

Introduction – Historical and cultural background Part II

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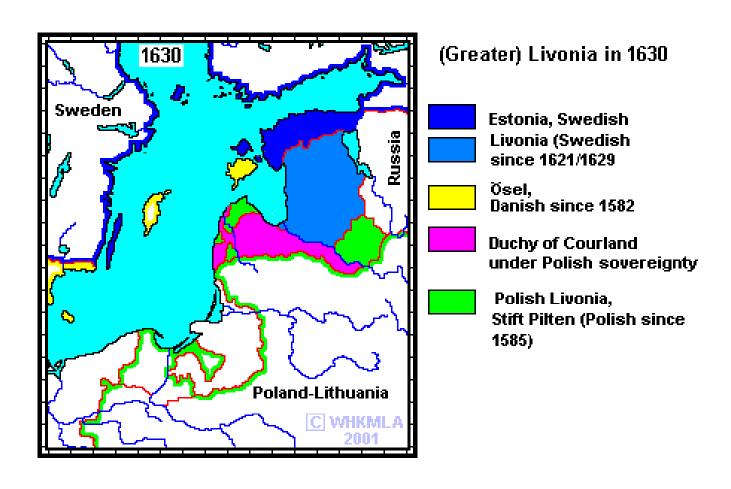




Baltic region in the 17th century

- Despite Swedish and Polish rule, Baltic German nobility retained their privileges.
- In the 15th century <u>serfdom</u> was introduced, in the 17-18th century serfdom became even harsher (Elbe-line).
- <u>Positive influence</u> of Swedish rule education → village schools → literacy, Tartu University 1632. Oldest university in the region Vilnius University 1579
- After the 16th century <u>main trade routes moved</u> to Atlantic → turning point for the CEE. The region began to lag behind from Western Europe.
- 16th century heydays of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. 17th century decline.
- Declining of Tallinn and Riga as trade centres

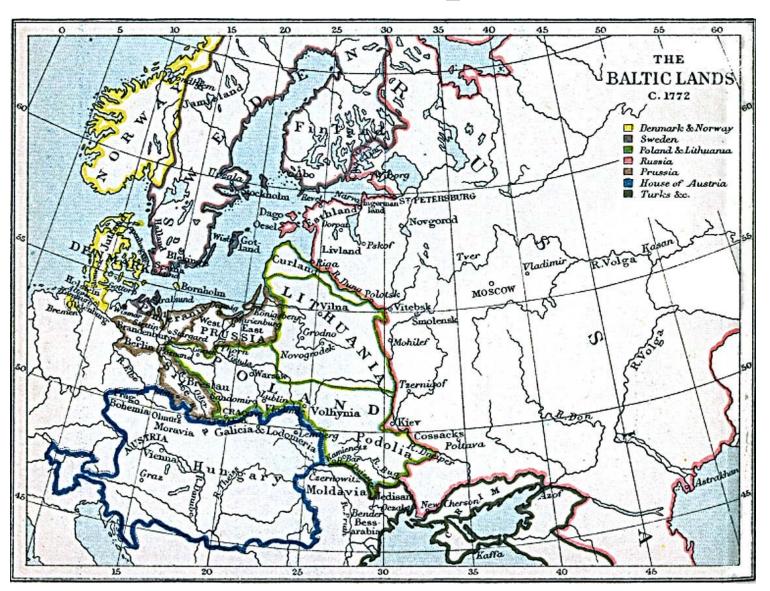
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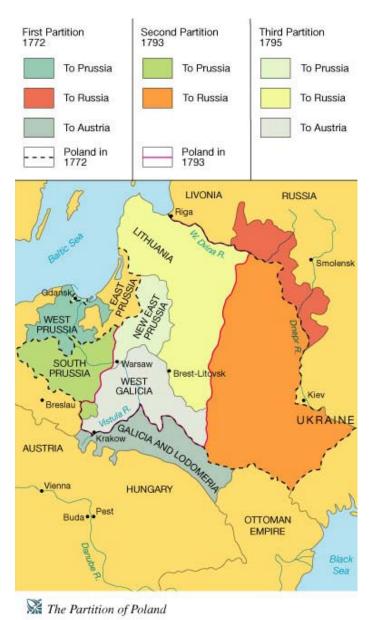
Russian conquest

- Russian interest: Baltics <u>as a window to Europe</u> trade and communication with Western Europe.
- <u>1700-1721 Great Nordic War</u> between Russia and Sweden. Peter The Great conquered all Swedish possessions (Estonia, Northern Latvia to Daugava +Riga; Latgale+Courland remained to Polish hands).
- Nordic War as a big economic and social catastrophe \rightarrow plague, economic decline intensified even more.
- "Special Baltic Order":
 - Baltic German nobility retained its political power.
 - Russian Empire was not allowed to settle here immigrants
 - Should accepted protestantism and German cultural domination
- <u>3 partitions of Poland</u> (1772, 1792, 1795) with third partition Russia got Courland+Lithuania.

Russian Conquest 1721



Partition of Poland



The region with a common destiny!

- Only since the end of the 18th century we can speak about the Baltic region as a region what has a common destiny.
- Before there was little common in the history of Lithuania and Estonia/Latvia!
- Before the 18th century quite few contacts with Russian culture and Ortodox civilization.
- Region was already integrated to the West!

Part of Russian Empire – 19th century

- <u>1819 serfdom was abolished</u> in Estonia and Northern Latvia (Estland and Livland).
- In Lithuania (also in Latgale) in 1861 (like in rest of Russian Empire).
- 1895 Literacy in Estonia/Latvia 92%, Lithuania ~ 30%
- Latvia/Estonia quicker development than Lithuania
- <u>1860's 1870's national awakening</u> defining Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian nations (started later in Lithuania).
- <u>Press and literature</u> now in local languages. Before German (Latvia, Estonia) or Polish (Lithuania) were dominating languages.
- <u>National movement</u> strong German origins <u>cultural</u> ethnicity (culture, language, genetical aspects)

The end of 19th century

- <u>Lithuania</u> relations with Tsarist government more tense. Several uprisings with Poles in the 19th century.
- Russification attempts in the 1880's:
 - usage of local languages at schools was banned,
 - Lithuanian language in Latin script was outlawed, etc.
 - The end of "Special Baltic Order".
 - Russification attempts failed too late! They even strengthened national consciousness.
- Industrialization in the end of 19th century:
 - Especially in Latvia and Estonia. Riga became the biggest industrial center of Empire alongside St. Peterburg/Moscow.
 - Lithuania lagged behind.
 - In the second half of the century peasants life standard was improving especially in Estonia and Latvia (St. Petersburg's, Riga's markets).

Beginning of the 20th century

- <u>Latvia and Estonia</u> the wealthiest provinces in the Empire (though pace of industrialization and living standard lagged behind from Western Europe at least half a century).
- The dawn of the 20th century quite wealthy, conscious, literate, quite educated Estonian and Latvian peasants.
- The second half of the 19th century was also the birth time of national urban middle class.
- Industrialization incited <u>more extensive urbanization</u>. (Lithuania lagged down). Small scale Russian immigration to Riga and Tallinn.
- All these groups: urban middle-class, workers, wealthy peasants became now politically active.

Conclusion: Different or similar?

• Origin:

- Lithuanians and Latvians common origin (Baltic nations),
- Estonians distinct (Fenno-Ugrian)

• History and Culture.

- Latvia and Estonia protestant, German-Scandinavian culture room, have a common history since 13th century (Latgale and Courland as exceptions).
- Lithuania distinct catholic, belongs to the Polish-Central European culture room, common history with the other Baltic nations only since the end of 18th century.
- <u>Lithuanians</u> also stress their medieval glory national pride and stronger nationalism. Latvians and Estonians have nothing comparable to be very proud of.
- Baltic nations have never been an integral part of Russian-Ortodox civilization.

Crucial event for making difference

• German conquest (13th century):

- Set border between Latvia and Lithuania. Set border with Russia
- Integrated Latvia/Estonia to German-Scandinavian culture room
- Integrated Lithuania later to Polish-Central-European culture room
- Grand Duchy of Lithuania the source of national pride for Lithuanians
- Integrated the whole region to the Western culture

• Reformation (16th century):

- Estonia and most of Latvia became protestant. Higher level of literacy → national awakening took place earlier
- Lithuania remained catholic. Lower level of literacy → national awakening took place later.
- A problem with Latgale region (in South-Eastern Latvia)

• Abolishing the serfdom (19th century)

- In Estonia and in Latvia earlier → much rapid industrialization, urbanization and quicker social-economic development
- In Lithuania later → slower industrialization and urbanization and slower social-economic development

Exercises

- Point out at least four most important events what did change the course of the history for the Baltic States (13th – 20th century):
 - 4 events for the rest of the region
 - 4 events for Latvia/Estonia
 - 4 events for Lithuania
- 2. What makes Lithuania different form rest of the Baltic countries?
 - Point out critical junctures in Lithuanian history and compare them with Latvia/Estonia
- 3. Map the main historical differences between Latvia and Estonia!

Exercise II

- 4. Here are the critical junctures of modernization. Compare the Baltic States with your home country:
 - Reformation
 - The first books printed in native languages, emergence of the wider national book market
 - The first universities founded
 - Emergence of centralized nation state (almost in the same borders like today)
 - Start of national awakening and spread of nationalism
 - The first newspapers in national languages
 - Start of industrialization/urbanization
 - The first railroad

Suggested Reading

- Kiaupa, Z., Mäesalu, A., & Pajur, A, Straube, G. (2002).
 The History of the Baltic Countries. Tallinn: Avita
- O'Connor, K. (2003). History of the Baltic States.
 Greenwood Press
- Smith, D, J; Pabriks, A; Purs, A; Lane, T. (2002). The Baltic States. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Routledge, London and New York.