., in particular, Gotthard Friedrich Stender's) that future Latvian literature and poetry had to be formed after the image of sentimental-rationalistic Enlightenment models (see Schmid 2003, 227–28). In Stender's fables, for instance, though he commented topical social issues in Courland, the locality, i.e., the Latvian world, occupied only a peripheral place, the space being either mythically abstract or related to historical or exotic narratives (Daija 2017, 39). To Hamann, another road had to be taken, strengthening the individual aspect of the Latvian poetry.

It should be mentioned that at the end of the lines quoted from the *Aesthetica in nuce*, Hamann seems to open up a perspective that may be of interest for scholars interested in issues of comparison. According to this perspective, the observation relating to the songs of the Latvian people could well be developed into an extensive research programme. This would include the methodological steps of contextualizing the phenomenon, of scrutinizing the reasons for the emergence of the phenomenon, of comparing the findings to other phenomena, and finally of drawing conclusions regarding the emergence of poetry and literature within the different peoples in question. Thus, Jørgensen's remark about Hamann's disinterest in the matter (Jørgensen 1993, 189) must be subject to doubt. It becomes even more questionable when one considers the fact that the four-step programme itself is precisely the way a proponent of the enlightenment would approach the phenomenon, that is: putting it in a light considered adequate (*in sein gehöriges Licht zu setzen*), subsuming it under certain criteria in order to compare it with others (*mit mehreren Phänomenen zu vergleichen*), adapting it to the principle of the sufficient reason (*den Gründen davon nachzuspüren*), and including it under the useful principle of cause and error (*und die fruchtbaren Folgen zu entwickeln*). Thus, in his opposition to the enlightenment project, the matter must be of preeminent interest to Hamann. In contrast to this attempt to make the phenomenon frizzy with a curling iron, to him, every phenomenon has to be examined in its God-directed originality[64] as an expression of individuality, personality, and locality. [51]

Conclusion

Hamann spent an important period of his life in the Baltic region and, as a citizen of Königsberg, remained in its vicinity and scarcely moved very far away. The sojourns in Courland left many important traces in his later writings. Admittedly, on the surface, there is only little material documenting situations of religious contact in or with the Baltic region in Hamann's [52] work. To a certain degree, however, this is also not to be expected in the case of the *Magus,* who usually composed and wrote his complicated texts in a rather idiosyncratic style. Nevertheless, the contact with the Baltic region in many regards did have some importance in his work as well as in the thought of later intellectuals referring to his work, most famously his pupil, Johann Gottfried Herder.

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[62] Hamann's writings from his London period start with the text *Über die Auslegung der heil.[igen] Schrift* and with the words *Gott ein Schriftsteller!* (1993a, 59).

[63] "In Hamann […], this simplicity becomes originality, closeness to the origin, not naive, but God-centered" (Bičevskis 2022, 154).

[64] On the relationship of originality and monotony as the tonality of origin in the case of the Latvian songs, see Bičevskis (2022, 155).

[53] To Hamann himself, the decisive contact he experienced in the Baltic lands was the struggle between the nobility on the one side and the urban patriciate and academics on the other. This was no less than a struggle between Enlightenment and the feudal *hinterwelt.* In hindsight, however, the contact with the Baltic peasants was more important, and even religiously significant.[65] Their authentic poetry served Hamann as a philosophical-theological argument in a struggle that he considered to be characterized by crypto-religious elements. Poetry in succession of the Creator's poetical action is local, individual, and personal, but not general and all-compassing—such poetry would be idolatry. It is no surprise, then, that this claim to individuality (see von Lüpke 2004, 10–11)[66] was Hamann's main point in his famous metacritical polemics against Kant: reason, if viewed as the overall judge and lawgiver, is bound to become pope-like or 'catholic.' The fact that even the seemingly enlightened circle around Berens in Riga took part in the apology and divinization of the 'enlightened' absolutistic rulers[67] (in this case, of Catherine the Great)[68] very likely strengthened Hamann's suspicion against the Enlightenment project as a dogmatic religion.[69]

[54] Hamann's writings manifest the contact of religious (and crypto-religious) tradition via the *medium* of language as a *tertium comparationis*. Hamann was exposed to chthonic Latvian poetry and, after his London conversion, used this experience in his continuing agonal contact as a Lutheran Christian opposing the crypto-religion of the Enlightenment movement. In this context, to Hamann, the genuine Latvian language with its specific kind of poetry, characterized by a particular metre, became a prime medium for spreading God's Word and an important example for the fundamental idea of God being the author or poet of the world. Compared to the sophisticated language of the Enlightenment, this grounded, personal, individual, and local language was more likely to provide insight into the book of nature and the basic actions of its author. While others, mostly parts of the clergy, thought language to be the suitable main medium for the spread of Enlightenment's generalizing ideas (Angermann

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[65] This might be part of the answer to the research question posed by Raivis Bičevskis on what Riga, Mitau and other places in Courland and Livland meant to Hamann (Bičevskis 2012, 358).

[66] ”Gegenüber einer 'allgemeine[n] Menschenvernunft', die sich selbst 'vergöttert', indem sie von ihrer Geschichtlichkeit, Wandelbarkeit und Leibgebundenheit abstrahiert, insistiert Hamann auf der Individualität der Vernunft. Dabei ist seine Hochschätzung der Individualität theologisch begründet […] Eben der so verstandene Gott unterscheidet sich von den Idolen der menschlichen Vernunft dadurch, dass er als Schöpfer jeden Menschen als Individuum ins Sein ruft und durch seine »individuelle Vorsehung« im Sein erhält.“

[67] See Tischer (2022, 62): “Die Kritik an der Leibeigenschaft ist durch die Schriften und Aktivitäten von Johann Georg Eisen oder Garlieb Merkel besonders präsent, aber tatsächlich war sie nicht prägend für die baltische Aufklärung. Die Literaten und namentlich die evangelischen Geistlichen waren in ihrer Funktion systemstabilisierend, nicht systemkritisch. Kritik war nicht karrierefőrderlich […].“

[68] See, on Hamann's attitude towards Catharine's predecessor, Peter the Great, who followed corresponding aims, Graubner (2022, 63–64).

[69] Von Pistohlkors comments on the relation of the Enlightenment movement to the rulers: ”Diese weitgereisten, mit den Themen der Zeit eng verbundenen ‚jungen Leute' um 1765 glaubten unter Katharina II. in der besten aller Welten zu leben und waren sich nicht zu schade, entsprechende Jubelgedichte zu verfassen oder in Auftrag zu geben. Daß der Selbstherrscher als Herrschaftsträger im ‚System der Republik der Gelehrten' (Herder) ein Fremdkörper war und sein mußte, ist von den Zeitgenossen mit Ausnahme von Johann Georg Hamann nicht erkannt worden. […] Die Herrscher-Vergötterung ist im Kreis um die Brüder Berens gang und gäbe“ (1994, 297).

and Brüggemann 2018, 179), Hamann insisted on the locality of the Latvian language as a medium of religious truth. To him, the hybris of Enlightenment thought became manifest in Stender's claim to reform the Latvian folk songs following external ideas concerning form and content.[70] As Daija and Briežkalne put it (2015, 172): "Stender was more than skeptical towards traditions and ethnographic habits proposing a more cosmopolitan life model instead. For Stender's vision, the past—either mythical, or historical—was to be abandoned, in order to create a new man, a new generation led by ethnically unspecified values." To Hamann, this kind of enlightened upbringing necessarily turns into a dictatorship upbringing (Daija 2014, 357).

Poetic language as a medium is of salient importance for religion and, thus, an important source for scholarship. After all, it is not by accident that the classical historian of Baltic/Latvian religiosity, Haralds Biezais, in accordance with Hamann's practice, based his pathbreaking research mainly on the songs of the Latvian people (*dainas*) (Luven 2001, XVI and 53). Accordingly, the situation of contact that manifested itself in Johann Georg Hamann's writings concerning the Baltic lands and its peoples is less about a *religious* encounter, and more about the contact with the mere existence, actions, and habits of the Baltic people interpreted *religiously*. In Hamann's view, the unique poetry of the Latvian peasants thus became a visible sign for the philosophical and theological idea of individuality, personality, and locality that indicate God's presence in the world.[71] Thus, the writings of the magus in north are an example of the religious struggle between Enlightenment's generalizations and (Hamann's) enlightening Lutheranism, triggered and motivated by the example of the Latvian people—whereas their 'visible' or surface religiosity hardly played a role in his considerations. [55]

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[70] As Pauls Daija has pointed out, Stender aimed at 'civilizing' some of the more explicit content of Latvian songs and giving them a more sentimental and emotional erotic meaning (2017, 86)—a prudishness Hamann could not agree on. Māra Grudule, thus, characterizes Stender's aim as building a path "for Latvian peasants to approach the German *bürgerliche* Gesellschaft or to build a civic society with appropriate cultural expressions of personal relationships and leisure opportunities" (Grudule 2021, 408). To Hamann, this is yet another attempt at idolatrical violation (*bildende Vergewaltigung*) of others (Graubner 2022, 69).

[71] To Bičevskis, Hamann stresses the "perpetual monotony of the contractions from the origin in all that is said. A monotony then also shows up in the verses of Homer and folk songs of the Latvian peasants. […] Hamann's monotony is paradoxical: the unity of the world is linked to the diversity of the world's sounds and colors, languages, and times: the world itself is a paradoxical monotony" (Bičevskis 2022, 155).

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Media Use and Social Influence Among the Moravian Brethren in the Baltic Region with a Focus on Modern-Day Latvia

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ABSTRACT The Herrnhut Brethren (Moravians) expanded to the Baltic region in the early eighteenth century and quickly became a substantial religious force, especially among the local Estonian and Latvian peasant population. Instead of following a top-down institutional approach to Christianity, the Moravians approached the peasants as equals. The resulting religious contact between the Moravians and the Baltic Lutheran Church entrenched Christianity in the Baltic countryside more than had previously been the case and empowered the local population, largely through the innovative use of media and access to education.

KEYWORDS Pietism, Herrnhut, Moravian Church, Livland, national awakening, peasant education

Introduction

Christianity was brought to the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea as early as the High Middle Ages, but the Christianity that blossomed here remained very much a Baltic German phenomenon, even well into the confessionalisation processes set in motion in the wake of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. In the case of the Baltic region, these processes often started to take expression only in the seventeenth century. Many developments began only at the end of the century and continued even into the nineteenth century. Pietism played a special role in this regard. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, thanks to Sweden's specific religious policy, it reached the Baltic provinces only in very few cases. However, in the eighteenth century, after the Great Northern War (1700–1721) when these territories came under Russian rule, most obstacles were taken down, and new ambassadors of pietism, the Moravian Brethren from Herrnhut (Oberlausitz), chose this region as one of the special destinations of their mission. They launched rather long-running and efficient activities among [1] the local populations, especially among the Latvian and Estonian peasants (Straube and Laur 2009, 97–114).

The first ambassadors from Herrnhut arrived in the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland[1] (the region called Vidzeme in present-day Latvia) in the autumn of 1729. Among them was the Moravian Brother Christian David, who more directly than anyone else represented the continuation of the old Czech Brotherhood of Jan Hus in the new Moravian Church, also called the Herrnhut Brethren, which had been re-established by count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. The statutes of the Brethren defined the commitment to facilitate the spread of Christianity and, wherever Christians faced obstacles in enjoying the fruits of the Christian faith, to help them overcome these (Hahn and Reichel 1977, 70, 350–51, 374, 376). The Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire presented a perfectly suitable arena for this kind of mission. Although the indigenous populations of these territories had been Christian since the thirteenth century, they lived under conditions that the Brethren regarded as obstructive. By this, they primarily meant that the Lutheran Church was controlled by the German-speaking elite, but also that a new political reality had taken shape after 1721—with the Baltic provinces of Estland and Livland under Russian rule, the dominating faith of which was Orthodoxy. [2]

As Heinz Schilling has aptly characterised it, the changes brought by the Moravian Brethren in religious life triggered changes in other social spheres as well (1999, 16). Conceptualising the arrival of the Herrnhut Brethren in the Baltic region from 1729 onwards as a case of religious contact between the 'traditional' Baltic German Lutheran Church and the new Pietist current, one can see how the use of non-traditional media and the integration of previously marginalised voices vastly impacted the religious landscape and the social realities of this region. This paper aims to shed light on the religious contact in terms of the Moravian introduction of new media for religious communication among the local inhabitants, primarily the Latvians. It does so in three steps. The first section investigates the concrete history of the contact between representatives of the Herrnhut brotherhoods and those of the mainstream Baltic German Church. In the second section, the focus is on the impact of the Moravians on language and education among the indigenous population, whereas the third section looks at later social consequences, such as on the economy, emancipation, and national movements. [3]

Pietism and Other Lutheran Christians

When the Herrnhut Moravians started their mission in the Baltic region, they were welcomed in the Governorates of Livland and Estland only by those Lutheran pastors and landlords who already sympathised with Pietism. The indigenous population regarded them as an evil brought from the West and boding only trouble for them. The situation started to change in the second half of the 1730s, when contact with the local peasants intensified. The Moravian Brothers, especially Christian David himself, whose activities were imbued with devotion and Christian love for the surrounding area, boosted their trust and aroused an interest in the Christianity preached by the Herrnhutians. Through these contacts, the farmers became more and more convinced that the German-speaking Brothers had come to help and support them, that they accepted the farmers in Livland as similar to themselves and did not view them from [4] above. This encouraged the peasants to open up to the Moravians and develop an interest in what they were doing and preaching. More and more farmers started attending gatherings organised by the German Brothers. But these meetings had an immense added value due to a new way of using media. If, in the past, the peasants literally just attended worship while their thoughts were more preoccupied with other things, Herrnhut worship began to demand their active participation. The sermons were much closer to their experiences, and the organisation of the service required the peasants to participate in it with their own activities. The way the Moravians organised the whole of spiritual life and congregational organisation into choirs at different levels, from very local to district-wide, also demanded more intensive participation of peasants in religious life.

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[1] In order to avoid confusion, this entity will be called "Livland," to distinguish it from the broader meaning of the medieval region "Livonia," which stretched all across the Baltic region. The Governorate of Livland only encompassed the southern half of today's Estonia and the northern half of Latvia. The Governorate of Estland covered the northern half of current Estonia.

Consequently, these contacts between the Moravian Brothers and the peasants of Livland were decisive in changing the attitude of the indigenous people of this region towards Christianity. One can imply that the Moravian Church served as a 'Reformation' for the Latvian peasants who, in a relatively short time under the impact of Herrnhutianism, started to reject the principles of their ancestral faith and evolved into typical Christians who practised their religion 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Before that, they had been a sort of 'Sunday Christians' who went to church only on Sundays for mass, and even then partially unwillingly. Apart from that, they had visited church only for baptisms, marriages, and funerals, partly because they risked being punished if they failed to meet these requirements. Nevertheless, sometimes even these requirements had been ignored; burying their dead outside the ground consecrated by the church had been rather broadly practiced. At all other times, peasants had made offerings to their gods and holy sites, left offerings on holy stones and in groves, and visited diviners and healers. Such syncretism was partially facilitated by the peasants' protest against the rule and faith that had been brought from outside and forced upon them. [5]

At the same time, the rapid increase of adherents and the popularity of the Moravian Church alerted the opponents of Pietism. There was also concern about a possible decline in church revenues as peasants had begun to prefer baptising their children and marrying in Herrnhut meeting houses rather than in Lutheran churches. Negative rumours and stories about plots reached St. Petersburg and found attentive ears with the religiously suspicious Empress Elisabeth Petrovna (1738–1742). She banned the Moravian Brethren from the Russian Empire in 1742. The government of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Livland conducted investigations for one whole year so that the order was fully carried out only in 1743, and the Brethren were forced to cease their activities. Several Herrnhut Moravians left Livland. However, the Russian Empire could not enforce the ban, and peasants quickly realised that. Already a decade after the issuing of the ban, the Brethren gradually resumed their expansion, both in geographical and quantitative terms, as the Moravian Church spread its influence in an increasing number of districts across Livland. The Brethren themselves described the period between 1743 and 1817 when there was formally a ban in place as "the silent march." At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Moravian Brethren already included approximately 10,000 Latvian peasants (Straube 2000, 156). [6]

Already in the 1740s, Lutheran pastors observed that peasants from their parishes had started to attend all prayer times in increasing numbers, and their knowledge of Scripture was becoming better. Furthermore, a growing number of peasants were able not only to recite the commandments and other religious texts but also to explicate them. A particular achievement was the fact that while at the beginning male peasants had been more successful in this regard, soon peasant wives, too, started to demonstrate increasingly better knowledge. Shortly before [7] "the silent march," members of the visitation commissions discovered that in several parishes peasants had become better at singing church hymns, and in others the pastors had even managed to train them to perform hymns not only in monophonic but also in polyphonic manner.

Among those who had become Herrnhut Brethren between the 1730s and the early nineteenth century, there were numerous Latvians who rose to fame in later years, indicating the success of the Herrnhut way of practicing Christianity. Significantly, it was in the Herrnhut environment that one of the first Lutheran pastors of ethnic Latvian origin, Georgs Neikens, was raised. His parents were not only members of the Moravian Church but also held important positions in it. Jānis Cimze, the head of the first officially state-founded Teachers' Seminary in Valmiera (German: Wolmar, founded 1839) for the training of peasant school teachers, likewise came from a family of Moravian Brethren. Many of the early Latvian nationalists, the most active figures of the national awakening in the second half of the nineteenth century, have similar origins. A pertinent formulation about this aspect comes from Ludvigs Adamovičs, one of the first Latvian church historians, who characterised the activities of the Livland Brethren as "the growth of Latvians into Christianity." This was even the title of one of his articles (1939). [8]

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the successful war with Napoleonic France brought Emperor Alexander I glory and raised hope for liberal reforms in Russia. Although the hope remained unfulfilled on a large scale, some steps were taken in this direction: In the Governorates of Courland and Livland, serfdom was abolished in 1817 and 1819, respectively, and peasants acquired personal freedom. Furthermore, in 1817 the emperor signed a Letter of Grace to the Moravian Brethren, again allowing them to work freely in the Russian Empire and granting them several privileges. It put an end to "the silent march," and the Moravian Church flourished for a few decades; it continued to spread in the Baltic, and the number of its adherents reached 20,000 (LVVA, 237.1.11b, 32). In many parishes in Livland, more than half of the peasants belonged to the Moravian Brethren; in some parishes, the proportion reached 90%. Thus, the Brethren yielded comprehensive and fruitful influence. The total number of Estonian and Latvian peasants who had joined the ranks of the Moravian Brethren is estimated at around 100,000 (ABU, R.19.G.a., 3.27.1.b.). [9]

In the 1830s, the domestic policy course of the Russian Empire became increasingly reactionary, and the tsars viewed Russification as one of their goals. In late 1832, a new Imperial Church Law was adopted which considerably restricted the activities of non-Orthodox Churches while increasing the role of the dominant Orthodox Church. This law hit the Baltic Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches hard and especially the Moravian Church in the governorates of Livland and Estland. In a short time, a range of enforced restrictions practically turned it into a sect with very limited opportunities for physical revival and continued functioning in compliance with its internal principles. Thus, in the second half of the century the representatives of the Moravian Church retreated from active agitation and the movement lost its impact in Livland. This process was also affected by the national awakening that gained force in the middle of the century. It had largely grown out of the Moravian Church, which can thus also be regarded as one of the main contributors to the awakening movement in the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland. [10]

As such, the Moravian Brethren were relatively successful in the Governorate of Livland during the timespan from the 1730s/1740s to the middle of the nineteenth century. The years of "the silent march," although initially signalling a recession, should in principle be seen as [11] a period of continued development and maturing of the Brethren. Thus, it is important to understand how the Latvian (and to the same extent also Estonian) peasants benefitted from their contacts with the Moravian Brethren and to see how their former daily life, religious precepts, education, culture, economic life, and worldview were affected.

Pietism, Public Education, Language, and Literature

In a little over a decade, between 1730 and 1743, approximately 3,000 Latvian peasants were accepted into the fold of the Moravian Church (Straube 2000, 239–87). They relatively quickly gave up their ancestral beliefs and turned into Christians who respected all the religious prescriptions: they celebrated Sunday worship and regularly recited their prayers in the mornings, at mealtimes, and in the evenings. Those who were literate read the Bible, and they learned church hymns while gradually giving up the tradition of burying their dead elsewhere than in churchyards, instead marrying and baptising their children according to church rites. [12]

The Herrnhutian Teachers' Seminary, which was opened in Valmiermuiža (German: Wolmarshof) in August 1738, played an essential role in this regard. It trained the local peasant youth as rural school teachers, thus contributing to the flourishing of peasant schools in the countryside of Livland and to the gradual decrease of illiteracy there. These schools significantly changed the level of education by the end of the century, rapidly increasing the number of readers, even though the seminary had to close already in 1744. [13]

The contribution of the Moravian Brethren to the education of the ethnic Latvians in Livland is also invaluable. Although sometimes historiography has noted that it was the Swedes with their peasant school policy who achieved the first positive breakthrough in this field in the seventeenth century, the reality is considerably different. It was in the eighteenth century that the education level among the Latvian peasants began to consistently increase. One of the first developments that set this process in motion was the foundation of the already mentioned Teachers' Seminary in 1738. It was headed by a former theology student from Jena, Magnus Buntebart (ABU, R.19.a.3.6.a., 7). He came to Livland in 1737 and mingled among the peasants for a year. He learned Latvian and subsequently was appointed head of the seminary, working there as a teacher. Among the first seminary students were peasants from the nearby manors. The graduates of the training course of one year, which taught them to read and write, religious education, and singing from a score, became teachers in peasant schools. Approximately 120 young men are estimated to have graduated from the seminary until the ban issued by Empress Elisabeth, and the majority of them subsequently worked in schools. During church visitations, in most cases they were described in a positive light as good teachers and skilled supporters of the pastors in the spiritual care of the parish. The greatest praise was given to the teacher of Āraiši (Arrasch) School, Gavēņu Andžs: When he died in 1782, the parish pastor noted that "this man was outstanding and deserves praise in many aspects" (Vičs 1923, 127). [14]

As Buntebart told the representatives of the Lutheran Church, his methods of training peasant youth to read were particularly progressive and better than the ones practiced earlier (LVVA 233.4.1105, 2). The head of the Seminary personally assured the visitation commission that he taught his students Christianity using Martin Luther's Catechism, writing, singing from a score, reading, and spelling out letters and syllables (LVVA 234.1.14, 373). [15]

At the same time, the Moravian Brethren knew how to incite peasants to learn to read and to use this skill for daily readings of the Bible. Special lessons in the Brethren's meeting [16] houses were organised for this purpose. The most original method was applied by Johann Barlach, deacon (assistant pastor) of the St. Simeon parish in Valmiera and a member of the Moravian Church: During the Lutheran mass, as he was reading something from the Bible, he used to stop his reading suddenly, pointing a finger at a worshipper shouting: “Now you!,” and the respective person then had to continue reading out loud from the place where the pastor had stopped. After a while, he chose another “victim.” This way, the reading skills of several peasants were tested during the divine service. This clearly gave a special stimulus to every parish member to practice reading (LVVA 4038.2.737, 34).

Very well attended were the so-called children’s lessons: special divine services for the children of the adherents of the Moravian Church. Apart from prayers, they contained instructions for reading and explication of the Holy Scriptures. Not only children but also adults, i.e., the mothers and fathers who accompanied their offspring, benefitted from these lessons. According to the Herrnhut Brethren from Germany, the meeting room was often packed to the extent that some parents could not get in and had to stand outside next to open windows to be able to follow what was going on in the room. [17]

Such events organised by the Moravian Brethren contributed to a considerable increase in literacy among the Latvian peasants in Livland. In the second half of the eighteenth century, already more than half of them could read. Since this process continued in the nineteenth century, the proportion of literate peasants kept growing, and in the nineteenth century, literacy among the Estonian and Latvian peasants reached the highest level in the entire Russian Empire (Census 1897). [18]

Naturally, literacy allowed the peasants to read the Bible and other religious texts independently, enabling them to better understand Christianity and helping them become stauncher Christians. But it also gave them an opportunity to become acquainted with other kinds of literature and expanded their knowledge in various fields. [19]

Music and singing were of special importance in the Moravian Brethren’s religious rites and daily life, both as part of work and recreation. In the Teachers’ Seminary mentioned above, Buntebart taught the would-be teachers singing “from tune” and soon, in many parishes, there appeared peasants who understood the essence of a correct singing technique. It is known that earlier pastors complained that peasants were each singing a different tune and at a different pace, and during singing, the church resembled a ‘cattle shed’: Everybody was singing in whatever manner they could, and while some had already completed the song, others were still only halfway through. Many peasants believed that if they shouted louder and tried to stretch the song longer, going on with it after some others had already finished singing, they would have a better chance that God would hear them. Thanks to the Moravian Brethren’s efforts, peasants started singing in unison and following a score, whereby their singing skills gradually improved. The Moravian Church also held singing lessons during which only church hymns were sung. This was done in a special Herrnhutian manner: singing only the first and the last verse of each song, allowing the performance of a rather large number of songs in one hour. The Herrnhut Brethren from Germany declared that they had translated and printed approximately 60 hymns for the Latvian peasants (LVVA 237.1.8, 14). [20]

This activity of the Moravian Brethren yielded specific fruit. Pastor Georgs Neikens, who came from a Herrnhutian environment, was the organiser of the first Song Festival in the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland that took place in his parish of Dikļi (German: Dickeln), in 1864. In 1873, with the support of the Latvian national movement, this initiative resulted in the All-Latvian Song Festival that brought together singers from all over present- [21]

day Latvia, similar to the Estonian song festival that had been arranged four years earlier. As is well-known, this early initiative has grown into an extraordinary phenomenon: Song and Dance Festivals are now held in Latvia on a regular basis and are listed as a unique UNESCO heritage.

The education facilitated by the Moravian Church and the musical training that was closely associated with it gave the Latvian nation its first professional specialist of music, Jānis Cimze, who, like the other personalities mentioned before, had close ties with the Livland Moravian Brethren. His abilities were noticed by the then General Superintendent of the Lutheran Church in the Governorate of Livland, Ferdinand Walter, who procured from the Livland diet (Landtag) the allocation of special funds for sending him to Weissenfels in Germany to study pedagogics. One of the subjects he studied there was music, and upon returning home, he collected folksongs, adapted them, and composed his own music. In 1839, Cimze became the head of the newly founded Teachers' Seminary at Valmiera, which under his leadership laid a great emphasis on musical education. As a result, many graduates later became outstanding choir conductors, composers, and collectors of folksongs. [22]

The movement of the Moravian Brethren in the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland left an impact on the development of Latvian national literature as well. In fact, it can be concluded with certainty that the beginnings of the Latvian national literature are entirely Herrnhutian. The first known Latvian poet, whose writings have survived and thus are known to us, was Ķikuļu Jēkabs (1740–1777). In 1777, he wrote "Dziesmas" (Songs). While not his only poetic composition, it is his most famous work (Ķikuļu Jēkabs 1982, 100-120). The neighborhood in which he lived was saturated with typical Herrnhutian activity, and several of his relatives are known to have been members of the Brethren, among them his brother Andžs, younger by eight years, who was well-known and highly regarded in the vicinity (Ķikuļu Jēkabs 1982, 103). Significantly, in his birth village of Blome, the Moravian Brethren's meeting house has been restored today and serves as a place where Herrnhutian traditions are remembered and cultivated. The premature end of Ķikuļu Jēkabs' short life is related to his involvement in writing a complaint to Russian Empress Catherine II the Great. Although the initiators of the complaint were other peasants, he was the one who wrote it, and for this, he was arrested and died in prison (Ķikuļu Jēkabs 1982, 118). [23]

Jānis Ruģēns (1817–1876) is celebrated as the second representative of Latvian national literature. While Ķikuļu Jēkabs' works were printed only in the twentieth century, Ruģēns' poems were published already during his lifetime. His most famous verse, where he expresses the hope to see the Latvians standing on the same level with other peoples, was quoted both in the nineteenth century and in the young state of Latvia in the twentieth century as well as under the Soviet regime: [24]

> Kad atnāks latviešiem tie laiki, [25]
> Ko citas tautas tagad redz?
> Kad aizies tumsība kā tvaiki,
> Kas ļaužu acis cieti sedz?

> When will the times come to Latvians [26]
> that other peoples are seeing now?
> When will the darkness fade like smoke
> that firmly covers people's eyes?

The Ruģēns family had special ties with the Moravian Brethren: The members of the fam- [27]

ily were among the first to join the movement in Livland and were active in it both in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Straube 2000, 53, 65).

1879 saw the publication of the first original novel written in the Latvian language—"The Time of the Land Surveyors"[2]; the authors were the brothers Reinis (1839–1920) and Matīss (1848–1926) Kaudzītes (Kaudzīte and Kaudzīte 1923). The novel is set in a significant period, the 1870s, when the resurveying of land was taking place in many rural settlements. As a result, peasants were allocated plots, which they were then allowed to cultivate freely. The action takes place in Piebalga, which is one of the regions where the Moravian Brethren were the most active in the nineteenth century. In many Lutheran parishes in this district, the majority of peasants joined the Herrnhutian groups. The authors of the novel themselves had been active members of the Brethren since childhood, under the influence of their parents. Significantly, Matīss Kaudzīte, in 1877, wrote one of the first studies of the history of the Moravian Brethren in the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland (Kaudzīte 1877). [28]

The Kaudzīte brothers had skilfully integrated several situations into their novel (Kaudzīte and Kaudzīte 1923) in which particular features of the Moravian Church and its impact can be clearly recognised. Thus, one of the main characters, a farm-mistress named Oliņiete, is depicted as a pious woman, at times excessively pious, who mentions God extremely often and threatens everyone with God's anger and retaliation. Another man, Tenis, relies very much on fate, believing that God takes care of him and looks after him. In naïve meekness, relying on the good Saviour, he lets himself be arrested although he has not done anything wrong. One of the most colorful scenes in the novel is when peasant Ķencis rides to the manor by carriage early in the morning to fetch a land surveyor. His intentions are not completely pure and holy, though: He is bringing gifts to the surveyor, including a live piglet, as he has been told that gifts will incline the surveyors to measure out and map better land plot borders for him. About halfway, Ķencis stops in a birch grove and, in a typically Herrnhutian manner, starts a discussion/prayer with God. This includes both complaints of his destiny and of his neighbor and a confession of his intent to move the surveyors to pity with gifts. Thus, he is trying to strike a deal with the Almighty and get his support. He does not need any medium, such as a church or a pastor, for this; in the Moravian Church, anyone can talk to God, and the Almighty is believed to be able to talk to the faithful through anyone and in any place. Even the squealing of the piglet in a sack in the carriage is not a disturbance for such a discussion. [29]

Pietism and Social Aspects

The examples mentioned so far are from the fields of mental and spiritual life. However, the impact of the Moravian Brethren's activities was effective in other aspects of daily life as well. One such impact was the emergence of a well-off peasantry. The Moravian Brethren urged the Livonian peasants to work hard and diligently, bringing it home to them that only those who did decent work would enter paradise. All the Moravian Brethren from Germany who had come from Herrnhut also practiced some craft alongside with their preaching duties. Christian David, mentioned above, was a skilful carpenter who helped construct houses. Other Herrnhut Brothers were weavers. Soviet historian Jānis Zutis analysed the social structure of the peasant adherents of the Moravian Church in Latvia and reached the conclusion that the majority of them had been farm owners and their sons, while the proportion of farm hands had been relatively small (Zutis 1956, 193–94). After the abolition of serfdom in 1819, [30] when peasants were allowed to buy the farmsteads that they had previously been renting from landlords, a part of them was unwilling to do so. It was the peasant adherents of the Moravian Brethren who, spurred on by the German Herrnhut Brethren, were among the first to use this opportunity and become farm owners relatively early. In the second half of the nineteenth century, they constituted a group of well-off peasants of the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland who competed with the manors with increasing success. After the foundation of the independent state of Latvia, they were the foundation for agricultural production.

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[2] A German translation of this novel was published as Kaudzīte and Kaudzīte (2012).

Another important aspect is the specific contribution to the development of rural architecture in Latvia. There are two sides to this aspect. The first one is related to the Moravian Brethren's meeting houses that appeared in the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland already in the first years of the Brethren's presence there, in the late 1730s and early 1740s. Gradually their number grew to approximately 130 buildings. These structures were built by the peasant adherents of the Moravian Church using their personal funds. The early meeting houses were a special phenomenon: from an architectural perspective, they were primitive and lacked a uniform style; often, a building had different windows as the peasants simply brought whatever building elements they had at home, eager to make a contribution to the construction of their meeting house. These rural structures that served the adherents of the movement as venues for divine service, training, singing lessons, and meetings acquired a more 'civilised' appearance with time. They were decorated with elements that were accessible and understandable to the people. As a result, they became what Roberts Legzdiņš, historian of Latvian architecture, has described as the highest expression of national architecture (Legzdiņš 1930, 22). [31]

The other side is related to the dwelling house of the Livland peasant, called "rija" in Latvian (German: Riege). Until the mid-eighteenth century, these were one-room structures that housed the entire peasant's family (husband, wife, and children), as well as the married farm hands with their families and the unmarried farm hands and cattle-herds. So many people living in one room created a favorable environment for the spread of various diseases. Moreover, such living conditions also contributed to the frequent involvement of minors in sexual relations. Throughout the eighteenth century, sources document complaints by the Lutheran Church about the frequent occasions of babies born to minor and/or unmarried girls. This was often a tragedy for young single mothers. Some of them even tried to hide their newborn and let it die. Although the Lutheran pastors issued regular warnings against such sins from the pulpit, the frequency of these occurrences did not decrease. The Moravian Brethren discovered the root of the problem and urged peasants to build several rooms in their houses and allocate separate premises for young girls and unmarried women. The first such peasant dwelling houses with several rooms appeared in the last quarter of the eighteenth century in the Valmiera district, which had a high proportion of adherents of the Moravian Church (Krastiņa 1959). Thus, the Herrnhut Brethren facilitated the improvement of the peasants' living conditions, helping them make their home environment healthier and achieve greater privacy as well as protection of minors from premature sexual relationships, which in most cases would have done them harm. It is important to keep in mind that for the Livland peasants of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, large households, including farm-hands and their families, played an important role. They were signs of a high economic and social status and prosperity, as well as commanding respect from the surroundings, but could also lead to condemnation and even contempt (Metsvahi 2019; Straube 2007, 2013). Single mothers found it difficult, often even impossible, to marry; the conservative rural society held a nega- [32]

tive attitude towards such women, and the preservation of virginity until the wedding night was almost a compulsory requirement on the part of a potential bridegroom and his family.

A third aspect is linked to women's emancipation and Enlightenment values. Although the Moravian Church was not really a part of this phenomenon, it contributed to the emancipation processes in the rural society of Livland. The specific tradition of dividing the adherents of the Moravian Brethren into choirs or communities enabled a relatively high number of peasants to climb some rungs of the hierarchy ladder accessible to them. It is known that the members of each meeting house were grouped as follows: two adult choirs (for men and for women) and two youth choirs (for boys and for girls), one children's choir, and one choir for widows. The most popular and charismatic member of each group was appointed choir leader. It was the first time that peasant women were given a chance to be in charge of their sisters in faith, to organise the necessary events, and chair them. The indigenous women of the Baltic region had never before been trusted with such responsibilities. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that some degree of women's emancipation took place within the framework of the Moravian Church that raised their self-confidence. [33]

The analysis of historical events shows that the Moravian Brethren even played a role in several peasant riots that transpired in the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland in the last third of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, evoking a fourth aspect of Moravian social influence. It was in the areas under the Brethren's influence that several peasant rebellions against their landlords took place in the eighteenth century. They were usually caused by peasants' discontent with the amount of corvée labour and other duties imposed on them, and there is a reason to think that it was the peasants' activity in the Moravian Church that gave them the courage to express their frustration and demand a fairer attitude from the manor administration. [34]

The loudest peasants' riots were triggered by the imposition of a poll tax in the Governorate of Livland in 1784. The riots spread rather widely, but it was in those parishes where the Moravian Brethren were active that they were the most resounding. Often the peasants discussed their campaigns in the Herrnhutian meetinghouses. As a result, the governmental investigation commission accused the Moravian Brethren of being one of the facilitators of the riot. [35]

Another peasant riot, which took place in the Kauguri Manor in the vicinity of Valmiera in 1802, had a great effect. It, too, was triggered by demands from the manor, and troops were sent to pacify the peasants. The riotous area was markedly Herrnhutian, and a large part of the rioters were members of the Moravian Church. Several peasants were killed, and the riot was put down. However, the government of the Russian Empire was forced to establish a commission which in 1804 adopted the Livland Peasant Law, the first of a long series of attempts to reframe the relations between peasants, landlords, and the state. Although some of the provisions of 1804 were soon abolished after landlord agitation, the path towards the abolition of serfdom was laid. [36]

Finally, the education of peasants encouraged by the Moravian Brethren in the Latvian part of the Governorate of Livland, the development of a group of specially trained rural schoolteachers, the emergence of the first men of letters, and the coming of the first academically educated ethnic Latvians onto the stage of history led to a fifth important aspect: the rise and growth of a national intelligentsia. According to the Czech researcher of national awakenings, Miroslav Hroch, the existence of a national intelligentsia is a necessary precondition for national awakening (Hroch and Schmidt-Hartmann 1994, 42–43). From the Christianisation of [37] the Baltic until the mid-nineteenth century, no presence of a national intelligentsia can be discerned either in the territory of present-day Estonia or Latvia. The absolute majority of the population were peasants; a small proportion lived in towns and were craftsmen but in no way represented the intellectual circles. The movement of the Moravian Church gave the first impetus for the development of conditions for the emergence of such a social group.

Thus, a small religious movement had an essential impact on various processes and even facilitated the awakening of the Latvian and Estonian nations, which, in the twentieth century when favourable preconditions emerged, resulted in the birth of new nation-states. [38]

Conclusion

The arrival of the Moravian Brethren from Herrnhut on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea in 1729 led to a religious contact situation within Protestant Christianity which challenged the existing hegemony of the Baltic Germans. The Moravian Brethren wanted to bring a new kind of Christianity to the region, one that was less prone to the Baltic German control mechanisms that had characterised the local Lutheran Church since the Christianisation from the twelfth century. The results of this contact situation were twofold—both related to the Moravians' concept and use of media. For one, the traditional religious media for Latvian (and Estonian) peasants had been the Baltic German pastors and landlords, which the Herrnhutians sought to bypass. This angered the Baltic Germans, who petitioned the political authorities to ban the Moravian Church all over the Russian Empire. This happened in 1743 after a decade of continuous expansion. [39]

However, because of the other result of the contact situation, this ban was not able to extinguish the movement but only had a dampening effect, which was later called "the silent march." This result was the way the Moravians used novel media to emotionally and intellectually bind the peasants to the movement. Instead of treating the Church as something external, imposed upon the locals by the essentially non-native Baltic Germans, the Moravians employed various media to give them the feeling of being in charge and having an impact on the movement. The media used were, on the one hand, linguistic—by translating church hymns and teaching reading and writing. On the other, they were of an organizational nature, by dividing the meeting house attendants into self-organised choirs and introducing new architectural concepts and ideas. [40]

With time, especially after Tsar Alexander I allowed the Moravians again in 1817, the Moravian Church increasingly merged into a part of the official Lutheran Church of the region, putting a stop to the conceptualisation as a contact situation. Nevertheless, the long-term effects of the initial clash and its innovative potential lived on in later periods, as the descendants of these first Latvian (and Estonian) Moravians went on to become important figures of national history. The Herrnhutians in Livland undoubtedly helped stir up the religious—and social—initiative of the indigenous population. [41]

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