

ORIGINS OF REGIONAL IDENTITY OF EASTERN LATVIA (LATGALE) AND APPROACHES TO ITS INVESTIGATION

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Historiography of Latgale considers the regional identity of Eastern Latvia (*Latgale*) a starting point for investigation of its history. This approach provides researchers with an opportunity to study specific manifestations of some basic tendencies in the history of Latvia as reflected in Latgale region. At the same time, this approach reveals local features that make Latgale different from the other parts of Latvia. The features of the regional identity of Latgale form a model of the history of Latgale in general. The discourse upon the origins of the regional identity of Latgale provided in the paper has some practical consequences: it justifies the fact that this historical region is an independent and comprehensive object of historical research.

Key words: Eastern Latvia, Latgale region, regional identity, regional (local) history, case study.

In the second half of the 20th century, focusing on regional (local) history has become one of the most important trends in researching past events and, at the same time, – a precondition for studying national history, since the fates of historical regions reflect global and national history with its causes and effects, but the image of the past becomes specific and individual (Ivanovs, Soms 1999, pp. 96–98; Ivanovs 2000, pp. 9–15). Within this context, the study of the regional identity of Latgale is of paramount importance.

The regional identity of Latgale embodies common features of the history of Latvia and the Latvian people. At the same time, as a result of interaction of specific historical factors, certain regional peculiarities have appeared and made Latgale a different place, compared with the rest of Latvia. The correlation and interaction of the common and distinctive features have created the regional identity of Latgale that is considered to be an independent object of research by historians (Soms 1992; Ivanovs 2000; Ivanovs, Soms 1999, 2001).

The Latgale Research Institute (in Latvian – *Latgales Pētniecības institūts*; hereafter – LPI) of Daugavpils University has stated that research of the regional identity of Latgale is its priority. From 1991 to 2007, the LPI organized 15 research conferences and published 6 collections of research papers *Acta Latgalica* (volumes 8–13). The LPI continues the tradition of the Latgalian Research Institute, founded in the USA and Western Europe in 1960. Seven volumes of *Acta Latgalica* as well as several important research materials about Latgale were published abroad (volumes 1–7). Currently, the LPI has signed cooperation agreements with several institutions of higher education in Latgale. Since 1994, the information related to Latgale has been compiled by the LPI in the *Latgale Dati* database, part of which is available in the Web (see: www.dpu.lv/LD/lid.html). It is the beginning of a complex source base for comprehensive research of the history of Latgale.

The experience of researchers in the West (especially, the USA, Germany and Italy) and in Russia is useful in investigating the history of Latgale. The first steps have been taken to develop cooperation between local historians and researchers and foundations abroad. In May 1998, the conference “Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Latgale: Historical Regions and Identity” was organized in Riga by the Volkswagen Foundation, Germany (see: Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Latgale 1999).

Benefiting from the experience accumulated by other researchers (Zeile 1996, pp. 12–3; Ivanovs, Šteimans 1999, pp. 115–9), this article aims to provide an insight into the creation of the identity of Latgale and to develop a dynamic retrospective model of the

region by means of aggregation and interpretation of historical data. In our opinion, no fact is to be considered of minor importance – all facts play their role in the history of the region. However, the degree of importance attributed to cultural and historical facts by the inhabitants can be one of the criteria in selecting particular data. In this paper, which can be seen as a *case study* of the regional identity of Latgale, the description of Latgale's past is provided by “looking through the eyes” of the local people.

In order to promote the investigation of the history and regional identity of Latgale, an appropriate pattern of regional historical research is to be established. Two alternatives are possible. The first alternative is to provide facts of history and culture so that the image of the past is created “spontaneously”, without “interference” of the researcher. The second alternative is to create and substantiate the historical model of the region and then to identify and investigate the historical facts and historical records so that the image of the past of the region is vivid, specific, and comprehensive. The first alternative is extensive and time-consuming, and it is not likely that it will be consistent and coherent. The second alternative reflects the human cognition process: the researcher develops abstract models of reality and then checks their congruence with the reality. The model of the history of Latgale is to be sought in the regional identity of Latgale, namely, the *factors* that have determined the identity and the *features* that are to be considered the components of that identity. In other words, it is a particular notion of the regional identity of Latgale that turns out to be the model of the history of the region. The determination of the exact geographical location of the region is a precondition for the research – it should be taken into account that the borders of the region were not the same throughout the centuries.

In the Middle Ages, the region of Latgale was located in the east part of the present-day territory of Latvia. From the 13th to the 16th century, the authors of historical narratives (Livonia's *Heinricus*, Old Russian Chroniclers, and others) and documentary records called the right bank of the River Daugava where the Baltic tribes lived *Latgale* (also *Latgola*). From the 16th century onwards, the present area of Latgale was officially called the Polish *Inflantia* (a distorted Polish name for Livonia). The present name of Latgale was introduced by the representative of the Latgalian national awakening movement Francis Kemps at the beginning of the 20th century.

Latgale is separated from the rest of Latvia by three rivers: Daugava, Pededze and Aiviekste. In the east, Latgale borders on Russia and Belarus. In the territory of Latgale, currently there are five administrative districts (Balvi, Krāslava, Ludza, Preiļi, and Rēzekne), and part of four other administrative districts (Alūksne, Daugavpils, Jēkabpils, and Madona). From 1920 to 1944, Jaunlatgale (later Abrene) district was also a part of Latgale. A total of 1,2 thousand km² of the district was cut off and annexed by Russia. In the Latvia's first period of independence (1918–1940), the total area of Latgale was 15679,6 km² or 23.83% of the area of Latvia. Daugavpils (with more than 45000 inhabitants) and Rēzekne (with more than 13000 inhabitants) ranked among the six largest cities in Latvia. In 1935, the population of Latgale was more than 567000 people, or 29,15% of the total population of Latvia (*Latvija skaitļos* 1938, pp. 22–6).

In the second half of the 20th century, the population of Latgale tended to decrease. The latest statistical data show that 377000 people, that is, less than 16% of the total population of Latvia, lived in Latgale at the beginning of 2000 (calculated using the data from *Latvijas demogrāfijas gadagrāmata* 2001, pp. 49–61). It should be noted that nowadays the trend towards further depopulation is present.

The distinctive character of Latgale has several typical features. As stated previously, some of these features are shared by all the historical regions of Latvia and reflect the overall history of the Latvian people. The distinctive features arise from the political, socio-economic and ethnic history of Latgale. Those features that reinforced the identity of the

region and the historical forces and factors that determined them deserve special research in the context of the history of Latgale.

The characteristic features of Latgale were shaped by the struggle and interaction of two contradictory historical forces. Researchers of the ethnic history of Latgale note that one of the two forces was the Latgalian ethnic mentality, which did not let the Latgalian ethnic community, its vitality and creativity, disappear (Zeile 1997, p. 281). The other force was the influence of the neighboring nations, as well as the culture, traditions, life-style, and languages of other nations. From the global perspective, the interaction of these two forces can be described as follows: when external, often hostile, influence sought to weaken Latgalians as an ethnic community and as an integral part of the Latvian nation, the strong ethnic mentality of Latgalians created an important support pattern (about the concepts support pattern' and support model' see Allworth 1977), allowing the ethnic community to exist and maintain its identity, together with all its forms of expression. The struggle started in the Middle Ages, when ancient Latgalians – the predecessors of modern Latgalians – created their first states in the east of present Latvia (7th–13th century), and it continued until the end of the 20th century.

As the research of the history of Latgale shows, the never-ending struggle for survival and preservation of ethnic values is reflected in various dimensions. When the history of the struggle is reconstructed in the context of language development, the destiny of Latgale is reflected in changes of the prevailing language in the area: Old Latgalian (7th–13th century), Latin and German (13th–16th century), Polish (1561–1772), Russian (1772–1917 and 1940–1989), and Latvian (1917–1940 and since 1990) (Zeile 1995, p. 10; Zeile 2006, pp. 509–25). Considering the fact that the ethnic culture is based mainly on the language, the history of changes of the prevailing language reveals the change and interaction of the dominant culture patterns in Latgale. The historical reconstruction of the struggle can also be based on the research of ethnic composition of the population in Latgale (Strods 1989). However, a general approach to the research of the history of Latgale requires a description of the political domination of the states which have included Latgale as their part – the Order of Livonia, Poland and Lithuania, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union – and the consequences and influence of such domination on the development of the Latgalian ethnic community. As a result, both reconstructions demonstrate the preservation of the ethnic identity of Latgale, in spite of continuous hostile influences and threats. Moreover, the resistance of the Latgalian ethnic mentality against external forces seems to have reinforced the identity of Latgale. Thus, the struggle can be considered the axis of the history of Latgale and the determiner of the key regional features.

It is not by chance that the most essential features of the Latgalian identity are ethnic in nature – initially, they developed as a result of the ethnic history of the region. The Latgalian language is one of the most important features. It should be noted that, historically, Latvia has two traditions of writing: the Latvian literary, or national writing, and the Latgalian writing as a regional form of writing (Braidaks 2007). The range of literature in the Latgalian language is rich – religious writings, calendars, newspapers, magazines, poetry, stories, etc. By World War II, the number of books in the Latgalian language reached 2,000, and the total number of published copies was 10 million (Seile 1936). In the Soviet period, the use of the Latgalian language was restricted. The tradition of Latgalian writing was continued in exile – in Germany, the United States, Canada, and Sweden, where about 120 titles of books were published. After the restoration of the independent Republic of Latvia there has been a growing interest in the Latgalian language; newspapers, magazines, and fiction are published; Latgalian culture and history are investigated. Approximate estimates show that the Latgalian language is used as a daily means of communication by about 150000–200000 people.

It should be noted that several languages are spoken in Latgale at present – Latvian, Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian. This reflects the multicultural environment of this particular region of Latvia, which is another essential feature of Latgale (Apine 1996). The tradition of multiculturalism was shaped by the ethnic history and especially by the inter-ethnic cooperation among the Latvians of Latgale, Latgalians (as a sub-ethnic group of Latvians or an ethnographic group with several specific features, distinct from the ethnic group), and other ethnic communities (Poles, Russians, Jews, Byelorussians, Lithuanians). The pattern of the ethnic relations in Latgale reflects the specific history of the region, since every minority represents a particular historical period of the region. Thus, for example, the heritage of Russian domination is reflected in the ethnic consciousness of Russians and, partly, in their values and patterns of behaviour. On the whole, the multicultural environment is a contradictory phenomenon since, on the one hand, it threatens the survival of the Latgalian ethnic identity, and, on the other hand, the “tradition of co-existence” of various ethnic groups can be considered a positive phenomenon in Latgale (Milts 1996, pp. 115–6).

An important feature of Latgale is the domination of Catholicism and the fact that it is identified with ethnic consciousness. By World War II, 58% of the population of Latgale was Catholic, 16% Russian Orthodox, 14% Russian Old Believers, 8% Lutheran, 5% Jewish. By comparison, in Latvia as a whole there were 24% Catholics and 56% Lutherans (Maldups 1938, p. 71). In the Soviet period, because of its atheist ideology, a person's religion was not officially recorded. There are almost a hundred Catholic parishes in Latgale. The Basilica of Aglona in Preili district is an important East European centre of Catholicism. Following the order of the Pope, the Rēzekne – Aglona episcopacy was created for the Catholics in Latgale.

The domination of the monotheistic religion – Catholicism – played an important role in shaping the ethnic character of Latgalians. The relations of Latgalians with Catholic priests differed from those in Kurzeme and Vidzeme. In Vidzeme, witch-hunting took place and witches were burnt at the stake, but in Catholic Latgale nothing of the kind took place. In works of fiction describing Latgale, the priest is a kind-hearted person, viewed by peasants as an advisor, a bearer of spiritual light and beauty. Under the influence of religion, the Latgalians developed a certain fatalistic attitude towards life and its problems. In the 20th century, as a result of continuous contacts, the differences in ethnic mentality were levelled, although certain elements were retained. Many researchers say that Latgalians express their sorrow more quietly and behave more joyously when they are happy. The degree of collectivism and mutual assistance is greater in relationships among neighbours (Apine 2001, pp. 59–67).

The nature of Latgalians as well as specific features of the regional identity of Latgale is the result of interaction of several factors. Opinions differ as to when the distinctive character of Latgale started to develop – was it the 17th century, when Latgale was incorporated into the Polish-Lithuanian state, or was it long before that, along with the ancient Latgalian states in the 9th–13th century? Be that as it may, all the researchers conclude that it is only from the 17th century that the history of Latgale was influenced to a considerable extent by several factors that determined its specific history, which was different from that of the rest of Latvia (Ivanovs, Šteimans 1999). These factors form a stable hierarchical system (Počs, Poča 1993, p. 3).

In Livonia, there were no distinct differences among the regions of Latvia since the system introduced by German Crusaders – the German lifestyle and Catholicism – united the inhabitants of Latvia. The year 1629, when the Truce of Altmark was signed between Rzeczpospolita and Sweden, was a benchmark in the history of Latgale. Vidzeme with Riga came under Swedish rule, Kurzeme was partly subject to Poland, but Latgale was fully controlled by Poland and was a part of Rzeczpospolita, or Poland-Lithuania.

The most important factors in the history of Latgale are the following: its geographical and political location; its administrative isolation from the rest of Latvia since the 17th century; its specific social and economic conditions (serfdom was abolished later, in 1861; land plots were small); the lasting influence of the Catholic Church and the spread of the Russian Orthodox Church; and ethno-demographical processes (high birth rate, large families, and migration).

Along with Latvia and the Baltic countries in general, Latgale found itself in the area where geopolitical interests met. Geopolitics is an inseparable part of military strategy; therefore, Latgale, being in a strategically important area next to the Daugava River, found itself in the place where the great powers realized their geopolitical interests.

Since the 16th century, Latgale often became a battlefield where the European countries fought for their hegemony in the territory of the present Baltic States. From the 16th to the 20th century, Russia, Germany, Poland, Sweden, and France chose Latgale as the place where to resolve their geopolitical interests by means of armed force. Latgale experienced four wars initiated by the great powers: the Livonian War (1558–1583), the war between Poland and Sweden (1600–1629), the First Northern War (1655–1660), the Great Northern War (1700–1721), the war between France and Russia (1812), and also World Wars I and II. At the start of the 20th century (1920), Latgale was the scene of conflict where the armed forces of Latvia, Poland, and Soviet Russia were involved – it was the final stage of Latvia's liberation war.

In wartime, Latgale changed its owners' several times. The presence of armed forces – regardless of whether they were native forces or those of other countries – seriously affected the situation of the local people. Devastating requisitions, plundering, raids of soldiers and mercenaries along with the direct damage caused by war led to the outbreak of plague in Latgale, as in many other European countries. The decrease in the population was particularly felt in Latgale since it was a sparsely populated region. However, it is difficult to obtain precise data about the demographic consequences of the wars in the period from the 16th century to the 19th century, but it is clear that the population decreased considerably. Many people fled from the areas exposed to the threat of war. There was a shortage of workers in the countryside, which encouraged the serf trade. The consequences of wars were also seen in the peasants' unrests.

At the time of World War I, thousands of civilians became refugees. The majority of the refugees from Latgale were sent to Vitebsk, the centre of the province. In a very short time, the population in Daugavpils decreased from 120000–125000 to 12000, that is, ten times less than before the war (according to some historical records, the decrease was even greater).

Latgale suffered considerable losses under the Red Terror. On March 26, 1919, the Soviet authorities declared the start of the Red Terror in Daugavpils. Arrests started; the first 76 arrested persons were shot on the night of March 27. According to some records, the number of victims reached nearly a thousand in the period from March to July. Representatives of many ethnic communities were killed, but the Poles were subject to special terror in the autumn of 1919, when the Polish army reached the Daugava river and, along with the Latvian army, was getting ready to fight the Soviet forces.

Latgale was affected by another wave of terror and repressions in 1940 and 1941. On account of ideological and class motives, people were arrested and deported. On June 14, 1941, 1,007 people were deported from Daugavpils district, 595 from Rēzekne district, and 435 from Ludza district (Aizvestie, 2007).

Enormous damage was incurred by Latvia, including Latgale, in World War II. In 1941, Nazi Germany occupied Latvia. When the situation of the German army deteriorated on the Eastern front, Latvian men were conscripted by force into the Latvian Legion.

Latvians could not accept the loss of their independent state. A national resistance movement was organized to resist the aggression of the great powers; it cost many lives. In 1944–1945, being afraid of the Stalinist terror, thousands of Latgalian fled to the West.

An American teacher, when teaching the geography of Eastern Europe to the children, compared the outline of the Baltic Sea on the map with that of a praying woman – her head rests in the forests of Finland, her hands are held in the lowlands of the Baltic countries and her knees are in the plains of Lithuania and Poland; she is praying for peace for her nations. The outline of the Baltic Sea actually matches this description. The Baltic nations have never stopped praying for peace (Puisans 1997, p. 200).

The historical isolation of Latgale from the rest of Latvia also led to emergence of distinctive features in the economy of Latgale. As early as the time of the Polish rule, it was clear that the feudal system was ineffective. However, the peasants were deprived of their civil rights even after the incorporation of Latgale into the Russian Empire in 1772. Serfdom was abolished in Russia only in 1861, and the peasants in Latgale gradually became land-owners as a result of a complicated land purchase procedure. In other regions of Latvia, serfdom was abolished much earlier: in 1817 in Kurzeme, in 1819 in Vidzeme. On the eve of the agrarian reform in the Republic of Latvia, farmsteads prevailed in Vidzeme and Kurzeme (from 15 to 150 ha), but in Latgale there were basically small farmers, since 60% of farms had 5–10 ha of land. The differences in the agrarian situation in the regions of Latvia made the implementation of the land reform of 1920 more difficult. Nevertheless, the overall outcome was successful – the structure of the population changed considerably, and the productivity of agriculture increased, Latvia started exporting butter, ham, and grain. However, the feudal system of farming had left traces in the psychology and consciousness of the Latgalian peasants. Team spirit, mutual assistance, modesty, even indifference towards property were typical features.

In terms of socio-economic development, the social differentiation of the peasantry in Latgale was slow and weak. It was determined by the so-called shortage of land, since manor houses contained large plots of land (up to 67% of privately owned land at the start of the 20th century). Land was cheaper in Latgale; therefore, people from other Latvian regions – local merchants and affluent citizens – bought land there. The Latgalians were subjected to the policy of Russification, and faced considerable restrictions with regard to land purchase. The tradition of a father's passing his land to his many children also played a role. Instead of consolidation, it led to the fragmentation of property. As a result of these conditions, a small class of relatively affluent peasants existed together with a great number of poor peasants in Latgale in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century (Boruks 2003, pp. 8–322).

Since the ancient times, historical developments have promoted the influx of other ethnic groups in Latgale. The eastern part of Latvia was a special area where the Finno-Ugrians, and later the Baltic and the Slavonic tribes, came into contact. Latgale was not densely populated in the 17th century (approximately 7 persons per 1 km²). In the 16th–18th century, there was an influx of Polish landlords, civil servants, peasants, and Russian Old Believers who were persecuted in Russia. Russian civil servants, merchants, and peasants flooded Latgale after it was incorporated into the Russian Empire (1772).

Latgale's border with Eastern Slavs meant a constant influx of Slavs and thus frequent opportunities to communicate with Byelorussians and Russians in Pskov and Novgorod. Of all the regions, Latgale suffered the most from the Russification policy enforced by the Russian Empire. The situation was especially difficult after 1865, when, as a result of the suppression of the Polish uprising, it was illegal to print books with Latin letters in Latgale. The prohibition was in force for 40 years (until 1904).

At the end of the 19th century, poverty and shortage of land forced the peasants to move to St. Petersburg and to Siberia in search of work. About 100 Latvian villages were established there. To facilitate the process of Russification, moving to Siberia was supported by the tsarist government.

After the establishment of the Republic of Latvia in 1918, many Poles went to Poland, and Lithuanians to Lithuania. Latvian traders, craftsmen, and civil servants from Vidzeme and Zemgale settled in Latgale. In the 1920s–1930s, the birth rate was higher in Latgale, compared to the rest of Latvia; often there were 6–8 children in the family.

After World War II – in the 1950s and 1960s – Latgalians moved to Vidzeme, Kurzeme, and Riga regions. Many Russians and Byelorussians settled in areas close to the border. Currently, the ethnic composition is diverse in Daugavpils, Krāslava, and Rēzekne districts. In some rural communities, the Latvian language is hardly spoken.

As a result of uncontrolled urbanization and migration, the percentage of people living in towns is high in Latgale. The largest cities in Latgale are Daugavpils with 115000 people (14% Latvians, 13% Poles, 70% Russians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians) and Rēzekne with 40000 people (40% Latvians, 55% Russians) (*Demogrāfija 2007*, 35–36). These figures prove that Latgale was subjected to the policy of Russification implemented by the Soviet authorities, and that policy can be regarded as a continuation of the policy of the Russian Empire. The Soviet nationality policy in Latgale was closely related to its socio-economic policy. The mechanism of interaction among the economic, social, and national policies was simple, even primitive, and it was applied not only in Latvia but also in other Baltic countries under the Soviet rule: by accelerating extensive industrialization, the Soviet regime stimulated migration and depopulation of the rural areas in Latgale (Markausa 1991; Mežgailis, Trostina, Katkovska 1992). These processes affected Latgale more than other regions of Latvia. It should be noted that the Soviet nationality policy involved the application of means that were approved by the Russian Empire, namely, the intensive introduction of the Russian language and fostering a negative attitude towards the Latgalian language (Stafecka 1991, p. 53), fighting against the Catholic Church, and indoctrinating of the inhabitants of Latgale.

At first sight, it seems that the Soviet nationality policy has achieved its key objective – the ethnic composition of the population in Latgale has changed (Markausa 1991, p. 19; Mežgailis, Trostina, Katkovska 1992, pp. 5–24). As a result, in terms of the number of Latvians, Latgale has fewer Latvians than other regions of Latvia. However, the sociological research carried out in the early 1990s (e.g. see Ivanov 1993) shows that, in fact, the aim of Russification has been only partly achieved, although various ethno-demographic policy tools had been applied. To a certain extent, the Soviet regime promoted the denationalization of the minorities living in Latgale, but it failed to destroy the ethnic mentality and national consciousness of Latgalians. At the end of the 1980s, while representatives of the minorities in Latgale (Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Jews, Russians) showed very low indices of self-identification and national consciousness, the Latgalians (Latgalian Latvians) had preserved their ethnic identity and viability, their language, culture, and mentality (Zeile 1997). It seems that the preservation of the Latgalian ethnic identity in a hostile environment, despite oppression and external factors, is one of the most important features of the regional identity of Latgale which requires further research.

Among other historical factors affecting Latgale, the role of the Catholic Church and religion should be mentioned. During the Reformation in the 16th century, Latvia (actually, Kurzeme and Vidzeme with Riga) and Estonia became typical Northern European countries. However, Latgale being under the influence of Poland experienced the Catholic Counter-Reformation. The local people had to accept the forgotten Catholicism and the Polish language and culture. There were not many new preachers of Christianity. Jesuits, Domini-

cans, etc., preached in Latgale. On the whole, in the second half of the 18th century, 32 Jesuits, 28 Dominicans, 10 Lazarists, and 3 Bernadines operated in Latgale at the same time. They kept growing in number. In 1888, representatives of religious orders preached for 200,000 people in the eastern part of Latvia (Zeile 2006, p. 206). It took less than a century for the small number of clergymen to reconvert the Latgalian population, to teach them read and write and to reunite them with the Catholic culture. The success of the missionaries was not determined solely by their commitment to their vocation. The activities of religious orders were limited to religious and cultural life – they were never of any political importance in Latgale. The model of medieval Europe where access to education and science was available only at the institutions of Church such as schools, monasteries, and universities, existed for a long time in Latgale. Therefore, the first Latgalian writers, collectors of folklore, public activists and researchers were Catholic clergymen (Taivans 1993, p. 255).

The Catholic Church and the priests play an important role in the life of the Latgalian Latvians – religion has its established place in their culture and conscience. Catholicism united Catholic Latvians, Poles, and Byelorussians and thus exposed them to assimilation (polonization). The Polish culture has been present in Latgale for 400 years. The Polish influence existed even after Latgale was incorporated into Russia, and it is clearly seen in the distinctive nature of Latgale. For example, church architecture determined the aesthetic taste and ideals of the people, and libraries established by missionaries in the manor houses of Polish landlords promoted the education of the people. The educated class of Latgale accepted the Polish language and culture in order to move to a more elevated level of culture and education (Kaminska, Bistere 2006, pp. 6–13).

Despite the intensive Russification and the threat of polonization, Latgalians managed to preserve their distinctive features. How can this stability be explained? The explanation is found in the social homogeneity of Latgalians (there were no major social or property differences) and the amalgamation of Catholicism and ancient traditions that protected their identity.

The discourse upon the regional identity of Latgale has some practical consequences: it justifies the fact that this historical region is an independent and comprehensive object of research. This, in its turn, necessitates a complex approach to a comprehensive investigation of the region, and the united and coordinated efforts of specialists and researchers from various sectors.

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Копсавилкумс

AUSTRUMLATVIJAS (LATGALES) REĢIONĀLĀS IDENTITĀTES ĢENĒZE UN PIEEJAS TĀS IZPĒTĒ

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20. gadsimta otrajā pusē pievēršanās reģionālajai (lokālajai) vēsturei ir kļuvusi par vienu no svarīgākajām tendencēm vēstures izpētē un, vienlaikus, – par nacionālās vēstures zinātnes attīstības priekšnoteikumu, jo tieši vēsturisko novadu likteņos uzskatāmi atklājas globālā un nacionālā vēsture, tās likumsakarības, bet pagātnes tēls kļūst konkrēts un individuāls. Latgales pagātnē un tagadnē iemiesojās Latvijas un latviešu tautas vēstures kopīgās iezīmes; tai pašā laikā specifisku vēstures faktoru ietekmē veidojās un nostiprinājās arī dažas reģionālās īpatnības, kas atšķir Latgali no pārējās Latvijas. Šo kopīgo un atšķirīgo iezīmju mijiedarbība veido Latgales novada identitāti.

Tieši specifiskās iezīmes, kas sekmēja novada identitātes veidošanos un nostiprināšanos, kā arī vēsturiskie spēki un faktori, kuri mijiedarbojās Latgales vēsturē, ir raksta autoru uzmanības centrā. Latgales reģionālās identitātes konstatēšanai ir ne tikai teorētiskas, bet arī praktiskas sekas: šo vēsturisko novadu pamatoti var uzskatīt par patstāvīgu un pilnvērtīgu izpētes objektu. Tas, savukārt, prasa kompleksās pieejas īstenošanu reģiona vispusīgai izpētei.

Резюме

ГЕНЕЗИС РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ ЛАТГАЛЬСКОГО РЕГИОНА (ВОСТОЧНОЙ ЛАТВИИ) И ПОДХОДЫ К ЕЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЮ

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Изучение региональной (локальной) истории стало одной из значимых тенденций в развитии исторической науки во второй половине XX века и, в то же время, необходимым условием успешного развития национальной историографии. Именно в исторических судьбах регионов наиболее наглядно проявляются закономерности глобальной и национальной истории, при этом образ прошлого становится конкретным и индивидуальным. В прошлом и настоящем Латгалии запечатлелись как общие тенденции, характеризующие историю Латвии и латышского народа в целом, так и ряд региональных особенностей, которые возникли в результате взаимодействия специфических исторических факторов, определивших отличие Латгалии от остальной части Латвии. Взаимодействие общих тенденций и региональных особенностей и обуславливает региональную идентичность Латгалии; при этом региональная идентичность края является самостоятельным объектом исторического изучения.

Соответственно, в центре внимания авторов данной статьи находятся специфические особенности региона, а также исторические силы и факторы, сыгравшие ключевую роль в возникновении и развитии идентичности Латгальского края. Определение региональной идентичности Латгалии может иметь не только теоретическое, но и прикладное значение, поскольку позволяет считать Латгальский регион самостоятельным, полноценным объектом исторического исследования. В свою очередь, всестороннее изучение региона возможно только на основе гибкого применения комплексного подхода.