

Consolidation of Surnames in Vidzeme (Latvia) during the First Half of the 19th Century: Origin, Semantics

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DOI: 10.2436/15.8040.01.164

Abstract

Vidzeme in the 1820s and 1830s was characteristic for consolidation of last names. Before this period surnames in rural areas were recorded only among the landed gentry, clergy and a few groups of craftsmen.

The need to introduce last names was determined mainly by the limited number of given first names, as it was difficult to distinguish between the numerous bearers of the names Jānis, Pēteris, etc., residing not only in one and the same civil parish, but even in one and the same farmstead. On 26 March 1819, laws concerning Vidzeme peasants were passed, stating in Clause 11 that all peasants had to adopt a last name which from then on should remain unchanged. Recommendations for the choice of last names were also published. Judging from the materials of “Revision of Ploughs and Living Souls” available at the State Historical Archives of the Republic of Latvia and from the data in the Church Record Books, last names were adopted until 1828.

Words from Latvian standard literary language (common word-stock) and dialectalisms, as well as words from contact languages of German, Slavonic and Finno-Ugrian origin, were chosen as the sources of last names.

Both Latvian and foreign words can be divided into two semantic groups: last names formed from common names and those formed from proper names.

Last names formed from common names can be further divided into the following subgroups: with flora semantics, with fauna semantics, motivated by the outer appearance and character of people, with ethnonymic semantics, with craft and profession semantics, of physical-geographic origin, and with abstract semantics.

The last names formed from proper names can be divided into two groups: of anthroponymic origin and of toponymic origin.

Outside of the mentioned semantic groups there are numerous other last names about which the expert on Latvian last names Ernests Blese once said: “there remain numerous distinct concepts, which are not readily classified as to their semasiology, as well as many words whose essence and meaning we no longer understand” (Blese, 1929, 130).

Research into historical last names in the aspect of the origin of Latvian and contact languages could help to determine the semantic affiliation of numerous last names.

Essential changes in the Latvian anthroponymic system took place during the 19th century: identification of individual Latvian peasants by a combination of the name of their home and their name evolved into assigning them a name and surname. Until now these surnames have practically not been studied but, as the Latvian linguist E. Blese noted, they are “linguistically rather significant”; were it to be possible to collect these surnames from parish church registers of births, deaths, and marriages, then it ought to help resolve a number of questions regarding phonetic changes in surnames, their ethnological origin, etc. (Blese, 1924, 168).

Undoubtedly, even prior to 1826, at which time surnames began widely to be attributed and fixed in Vidzeme, some surnames already existed but, following common law, they could be adopted and changed at will (Upelnieks, 1936, 236-237). These surnames can be discovered from inspection of the limited number of Evangelical Lutheran church baptismal records of the period (LVVA, 235. f.). For example, church records from the Evangelical Lutheran parish of Ērgeme give the first surnames in 1821, the surname *Jürgen* (*Karl Kristian Jürgen*), of Germanic origin, is recorded in 1821, and a number of surnames of different origin were recorded in 1822, i.e. *Leitis* (*Jurre Leitis*), *Kalniņ* (*Peter Kalniņ*), *Gaike* (*Karl Ludwig Gaike*), *Sutta* (*Peter Sutta*), *Studen* (*Dahwis Studen*). Surnames are even less frequently found prior to 1826 in the census records (Counting of Souls) in the province of

Vidzeme. One rare example is the case of 1816 census records for the Kokenberg estate, located in Ērgemes parish, where already then more than one-half of those residing on the estate possessed surnames. By contrast, in 1816 no surname was recorded for anyone else other than for the Lord of Alswig Manor in the respective parish.

At the beginning of the 19th century a new legal basis was put in place for attributing surnames. Changes of surname were subsequently only possible following a legal process. The “Laws on peasants in Vidzeme” were issued on 26 March 1819, wherein paragraphs 11 and 12 stated the necessity of accepting a surname and the grace period during which this had to be done. A practical motive underlying this legal requirement was the fact that more than one person could have the same given name in a particular household, not to mention the multiplicity of persons with the same given name residing in the bounds of an estate or parish. Thus, it was impossible uniquely to identify a person simply by their given name. All surnames had to be attributed by the end of 1826 (Likkumi, 1820, 53). Examples of the multiplicity of persons with the same given name within the same household can be found in practically every estate. For example, out of 10 men in the household Kalna Steltes, there were 4 named Jānis, 2, Juris, one each, Sanders, Viļums, Pēteris and Pāvuls. Additionally out of four women two were named Marija and one each, Mārieta and Anna. After the attribution of surnames the 1826 census gives a different surname for each of the men named Jānis, i.e. *Jahn Kirpets*, *Jahn Suhbur*, *Jahn Schauņ*, *Jahn Ahbel* (LVVA 199. f., 1. apr., 97. l., 49.-50. lp.). A similar situation obtained for the Žubes household, Oppekāln parish, Reppekāln estate, where there resided six men named Toms, who in 1826 were listed with differing surnames, i.e. *Thom Abakohks*, *Thom Alksniht*, *Thom Buckalder* (2x), *Thom Jankarls*, *Thom Uhdriht* (LVVA 199. f., 1. apr., 369. l., 5.-6. lp.).

Paragraph 12 of the “Laws on peasants in Vidzeme” specified that all surnames attributed in 1826 had to be recorded, in triplicate, in the protocols of a legal process (Likkumi, 1820, 54); however, these records of an essential legal process have survived only in the case of a few estates in Vidzeme. Thus, other, equally valid documents that have fortuitously survived from the period serve for the purpose of analysing the process of how surnames began to be attributed. Presently the most comprehensive source of information comprises census records from 1826, which documents are kept by the Latvian State Historical Archive.

Based upon a study of the process of assigning surnames as carried out in the provinces of Kurzeme and Vidzeme, K. Upelnieks concluded that the right to attribute surnames was accorded the “boards of estates, i.e. the manorial police, specifically the lords of these manors” (Upelnieks, 1936, 250). Assigning surnames thus comprised two elements: “On the one hand, an individual who proposed a surname, and on the other hand a legal entity, parish or other, that decided on whether the chosen surname was consistent with the personality of the person in question, and also whether this proposed surname did not contradict any essential rules in force, and, in the case of a positive decision, recorded this fact in writing, thereby assigning a surname to the individual” (Upelnieks, 1936, 250).

The process of assigning surnames proceeded differently in various parishes in Vidzeme. Evidence for this is the relationship of attributed surnames with the names of houses. In the parishes of Ērgeme an attempt was made to avoid congruence of surnames and names of houses. In Ērgeme only the house name *Desse* was the basis for the surname *Desse* that was given to the head of this household, a well-established household, and to his sons. A degree of congruence might be discerned in the case of a household belonging to the Veckārķu estate, whose name *Purrigail* could be the basis for the surname attributed, *Gailitis*. In individual cases an apparent congruence is noted, in for example the house names *Lejes Eglite* and *Kalne Eglite*, which are to be found belonging to the Ērgemes estate, and the surname *Eglite* was assigned to individuals in the Turna estate.

In the case of estates located within Opekals parish, the opposite was the case: heads of households and other individuals were commonly assigned the names of houses. In the case of the Korwenhof estate, 10 out of 14 names of houses coincide with the surnames assigned to those living therein. The house name *Jacopin* is one such case and its head of household was assigned the surname *Jacobson*; both names are semantically linked with the anthroponym *Jēkabs*. In the case of the Alt-Laitzen estate, in only two cases out of 45 was the assigned surname different from (unrelated to) the name of the respective house.

A guide “Advice on accepting surnames” was appended to the yearly calendar for 1823, in order to facilitate the process of acquiring a surname. This publication indicates that acceptable surnames are 1) designation of a trade or occupation, 2) terms associated with a person’s soul or body, 3) the names of animals, birds, fish and other fauna, as well as names of trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers, and 4) the names of tools and objects. Furthermore it was noted that the endings *-iņš* or *-īts* could be appended to the stem of a surname (Kalenders, 1823, b. 1.). Certainly, these recommendations explain the widespread attribution of a number of popular surnames; for example, a surname that took a diminutive form, *Behrfiņ*, was in 1826 attributed in 3 estates in Ērgeme parish, and the Germanised *Behrsing* in 3 estates in Opekals parish.

In addition to evaluating the process of attributing surnames, it is important to assess their origin and semantics.

Semantic analysis of surnames typically proceeds by first identifying a number of thematic groups. This principle has usually been respected when analysing contemporary surnames in Latvia (Staltmane, 1980; Balodis, 2009). The first group usually comprises distinguishing between surnames based on generic terms and those based upon proper names.

Surnames in Vidzeme are largely based upon terms that are common to all Latvian dialects. These surnames often show the imprint of orthography current at different times. In addition to commonly understood elements surnames were formulated using both lexical aspects of local dialects as well as the fashion in which words are formed corresponding to the local dialect. Surnames that contain dialect specifics usually fall within traditional semantic groups; however, understanding their meaning is difficult in cases where dialect words have not been fixed in lexicographical sources and collections. It is hypothesised that many words, sources of surnames, that have not been understood fall into this category of missing dialect vocabulary.

Dialect vocabulary is the source of a number of surnames, such as *Drikis*¹ ‘i.e. buckwheat’, *Lesda*, *Lesdi* ‘hazel, little hazel’, *Ruk* ‘radish’, *Schihgur* ‘sparrow’, *Vuschkahns* < *vuška* ‘sheep’, *Irkliis* ‘oar’, *Rauga* ‘component of a carriage’, *Svekris* ‘resin’, *Svikkis* ‘a peg’, *Pinnis* < ‘a Finn’. A number of words borrowed from colloquial German, or other languages, have been used to form surnames, for example, *Plinte* ‘rifle’.

Surnames based on common names are readily identifiable as derived following dialect rules. The most common examples are diminutives, typically with endings *-īts*, that are widely distributed over Latvia, for example, *Behrsiht* (instead of *Bērziņš*), *Klawiht* (instead of *Kļaviņš*), *Kruhmiht* (instead of *Krūmiņš*), *Sariht* (instead of *Zariņš*), *Ahbolihht* (instead of *Āboliņš*), *Putniht* (instead of *Putniņš*), *Kauliht* (instead of *Kauliņš*), *Pohdiht* (instead of *Podiņš*), *Zimdiht* (instead of *Cimdiņš*). In many cases, where the surname takes the form of a common name that itself is derived using dialect rules, the surname may be found with the *-īts* diminutive ending typical of dialects, or with the *-iņš* diminutive suffix characteristic of the literary form.

¹ To avoid excessive repetition, henceforward references to Latvian State Historical Archive locations of results from the census in Vidzeme as well as references to parishes and manors shall be omitted.

A number of surnames with the suffix *-ing* testify to historical tendencies and evidence for attempts at Germanisation, for example, *Saring*, *Tauring*, *Krasting*, *Siling*.

Surnames derived from generic terms

It is a characteristic of surnames as well as of place names that a direct relationship with a generic word is evident in only a few cases. Generic terms that form the basis for an assigned surname are clearly identifiable for two semantic groups, i.e. surnames derived from terms for flora and those derived from terms for animals.

The **semantic group of flora-based surnames** contains the greatest number of surnames derived from generic terms. This has happened not by chance, given that the ancient Latvians derived their world outlook from a close relationship with nature. Terms used to form surnames of this type are most often terms common to all Latvian dialects, including the literary form, which relate to trees, including diminutive forms; it is also possible to come across such surnames with specific dialect features or Germanised forms, for example, *Alkfnis*, *Alkfniht* < *alksnis* ‘alder’, *Behrfjn*, *Behrsit*, *Behrfjt*, *Behrsing*, *Bersing* < *bērsz*² ‘birch’, *Egliht*, *Eglit*, *Egglite* < *egle* ‘spruce tree’, *Kahrkle*, *Karkle* < *kārklis* ‘osier’, *Klawa*, *Klawe*, *Klawiht*, *Klawing* < *kļava* ‘maple’, *Leepin*, *Leepiņ* < *liepa* ‘linden’, *Lasde*, *Lasding* < *lazda* ‘hazel’, *Lesde* < *Lezda* ‘dialect word for hazel’, *Ohsche* < *osis* ‘ash’, *Ohfol*, *Ohsolit*, *Ohsoling* < *ozols* ‘oak’, *Ohfull*, *Ofull*, *Ohfulneek*, *Osuling* < *Ozuls* ‘dialect word for oak’, *Pabersis*, *Pabehrfiht* < *pabērsz* ‘buckthorn’, *Paeglis*, *Paegel* < *paeglis* ‘juniper tree’, *Preede*, *Preediht* < *priede* ‘pine’, *Pupol* < *pūpols* ‘willow catkins’, *Wihtol*, *Wihtols*, *Witoling* < *vītols* ‘willow’.

Names of fruit trees and bushes also have been used to form surnames, for example, *Ahbel* < *ābele* ‘apple tree’, *abelkoks* < *ābele* ‘apple tree’, + *koks* ‘tree’, *Uppenafsch* < *upenājs* ‘black currant bush’.

Additionally, the names of cultivated plants and wild herbs have been used as the basis for surnames. Most of these surnames are related to cereals, for example, *Ausiņ*, *Ausing* < *auzas* ‘oats’, *Drikkit*, *Drikit* < *driķi* ‘dialect term for buckwheat’, *Meeses*, *Meefis*, *Mees* < *mieži* ‘barley’, *Rudfiht*, *Rudfjt* < *rudzi* ‘rye’, *Puppa*, *Puppe* < *pupa* ‘beans’, *Sirnis* < *zirnis* ‘peas’; names of vegetables were also used, for example, *Ruks* < *Ruks* ‘dialect term for radish’, *Sihpol* < *sīpols* ‘onion’; names of flowers, *Lilje* < *lilija* ‘lily’, *Rose*, *Rohse*, *Rohfiht*, *Rohsit* < *roze* ‘rose’; finally there are cases of names of divers plants being used, for example, *Appin*, *Appiņ* < *apinis* ‘hops’, *Dadfis*, *Dadse* < *dadzis* ‘thistle’, *Ebbulin* < *ebuols* ‘dialect term for clover’, *Ehmolit*, *Emmohliht* < *emuols* ‘(different) dialect term for clover’, *Kannep*, *Kannepe* < *kaņepe* ‘hemp’, *Smilge* < *smilga* ‘bent-grass’.

A relatively large group of surnames derive from generic terms for plants or parts of plants, for example, *Krums*, *Kruhmit*, *Kruming* < *krūms* ‘bush’, *Pukkiht* < *puķe* ‘flower’, *Rohga*, *Rohgul*, *Rohguls* < *roga* ‘ear (botany)’, *Salmiņ* < *salms* ‘straw’, *Sarrit*, *Sarring* < *zars* ‘branch’, *Wahrpiņ* < *vārpa* ‘ear (botany)’, *Zelms*, *Zelmiņ*, *Zelmit*, *Zelming* < *celms* ‘stumps’, *Zerrs*, *Zerre* < *cers* ‘shrub’. Fruit names also served as the basis for attributed surnames, *Abols* < *ābols* ‘apple’, *Zitrohn* < *citrons* ‘lemon’, *Sihle* < *zīle* ‘tit (bird)’; even terms for kinds of mushroom were used, for example, *Borrewik* < *baravika* ‘king boletus’.

The second largest semantic group of readily identifiable **surnames derived from terms for fauna**. Terms for domesticated and wild birds were used, for example, *Gails*,

² This is the basic form of the word. We have omitted the diminutive forms, i.e. the literary form suffixes, *-iņš*, *-iņa*, *-ītis*, *-īte*, the dialect diminutive form with suffix, *-īts* (in lieu of *-iņš*), Germanised versions with suffix, *-ing*, as well as a number of other dialect characteristics.

Gailit < *gailis* ‘rooster’, *Zahlit* < *cālis* ‘chick’; *Ballod* < *balodis* ‘dove’, *Dfenis*, *Dfennis* < *dzenis* ‘woodpecker’, *Dfilna* < *dzilna* ‘another term for woodpecker’, *Gulbe* < *gulbis* ‘swan’, *Irbiht* < *irbe* ‘partridge’, *Kikkut* < *ķikuts* ‘snipe’, *Medne*, *Mednis* < *mednis* ‘capercaillie’, *Rubben* < *rubenis* ‘black grouse’, *Schaggat* < *žagata* ‘magpie’, *Schiggur*, *Schigur* < *Žīgurs* ‘dialect term for sparrow’, *Slohk*, *Slohks* < *sloka* ‘woodcock’, *Strasde*, *Strasding* < *strazds* ‘thrush’, *Tetter* < *teters* ‘heath-cock’, *Wahrna*, *Wahrne* < *vārna* ‘crow’, *Zihruls* < *cīrulis* ‘lark’; additionally, terms denoting domesticated and wild animals were the basis for attributed surnames, for example, *Ahse*, *Ahse*, *Ahšis* < *āzis* ‘billy-goat’, *Aitiņ* < *aita* ‘a sheep, or ewe’, *Aun*, *Auns*, *Aunin* < *auns* ‘ram’, *Jehrinšch* < *jērs* ‘lamb’, *Kakkit* < *kaķis* ‘cat’, *Lahze*, *Lahziht* < *lācis* ‘bear’, *Laps*, *Lapse*, *Lapfe* < *lapsa* ‘fox’, *Luhse* < *lūsis* ‘lynx’, *Sakkis* < *zaķis* ‘hare’, *Udre* < *ūdrs* ‘otter’, *Wahwer*, *Wawer* < *vāvere* ‘squirrel’, *Wehse*, *Wehfits* < *vēzis* ‘crayfish’, *Wilks* < *vilks* ‘wolf’; terms for fish species were also used, for example, *Karpe* < *karpa* ‘carp’, *Sutte*, *Suttis* < *zutis* ‘eel’; terms denoting insects, for example, *Blusfe*, *Blusfing* < *blusa* ‘flea’, *Dundur*, *Dunder* < *dundurs* ‘gadfly’, *Zirzen* < *circenis* ‘cricket’. Surnames were attributed that were based on generic terms for fauna, for example, *Putnis*, *Putnin*, *Puttning* < *putns* ‘bird’.

Quite a few surnames are readily identifiable as derived from **terms for crafts or professions**. Most of these attributed surnames are based on specialised names for crafts of the period, which terms originate either from Latvian or German, for example, *Arrais* < *arājs* ‘ploughman’, *Bisneek*, *Bisneek*, *Bisnek*, *Bisneek*, *Bisneek* < *bis(i)nieks* ‘gunsmith’, *Gehrmann* < *Ģērmanis* ‘obsolete term for tanner’, *Kalleis* < *kalējs* ‘smith’, *Kurpneek* < *kurpnieks* ‘shoemaker’, *Mutzeneek* < *mucenieks* ‘cooper’, *Nammik* < *Namiķis* ‘dialect term for stoker; house servant’, *Pohdneek* < *podnieks* ‘potter’, *Ratneek*, *Rattneek*, *Rattneek* < *ratnieks* ‘wheelwright’, *Wehwer* < *vēveris* ‘weaver’. In some cases there is an association hinting at another profession, for example, *Kutscher*, *Kutfcher* < *kučieris* ‘coachman’, *Meesneek* < *miesnieks* ‘butcher’, *Mehrneek*, *Mehrnek* < *mērnieks* ‘surveyer’, *Stuhrman* < *stūrmanis* ‘helmsman’, *Sargs* < *sargs* ‘guard’, *Skriwels* < *Skrīvelis* ‘obsolete term for secretary, clerk’, *Skrodels* < *Skrodelis* ‘obsolete term for tailor’, *Sweineeks* < *zvejnieks* ‘fisherman’. The surname *Bendis* < *bende* ‘executioner’, may well have related to the bearer’s profession. In several cases military terms were the basis for attributed surnames, for example, *Kaptan* < *kapteinis* ‘captain’, *Major* < *majors* ‘major’, *Polkownek* < *palkavnieks* ‘colonel’.

In a limited number of instances, surnames were quite likely to have been nicknames for the bearer related to his occupation, for example, *Wehshukehninšch* < *vēzis* ‘crayfish’ + *ķēniņš* ‘king’, *Wilkschaweišch* < *vilks* ‘wolf’ + *šāvējs* ‘marksman’.

A separate semantic sub-group comprises surnames based upon **personal appearance or character**. It is admitted that most of the surnames included in this grouping are based upon speculation; such surnames are derived from well-known words in Latvian, including dialect words, as well as from words whose meaning is unknown or which are rarely used. Most of these surnames relate to visible physical features (height, colour of beard or hair, and shape), for example, *Baltekahje* < *balts* ‘white’ + *kāja* ‘foot, or leg’, *Garreis* < *garš* ‘tall’, *Leelkahje* < *liels* ‘large’ + *kāja*, *Lehlaus* < *liels* ‘large’ + *auss* ‘ear’, *Melbahrd* < *melns* ‘black’ + *bārda* ‘beard’, *Melfohb* < *melns* ‘black’ + *zobs* ‘tooth’, *Kreil*, *Kreile* < *kreilis* ‘left-handed’, *Krepaus* < *krēpes* ‘mane’ + *auss* ‘ear’, *Kurl* < *kurls* ‘deaf’, *Pundur* < *punduris* ‘dwarf’, *Sirmal*, *Sirmul* < *sirms* ‘grey-haired’, *Pellekais* < *pelēks* ‘grey’, *Pillweder* < *pilns* ‘full’ + *vēders* ‘stomach’, *Ruddit*, *Rudiht* < *ruds* ‘red-haired’ (compare also with the dialect terms *rudiņš* ‘red dog’), *Sprohgis* < *sproga* ‘ringlet’, *Sturke* < *stūrks* ‘dialect term for long-legged person’, *Uhsiht* < *ūsas* ‘moustache’. In a few cases the semantics of a surname might be based on a

person's moral values, for example, *Gudrit* < *gudrs* 'wise', *Skohping*, *Skoping* < *skops* 'miserly'.

Theoretically this group should include surnames such as *Beswahrdis* < *bez* 'without' + *vārds* 'name', and *Wisswetzaks* < *viss* 'the most' + *vecākais* 'elderly'.

A small semantic sub-group comprises surnames based on ethnonyms. It is reasonably certain that the surname *Leitis* < *leitis* 'a Lithuanian', belongs to this group. One can hypothesize that the following surnames also belong to this sub-group, *Pinne* < *Pinnis* 'dialect term for a Finn' (compare with *pinne* 'blotch'), *Pohle*, *Pohlis* < *polis* 'a Pole' (compare with *pole* 'a cow without horns'), *Sweeder*, *Sweedre* < *zviēdris* 'a Swede' (compare with *sviedri* 'sweat'). Even the surname *Turkis* < *turks* 'a Turk', might not refer to a Turkish person, but simply someone who has Eastern features. It is also possible that the surnames *Kreews*, *Krews*, *Kreewihts*, *Kreewing* derive from the ethnonym, *krievs* 'a Russian', and that it was attributed to Russians.

In several parishes in Vidzeme there are sufficient attributed surnames that these form a **group of surnames whose semantics are physical-geographic in nature**, of which the majority refer to elevations in the countryside. It is noteworthy that the spatial distribution of surnames from this semantic group are related to the actual topography, for example, in the relatively flat Ērgemes parish one finds only the surname, *Kalniņš* < *kalns* 'hill', whereas in Opekālns parish, possessed of rolling countryside, some 50 different attributed surnames refer to elevated topographic features whose common name is *kalns*, for example, *Abolkallns*, *Abolkaln* < *ābols* 'apple' + *kalns* 'hill', *Apfchakalln* < *apse* 'aspen' + *kalns*, *Augstkalln* < *augsts* 'high' + *kalns*, *Awotekalln* < *avots* 'spring' + *kalns*, *Buckalns* < *buks* 'male of most animals' + *kalns*, *Dambjakalln* < *dambis* 'dam' + *kalns*, *Kallne*, *Kallning*, *Kalning* < *kalns*, *Kliawekaln* < *kļava* 'maple' + *kalns*, *Kristkallit* < *Krists* 'dialect term for cross' + *kalns*, *Leepekalln*, *Leepkalliht* < *liepa* 'linden' + *kalns*, *Ofulkalln* < *Ozuls* 'dialect term for oak' + *kalns*, *Pakalneek* < *pakalns* 'foot-hill', *Pillskalln*, *Pilfkallit* < *pils* 'castle' + *kalns*, *Plattaiskalns* < *plats* 'wide' + *kalns*, *Plawekaln*, *Plawekalns* < *pļava* 'meadow' + *kalns*, *Predekalln* < *priede* 'pine tree' + *kalns*, *Purekaln* < *pur(v)s* 'marsh' + *kalns*, *Sidrābkalln* < *Sidrābs* 'dialect term for silver' + *kalns*, *Sillakalln*, *Sillekalns*, *Sillkaln* < *sils* 'pine forest' + *kalns*, *Skaijtkallit* < *skaists* 'beautiful' + *kalns*, *Wiksnēkalln* < *vīksna* 'elm' + *kalns*, *Wufchkalln* < *Vušķa* 'dialect term for sheep' + *kalns*, *Zukkurkalln* < *cukurs* 'sugar' + *kalns*.

There are far fewer surnames associated with other physical-geographic features. One can mention the class of surnames associated with water, for example, *Awoht* < *avots* 'spring', *Esser* < *ezers* 'lake', *Uppiht* < *upe* 'river', *Mahlup* < *māls* 'clay' + *upe*, *Mellup* < *melns* 'black' + *upe*, as well as the group of surnames containing the component *purvs*, for example, *Purens*, *Puhrin* < *pur(v)s* 'marsh', *Mahsepuhren* < *mazs* 'small' + *pur(v)s*.

It might be possible to include in this group surnames that are derived from terms denoting any landscape feature, or any object in a landscape, including dialect terms or obsolete terms for a forest, marsh, meadow or field, for example, *Bauske* < *bauska* 'poor meadow', *Klanzen* < *klāncis* 'fragment of a field where cereals grow poorly', *Mukke* < *muka* 'a marsh in which feet stick', *Selgus* < *selga* 'a high point on the sea surface; alternatively, low lying fertile ground', *Sillans* < *silainis* 'a sandy space covered with heather'.

One of the largest groups of attributed surnames, but one whose semantics are unclear, is **the group with tangible semantics**. Surnames in this group are based on words current in modern Latvian, including dialect words, as well as words that are no longer commonly used but nevertheless at that time were well known and used.

One sub-group comprises attributed surnames that were derived from words describing the weather, for example, *Buls* < *bula* ‘hazy, sweltering weather’, *Migla*, *Migle* < *migla* ‘fog’, *Saule*, *Saulit* < *saule* ‘the sun’, *Sibben* < *zibens* ‘lightning’, *Pille*, *Pillis* < *Pillis* ‘dialect term for an icicle hanging from a roof’, *Staukle* < *Staukle* ‘an icicle’.

In like manner one can group together surnames that are based on food and meals, very often referring to dialect terms or words that are now obsolete: *Desfe*, *Desse* < *desa* ‘sausage’, *Eefalneeks* < *iesals* ‘malt’, *Karrasch* < *karaša* ‘flat cake’, *Klaipiņ* < *klaips* ‘loaf of bread’, *Miltiht*, *Miltid* < *milti* ‘flour’, *Penzis* < *Pencis* ‘dialect term for potato porridge, or for pease pudding with hemp added’, *Puttrin*, *Puttring* < *putra* ‘porridge’, *Studehn* < *studenis* ‘meat-jelly’, *Suppa* < *zupa* ‘soup’.

Some surnames were based on terms for currency, for example, *Dalders* < *dalderis* ‘thaler’, *Grafsis*, *Grasfi* < *grasis* ‘groat’, as well as terms for various substances, for example, *Akmens* < *akmens* ‘stone’, *Dsels* < *dzelzs* ‘iron’, *Misfin*, *Misfin* < *misiņš* ‘brass’, *Ohgle*, *Ohglin* < *ogle* ‘coal’, *Selting*, *Seltins* < *zelts* ‘gold’, *Svekri* < *Svekri* ‘dialect term for resin’.

At present only one assigned surname has been found in Vidzeme that is based on a number, i.e. *Simtiht* < *simts* ‘one hundred’.

Most attributed surnames with concrete semantics are derived from terms describing various objects and things, whose actual relevance is often difficult to determine. A small sub-group is identifiable of surnames based on utensils used in tea preparation and presentation of meals: *Blohda* < *bloda* ‘bowl’, *Kastrolle*, *Kastrolle* < *Kastrolis* ‘obsolete term for pot’, *Kruse*, *Kruhfiht* < *krūze* ‘cup’, *Pohde*, *Pohds* < *Pods* ‘pot’, *Tellek*, *Tellek* < *Telēķis* ‘obsolete term for plate’.

Words upon which surnames were based are terms for a number of objects and implements used in farming, fishing and construction, in particular terms denoting materials and tools: *Ahkis* < *āķis* ‘hook’, *Asmenne* < *asmens* ‘blade’, *Balka* < *Balka* ‘dialect term for beam’, *Biring* < *Birins* ‘dialect term for hammer’, *Irkls* < *Irkls* ‘dialect term for oar’, *Kaben* < *Kabene* ‘dialect term for a small fishing net’, *Laiwiņ* < *laiva* ‘boat’, *Lubbiņ* < *luba* ‘thin wooden shingle’, *Milniht* < *milna* ‘cudgel, pole’, *Plint*, *Plinte* < *Plinte* ‘obsolete term for rifle’, *Pohga*, *Podfiņ* < *poga* ‘button’, *Rohze* < *rocis*, *roce* ‘dialect term for part of a plough’, *Rullis* < *rullis* ‘roller’, *Runge* < *runga* ‘cudgel’, *Seetiņ* < *siets* ‘sieve’, *Soben* < *zobens* ‘sword’, *Stabbing* < *stabs* ‘pole’, *Walge* < *valgs* ‘string, cord’.

Names of music instruments could have been the basis for a number of attributed surnames, for example, *Dudelle* < *dūdas* ‘a form of bagpipe’, *Taurit* < *taure* ‘trumpet’. One of the terms from which the surname *Braukis* might have been derived describes part of a musical instrument, i.e. the bow of a violin (a dialect word).

The likely originating word for many surnames are terms describing parts of their bodies, for example, *Kaul*, *Kauliņ*, *Kauliht*, *Kaulihts*, *Kauling* < *kauls* ‘bone’, *Lipa*, *Lippiņ*, *Lipping* < *ļipa* ‘short tail’, *Schauin*, *Schauiņ* < *sauja*, *šauja* ‘dialect term for hollow of a hand’, *Schauwe* < *šauva* ‘dialect term for hollow of a hand’, *Schnukke* < *šnuka* ‘dialect term for snout’, *Stackle* < *stakle* ‘fork of a branch’.

In addition one can identify a number of surnames derived from specific substantives, largely ones from dialect vocabulary or which are obsolete, for example, *Baķķis* < *baķis* ‘a piece of cloth’, *Bukka*, *Bukke* < *Buka* ‘dialect term for a seat in a carriage’, *Ehk* < ? *ēka* ‘building, house’, *Jumburk* < *junburs*, *jumburgs* ‘dialect term for forked branch’, *Kirp* < *ķirpa* ‘a haystack or pile of cereal’.

A number of attributed surnames may be terms for illnesses, various ailments and associated symptoms, partially abstract concepts, for example, *Liga* < *liga* ‘dialect term for illness or fate’, *Krewels* < ? *krevele* ‘scab’, *Pinne* < ? *pinne* ‘acne’.

One can identify a very small sub-group comprised of **surnames with abstract semantics**, for which the basic words are substantives related to the spiritual domain and manifestations thereof, for example, *Bilans* < *Bile* ‘dialect term for fear’, *Brihwib* < *brīvība* ‘freedom’, *Daina* < *daina* ‘song’, *Draugs* < *draugs* ‘friend’, *Nahve* < *nāve* ‘death’.

Rather many of the terms for species from which surnames have been derived in Vidzeme are of **Germanic origin**.³ It is possible that the overwhelming number of attributed surnames of Germanic origin is evidence that, in addition to individuals themselves, Lords of manors, scribes and others actively participated in the process of fixing surnames. Surnames based on the German language are both composite in type or are based on a single term. When trying to understand how in reality the process of attributing surnames took place in the first half of the 19th century, it is difficult to understand how those who accepted these surnames took part in the process, including the extent of their language skills. Thus it is unclear when concurring to a particular surname the recipient fully understood its origin and its association with the German language. It is possible that a surname was taken as an anthroponym. Given these observations, words upon which surnames were attributed that were possibly Germanic in origin are only tentatively analysed with reference to common names and/or nouns found in modern German (in some cases Middle Low German and Middle High German) nouns.

Surnames based on Germanic terms evidently derive from the same group of semantic appellatives as surnames derived from the Latvian language; however, the ratios of various kinds of semantic groups are different. There are very few surnames derived from German terms for flora and fauna. At present the etymology of several surnames has been determined, *Eihe* ‘oak’, *Kirsch* ‘cherry’, *Weide* ‘willow’, *Zahbel* < *Zobel* ‘sable’, *Vogel* ‘bird’. It is possible that the surname *Birkeritz* is based on the German appellative *Birke* ‘birch’.

The group of surnames derived from German terms for crafts and professions is rather extensive. This may be explained by the relatively large numbers of German craftsmen living in Latvia and the preponderance of the German language in denoting various tools used by craftsmen, for example, *Feldman*, *Feldmann*, literally: ‘a man from the fields’, *Schmidt* ‘smith’, *Schneider* ‘tailor’, *Schreiber* ‘scribe, clerk’, *Uhrman* ‘watchmaker’, *Vēbers* < *Weber* ‘weaver’. Certainly there are a number of problematic surnames whose origins are unclear and debatable. For example, the surname *Bunds* may possibly be derived from the Old Swedish term, *bunta* ‘farmer, peasant’, or the Danish and Swedish terms, *bonde* ‘yeoman, man’ (Laumane, 1996, 83-84). The surnames *Wilister*, *Willister*, based on the German term *Philister* ‘Philistine’, may be derived from words for professions, i.e. belonging to a particular social group.

One could include in this group the many composite surnames where the second component is the German generic term, *Mann* ‘man’, and whose analogues are often found in German surnames, for example, *Aldermann* < Old English *ealdorn* ‘elder’ + *Mann* ‘man’, *Bindemann* < *Binde* ‘bandage’ + *Mann*, *Buschmann* < *Busch* ‘bush, shrub’ + *Mann*; see also *Buschmann* (Bahlow, 1985, 82), *Buhmann* < German *Buhmann* = *Baumann*, *Ackermann* (Bahlow, 1985, 80), *Lesmann*, *Lefsmann* < German *Lessmann* (Bahlow, 1985, 314), *Opmann* < ? + *Mann*, *Purrmann* < German *Fuhrmann* (Bahlow, 1985, 151).

Several surnames with Germanic origin are to be included in the semantic group of those derived from terms for landscape features, for example, the following cases contain the term *Berg*, *Berger* < *Berg* ‘hill, mountain’; such surnames, in contrast to the Latvian equivalent ones with *kalns* ‘hill’, were widely found in all parishes in Vidzeme. This appellative comprises a number of components, for example, *Bergengrün* < *Berg* ‘hill’ + *grün* ‘green’,

³ Surnames derived from terms that are present in the Latvian language (colloquial and everyday speech, in dialects or obsolete words) and which originate from the German language are not considered to be surnames of German origin.

Blumberg < *Blume* ‘flower’ + *Berg*, *Daneberg* < Middle High German *tan* ‘Wald’ + *Berg* ‘hill’; compare family names *Dannemann* (Bahlow, 1985, 85), *Grünberg* < *grün* ‘green’ + *Berg*, *Klokkenberg* < ? *Glocke* ‘bell’ + *Berg*, *Limberg* < ? + *Berg*, see also *Limberg* (Bahlow, 1985, 318), *Rosenberg* < *Rose* ‘rose’ + *Berg*, *Unberg* < ? + *Berg*, *Weinberg* < *Wein* ‘wine’ + *Berg*, see also *Weinberg* (Bahlow, 1985, 550).

Surnames derived from terms for low lying landscape features are rare. An exception might be the surname *Rosenthal*, *Rosental*, based on the word ‘rose’ combined with the term, *Tal* ‘valley’. Similarly this group contains the surname *Rosfeld* < *Rose* + *Feld* ‘field’.

Surnames paralleling those found in the register of Germans living there were attributed to Latvians living in every estate in Vidzeme; it is, however, difficult to draw parallels with appellative vocabulary, for example, *Bohsche* < German surname *Bosch* (Bahlow, 1985, 70), *Bremer* < German surname *Bremer* (Bahlow, 1985, 75), *Bunfis*, *Bunsis*, *Bunse* < German surname *Bunsen* (Bahlow, 1985, 81), *Dolgis* < German surname *Dolge* (Bahlow, 1985, 98), *Genfis*, *Gensis* < German surname *Gens(s)* < *Jens*, *Jenß* (= *Johannes*) (Bahlow, 1985, 164), *Hill* < German surname *Hill(e)* (Bahlow, 1985, 239), *Kersten* < German surname *Kersten* (Bahlow, 1985, 277), *Kiehl* < German surname *Kiehl* (Bahlow, 1985, 278), *Korts* < German surname *Körte*, *Korte* (Bahlow, 1985, 293), *Kuse* < German surname *Kuse* (Bahlow, 1985, 304), *Menfis*, *Mensis* < German surname *Mense*, *Mensing*, *Menssen* < German surname *Meinhard* (Bahlow, 1985, 338), *Mikfsche* < German surname *Micksch* (Bahlow, 1985, 342), *Reineks* < German surname *Reineke* (Bahlow, 1985, 416), *Saager* < German surname *Sager* (Bahlow, 1985, 442), *Seewald* < German surname *Seewald* (Bahlow, 1985, 477), *Seibot* < German surname *Seibot* (Bahlow, 1985, 478), *Sihden*, *Sihdehn* < German surname *Sieden* (Bahlow, 1985, 483), *Stier* < German surname *Stiehr* (Bahlow, 1985, 501), *Suhle* < German surname *Suhl*, *Suhle* (Bahlow, 1985, 508), *Weisner* < German surname *Weißner* (Bahlow, 1985, 553).

Surnames based on Finno-Ugric terms were attributed in those estates located in Vidzeme but bordering on Estonia, and on whose territory it is known that the local inhabitants were of Finno-Ugric stock. When compared with the number of place names in the same region, the number of attributed surnames derived from Finno-Ugric is rather small; these surnames are to be found in all of the semantic groups. For example, in the semantic group of surnames based on flora we find, *Muraka* < Estonian *muraka* ‘cloudberry’, *Vahers* < Estonian *vaher* ‘maple’, but as regards the fauna group, *Kalekaurs* < Estonian *kala* ‘fish’ + Estonian *kaur* ‘a species of wild duck’, *Kuks* < ? Estonian *kukk* ‘rooster’, *Luts*, *Lucs* < ? Estonian *luts* ‘freshwater cod’, *Rebans*, *Rebane* < Estonian *rebane* ‘fox’, *Suta* < ? Estonian *susi* ‘wolf’, vsk. partitīva forma *suut*. It is possible that a number of other Estonian terms for species were the basis for surnames: *Lamba* < Estonian *lammas*, genitive case *lamba* ‘sheep’ (Wiedemann, 1973, 453–454), *Kikka* < Estonian *kikas*, genitive case *kikka* ‘rooster’ (Wiedemann, 1973, 280).

As regards the other semantic groups one must note *Mirks* < Estonian *murk* ‘poison’, *Rēdel(i)s* < Estonian *redel* ‘rack’, *Rītels*, Estonian *rüütel* ‘knight’, *Kipers*, *Ḳipers* < Estonian *kipper* ‘ship captain’, *Must* < Estonian *must* ‘black’.

Only a few surnames of Slavic origin were registered in 1826 in Vidzeme, for example, *Kabban* < Russian *кабан* ‘wild pig; boar’, *Utke* < Russian *утка* ‘duck’, *Mifchka* < Russian *Мишка* ‘diminutive of the given name *Mikhail*’, *Basanogi* < Russian *босоногий* ‘barefoot’, *Drugs* < Russian *друг* ‘friend’.

Although today these particular Slavic surnames are no longer to be found, nevertheless the number of Slavic surnames in Vidzeme has rapidly increased.

Surnames based upon proper nouns

A second semantic group consists of **surnames that are derived from given names**; these surnames may be classified as anthroponyms and toponyms by their origin. The group of surnames that are anthroponyms, together with the semantic group comprising names derived from terms for flora and fauna, is one of the largest semantic groups.

It is difficult to determine precisely the origin of these surnames as the given names are of Greek, Latin, Hebrew and German origin, whose precise form has changed as they are passed through intermediary languages.

Two types of attributed surnames are found that are anthroponyms; these are, in fact, largely patronyms. The first of these groups comprise source words that are given names, for example, *Abraham* < given name *Abrahams*, *Adams* < given name *Adams*, *Alek*, *Alekei*, *Aleks*, *Aleksei*, *Alekseij*, *Aleksis*, *Alekfei*, *Aleksfis*, *Alex*, *Alexei*, *Alexis*, *Alix*, *Alleks*, *Allekfei*, *Allekfeij*, *Allekfis*, *Allex*, *Allexei*, *Allexis* < given name *Aleksis*, *Aleksejs*, *August* < given name *Augusts*, *Ehrmans* < given name *Ērmanis*, *Dannils* < given name *Daniels*, *Iwan*, *Iwans* < given name *Ivans*, *Johnas* < given name *Jons* or *Jonass*, *Jahniht* < given name *Jānis*, *Lazars* < given name *Lācars*, *Mattees*, *Mattihs*, *Mattis* < given name *Matīss*, *Mikel* < given name *Miķelis*, *Pauliht*, *Paulihts*, *Paulit* < given name *Pauls*, *Rubbults* < given name *Rubults*, *Sihman* < given name *Sīmanis*, *Steppe* < given name *Stefans*, *Wilip* < given name *Vīlips* or *Filips*.

A tendency was detected in certain parishes in Vidzeme to string together several given names as the surname, for example, *Janjurjan* < given name *Jānis* + given name *Juris* + given name *Jānis*, *Jankarls* < given name *Jānis* + given name *Kārlis*, *Jurrjahn*, *Jurjan* < given name *Juris* + given name *Jānis*. It is noteworthy that these joined given names are formed using only the most popular given names for men.

In some cases, the surname has been formed with the proper nouns, *liels* 'large', and *mazs* 'small', as a prefix, for example, *Lehljahn* < *liels* + given name *Jānis* 'John', *Lehlkarl* < *liels* + given name *Kārlis* 'Carl', *Masjahn* < *mazs* + *Jānis*. It is also the case for these surnames that only the most popular names for men are used. The surname *Klawejahn* was attributed in the Jaunkārki estate: this surname might have been based on the floral semantic term, *kļava* 'maple', complemented by the name *Jānis*, given to men only.

It is possible that, in a limited number of cases, women's given names might have been the basis for a surname, for example, *Matsche* < given name *Mača*.

The largest contingent of surnames, which is also characterised by a multiplicity of spellings of the surname, consists of given names supplemented by the German appellative, *Sohn* 'son'. Usually these surnames derive from men's given names, for example, *Adamsohn*, *Adamson*, *Adamsfohn*, *Adamfon*, *Ahdamsohn*, *Ahdamson* < given name *Adams* + German *Sohn* 'son', *Andersohn*, *Andersohns*, *Anderson*, *Andersfohn*, *Andersfon*, *Andersfohn*, *Anderfon*, *Andresfohn*, *Andrusohn*, *Andrussohn*, *Andrusson*, *Andrusfohn*, *Andrusfon* < given name *Andrejs* + German *Sohn*, *Ehrmannsohn*, *Ehrmansohn*, *Ehrmanson*, *Ehrmansfohn*, *Ehrmanfohn*, *Ehrmanfon*, *Ermansfohn* < given name *Ērmanis* + German *Sohn*, *Girgenfohn* < given name *Girgens* + German *Sohn*, *Indriksohn*, *Indrikson*, *Indriksons*, *Indrikssohn*, *Indriksfohn*, *Indriksfon*, *Indrikfohn*, *Indrikfohns*, *Indrikfon* < given name *Indriķis* + German *Sohn*, *Jacobsohn*, *Jacobson*, *Jakobfon*, *Jehkabsohn*, *Jehkabfon* < given name *Jēkabs* + German *Sohn*, *Jahnsohn*, *Jahnsohns*, *Jahnson*, *Jahnssohn*, *Jahnsfohn*, *Jahnsfon*, *Jahnfohn*, *Jahnfohns*, *Jahnfon*, *Jansohn*, *Janson*, *Jansfohn*, *Jansfon*, *Janfohn*, *Janfon* < given name *Jānis* + German *Sohn*, *Johannsohn*, *Johannson*, *Johannfohn*, *Johannfon*, *Johansohn*, *Johanson*, *Johanfon* < given name *Johans* + German *Sohn*, *Juhannson*, *Juhannfon*, *Juhanson*, *Juhanfon*, *Juhanson* < given name *Juhans* + German *Sohn*, *Kahrlohn*, *Kahrison*, *Kahrlofohn*, *Karlsohn*, *Karlson*, *Karlsfohn*, *Karlfohn* < given name

Kārlis + German *Sohn*, *Michelson*, *Michelssohn*, *Mikkelson*, *Mikkelfohn*, *Miķelson* < given name *Miķelis* + German *Sohn*, *Peeterson*, *Pehtersohn*, *Pehterson*, *Pehtersfohn*, *Pehtersfon*, *Pehterfon*, *Petersohn*, *Peterson*, *Peterssohn*, *Petersfohn*, *Peterfohn*, *Peterfohns*, *Peterfon*, *Peterfsohn* < given name *Pēteris* + German *Sohn*, *Sanderfohn*, *Sanderson*, *Sandersohn* < given name *Sanders* + German *Sohn*, *Tönnisfohn* < given name *Tennis* + German *Sohn*, *Willumsohn*, *Willumson*, *Willumsfon*, *Willumfohn*, *Wilumfon*, *Wiļļumsohn*, *Wiļļumsfohn*, *Wiļļumfohn*, *Wiļumfon* < given name *Viļums* + German *Sohn*.

The group of **surnames that are toponyms** is rather small. Usually the toponym from which a surname was derived is a place name in Vidzeme, for example, *Kalzanaw*, *Kalzenaw* < German place name *Kalzenau* ‘Kalsnava’, *Meiran*, *Meiren* < place name *Meirāni*, *Peebalg*, *Peebalga* < place name *Piebalga*, *Cehsneek* < place name *Cēsis*. In the same way as a foreign word is the basis for surnames of anthroponymic origin, so surnames of toponymic origin are based on foreign toponyms (most often German ones). The toponym *Piebalga* may be of Latvian origin as it comprises the prefix, *pie* ‘near to’, and the hydronym, *Balga*.

One is led to agree with the conclusion drawn by the Latvian linguist Ernests Blese, that “there remain numerous distinct concepts, which are not readily classified as to their semasiology, as well as many words whose essence and meaning we no longer understand” (Blese, 1929, 130), that were the basis for surnames attributed in Vidzeme and which are not mentioned in this article. Rare surnames as well as those based on dialect words elicit the greatest interest and may help resolve onomastic problems in addition to facilitating assessment of the distribution and origin of many appellatives. Surnames belonging to the fauna, flora and occupation semantic groups, excepting those based on dialect terms, yield the least information about where they physically originated, since surnames such as *Bērziņš*, *Liepiņš*, *Lācis*, *Zaķis*, and *Kalniņš* in the 1826 census were recorded in practically every parish in Vidzeme. Flora and fauna semantic group surnames account for one third of all surnames attributed in Vidzeme; this attests to the close link that Latvians of the time had with their physical environment, as well as to the active role played by Latvians themselves in deciding surnames. After their attribution these surnames brought a Latvian theme to the cultural environment, since judging by their sound content and certain morphological features, many words presently not understood are either obsolete vernacular words or words lost in their entirety from modern Latvian. Some of the words whose meaning today is unclear may be of Germanic, Slavic or Finno-Ugric origin.

In analysing the surnames attributed in Vidzeme during 1826 it is vital to follow their subsequent evolution. Unfortunately, surviving archival records do not permit this, either for the surname or for its bearer; however, certain overall developments can be discerned. In the mid-19th century, from which period registers of births, deaths, and marriages have survived from almost all Evangelical Lutheran parishes in Vidzeme, the number of distinct surnames, and variations thereof, increased rapidly; double surnames appeared, i.e. the family surname attributed in 1826, together with another surname, whose origin might be either Latvian or from some other language, for example, *Ahbel* known as *Kalnin*, *Gohba* known as *Zirzen*, *Leelaufis* known as *Ellmann*, *Leelaufis* known as *Enmann*, *Johanfon* known as *Janson*, *Mickelson* known as *Veithe*. These mid-19th century surname modifications were not legalised, however, and are absent from official census documents. After the peasantry in Vidzeme was freed in 1862 (the abolition of serfdom), the considerable movement of peasants that set in led to family members living outside of a parish boundary and also led to the migration of surnames. The number of surnames recorded in any given parish rose; we may, thus, regard the 1826 census material as an invaluable source for investigating the process of how surnames arose, and determining their origin and semantics.

Abbreviations

apr. – series (apraksts)

f. – collection (fonds)

lp. – page

LVVA – Latvian State Historical Archive

Primary sources

LVVA 199. f. Census lists from Vidzeme province (guberna).

LVVA 235. f. Church records of Evangelical Lutheran parishes in Vidzeme and Latgale.

LVVA 7229. f. Register of births, deaths and marriages of Evangelical Lutheran parishes in Vidzeme and Latgale.

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