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Priit Raudkivi. *Der livländische Landtag: zur Entstehung einer mittelalterlichen Institution* [The Old Livonian Diet (Landtag): the formation of a medieval institution/ Livonijas landtāgs: Viduslaiku institūcijas izcelšanās]. (Schriften der baltischen Historischen Kommission. Hrsg. von Stefan Donecker, Matthias Thumser und Ralph Tuchtenhagen. Bd. 21). Berlin: Lit. Verlag, 2018. 152 S. ISBN 978-3-643-14066-1

The array of publications by the Baltic Historical Commission is now complemented by a monograph on the Livonian Diet (*Landtag*), written by Estonian historian Priit Raudkivi. His book discusses the formation of this institution in the context of political history, analyzing separate elements of its system (*curiae*, social classes, territorial lords (*Landesherren*) from the point of view of social sciences. The Livonian Diets are also viewed in the broader context of the estates of the realm in medieval Europe – their formation, typology, and functions.

The main topics are discussed in six chapters, of which the first three provide a concise characteristics of the political and social background of Livonia, as well as its links with the external factors (both the German Emperor and Papacy) during its formation, and its internal powers (the Teutonic Order and the bishoprics) and their legal relations.

A brief characteristics of the second and third estate (the vassals/nobility and the burghers) of Livonia is also given, followed by a description of its internal relations and the assemblies of territorial lords and curiae in the 14th century, as well as a detailed analysis of the procedure of the Livonian Diets during the 1420s.

The four sociopolitical groups or curiae were involved in the Diets of the Livonian–Prussian relationships. The main focus is on the history of the Teutonic Order, nevertheless highlighting all curiae in terms of their policy, self-identification, spheres of mutual contact, and impact on the Diet's decisions.

Separate sub-chapters are devoted to the inner relations of Livonia until the so-called confederation of Walk of 1435, asking a question whether it changed the stately and political development of Livonia. It is then concluded that in the 14th century the assemblies of the territorial lords and curiae of Livonia were mainly held in the interests of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order, but in the 15th century it was necessary to achieve a balance between the two main political players – the master of Livonia and the Archbishop of Riga – in order to hold an assembly. The Diets were a battlefield between these two centres of power, but the Order was still the dominant one. The author of the book believes that during the initial stage of forming of Diets the interests of the vassals and burghers were not represented, and concludes that the Diets of that time were not assemblies of the estates of the realm, but of the territorial lords only.

The German version of P. Raudkivi's book is a translation of its Estonian edition of 2007. However, in the list of literature used by the author, describing the political structure of Livonia and the stratification of medieval society, the most recent publications are from the 1990s. When characterizing the processes of the 13th century, such concepts as “feudal fragmentation” and “freedom fight” are used, the narrative of conquest is also prominent.

Surprisingly, no attention has been paid to some well-known Estonian researchers (such as Anti Selart, Marek Tamm, Juhan Kremm) who have been researching the issues of Livonia's formation and its political history for decades. The contribution of the 21st century historians of other countries to the study of Livonia is also mentioned only scarcely. Also, the debate of historians, which is methodologically significant for this work, about the roots of parliamentarism in the European medieval stratified societies, corporatism and representative democracies stops with the 1980s–1990s.

There is more focus on the authors that have concentrated on Livonian Diets – Misāns (2001), Jaron Sternheim (2015). This historiographic tendency might be explained by the following: even though P. Raudkivi's book has been first published in 2007, its main topics have been

elaborated already much earlier. He obtained his PhD degree in 1987 and published a monograph on the origins of the Livonian Diets in 1991<sup>1</sup>. Around the same time in the 1980s, the Latvian historian Ilgvars Misāns also turned to this topic, analysing the urban policies in Livonian Diets. So did the Polish historian Jan Kostrzak (1946–2004), and P. Raudkivi particularly points out J. Kostrzak's academically well-grounded interpretation of the formation of Landtags of Livonian Diets in Prussia. P. Raudkivi also emphasizes that he shares the views of I. Misāns regarding the role of the Diets<sup>2</sup>.

The 21st century historiography about Livonia, its formation, power balances and internal conflicts is rather copious; many issues have now been analysed in a rather detailed way and conceptually differently from the late 20th century viewpoints. The involvement of social groups or communities in administration not only remains a relevant topic in the European context, but also acquires ever new dimensions as the Western cultural sphere is searching for its identity. Moreover, its relevance is recognized outside the academic sphere as well – thus, in 2013 the UNESCO programme “Memory of the World” was complemented by the oldest documentary evidence of a European parliamentary system, namely, the Decrees of León of 1188<sup>3</sup> (in contemporary Spain).

Thus, it was confusing to read what P. Raudkivi denotes as “proposed in the previous research” and “a new approach” (for instance, at pages 120–121), because after a closer look it is obvious that he is referring to the studies of Baltic German and sometimes also German and Polish historians of a rather long time ago. The Estonian author also uses very little research done by Latvian colleagues, and a Latvian reader of his book might also be puzzled by the fact that P. Raudkivi concludes his description of the formation (conquest) of Livonia with the subjugation of Kurzeme in the 2nd half of the 13th century, quoting the articles by Philipp Schwarz (1951–1908) (Leipzig, 1885<sup>4</sup>) and Paul

<sup>1</sup> Priit Raudkivi (1991). *Maapäeva kujunemine: peatükk Liivimaa 14.–15. sajandi esimese poole ajaloost*. Tallinn.

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, P. Raudkivi's list of literature is lacking an important work written by this author on the topic of Diets: Ilgvars Misāns (2005). *Organisation und Ablauf der Livländischen Land- und Städtetage*. In: K. Neitmann, W. Neugebauer (Hrsg.). *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands*. Bd. 51. München, S. 49–62.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-8/the-decreta-of-leon-of-1188-the-oldest-documentary-manifestation-of-the-european-parliamentary-system/>

<sup>4</sup> A source that has been little used in historical literature: Philipp Schwarz (1851–1908), dissertation “Kurland im dreizehnten Jahrhundert bis zum Regierungsantritt Bischof Edmund's von Wer”. Leipzig, 1885.

Johansen (1901–1965) (Weimar, 1940/1941; Leipzig, 1939) about Kurzeme.

The next landmark is the legal formation of Livonia after the Saint George's Night uprising of 1346. It is unclear whether P. Raudkivi doubts the Semigallian warfare after the battle at Aizkraukle (1279), or maybe regards them as belonging to Kurzeme.

Similarly, the author neglects the activity of the papal legates and does not see it as a purposeful intervention in the domestic affairs and in the secular administration of Livonia (page 41).

Regardless of all the above-mentioned, the central debate of P. Raudkivi's book cannot lose its significance – this debate is with the Baltic German authors who even in the 19th century were emphasizing the role of the nobility and burghers in the formation of Diets. There is an article (1861) by Julius Eckardt and the works (1893–1896) of Adolph von Gernet which are lesser known in the Latvian historical literature, but the research done by the Baltic German legal historian Friedrich Georg von Bunge (1802–1897) has left a lasting impact. Meanwhile, the Latvian publications regarding the formation of Diets in the 1420s certainly do not glorify the 2nd and 3rd estate. Their increasing role in the policy of the 15th century Livonia is evaluated in the context of the lack of interest shown by vassals and burghers in the centralization of power and the hegemony of the Order. Moreover, unlike the conclusions drawn by P. Raudkivi, it is highlighted clearly that the opponents of the Order benefitted from the initiative of the Riga Archbishop Johannes VI Ambundi to call the general Diets, while the Order was forced to adapt to the new situation.

P. Raudkivi's assessment of the role of Livonia's nobility is based on some questions to which we cannot find affirmative answers in historic sources. He emphasises that there is no information about the self-identification of the vassals and their involvement in the political life of Livonia and institutions of nobility existed separately each in its own territory. Thus, there were six distinct groups of nobility, each with a different chronological course of corporative development. The author of the book also claims that even the extended privileges of fief inheritance in the 15th century refer only to the relations of the particular vassals to their particular territorial lords, but do not provide any evidence about the political role of vassals in Livonia on a broader political scale (pages 44–45).

This claim, however, is not very convincing. For instance, in the introduction to the so-called Silvester's Grace (Germ. *Sylvestersche Gnade*)

of 1457 the Archbishop of Riga refers to the “*humble request by the whole nobility of the Bishopric of Dorpat, Bishopric of Ösel, and the regions of Harrien and Wieck*”<sup>5</sup>. This document not only regulated the inheritance rights of the vassals in the archbishopric of Riga, but also allowed the vassals and even members of the Cathedral Chapter and clergymen of the above-mentioned bishoprics to inherit fief manors.

Already in the 14th century, among the nobility many were fief holders in various bishoprics in Livonia, and at least legally there was an awareness of unity. For instance, in the Manntag of the Riga Archbishopric of 19 February 1392, in Limbaži, the 80-year-old Bartholomeus von Tiesenhausen, a knight and vassal of the Riga Archbishopric and the Ösel-Wieck bishopric, spoke about the issue of pledge rights and pointed out laws observed by the vassals of all Livonia or the diocese of Riga<sup>6</sup>.

Notwithstanding the fact that Livonia was regarded as a united entity in many aspects, one can agree with P. Raudkivi's conclusion that there existed several competitive territorial lords (*Landesherren*) with their own administration and policy, and there is no reason to search in Livonia for any characteristics of a formation process of the classic “estates of realm” (Germ. *Ständestaat*).

Vija Stikāne,  
tulkojusi *Dace Strelēvica-Ošiņa*

<sup>5</sup> *Liv-, Esth- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch nebst Regesten*. Hermann Hildebrandt (Hrsg.). Bd. 9: 1436–1443. Riga; Moskau, 1889, Nr. 644.

<sup>6</sup> *Livländische Güterurkunden (aus den Jahren 1207 bis 1500)*. Hrsg. von Hermann von Bruining und Nicolaus Busch. Riga, 1908, Nr. 138, p. 158.