

Introduction – Historical and cultural background Part I

Lecturer: Tõnis Saarts

Institute of Political Science and Public
Administration

Spring 2009



Euroopa Liit
Euroopa Sotsiaalfond



Eesti tuleviku heaks

The objectives of the lecture

- To provide a basic introduction to the history of the Baltic States from ancient times to the beginning of the 20th century.
- To map the crucial historical events/processes in the Baltic history what made these three countries historically-culturally different from each other
- Why it is needful to know the history of the region?
 - For better understanding the social and political context/processes/problems of the region

The outcomes of the lecture

- The basic knowledge about the history of the Baltic States
- The basic knowledge about the main cultural and historical differences between three Baltic countries and the basic knowledge the historical origins of these differences.

Ancient times: Languages and origins

- Estonians – Fenno-Ugrians (like Finnish, Hungarians). Other Baltic nations don't understand the language.
- Fenno-Ugrian tribes arrived to the Baltic Sea regions 5000 years ago (from Ural mountains). Before Slavic people's invasion (the 5-6th century) settled on the huge territory from Urals to the Baltic Sea. Fenno-Ugrian nations probably the oldest European nations.
- Baltic tribes arrived to the Baltic Sea district 3000 years ago. Latvian and Lithuanian language more similar. Russian language a slavic language –very different from Fenno-Ugrian and Baltic languages.

Baltic tribes



Fenno-Ugric nations



FINNO-UGRIC							
FINNIC			UGRIC				
A. Baltic-Finnic:	Veps	3	Udmurt		A. Hungarian		
Finnish	Votic	4	D. Mari		B. Ob-Ugric:		
Ingrian	1	B. Sami		E. Mordvin		Mansi	
Karelian	2	C. Permic:				Khanty	
Estonian	2	Permyak					
Livonian	2	Komi					

Ancient independence

- Baltic tribes settled on the territory from today's Latvia to Vistula. Several quite distinct tribes: Prussians (extinct and germanized in the 16th century), Latgallians (ancestors of today's Latvians), Couranians (Courland), Semgallians (Riga district), Livians (a Fenno-Ugrian tribe), Samogitians (Western Lithuania), etc.
- Baltic tribes more scattered and less unified than ancient Estonians. Estonian-Latgallian relations.
- Before German invasion neither Baltic tribes nor Estonians had their own states. Tribal society, similar to Vikings. Pagans. Couranians as the last vikings in Europe (fierce warriors, pirates, plundered Sigtuna 1184)
- Estonia – Estland. Est, ost → East → Eastern Nation

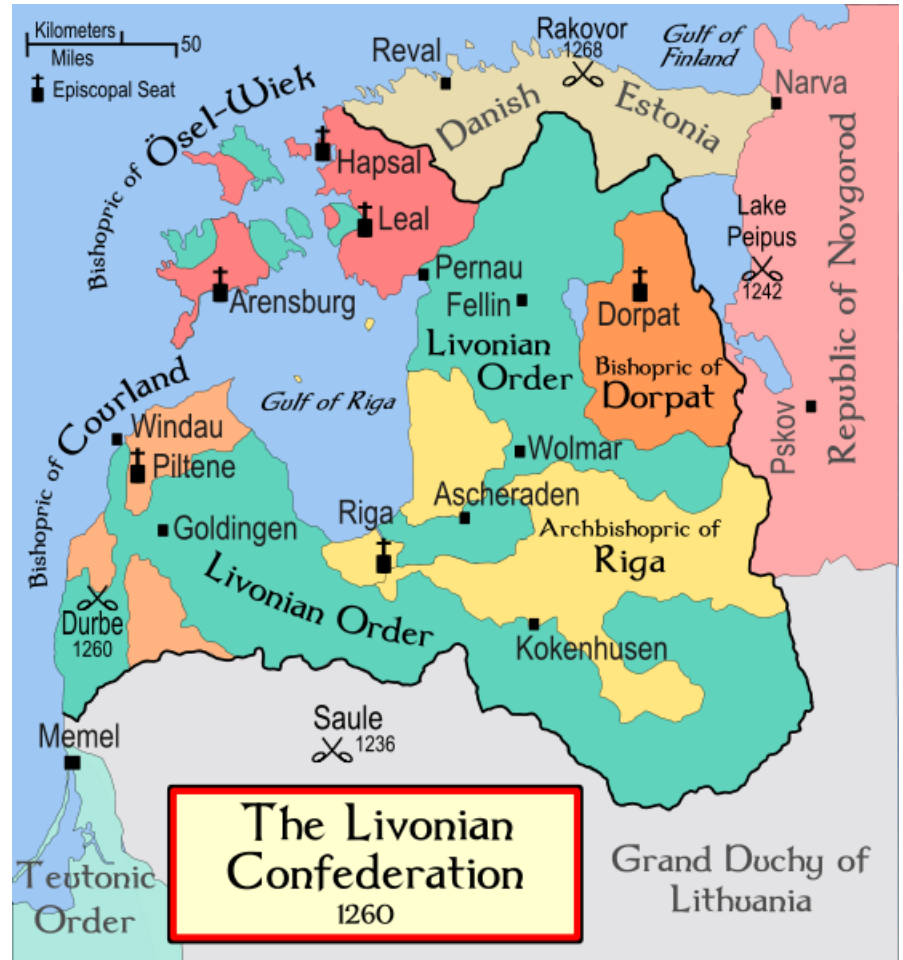
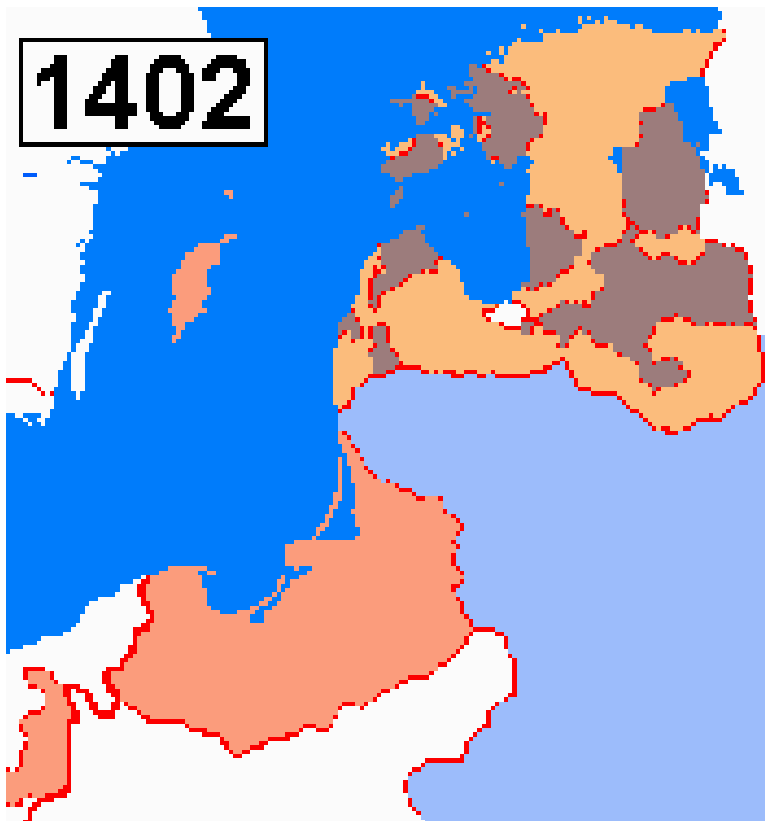
German invasion

- Started in the beginning of 13th century (1201 foundation of Riga). Interest: convert pagans, trade. Baltics as a last pagan stronghold in Europe.
- Estonian ancient war for independence 1208-1227. Latgallians as allies of Germans. Couranians subjugated 1267. Danes in Northern Estonia. Tallinn.
- German crusaders a new knight order – Livonian Order
- 1237 Battle of Saule, Germans attempted to conquer Lithuania but failed. Since this constant war between Lithuanians and Order, lasted almost 200 years.
- 1253 Mindaugas was crowned as King of Lithuania and was baptized. He united Lithuanian tribes to one state. Was murdered, Lithuania reverted to paganism.
- Lithuania as the last pagan stronghold in Europe

Medieval Livonia

- Ruling class German nobility – Baltic Germans (5% of population). Estonians and Latvians peasants (later serfs)
- Livonia was not an unified Order State, divided between several smaller semi-independent domains (bishoprics).
- German conquest - region was integrated to Europe
- Hanseatic League – heydays of Tallinn and Riga 14th and 15th century. Trade with Russia. Economically more developed than Finland/Northern Sweden (sour fish!)
- German conquest set eastern border for today's Estonia and Latvia. Also border between Latvia and Lithuania.
- Crucial differences between the Baltic States:
 - Estonia + Latvia = German-Scandinavian culture room.
 - Lithuania – Central Europe (Polish culture room).

Medieval Livonia



Grand Duchy of Lithuania


- Under Grand Duke Gediminas (I half of 14th century) Lithuania became a stronger unified state. Started eastward expansion (most of today's Belarus and Ukraine). Russia wasn't unified, weakened by Mongol's.
- Lithuania had a very liberal cultural and religious policy in conquered lands. Lithuanian culture and language didn't become dominant (Old Slavonic).
- 1383 Personal union with Poland → start of Polish-Lithuanian alliance and political integration. Lithuania became a Christian country.
- Peak of Empire under Vytautas – (beginning of the 15th century). 1410 battle of Grünewald. Duchy extended from Baltic to Black sea – the largest state in Europe

Grand Duchy of Lithuania



Europe 1500

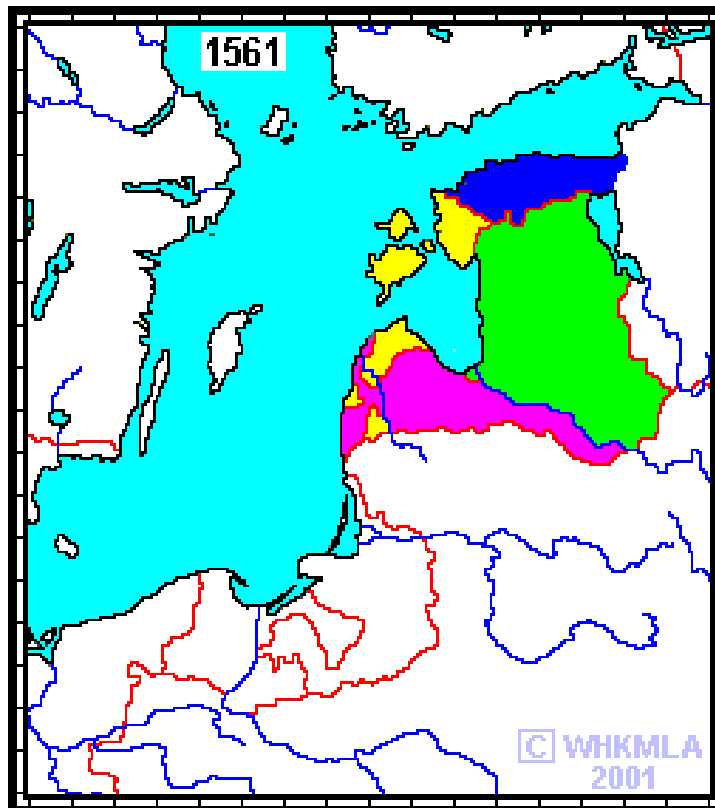


 Eastern Europe (ca. 1550) after the consolidation of Russia and the growth of Poland. The eastern part of Europe was still sparsely populated and economically underdeveloped.

Reformation, Livonian war

- 1525 – Reformation in Latvia and Estonia → the third difference between Baltic States: Lithuania remains catholic, Estonia and most of Latvia protestant
- Consequences for Lithuania later: low literacy, slower industrialization and modernization.
- 1558-83 Livonian war,
 - Russia (Grand Duchy of Moscow) became stronger in the 15th century and unified most of European part of Russia.
 - Started west-ward expansion.
 - Teutonic Order collapsed under Russian attack, but Denmark, Sweden and Poland were also interested in the Baltic region.
 - 23 years lasting struggle. Result: Russians were repulsed, Sweden got Northern Estonia, Poland Southern Estonia and Latvia.

Result of Livonian war



(Greater) Livonia in 1561

-  Estonia, Swedish
-  Ösel, Stift Pilten
ruled by Duke Magnus
1561-1582
-  Duchy of Courland
under Polish sovereignty
-  Livonia, ruled by the
Livonian Estates
under Polish sovereignty

Note : much of Eastern Estonia and Latvia was occupied/ravaged by Russian troops (Ivan the Terrible). The Russian threat ended in 1582.

Union of Lublin. 17th century

- Till 1569 Lithuania as an independent state under their own rulers. Just allied with Poland, though culturally and politically already under Polish domination.
- 1569 Union of Lublin: common Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under common monarchy.
- Lithuania a semi-autonomous vassal state of Poland. Nobility was polonised and Polish language dominant.
- In the I half of the 17th century Swedes conquered Southern Estonia and Northern Latvia.
- Latgale and Courland remains in Polish hands. Regional and religious differences in Latvia → Latgale was converted back to catholic faith → historically the poorest part of the country.
- Duchy of Courland (Polish vassal) → a colonial power