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Collection, research and use of indigenous Livonian place names in Latvia

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VPP-LETONIKA-2021/2-0002 SRP "Latvian Studies for the Development of a Latvian and European Society" "Multifunctional dictionary of Livonian"

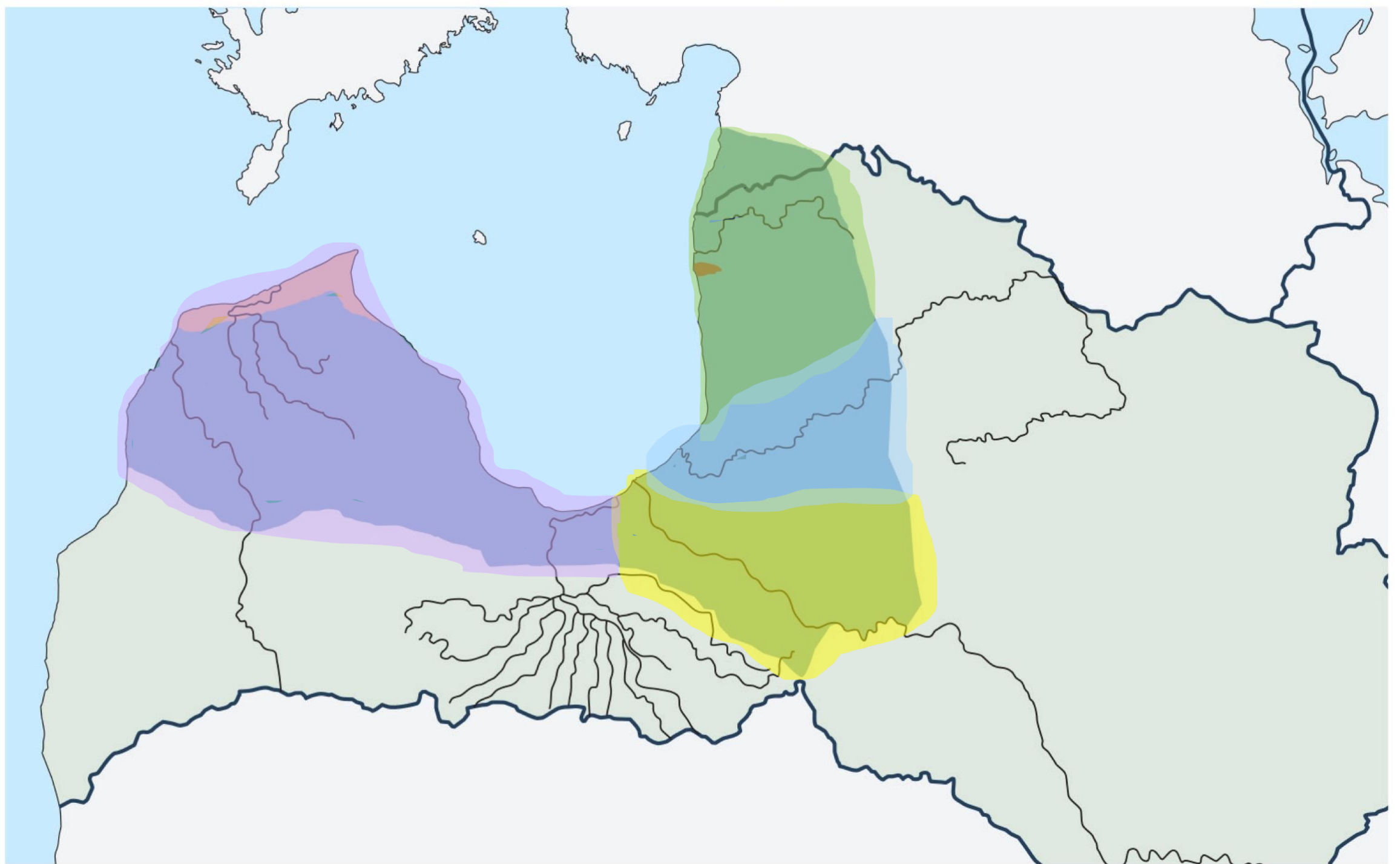
Fundamental and Applied Research Project

"Documenting and Mapping Livonian Place Names and Creating an Official Place Name Register" No. LZP-2019/1-0240

Livonians

- **Livonians are indigenous people of Latvia**, Livonian is a Finnic language.
- **Livonians formed as ethnicity over 1000 years ago** and used to inhabit large parts of contemporary Latvia.
- **Livonians have participated in consolidation of Latvians** leaving significant footprint in Latvian language, culture and identity.
- At the same time **Livonians have preserved their language and heritage up until today.**







Legal framework: general

- **Livonian status** as Latvia's indigenous nation **is set by the law** “On Free Development of Latvia's National and Ethnic Groups and Their Right to Cultural Autonomy” (1991), “Official Language Law” (1999), “Law on Latvian Historical Lands” (2021)
- According to Official language law **Latvia has 3 domestic languages with officially status: 1) state language Latvian, 2) variety of state language – Latgalian written language, 3) indigenous Livonian language; and minority languages.** Traditional minorities are generally considered Lithuanian, Estonian, Polish, Jewish, Roma, Belorussian and Russian. From historical perspective – German.



Legal framework: place names

- Article 18 of the State Language Law (1999) states that: “In the Republic of Latvia **names of places are to be made and used in the state language**”, with an exception: “(4) **In the area of the Livonian Coast names of places**, as well as the names of agencies, community organisations, businesses, and events in this area **are created and used also in Livonian**”.
- The Place Name Information Guidelines (2012) state that “**place names in the territories historically inhabited by the Livonians are also to be in Livonian and must correspond to Livonian language norms**”.



Legal framework: place names

Law of Latvian Historical Lands (2021), 4. Obligations of state and municipal institutions:

- (7) State and respective municipalities ensure preservation of the identity and cultural-historical environment of Latvia's indigenous people – Livonians (..) including (..) introduction and usage in the environment place names in Livonian.



Collection and research

With few exceptions place names have generally been collected as part of creation of lexicographical collections and publications.

- A broader collection of place names has taken place in 1960s by Livonian language activist Pētõr Damberg
- 2020–2023 – Fundamental and Applied Research Project “Documenting and Mapping Livonian Place Names and Creating an Official Place Name Register”, No. LZP-2019/1-0240



Collection and research

- Database of Livonian place names available at **Livonian.tech** (~1600 place names)

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al*

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Alāb

{Alāb}

place name (Sēta)

247

Sēta celta ap 1925. gadu, tajā pašā laikā dots vārds. Alabi saistīti ar lībiešu Breinkopfu dzimtu. Tur 1930. gados dzīvoja tālbraucēja stūrmaņa Didriķa Breinkopfa vecākais dēls, lībietis Alfrēds Breinkopfs, ar ģimeni. Alfrēds bija mācījies jūrskolā, tomēr par jūras braucēju nekļuva. Viņš uzcēla Alabu māju un strādāja uz dzelzceļa. Ģimene 1944. gadā devās bēgļu gaitās un vēlāk nokļuva Kanādā.

↑ Sīkrōg

Alāb

{Alāb}

place name (Sēta)

247

Kōrand nim Kuoštrōgōl. Sētas nosaukums Košragā.

Māja celta pēc 1. pasaules kara. 1935. gadā tajā dzīvoja lībiete Ģērde Skadiņa (dz. Gūtmane, 1858), kas bija arī lībiešu folkloras teicēja. 1980. • 1990. gados mājas vairs nebija.

↑ Kuoštrōg

Alāb

{Alāb}

place name (Sēta)

247

Kōrand nim Pitrōgōl, pandōd immōr 1925. āigast. Sētas nosaukums Pitragā, ielikts ap 1925. gadu.

1935. gada tautskaites sarakstā Pitragā ir Vitolu sēta, kurā tolaik dzīvoja lībiete Rozenbergs Zete (dz. Zariņa, 1882) ar dēlu Rozenbergu Edgaru (dz. 1913).

Collection and research

- Livonian place names also available on a special layer of **BalticMaps.eu** along with Livonian interface



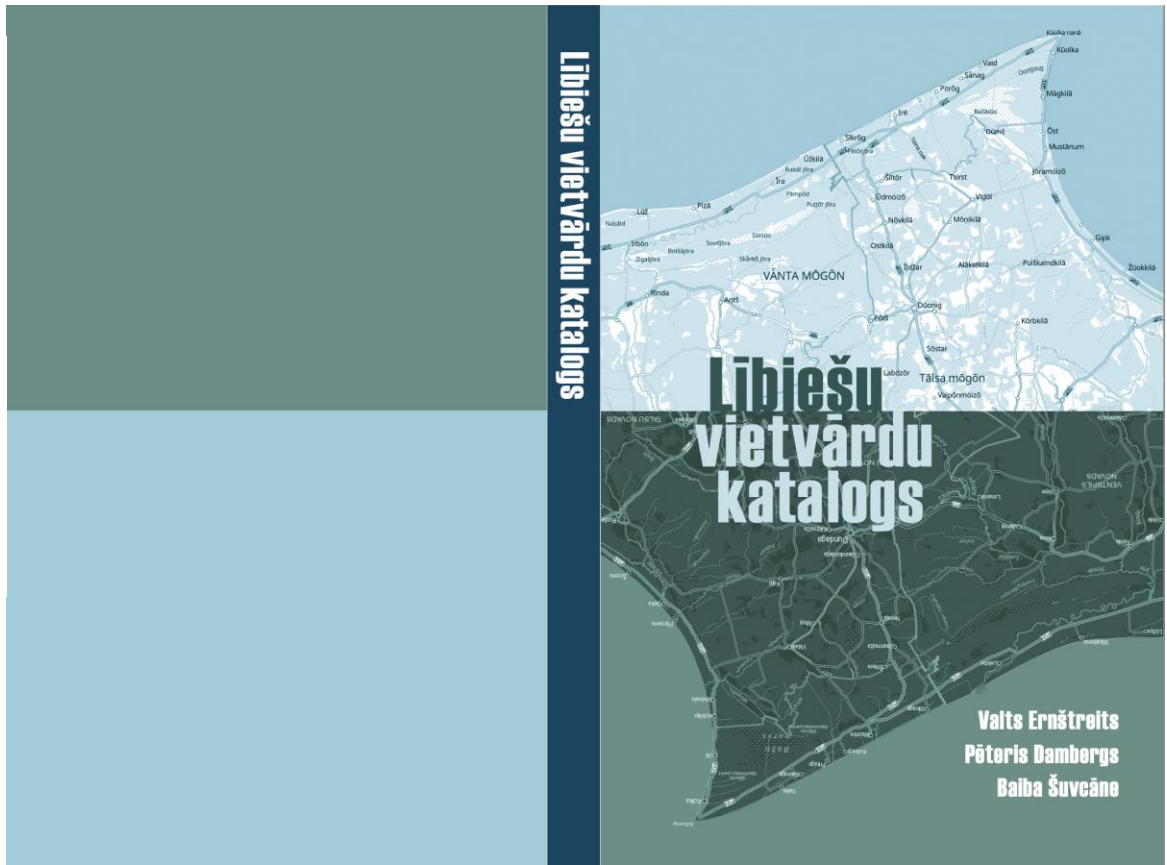
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Collection and research

- Livonian place name catalogue in print (opening on 11.10.2024.)

Saturs

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Use of Livonian place names

- First bilingual (Latvian/Livonian sign installed at the border of Talsi municipality on February 20th 2023.



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Use of Livonian place names

- Extensive changing and installation of bilingual signage on the Livonian Coast launched since the end of 2023 and is ongoing.



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Use of Livonian place names: varieties

- Livonian standard language is based on Courland Livonian, which differs from Vidzeme Livonian, also by orthography (lvC *Pivākilā* versus lvV *Püög* 'Svētciems'; lvC *Siepākilā* versus *Sepķul* 'Pāle', lvC *Limbaž* versus lvV *Lemmistnīn* 'Limbaži')
- **Planned for 2024 is installation of lvC *Aḑā joug* ~ LvV *Aḡjoug*** 'Aģe river' initiated by Sigulda municipality.



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What else?

- **Livonian Language Commission** at the Official Language Centre established in 2024; also **discusses Livonian place name issues**
- **Global action plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032): Activity 5.2. (..) elaborating policy guidelines for the public information space in Indigenous languages including extension of use of Indigenous names and words to official signage, focusing on place name signs in areas traditionally inhabited by Indigenous Peoples**





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Thank you! | Tienū!

