

The Search for Regional Identity: Latgale in Latvian Literature in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century

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Abstract Nowadays, problems of regionalism have appeared in the centre of political life in a lot of countries. Therefore, the study into a sociocultural, and political-economic situation in a specific region, as well as the development of the theory of a regional identity has become an important research issue for the humanities and social sciences. Focusing on the subject of regionalism, the research into regions' cultural and historic peculiarities has become one of the tasks for the humanities, one of the possible sources of which is a literary text. This research deals with Latgale's narrative analysis in the Latvian literature of the first decades of the 20th century as a means for the study into Latgale's regional identity which allows establishing the indicators of regional identity.

The aim of the research is to analyse how Latgale's regional identity is reflected and created in the Latvian literature of the first decades of the 20th century. This time period has been chosen for the purposes of the research as it marks the beginning of the formation of Latgale's image in the public consciousness of Latvian people, as well as it is related to the period of the national awakening and establishment of the statehood in Latvia. The study uses theoretical insights on the relationship between a person, place, and regional identity; as well as it uses the data on Latgale and Latgalians found in the Latvian periodicals of that period as an additional source of information. In order to analyse the reflections of regional identity which can be found in literature, the research uses the texts which show both the internal and external identifications, in particular, both the texts that were written by people from Latgale, and the texts whose authors were writers who visited Latgale as travellers, or stayed there over a certain time. The literary texts under study include such features of Latgale's regional identity as its nature, landscape, architecture,

Catholicism, characteristic features of its people, language, history, and memory, which in general create a positive and harmonious image of Latgale in the literature of the early 20th century and up to the 1920s, which contradicts the official discourse reflected in the periodicals.

Key words region; identity; Latgale; Latvian literature; culture; local; global

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Introduction

The issue of the influence of globalization on the regional identity has become especially relevant in modern society. Open information space, wide opportunities for mobility, and development of the Internet have changed a person's view on themselves and their place in the world. Since the connection between a person and place in the consciousness is very strong, the processes of globalization have caused a crisis of identification, resulting in the appearance of the so-called hybrid and unidentified identities. In this context, regional identity has become an opportunity for a sense of stability and an unconscious protest against the trends of globalization and unification. The problems of regionalism have appeared in the center of political life in a lot of countries. Therefore, the study into a socio-cultural and political-economic situation in specific regions, as well as the development of the research theory into the regional identity have become topical research issues for the humanities and social sciences. Focusing on the subject of regionalism, the research into regions' cultural and historic peculiarities has become one of the tasks for the humanities, one of the possible sources of which is a literary text. In order to clarify the needs and peculiarities of the region's identity in our time, it is necessary to study their development in the past, paying attention to the ideas that have developed about this region over time. Literary texts not only adequately describe the features of a particular period, place, and mentality of people, but also reflect the spiritual and physical needs of the society living in that time period.

Narratives of regional identity lean on miscellaneous elements: ideas on nature, landscape, the built environment, culture/ethnicity, dialects, economic success/recession, periphery/centre relations, marginalization, stereotypic images of a

people/community, both of ‘us’ and ‘them’, actual/invented histories, utopias and diverging arguments on the identification of people. (Paasi 178)

The aim of the research is to analyse how Latgale’s regional identity is reflected and created in the Latvian literature of the first decades of the 20th century. The abovementioned period — the first decades of the 20th century — is extremely important for the process of formation of the Latvian national and regional identities. Firstly, this was the period when for the first time in history the Latgale region with its specific cultural and historical features, which are not typical for other inhabited Latvian territories, emerged in the Latvian cultural context. First journalistic and literary works that appeared at that time laid the foundation for the further attitude to Latgale’s region and created the basic principles for perception of Latgale’s regional identity up to the present day. Secondly, the period chosen for the study is significant because in 1918 the Latvian state was established, and Latgale became its constituent part. As a result, a dialogue between the national and regional identities, which continues up to the present day, has been formed in the public discourse.

Regional Identity: Theoretical Overview

Identity is recognised as the central element in the consciousness of every person, about oneself and about one’s place in the community (society). This allows an individual to recognise him/herself as being different, at the same time as finding a common bond with others in the creation of group identity. (Druviete 151)

The concept of “identity” is currently considered to be the most general and universal concept that describes a set of qualitative and quantitative characteristics associated with the peculiar nature of any given cultural or geographical individual (a personality, a group, a territorial community, or a territory). S. Hall notes: “identity is formed at the unstable point where the ‘unspeakable’ stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture” (Hall 135). Therefore, along with a person’s subjective feelings, the identity is shaped by history and culture. The concept of “identity” implies sameness, similarity, likeness. The problem of a modern person is an identity (both individual and collective) crisis. It is related to the destruction of many customary norms, the ephemeral nature of social processes, and the difficulty of integrating the past and the future, different communication flows and systems of social interaction at individual and collective levels.

Dynamism is an important feature of an identity; it (identity) is in the stage of development and variability, it is subject to a conscious will to the construction of the individual and factors of external influence. In the modern volatile world, in which everything is very dynamic, the construction of an identity and its awareness becomes a problem, as the natural desire of an individual is to feel something stable and unchanging, at least for a moment. Nowadays, a lot of people are no longer able to define their identity. Therefore, such notions as “hybrid identity,” “double identity,” “multiple identity,” “hyphenated identity / communities,” “shared identity” appear. As a reaction to the peculiarities of the socio-cultural situation of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a lot of theoretical research on the problem of identity in terms of philosophy, psychology, culture, sociology, etc. (see Fukuyama, Burke, Erikson, Ricoeur, Leary, Tangney, Thompson, Weinreich, Saunderson, Woodward e.o.). However, despite a large number of studies, among scientists there is no a complete consensus on the understanding of the concept of identity and its constituent elements.

Most researchers admit that “a place/a living place” is a significant element for the identity formation. The analysis of the current situation allows us to correlate the identity crisis caused by globalization with the problems of national identity. Nationality begins to lose its significance in the structure of identity. As a result, the idea of stability of the national state also gets lost. Thus, a “local identity” which may include emotional and symbolic components important for the process of a human self-identification becomes cognitively and psychologically significant for many people.

The connection between a person and a place has been analyzed many times and it is undeniable. Psychologists and culture experts concluded that people have a universal need to associate themselves with a specific place. Home is recognized as the most important and necessary place for the existence of a person. Relationships between people and a place are always dialectical. “The relationship between a person and the place of his living is mysterious but obvious. Or: doubtless but mystic. The genius of the place, *genius loci*, already known by the ancient people, who connects intellectual, spiritual, and emotional phenomena to their material environment, is in charge of this relationship” (Vail, 5). A place is usually constructed by a person; and a person attributes it with a certain specific, emotional, and symbolic meaning. In turn, places form people and their characters, and, therefore, we can state that a local identity can be perceived as a result of the interactive interaction between the place and the person. This interaction also generates the sense of belonging. The described process proves that a local identity is created figuratively, and it identifies

who we are (Torkington 75-76).

Regions have become important research objects nowadays. There is no unified definition for a region, as the emphasis is laid depending on the science studying it. Providing a general definition, a region is a certain part of the territory which has common features. Regions are characterised by an internal uniformity of cultural, economic, and political processes (Vaidere *at al.*). “Often considered as referring to a part of a nation, the word can also denote supranational territorial entities development: development is often measured simply by calculating” (Dunford 2).

In terms of geography, regions are identified according to the following features:

- 1) a certain part of the territory has the known unifying features;
- 2) a certain part of the territory is functionally independent;
- 3) a certain part of the territory which has a unified economic, political, or administrative power (Dunford 2).

A region is necessarily a territorial demarcation, but within this there is scope for a variety of functional processes. It is also an institutional system, either in the form of a regional government or as a set of institutions operating in a territory. It may constitute itself as an actor in national and external politics, geared to the achievement of a social and economic project. It is only by appreciating the conjunction of these different logics within a territory that we can understand the regional phenomenon and its importance. (Keating 383)

Though European regions have a long history, the end of the 19th century is considered to be the beginning of the regions as the development of state structures, when national ideas became relevant, and the ideas of the establishment of many states appeared. M.Keating writes:

...we can identify three crises of territorial representation, coinciding with changes in the responsibilities and scope of the nation-state, and often with crises of the central regime or party system: in the late 19th century; in the 1960s and 1970s; and in the 1990s. The first two were played out in the context of the nation-state and resulted in new territorial settlements; the third is taking place in a new context, marked by global economic integration and European unification and thus escapes the confines of national politics. (Keating 384)

The term “glocalization,” which represents a challenge to simplistic conceptions

of globalization processes as linear expansions of territorial scales, reflects the development of regions in the era of globalization. Glocalization indicates that the growing importance of continental and global levels is occurring together with the increasing salience of local and regional levels (*Glocalization*).

The term was modeled on the Japanese word *dochakuka*, which means global localization. It had referred to the adaptation of farming techniques to local conditions. Though the term “glocalization” has a Japanese origin, its English usage can be attributed to a British American sociologist Professor Roland Robertson. Being interested in Japanese culture, R. Robertson realized that the term “glocalization”, which is used by Japanese marketing specialists, means goods of local origin but which are used around the world. “Robertson and other sociologists interested in the subject of global processes could not help noticing that many of the social categories and practices assume a local flavour or character despite the fact that these products were invented elsewhere” (Khondker 185). The globalization and glocalization processes are tightly linked. A British sociologist Anthony Giddens believes that glocalization provides a basis for revival of certain cultures (Giddens 31).

Regional/local identity has been enhanced nowadays as a possible protest against impersonality and universalism of globalization. The specific character of this phenomenon has also been recognized from the theoretical point of view — in the last 20 years, the interest in regional and local cultures, as well as in the theoretical aspects of regional studies has increased significantly. Regional identity is in the scope of interest of interdisciplinary research; it is studied from the viewpoint of cultural studies, political science, economics, sociology, geography, etc. Some aspects of regional identity are often examined in order to promote the economic growth of a region and to enhance the political stability in the state, thinking about a possible degree of the region’s sovereignty, as well as in order to determine peculiarities and changes of national and regional identity in the course of history (e.g. Hudson, 2001; Clayton, 2002; Jones, 2000). However, a regional identity is originally associated with the processes in the consciousness and self-consciousness of a person, which are reflected in the cultural and historical features. The fundamental basis of any regional identity is the forms of real expression that exist in social and cultural practice, but not abstract political and economic attitudes. A. Paasi writes:

‘Regional identity’ is, in a way, an interpretation of the process through which a region becomes institutionalized, a process consisting of the production of territorial boundaries, symbolism and institutions. This process concomitantly gives rise to, and is conditioned by, the discourses, practices and rituals that

draw on boundaries, symbols and institutional practices. (Paasi 178)

Regional identity is formed by many interrelated factors: relations with the landscape (natural and man-made); relations with the history, traditions, values, other people; relations with the social space of the region (institutional and infrastructure aspects); as well as the special self-identity of the region (*Latvija. Pārskats...* 16).

Historical Background for Formation of Latgale's Regional Identity

Despite the fact that the problem of regional identity has become particularly relevant around the world at the end of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st centuries, the beginnings of the regions are traced back much earlier. In the context of Latvia, we can speak about the development of the regions and their relations with the national authorities since 1918, when the independent state of Latvia was established. Nevertheless, the prerequisites for the development of regions and regional identity had been formed much earlier — for many centuries the regions, which later became part of Latvia, underwent different cultural and historic development. In Latvia, there are five cultural-historical regions — Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, Latgale, and Sēlija. However, according to the Latvian Constitution, Latvia consists of four regions — Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, and Latgale. Nowadays, due to economic and political considerations (since 2006), five planning regions have been officially defined in Latvia: Riga, Kurzeme, Latgale, Vidzeme, and Zemgale regions. Nevertheless, their borders do not coincide with cultural historical regions. The lack of defined geographic borders between the regions, as well as the lack of a clear understanding of the region (because there are cultural and historical regions, and planning regions) allows researchers to say that there is no strict difference between the regions.

Research shows that in Latvia the belonging to the state and the immediate place of residence is felt the strongest in the relationship between a person and a place, while the belonging to the region is assessed in the most ambiguous and relatively weaker way. The only exception is Latgale where respondents assessed their belonging to the region as tighter than belonging to their immediate place of residence (*Latvija. Pārskats...*). In modern Latvia, Latgale is the only region with its peculiar features. Here, the regional identity is fully expressed. Moreover, Latgale's residents actively support, preserve, and construct it. Modern researchers (Šuplinska, Runce, Leikuma, etc.) recognize that, since 2000, the process of recognition and construction of Latgalian regional identity has entered a qualitatively new stage: discussions on the importance of the Latgalian language as a regional language have

been revived; in the policy planning documents Latgale is recognized as a special region, the development of which should attract special attention and funding, etc. Therefore, nowadays there are prerequisites for in-depth study of the peculiar features of the Latgale region.

Researchers' opinions on the issue of Latgale's regionalism and the regionalism of other Latvia's districts differ. Most of the modern and earlier time culture experts, historians, literary scholars, folklorists (Salcevic, Suplinska, Apine, Strods, etc.) believe that Latgale is characterized by pronounced regional features that differ from other regions of Latvia. However, other researchers, mainly modern economists, political scientists, and geographers (Zobena, Grivins, Nikisins) point out that in Latvia it is problematic to talk about the specific differences of any regions, as Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Zemgale and Latgale, even being registered in the Constitution, remain, nevertheless, for the most part, cultural historical areas or, sometimes (for individual needs of the government institutions), territorial associations, but they lack economic self-sufficiency, political unity, and clearly defined borders (Zobena *at al* 12).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the expressed features of cultural and historical development (which determine the presence of a specific regional identity) are more characteristic of Latgale, although the economic and political features of the region are less expressed in this region. I. Apine writes:

Latgale's regionalism differs from the local cultural and historical features of the remote parts in Kurzeme and Vidzeme. A long-term mix of many fundamental differences which acquire an ethnic character is peculiar to Latgale. (Apine, Volkovs 120)

In order to understand the cultural and historical peculiar features of the Latgale region, it is useful to go back into the history of the region's development. Latgale is a cultural and historical region in the eastern part of Latvia. Territorial identity of the modern Latgale is traced back to the Principality of Jersika at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, which in the Latin texts referred to as Lethia, and in the Old Russian records as Lotigola. In the 13th century Latgalian lands occupied the territory of modern Latgale as well as an eastern part of Vidzeme. The territory Lethia inhabited by Latgalians gave the name for the whole of Latvia. As a result of the invasion of the German crusaders in the 13th -14th centuries, the lands of Latgalians (Latgals) were divided between the Livonian Order and the Archbishopric of Riga. After the Livonian War (1558–1583) the Latgalian lands became part of the Polish-Lithua-

nian State. In 1629 after the Polish-Swedish War (1600–1629) the Truce of Altmark was signed. According to the treaty, Latgale (*Województwo inflanckie* [the Inflanty Voivodeship]) was separated from Vidzeme which remained under the Swedish rule. In 1772 after the first partition of Poland, Latgale became part of the Russian Empire. First, it was part of the Pskov Governorate, later – the Vitebsk Governorate, i.e., “Latgale was part of other governorates unlike Vidzeme and Kurzeme, and it was not perceived as a truly Latvian territory by people of Vidzeme and Kurzeme up to 1905-1906” (Kursite 17).

The origin of the name “Latgale” is also peculiar and controversial. “Latgalians” as the name for people or a tribe was used in the Livonian Chronicle of Henry, the Primary Chronicle, and later in the chronicles of the 16th century. After that, this name disappeared for many centuries, and it was substituted by the name Inflanty Voivodeship as a province of the Polish-Lithuanian State. Only at the beginning of the 20th century Latgalian activists of the Latvian National Awakening and patriots restored the name “Latgale.”

Eventually, the peculiarities of Latgale’s region acquired qualitative features and influenced the ethnic processes. In researchers’ opinion, the following aspects mark Latgale’s regionalism:

1) Its geopolitical status, specifically, its border with the eastern Slavs. Latgale has intensive ethnic contacts with Russians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Poles, and Jews. As a result, there is a specific ethno-cultural environment here which is determined by the symbiosis of many cultures.

2) Its historical isolation from Kurzeme and Vidzeme. In 1772 Latgale became part of Russia, therefore, the organization of the economic life here was different from other Baltic States. For example, in Latgale there were no separate farms as there used to be on the rest of Latvia’s territory, although there were typical villages. Its geographical position was not so favourable as in other Latvia’s regions, where large cities and ports could develop. As a result, Latgale’s farms were smaller in size and poorer. Socio-economic underdevelopment slowed down the processes of cultural development.

3) The dominance of Catholicism is one of the main characteristic features of Latgale’s regionalism. As Latgale remained Catholic within the Polish-Lithuanian State, it was not affected by the Reformation, as the rest of Latvia was. Researchers of Latgale’s history and culture emphasize a stable place of Catholicism within Latgalian culture and consciousness.

4) The long-term influence of the Polish culture is still noticeable. It is

confirmed by a number of material cultural monuments in Latgale, for example, sacred architectural buildings, Polish landlords' residences, which influenced the aesthetic taste of the inhabitants, and formed the external architectural image of Latgale. Polish book collections and libraries played an important role in the education of Latgalians. The Polonization of local residents was held under the influence of the Polish culture.

5) The objective features of Latgalian regionalism enhanced under the influence of emotional and psychological factors, specifically, the fact that the attitude of residents of the other Latvian territories and the official government to Latgale was often repulsive, Latgalians were perceived as others. (Apine, Volkovs 110-119)

Researchers often put a question in what way and why Latgale managed to preserve its specific culture for centuries, experiencing a strong influence of the Polish and Russian cultures. Answers vary — some scientists believe that a peculiar mixture of folklore and religion is important, as well as the preservation of their own language and literary tradition; others point out that Latgalians' unity and strength were fostered by a common socio-economic situation of people: all Latgalians stayed rather poor over the centuries. In the run of the original cultural and historical process, Latgalians have developed their own unique identity that is expressed in culture, literature, and perception of the world.

Reflection of Regional Identity in Publicist Narratives and Literary Narratives

One of the most important stages in the history of Latvian people, the Second Awakening — a national movement that led to the proclamation of the state of Latvia in 1918 — started at the beginning of the 20th century. Authors of literary works actively react on the events in the spheres of politics and culture. Therefore, in literature there are attempts to restore the code of Latvianness, to renew the values of the past, and in this way, to learn and create a national identity. Literature created that time in the Latvian language actively developed, getting acquainted and being immersed in the European cultural heritage, and it covered the most significant stages of Europe's cultural development in a few decades. Therefore, at the beginning of the 20th century Latvian literature and language were ready to reflect on their cultural features and rights in this way raising the national consciousness and promoting consolidation. The attempts to raise the national consciousness were also made in Latgale. However, the activity of public workers was complicated there by the Press Act adopted in 1865 which prohibited to publish books with Latin letters. There-

fore, in fact, Latgalians had no opportunities for self-expression. The Latgalian intelligentsia started to work for the abolition of the ban on press, as well as to raise the national consciousness in any other possible ways. They founded associations which made it possible to come together and discuss realia of cultural and political life; the cultural life became more intense. In 1904 the ban on press was abolished, and, straight away, books in the Latgalian language started to be published legally. The Latgalian intelligentsia began to publish materials that Inflatians or Latgalians were also part of the Latvian people, although they speak and write in their own Latgalian language which differs from the Latvian language in other regions. Gradually, the Latvian intelligentsia heard the Latgalians' attempts to express themselves, and they paid attention to the previously overlooked region of Latgale and its cultural-historical and socio-economic peculiar features. Exploring the Latgalian special nature, both Latgalians and Latvians emphasized its original history, way of living, folklore, and national awareness of Latgale's people. The gradual emergence of interest in Latgale can be observed by researching publications on Latgale and Latgalians in Latvian periodicals.

Looking at the most popular periodicals and articles of the first decades of the 20th century which emphasized the idea of Latvian identity, we can state the gradual emergence of interest, which began in 1900, and the rapid popularization of the Latgale region, which began since 1907. In the period from 1900 to 1905, Latgale was mentioned exclusively in the context of considering the aspects of Latvia's historic development emphasizing the peculiar features of Latgale's (Inflanty's) development. At that time, Latgalians were called Inflatians or the Vitebsk governorate Latvians. For example, in 1901 two periodicals, *Balss* and *Baltijas Vēstnesis* published an article "About the Strength of Latvian People at Ancient Times" (*Par Latviešu tautas spēku senākos laikos*) in which Latgale was mentioned as a place where the Russian power and Russian culture were most vividly revealed in the 11th century as there were two Russian fortresses in Koknese and Jersika.

Since 1905, more extensive reviews of not only the historical development of Latgale, but also its present development, which emphasized Latgale's cultural and economic backwardness, appeared. For example, the article "One More Word in the Case of Inflatians" (*Vēl kāds vārds inflantiešu lietā*) published in the newspaper *Apskats* in 1905 said that all regions where now Latvian people live belong to the same state, therefore they should have been united, but it does not happen. The Inflanty is especially separated as it is determined by its historic peculiarities. The Inflanty's backwardness is described through several paragraphs. It is mentioned that there is no active cultural life there, especially there are no

communities, associations, theatre performances, exhibitions, etc. Nothing happens in the Inflanty — people live in their villages, they do not receive any periodicals from other regions. The Inflantians live according to their ancestor's laws, and they have no idea about new research, including new things which they might need in their life. This detailed article vividly describes the features of the formation and characterization of Latgale's image in the first decades of the 20th century.

In 1907 there was a more active interest in Latgale and Latgalians; there were articles which tried to create a positive image of Latgale. Fransis Trasuns, an active Latgalian public figure, was one of the most popular culture professionals who promoted and defended Latgale. In the newspaper *Zemkopis* he regularly informed Latvian society about what happened in the Latgalian culture, economy, education, etc. He fought against the stereotype of Latgalians' and Latgale's backwardness, pointing out that Latgalians live not far from Latvia's central regions, and they share a common mentality and culture with other Latvians. F. Trasuns published his reviews in the Latgalian language which reflects the cultural peculiarity and is a vivid indicator of the regional identity. However, publications in the Latgalian language in the Latvian-speaking press caused a certain alienation of Latvia's population, as the Latgalian language has its peculiar features and it is not completely understood by the Latvians.

1908 was a significant year, as it was the time when the newspaper *Rīgas Apskats* published the article *On the Accession of Latgale to the Baltic States (Par Latgales pievienošanu Baltijai)* which discussed to which state Latgale should have been joined. The article said that, for example, the Catholic clergy believed that Latgale should be joined to Lithuania, as these lands have a common faith; the clergy were scared of Latgalians converted to Lutheran faith. The article also mentioned that there were very few educated Latgalians, the majority of them spoke Polish, and the farmers' opinion was not known:

A Latgalian is so ignorant that he cannot see further than his cleanliness; he believes completely and trusts his priest and clergy. Peasants almost do not know the Baltics, they do not know the conditions in which our farmers live, how they manage their farms, etc. A Latgalian knows Latvians as farmers, innkeepers, and traders, who he looks at with hatred, who he perceives as his devastators. (*On the Accession...*)

Since from 1911 in the Latvian periodicals there was a huge interest in Latgale. The central as well as specialized and regional periodicals published the reviews on the

region commenting on its economic, social, and cultural development paying special attention to its agriculture.

It is possible to conclude that there was a rather big interest in Latgale and Latgalians in the Latvian information environment, although, the focus was on the peculiarities of its economic and cultural development which could not be spotted on other territories inhabited by the Latvians. In the first decades of the 20th century Latvian periodicals reflected the image of Latgale which existed in the Latvian society as a “backward” part, as well as the controversial attempts to change the stereotypes of Latvian people about Latgale and Latgalians. To a great extent, the objective assessment of the cultural situation as well as the views of Latgalians on the possibility of existence and development of their culture determined such a negative and pessimistic image of Latgale. It should be noted objectively that the writing in the Latgalian language started to develop only in 1904. Before that, there were only a few works in the national Latvian language written and published. There were only rare theatre performances in Latgale. A serious awareness of literary and historical facts started only in the 1920s of the 20th century. Looking at the events in Latgale’s literature that happened over the past decades, local reviewers and critics in the 1920s of the 20th century were often rather skeptical about the possibility for further development of Latgalian literature, indicating that so far there were no great achievements. Assessing the situation from the outside and feeling the skeptical attitude of Latgalians to the preservation of their culture and identity, writers and culture specialists who wrote in the literary Latvian language, also expressed their negative attitude.

However, gradually Latgale managed to attract the attention of people from other parts of Latvia. Besides that, having taken the decision to join the newly-established State of Latvia in 1918, Latgale turned out to be related to the rest of the territory politically and economically as well as culturally. The state formed a single legislation, and introduced a single literary language. As a result, the Latgalian language acquired the status of a dialect, and the literature published in it was perceived as a peripheral phenomenon. Latvian writers started to create works where the action took place in Latgale, in this way, inviting their readers to pay more attention to this little-known region. Latgalian text referred to the Latvian periphery, to a provincial text, and therefore, it formed its own model of the world, at the same time reflecting Latgale’s regional identity.

Antons Austrīņš was one of the first Latvian writers who showed Latgale in his literary texts. He published his first short story Čiuļi in 1909, although, Latgale was only briefly mentioned in it. However, in 1915 Austrīņš published two short stories

about Latgale — *Tirgus diena Stalidzānos* and *Sirmā stunda*, where the action took place in Latgale; its people, their everyday routine, and nature were described. It is Latgale that Austriņš connected the origins of Latvian people and the idea of spiritual revival to; his short stories have an autobiographic basis. Since 1909, his first visit to Latgale, the author paid special attention to the study of this region's features; he participated in the meetings with Latgale's culture experts, collected newspaper articles on Latgale, wrote down dialect words, created a collection of Latgalian toponyms and proper names. Austriņš wrote numerous short stories about Latgale which were published in the collections *Māras zemē* and *Neievērotie*. His contemporaries had a critical attitude towards Austriņš's commitment to and idealization of Latgale, as this region in the consciousness of Latvia's people had an image of an uneducated and undeveloped province. Reviewers believed that Latgale in the works by Austriņš was too idealized; the author, for unknown reasons, had a strong attachment to this land, and they were looking for explanations for the changes in the writer's worldview (see Virza, 1930; Paegle, 1920; Sudrabkalns, 1919).

In the second decade on the 20th century other Latvian writers began to address the Latgale theme. For example, Kārlis Skalbe at the beginning of 1918 published his travel writing *No rudzupuķu zemes*, Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš showed the spiritual strength of Latgalians in his essay *Jāzeps Vaskāns* written in 1919. Ādolfs Erss, who published a short story *No burvju kausa* in 1914, wrote a lot about Latgale; he depicted Latgale in a lot of his works: *Latgales stāsti* (1926), *Vecā Latgale* (1931), *Muižnieki* (1931), *Krusts ceļmalā* (1938), and others. Erss neither idealized Latgale like Austriņš, nor admired its nature or St Māra, although his prose was filled with love towards this land. Erss was attracted to Latgale because it had ancient features remaining. Austriņš in the majority of his short stories underlined that historic changes did not influence Latgale; Erss depicted Latgale of a little bit later period, and he could already see the changes which he did not like. Therefore, in the foreground there were those features of Latgale which had preserved since ancient times. Erss paid attention to unusual, magical phenomena, therefore he was attracted to Latgalian castles and estates, in the depiction of which the features typical to Edgar Poe's prose appeared – mysticism and mystery which nevertheless were based on realistic and precise descriptions.

The position of a narrator to a large extent determines the similarity of Latgale's images created by Latvian authors (Austriņš, Erss, Skalbe, Jaunsudrabiņš, etc.). For these writers, Latgale is a beloved, though a foreign, land. This fact directly influences the narrative perspective — an observation from the outside. In Austriņš's works it is also shown in terms of the plot — a large number of

his plots are based on the description of travelling. Therefore, the discovery of Latgale's special nature is mainly based on visual material and things experienced during travelling. No matter how much Latvian writers would like to understand all Latgale's features, it is still impossible, as they remain strangers to this land. It also determines the importance of the category of mysteriousness in Latgale's descriptions by Latvian writers. These writers often looked at Latgale from the viewpoint of travellers, or guests, which is why Latgale's highlighted features are similar: a cult of Catholicism, an idea of preservation of ancient values, mysteriousness of Latgale's nature, etc.

In the first decades of the 20th century, local Latgalian authors Francis Kemps, Francis Trasuns, Andriivs Jūrdžs, etc. also clearly emphasized the Latgalian theme in their works. As compared with Latvian writers, Latgalian authors have some peculiarities in the perception of Latgale, which are related to the opposite prospect of narration — an observation from inside. It is noteworthy that, despite the special commitment to the study of the region's cultural and historical features, there was no single image of Latgale in the early 20th century fiction literature, especially in the prose, as the features of the region which, when looking at the known and familiar things remain unchanged, were not really emphasized. That time Latgalian short fiction focused on the creation of an interesting plot and intense action. A relatively low level of quality of this literature also should be taken into account, as this was an initial stage of the development of Latgale's literature. These two factors determined that there was a minimal number of descriptions of Latgale and peculiarities of its environment in the prose by Latgalian authors. However, Latgalian literature provided detailed descriptions of everyday life, and emphasized the everyday realia of Latgale's people; at the same time, works written in the Latgalian language reflect the peculiar features of the language structure and lexical-semantic peculiarities, which is really significant from the viewpoint of the ethnic mentality. Latgalian authors, reflecting the everyday life of their people, reveal the mystery of this land, which, in turn, try, but cannot do the authors writing in the literary Latvian language and who have the view from the outside.

Latgale's specific features are more strongly reflected in Latgalian poetry than in the prose, as writers' patriotic feelings and their desire to emphasize Latgalian cultural values determined the poetics and themes of the poetry to a greater extent. They depicted the same objects which attracted the attention of Latvian authors: Latgale's Catholic churches, especially Aglona, the image of St Māra, and the nature are compared to Italy and mainly is based on the Catholic tradition which is relevant both in Latgale and Italy. The poetry by Latgale's authors emphasizes the

opportunity for achieving a spiritual harmony in Latgale, but not in any other region of Latvia.

Alberts Sprūdžs made a significant contribution to the development of Latgalian literature and the formation of the Latgalian text in Latvian and Latgalian literature. He was a Latgalian who wrote in Latvian, in this way introducing Latvian readers to the Latgalian literary tradition, which he continued, as his works are characterized by both the mentioned features of Latgalian prose of the early 20th century, and a relatively high quality of his writing style. Reviewers compare the authors who wrote about Latgale in the Latvian language with the builders of a bridge which united Latgale with the rest of Latvia (Kraujiņš).

Travelogue as a Technique for Describing a Regional Identity: External and Internal Examples of Identification

It is accepted to distinguish between external and internal identification in the research into a regional identity. External identification is the definition and description of a regional identity from the outside, from the viewpoint which does not belong to a particular region. We speak about internal identification when we analyse the peculiar features of the region which have been determined by the residents of this region. In fact, both forms of identification interact and form a common understanding about the identity of a region in society.

Travelogue is one of the most widely-spread techniques applied by Latvian and Latgalian authors when they tried to describe peculiarities of the regional identity in the first decades of the 20th century. Such descriptions also have certain features of documentary, as the authors mainly relied on their personal observations while travelling around Latgale. Although they also assigned their texts certain features of fiction in order to make the material more exciting, and in this way to attract more readers' attention. In order to create a more complete picture of attempts to define Latgale's national identity, it seems reasonable to compare two texts that introduce examples of both external and internal identification. Antons Austrīņš's collection of short stories *Māras zemē* (1919) written in the Latvian literary language is one of the brightest examples of external identification. The book *Ceļojums pa Latgolu* (1924) by a Latgalian writer Kristops Brems (real name Nikodems Rancāns) exemplifies an attempt at internal identification. It should be noted that in the early 20th century, descriptions of travelling were a popular genre in the Latvian literature, but they mainly described travelling to other countries — Italy, France, or Russia. The mentioned works about Latgale, from the point of view of the theme, are significantly different from the descriptions of travelling that dominated at that time,

as they depicted one of the regions of Latvia.

In Austriņš's collection of short stories *Māras zemē*, the described journey is divided into a few stages (one story usually describes one or two stages); they do not have a single special aim, the described objects change — a temple, people, a birch, a lake, etc. The journey does not create a main line of narrative, it is only a way which helps you observe; the main thing is the objects and the spaces that the narrator visits to get an idea about the life in Latgale and understand its secrets. A mystery and mysteriousness are one of the most significant categories in Austriņš's *Māras zemē*. The journey allows the main character to explore and learn as much as possible, thus approaching the disclosure of the mystery. The main character is interested in everything, but only particular objects give food for reflection, and lead to revelation. Travel descriptions are mythologized. The character usually goes on a trip by boat, small parts of the journey he makes on foot, thus, having the opportunity to make his way more interesting. Then again, he travels by boat, which he gets for free from fishermen, or mowers, who need to swim to mow the grass on another meadow. At the same time, as soon as travellers begin to worry that they will not make it on time, or that they will not find transport, or they will not meet the person who can tell them the way, suddenly there is an unexpected solution to the situation, and no one remains disappointed. From time to time, the inexperienced traveller gets scared of the proximity of nature, then he feels sadness and thinks of eternal loneliness, but these feelings and thoughts soon go away with the change of the situation.

The idea of the search for an individual spiritual harmony by the main character is realized in the semantics of the journey. A new space — Latgale — denotes a new stage in the development of the character, receiving a new experience that harmonizes his personality. The journey through Latgale in the life of the main character symbolizes the way out of a deadlock, and he projects his experience to the people, in this way promoting Latgale as a symbol of spiritual awakening of the people and the humanity. During the journey, the main character tries to gain a unique experience, something that is peculiar only to Latgalians. It means to learn the secret of Latgale, because, in this ethnic and unique experience he tries to find universal values common to all people.

Brems in the preface, which is an integral part of the collection, provides a detailed description of the background and reasons of the journey. He does not emphasize a didactic function of his work. However, he openly describes an everyday situation, when a narrator hosts guests from various countries and they tell exciting stories, whereas the narrator himself is not a traveller, and he can only listen. The

preface is written in the form of a conversation, which attaches the narrative with an illusion of intimacy and truthfulness. The description open to everyday routine makes the text clear and close, as a result, a reader feels like a trusted person of the narrator, his contemporary, neighbor or even friend. Further, in the description of the journey two forms of narration are used — letters to the wife and the traveller's notes, which sustain the intimacy previously attached to the text. Brems abundantly uses colloquial words and expressions; a certain naivety and truthful, undisclosed emotionality are typical of the narrator, which, in general, creates the presence effect and the impression of reality, even when it comes to wonderful and fabulous events. The narrator's route is random, he does not have a specific purpose. The most important thing are the people and realia he meets on his way. The places visited and mentioned in the text are largely invented and they are often described in a grotesque way. Unlike the journey described by Austriņš, Brems's journey did not happen in reality, it was made up with the intention to educate and teach peasants, and to satirize vices and to praise virtues of that time. The journey here is simply a well-chosen form of literary work, but not the purpose of the description. In both Austriņš and Brems's opinion, Catholicism and Latgale are one whole, they are inseparable. The name of Austriņš's collection perfectly confirms this idea, as there is a significant influence of the Christian Virgin Mary, whose cult is especially important for Catholics in Latgale's Māra.

The book *Ceļojums pa Latgolu* published by Brems in 1924 offers its readers to immerse themselves in the essential nature of Latgale's life and mentality by means of an intense and interesting plot. As Ilona Salceviča accurately characterizes this work:

The book includes 10 moralizing, even didactic pieces of short fiction written in the rich, vivid, and lively folk language. In the form of grateful travel essays, it describes the pictures from the life in Latgalian villages and provincial towns, highlights and satirizes vices — alcoholism, laziness, stupidity, ignorance, garrulity, gossip, slander, etc. Kristops Brems travels around Latgale, and everything he experiences is expressed in his essays and letters to his wife. His observant eye notices both the good and the bad. (Salceviča 34)

Latgalian literature reflects those peculiar features of Latgale which Latvian authors did not have a chance to discover, especially, details of everyday life. If Latvian writers turn to descriptions of external things, Latgalian authors better perceive the everyday life of their people. Moreover, works written in the Latgalian language

reflect the structural peculiarities of the language and its lexical-semantic specific nature, which is really significant in terms of ethnic mentality.

The perception of Catholicism also determined the perspective of the narrator's view. Despite the fact that both *Austriņš* and *Brems* find Catholicism is an integral peculiar feature of *Latgale*, and a sincere faith characteristic of the *Latgalians*, *Austriņš* notices and emphasizes only the external manifestations of Catholicism, although *Brems* draws attention to the certain attitudes of Catholicism towards ethics and morality. The land of *Māra* attracts *Austriņš*'s traveller *Konrads Krenklis* with its mysteriousness, one of the reasons for which lies in Catholicism. The main character tries to grasp the essence of Catholicism mainly by visiting churches. According to the stories the narrator used to listen to in his childhood, a Catholic church has an amazing power. The Catholic Church has an ambivalent image — it both attracts and repels the main character. The unity of material and spiritual is an important feature of the image of the temple. *Latgale*'s people manage to organically combine the spiritual and material spheres; they are both an integral part of their lives. The fact that markets are organized around churches is the evidence for this; on holidays, leaving their houses, the *Latgalians* follow two inseparable purposes — to pray to God and to do the shopping (*Austriņš* 7). In the mind of the main character, it is impossible to imagine *Latgale* without its Catholic churches which add to it a special character. *Latgale*'s people have an exaggerated faith, which *Krenklis* is ironic about, nevertheless, he is attracted to a Catholic church, which he, not being Catholic, finds exotic: *Krenklis*, being an educated man with a keen mind, can critically assess the influence of the Catholic Church in *Latgale*. However, he has a susceptible perception and sensuality of a romantic hero. The search for *Latgale*'s mystery to a large extent is connected with the search for the main character's spirituality, peace, and harmony. Thus, we can explain his affection for the church — to its ornate vanity, a loving cult of *Māra*, and spirituality. The image of *Māra*, which has a special meaning in *Austriņš*'s *Latgalian* text, attracts *Krenklis* to the Catholic Church: *St Māra* is a symbol of *Latgale*, and at the same time, it is a symbol of the renewal of spirituality. The image of *Māra* attracts the main character most of all, and it personifies *Latgale*'s mystery. The image of *Māra* combines the Christian and barbaric, and this synthesis is projected on the whole *Latgalian* space.

A Catholic church is not always included in the general idyllic description of *Latgale*. *Krenklis*'s observations at a church often make a dissonance with his childhood memories of his father's tales. In his memories, the church seemed to be a miracle, which is perceived as an image from a fairy tale that beckons the main character. Having attended the church, he changed his ideas dramatically, he

is scared of both the external and internal space of the church. Even Christ's image causes terror but not piety. He is attracted only to St Māra and the procession.

The structure of the society and status of all levels of the society can be seen at the church, as all Latgalians come to celebrate the festival. In general, people do not have any individual features, they make a crowd which mechanically, blindly perform a liturgical ritual without thinking about its nature. Only beggars and cripples stand out in this crowd.

A traveller from Vidzeme still cannot fully understand the values of Latgale's people, and therefore, the mystery of Latgale remains undiscovered. Watching people at the church, where it would be possible to go deeper into their spiritual space, Krenklis does not understand their behaviour, and their feelings remain unclear to him. In the last short story of the collection *Viena diena klānos*, Austriņš asks: "Where does this magic power of Latgale come from, and what is really this long-suffering land? Neither the soaked road, nor the yellowing birch, nor even my quiet companion, who, maybe, solved this mystery, but did not give me the answer" (Austriņš 112). Latgale's mystery is its special image which is made of Catholic churches, lakes, autumn leaves, people, etc.

Not only churches, their decoration, behaviour of parishioners, celebration of religious holidays reflect the importance of Catholicism for Latgale. Latgale's everyday life also emphasizes it, for example, a Catholic tradition is clearly observed in the decoration of the house. Not far from the house there is a cross or a chapel; in the house, there is a corner with icons; on the doors, you can often see the inscription +K+M+B, made with the chalk consecrated on the Three Kings' Day. The traveller from Vidzeme is explained that all these attributes are necessary as real Catholics live here. Although, Krenklis has an ambiguous attitude to Catholicism, as in many of its manifestations he sees the stiffness and ignorance, the attributes of Catholicism still mesmerize him, because he considers the image of St Māra to be the symbol and guardian of Latgale.

Brems's narrator is a Latgalian, a Catholic; in addition, he is a man of faith with high standards of ethics and morality. These features determine the reflection of Catholicism in *Ceļojumā pa Latgolu*. This work mentions no other confessions, their churches, or adherents — Latgale here is only Catholic. Unlike Austriņš's narrator, Brems's traveller absolutely does not see any negative manifestations in Catholicism, since the author of the work, Brems, is an educated priest whose goal is to educate people in the faith in God, in real morality and ethics. It is significant that in the first story the narrator faces a positive Catholic feature of Latgale, which he praises, and which he is openly happy about. In other stories, the narrator refers

to satirizing of various negative features of people. In the narrator's opinion, the lack of faith in God and irregular church attendance are the reasons for many ethical and moral problems. This idea is realized in a lot of stories. The story *X... draudzes bazneica* describes a neglected church which is unpleasant to be inside. During the service, the priest asks people for help to clean and repair the church of the parish, but everyone has their own reason why it cannot be done. In order to more completely describe the situation Brems, describing the people's behaviour in the church, uses grotesque, which causes irritation. In this way, the author connects the inability of people to behave decently in the church (or in any other public place), their laziness and lack of faith, their unwillingness to listen to what the priest said and think about the meaning of life. According to the author, only a believer who regularly attends church can be truly virtuous. The whole story is devoted to the poor who beg at the Church. They deceive other people, they are lazy, and they are not ashamed of being near a sacred place. After the service, the beggars go straight to the pub, they no longer look crippled or miserable, and they have a good time. The narrator points out that he saw such beggars only in one community, thus indicating that moral people, nevertheless, predominate in Latgale.

During the journey, the narrator meets people with different vices — lazy-bones, beggars, drunkards, fools, etc. They have one feature in common — the lack of faith in God, as a true believer is a virtuous person. Virtue and sin in the conceptual structure of the world are opposed as the fight between God and Devil which breaks out in the soul of every person.

Austrīņš and Brems describe Latgale in different ways emphasizing different peculiar features. Austrīņš finds it important to grasp the nature of Latgale. He strives to do it by observing types of people, way of living, peculiarities of nature, customs, including religious rituals. Brems pays more attention to religion judging people depending on whether they are true believers and virtuous. Not only the fact that one of the writers represents the view from the outside (external identification), and the other one defines the characteristic features of his region (internal identification) influences the difference of opinions of these two authors. Both the purpose of the writing and details of the author's biographies are also important. Austrīņš was a writer whose fate forced him to be a fugitive, and he found shelter in Latgale at that difficult time, so his vision of Latgale, mainly, inherent positive features; it is perceived as the land of spiritual awakening, as it preserved the ancient values. K. Brems was a priest, whose goal was to educate society, therefore, Catholicism and morals of people which are cultivated in the church are in the center of his attention. Despite the differences in their opinions, both authors create an image of Latgale in

the society of that time. They begin attempts to identify Latgale's identity by means of a literary text, and the image of Latgale created by them laid the foundation for the understanding of the identity's features of this region which has preserved up to the present time.

Conclusion

There has been a significant increase in interest in regional and local cultures as well as theoretical aspects of regional research during the last 20 years. Origins of regions can be found in the past. In the context of Latvia, we can speak about the development of regions and their relations with the national government starting from 1918, when the independent state of Latvia was established. However, the prerequisites for the development of regions and regional identity were formed much earlier. The regions which later joined the Latvian state had had different cultural and historical development for many centuries. Peculiarities of regional development are especially clearly visible in Latgale, which, in the researchers' opinion, has the expressed ethnic character of its own. In the minds of people, this region is special and it is different from other areas of Latvia, in terms of cultural and religious contexts, as well as in the context of perception of nature and human mentality.

Looking at the most popular newspapers and magazines of the first decades of the 20th century which published news about Latgale, it is possible to conclude that the interest of Latvia's people in this region increased significantly since 1905. Periodicals emphasized the peculiar features of the economic and cultural development of this region which could not be observed on other territories inhabited by Latvians. Latgale was reflected as "backward" in terms of cultural and economic development.

The public interest in Latgale as well as the significance of national-patriotic ideas in the early 20th century and the Latgale's Awakening created the situation when both Latgalian (Kemps, Trasuns, Jūrdžs, etc.) and Latvian authors (Austriņš, Erss, Skalbe, Jaunsudrabuņš) turned to the description of the Latgale region. Latgale writers have certain peculiarities in the perception of Latgale that are related to the view from the inside, which determines the content and evaluation aspect, for example, the literature written in the Latgalian language gives a comprehensive description of everyday life details, emphasizes the daily life of people; at the same time, works written in the Latgalian language reflect the structural features of the language and its lexical and semantic peculiarity. Nevertheless, these works to a much lesser extent formed the ideas of Latgale in the Latvian society than the works written in the Latvian literary language, as they were not widely known to

readers. For the writers who wrote in the Latvian literary language, Latgale was an extremely beloved, although a foreign land. Therefore, the discovery of Latgale's special nature is mainly based on visual material and the experience gained during the travelling. No matter how hard Latvian writers wanted to dive into the Latgalian identity, to grasp all its features, it is still impossible, as they remain foreigners for this land. It also determines the importance of the category of mysteriousness in Latgale's descriptions by Latvian authors. These writers often looked at Latgale from the perspective of a traveler, or a guest, therefore, the highlighted features of Latgale are the same: the cult of Catholicism, the idea of preserving of ancient values, the beauty and mystery of Latgale's nature, the peculiarities of the people's nature and behavior, the flair of the Latgalian language, the peculiarities of historical development. Unlike the negative image of Latgale which dominated in periodicals, fictional literature showed a much more positive image of Latgale: it is the land where spiritual awakening is possible, whose people have a great inner strength, and which attracts with the beauty of its nature. The above-mentioned features of Latgale's regional identity, which are emphasized in literary text, though also represent the individual author's model of the world, at the same time reflect both the social position of the time when these works were written, as well as form ideas about Latgale in the minds of people up to the present day.

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