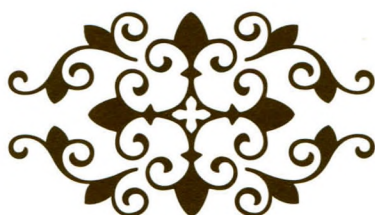


СВЯТОЕ ЕВАНГЕЛИЕ  
Апракос полный 1270 года

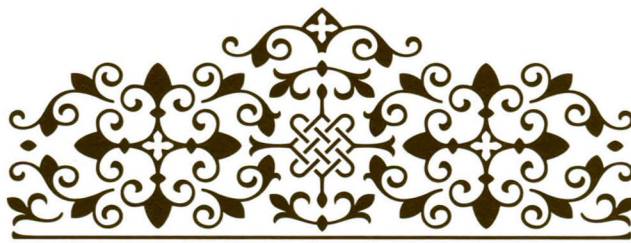
Научные исследования

# СВЯТОЕ ЕВАНГЕЛИЕ Апракос полный 1270 года



Уникальная историческая рукопись,  
именуемая  
«Евангелие Лотыша»,  
(«Ерсикское Евангелие», «Симоновское Евангелие»)

Научные исследования



## СОДЕРЖАНИЕ

<b>Предисловие</b> .....	4
Высокопреосвященнейший Александр, Митрополит Рижский и вся Латвии.	
<b>Древняя Ерсика и её духовное наследие</b> .....	7
Молчанов В.Ф. <b>Евангелие Лотыша 1270 г. из собрания рукописных книг Государственного канцлера России Р.П. Румянцева</b> .....	19
Коцере В.Я. <b>Евангелие Георгия из Ерсика 1270 года</b> .....	35
<b>Спешите делать добро!</b> .....	42
<b>Иллюстрации / Ilustrācijas / Illustrations</b> .....	43

## SATURS

<b>Priekšvārds</b> .....	68
Viņa Eminence Visaugstisvēitais Rīgas un visas Latvijas Metropolīts Aleksandrs.	
<b>Senā Jersika un tās garīgais mantojums</b> .....	71
Viktors Molčanovs. <b>1270. gada Latvieša Evaņģēlijs no Krievijas Valsts kanclera N. Rumjanceva rokkrakstu grāmatu kolekcijas</b> .....	82
Venta Kocere. <b>Jersikas Jurģa 1270. gada Evaņģēlijs</b> .....	96
<b>Steidziet darīt labu!</b> .....	102

## CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b> .....	103
His Eminence Metropolitan Alexander of Riga and All Latvia.	
<b>Ancient Jersika and its spiritual heritage</b> .....	106
V.F. Molchanov. <b>Gospel of Lotysh, 1270 AD from the collection of manuscripts of the Russian State Chancellor N.P. Rumyantsev</b> .....	117
Venta Kocere. <b>Gospel of Georgy from Jersika published in 1270</b> .....	132
<b>Hasten to do good!</b> .....	139
<b>Содержание / Saturs / Contents</b> .....	140
<b>Благодарность</b> .....	141
<b>Pateicības</b> .....	142
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	143



## Gospel of Georgy from Jersika published in 1270.



150 page long extract from the Chronicles of Jirgen Helms, written in the middle of the 17th century and copied by Johann Christoph Brotze (1746–1823), the Baltic historian, researcher and tutor, introduces the assembled volumes “Livonica” from the collection of J.C. Brotze, which are currently preserved in the Academic Library of the University of Latvia (founded in 1524). It describes the castle settlement of Jersika.

Jersika had been mentioned for the first time in the Chronicle of Henry (Heinrici Cronicon Lyvoniae)<sup>1</sup> as a centre of the Latgalian state that King Visvaldis ruled, but the collected material about the castle of Jersika could serve as material for further research of the history of Latvia.

The outstanding historian, Dr. iur. Prof. Arveds Schwabe (1888–1959), has written that, contrary to the other castle settlements of our predecessors, there has been a lot of information, left not only in the Chronicle, but also in the other official documents. It is even well known who ruled Jersika at that time. The Livonian Chronicle of Henry (Heinrici Cronicon Lyvoniae) mentions him as Visvaldis (“Vissewalde”), but the Bishops chancellery in Riga in 1209 uses the Russian version “Wiscewolodus”. A similarly named ruler “Wyssewalde” is to be found in the Chronicle of the Wiegand from Marburg in 1388. A particular Lithuanian castle (“Castrum Wyssewalde”) was located near Villia in the vicinity of Kaunas. Historically it is quite possible, though there is no direct evidence, that after the downfall of the state of Jersika the legal heirs of Visvaldis travelled to Lithuania to stay with the relatives of their mother. The only suggested proof is the inscription in the liege books of the Bishop of Riga in 1209, where in the copy of the 16th century

the Russian name Vsevolod is used instead of Visvaldis. Later we find this name in Russian and Polish historical literature and this proved the basis for the assumption that Visvaldis from Jersika was a Russian grand duke (knyazh). Visvaldis is the only ruler mentioned by the Henry the Latvian as a king. A contradictory issue is the nationality of Visvaldis. It must be mentioned that the Chronicle of Henry refers not only to Jersika, but also to Koknese as a Russian castle, although the Selonians, Latgalians, Russians and Germans lived there. It must be that, similarly to Koknese, Jersika was inhabited by four nations. The only exclusion is that instead of Germans there were Lithuanians. The following words in the Chronicle prove it: “And he (Visvaldis) secured their (Lithuanians) crossing over the Daugava river and supplied them with food when they went to Russia and Estonia.” Therefore, according to Livonian Chronicle of Henry, it should not be understood that Russians (from Rutheni) had escaped from the attacks of German troops and they were the only ones who fought the troops of Bishop Albert, Even today in Latgale quite often the religion to which a person is belonging dominates over nationality and all the Orthodox Church supporters are considered to be Russians while all the Catholics are considered to be Poles. So in the 13th century, especially in the regions of missions, it was quite normal to differentiate: pagans – Latins (Catholics) – Russians (Orthodox). The Chronicle of Henry the Latvian quite often mentions German Crusaders as Latin pelegrins.

Francis Balodis (1882–1947), an outstanding archeologist, Dr. phil., Dr. hist., and professor, evaluated the ancient chronicles and documents during the thirties of the 20th century. The first excavations and the research in the Jersika castle hill

<sup>1</sup> Chronicle of Henry of Livonia – (Latin: Heinrici Cronicon Lyvoniae) is the first complete historical written source that tells about the events in the Baltics at the end of the XII century and first decades of the XIII century. Although events depicted in the Chronicles cover even less than half a century, it reflects the political, economic and cultural issues of the Latvian and Estonian history as brightly as any other Chronicle or document of this time – editor’s note.

and cemetery were of special importance as the archeological evidence proved or negated facts mentioned in the written sources. The materials of the excavations did not provide evidence that Russian inhabitants or a Russian Grand Duke and Russian soldiers were present in Jersika castle for a long time. There was no proof of that either in the excavations at the burial places. F. Balodis, while summarizing the materials of excavations, wrote: "The excavation proved that it was the castle of Christians and Latvians, who inhabited the castle of Jersika. The jewelry found in the castle and the city is 99 % of Latgalian origin. Could it be so that the supposed Russian king would live alone in a Latvian city without any Russian soldiers?" The patriotic thoughts F. Balodis expressed at the end of the thirties of the 20th century were said at the moment of national patriotic rise. A certain part of researchers considered the interpretation of the materials about the excavations to be biased. The Russian and Belorussian researchers, in their studies, considered not only Jersika and Koknese, but also Olinkalns and Asote, to be a part of the defense settlements of Ancient Russia. For the IX–XIII centuries Jersika and Koknese are mentioned as cities of Russia. F. Balodis designated also the same fact that A. Schwabe had mentioned: that Moscow's Rumjantsev Library possesses the Ancient Slavic Gospel written in 1270 AD by Georgy, who was the son of a Latvian clergyman from Gorodische (Jersika). It means that Christianity was already an established institution, as the city could provide clergy men like the father of Georgy was.<sup>2</sup>

Janis Berzinsh (1883–1940), a historian, while explaining the word Jersika, wrote: "This explanation does not fit Gorodische at Novgorod in any way. The name "Gorodische" could not be explained with any Latvian word. The word has nothing to be linked with Jersika which is strange to the Russian language. Hanseatic Traders renamed Gorodische into Jersika. The Hanseatics have been travelling to Latvia where they knew at least one castle – Jersika. May be even those Hanseatics, who gave the name of Gerceke to Gorodische, made this analogy to Jersika that King Visvaldis ruled: the above document mentions Gorodische as "Curia Regis"<sup>3</sup>. Russians had well developed contacts with the Jersika that King Visvaldis ruled. We do not know how the Russians referred to it". In 1931 Janis Kreics expressed the idea that Russians called Jersika, which was ruled by King Visvaldis, as Gorodische. In 1936, A. Schwabe agreed with those ideas of J. Kreics.

The hypothesis of J. Kreics and A. Schwabe was based on the inscription in the "Gospel of Georgy" ("Евангелие Георгия", "Евангелие Лотыша"), that is to be found in Moscow,

in Rumjantsev library. The person who copied the Gospel has written down about himself and the work he has done at the end of the work: "These books have been completed on March 23rd, 6778 AD, Martyr St. Nikon reminiscence day. On the same day there were signs at the sun. I, Georgy, son of the priest called Latvian from Gorodische, with the means of monk Simon from St. Georgy, for my own salvation and consolation for all Christians, wrote." In 1922, Dr. iur. Prof. Arveds Schwabe in his "Latvijas Vēsture" (History of Latvia) published this text for the first time in Latvian. According to the version of J. Kreics, Gorodische is to be understood as the castle where King Visvaldis ruled. From Gorodische comes the father of Georgy, who copied the Gospel which was called Latvian. Jersika was part of the Polotsk eparchy. At the time when Gospel was copied, eparchy was ruled by Bishop Simon (Sīmanis) or Simeons, probably the person who ordered the Gospel. A. Schwabe agreed with those thoughts of J. Kreics.

However, this hypothesis has weak arguments. There is proof that Bishop Simon (Sīmanis) or Simeons was from a family of Polock grand dukes. He was an energetic and prominent public figure of the time. Definitely, he could have provided resources for the copying of the Gospel. Though in the final inscription there is nothing mentioned about the Bishop Simon. Could it have happened that a simple book scribe all of a sudden calls his bishop "an ordinary monk"? Could he dare to do so? When Bishop Simon II from Polotsk, who lived slightly later (in the middle of XV century), called Metropolitan Jon his brother, as it was among the bishops, not father, the metropolitan scolded him: "I do not know if you have aged and lost your memory, or your mind is overwhelmed with pride. Think it over yourself: Could we, Metropolitan, write to a Patriarch and address him "brother"?" A simple son of a priest could not dare to call his bishop an ordinary monk. It must be recognized that the monk mentioned in the inscription is Monk Simon from the Monastery of St. Georgy.

In 1938, Janis Endzelins (1873–1961), a philologist, and a professor, started a debate with a columnist Janis Kreics. Janis Endzelins wrote: "In the Slavic Gospel copied in 1270, which presently is to be found in Moscow and is known as "Novgorod Gospel", the book scribe has added a note that he, Georgy, known as the son of a clergyman, named "Lotysh" from Gorodische, has written this book with the means of Monk Simon from St. Georgy's Monastery. Many have made conclusions that no doubt "Lotysh" means Latvian. Words, that means for copying of the book were provided by some Monk Simon, thus prove to J. Kreics that not only grand dukes, but also other ranks

<sup>2</sup> Balodis F. Jersika un tai 1939. gadā izdarītie izrakumi. – Rīga, 1940, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Curia regis – the place of the king's residence.

of society in Russia were interested in the bringing of the light of Gospel to the Latvians. Therefore even monks did so and spent their resources for this purpose even at the time when Latvians were under the rule of Germans.” J. Endzelins does not understand how the Gospel, written in Slavic language, could proselytize Latvians to Christianity. He also does not know other monks (besides Simon) and other Grand dukes who could have served to bring Latvians to Christianity. The famous Georgy’s Monastery from ancient times was located in the vicinity of the Novgorod region on the left bank of the Volhov River and Gorodische was on the opposite coast of the river. There is a high likelihood that the Gospel was copied far from the Latvian lands and was not meant for the Latvian parishes. Does the word “Lotysh” really mean Latvian? Prof. Jozefs Juliuss Mikkola (1866–1941) from University of Helsinki, Finland, alluded to the well-known Russian surname Latishev that probably also does not have anything to do with the Latvians.<sup>4</sup>

J. Kreics responded to J. Endzelins: “Firstly, our historians unanimously have agreed that the Orthodox belief has deeply spread in the territory of Latvia. Orthodox churches existed in Jersika and Koknese. Latvians had their own terminology for church use, though it was influenced by Slavic language. The orthodox missionaries translated the text for the Latvians where it was necessary. Who were the grand dukes and other representatives of the Russians who cared about Christianity for Latvians? Prof. Endzelins said: “Historical sources and J. Kreics are silent about it.” I did not write about it as it was not my intention to discuss such questions, as the topic of my article was to discuss facts mentioned in the inscription of Georgy. But it is not true that historical sources are silent. The Russian Hypatian Chronicle mentioned that in 1177 AD Grand Duke Rjurik Rostislavitch constructed a church in the area of Ludza, at that time inhabited by Latvians and Latgalians. The church was meant not only for the Russians (How many Russians were in Ludza at that time?), but for all the inhabitants living in the area of Ludza at that time. The Orthodox followers have never separated one nation from the other and do not do so today as well. Further on, Prof. J. Endzelins writes as if he does not understand why it is so: if the Bishops and Grand Dukes of Polotsk have tried to provide Latvian priest for the Latvians, there would be at least a number of Latvian priests. Therefore, why should just one be named a Latvian? But Georgy told us only about himself and mentioned only his father. It could not be demanded that he would provide full statistics and classification of all the clergy of his time in his short article. J. Endzelins is doubtful that the name “Lotysh” in “Georgy’s Gospel” really means Latvian

and prof. J. Mikkola in his article mentioned that “Lotysh” in Russian could be a common name describing a chatty person. According to Prof. J. Mikkola and J. Endzelins, Georgy in the inscription of the Gospel badmouthed his father, calling him a babblers. Georgy was a religious person, and it could be noticed that he mentioned the saint’s day on which he finished the work, considered it his duty to remember it. So he could not have used a bad word describing his father. Prof. J. Mikkola and J. Endzelins believe that Georgy’s father, called “Lotysh,” was not a Latvian and think that the name “Lotysh” is used in ancient Russia as a surname. Prof. J. Mikkola mentioned five examples in his article. Among them are Jurko Lotysh – colonel in Chigirin in 1634, Jushka Lotysh (Cossack from the Ukraine) in 1654, and Fedka Lotysh – archer in Caricin in 1678. Were they all Latvians? Prof. J. Mikkola alludes to the famous Russian surname Latishev that has, most probably, nothing to do with Latvians.

Not only Prof. A. Schwabe approved the fact that the clergyman mentioned in Georgy’s inscription was in Jersika and was a Latvian. The magazine “Ticība un Dzīve” (Faith and Life) published an article “The Spread of Orthodox belief with Ancient Latvians”. The author, assuming that Georgy’s father was a Latvian and lived in Jersika, goes even further and speaks about the Orthodox missionaries, sent to ancient Latvians, as follows: “It is not possible that the missionaries were only Russians as the latest studies show that Polotsk was not so Russian at that time. Many Latvians lived there, and missionaries who spread the Orthodox religion in Jersika and Talava, could have come from them.” The author assumes that the church of Jersika possessed Latvian books already in 1207 AD. Finally, there is one more fact. In April 1931, in Riga, in the premises of O. Lishin’s Gymnasium, the Society of Russians Old believers organized the “Slavic Exhibition” with a display of ancient books. Speaking with one of the organizers of the exhibition, Pavlov, an Old believers’ iconographer, about “Georgy’s Gospel” published in 1270 AD, it turned out that Pavlov knew it and told him that: “Georgy has left also a story about how he fled from the Germans and how he has preserved the Gospel.” The book with this story he has seen in the Ludza region.” In Prof. A. Schwabe’s “Latvijas Vēsture” (History of Latvia), it is said that Georgy had emigrated for Novgorod and finished the copying of the Gospel.<sup>5</sup>

In 1931, Janis Kreics, a historian, has written in his article about “Gospel of Georgy” that is to be found in the Moscow Rumjantsev library and is written in 1270 AD. On page 167 of the Gospel it has been written in Russian with capital letters: “В лето 6778 кончена быша книга сия мца марта въ 23 на память стго мчнка Никона томъ же дни бысть знамение в съльньцы.

<sup>4</sup> Endzelins J. Vai senajā Polockas valstī ir bijuši latviešu tautības mācītāji? // Latvijas Kareivis, 1938, Nr. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Pareizticības izplatīšanās pie senajiem latviešiem // Ticība un Dzīve, 1938, Nr. 11, 164.–165. lpp.

Писах же книги сия аз Гюрги снъ поповъ гллагаго Лотыша с городища стяжаниемъ Симона чърньца от стго Георгия собе на спсение и всъм кртияномъ на оутъхоу”, which means: “These books have been completed on March 23rd, 6778, on Martyr’s St. Nikon reminiscence day. On the same day there were signs at the sun. I, Georgy, son of the priest, called Latvian from Gorodische, with the means of the monk from St. Georgy’s Monastery, for my own salvation and the consolation of all Christians, wrote them.” A. Schwabe mentioned the inscription to Latvians in his article. T. Zeiferts provided an extract from the article in his “Latviešu Rakstniecības Vēsture”<sup>6</sup> (History of Latvian Writing) with a note that the Gospel has been written by Georgy, a son of a Latvian clergyman from Jersika. This inscription is very significant for us. Though our historians (A. Schwabe, T. Zeiferts) knew about it for at least ten years, it has not been fully appreciated. It is proof that the author of Livonian Chronicle of Henry (Heinrici Cronicon Lyvoniae) was wrong when saying, “Russian grand dukes had a habit not to bring any conquered nation to Christianity, but they force them to obedience and payment of taxes and money.” Henry (Heinrici) says it about the grand dukes of Polock. But the very first Russian Christian Grand Duke Vladimir, giving regions to his sons said: “посла съ ними священники, заповѣдая сыномъ своимъ, да каждое въ области своей повелѣваетъ учити и крестити людей и церкви ставити, еже и бысть” (sent with them clergymen, admonishing to the sons to teach and baptize people and construct churches, as it happened). He also thought to inaugurate bishops for the cities and to send sons to the regions, and asked them to talk to the bishops. In 992 AD, it means 4 years after the baptizing of the Great Grand Duke Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev, Leonty, inaugurated bishops for the cities: Veliky Novgorod – Joakims Korsunietis, Chernigov – Neofit, Rostov – Feodor, Vladimir – Stefan, and “sent bishops to many other cities”. Some Russian historians think that Polotsk was among the cities where Metropolitan Leonty inaugurated bishops. But then it would mean that the bishop’s chair had been established in Polotsk in 992 AD. The Polotsk region went to Vladimir’s son, Izjaslav, who established his dynasty there and completed the task that his father had set for him. He taught and Christianized and constructed churches of the Polotsk region, among them also for Latvians and Latgalians as of the end of 10th century, and the latest the beginning of the 11th century. The note of the person who copied the Gospel, Georgy, mentions that resources for the copying were provided to him by some Monk Simon, proving that not only grand dukes, but also the other ranks of the society and even monks were interested in the spreading of the



Dr. h. c. philol. Venta Kocere, Director of the Academic Library of the University of Latvia

light of the Gospel among the Latvians and used their resources for doing so even though the Latvians were already conquered by Germans at that time. This means that Russian grand dukes and Russian bishops did not turn pagans to Christianity by force as it was done by Germans, but worked following the word and spirit of the Gospel, accepting into Christianity and baptizing only those who wanted to do so themselves. Such a method of the turning of pagans to Christianity was not familiar to Henry (Heinrici), he did not understand it. Further mentioned inscription shows an outstanding fact. The grand dukes and bishops of Polotsk from the very beginning supported this principle: Latvian clergymen should be Latvians themselves. They did it by educating the Latvian clergymen from their own ranks. As in 1270 AD, there was an Orthodox Latvian priest for the Orthodox Latvians, whose son copied the Gospel, and it was clear that such priests were there earlier also”.

An outstanding Byelorussian researcher of ancient times, V. Lastovskis, calls this Gospel that Georgy had copied “Гарадзецкае Евангеліе” – the “Gorodetz or Gorodische Gospel”. Russians use to call all places, where were fortified hills or cities were located in ancient times, as городище

<sup>6</sup> Kreics J. Vai senajā Polockas valstī ir bijuši latviešu tautības mācītāji? // Latvijas Kareivis, 1938, Nr. 105.

(gorodische). But where was the place with only ruins in 1270 AD, where the Orthodox Latvians lived in such quantities though, that they even had a priest who was a Latvian? Most probably they were in territories inhabited by Latvians and not Russians. The place could be only ancient Jersika, where only the ruins were left over in 1270 AD. It would be more correct to call this Gospel as the “Gospel of Jersika”, as the son of the priest of Jersika copied it and it was used in Jersika during the church services and while teaching the inhabitants of Jersika. V. Lastovskis, who has researched the language of Gospel and has found the language peculiarities of ancient Krivichs from Polotsk, as for instance: use of “ц” (c) and “ч” (ch) instead of each other. Such exchange is to be found in the present languages of Vitebsk and Polotsk Byelorussian dialect. It proves that the person who copied the Gospel was familiar with the dialect of the language and had got used to the language to such an extent that the features of the language entered the copied Gospel. Polotsk was an essential trade centre on the long way from Scandinavia to Constantinople “из варяг в греки” (from Varangians into Greeks). Polotsk has already been mentioned in the Scandinavian sagas. In the 11th century it became a remarkable political, religious, and cultural centre as a capital of grand dukes, of wide and strong region, and the bishop’s residence of large eparchy. Merchants and entrepreneurs from Scandinavia tended to travel to this city up to the time when Germans settled in the delta of the Daugava River, thus blocking the way “из варяг в греки”. But the territories inhabited by Latvians were separated from Polotsk only by tens of kilometers. Drisa was indicated as a Latvian city even in the travel description of Catherine II. It would be unbelievable if the Latvians and Latgalians whom the Grand Duke of Polotsk conquered did not have access to the capital of Polotsk, even if they did not tend to travel to it. The road to Polotsk was not long or difficult, especially down the Daugava River.

The Orthodox Priests for Latvians were taught and inaugurated in Polotsk, where located Cathedral and residence of the bishop. Priests always had close links to their Archpriest – the bishop. For this reason we could assume that in the 13th century the Orthodox priest and his son Georgy – the person who copied the Gospel – had attended school in Polotsk and there learned the language of the Krivichs from Polotsk with all the language peculiarities. Who was Monk Simon, who provided Georgy with resources to copy the Gospel? Where did he live? There were several monasteries in Polotsk for men as well as for women, where prospective monks came from the superior ranks of the society including, the Grand Dukes family. So, the widow of Polotsk Grand Duke, Roman Vseslavich, entered the nunnery at the Cathedral of Polotsk – Church of Sophia, adopting the

name Romania, and was the senior of the monastery. Preslava, daughter of Roman’s brother Svjatoslav – Georgy, entered the nunnery, with the name of Eufrosiniya, and her sister, Gorislava, adopted the name of Eudokiya, and Zvenislava, the daughter of the third brother – Boris Vseslavitch, adopted the name of Eupraksiya. For this reason we must think that Monk Simon, who was so interested in the mission of the Gospel amongst Latvians and provided resources for the Gospel, was the monk of the monastery in Polotsk, and may be of higher social standing, but by no means a prosperous and educated person, it must be stated that at that time when Georgy wrote his Gospel, the bishop of Polotsk was a bishop called Simon, known also as Novgorodite (Симон Новгородец, 1260–1274). Russian historians mentioned that he had established a monastery in Polotsk.

Since the Orthodox bishops were monks and often lived in monasteries, would it be possible that Monk Simon, who provided means for Georgy to copy the Gospel, was the same bishop, who would not want to reveal his name, but sought to do good in secret and pretended to be just a simple monk? And did not his soubriquet “Novgorodian” give T. Zeiferts a reason to move the city of Jersika from the diocese of Polotsk to the diocese of Novgorod? Orthodox residents of Jersika, while under German power, received both priests and material benefits from their former metropolis. Their tragedy apparently dragged on for a while even after 1270 AD and ended only much later, during the XIV century, when the metropolis itself was in great confusion, and the district of Polotsk fell into the hands of other nations – Lithuanian and Polish.<sup>7</sup>

The researcher of medieval times, Indriķis Sterns (1918–2005), indicates in his research that there is no direct evidence in the written records that people living in Eastern Latvia would have converted to Orthodoxy. Only the “Chronicle of Henry” testifies that Visvaldis of Jersika and the sons of Tāļivaldis of Talava were Orthodox together with the Latgalians living in Talava. To prove that Eastern Latvians were baptized in Orthodoxy, historians use the aid of language evidence, from which it can be seen that many words, used in Christian churches, originate from the Slavonic language. Ernest Blese has studied these words a lot, and the most common ones are:

- baznīca – божница (a church)
- gavēt – говеть (to fast)
- grāmata – грамота (a book)
- grēks – грех (a sin)
- kristīt – крестить (to baptize)
- krusts – крест (a cross)
- kūma – кума (a godparent)
- Lielā Piektdiena – Великая Пятница (Good Friday)

<sup>7</sup> Zeiferts T. Latviešu rakstniecības vēsture. – R., 1922, 1. d., 336 p.



Lieldienas – Велик День (Easter)  
nedēļa – неделя (a week)  
svēce – свеча (a candle)  
svētki – святки (celebration)  
svēts – святой (saint)  
zvans – звон (a bell)

It is known about Jersika and it can be assumed about Koknese as well, that Orthodox churches were built there, meaning that Orthodox people lived there: Russian merchants and, presumably, also a part of the urban population (Jersika city had more than one church). But were Latvians, living outside these cities, also Orthodox? Historians cannot answer this question, because of the absence of any written testimonies, and Orthodox crosses, found by archaeologists, which testify a lot about trade routes, wealth, and love for the adornments of ancient Latvian women, say little to historians about a devotion to Orthodoxy by the ancient Latvians. So we must return to the words of the Christian faith, borrowed from the Russian language and found by linguists.<sup>8</sup>

The Lutheran pastor, professor of theology at the University of Latvia, and historian of Latvian Church, Dr. Theol. Roberts Feldmanis (1910–2002), writes in his book “Latvian Church History”: “There is one moment that characterizes the Orthodox Missions before the arrival of Maynard. It is information about so-called Jurgis (Georgy) the Latvian and “Gospel of Jersika”. Jurgis the Latvian, who lived in the XIII century, was a son of the Latvian Orthodox priest from Latgale, who copied the Gospel in Slavonic language on 1270 AD, which is stored in Moscow, at the museum that was called the Rumjantsev museum before the war. The afterword is written on the 167th page of the Gospel, saying: “during the year 6778th (according to the Old Testament dating method) on March 23rd, reminiscence day of the holy martyr Nikon, this book was finished. And on the same day there were signs in the sun. These books were written by me – Jurgis, priest’s son, called the Latvian, from Gorodische (worded: Az Giorgiy sin... glagolyeno Latish s Gorodishche), using the means of Monk Simon from St. Georgy, for my own salvation and consolation for all Christians.” The language of the Gospel gives evidence about the Polotsk’s Krivichi phonetic peculiarities that are even now present in Belarusian language in Vitebsk and Polotsk. It, in turn, makes it believable that the scribe of the Gospel had learned good spelling and the Krivichi dialect in Polotsk, which was a metropolis of Latgale in the XIII century. Georgy calls himself a priest’s son, so it must be assumed that his father was also an educated and ordained priest at the nearest eparchy in Polotsk. The place named “Gorodische”, mentioned

in the afterword of the Gospel, cannot be established reliably, as this word was usually used to call every Russian fortified mound or a place where the ruins of the town were found. True, in the Novgorod area, located on the right bank of Volhova, the Viking castle Gorodische is located, but it is unlikely that Jurgis, the Latvian, would have lived so deep in Russia. To tell the truth, there is not much doubt, as he was turned not just to Orthodoxy, but also into a Russian. Orthodoxy has always been equal to switching to the Russian nationality, and, in addition, his ability to write in a Slavic language with Cyrillic characters exacerbates that, because neither Latgallians nor Livs had their own writing. This also marks a unique moment – even if Latvians did something in this direction, then it was like this – Slavic writing. Its spread, though, apparently has not been wide, as we do not find the slightest sign of writing anywhere else in Latvian tribes before the XII-XIII centuries. The signs, which are sometimes written on an image of Perkons (God of Thunder) or a flag, partially remind of runic characters and partly some sort of other signs; not many signs have been found, they have never been decrypted and most important – have never been widely used. As we see, the location of Gorodische lies elsewhere. Since the Germans called this Gorodische of Novgorod as Gersicke, it seems that Gorodische, mentioned in the “Gospel of Jurgis the Latvian”, was another, “Russified” form of Gercike. This Russian city in Latgale with the double name Gorodische and Gercike is the Jersika mound of present day. We must conclude, that the father of Jurgis the Latvian, was an Orthodox priest, residing in Latgale, Jersika, and that the work, copied by his son, was the “Gospel of Jersika”. It is not clear who was the rich Monk Simon, who had given money to Georgy to copy the Gospel. Maybe it was the Bishop Simeon of Polotsk. The “Gospel of Jurgis the Latvian”, proves that Latvian Orthodox priests existed in Latgale during the XIII century and that Jersika was the mission center, from which this faith was more or less established in the rest of Latgale prior to the later Catholicism. Please note – it was at the end of the XIII century already – in 1270 AD. It was almost a hundred years after the arrival of Maynard. So far, this was information on the entrance of the Orthodoxy in our nation.<sup>9</sup>

Historically significant person of Jurgis from Jersika had reflected in Latvian literature and arts.

The Latvian painter, stage designer and teacher Ludolfs Liberts (1895–1959) painted portraits of the XIII century kings during the 30s of the previous century. First, a historical portrait of the Prince of Semigallians, Namejs, was painted, but later the visit of the Swedish King Gustav V in 1937 prompted to convert the Riga Castle, using the “Latvian national style”. The room of

<sup>8</sup> Šterns J. Latvijas vēsture: 1180–1290: Krustakari. – R. : Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2002, 331.–375. lpp.

<sup>9</sup> Feldmanis R. Latvijas baznīcas vēsture. 2. izd. – R., 2011, p. 26–27.

ancient rulers was created, where L. Libert's other known paintings of ancient kings were placed – imaginary portraits of Cours' Lamekin, Semigallians' Viesturs and Latgallians' Visvaldis and Talivaldis. The majestic Visvaldis stood out in this gallery, which perfectly supported the ideological approach of those days. The portrait of Georgy of Jersika was added in 1936.<sup>10</sup>

In his historical novel, "The winds blow the ashes..."<sup>11</sup>, the writer Janis Niedre (1909–1987) turned to the area not touched by fiction novelists till then – to the land of Jersika and at the time (1237–1252). The novel, with a scientific precision, proves that the society was fully formed at the time of King Visvaldis already.

The novel's story line is connected with Georgy from Latgale, raised at the convent in Polotsk, and his march "through the snowbound trail" across the land of Jersika. Georgy is looking for strength that will restore what existed earlier, but can find only what helps to maintain people's physical and spiritual existence. Therefore, the part about the people from the Dark village is a very important chapter of the novel – Georgy is watching the lives of the peasants and their unshakable will to survive.

"There is even less information in historical sources about the person who copied the Gospel, the ethnic Latvian, and son of the Orthodox priest, Jurgis, than Kaupo or the chronicler Heinrici, who repeatedly were used as a useful prototype image for literary characters. The author has recreated Georgy as a thinker, comparator and assessor of controversial life events. The second aspect of Georgy's personality is his unshakable trust in the idea of returning peaceful working days to his people and faith in their own fatherland – Jersika. His determination is not destroyed by the long years of captivity in the scary cellar of the Cross castle, built by Germans. Through this literary work, the reader gets insight of the spiritual currents of the Baltic people during the XIII century, and about their mutual relations, especially about the popular beliefs and bringing the Orthodox Church ideas closer to the broader parts of the population. The author's approach is upheld by the archaeological findings of the spread of Orthodox crosses in Latgale, but the historian has a reason to doubt that Georgy was able to explore the works of the ancient Greek philosophers.

The story of J. Niedre about developments at the Jersika land during the XIII century should be regarded as the deepening of the philosophically-historical and archeological knowledge, the alloy with the folklore and ethnographic evidence about the spiritual life of the people. The author has created a powerful entirety of the depicted period, which can be created by the fusion of mentioned sciences and creative imagination of the artist."<sup>12</sup>

J. Niedre writes in the afterword of the book: "Is the story about Jersika, Georgy and Jersika's people only the author's imagination? No, it is a historical truth. And there is creative imagination – as in any literary work that tells the story of people's lives, struggles, mutual relationships, habits and beliefs in the remote past. The historic book describes the feudal state of Latvian Jersika, its great city – a great exchange center of goods and cultural values, located at the middle of Daugava. Jersika's close contacts with the dukedom of Polotsk and training of the Christian cult servants and book scribes in Polotsk to serve in Latgale are historically documented. The ruler of Jersika, Visvaldis, son-in-law of the grand duke of Lithuania, who was one of the first to resist German knights at the beginning of the German invasion in Baltics, is a historical personality. Also, historically (and especially archaeologically) the once much-vaunted Jersika craft art is documented. The son of the Orthodox priest in Jersika, Georgy, who copied the book library at the convent of Polotsk, is a historic person as well. The mythological description of the ancient world of Latgallians, "writing" ability of residents of ancient castles and villages, i.e. ornamentation, and its link with tales and songs is well grounded. The material for the book, the material for the formation of characters and fables, is gleaned from the national oral poetry, archaeological, ethnographic and geographic materials and researches, historical descriptions of Livonia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia, writings from the early period of Christianity, stories of old people, and legends and beliefs."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Caune M. Rīgas pils. – R. : Zinātne, 2001, 128 p.

<sup>11</sup> Niedre J. Un vēji triec nodegu pelnus... Jersikas zeme: Romāns. 2. izd. – R. : Liesma, 1984, 225 p.

<sup>12</sup> Svarāne M. Gadsimts toreiz bija trīspadsmitais // Karogs, 1979, Nr. 4, p. 169–170.

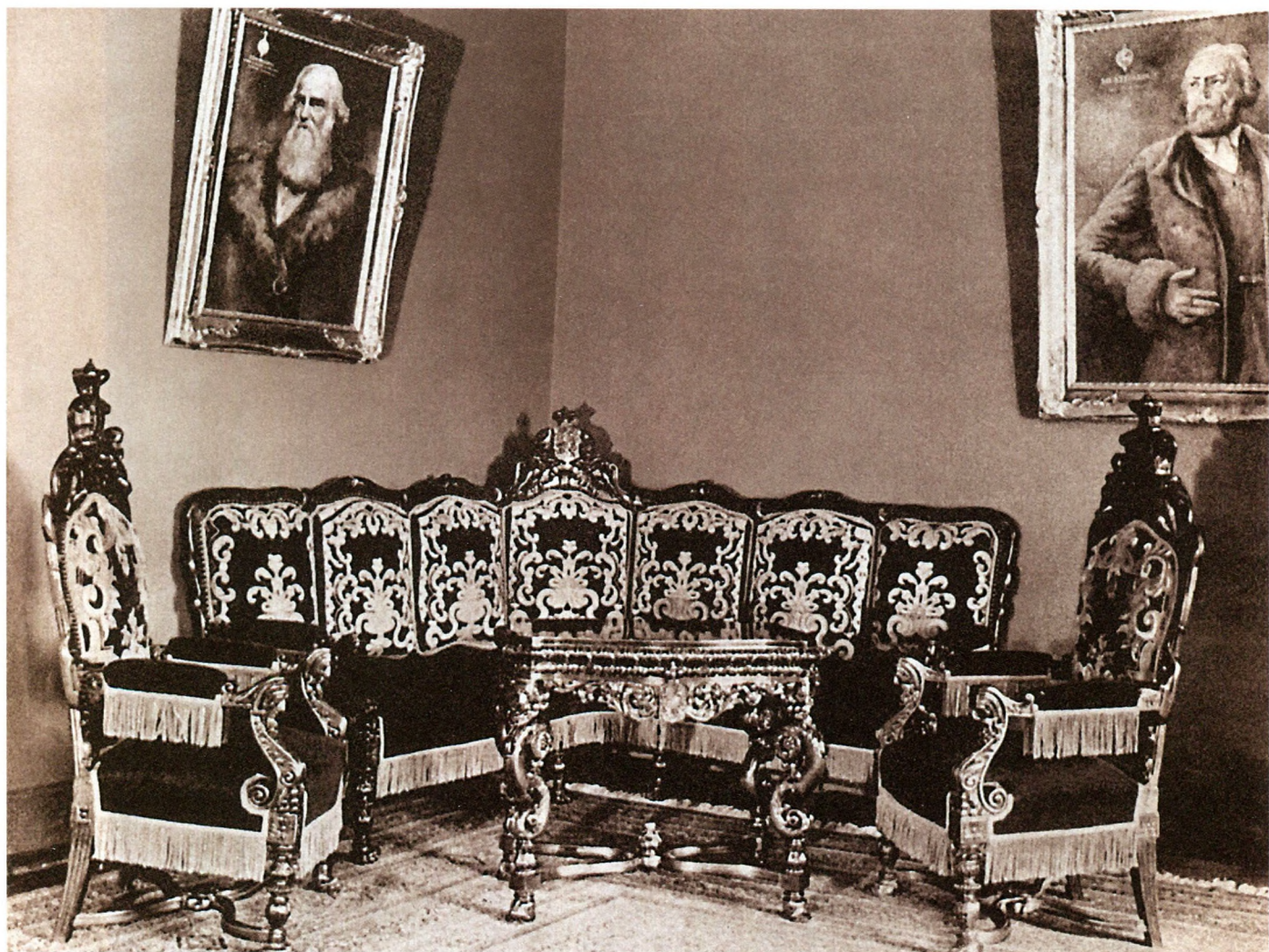
<sup>13</sup> Niedre J. Un vēji triec nodegu pelnus... Jersikas zeme: Romāns. 2. izd. – R. : Liesma, 1984, p. 224–225.



Книгописец Георгий. Исторический портрет латышского художника Л. Либертса. 1936 год  
Grāmatas pārrakstītājs Jurgis. Ludolfa Liberta vēsturiskais portrets. 1936. gads  
Book scribe Georgy. Historical Portrait by Latvian artist L. Liberts. 1936



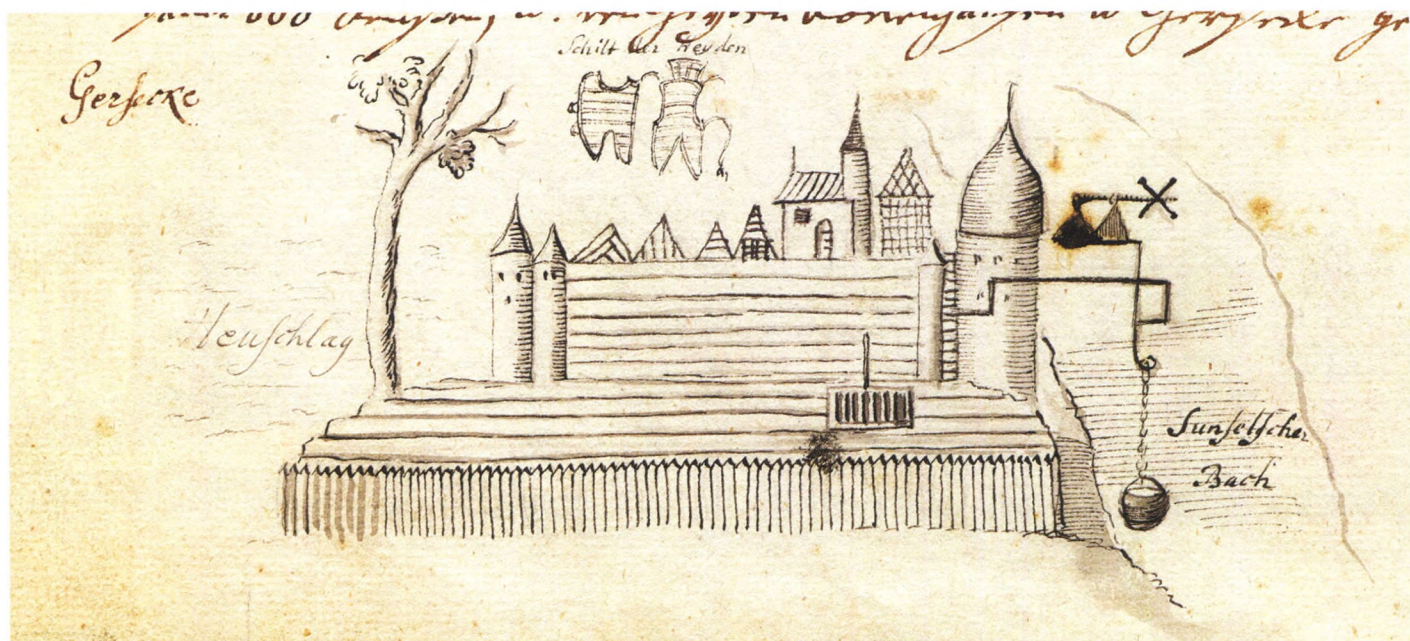
Князь Ерсики Всеволод. Исторический портрет латышского художника Л. Либертса. 1937 год  
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Knyazh of Jersika, Vsevolod. Historical Portrait by Latvian artist L. Liberts. 1937



Зал древних правителей в замке Президента Латвийской Республики. Фотография конца 1930-х годов

Seno valdnieku zāle Latvijas Republikas prezidenta pilī. 30. gadu beigu foto

Hall of the ancient rulers at the castle of the President of Latvia. Photo from late 1930s



Ерсикский замок. Рисунок И. К. Бротце, сделанный с изображения в старинной хронике Иргена Хелмса. Конец XVIII века

Jersikas pils. J. K. Broces zīmējums no attēla senajā Jirgena Helmsa hronikā. XVIII gs. beigas

Jersika castle. Drawing by J. C. Brotze, made from the image in the ancient chronicles of Jirgen Helms. The end of the XVIII century



Ерсика. Картина латышского художника А. Гусарса. 1939 год  
Jersika. Latvijas mākslinieka A. Gusāra glezna. 1939. gads  
Jersika. Painting by Latvian artist A. Gusars. 1939



Латышский историк профессор А. Швабе. Фотография 1930-х годов  
Latviešu vēsturnieks profesors A. Švābe. XX gadsimta 30. gadu fotogrāfija  
Latvian historian Professor A. Schwabe. Photo from 1930s





Латышский учёный-археолог профессор Ф. Балодис. Портрет Л. Либертса. 1930-е годы  
Latviešu zinātnieks arheologs profesors F. Balodis. L. Liberta portrets. XX gadsimta 30. gadi  
Latvian archaeologist Professor F. Balodis. Portrait of L. Liberts. 1930s

JĀNIS  
NIEDRE

UN VĒJI TRIEC  
NODEGU PELNUS...



STĀSTI PAR VĒSTURI

Обложка книги латышского писателя Яниса Ниедре «И ветры гуляют на пепелищах...», (Рига, 1984),

главным героем которой является Георгий Книгописец

Jāņa Niedres grāmatas “Un vēji triec nodegu pelnus...” vāks (R., 1984),

kuras galvenais varonis ir popa dēls Jurgis, grāmatu pārrakstītājs

The cover of the historical novel by the Latvian writer Jānis Niedre “And the winds blow the ashes...”, (Riga, 1984),

whose main character is Georgy the Book scribe