

Latvian Moravian Manuscripts: Historical Overview and Research Perspectives

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Abstract. The article explores Moravian manuscripts as a source of literary and social history, focusing on the Latvian part of Livland with the aim of providing an overview of Latvian manuscript literature and highlighting the most significant research perspectives. Written and rewritten in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, Moravian manuscripts build a heterogeneous body of texts, including religious speeches, hymns, biographical writings, historical treatises, letters, and devotional literature. The development of the tradition of Moravian handwritten literature has been viewed in the article from the point of view of literary history by focusing special attention on historical texts and life stories. The effects of Moravian manuscripts have been analysed within the context of social change and emancipating trends brought about by the Moravian movement.

Keywords: Moravian Brethren; manuscript literature; history of Livland; Latvian literature; life stories

The Moravian movement was a turning point in the eighteenth century history of Livland. It marked a spiritually and socially uplifting period, laid the foundations for the formation and self-organisation of a Latvian

middle class and the development of education within it.¹ Metaphorically, it has been described as a meteorite, as an explosion – that was how it was perceived by contemporaries and later also by historians:

The Unity of the Brethren is the only bright star that shines forth in this darkest century of ours. It suddenly appears, like a meteor, awakens the people from spiritual sleep, imbues them with new vigour, helps them to endure the hardships of life, awakens hope for new, better times, for a new, enjoyable life, becomes the delight and treasure of an oppressed people.²

As early as the eighteenth century, there was a debate about the impact of the movement on its followers – about why Moravians were truer Christians, better workers and more virtuous.³ This was happening at a time when there was no doubt that “the pastor does not follow the plough, and the peasant does not explain the scriptures, so that no disorder shall arise in the world”, as a contemporary stated in this context.⁴ But the Moravian movement directly contributed to this disorder: there was a higher risk of unrest in Moravian districts, and over time the link between the Moravian movement and nation-building became apparent.⁵ Memory repositories contain evidence of another manifestation of Moravian subversive activity that remained invisible to outsiders: manuscript literature.

Most of the texts written, translated and rewritten by Latvian and German brothers and sisters in Livland – about 500 items – are held by the Rare Book and Manuscript Department of the National Library of Latvia, others are held in the University of Latvia Academic Library, the Museum of Literature and Music, the Latvian National Historical Archive, the Unity Archives in Herrnhut and elsewhere. After a number of studies during the interwar period, these manuscripts have

- 1 M. Kaudzīte. Brāļu draudze Vidzemē. M. Jākobsons, Rīga, 1877; L. Adamovičs. Latviešu brāļu draudze dzimtbūšanas laikos. – *Latvieši: rakstu krājums*. II. Ed. F. Balodis, P. Šmits, A. Tentelis. Valters un Rapa, Rīga, 1932, 48–86; G. Philipp. Die Bedeutung von Herrnhuter für die Entwicklung eines fortschreitenden Bildungsniveaus und die Herausbildung einer eigener Identität der indigenen Bevölkerung Est- und Livlands. – *Unitas Fratrum*, 2011, 65/66, 13–40; G. Philipp. Die Wirksamkeit der Herrnhuther Brüdergemeinde unter den Esten und Letten zur Zeit der Bauernbefreiung: vom Ausgang des 18. bis über die Mitte des 19. Jahrhundert. Böhlau, Köln, Wien, 1974; G. Ceipe. Brāļu draudze. Rīgas ev.-lut. Misiones draudze, Rīga, 2020; G. Ceipe. Dieva tautas dzimšana. *Latvieši*. LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, Rīga, 2014.
- 2 H. Enzeliņš. Skati Valmieras pilsētas, draudzes un novada pagātnē. Zeme, Valmiera, 1932, 138–139.
- 3 Cf. W. C. Friebe. Wegen einer Bemerkung über die in Liefland zur Brüdergemeinde oder zu den sogenannten Herrnhutern, gehörenden Bauern. – *Nordische Miscellaneen*, 1790, 20, 21, 464–475.
- 4 O. F. P. Rühl. Veranlatzte Gedanken über die Herrnhuterey unter den liefländischen Bauern. – *Nordische Miscellaneen*, 1791, 26, 314. Here and further our translation – P.D., B.P.
- 5 G. Straube. Latvijas brāļu draudzes diārijs (jaunākais noraksts) jeb Herrnhūtiešu brāļu draudzes vēsture Latvijā. N.I.M.S., Rīga, 2000, 235.

been most thoroughly researched by book historian Aleksejs Apīnis (1926–2004) during the Soviet period. He came to the conclusion that the manuscripts “marked the transitional stage to a new ideological formation”.⁶ Moravian manuscripts illustrate the formation process of Latvian national literature a century before the emergence of mass national literature, which can be dated to the second half of the nineteenth century. The arrival of new ideas, aesthetics and even genres in Latvian national literature through the intervention of Moravian manuscripts enables this relatively bold statement by Aleksejs Apīnis to be confirmed. Later, Gvido Straube, Edgars Ceske, Pavel Štoll among others studied both individual manuscripts and general interconnections in the development of manuscript literature. Nevertheless, many manuscripts are still awaiting in-depth research, in addition to which the manuscript collection is open to different interpretations, especially from a comparative perspective, revealing them as part of the transnational network of the Unity of the Brethren.⁷

The aim of this article is to provide an insight into the main features and development trends of Moravian manuscript literature, focusing on texts in Latvian. After a review of the characteristics of manuscripts, the body of manuscripts will be explored from three perspectives: the history of literature, the making of historicity themes topical, and as a source of social history (in life stories). In conclusion, the article provides an overview of the importance of manuscripts in the history of culture.

MANUSCRIPT CHARACTERISTICS

Livland was one of the first goals of the diaspora’s work for the restored Moravian Unity of the Brethren in the early eighteenth century. The first missionaries arrived here in 1729, followed by the arrival of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), the leader of the movement, in 1736. This in turn was followed by the involvement of favourably disposed estate owners, with Balthasar von Campenhausen (1772–1823) and Magdalena Elisabeth von Hallart (1683–1750) being of particular importance.⁸

6 A. Apīnis. *Latviešu hernhūtiešu vēsturiskie un biogrāfiskie rokraksti. Izlase: grāmatas izdevniecības manuskripti un A. Apīņa sarakste ar izdevniecību par manuskriptu.* Rīga, 1988–1993. Rare Book and Manuscripts Collection of the National Library of Latvia, RXA300,127, 28.

7 Cf. A. Apīnis. *Aizsākums.* – Karogs, 1984, 8, 140–154; B. Paškevica. *Das transkulturelle herrnhutische Schrifttum als Bestandteil des Medienwandels im lettischen Livland.* – *German as a Foreign Language*, 2020, 3, 142–151.

8 B. Paškevica. *Pītisms kā hernhūtiešu misijas darba sagatavotājs Vidzemē.* *Magdalēnas Elizabetes fon Hallartes agrīnā darbība.* – *Letonica*, 2016, 32, 31–40.

Moravians chose preachers from among the people themselves. Often, even with a clear disregard for the social hierarchy, the most prominent representatives of Latvian Moravians (Krišs Pēteris (1699–1771) and Jānis Šteinhauers (1705–1779) were referred to as “teachers” in the chronicles and letters written by German Moravians), while some of the German brothers – craftsmen and students – particularly active in Livland merited comparisons with the biblical Apostles (Christian David (1692–1751), Magnus Friedrich Bunthebart (1718?–1750)).⁹ As a staunch follower and financial supporter of Halle’s Pietism in the mid-1730s, Magdalena Elisabeth von Hallart became increasingly sympathetic to the Unity of the Brethren formed in Herrnhut. She invited the Moravian brothers and sisters to settle on her property, established schools, and organised places of worship for peasants’ children. In 1738, the newly built *Jērakalns* prayer and education centre on the banks of the river Gauja/Aa in the city of Valmiera/Wolmar, financed by Hallart, was consecrated. Jakob Benjamin Fischer (1731–1793), the superintendent-general of Livland, specifically mentioned Hallart’s institutions, in particular the teachers’ seminary that von Hallart had founded, as an example worthy of following in the preface of the 1739 Latvian edition of the Bible.¹⁰

Hallart was one of the funders of this edition of the Bible, as well as of a planned supplement to it, a small collection of hymns called *Kādas izlasītas garīgas jaukas dziesmas* (Selected Pleasing Hymns). The hymn collection was published in Königsberg in 1739 at the same time as the second Latvian edition of the Bible, without the official permission of the Lutheran Church and the landed gentry. By 1742 the need had arisen to print a much larger collection of Moravian hymns with the same title, and this was published in Tallinn/Reval. However, this period of upsurges in creativity, during which many Moravian texts were translated, published and distributed in manuscripts, was not to last because, as soon as 1743, after a six-month investigation, the movement was prohibited (which lasted until 1764) and the hymnbooks were confiscated and destroyed.¹¹ Latvian Moravians had to hand over all Moravian literature, as described, for example, in the life story of Kiegaļa Pēteris (1711–1802):

9 E. Ranzau. Historische Nachricht von dem Anfang und Fortgang des Gnaden Reich Jesu Christ in Liefland überhaupt und insonderheit in Lettland. Unitäts-Archiv Herrnhut, Manuskript Nr. NB.I.R. 3.148.m, Paragraph 45, 49.

10 See further: B. Paškevica, Vidzemes muižnieces Magdalēnas Elizabetes fon Hallartes (dzim fon Bilovas) dzimta un agrīnā darbība Halles piētistu interesēs. – Sievietes Reformācijas ceļā. LU, Rīga, 2018, 28–47.

11 A. Apinis. Latviešu hernhūtiešu vēsturiskie un biogrāfiskie rokraksti, 13.

In 1743, a commission sent to Valmiera forbade all our gatherings, our masters were given permission to take away all the congregation's books, and I also had to take my hymnbook to the manor house and hand it over to the inspector, who then slapped me with it: "You rebel you, listen to your pastor, that's more than enough for you", I was told I would be whipped, but in the end, I was released. [...] when all meetings were forbidden, we gathered in small groups, whether in the woods or in some other secret place, we encouraged each other to cling tightly and always to the beloved Saviour, and helpers passed a message to Brother Bunthebart each week about how our Brethren and Sisters were faring.¹²

The period which, in the history of the Latvian Moravians gained the name "the silent march", had begun. Nevertheless, the writing, translation and distribution of handwritten texts for ritual purposes – speeches and hymns – continued without the acceptance and participation of the official church. Devotional literature was developing in parallel. The international nature of the movement also meant maintaining correspondence with Herrnhut, writing notifications and reports. The life stories of foreign Moravians translated into Latvian were read out during services, which inspired the members of the congregation to start writing down their life stories. From 1750, each meeting house wrote its own chronicles.¹³ Not only did congregations' historical descriptions circulate, but also those of the entire Moravian movement, as well as descriptions of missions. These texts manifested as the Moravians' "culture of writing", based on a "culture of narrative and rhetoric".¹⁴ Writing by hand, the distribution of texts as transcripts was not a characteristic specific to Livland, but a transnational phenomenon of the Moravian movement. The Moravians were not opposed to printed books in principle, but manuscripts were more exclusive, enabling secrecy and the distribution of texts for internal use, addressing the audience more directly, and also enabling censorship to be sidestepped.¹⁵

Ludvigs Adamovičs has provided the most pertinent description of the publishing of articles by the Unity of the Brethren in general. In his study of the Livland church and the Unity of the Brethren, he writes:

12 Keegala Peter. Unitäts-Archiv Herrnhut, R. 22.49.

13 A. Apīnis. Latviešu hērnhūtiešu vēsturiskie un biogrāfiskie rokraksti, 35.

14 P. Schmid. Moravian Memoirs as a Source for the History of Education. – Self, Community, World: Moravian Education in a Transatlantic World. Ed. by H. Lempa, P. Peucker. Lehigh University Press, Betlehem, 2010, 170.

15 Cf. G. Mettele. Global Communication among the Moravian Brethren: The Circulation of Knowledge and its Structures and Logistics. – Reporting Christian Missions in the Eighteenth Century: Communication, Culture of Knowledge and Regular Publication in a Cross-Confessional Perspective. Ed. by M. Friedrich, A. Schunka. Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2017, 158–161.

The writings of the Unity of the Brethren in Latvia originated independently of the leadership of the country's church and was not only printed without official religious censorship and published without the usual introductory and explanatory words of the superintendent-general, but also distributed without formal permission. In this way, the devotional writings of the Latvian Unity of the Brethren arrived at the status of illegal writing and remained so for decades. They were once confiscated and destroyed, the congregation itself has withdrawn some publications – but new, more complete versions reappeared and again found a way to the farms and hearts of Latvian peasants.¹⁶

The manuscripts were either tied to a ritual or to the need for mutual communication. The authors and translators of these manuscripts were initially mainly German brothers. Latvian preachers and congregation members also quickly became involved in writing alongside the German brothers, but in most cases they remain anonymous. However, some of the early Latvian writers can be identified. They include Dukuļa Pēteris (1760–1840) as a Latvian life story writer and, possibly, Ķīšu Pēteris as a translator of hymns together with Magnus Friedrich Bunthebart, a lecturer at the teachers' seminary. The transcribers of texts generally remain anonymous, but initially they definitely included students at the Jērakalns seminary. Their names have been most successfully identified in nineteenth-century transcripts because their handwritten correspondence and church records could be compared with signed manuscripts. This identification work was mainly performed by Aleksejs Apīnis. Those identified include deacons Johann Carl Barth (1787–1843), Friedrich Heinrich Röchling (1823–?), and Isaac Bourquin (1775–1856).¹⁷ Some manuscripts that circulated among the Moravians were also written or translated by Pietist Lutheran pastors favourably disposed toward the Moravians. Latvian transcribers from the beginning of the nineteenth century are better known, for example, Pēteris Baidiņš (1820?–?) and Gusts Ēverss (1787–1851), who created their own bindings with manuscripts of various content, which could be called manuscript books.¹⁸ Most of the manuscripts that have survived are transcripts from this period, sometimes called the “second heyday” of the Moravians.

Latvian Moravian manuscripts form an extremely heterogeneous body of texts: they cover both different time periods and different genres. They consist of both self-composed works and translations, and their sources are often based on printed books. Their authors are both

16 L. Adamovičs. *Vidzemes baznīca un latviešu zemnieks 1710–1740*. Ģenerālkomisija Latvijas Vidusskolu Skolotāju Kooperatīvs, Rīga, 1933, 341.

17 A. Apīnis, *Latviešu hērnhūtiešu vēsturiskie un biogrāfiskie rokraksti*, 25.

18 *Ibid.*, 25–26.

German brothers and Latvians (including some who were not themselves Moravian), as well as Lutheran pastors, and it is often impossible to determine authorship because anonymity was the norm. As most texts have survived as transcripts, exact dating of originals is often a problem. These aspects also determine the diversity of research opportunities. As Pia Schmidt has pointed out about Moravian life stories, they

can be used in quite different ways for historical research: as illustrations of the experiences of religious refugees, missionaries, or travellers; by literary scholars interested in the genre of devotional literature; by social historians concerned with issues of gender and race; or by proponents of the new cultural history or historical anthropology from the perspective of devotional practices.¹⁹

This can also be applied to the body of Latvian Moravian manuscripts as a whole. The creation of manuscripts in a way reflected the Moravians' general principle of priesthood: just as no restrictions were placed on peasants in terms of preaching, so everyone was invited to write.

THE LITERARY HISTORY PERSPECTIVE

First of all, these manuscripts are important in the history of literature. In the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, Latvian printed literature dynamically transformed. Alongside religious literature (sermons, hymns, catechisms, etc.), works of secular literature (stories, novels, poetry, essays, agricultural and medical advice) also appeared which, in the same way as religious literature, were written and translated by rural Lutheran pastors. These were generally translations from German and were influenced by the Popular Enlightenment (*Volksaufklärung*) ideas of the German-speaking countries, with a strong emphasis on rationalism.²⁰ Traditionally, histories of Latvian literature have limited themselves to reviewing the printed literature of this period. However, various works of fiction circulated as manuscripts, to some degree belonging to the tradition of devotional literature, which significantly expanded the reading material of Livland Latvians.

Various biblical accounts and apocryphal texts (for example, the Gospel of Nicodemus²¹), often written down by Latvian Moravians without the knowledge of the German brothers, lead to the reception

19 P. Schmid. *Moravian Memoirs*, 168.

20 See further: P. Daija. *Literary History and Popular Enlightenment in Latvian Culture*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2017.

21 A. Apinis. *Neprasot atļauju: latviešu rokkrasta literatūra 18. un 19. gadsimtā*. Liesma, Rīga, 1987, 28–29.

of English Puritan literature in Latvian, for example the translations (using German as the intermediate language) of Thomas Wilcox's treatise *A Choice Drop of Honey from the Rock Christ* (into Latvian 1770) and John Bunyan's allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* (into Latvian between 1787 and 1797).²² An abridged translation of Heinrich Jung-Stilling's mystical treatise *Das Heimweh* (Latvian transcript after 1817²³), as well as *belle-lettres* style treatises about nonconformists and preachers from the seventeenth century, circulated as transcripts. One of these worthy of note is the life story of the German preacher Hans Engelbrecht (1599–1642) *Hans Engelbrechts von Braunschweig wunderbarer Beruf und Lebens-Lauf*, which circulated in Latvian under the title *Tie dzīvības notikumi no tā Anča Eņģelbrekta* (Life Events from Ancis Eņģelbrekts, transcript 1845–1849).²⁴ In the latter text, the life story of an extremely popular seventeenth century German tailor who became a travelling religious preacher is retold; his ideas were close to mysticism, and the narrative is structured to evoke identification with Moravian readers. His suffering (being an outcast) is described in detail as well as his mystical visions.

These texts formed an unusual continuation of eighteenth century Baroque devotional literature, often merging Baroque elements with Enlightenment sentimentality. As with all Moravian manuscript literature, these texts were deeply immersed in religious experience, but at the same time they brought English, German and French literary motifs into Latvian literary culture:

The Unity of Brethren writings breathe the air of world culture. They have absorbed the features of different visions of life – Renaissance, Baroque, rationalist, they have absorbed the elements of various European free-thinking currents, but these currents echo in one way or another in the agonising processes of forming a new society.²⁵

This was a “religion of the heart” rather than the “religion of the mind” officially propagated by the Lutheran Church. This means, as Štoll points out, “the practice of an emotional, voluntary, and joyous faith in which the highest values are the psychic state of ‘grace’, repentance for one’s sins, and the experience of Jesus’ proximity, sacrifice and

22 Rare books and manuscript collection of National Library of Latvia, RX35,3,2, RX35,3,5. Latvian State Historical Archives, F. 4038, descr. 2, p. 967. Cf. A. Apinis. Neprasot atļauju, 30. See further: E. Ceske. Priekšvārds. “Krusta skolas grāmata” un tās autors. – J. N. Ramanis, *Krusta skolas grāmata*. Ed. E. Ceske. Zvaigzne ABC, Rīga, 1995.

23 Rare books and manuscript collection of the National Library of Latvia, RX35,3,2.

24 Rare books and manuscript collection of the National Library of Latvia, RX35,3,2.

25 A. Apinis. Neprasot atļauju, 34–35.

salvation, rather than church orthodoxy and dogmatic theology”.²⁶ The strongest manifestation of the “religion of the heart” was the hymns of the Moravians. As already mentioned, they also appeared in printed books, but the confiscation and destruction of the first printed books, after the movement was banned, strengthened the distribution of songs through transcripts. The hymns most consistently fostered the Moravians’ special imagery, developing “their own language of symbols, which seemed laughable, even salacious, to strangers”.²⁷ Hymns were one of the most pliable genres of manuscript literature. Not only were new songs written, but old ones were combined, fusing verses from different texts.²⁸ “Singing was given a lot of attention during gatherings and in everyday life, often replacing the recitation of the Word of God, and became an integral part of peasants’ lives,” notes Straube.²⁹ Rewriting and learning songs promoted the formation of Latvian literacy in the Moravian-influenced regions. Erich von Ranzau (1719–1796), the first officially appointed director of the Unity Archives, wrote:

Through these children [students at schools in Valmiermuiža and Valmiera founded by the Moravians] their parents also heard of the miracle of grace, and our Brethren took the opportunity to visit them in their family homes, where they found sympathetic ears and open hearts, introduced them to the translated songs, which the Brethren had got the schoolboys to make many copies of, and those who could not read, tried to learn to read and write because of these songs, which lead to this nation markedly changing in such a special way.³⁰

The significance of singing is recorded in many Latvian life stories. The transcribing and also translating of songs fostered the creativity of the brothers and sisters themselves. Hymns also served as a kind of shield against the negatives of real life for Moravians. The distinctive Christocentric and egalitarian nature of the newly arrived Moravian songs evoked enthusiasm and the desire to participate personally in the creative process. Consequently, the connection between the Moravian movement and Latvian choral singing traditions has been noted in previous studies.³¹ Both the songs and the sermons expressed traits of the Moravian worldview – contemplation and the primary role of feelings

26 P. Štolls. *Latviešu kultūra un brāļu draudze: Latviešu kultūras tradīciju čehu konteksti XVII–XX gadsimtā. u.c.*, Rīga, 2016, 136–137.

27 J. Krēsliņš. *Latviešu brāļu draudzes 250 gadu. – Laiks*, 1980, 101, 6.

28 M. Grudule. *Hernhūtiešu dziesmas un to nozīme latviešu kultūrā.* <https://braludraudze.lndb.lv/filter/?filter=2_4> Accessed 18/01/2022.

29 G. Straube, *Latvijas brāļu draudzes diārijs*, 233.

30 E. Ranzau. *Historische Nachricht*, Paragraph Nr. 23.

31 G. Straube. *Latvijas brāļu draudzes diārijs*, 233.

in faith; the notion that individual's relationship with God was direct, that it did not require the mediation of the church; refraining from interpreting the Scriptures, more orientation on the practical lessons of life.³²

The gradually strengthened tradition of fiction also paved the way for the translation of secular texts. One of the earliest was *Stāsts no Fridolīna* (A Story of Fridolin) (1820),³³ by an as-yet unidentified German author, translated by Jānis Peitāns (1801–1859), a carpenter from the Dikļi/Dickeln estate, who grew up in a Moravian family. In this text, which merges the elements of adventure story and a biographical novel, the colourful adventures of a son of a teacher have been explored including wrongful accusation in murder, military service in the army of East Indies and travel to Japan.³⁴

The most striking example and event in the Latvian literature of the Enlightenment era is Peitāns' translation of Friedrich Schiller's play *Die Räuber* (1783), *Laupītāji* (The Robbers, 1818), which he staged himself.³⁵ It should be noted that we can only in part talk about Peitāns' version of *Die Räuber* as a translation in the contemporary sense, because Peitāns selectively rendered some of the most colourful episodes in Latvian, but he fully preserved the plot and message.

MAKING HISTORY TOPICAL

Another important significance of Moravian literature is related to the movement's awareness of historical memory and, consequently, the expression of this in its texts. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the Moravians linked their origins to the religious reforms of Jan Hus, the subsequent Hussite movement, and the Unity of Czech Brethren formed in the fifteenth century. These events are described in David Cranz's (1723–1777) book, *Alte und Neue Brüder-Historie* (1772), which draws on the work of Jan Amos Komenský and a Latvian

32 A. Apīnis. Latviešu hernhūtiēšu vēsturiskie un biogrāfiskie rokraksti, 41; P. Štolls. Latviešu kultūra un brāļu draudze, 136.

33 Academic Library of the University of Latvia, RM Peitāns J. I. Cf. Apīnis, Neprasot atļauju, 78–79.

34 See further: A. Apīnis. Neprasot atļauju, 78–79.

35 A. Apīnis. Pa pirmās latviešu teātra izrādes dalībnieku pēdām. – Zvaigzne, 1965, 3, 4–5; A. Apīnis. Gājiens pa pirmās latviešu teātra izrādes dalībnieku pēdām turpinās. – Literatūra un Māksla, 1974, 16, 15–16; A. Heniņš, Dikļu Peitāni. – Karogs, 1981, 6, 154–155; B. Paškevica. Schillers Drama "Die Räuber" in der Übersetzung eines lettischen Leibeigenen. Eine eigenartige Rezeptions- und Inspirationsgeschichte. – Baltische Literaturen in der Goethezeit. Hg. v. H. Bosse, O. H. Elias, T. Taterka. Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 2011, 291–302.

translation of which – *Tie stāsti no tās vecas brāļu draudzes; tie stāsti no tās atjaunotas brāļu draudzes* (Those stories from the old Unity of the Brethren; those stories from that restored Unity of Brethren) was distributed as transcripts (between 1798 and 1801, 1835, between 1845 and 1849).³⁶ In this work, the history of the Christianisation of Czechia has been described as well as subsequent events including the Waldensian heretic movement, the Hussite Wars in the fifteenth century, the defeat of the Taborites and the establishment of the Czech Unity of the Brethren. The history of this brethren ends during the Thirty Years' War. In following, the biography of Jan Amos Comenius is retold, representing Comenius as the link between old and new Unity of the Brethren and relating the events after Comenius' death.

In addition to the historical treatise on Jan Hus, another story *Stāsts no viena patiesīga liecinieka tā kunga Jēzus Kristus ar vārdu Jānis Guss* (A story from one true witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, called Jan Hus, published prior to 1834), circulated in manuscript.³⁷ In this text, the biography of Jan Hus is outlined, with special attention to the popularity of his sermons and quoting his 1415 letter from Konstanz. The condemnations and attacks on Hus resulting in his death are described in detail, at the same time demonstrating Hus's unwavering belief.³⁸

Related to these texts was the treatise *Kādas ziņas no vecu brāļu draudzes* (Some news from the Old Unity of the Brethren), which also briefly described the founding of Herrnhut.³⁹

In essence, as Apīnis has pointed out, these were histories of heresy and persecution,⁴⁰ and they allowed the Moravians to interpret the persecution they themselves faced and place it in a broader context. But more than that, this shared history also strengthened the sense of community. The Moravians identified themselves as an “invisible church”, and the shared history, as well as the circulation of texts, were the means by which to keep the church together.⁴¹

36 Rare books and manuscript collection of National Library of Latvia, RX35,1,50. See further: E. Ceske, Daži apsvērumi par Dāvida Kranca grāmatas “Vecā un jaunā brāļu vēsture” (“Alte und neue Brüder-Historie”, Barby 1771) tulkojumu latviešu valodā un tā norakstiem (18. gs. otrā puse – 19. gs. sākums). – LNB Zinātniskie raksti, 2018, 4 (XXIV), 66–83.

37 Rare books and manuscript collection of National Library of Latvia, RX35,3,5. See further: P. Štolls. Latviešu kultūra un brāļu draudze, 248–252.

38 See further the analysis of this work: P. Štolls. Latviešu kultūra un brāļu draudze, 248–252.

39 National Historical Museum of Latvia, VN 2219,1.

40 A. Apīnis. Neprasot atļauju, 26.

41 C. Ahlberger. The Moravian Archive and the Magical Ark: On Archivization, Lebenslauf and the Embodiment of an “Invisible” Church. – Moravian Memoirs: Pillars of an Invisible Church. Ed. by C. Ahlberger, P. von Wachenfeldt. Artos Academic, Skelleftea, 2017, 67.

The translation of Zinzendorf's *Erster Versuch zu einem Chronico der Kirchentage* (1757) with Latvian title *Pirma pārbaudīšana uz vienu laikugrāmatu tās draudzes dienu* (The first examination of Unity days through its diary) explored biblical and historical events up to the 4th century. The history of the beginnings of the Christian church was intended for use in Unity of the Brethren schools, and was written as a chronicle covering the period 28 to 329 AD. It was a difficult test for translators in terms of language complexity, as was the case with other Zinzendorf texts whose Latvian translations have survived. The translator of the Zinzendorf chronicle was probably Heinrich Baumann (1716–1790), a Lutheran pastor and a supporter of the Livland Unity of the Brethren Church. Baumann strove to translate all of Zinzendorf's text in good faith, without abridging or adapting anything, as was often the case in early Latvian writings. The translation did not contain the explanations and index of persons listed after the text in the German edition, but the body text was 'transferred' literally. The innumerable names of historical persons, geographic names, and the realities of the church in this text bowled into the Latvian language like an avalanche, expanding its boundaries. Even if new words, such as *poet* and *philosopher*, demanded explanation, which the translator was happy to provide, they were still inserted into the minds of Latvian peasants and quietly herald the beginning of a new century of Enlightenment and national self-consciousness.⁴²

The Moravian sense of historicity did not involve only looking at the past, but also recording the events of the present so as to preserve them for future generations. Each congregation wrote its own diary in the form of a chronicle.⁴³ Exchanges of these texts fostered the coherence of the Moravian movement and the "imaginary order".⁴⁴

Awareness of the historical roots of one's religious community led to the development of historical consciousness in general, and this facilitated the appearance of texts dedicated to the history of the Livland region in manuscript literature. The first of these, Friedrich Bernhard Blaufuß' (1697–1756) *Stāsti no tās vecas un jaunās būšanas to Vidzemes ļaužu* (Stories of the old and new life of the Livonian people), was written relatively early, in 1753, and is devoted to an account of the

42 Rare books and manuscript collection of National Library of Latvia, RX35,1,49.

43 A. Apīnis. Latviešu hernhūtiešu vēsturiskie un biogrāfiskie rokraksti, 35.

44 G. Mettele. Spiritual Kinship: The Moravians as an International Fellowship of Brothers and Sisters (1730s–1830s). – Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond: Experiences Since the Middle Ages. Ed. by C. H. Johnson, D. W. Sabean, S. Teuscher, F. Trivellato. Berghahn Books, New York, 2011, 168.

events of Christianisation.⁴⁵ It was intended to provide an alternative to the rumours surrounding the progress of Christianisation circulating among the rural population. A reflection, *Īsa pārraudzīšana* (A Brief overview), dedicated to the history of the Unity of Brethren in the Baltics was produced by German Brethren in Estonia, while Deacon Johann Friedrich Schippang (1788–1869) also wrote a more extensive work on this topic.⁴⁶ This was followed by other manuscripts. Particularly noteworthy is J. Pulāns' *Stāsts tās latviešu tautas no viņas priekšlatkiem līdz šai dienai* (The story of the Latvian nation from early times to the present day) (around 1800), which presents summarised extracts of Garlieb Merkel's works. This manuscript is preserved in mid-nineteenth century transcripts and confirms that Merkel's works reached Latvian readers long before the first printed translation in 1905.⁴⁷ Merkel's works also influenced *Ar acīm redzēts ceļš uz Vidzemes debesīm* (The path to heaven seen in Livland) (1843), a handwritten historical account by Jānis Ruģēns (1817–1876). It is a singular work that fused elements of edifying literature with historical material. Ruģēns presented episodes from Livland's history using a structure borrowed from Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the form of a pilgrimage of the Latvian nation.⁴⁸

Three important features may be pointed out. Firstly, the example of Ruģēns illustrates the thesis that historical literature for Moravians simultaneously functioned as scholarly and fictional works.⁴⁹ Secondly, the potential for social protest can be seen clearly in relation to the circulation of texts dedicated to historical events, which no longer involved the Moravian movement but rather the Livland region. The link between regions populated by Moravians and protest movements in them is an interesting topic, but the role of manuscript circulation in these processes is a task for future research. Thirdly, the plasticity of manuscript literature is noteworthy: although it began with devotional texts, it contained the creative potential to turn to new topics that were no longer related to religion or Moravian history.

45 See further: J. Šiliņš. Frīdriha Bernharda Blaufūsa "Stāsti" un latviešu brāļu draudze. – *Letonica*, 2016, 32, 41–50.

46 Rare books and manuscript collection of National Library of Latvia, EX35,1,51. Cf.

A. Apīnis. Latviešu hernhūtiešu vēsturiskie un biogrāfiskie rokraksti, 34.

47 A. Apīnis. J. Pulāna "Stāsts tās latviešu tautas". – *LPSR Zinātņu akadēmijas Vēstis*, 1966, 7, 22–33; A. Apīnis. G. Merķelis latviešu rokraksta literatūrā. – *LPSR Zinātņu akadēmijas Vēstis*, 1974, 2, 128–129; J. Boguna, I. Cīrulis, L. Rutka, T. Taterka. Von der Schrift der Gemeinde zur Stimme der Neation. Zur Konstruktion lettischer Identität um 1800 in J. Pulans "Stahsts tahs Latweeschu Tautas". – *Baltische Literaturen in der Goethezeit*. Hg. v. H. Bosse, O. H. Elias, T. Taterka. Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 2011, 15–64.

48 Cf. P. Daija. John Bunyans Roman "Die Pilgerreise zur seligen Ewigkeit" und die Literatur der lettischen Brüdergemeine. – *Unitas Fratrum*, 65/66, 2011, 149–162.

49 A. Apīnis. Latviešu hernhūtiešu vēsturiskie un biogrāfiskie rokraksti, 41.

LIFE STORIES

The Moravian manuscripts are an important source of social history, and Moravian life stories provide one of the most valuable group of texts in this regard. They also demonstrate a sense of historicity that is transferred to the level of the individual. As early as in 1747, Zinzendorf was urging Moravians to write down their life stories.⁵⁰ The tradition of life stories was based on various sources, for example Pietists' biographies, European confessional narrative traditions, and funeral elegies. The call for congregation members to write down their life stories was based on Moravian habits of reflection as well as on the notion that church history is not institutional but rather is the sum of all individual experiences:

Church history as understood by the Moravians (and many other Pietists) was not the history of institutions and doctrines, but rather the sum total of incidents and individual testimonies of faith that documented the (be-) coming and growing of God's kingdom (the so-called *Reich-Gottes-Arbeit*).⁵¹

Religious awakening lay at the heart of the life stories, written according to a specific pattern which saw descriptions of origins and parents, sinful childhood and youth, turning to God, and becoming part of the congregation. It can be agreed that in this case, descriptions of the inner lives prevailed over outer-life elements, which were mainly incidental, secondary in nature.⁵² And yet many details of daily life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries broke into the Moravians' life stories, as did evidence of the mobility of peasants in this era.

Initially, translations of foreign life stories spread among Latvians and served as a model to write their own life stories. Reading life stories out loud was part of the ceremonies, but over time, the habit of reading them at home also became stronger. It has been pointed out in scholarship that life stories had a set of various functions: the settling of accounts, personally and before God, to give testimony to the congregation, and to manifest a sense of historicity.⁵³ By simultaneously revealing both common and individual identities, life stories confirmed the importance that each individual gained through the congregation.⁵⁴ Another important function was to serve the religious growth of the congregation.

50 C. Lost. *Das Leben als Lehrtext: Lebensläufe aus der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine*. Herrnhuter Verlag, Herrnhut, 2007, 8.

51 G. Mettele. *Global Communication*, 153

52 Cf. H. Schwalm. *Autobiography. – Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*. Vol. I: *Theory and Concepts*. Ed. by M. Wagner-Egelhaaf. De Gruyter, Berlin, Boston, 2019, 508.

53 Cf. C. Lost. *Das Leben als Lehrtext*, 12.

54 *Ibid.*, 12.

One vivid example is the life story of Skangaļu Jēkabs (1722–1801), written in German, later disseminated in Latvian translations. Skangaļu Jēkabs was born in 1723 to a Latvian peasant family in Livland. He learned to read early, learning Christmas carols and Easter hymns by heart, as well as entire chapters from the Old and New Testaments. Jēkabs read both alone and in front of other members of his household:

And each time I read aloud or sang aloud, I began to reflect and make comparisons of everything I had sung and read, especially in the New Testament, in letters to individual congregations. Then I realised that neither I nor the rest of the people around me were like the people that were described therein. Then I had very miserable contemplations that things should be somehow different.⁵⁵

Jēkabs learned the linen weaver's trade and in his adolescence in Valmiera/Wolmar, he met Bunthebart, a Moravian preacher, the future head of the Valmiera teachers' seminary, who left a strong impression on him. Appointed a runner to the Duke of Courland Peter von Biron (1724–1800), he travelled to St. Petersburg. Having been relieved of his duties through illness and freed from serfdom, he returned to Livland, from where he travelled on to Germany, subsequently learning the soap-maker's trade. Having lived in various places in Germany, he later settled in Zeist in the Netherlands, becoming the director of a soap factory. Skangaļa Jēkabs himself wrote about the period up to the age of 17, an unknown writer recording the rest of his life. In his life story, Skangaļa Jēkabs focuses mainly on the inner life, religious revelations and his experience of sinfulness, the influence of the Moravian Brethren on his spiritual growth. But in doing so, he relates much more: the social mobility and travels of an individual Latvian peasant in the eighteenth century, as well as the transnational network of the Moravian movement. Moreover, Skangaļa Jēkabs also touches on the historic relations between Latvians and Germans, describing his first meeting with Peter von Biron in St Petersburg:

Entranced by what I was seeing, I heard someone speak Latvian and make observations about us from a gallery above us – we would be good as recruits for the Guard to the heir to the throne. [...] But his [Biron's] address to us was about home, very polite, and in Latvian no less, in our mother tongue. [...] I immediately reflected – this great lord, who is supposed to be a vice-emperor, is acting so politely and incongruously as if he were one of us. And our miserable estate managers in Latvia treat us so arrogantly and contemptuously, us poor Latvians, as if they were demigods. [...] There is

55 As quoted in A. Apinis. *Atraišīšanās*. – Grāmata, 1992, 1, 80.

no contempt, as there is in Latvia for us, poor Latvians, on the part of the Germans, but quite the opposite.⁵⁶

We can see here how analysis of the experience and consciousness of the community conceals a seed of social and, in a sense, national protest.⁵⁷

Several life stories discuss the gaining of personal freedom during eighteenth century serfdom through so-called *brīvgrāmatas* (literally, free books). Latvians were not only peasants but had also been apprenticed to German or Latvian masters. Blacksmiths, linen weavers, shoemakers and coachmen are mentioned in life stories. Some of them were trained in several trades.

Life stories of eighteenth century women are a very rare phenomenon in Latvian social history. These women were not only members of the congregation, but often held senior positions in Unity of the Brethren structures, such as choir leaders or nurses. In Moravian women's life stories too, one of the last sentences is often news of death in childbirth or at an early age for an unnamed reason.⁵⁸ Ruģēna Kača reached the age of 51, and in her youth was ordained as a nurse to the congregation's sick members. After marrying, she led the married couples' choir together with her husband.⁵⁹ The involvement of women in community life and the holding of office is a phenomenon specific to the Unity of the Brethren, which is practically not found elsewhere in Protestant church life in this era. Significantly, women's life stories are much shorter than men's, indirectly illustrating the insignificance of women, and in this being representative of the era, although the existence of such life stories is already very unusual in the discourse of the era.

One child's life story is also known.⁶⁰ Children's life stories were written when a child had led an exemplary life, was seriously ill, or had died (or was expected to).

In the context of social history, translations of foreign life stories can also be mentioned, as they gave Moravian readers an insight into the specific character of foreign countries, and also included information about the persecution of Moravians in the Czech Republic and Germany. Polish, American, English, Danish and Swedish men's and women's life stories have also been identified.⁶¹ These manuscripts strengthened the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁷ See further on Skangaļu Jēkabs: L. Adamovičs. Skangaļu Jēkabs (1723–1801): Audējs, hercoga Bīrona skrējējs un ziepju vāritājs. – *Senatne un Māksla*, 1938, 2, 7–11; A. Apīnis. *Neparasts gājums*. – *Karogs*, 1990, 2, 166–169.

⁵⁸ Cf. Unitāts-Archiv Herrnhut. SHAHt_164_286, S. 614, 615; GN_C_136_1765_6, S. 171–174.

⁵⁹ Unitāts-Archiv Herrnhut GN_A_164_1772_5.

⁶⁰ Behrnu Ds. St. Dahwid Misse. Museum of Literature and Music, Riga, S R 48/14 44262.

⁶¹ A. Apīnis. *Neparasot atļauju*, 20–21.

Moravians' sense of belonging to a transnational network, their cross-border identity.

Mission descriptions and letters also contributed to this. As early as the eighteenth century, the circulation of messages from congregations was recognised as “a fortunate invention and a blessed method of keeping all of Brethren Christianity in the whole world of one mind”.⁶² The Latvian Moravians themselves wrote letters and sent them to Herrnhut – they are stored in the Moravian Unity Archives – and, in the same way, letters from the leaders of the movement in Herrnhut were also circulating in Livland.⁶³

READING HABITS AND IMPACT

Manuscripts were most often read aloud. They were also generally written in a ceremonial, uplifting style, often with an emphasis on the tragic, emotionally exaggerated elements.⁶⁴ There are also testimonies about silent reading; however, overall, the reading habits of Moravians would still need to be studied in the context of the ‘reading revolution’ and the transition from intensive to extensive reading.⁶⁵ The diversity of manuscripts and the regular appearance of new texts suggest the gradual strengthening of extensive reading habits, although secular texts appeared relatively late and to a limited extent. Reading remained largely a religious experience, even if it was no longer part of the ritual. The great attention paid by the Moravians to education led to a situation where, at the end of the eighteenth century, the proportion of literate people in Moravian areas of Livland reached 90 %.⁶⁶ The circulation of manuscripts and the habits of regular reading they fostered also played an important role in this process. By adopting the practice of manuscript literature from the German brothers, the Latvian Moravians became the first ethnic Latvians to cultivate Latvian literary culture; meanwhile, where printed literature was concerned, the dominance of Baltic-German pastors persisted.

The key to the success of the Unity of the Brethren among Latvian peasants lies in the geographic and at the same time transcendental

62 G. Mettele. *Global Communication among the Moravian Brethren*, 151.

63 G. Straube. *Vidzemes brāļu draudžu ietekme uz grāmatniecības attīstību Latvijā*. – *Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmijas Vēstis*, 1990, 6, 45–49.

64 A. Apinis. *Neprasot atļauju*, 19.

65 P. Daija. *The Reading Revolution*. – *A New History of Latvian Literature: The Long Nineteenth Century*. Ed. by P. Daija, B. Kalnačs. (*Cross-Roads: Studies in Culture, Literary Theory, and History*, 29), Peter Lang, Berlin, 2022, 87–103.

66 A. Apinis. *Grāmata un latviešu sabiedrība līdz 19. gadsimta vidum*. *Liesma*, Rīga, 1991, 110.

omnipresence of the Moravian's activities in the physical and spiritual living space of the Latvian peasant:

The Word of God was ubiquitous, and it was often in motion. The sacred place of the divinity in the ritual, where everything happens, was fluid. For the little church within the church [*ecclesiola in ecclesia*, Latin original] the most important place to meet the Saviour and his companions seems to have been on the rural roads of Livland. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119, 105).⁶⁷

The question of whether Moravian manuscripts belong to the Enlightenment tradition can also be asked. Even though the Moravians developed in conscious opposition to the Enlightenment, much of their activity led to the results that the Enlightenment culture had set itself to achieve.⁶⁸ Commenting on the movement's enlightening significance, Gvido Straube has emphasised:

Directly because of this, the level of education in Livland increased rapidly, consequently this region was considered to be the best educated part of the Russian Empire in the twentieth century. This undoubtedly contributed to the intense political activity of the people of Livland both in the nineteenth century and in the 1905 Revolution and also in the events of 1917. At the same time, the enlightenment activities of this movement had a positive effect on the awakening and development of the local population's national self-consciousness, fostering its spiritual liberation. This process yielded the first members of the national intelligentsia.⁶⁹

As a local manifestation of the transnational manuscript culture, Latvian manuscript literature facilitated these processes, promoting community awareness, and the transfer and dissemination of ideas.

Pavel Štoll, referencing Juri Lotman, has outlined three functions of Moravian manuscripts: the mnemonic, communicative and creative.⁷⁰ Even though the beginning was practical, focused on mutual communication, over time writing and reading became a self-contained activity: the communicative function was initially joined by the mnemonic and, over time, the creative. Writing habits were influenced by both preaching among the laity and the tradition of talking things through ("caurrunāšana"), which overall formed a culture of reflection; thanks to the extensive circulation of manuscripts, the Moravians can

67 J. Krēsliņš. DEIN Wort ist die Wahrheit. Über die Entstehung und die Auswirkungen der lettischen Bibel im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. – *Unitas Fratrum*, 65/66, 2011, 128.

68 H. Lemppa, P. Peucker. Introduction. – *Self, Community, World: Moravian Education in a Transatlantic World*. Ed. by H. Lemppa, P. Peucker. Lehigh University Press, Bethlehem, 2010, 18.

69 G. Straube. Latvijas brāļu draudzes diārijs, 232.

70 P. Štolls. Latviešu kultūra un brāļu draudze, 163.

also be called a “narrative community”.⁷¹ Thus, as a whole, manuscripts contributed to the community’s growing self-awareness through the written word.

The significance of the Moravian movement for the further development of Latvian culture has been described at various levels, emphasising economic growth, the formation of a middle class and the increase in education, as well as the establishment of specific cultural practices. Gvido Straube has highlighted the contribution to the Christianisation of Latvians, enlightenment activities, moral upbringing, changes to rural architecture, economic improvement, the effect on peasants’ autonomy and social prestige, and the influence on peasant unrest.⁷² Pavel Štoll has divided the Moravian influence into three groups: firstly, religion and morality (the first real success in the Christianisation of Latvians, improvement in morality), secondly, education and culture, and thirdly, social, national and political emancipation. While emancipation is associated with the formation of the middle class and – no less important – economic emancipation, the pre-history of the national awakening and the seeds of the formation of a civil society, its role in culture and education is manifested in the cultivation of choral singing, instrumental music, graveyard memorial days and amateur theatre traditions, although it can mainly “be seen in the increases in Latvians’ writing and reading skills and education level, their first involvement in the creation of devotional and secular literature, as well as in the pre-scientific-era beginnings of church and national historiography”.⁷³

As Moravian manuscripts were only distributed among congregation members, so remaining relatively secret from outsiders, their direct influence on society remained limited. Just as the Moravian meeting houses were built so as to be isolated from the outside world and hidden from external view,⁷⁴ manuscripts were circulated covertly, hidden from the general public. Consequently, the main influence of these manuscripts is to be found within the Moravian movement itself, and it can be described in two levels. On the one hand, the manuscripts fostered a sense of unity and nurtured an “imagined community”⁷⁵

71 G. Mettele. *Spiritual Kinship*, 164.

72 G. Straube. *Latvijas brāļu draudzes diarijs*, 232–235. Cf. also G Philipp. *Die Wirksamkeit der Herrnhuther Brüdergemeine*, 325–346.

73 P. Štolls. *Latviešu kultūra un brāļu draudze*, 115.

74 J. Jaunzems. *Brāļu draudzes saiešanas nami*. – *Senatne un Māksla*, 1940, 1, 96.

75 Cf. G. Mettele. *Eine “Imagined Community” jenseits der Nation*. *Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine als transnationale Gemeinschaft*. – *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 2006, 32, 1, 45–68.

both regionally and internationally, that would not otherwise have been conceivable. On the other hand, the manuscripts also developed a particular reflective literary culture that was characteristic of Moravians and significantly complemented the oral communication tradition. Indirectly, this culture undoubtedly furthered the emancipation and education of Latvian society. In later Latvian literature, the influence of Moravians was expressed in a certain imagery, especially in the so-called “pure-minded” characters in Latvian authors’ works of the second half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ Similarly, Moravian Brethren, as Māra Grudule has pointed out, served as a source of moral values, leading to self-awareness and reflection.⁷⁷

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the point of view of modern-day research, the collection of manuscripts is interesting, first and foremost as a “bottom-up” form of literary cultural expression, as an alternative to official book culture, and as a set of texts that developed spontaneously without a fixed, stable centre. These texts makes it possible to recognise and study how the circulation of manuscripts continued to be an important way of disseminating information long after the invention of book printing and how literary culture developed in underground forms within the peasant community. The manuscripts remain an indispensable source, revealing the voices of Latvian peasants in the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, which would otherwise most likely remain unheard. In their life stories, they reveal how peasants understood and experienced their lives, especially religious experiences, while in other texts they exhibit the literary imagination and historical awareness of their era. As there was a fluid transition from a religious to a secular worldview within the manuscripts, they also reveal the potential for protest inherent in this underground culture, and their significance is much broader than that set by the historical context of religious renewal.

76 I. Kalniņa. Gestalten der reinherzigen Menschen in der lettischen Literatur. – *Unitas Fratrum*, 65/66, 2011, 163–178; I. Miezīte. Hernhūtisma pēdas latviešu dzejā (19. gs. 2. puse – 20. gs. 1. puse). – *Vidzeme, baznīca, sabiedrība laikmetu maiņā*. Ed. G. Straube. Vidzemes Augstskola, Valmiera, 2009, 69–83.

77 M. Grudule, *Hernhūtiešu dziesmas un to nozīme latviešu kultūrā*.

LÄTI HERNHUUTLASTE KÄSIKIRJAD. AJALOOLINE ÜLEVAADE JA UURIMISSUUNAD

Pauls Daija, Beata Paškevica

Artiklis vaadeldakse hernhuutlaste käsikirju kirjandus- ja sotsiaalajaloo allikana. Hernhuutus oli usulise ärkamise liikumine, mis leidis eestlaste ja lätlaste seas hulganisti järgijaid. See tähistas vaimselt ja ühiskondlikult lootusrikast perioodi, pani aluse lätlastest keskklassi moodustumisele ja iseorganiseerumisele ning hariduse edendamisele selle sees. Artiklis keskendutakse Liivimaa Läti-osale. Antakse ülevaade Läti hernhuutluse käsikirjalisest pärandist ja tuuakse välja selle olulisemad uurimisvõimalused. Paljud käsikirjad ootavad endiselt süvitsi uurimist, samuti võib käsikirjakogusid mitut moodi tõlgendada, eriti võrdlevast vaatenurgast, mis toob välja nende kuulumise rahvusvahelisse vennastekoguduste liikumise võrgustikku. Suurem osa neist tekstidest, mille on kirjutanud, tõlkinud ja ümber kirjutanud läti ja saksa vennad ja õed Liivimaal – umbes 500 ühikut – on hoiul Läti Rahvusraamatukogu haruldaste raamatute ja käsikirjade osakonnas, ülejäänud Läti Ülikooli akadeemilises raamatukogus, Kirjanduse ja Muusika Muuseumis, Läti Riiklikus Ajalooarhiivis, vennastekoguduse liikumise arhiivis Herrnhutis ja mujal.

Need 18. sajandil ja 19. sajandi alguses kirjutatud ja ümber kirjutatud käsikirjad moodustavad heterogeense tekstikogumi, mis hõlmab usutekste, kirikulaule, biograafilisi kirjutisi, ajalookäsitlusi, kirju ja kristlikku kirjavara. Saksa misjonäride käsikirju kirjutasiid ümber peamiselt läti talupojad ning sellel oli märkimisväärne roll läti kirjanduse arengule ja Liivimaa talupoegade kirjaoskuse edenemisele. Artiklis vaadeldakse hernhuutlaste käsikirjaliste tekstide traditsiooni arengut kirjandusajaloo vaatenurgast, pöörates erilist tähelepanu ajaloolistele tekstidele ja elulugudele; näidatakse, et hernhuutlastele täitis ajalookirjandus ühtaegu teadus- ja ilukirjanduse otstarvet. Ühiskondliku protesti potentsiaali võib näha selles, kuidas ajaloosündmustele pühendatud tekste levitati. Kuigi hernhuutlaste käsikirjaline traditsioon algas kristliku kirjandusega, oli selles peidus loomepotentsiaal kaasata uusi teemasid, mis ei olnud enam seotud usu ega hernhuutlaste ajalooga. Kuigi hernhuutlaste elulookirjeldused olid suunatud sissepoole, sisaldasid need mitte ainult argielu detaile, mis on väärtuslik sotsiaalajaloo allikas, vaid ka õõnestamispotentsiaali.

Hernhuutlaste käsikirjade mõju analüüsitakse artiklis ühiskondlike muutuste ja hernhuutlaste liikumise vallandatud vabastamissuundumuste kontekstis. Need käsikirjad pakuvad eelkõige huvi kui „alt üles“ kirjandusliku kultuuriilmingu vorm, alternatiiv ametlikule raamatukultuurile, ja kui tekstikogum, mis kujunes spontaanselt, kindla ja stabiilse keskmeta. Tervikuna võimaldavad need tekstid hinnata ja uurida, kuidas käsikirjad olid ka sel perioodil, veel hulk aega pärast raamatutrükkimise leiutamist, endiselt oluline teabe edastamise moodus ning kuidas talupojakogukondades moodustus põrandaaluste vormidena kirjanduslik kultuur. Käsikirjad on vaieldamatult asendamatu allikas, mis toob meieni 18. sajandi ja 19. sajandi esimese poole läti talupoegade hääle, mida muidu tõenäoliselt ei kuuldakski. Oma elulookirjeldustes avaldavad talupojad selle, kuidas nad näevad oma elu ja eriti usulisi kogemusi, teistes tekstides aga ilmutavad kirjanduslikku kujutlusvõimet ja ajaloolist teadlikkust oma ajastust.