

RATIONALIST HYMNBOOKS IN THE LATVIAN EARLY 19TH CENTURY LITERATURE: AN EPISODE IN THE HISTORY OF READING IN LIVONIA AND COURLAND¹

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The article explores the introduction of the Rationalist hymnbooks in the Latvian literature during the first decade of the 19th century as an episode in the history of reading in Livonia and Courland. The reformed hymnbooks met with strong resistance of the Latvian reading public that might be explained by the significant place of the traditional hymnbook in peasants' lives. In the article, the process of the introduction of new hymnbooks has been analysed along with the reasons for a dismissive attitude from the Latvian readers. In the context of the history of reading, the introduction of new hymnbooks has been described in terms of segregation in the reading public, as analysed by the Latvian scholar Aleksejs Apīnis.

KEYWORDS: *Theological Rationalism, Lutheran hymnbooks, history of reading, Popular Enlightenment, history of Latvian literature.*

INTRODUCTION

In the early 19th century, Latvian literary culture had already had a history of more than two centuries, since the first Latvian books appeared in the 16th century. In the 17th century, the religious literature was established, including sermons and hymns along with the translation of the Bible. In the mid-18th century, the first secular books appeared, mostly leaning on the traditions of publishing in religious writings, and were rapidly developing in various directions; along with the printed books, in the Herrnhutian regions, the manuscript literature flourished.² By the early 19th century, a wide range of

secular texts had been already introduced and established in Latvian literature, including prose fiction, poetry, stage plays, manuals in medicine and agriculture, works of popular science, journals and calendars, etc.³ Religious literature, on its part, underwent significant transformations, by leaning towards secular trends of the era, inspired by the ideas of Neology or Theological Rationalism.⁴ Secular reading matter demanded new type of reading practices, and between the late 18th century and the 1840s—the decade marked by the first Latvian bestseller⁵—gradual changes in the Latvian reading public occurred. Until 1817 in Courland and 1819 in Livonia, the largest part of Latvians were still under serfdom, and the authors who wrote in Latvian were Baltic German parsons who mostly pursued religious, enlightening and philanthropic aims. The entire Latvian literature during the times of serfdom and even later was peasant-oriented; it was heavily influenced by the peasant enlightenment and educational books for peasants in Germany that belonged to the tradition of *Volksaufklärung* (Popular Enlightenment). As Reinhart Siegert has noted, the Popular Enlightenment was characterized by “the attempt by a broad stratum of educated people to win over the mass of the population too for the new world of thought and the foundations of our modern understanding of politics: for human rights and citizenship, for tolerance, for the heliocentric system, for awareness of historical changes, and for general intellectual flexibility.”⁶ Popular enlighteners in German-speaking countries aspired “to address Enlightenment thoughts directly at ‘the people’ and to change their mind-set, thus on the one hand giving the disadvantaged the possibility of further developing their personality and its natural human potential, while on the other

1 I thank Laine Kristberga for helping with proofreading and editing. Parts of this article have been elaborated in more detail in this publication: DAIJA, Pauls. Racionālistu dziesmu grāmatas 19. gadsimta sākumā latviešu lasīšanas vēstures kontekstā. *Ceļš: LU Teoloģijas fakultātes teoloģisks, reliģijpētniecisks un kultūrvēsturisks izdevums*, 2017, nr. 67, p. 49–80.

2 See further: APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Neprasot atļauju: latviešu rokraksta literatūra 18. un 19. gadsimā*. Rīga: Liesma, 1987.

3 See further: DAIJA, Pauls. *Apgaismība un kultūrpārnesē: Latviešu laicīgās literatūras tapšana*. Rīga, 2013.

4 See further: BEUTEL, Albrecht. *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*. Göttingen, 2009,

p. 112–146.

5 Christoph von Schmid's (1768–1854) *Genovefa* (1810), translated by Ansis Leitāns (1815–1874) in 1845 as *Grāfa lielmāte Genoveva* [*The Countess Genoveva*]. See further: LIMANE, Lilija. Robinsoniāde un stāsts par Genovevu latviešu grāmatniecībā. In ARĀJS, Eduards (ed.) *Grāmatas un grāmatnieki*. Rīga, 1985, p. 138–145.

6 SIEGERT, Reinhart. The Popular Enlightenment at its Height and the Break Caused by the French Revolution. In BÖNING, Holger; SIEGERT, Reinhart. *Volksaufklärung: Biobibliographisches Handbuch zur Popularisierung aufklärerischen Denkens im deutschen Sprachraum von den Anfängen bis 1850. Band 2. Teilband 2.1*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 2001, p. XLVI.

contributing through changes of attitude to the solution of burning contemporary problems (especially how to cope with shortages of food and energy caused by a population explosion)".⁷

The secular turn in previously religious Latvian literary culture initiated a strong emphasis on belletrist fiction in Latvian, thus establishing all the preconditions for modern Latvian literature.⁸ Initially, the authors of the Popular Enlightenment books strived to inform and instruct peasant readers; eventually, their aims were extended to changing the mentality of their public. The hierarchic relationship between the Baltic German authors and Latvian readers was probably the most distinctive feature of the Popular Enlightenment literary culture; another distinctive feature was the intense multiplication of different topics introduced within a short time in Latvian literature. Different topics also provided different uses of reading, ranging from reading for pleasure to reading for instruction, and during the early 19th century, according to the debates among contemporaries, the changes in literature were accompanied by dynamic transformations in the Latvian reading public.⁹ Along with the new secular topics, traditional religious literature began to undergo significant changes that were inspired by Herrnhutian writings, on the one hand, and rationalist theological writings, on the other. Rationalist authors published Latvian sermons and hymns that were to become one of the hardest challenges for Latvian readers.

During the first decade of the 19th century, the view was expressed by various authors that the prestige of the book was steadily rising among Latvian readers, and reading habits were spreading to a great extent.¹⁰ At the same time, it was noted by contemporaries that the largest part of Latvian reading public did not welcome new trends of literature, for instance, secular writings, and embraced traditional religious reading matter that had remained virtually unchanged over the 18th century.¹¹ As these observations were sometimes accompanied by prejudiced and stereotyped view on the intellectual faculties of Latvian readers, it is hard to tell how accurately they reflected social reality. Most of the available statistical data remain too fragmentary to provide satisfactory overview on Latvian reading habits in this period of time. There was, however, an event that brought into the spotlight preferences of Latvian reading public and problems caused by gaps in literary communication. It was the introduction of new Lutheran hymnbooks in Courland (in 1806) and Livonia (in 1809).

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALISM

Among the different reforms of popular enlighteners, the reforms in Lutheran church had a special place. “Naturally, the parsons’ own enlightenment had already found expression in the topics and style of their sermons: emphasis on morals instead of dogma and polemics, avoidance of Biblical accounts of miracles, choice of language and ideas to suit the understanding of their listeners, rejection of the idea of life on earth as a “value of tears” in favour of “the building of heaven on earth”, to adopt Salzmann’s pithy formulation,” writes Reinhart Siegert in this regard highlighting the new trend characterized by a “huge effort to get rid of obsolete ideas [...] particularly what they felt to be the baroque bombast or mystic symbolism of long-established devotional books and hymn-books”.¹²

Baltic German Lutheran parsons had discussed the necessity of the hymnbook reform since the 1780s.¹³ The necessity resulted from the internal changes in the Lutheran church during the second part of the 18th century, connected to the new trends of Theological Rationalism. It was a characteristic phenomenon of the Lutheran church in German cultural space, and it travelled also to the Baltic Provinces. Along with Pietism and Herrnhutism, it was a reaction to the Orthodox Lutheran ideas. By accepting in religion only what was available to rational reason, it promoted a transition towards more secular worldview and switched the emphasis from faith to virtue and morals. Both Pietism and Rationalism attacked the dogmas of orthodox Lutheranism, each from a completely different side: Pietism as a religion of heart, and Rationalism – as a religion of mind.¹⁴ While rationalists looked on themselves as the

7 SIEGERT, Reinhart. The Popular Enlightenment at its Height, p. XLVII.

8 See further: GRUDULE, Māra. Volksaufklärung in Lettland. In SCHMITT, Hanno, BÖNING, Holger; GREILING, Werner; SIEGERT, Reinhart (eds.) *Entdeckung von Volk, Erziehung und Ökonomie im europäischen Netzwerk der Aufklärung*. Bremen, 2011, p. 137–156.

9 See further: APINIS, Aleksejs. *Latviešu grāmatniecība: no pirmsākumiem līdz 19. gadsimta beigām*. Rīga, 1977, p. 81–128.

10 Cf. APINIS, Aleksejs. *Latviešu grāmatniecība*, p. 121–128.

11 Cf. STENDER, Alexander Johann. *Dziesmas, stāstu dziesmas, pasakas*. Jelgava, 1805, p. 125;

KADE, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Beleuchtung der Albersschen Kritik*. Mitau, 1806, p. 9–11; WATSON, Karl Friedrich. Plan über die Art und Weise, wie die Gesellschaft auf die Kultivierung des lettischen Landvolks einwirken könne. *Jahresverhandlungen der Kurländischen Gesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst*, 1819, vol. 1, p. 47.

12 SIEGERT, Reinhart. The Popular Enlightenment at its Height, p. L.

13 ŠVĀBE, Arveds. *Kāda mācītāja dzīve*. Stockholm, 1958, p. 52.

14 Cf. JOHANSONS, Andrejs. *Latvijas kultūras vēsture*. Rīga, 2011, p. 281.

15 Ibid., p. 249.

“peak of the evolution of Christianity”,¹⁵ it managed to achieve more impact in non-religious spheres such as the Latvian secular literary culture; whereas Pietists and Herrnhutians had a strong impact on Latvian religious life in Livonia and social changes. It might be suggested that the development of Rationalism and Pietism occurred in separate directions, Pietism reaching wide masses of population and Rationalism remained an elite phenomenon. The fate of new hymnbooks was no exception. Rationalism had a strong impact on the secular development of Latvian written culture and was directly connected to the rapid spread of secular books over the second half of the 18th century, including agricultural and medical manuals, popular prose fiction, poetry and drama, popular science works. However, the strong link between Rationalism and Popular Enlightenment was but a one side of the coin. Rationalistic sensibilities tended to embrace every sphere of culture, the most infamous example being the destroying of baroque decorations of churches.¹⁶

The first step in the hymnbook reform was the German hymnbooks for Courland and Livonia, published in 1771 and 1781, respectively. While they had provoked mild resistance among Baltic German churchgoers, they were still used as a model for Latvian hymnbooks. In 1783, Gotthard Friedrich Stender (1714–1796) published the first attempt to modernize Latvian hymns in his “Jauna izskaidrota dziesmu grāmata” [New Explained Hymnbook], which did not meet readers’ approval.¹⁷ Stender, as commented by the Latvian scholar Ludis Bērziņš, “was most afraid of the lack of clarity in language and mysticism in feelings”, and attempted to modernize the hymns accordingly. However, what has been described as a “high tide of Rationalism” by Latvian scholar Andrejs Johansons,¹⁸ went on, and in the 1790s the first reformed sermon-books were published. In 1793, Friedrich Gustav Maczewski’s (1761–1813) “Jauna sprediķugrāmata” [New Book of Sermons] was published in Jelgava/Mitau, followed by Gustav von Bergmann’s (1749–1814) “Saņemamas sprediķu mācības” [Receiveable Sermon Learnings] in 1795. These sermons might be considered as a rehearsal for upcoming hymnbooks. Although they were not capable to compete with older sermon-books such as Jakob Friedrich Bankau’s (?–1725) “Latviski svētdienas darbi” [Latvian Sunday’s Works] (1725, reprinted ten times over the 18th century, hence demonstrating their popularity), their use was not mandatory, therefore these new sermon books were not met by protests.¹⁹

LUTHERAN HYMNBOOKS

Although continuously renewed and reedited, the traditional hymnbook had become a stable part of peasants’ spiritual life, comparable to the

Bible. By the turn of the 19th century, the hymnbook was without doubt the most popular and most read book among the peasant reading circles.²⁰ Even those contemporaries who complained that Latvian peasants did not read books, felt compelled to admit that the hymnbooks along with calendars were exceptions.²¹ An integral part of the everyday life, the hymnbooks influenced the perception of reading in general as a primarily religious experience and often a ceremonial one. Such perception corresponded closely to the intensive (or repetitive) type of reading, according to various stages in the history of reading, as outlined by Rolf Engelsing.²² Besides, owning a hymnbook was a sign of higher social status among peasants.²³ While in German speaking countries, the hymnbook was sometimes labelled as the “second Bible” of peasants, similar characterization might be attributed to the perception popular among Latvian peasants as well.²⁴

16 Ibid., p. 542.

17 STENDER, Gotthard Friedrich. *Lettisches Lexikon. In zween Theilen abgefasst, und den Liebhabern der lettischen Litteratur gewidmet*. Mitau: J. F. Steffenhagen, 1789, p. [14]; STENDER, Alexander Johann. *Dziesmas, stāstu dziesmas, pasakas*, p. 128. See further: JOHANSONS, Andrejs. *Latvijas kultūras vēsture*, p. 448.

18 JOHANSONS, Andrejs. *Latvijas kultūras vēsture*, p. 448.

19 ŠVĀBE, Arveds. *Kāda mācītāja dzīve*, p. 93–101; ADAMOVIČS, Ludvigs. *Dzimtenes baznīcas vēsture*. Detmolda, 1947, p. 59; JOHANSONS, Andrejs. *Latvijas kultūras vēsture*, p. 251, 442–444.

20 Cf. NEILANDS, Jānis. *Par mūsu baznīcas dziesmu-grāmatām*. Valmiera, 1905, p. 30; NEANDER, Irene. Die Aufklärung in den Ostseeprovinzen. In WITTRAM, Reinhard (ed.) *Baltische Kirchengeschichte: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Missionierung und der Reformation, der evangelisch-lutherischen Landeskirchen und des Volkskirchentums in den Baltischen Landen*. Göttingen, 1956, p. 145; JOHANSONS, Andrejs. *Latvijas kultūras vēsture*, p. 436. For a detailed overview on the history of Latvian hymnbooks, see: GRUDULE, Māra. *Latviešu dzejas sākotne 16. un 17. gadsimtā kultūrvēsturiskos kontekstos*. Rīga, 2017.

21 WATSON, Karl Friedrich. Plan über die Art und Weise, p. 45. Cf. ISCHREY, Heinz.

Buchhandel und Buchhändler im nordosteuropäischen Kommunikationssystem (1762–1797). In BARBER, Giles (ed.) *Buch und Buchhandel in Europa im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*. Hamburg, 1981, p. 265–266.

22 Cf.: ENGELSING, Rolf. *Zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Mittel- und Unterschichten*. Göttingen, 1978, p. 113–154; MÄKINEN, Ilkka. “Nödvändighet af Laina Kirjasto”: modernin lukuhallun tulo Suomeen ja lukemisen instituutiot. Helsinki, 1997, p. 443–452 (English summary). See also: MÄKINEN, Ilkka. Leselust, Goût de la Lecture, Love of Reading: Patterns in the Discourse on Reading in Europe from the 17th until the 19th Century. In NAVICKIENĒ, Aušra et al. *Good Book, Good Library, Good Reading: Studies in the History of the Book, Libraries and Reading from the Network HIBOLIRE and its Friends*. Tampere, 2013, p. 261–285.

23 KARULIS, Konstantīns. *Latviešu grāmata gadsimtu gaitā*. Rīga, 1967, p. 57. Cf. also: SCHMIDT, Heinrich. ‘Aufgeklärte’ Gesangbuch-Reform und ländliche Gemeinde. In HINRICHS, Ernst & WIEGELMANN, Günter (eds.) *Sozialer und kultureller Wandel in der ländlichen Welt des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Wolfenbüttel, 1982, p. 90.

24 MAURER, Catherine. Aufgeklärte Gesangbücher und ‘gemeine Leute’. Äußerungen und Inhalte der Gesangbuchstreite des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts im protestantischen Deutsch-

However, the new generation of Lutheran parsons saw many shortcomings in the traditional and beloved hymnbooks. They emphasized two reasons for the reform. The first was the obsolete language in old hymnbooks that made them useless for further editing.²⁵ The second and more significant reason was the unsuitableness of the old hymnbooks for the new understanding of religion. Traditional hymns contained the conceptions and imagery of Orthodox Lutheranism that to the young rationalist parsons appeared not only outdated, but even unacceptable and bordering on superstition. For instance, the editors of the Courland hymnbook noted in the foreword that in recent times, when “odd beliefs and superstitions begin to cease [...] parsons and some reasonable readers among Latvians have expressed the wish for a clearer hymnbook, understanding that now when the faith begins to clear everywhere, the old hymnbook does not fit those who strive for better apprehension”.²⁶

The new hymnbooks were published during the first decade of the 19th century. In 1806, the Courland hymnbook “Jauna un pilnīga latviešu dziesmu grāmata” [New and Complete Latvian Hymnbook] was published in Jelgava/Mitau. It replaced the old Courland hymnbook that had been in print and constantly reviewed since 1685. The new hymnbook was based on a manuscript by Grobiņa/Grobin parson Johann Christoph Baumbach (1742–1801), left as an inheritance to Christian Friedrich Launitz (1773–1832), a parson and landowner in Grobiņa/Grobin and honorary doctor of philosophy at the University of Wittenberg. The manuscript was edited, as well as supplemented with new hymns by Launitz himself and a group of parsons, including Friedrich Gustav Maczewski, Alexander Johann Stender (1744–1819), Georg Siegmund Bilterling (1767–1829), Johann Christoph Köhler (1775–1853), and Matthias Stobbe (1742–1817). Most of them were also productive secular writers who had published several Popular Enlightenment works in Latvian on such different topics as agriculture, beekeeping, gardening, philanthropist pedagogy, not to mention secular poems, prose fiction and drama.

In 1809, the Livonian hymnbook “Kristīgas dziesmas, Vidzemes baznīcās un mājās dziedamas” [Christian Hymns, to Be Sung in Livonian Churches and Homes] was published in Riga. The chief editor of this book was Cēsis/Wenden parson Christoph Reinhold Girgensohn (1752–1814) who later acquired fame thanks to his posthumously published Latvian translation of “Robinson Crusoe” (1825). He gathered a group of Livonian parsons to work on new hymns, including general-superintendent of Livonia Karl Gottlob Sonntag (1765–1827) as well as Paul Tiedemann (1766–1822), Gustav von Bergmann, Christoph Harder (1747–1818), Karl Emanuel Pegau (1751–1816), Otto Friedrich Paul

Rühl (1764–1835). Among these parsons, Bergmann and Harder have to be highlighted as they were active popular enlighteners and published such works as the first Latvian cookbook and math textbook as well as the translation of the German Popular Enlightenment bestseller “Noth- und Hülfsbüchlein” (1791). A few hymns written by peasants were included in this hymnbook, namely hymns by Courlandian peasant Elkulejas Indriķis (1783–1828) and Livonian peasant and Herrnhutian Bormaņa Anna (1785–?), the latter marking the first publication of Latvian woman author.²⁷

Traditional hymns were mostly abandoned or heavily edited; over a short period of time, authors composed more than a thousand of new hymns for both hymnbooks. The structure of the hymnbooks was modified as well. Latvian historian Tālis Pumpuriņš has thoroughly studied the differences between the new and the old hymnbooks, concluding that in the new hymns morality dominated over religion,²⁸ Deist and Panteist trends were prevalent, and some significant tenets of Christianity were omitted, such as the original sin or the concept of the earth as a valley of tears. Pumpuriņš notes that religion has become rather utilitarian teaching in new hymnbooks, on some occasions even losing Christian character altogether.²⁹ Such features as an unclear mode of expression, the poetics characterized by mysticism or strong religious experience were eradicated, for instance the depiction of the Passion and the wounds and blood of Jesus Christ—the nuances especially loved by Latvian readers.³⁰

land. In BÖDEKER, Hans Erich; CHAIX, Gerald; WEIT, Patrice (eds.) *Der Umgang mit dem religiösen Buch: Studien zur Geschichte des religiösen Buches in Deutschland und Frankreich in der frühen Neuzeit*. Göttingen, 1991, p. 270; MÜLLER, Heinrich. *Ueber die gewissenlose Freiheit theologischer Schriftsteller und Schriften, welche die Religiosität des Volks zerstöre*. Quedlinburg und Leipzig, 1820, p. 148.

25 *Jauna un pilnīga latviešu dziesmu grāmata*. Jelgava: J. F. Stefenhāgens, 1806, p. [4]; *Kristīgas dziesmas, Vidzemes baznīcās un mājās dziedamas*. Rīga: J. K. D. Millers, 1809, p. [5–6].

26 *Jauna un pilnīga latviešu dziesmu grāmata*, p. [3].

27 See further: APĪNIS, Aleksejs (ed.) *Seniespie-dumi latviešu valodā, 1525–1855*: Koptkatalogs.

Rīga, 1999, p. 249–250, 267–268.

28 PUMPURIŅŠ, Tālis. Latviešiem domāto luterisko dziesmu grāmatu modernizācija (18. gs. beigas – 19. gs. sākums). In STRAUBE, Gvido (ed.) *Vidzeme, baznīca, sabiedrība laikmetu maiņā*. Valmiera, 2009, p. 86.

29 Ibid., 88. Cf. similar view: SVELPIS, Alnis. Luterisma attieksme pret I. Kanta filozofiju Latvijā 18. gadsimta beigās un 19. gadsimta sākumā. *LPSR Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis*, 1981, no. 10, p. 80–87.

30 SCHMIDT, Heinrich. ‘Aufgeklärte’ Gesangbuch-Reform, p. 85; MAURER, Catherine. Aufgeklärte Gesangbücher und ‘gemeine Leute’, p. 274; APĪNIS, Aleksejs. Grāmatas funkcijas latviešu sabiedrībā 18. gadsimta otrajā pusē un 19. gadsimta sākumā. *Karogs*, 1981, no. 3, p. 150.

Taking into account the special status of the hymnbook, the reasons for resistance for new hymnbooks were understandable. While parsons anticipated such resistance,³¹ they were not aware of its scope that followed shortly after the new books were put in print. Transition to new hymnbooks was not voluntary but imposed by the state. The Board of Governors of Livonia passed the law in 1810, signed by governor Ivan Repev (*Иван Репьев*, 1755–1833), according to which the use of new hymnbooks in church was mandatory, while the Courland governorate lingered on passing a similar law. Nevertheless, the churches began to use the new hymnbooks exclusively, virtually prohibiting the use of the old ones.³²

The attitude towards the new hymns among the educated Baltic German intellectuals was optimistic, and they were welcomed as a significant achievement in the spirit of Enlightenment.³³ Latvian readers, according to contemporaneous reports, did not embrace the new hymnbooks and showed signs of strong resistance towards them. They complained about the dry intellectual character of the hymns, the lack of emotional experience and mentioned that the hymns are of “thin and poor blood”.³⁴ Even if the old hymns were unclear in terms of their content and on some occasions composed in incorrect Latvian, their strong emotional impact, personifications and the stylistic features characteristic of baroque and mysticism apparently had counterbalanced these shortcomings. One of the forms of resistance among Latvian readers was a refusal to buy the new books, by coming up with various excuses, such as the high price of the book and the rise in prices of some food products (for instance, salt).³⁵ However, extensive donations of the new hymnbooks were organised.³⁶ Readers in Livonia complained that hymns by Latvian peasant authors were included in the hymnbook.³⁷ Collective petitions by the most active groups of peasants were addressed to the church, asking to return to the old hymnbooks.³⁸ On many occasions, resistance took the shape of sabotage, attempting to outvoice the church singer during the service or by stealing the keys of church. Some of the peasants attempted to organise their own services where they used the old hymnbooks. In Liepāja/Libau they threatened to expel the parson from the church.³⁹ The attempts by the church officials to organise special delegations of parsons who would persuade the restless churchgoers apparently did not have much success. Similarly to German-speaking countries (for instance, Hessen-Kassel and Württemberg⁴⁰), in Liepāja/Libau, the police and military forces were involved in order to prevent the public disorder cases. This radi-

cal step was documented in the appeal by the governor of Courland, Emanuel von Stanecke (1750–1838), published in 1817 and addressed to the peasants from Rucava/Rutzau, Nīca and Liepāja/Libau. The Governor condemned the “shameless rebellion” and “turning the house of God to a den of murderers”⁴¹ and informed that the leaders of the rebellion would be punished with corporal punishment while others would be pardoned.

It is hard to make generalizations about the extent of rebellions; it should not be doubted that there were readers who did not resist the new hymns, however, the large amount of testimonies of resistance in the memoirs and studies of the 19th century leads to think that resistance was rather universal. As regards the protests that were directed towards the ruling class, as well as forms of self-organisation, parallels might be drawn with another occasion of peasant unrest at this time.⁴²

At last, losing their fight, Latvian peasants began to use both hymnbooks, singing new hymns in the church during the service, but secretly returning to the old hymns at home.⁴³ In the 1830s, while the spirit towards the religious

31 ŠVĀBE, Arveds. *Kāda mācītāja dzīve*, p. 53–54.

32 APĪNIS, Aleksejs (ed.) *Seniespiedumi latviešu valodā*, p. 249, 268.

33 Cf. MÜLLER, Julius Conrad Daniel. Das neue lettische Gesang- und Gebethbuch für Livland. *Rigasche Zeitung*, 1810.19.01, p. 5; BERENS, Reinhold. *Geschichte der seit hundert und fünfzig Jahren in Riga einheimischen Familie Berens aus Rostock, nebst Beiträgen zur neuesten Geschichte der Stadt Riga*. Riga, 1812, p. 64; [ELVERFELD, Karl Gotthard] –rf–, “Jauna un pilnīga Latweeschu Dseesmu-Grahmata”. *Wöchentliche Unterhaltungen für Liebhaber deutscher Lektüre in Rußland*, 1807, no. 8, p. 113–124; no. 9, p. 129–140.

34 APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Grāmata un latviešu sabiedrība līdz 19. gadsimta vidum*. Rīga, 1991, p. 132; APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Latviešu grāmatniecība*, p. 99.

35 Ibid., p. 93; This was similar to reaction of peasants to new hymnbooks in German-speaking countries, cf. MAURER, Catherine. *Aufgeklärte Gesangbücher und 'gemeine Leute'*, p. 281–282.

36 APĪNIS, Aleksejs (ed.) *Seniespiedumi latviešu valodā*, p. 249.

37 APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Latviešu grāmatniecība*, p. 92; JANSONS, Aleksandrs. Bormaņu Anna. *Izglītības Mēnešraksts*, 1943, no. 9, p. 213;

GRUDULE, Māra. *Volksaufklärung in Lettland*, p. 144–145.

38 APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Grāmata un latviešu sabiedrība*, p. 131.

39 APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Grāmatas funkcijas*, p. 148; APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Grāmata un latviešu sabiedrība*, p. 131–132. On similar occasions in German-speaking countries, see: MAURER, Catherine. *Aufgeklärte Gesangbücher und 'gemeine Leute'*, p. 279; SCHMIDT, Heinrich. ‘Aufgeklärte’ Gesangbuch-Reform, p. 87.

40 APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Grāmata un latviešu sabiedrība*, p. 132.

41 *Pasludināšana no Kurzemes Gubernementa Valdišanas visiem un ikkuŗiem Rucavas-, Nīcas- un Liepājas-Latviešu draudzu locekļiem par ziņu un par panākšanu*. [Jelgava: J. F. Stefenhāfens,] 1817, p. [1–2]. Academic Library of the University of Latvia, MR 17621.

42 See further: KAPOSTIŅŠ, Ādolf. *Vidzemes zemnieku nemieri Kaugurmuižā 1802. g.* Rīga: Valsts arhīvs, 1924, p. 8–12.

43 NEILANDS, Jānis. *Par mūsu baznīcas dziesmu-grāmatām*, p. 24; BERKHOLZ, Christian August. *Zur Geschichte des Rigasches Gesangbuches*. Riga, 1878, p. 58.

reforms was changed, the church returned to the old hymnbooks that were republished again.

The main reason for the peasants' resistance was the threat to lose a significant book in peasants' lives, and along with it also their religion.⁴⁴ The Rationalist aims contradicted with Latvian peasants' perception of religious experience. Latvian readers complained that in the new hymns there was too much "food for body" lacking the "food for the spirit", as a result "heart remains cold and empty [...] it lacks the ability to edify".⁴⁵ It seems, however, that many theological nuances might have gone unnoticed by the peasant readers, while they noticed the lack of traditional poetics. In the reports by parsons to the consistory, the forms of resistance as well as reasons mentioned by peasants have been outlined. One must keep in mind that on many occasions those testimonies should be taken with a grain of salt, as they were indirect and probably peasants were unable or reluctant to express their true concerns. It is significant to note the lack of emotionality that was repeated many times in the peasants' complains. Later, historian Julius Eckardt (1836–1908) spoke about "the tender, melancholic world of feelings of Latvians"⁴⁶ in this context, and Riga parson Christian August Berkholz (1805–1889) characterized the rationalist hymnbooks as the "assassination attempt on the spirit of the people [*Volksggeist*]"⁴⁷.

However, it was not a unique Baltic phenomenon. Opposition among Latvian readers closely resembled a similar attitude among the peasant readers in German-speaking countries where strong resistance among the peasants towards the new hymnbooks was met.⁴⁸ It has been explained with traditionalism, one of the most striking features of the peasants' cultural mentality, as observed by contemporaries. Traditionalism was understood as resistance towards all innovations and devotion to habits that had been inherited over generations; on some occasion, traditionalism was perceived simply as foolishness by educated contemporaries. Traditionalism was most often commented in the context of superstitions and prejudices; on this occasion, however, superstition and religion were merged. It might be assumed that the status of the hymnbook was the reason for resistance; a hymnbook was not just another book, it had become a value in itself that had been inherited over generations. It accompanied a Christian during all his/her life and was a "sacral symbol".⁴⁹ In the history of new hymnbooks, the attitude of the peasant community towards modernization was demonstrated, at the same time manifesting the stage of development of reading habits.

CONCLUDING REMARKS. HYMNBOOKS IN THE HISTORY OF READING

The fate of the new hymnbooks can be analysed in the context of wider transformation in the history of reading with a focus on different perceptions of reading among Latvians. By the early 19th century, at least two types of reading habits were to be observed. Aleksejs Apinis has proposed connecting the split between different perceptions of reading to the modernization of society and emergence of new social strata that were more open not only to reading books in general, but especially to the secular reading matter and extensive reading practices. He divided two groups, defining them as 'old society' and 'new society'. According to Apinis, the 'old society' was represented by large masses of peasants who lived according to the traditional and patriarchal life patterns; in contrast, the 'new society' was represented by Latvians in towns, rural officials, manor servants, craftsmen, innkeepers, millers, as well as free peasants. "The season for the demand of books in the 'old society' was to be seen in the deep-rooted order of life where the rhythm of everyday life and each large transition was accompanied by the ceremonial of the written word," wrote Apinis. "In contrast, in the 'new society' the reading might have been motivated by closer ties with the upper social strata, as well as by the necessity to be competent in unfamiliar situations. One presumes that the majority of book-buyers and readers were to be found in the 'old society', but in regard of interests, mastering new topics the 'new society' came to the fore. It was also more open to the strivings of Enlightenment and intellectual renewal, and the authors who were influenced by the Enlightenment could teach it the pleasure of reading as well as the pleasure of didactic, moralizing and philosophical reading matter."⁵⁰ By elaborating Apinis's statement, one can presume that the first group was characterized by a religious understanding of the books and limited the reading experience to the sacred reading matter, including both private and ceremonial

44 See in more detail: MAURER, Catherine. Aufgeklärte Gesangbücher und 'gemeine Leute', p. 281–283.

45 APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Grāmata un latviešu sabiedrība*, p. 132, 135.

46 JOHANSONS, Andrejs. *Latvijas kultūras vēsture*, p. 274.

47 BERKHOLZ, Christian August. *Zur Geschichte des Rigaschen Gesangbuches*, p. 58.

48 SCHULER, Johann Melchior. *Ueber das alte*

und neue Gesangbuch. Eine Predigt. Zürich, [1808]; *Bemerkungen über Kirchenlieder in einer ausführlichen Kritik des neuesten bergisch-lutherischen Gesangbuches*. Köln, [1809]; *Gespräch einiger Landleute des Kantons Schaffhausen über die Einführung eines neuen Gesangbuchs*. Bern, 1838.

49 SCHMIDT, Heinrich. 'Aufgeklärte' Gesangbuch-Reform, p. 92.

50 APĪNIS, Aleksejs. *Grāmata un latviešu sabiedrība*, p. 121.

reading practices. The second was grounded in the new assumptions of reading for pleasure and instruction, and was the direct consequence to the new type of secular books written in line with the ideas of Popular Enlightenment. To some extent, these two types of reading overlap with the distinction between repetitive and extensive reading. While the first type of reading was widespread in the traditional rural society, the second one gained ground among the readers who did not belong to peasantry—town inhabitants and those who might be described as members of the rural middle-class.

Resistance to the rationalist hymnbooks demonstrated that during the early 19th century, the majority of Latvian readers belonged to the 'old society' and understood reading in terms of traditional, inherited and ceremonial practice. It might be assumed that the dismissive attitude towards rationalist ideas and dry language merged with the resistance to the innovations and changes in the traditional reading matter. The introduction of the new hymnbooks became the conflict between traditionalism and progress. At the same time, the arduousness of the readers demonstrate that by the early 19th century, the books had already gained a significant place in the peasants' lives, enjoyed high prestige and readers were eager to rebel and to go through troubles in order to preserve their books and reading habits.

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LATVIŪ RACIONALISTINĀ POBŪDŽĪO GIESMŪNĀI XIX A. PRADŽIOS LITERATŪROJE: SKAITĪMO ISTORIJOS VIDŽEMĒJE IR KURŠE EPIZODAS

Pauls Daija

Santrauka

Straipsnyje tyrinėjami latvių racionalistinio pobūdžio giesmynai XIX a. pradžios literatūroje, sutelkiant dėmesį į skaitymo istorijos Vidžemėje ir Kurše epizodą. Pertvarkyti giesmynai sulaukė stipraus latvių skaitytojų auditorijos pasipriešinimo, kurį galėjo lemti svarbus tradicinių giesmynų vaidmuo valstiečių gyvenime. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjamas naujų giesmynų pristatymo procesas, nurodant atmetinio latvių skaitytojų požiūrio į juos priežastis. Skaitymo istorijos kontekste, kaip teigė šią sritį nagrinėjęs latvių mokslininkas Aleksejs Apinis, skaitytojams pristatyti naujieji giesmynai iš jų sulaukė segregacinio požiūrio.

Pasipriešinimas racionalistinio pobūdžio giesmynams parodė, kad XIX a. pradžioje dauguma latvių skaitytojų priklausė „senajai visuomenei“ ir suvokė skaitymą kaip tradicinę, paveldėtą ir

su apeigomis susijusią praktiką. Galima daryti prielaidą, kad atsainus požiūris į racionalizmo idėjas ir sausą kalbą sutapo su pasipriešinimu naujovėms ir tradicinės literatūros pokyčiams. Naujųjų giesmynų įvedimas tapo tradicijos ir pažangos konfliktu. Tuo pačiu metu skaitytojų nepakantumas naujovėms rodo, kad XIX a. pradžioje knygos jau buvo įgijusios reikšmingą vietą valstiečių gyvenime ir buvo laikomos labai prestižinėmis, o skaitytojai buvo pasirengę maištauti ir susitaikyti su sunkumais, siekdami išsaugoti savo knygas ir skaitymo įpročius.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: teologinis racionalizmas, liuteroniški giesmynai, skaitymo istorija, populiarusis švietimas, latvių literatūros istorija.

Įteikta 2018 m. balandžio 16 d.

Priimta 2018 m. balandžio 21 d.