INSIGHT INTO THE CITY/TOWN NAMES OF LATVIA

Laimude Balode
University of Helsinki, University of Latvia

Abstact. The origin of place names is a research topic for linguists (or onomasticians) and geographers, but since ancient times a wide range of people have also been interested in the subject. As Latvia is the closest neighbour to both Lithuania and Estonia, they share, to a large extent, a common history, as well as – because of this fact – a number of borrowed common words and names. This article is based on the toponymical material included in the short dictionary of Latvian geographical names entitled "No Abavas līdz Zilupei" ("From Abava to Zilupe. The origin of Latvian geographical names"), which was compiled by Laimute Balode and Ojārs Bušs and published in Rīga in 2015. It offers insights into the contemporary situation of Latvian oikonyms as well as providing comparisons of the names of inhabited places with their historical names.

1. Introduction

Today, Latvia has 9 cities and 67 towns (N=76) with town privileges. Naturally there are ancient cities, such as *Rīga*; founded in 1201, it has had town privileges since 1225. Other examples include *Valmiera* and *Cēsis*, which were granted town privileges in 1323, and *Aizpute*, *Kuldīga*, *Ventspils*, which were granted town status in 1378. In addition, *Ludza* was recorded in historical annals as early as in 1173, but town privileges were not granted until 1777. Then we must also consider the newest towns of Latvia: *Jūrmala* has been recognised as a town since 1956 and several inhabited places – *Aknīste*, *Cesvaine*, *Ķegums*, *Pāvilosta*, *Saulkrasti*, *Seda*, *Stende*, and *Vangaži* – were adjudged as towns in the first years of the second independence – from 1991. Others include *Brocēni*, *Ikšķile*, and *Lielvārde*, from 1992; *Salaspils* from 1993; the youngest Latvian town at the moment is *Skrunda*, which obtained town privileges in 1996, although its name as an inhabited place has been found in documents dating back to 1253. It is customary

for many countries to adopt formal criteria such as population and population density to determine settlements that have attained city status. However, the Latvian list of cities has been formed historically over the centuries and is not based on formal criteria. Three settlements of fewer than 1,000 inhabitants have town rights – *Ainaži*, *Durbe* and *Subate* (data from PMLP 2016). It is also important to note that Latvia has a number of villages that have populations significantly higher than those of smaller towns, but the villages have nonetheless not attained city status.

Analysing the name of a city or town is not an easy task even for experienced onomasticians, not only because many inhabited places have changed their names several times over the centuries. For instance, the contemporary city in Latgale (see map No 1) ***Daugavpils*** (see map No 2), which was recorded in 1275 as *Dünaburg* (1275–1656), was granted town privileges in 1582. It was briefly also called *Borisoglebsk* (*Борисоглебск*) (1656–1667 during the Russo–Swedish War): this was when the Russians captured Daugavpils on the day of St Boris and St Gleb, and this was the motivation for renaming it. Later *Borisoglebsk* was again renamed *Dünaburg* (1667–1893); as part of the Russian Empire, this city was called *Dvinsk* (*Двинск*) (1893–1920). It was not until the first independence of Latvia (particularly from 1920 until the present) that it was renamed as *Daugavpils*. The last name of the city undoubtedly originated from the river name *Daugava* (on its etymology see Balode and Bušs 2015: 88–91) + the Latvian appellative *pils* 'castle', evidently by translating the German toponym (Balode and Bušs 2015: 92–93).

2. Etymology of the oikonyms

Concerning the origin or etymology of the names of the towns of Latvia, there are few – at least at first sight – transparent toponyms, such as *Baloži* < Latv. *balodis* 'pigeon', *Jūrmala* < *jūra* 'sea' + *mala* 'edge, brim, border', *Saulkrasti* < *saule* 'sun' + *krasts* 'coast, shore', *Olaine* < *olis* 'pebble', *Pļaviņas* < diminutive form from the Latv. appellative *pļava* 'meadow', and others. It seems that new town names are more transparent, but perhaps this is only illusory. These above-mentioned names as oikonyms = inhabited place names, (or sometimes as hydronyms – cf. the river name *Olaine*) are rather ancient toponyms. A substantial number of names have remained unclear until recently, or there are several hypotheses regarding their origin. An example is the

etymology of towns such as *Jelgava*, *Kuldīga*, *Lielvārde*, as one can mention at least three to four possible etymological explanations (see Balode and Bušs 2015, 117–120, 133–134, 141–143). The same can be claimed for the largest city of Latvia – ***Rīga***: the name of *Rīga* is linked in diverse written sources to the Latin *rigata* 'spattered', the Baltic German *Riege*, the Russian *puɜa*, the Livonian *rīj* 'threshing barn', and the German dialectal nomenclature word *riege* 'old riverbed brook, inlet'. Riga is also associated with the Middle Low German appellative with the meaning of 'brook, ditch with water', as well as the personal name *Riga*. One must also mention the remark made by Jānis Endzelīns in the manuscript of "Latvijas vietvārdu vārdnīca" ("The Dictionary of Latvian Place Names", see also LVV 2013: 286), that the origin of *Rīga* may be related to the names of the Estonian villages of *Riigi* and *Rüüga*, even though this claim has been denied by the Estonian linguists Paul Ariste and Madis Norvik (Dambe 1990: 19). At the same time, the search for the Livonian roots of the name are based on historical facts. At present, the city name *Rīga* is assumed to be of Baltic origin. One of the most serious arguments here is that in German documents of the thirteenth century, the words *de stat to Riga*, 'the city at Rīga', can be found, and these can be explained as 'the city at the River Rīga'. Therefore, linking the origin of the name of the city to the name of the River *Rīgas upe* or later *Rīdzene*, which was filled in the eighteenth century < Baltic root *ring-* 'to wind, to bend, to flow zigzag'; this root can be found in rather many hydronyms in Lithuania (the rivers *Ringa*, *Rìngė*) and Latvia (Lake *Riņģis*). Moreover, there is also the Latvian appellative *rīdziņa* 'small brook' (ME III 536), which has an etymological root that is related to the previously mentioned root *ring-* and is homonymic to the German *Ring* 'a circle, ring, curve, finger ring', but this German word is of a different origin. It is likely that the name of the city (the river or the place around the river) was given by the Curonians rather than the Germans. (Konv. XVIII 35729, Dambe 1980: 8, Dambe 1990: 5–20, Balode and Hirša 2009: 279–280, LVV 2013: 283–286, Balode and Bušs 2015: 190–193).

2a. Oikonyms of Baltic origin

Most of the oikonyms – town/city names – under review are of Baltic or Latvian origin (*Baldone*, *Dobele*, *Nīca*, *Pļaviņas*, *Saldus*, etc.). The following are some examples of the names of Baltic/Latvian origin:

Aknīste (see map No 3) – a town in the south-east of Latvia, in Sēlija, on the banks of the River Dienvidsusēja; has had town privileges since 1991. It was first mentioned in historical sources in 1298. Kazimieras Būga (Būga RR III 578–579) considers this place name to be a transferred toponym that was brought by the Selonians in the early medieval times from the contemporary territory of Lithuania to the banks of the River *Aknīste* (Lith. *Aknysta*). Jānis Endzelīns (Lvv I 13, 17–18) hypothetically compares the origin of this name to the Latvian appellative *aka* 'well', although he does not provide any hypotheses for the derivation type of the toponym. Explaining the origins of the name of the Lithuanian river, *Aknysta*, and other similar Lithuanian hydronyms, Aleksandras Vanagas (LHEŽ 37) also quotes Endzelīns and supplements his hypothesis by arguing that the Latvian word *aka* can be further compared to the Latvian *acs* 'eye' and the Lithuanian *akìs* 'eye; ice hole; pool in a marsh', 'water basin in a marsh or almost completely overgrown lake'. (Balode and Bušs 2015: 47–48).

This was the name from the southern part of Latvia – from the border with Lithuania. The following example is from the northern part of Latvia – a town located not far from the Estonian border (see map No 4):

Alūksne (local pronunciation *Oluksne*) – a town in the north-east of Vidzeme on the southern bank of Lake *Alūksnes ezers*. The German name for this inhabited place, *Marienburg*, was recorded in historical documents in 1284 after the castle of St Maria on the island of the lake. Alūksne has had town privileges since 1920. The name of this town was apparently derived from the name of the River *Alūksne*, or possibly through the name of Lake *Alūksnes ezers*, with origins that are rooted in the Latvian dialectal lexeme *aluogs* or *aluots* 'spring, source' and *aluksna* 'swampy place'. August Bielenstein (Biel. Gr. 98) included the form that had been recorded in the thirteenth century, *Alūkste*, which is supported by the corresponding Old Russian names of *Алыстъ* and *Олыста* that were mentioned in the Chronicle of Pskov. These Old Russian names indicate that the older name of *Alūksne* was *Alūkste* (Bielenstein mentions it as a parallel name that continued to be used in the nineteenth century), or *Alūksta*. However, Kazimieras Būga attributes the name *Alūksta* to the seventh and eighth centuries (Būga RR II 108, III 535). The folk etymology links this toponym to the Latv. common word *alksnājs* 'alder forest' (the local dialect form *oluksnājs*), but there may be a scientific basis for regarding the claim as a possible hypothesis. (Lvv I 24, Dambe 1987: 39, Balode and Hirša 2009: 283, Balode and Bušs 2015: 54–55).

Gulbene – a town in the north-east of Vidzeme (see map No 5), having received town privileges in 1928. This oikonym was first mentioned in German documents in 1224 as *Gulbana*; in 1340, a stone castle was built and referred to as *Schwanenburg* in German < Germ. *Schwan* 'swan'. This town name is likely to have a purely Latvian origin, derived from the Latv. bird name *gulbis* 'swan' (cf. also Lith. *gul̃bė* 'idem'). (BHO II 566–567, Konv.VI 10977–10979, Lvv I 339, Balode and Bušs 2015: 108).

Some town names could be considered as names of Lithuanian origin – all located close to the Lithuanian border, such as the following examples:

Auce – a town in south-west Zemgale (see map No 6), near the River *Auce*. This name was first recorded in historical sources in 1426 as *Owcze*, later *Autz* and *Alt-Autzen* (BHO II 45). At the end of the nineteenth century, near the Auce railway station, *Auce* began to develop as a small town, obtaining town privileges in 1924. The oikonym originated from the name of the River *Auce*, which flows out from Lake *Lielauces ezers*. Jānis Endzelīns writes that the River *Auce* is rapid in its upper reaches, and for this reason, it is possible to assume the link between the name and the Lithuanian verb *išaukti* (sic!) 'to cry out' (Lvv I 49) and probably the Latvian word *auka* 'gale'. Kazimieras Būga (Būga RR III 256) relates the toponym *Auce* to the Lithuanian common word *aukė* without mentioning the meaning of this Lithuanian appellative. In addition, no such common word is included in the 20-volume Dictionary of Lithuanian (*Lietuvių kalbos žodynas*) (moreover, the Lith. verb *išaukti*, which was proposed by Endzelīns, could have the root *šauk-*, rather than *auk-*). Aleksandras Vanagas (LHEŽ 52–53) argues that the Lithuanian river name of *Aũkupis* and other Lithuanian hydronyms with the stem *Auk-* are likely to be related to the Latvian *Auce* and could be coined from the Lithuanian verb *aukúoti* 'to swing, dandle'. This semantic motivation for the hydronym appears to be highly credible; and this certainty is further supported by the obvious semantic similarity to another Latvian place name – a town name as well as river name, *Līgatne* < Latv. verb *līgot*, *līgoties* 'to sway, swing'. By contrast, Konstantīns Karulis (Karulis I 87) links the Latvian appellative *auka* 'strong storm' to words denoting noise, such as the Lithuanian dialect word *áukterti* 'to yowl'; verbs denoting sounds often serve as a basis for river names, and thus this type of link (*Auce : auka*) does not seem implausible. (Balode and Bušs 2015: 61–62)

An even more credible Lithuanism is located on the Lithuanian border:

Subate – a town in Sēlija (see map No 7), on the banks of Lake *Subates ezers*. As early as the sixteenth century, a settlement began to develop on a merchants' route (name recorded in 1570). *Subate* obtained town privileges in 1917. The place name originated from the Lithuanian dialectal word *subata* – a Slavism meaning 'Saturday' – Saturday was the biggest and most important day for trading. Incidentally, the names of the week (mainly the trading days) were used to coin a couple of place names in Lithuania: *Pandėlys* < the Lith. dialectal lexeme *pãnedėlis* 'Monday', *Seredžius* < the Lith. dialectal *seredà* 'Wednesday' (Otrębski 1961: 56–57). Even so, Aleksandras Vanagas is inclined to regard the name of the Lithuanian town of *Subačius* as having an anthroponymic origin – to have originated from the surname *Subačius* rather than directly from the Lithuanian *subatà* 'Saturday' (Vanagas 2004: 199–200). (Balode and Bušs 2015: 228–229)

One possible Lithuanism (although with a question mark, due to its location far from the Lithuanian-speaking area) is the name of the Latvian town of *Piltene* (see map No. 8):

Piltene – an ancient inhabited place in the north of Kurzeme, by the old riverbed of the River *Venta*. The Piltene castle (*Pilten*) was first mentioned in 1309. Piltene has had town privileges since 1557. Jānis Endzelīns relates the name of the town to the Lithuanian verb *pìlti* 'patter, pour', which corresponds to the Latvian dialectal verb *pilt* 'to dribble' that was recorded in Dundaga. Endzelīns suggests that the original meaning of the place name was 'manually raised (castle) mound' and compares it to several Latvian hill names – *Piltiņa kalns*, *Piltiņu kalns*, as well as to some other similar place names. For comparison, one can also mention a Lithuanian common noun, *piltìnė* 'moulded hill'. (Biel. Gr. 196, Endzelīns DI III1 522, LVV 2006: 38, Balode and Bušs 2015: 175–176).

Several of the town names in Latvia are considered to be of Baltic/ Curonian origin, but they are very hypothetical. There are very few language features known of this ancient Baltic language, but based on the phonetics and lexicon, these names could be possible Curonianisms: *Durbe*, *Grobiņa*, *Kuldīga* < *Kuldinga* (?), *Nīca*, *Priekule*, *Sabile*, *Stende*, *Talsi* (?); for instance, more detailed analysis of the town name *Sabile*:

Sabile – a town in the north-east of Kurzeme (see map No. 9). A document published in 1253 records it as *Zabel*, it is recorded as *Sabelen* in 1438, and later in German as *Zabeln* (BHO II 721). Sabile

has had town privileges since 1917. Jānis Endzelīns mentions this name among the place names that, in terms of their form, are considered to be of Curonian origin: according to Endzelīns, the evidence for the Curonian origin is the (historical) suffix *-il-* (Endzelīns D III2 255–256). Valentin Kiparsky (Kiparsky 1939: 149) indicates that this suffix can also be found in Old Prussian place names (Endzelīns himself used the Prussian *Tapilkayme* for the comparison) and therefore it may be of unspecified Baltic origin; considering the modern perception of the Curonian language as – at least initially – a West Baltic language, the suffix *-il-* could perhaps be considered to be West Baltic, i.e. at least common for the Prussian and Curonian languages. The root of the name *Sabile* could be the same as the root in the Prussian place names *Sabenowe*, *Saboniten*, and the Prussian personal names *Sabine*, *Sabune*; the latter names are compared by Georg Gerullis to the Lithuanian personal names *Sabas*, *Sabonis* (Gerullis 1922: 147–148), whereas the analogical contemporary Lithuanian surnames are believed to have derived from a borrowed personal name, *Sebastijona*s (LPŽ II 652, 654), which is unlikely to be related to the name *Sabile*. Perhaps the oikonym is linked to the rare Latvian dialectal adjective from Zemgale, i.e. *sabrs* 'strong, stocky', the substantive *sabris* 'strong man' (ME III 597), if they are inherited names with the historical suffix *-r-*. However, no other Latvian common nouns or verbs are considered to be credible etymons for the toponym *Sabile*. (Balode and Bušs 2015: 196–197, Biel. Gr. 184–185).

2b. Oikonyms of Finnic and Germanic origin

Approximately ten contemporary towns/cities in Latvia could be regarded as having names of Finnic origin – some of them are more and some less credible: *Ainaži*, *Ikšķile*, *Jelgava*, *Limbaži*, *Matkule*, *Rūjiena*, *Vangaži*, *Valka* (?), *Kuldīga* (?), *Viļaka* (?). At least one such example of all these possible Finnicisms with greater reliability is *Rūjiena* (see map No 10):

Rūjiena – a town in the north of Vidzeme, ten kilometres from the Estonian border, has had town privileges since 1920. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, a stone castle in Rūjiena already existed (Germ. *hove to Ruyen*) and a village began to develop next to it. The inhabited place derived its name from the River *Rūja*, which runs through the city and flows from the Estonian Lake *Ruhijärv* (cf. the Estonian lexeme *ruhi* 'manger; log boat', see also EKR 2016: 565, 566). Kazimieras

Būga (Būga RR III 508, 617) and Marta Rudzīte (Rudzīte 1968: 190) believe the river name of *Rūja* to be a word of Finnic origin and compare it to another Estonian lake name, *Ruhja järv*. Aleksandras Vanagas (LHEŽ 283) seems to agree, although he does not consider the Lithuanian hydronyms of the same root to be Finnicisms. Hypothetically, the name of *Rūjiena* could also be linked to the Latvian lexeme *rūja* 'rut' (ME III 568), but this relation seems less credible. (LVV 2013: 510, Balode and Bušs 2015: 194–195).

It is rather difficult to explore the town names of Germanic origin in Latvia because they all came into Latvian through the intermediation of German anthroponyms, for example:

Ape (a local pronunciation is Opa or Ope) (see map No 11) – a town in the north-east part of Latvia near the Estonian border, on the left bank of the River *Vaidava*. *Ape* developed from a former manor estate and obtained town privileges in 1928. This manor was called *Hoppenhof* or *Hopfenhof* in German (BHO II 224). The name was coined from the German surname *Hoppe*, which originally is linked to the contemporary German appellative *Hopfen* 'hops'. In 1421, the Master of the Livonian Order, Sigfried Lander von Spanheim, gave the manor to Gerhard Hoppe, and his descendants governed in the region for many years. (Lvv I 37, Balode and Hirša 2009: 283, Balode and Bušs 2015: 56–57).

In addition, as a possible indirect Germanism that came to Latvia through a personal name, one should mention examples of town names such as *Brocēni* and *Līvāni*:

Brocēni (pronounced as Bruocēni, earlier Bruoceni) (see map No 12) – a town in the south-east of Kurzeme, five kilometres to the north-east of Saldus between Lake *Brocēnu ezers* and Lake *Cieceres ezers*. *Brocēni* was granted urban village status in 1950, and town privileges in 1992. The name *Brocēni* was first mentioned in a document dating to 1528; at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was recorded in two ways: *Brautzen* (1702), *Brozen* (1704), while the name of Lake *Brocēnu ezers* has been known since the sixteenth century as *Protzeneekscher See* (1574) (BHO II 91), which leads to the hypothesis that the settlement (possibly a manor) might have once been called **Brocenieki*. Furthermore Vallija Dambe (Dambe 2012: 332) and other authors have highlighted that the form of the toponym with the short vowel *-e-* in the auslaut of the word is historically more correct, i.e. *Broceni*. The basis for this might have been the German surname *Brotze* or variations of this surname, which in German may have derived as a hypocoristic form from the personal name *Ambrosius*. However, there is no historical evidence of a person (possibly a manor owner) bearing

such a surname. For this reason, one should also consider the position of Dzintra Hirša (Hirša 2008: 24–26), who claims that the origin of the place name *Brocēni* might be linked to the Baltic languages, i.e. the Latv. verbs *braukt* 'go, drive', *braucīt* 'rub, stroke', the Curonian verb *braucēt* ('go to the sea', cf. the place name's recording of 1702, i.e. *Brautzen*), as well as Latvian *braukt*, *braucināt* with the old meaning of 'scrub, rub; sharpen, hone'. Since Lake *Cieceres ezers* lies on limestone deposits, the place name *Brocēni* might have been related to the name of a hand tool used to work limestone. Hirša proposes hypothetically reconstructing the word **brocis*, which could also have the meaning 'person who handled limestone'. The aforementioned hypotheses would be more credible if the history of the town name had originated from the name of a farmstead. (Balode and Bušs 2015: 73–75)

An analogical example of a possible indirect Germanism is the next town name:

Līvāni (the local pronunciation is Leivuons; the local inhabitants use this name as a singular noun) – a town in the south-west of Latgale (see map No 13), on the right bank of the River Daugava, at the mouth of the River Dubna; it has had town privileges since 1926. In 1533, a settlement called *Livenhof* or *Lievenhof* in German was founded here by Jürgen Lieven, the vassal of the Archbishop of Riga, and the village was the property of the *Lieven* (also *Liewen*) family until 1574. According to legend, the progenitor of the family was *Nicholas*, a grandson (daughter's son) of the Livonian chieftain Kaupo, and thus the family name would be linked to the ethnonym (German *Liven*, Latin *Livones*, i.e. the Livonians). (Konv. XII 23839, Latkovskis 1940: 134, Zeps 1984: 271, Balode and Bušs 2015: 152–153).

2c. Obscure oikonyms

However, many unclear and rather obscure oikonyms have two or even more explanations for their origins, as in the following example:

Ogre (pronounced as Uogre) – a town situated on the banks of one of the most rapid rivers in Latvia – *Ogre* – where it flows into the River Daugava. This settlement name was mentioned as early as in 1206, and the town has had town privileges since 1928. One of the most credible hypotheses, which was formulated by Kazimieras Būga (Būga RR III 543), derives the river name *Ogre* from the reconstructed form **Vangr̨iē*, which is related to the Lith. adjective *vingrùs* 'meandering, curly', and the Latv. *vingrs* 'nimble, skilful'. In other words, the river

name *Ogre* could mean 'the meandering river'. It seems that the Baltic and Slavonic common root **angra-* 'similar to a snake', which was reconstructed by Vytautas Mažiulis (Mažiulis 1988, 79–80) and which is also indirectly linked to the Latvian place name *Engure*, belong to the same etymologic nest as *Ogre*. The Proto-Baltic and Lithuanian syllabic diphthong *-an-* corresponds to the Latvian diphthong *-uo-*, and this is why the correspondence between **angra-* and *Ogre* is highly probable. However, another hypothesis of the etymology has been posited that links this hydronym to the Finnic languages: the Chronicle of Henry from the thirteenth century mentions the form of the river name as *fluvius Wogene*, which allows us to link it to Est. *voo* or *voog*, *voogu* 'stream', and Est. *voogama* 'to flow' (Karma 1994: 150–154); but perhaps these names – *Wogene* and *Ogre* – are etymologically unrelated. (Alvre 1985: 32–34, Balode 1980: 26, Balode and Hirša 2009: 292, Balode and Bušs 2015: 166–167).

Nonetheless, there is currently no clear origin of popular town names such as *Cēsis*, *Cesvaine*, *Madona* (the latter has only a folk-etymology, which connects this place name to the Latv. dialectal adjective *moduons* [=**muoduons*?] 'early, brisk, vigilant, playful'; another folk explanation, which is considered to be a legend, relates it to the personal name *Made* (it is said that a woman bearing such a name drowned in the nearby Lake *Madonas ezers*) (Balode and Bušs 2015: 159–160). Moreover, the etymology of town names such as *Ilūkste*, *Kandava*, *Krāslava*, *Sigulda*, and *Stende* are also uncertain, but some hypotheses are expressed in the aforementioned book "No Abavas līdz Zilupei" (2015).

3. Hybrid names

From the etymological viewpoint, some Latvian town names are coined as hybrid names-composites:

Mazsalaca (see map No 14) < Latv. adjective *mazs* 'small' + Finn. (?) *Salaca* – a river name that has several Finnic and Baltic explanations, including folk-etymologies as well (as the Latv. *sala* 'island' + *acs* 'eye'), but most probably it is a hydronym of Livonian origin: cf. the Liv. *saletsa* 'salty river' (but this lexeme is not recorded in Livonian dictionaries), or the Curonian Livonian lexeme *salai* 'biting, pungent' (see also EKR 2016: 588–589), with the following possible Baltic juxtapositions: the Lith. river name *Salantas* and the verb *sálti* 'to flow', and others. (Balode and Bušs 2015: 162–164);

Salacgrīva (see map No 15) < Finn. (?) *Salaca* (see *sub voce* above *Mazsalaca*) + Latv. *grīva* 'estuary' (Balode and Bušs 2015: 198–199);

Jaunjelgava (see map No 16) – this town name has changed many times over the centuries. For instance, *Jaunjelgava* has been known as *Sērene*, *Jaunpilsēta*, *Jelgaviņa*, *Jaunā Jelgava*, *Lubu Jelgava*, and it was recorded as *Neustadt* and *Friedrichstadt* in German. The contemporary name is comprised of the Latv. adjective *jauns* 'new'+ *Jelgava* – the name of another city located rather far away, the former capital of the Duchy of Courland, which could be of Finnic origin, i.e. the Livonian common name *jālgab* 'city' (Endzelīns D III2 46–50), but numerous hypotheses are posited for the origin of this name – the Baltic etymon as well as the Finnic etymon (Balode and Bušs 2015: 113–114, 117–120).

4. Motivation of oikonyms

From the point of view of motivation, the names under review are predominately related to hydronyms: coined from the names of rivers (or potamonyms), less often – from the names of lakes (or limnonyms), such as ***Ainaži*** < the river name (cf. the name of the border river of *Haynejecke* recorded in 1276), ***Aizkraukle*** < the river name *Kraukle*, ***Alūksne*** < the lake name *Alūksnes ezers*, on whose southern bank it is located, and the river name *Alūksne*, ***Auce*** < the river name *Auce*, ***Aknīste*** < the river name *Aknīste*, ***Balvi*** < the river name *Bolupīte* and the lake name *Balvu ezers*, ***Daugavpils*** < the river name *Daugava*, ***Ilūkste*** < the river name *Ilūkste*, ***Līgatne*** < the river name *Līgatne*, ***Lubāna*** < the lake name *Lubāns*, ***Ludza*** < the lake name *Ludzas ezers* and the river name *Ludza*, ***Mazsalaca*** < the river name *Salaca*, ***Ogre*** < the river name *Ogre*, ***Olaine*** < the river name *Olaine*, ***Rēzekne*** < the river name *Rēzeknes upe*, ***Rīga*** < *Rīgas upe* or *Rīdzene*, ***Rūjiena*** < the river name *Rūja*, ***Salacgrīva*** < the river name *Salaca*, ***Ventspils*** < the river name *Venta*, ***Viesīte*** < the river name *Viesīte* and the lake name *Viesītes ezers*, ***Viļaka*** < the lake name *Viļakas ezers*, ***Zilupe*** < the river name *Zilupe* (which appeared as a misunderstanding < *Sienupe* < Latv. *siens* 'hay' or Lith. *siena* 'border' + Latv. *upe* 'river').

Several town names are coined from personal names (or anthroponyms), although these are not as numerous as they are in other countries. Some of them are well-known historical persons, but some of them are rather obscure, for instance, ***Ape*** < the German personal name, *Gerhard Hoppe*, who was the landlord of the estate, ***Brocēni*** < (?) Germ. surname *Brotze*, ***Jēkabpils*** < *Jēkabs* – Duke of Courland

Jacob who granted Magdeburg rights to the town, **Līvāni** < Germ. *Lieven*, *Liewen* – the surname of the founder of the settlement, vassal of the Archbishop of Riga, **Pāvilosta** < named after *Paul von Lilienfeld* – brother of the founder of this port, Baron Otto von Lilienfeld, **Staicele** < (?) the German surname *Steitz*, *Stietzel*, *Staitzel*, **Strenči** < (?) the German surname *Stren(t)z-*, *Stranz* or the Latv. personal name *Trencis*, **Valdemārpils** < *Krišjānis Valdemārs* – an active member of the Latvian National Awakening, **Valmiera** < *Valmiers* or *Valdimiers* – maybe the name of the ruler of the old castle; actually it is difficult to explain which historical person the name was given after: there are two most popular versions – Prince *Vladimir Mstislavich of Pskov* or *Valdemar II*, King of Denmark.

5. Some morphological features of the structure of oikonyms

A brief insight into the formal derivation of the oikonyms under review attests to the fact that the names of the Latvian towns are predominately one-root toponyms (in spite of the popularity of composite names in other oikonyms, e.g. in homestead names): *Baldone*, *Balvi*, *Bauska*, *Cēsis*, *Durbe*, *Ogre*, *Preiļi*, *Rīga*, *Saldus*, *Valka*, etc. Suffix derivation is the most widespread type among derivatives. For example, the most popular suffixes are: *-ava* – *Ārlava*, *Kandava*, *Kārsava*, *-āni* – *Līvāni*, *Varakļāni*, *Viļāni*, *-ene* – *Gulbene*, *Piltene*, *Smiltene*, and also Finnic *-aži*, which is still a rather obscure formant (see Biel. Gr. 45, 48, Endzelīns D III-2, 93, Balode 2015: 61–62) – *Ainaži*, *Limbaži*, *Vangaži*. The rarer suffixes (i.e. suffix + ending) that are used in coining Latvian town names are the following: *-aine* – *Cesvaine*, *Olaine*, *-ona/-one* – *Madona*, *Baldone*, *-āja* – *Liepāja*, *-ēni* – *Brocēni*, *-iņas* – *Pļaviņas*, *-iena* – *Rūjiena*. Only a few of the town names could be considered as prefixal derivatives. These are derived by using the prefix *aiz-* 'behind' – *Aizkraukle*, *Aizpute*, one possibly with the prefix *prie-* 'near' – *Priekule* (?). Several of these oikonyms are clearly two-root names, such as the following composites: *Daugav-pils*, *Jēkab-pils*, *Valdemār-pils*, *Vents-pils* (all coined with the second component the Latvian *pils* 'castle'), *Jaun-jelgava*, *Jūr-mala*, *Maz-salaca*, *Salac-grīva*, *Pāvil-osta*, *Saul-krasti*, and hypothetically also *Als-unga* (?), *Liel-vārde* (?).

The first impression of a derivational type is sometimes misleading. For instance, the contemporary oikonym **Dobele**, a town in the west of Zemgale on the bank of the River Bērze (see map No 17), appears to have been coined by using the suffix *-ele* from the well-known

Latvian appellative *duobe* (or *dobe* in standard Latvian), which has the meaning 'pit; pothole; dip'. However, in a document of 1254, *Dobele* was recorded as Germ. *Dubelene*, *Dubelone*, and later as *Doblene*, *Doblenen*, and *Doblen*. These records testify to the fact that, *inter alia*, the original form of this place name was *Dobelene (or *Dobeliene, as reconstructed by Jānis Endzelīns) where *-ene* is the characteristic form of the settlement names of the Old Semigallians. The origin could be related to another Latv. word *duobele* 'small hollow; small pit; dip'; thus the reconstructed place name *Dobelene would most likely have meant 'a populated place in a small dip'. (EH I 349, ME I 531, Lvv I 246–247, Balode and Bušs 2015: 94–95)

Comparison of the grammatical number of the town names offers a somewhat surprising result. One could expect *a priori* that most of the Latvian oikonyms (homestead names and village names) would be *pluralia tantum* toponyms, but the proportion between *singularia tantum* and *pluralia tantum* in town/city names is 62:14. The following are a complete list of the *pluralia tantum* names in Latvia: *Ainaži*, *Limbaži*, *Vangaži*, *Baloži*, *Balvi*, *Brocēni*, *Cēsis*, *Līvāni*, *Preiļi*, *Pļaviņas*, *Saulkrasti*, *Strenči*, *Talsi*. All of them, with the exception of two – *Cēsis* and *Pļaviņas* – are names that have masculine gender.

To compare the gender of town-names, the majority of these names have feminine gender (perhaps the gender of geographical nomenclature words have also influenced the gender of oikonyms, cf. Latv. *vieta* 'place', *pils* 'castle', *pilsēta* 'town, city' – all these appellatives in Latvian are words bearing feminine gender). The oikonyms that take masculine gender are only the following fourteen town names (almost all them *pluralia tantum* names): *Ainaži*, *Limbaži*, *Vangaži*, *Baloži*, *Balvi*, *Brocēni*, *Līvāni*, *Preiļi*, *Saulkrasti*, *Strenči*, *Talsi*, as well as *Saldus* and *Ķegums* (the latter two are *singularia tantum* names).

6. Summary

As demonstrated, rather many names of towns/cities in contemporary Latvia are of Baltic origin (Latvian, Curonian, Lithuanian), some are borrowings from Finnic – in the Northern part of the country, and there are very few Germanisms – predominantly indirect Germanisms, i.e. coined from the anthroponyms of German origin; three town names – possibly hybrid composites. Many toponyms under review have several hypotheses concerning their origin. Each Latvian town or city name is worthy of a separate analysis – even a separate article

could be devoted to hypothetical oikonyms. They all are (or will all soon be) included in the Dictionary of Latvian Place Names – "Latvijas PSR vietvārdi" and "Latvijas vietvārdu vārdnīca" (Lvv I, II, LVV 2003, 2006, 2010, 2013), which was initiated by Jānis Endzelīns and is still a work in progress by the toponymists at the Latvian Language Institute (University of Latvia).

Address:
Laimute Balode
University of Helsinki
Department of Modern Languages
Unioninkatu 40 B
FI-00014 Helsinki, Finland
E-mail: laimute.balode@helsinki.fi

University of Latvia
Latvian Language Institute
Akadēmijas laukums 1
LV-1050 Rīga, Latvija
E-mail: laimute.balode@lu.lv

Abbreviations

Est. – Estonian, Germ. – German, Latv. – Latvian, Lith. – Lithuanian, Liv. – Livonian

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Kokkuvõte. Laimute Balode: Pilk Läti linnanimedele. Kohanimede päritolu on keeleteadlaste (täpsemalt nimeuurijate) ja geograafide uurimisvaldkond, mis on ammustest aegadest huvi pakkunud ka kõikidele teistele. Kuna Läti on Leedu ja Eesti lähinaaber, jagavad riigid suurel määral ühist ajalugu, mistõttu on neil ka hulk ühiseid laensõnu ja laenatud nimesid. Käesolev artikkel põhineb Läti kohanimeleksikoni "No Abavas līdz Zilupei" toponüümilisel ainestikul. See heidab pilgu tänapäeva Läti oikonüümide olukorrale ning võrdleb asustuste nimesid nende ajalooliste nimedega.

Märksõnad: onomastika, linnanimed, Läti

Map No 1. Cultural ethnographic regions of Latvia

Map No 2

Map No 3

Map No 4

Map No 5

Map No 6

Map No 7

Map No 8

Map No 9

Map No 10

Map No 11

Map No 12

Map No 13

Map No 14

Map No 15

Map No 16

Map No 17