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## LIVONIAN ORTHOGRAPHY

**Abstract.** This article deals with the development of Livonian written language and the related matters starting from the publication of first Livonian books until present day. In total four different spelling systems have been used in Livonian publications. The first books in Livonian appeared in 1863 using phonetic transcription. In 1880, the Gospel of Matthew was published in Eastern and Western Livonian dialects and used Gothic script and a spelling system similar to old Latvian orthography. In 1920, an East Livonian written standard was established by the simplification of the Finno-Ugric phonetic transcription. Later, elements of Latvian orthography, and after 1931 also West Livonian characteristics, were added. Starting from the 1970s and due to a considerable decrease in the number of Livonian mother tongue speakers in the second half of the 20th century the orthography was modified to be even more phonetic in the interest of those who did not speak the language. Additionally, in the 1930s, a spelling system which was better suited for conveying certain phonetic phenomena than the usual standard was used in two books but did not find any wider usage.

**Keywords:** Livonian, standard language, orthography.

### Introduction

The Livonian language has been extensively written for about 150 years by linguists who have been noting down examples of the language as well as the Livonians themselves when publishing different materials. The prime consideration for both of these groups has been how to best represent the Livonian language in the written form. The area of interest for the linguists has been the written representation of the language with maximal phonetic precision. For everyday users the most important aspect has been how to write and read the language in the best, easiest and most practical way.

Therefore, both phonetic transcription and standard written orthography have been used widely for writing Livonian, though both of these systems are relatively closely connected. It is thought, however, that the basis for the Livonian written standard was the new Latvian orthography (Damberg 1978 : 7), although in reality it seems that it was the Finno-Ugric phonetic alphabet (transcription), some aspects of which were later adapted to the new orthographic conventions of Latvian.

For writing Livonian, a phonetic transcription of the time was already used by Johan Andreas Sjögren and Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann whose work resulted in the publication of the first Livonian grammar in 1861 together with appendices — Livonian texts (Sjögren, Wiedemann 1861a), and a dictionary (Sjögren, Wiedemann 1861b). The transcription used there was also used in the first Livonian language books (Mt 1863a; Mt 1863b).

Different phonetic transcriptions within the framework of the Finno-Ugric phonetic alphabet were used for writing down Livonian by Eemil Nestor Setälä (Setälä 1891; Näytteitä liivin kielestä 1953), Lauri Kettunen<sup>1</sup> (1938), Lauri Posti (1942), and other linguists. Although similar in their content, the three phonetic transcriptions above differ from each other mainly in the degree of their phonetic detail and interpretation. For instance, the  $\tilde{o}$  of the first syllable is always represented as the sound  $\varrho$  by L. Kettunen whereas E. N. Setälä has  $\imath$  and L. Posti  $\varrho$ . This points to the fact that the aim of the use of the phonetic transcription is to write down the language in as precise way as possible, and depends largely on the principles used (i.e. on the particular transcription and its details) and also on the language informant and the interpretation of the perceived sounds.

Thus, the representation of the phonetic entities of Livonian in various phonetic transcriptions and the comparison of these transcriptions forms a topic in its own right. From the point of view of the present article it is important to note in which way certain phonetic phenomena have been represented in Livonian orthography, or in other words, how the present day Livonian orthography developed.

Crucial questions of debate in Livonian orthography have always been the representation in written form of vowels and their quantity, diphthongs and their quantity, the palatalisation and quantity of the consonants, the voicing of the components of consonant clusters and the broken tone. Another vital factor from the point of view of the development of orthography, which is connected to vocalism, has to do with the differences between the two sub-dialects of the Courland dialect of Livonian, Eastern Livonian (LiE) and Western Livonian (LiW),<sup>2</sup> which are largely manifested in vocalism. In the following, a short overview will be given of the main issues relating to the development of Livonian orthography.

Livonian is rich in vowels including the following set:  $a$ ,  $\acute{a}$ ,  $\ddot{a}$ ,  $e$ ,  $\varrho$ ,  $\hat{\delta}$ ,  $i$ ,  $o$ ,  $\varrho$ ,  $\varrho$ ,  $u$ , and historically also  $\ddot{u}$  and  $\ddot{o}$ . Most Livonian vowels occur only in the first syllable and the usage of some vowels is even more restricted.

From the point of view of the Livonian orthography, the main problems related to the vowels of the first syllable are the marking of vowel length and finding the right characters to represent certain vowels. Such vowels are: (1)  $\varrho$  and  $\acute{a}$  which appear only in the first syllable and only as long, i.e. in the form  $\bar{\varrho}$  and  $\bar{\acute{a}}$ , while  $\bar{\varrho}$  occurs only in Eastern Livonian and  $\bar{\acute{a}}$  occurs in Western Livonian and İra (Central Livonian) as an equivalent of

<sup>1</sup> The most substantial and influential work in Livonian linguistics is the dictionary by Lauri Kettunen. Therefore, for the sake of clarity and to avoid ambiguity, L. Kettunen's phonetic transcription has been used in the present article.

<sup>2</sup> The basis of the present day Livonian orthography is the Eastern Livonian dialect. At the same time Western Livonian has influenced the development of the written standard in that often a compromise had to be found between the two varieties. For a more detailed overview of the dialectal background of the Livonian orthography see Ernštreit 1999.

the Eastern Livonian and  $\bar{a}$  only in Eastern Livonian and in Īra (Central Livonian) as an equivalent of the Eastern Livonian  $\bar{o}$  and  $\bar{a}$  (cf. LiW  $m\bar{a}$  'country, land; soil' and  $j\bar{a}lga$  'foot' vs. LiE  $m\bar{o}$  and E  $j\bar{a}lga$ ); (2) the sound  $\varrho$  which occurs in Eastern Livonian and Īra in the first syllable of the word as both short and long whereas in Western Livonian its equivalent is either the diphthong  $^{u}o$  or the diphthong  $\grave{y}o$ . (The sound  $\varrho$  developed historically as a phenomenon of coarticulation and occurs invariably in combination with the consonants  $m$ ,  $p$  and  $v$  (e.g. LiE  $m\varrho iz\hat{\delta}$  'manor',  $p\varrho\hat{\delta}dd\hat{\delta}$  'to ache',  $v\varrho l$  'beer')); (3) the sound  $\varrho$  which occurs both as short and long but also only in the first syllable and only in Eastern Livonian and in Īra, while its equivalents in Western Livonian are the sounds  $i$  or  $u$  (e.g. LiE  $\bar{\varrho}d\hat{\delta}g \sim$  LiW  $\bar{i}d\hat{\delta}g$  'evening'; LiE  $v\varrho tt\hat{\delta} \sim$  LiW  $vutt\hat{\delta}$  'to take'); and (4) historical vowels  $\ddot{u}$  and  $\ddot{o}$  which occurred also as long and short only in the first syllable.

In the second syllable and other non-initial syllables, the main problems are related to the writing of the short vowel  $\hat{\delta}$  (which is the only Livonian sound that does not occur in the first syllable) and the designation of the quantity of the vowels in non-initial syllables. Namely, like in Estonian, in Eastern Livonian the vowels of the syllable following a short stressed syllable ( $a$ ,  $i$ ,  $u$ ) are half-long and even longer, e.g.  $kal\hat{a}$  'fish',  $re\check{k}k\grave{a}nd\hat{\delta}b\hat{\delta}$  'they speak'. It is important to remember that there is no lengthening of the vowel of the syllable following a short syllable in Western Livonian. It is, however, possible that this phenomenon is a later development in Western Livonian because it becomes clearly discernable only in the 20th century.

Another problematic area related to the representation of vowels is the diphthongs, above all those ending in  $i$  and  $u$  (e.g.  $t\grave{a}\grave{y}\check{z}$  'full',  $ku\grave{i}$  'how',  $\grave{a}i\grave{g}a$  'time') and the approximants following a single vowel or a diphthong ending in  $i$  and  $u$  (e.g.  $l\grave{o}ja$  'boat' : PSg  $laij\hat{\delta}$ ,  $p\grave{a}va$  'day' : PSg  $p\grave{a}y\check{v}\hat{\delta}$ ;  $ka'i$  'damage' : PSg  $ka'jj\hat{\delta} \sim ka'ijj\hat{\delta}$ ;  $ki'uv \sim ki'u$  'stone' : PSg  $ki'u\check{v}\hat{\delta}$ , NPI  $kiv\grave{i}d$ ). As regards the use of either an approximant or a vowel at the end of a diphthong there is such a huge variation in Livonian written texts even within the same writer's work that it is almost impossible to describe any system. Therefore, this question is not treated in any further detail in the present paper. It remains only to be said that today this variation has largely been eradicated with the help of certain rules such as following morphological principles. Also problematic is the occurrence of the extra short component  $\grave{i}$  or  $\grave{u}$  at the beginning of a diphthong or a triphthong, e.g.  $p\grave{i}er\grave{a}st$  'after',  $s\grave{u}od\grave{a}$  'war',  $l\grave{i}e\grave{u}d\hat{\delta}$  'to find' :  $l\grave{i}ed\grave{a}B$  'he finds';  $t\grave{u}o\grave{i}$  'second' : PSg  $t\grave{u}o\grave{i}sta$ .

In the case of consonants, a problem is posed by the marking of palatalisation and the representation of word-internal and word-final consonant length (e.g.  $mat\hat{\delta}$  'to bury',  $ka\check{s}$  'cat'). Likewise, it has been particularly problematic to present the different degrees of sonority beginning with a voiced intervocalic obstruent which alternates with a half-voiced obstruent at end of a word and a voiceless obstruent in consonant clusters (e.g.  $a'bb\hat{\delta}$  'help' (PSg) : NSg  $a'B$  'help' : ISg  $a'pk\hat{\delta}ks$ , cf. also  $\grave{a}'pt'\hat{\delta}$  'to help, to aid' (Inf);  $puni\check{z}\hat{\delta}$  'red' (IllSg) : GSg  $puni\check{z}$  : PSg  $puni\check{z}t$ , NPI  $pu'nnist$  from  $pu'nni$  'red'). This problem, however, is more closely related to the choice between morphological and phonetic principles, or in other words the question

concerns the retention of the basic form of the word stem in different word forms or derivations (e.g. **punni** : **punīz** : **punīzō** : **punīzt** : **punnizt**).

Another crucial issue from the point of view of Livonian orthography is the representation of the broken tone in standard texts. This problem should be viewed more broadly in the context of the Livonian standard language. In most languages, orthography is used by the people who speak the language as their mother tongue and therefore the phonetic and even phonological phenomena need not be represented in a very detailed way in the spelling because the mother tongue speakers use the orthography mainly for writing or reading texts and not for identifying the pronunciation. In the case of Livonian, since the 1970s, written Livonian texts have been used by people whose mother tongue is not Livonian and therefore a more exact representation of phonetic detail in written texts, and in particular study texts, has become more important. This is of extreme importance for the representation of the broken tone and some other phenomena which are not that crucial for those speaking Livonian as their mother tongue, such as the writing of the vowel *o* or the representation of the vowel length in the syllable following a short syllable.

In the following, the development of the Livonian orthography during different periods and the principles used will be viewed in the context of the above mentioned main problems. A short summary of the principles used is presented in a table.

### **The first Livonian books**

The first books in Livonian appeared in 1863 in London. They were the Gospel of Matthew published in two sub-dialects of the Courland dialect of Livonian, Eastern Livonian and Western Livonian (Mt 1863a; Mt 1863b).

Both books were published in 250 copies each and were mainly meant for collectors and those interested in languages. The Livonians received only one copy of each publication and therefore the orthography used in them can only remotely be counted as part of the history of the development of the Livonian orthography because the books did not have a direct influence on the emergence of the present-day orthography. Nevertheless, the orthography of the books was very modern in a certain sense because similar principles were later employed during further stages of development of the written language.

The books used a similar phonetic spelling system that was used in the Livonian-German-Livonian dictionary and the accompanying Livonian examples which appeared a few years earlier (Sjögren, Wiedemann 1861a; 1861b). The basis for this spelling system was an antique script where various diacritics were added. As this is a phonetic transcription the orthography used in the books was considerably more detailed than is needed for an average reader.

Vowel length is as a rule marked with a macron above the letter, e.g. **tēg** 'you', whereas the first long component of a diphthong is marked with an acute accent, cf. **kúožōd** 'places' or is left unmarked as in e.g. **āb lieda** 'does not find', vs. Modern Livonian (MLi) **kūožōd**, **āb lieda**.

Additional diacritics for marking the quality of vowels are placed under the letters. The historic sounds *ö* and *ü* which appear everywhere in the

texts are written as **o** and **u** (**sudām** 'heart', **lob** 'through', cf. LiM **sidām**, **leb**). It is possible that this solution was chosen in order to avoid the use of double diacritics above the letter (e.g. **sāl** 'there', MLi **sāl**), which has proven to be one of the main technical problems in later spelling systems of Livonian.

All the vowels permitted in the first syllable in Livonian are marked with the help of such diacritics; in order to differentiate the vowels of the first syllable, **ō** and **ā**, from the ordinary vowels **o** and **a** they are written respectively as **o** and **a**. The vowel **ȯ** is marked with **o** and the vowel **õ** with **o**.

The same character **o** is used to represent the **ð** in non-initial syllables (e.g. **roḱāndḱob** '(s)he speaks') — this solution of writing two different sounds in a similar way was used again in later spelling systems. Another feature which appears in these books and was employed later is the marking of the vowel length with a macron in non-initial syllables. As a special feature, the vowel length is indicated in the closed syllable (e.g. **vijast** 'anger (ElaSg)', but is left unindicated in the open syllable (e.g. **vija** 'anger').

The palatalisation of consonants is marked with an acute sign above the letter or next to it (e.g. **eñtš** 'onself's'). At the same time it is worth noting that also marked as palatalized are consonants that appear before diphthongs where the first component is **i**, e.g. **perāst** [**p<sup>l</sup>erāst**] 'after'; **ferroḱs** [**t<sup>l</sup>er<sup>l</sup>ḱs**] 'healthy (Trl)'. Also, **ŋ** is represented separately, e.g. **jeñg** [**jeñg**] 'soul'.

Yet another interesting feature which characterizes this spelling system is that the word-final past tense singular marker **-z** is everywhere written as **-s**, e.g. **kītis** [**kīttiz**], '(s)he said'. The same is true of the nouns ending with **z** in the nominative case, e.g. **lāmbas** [**lāmbaz**] 'sheep', **tōvas** [**tōvaz**] 'sky'. Even if the same could be expected in the genitive of the nouns ending with an **-i** the ending **-z** occurs instead, e.g. **pilkijiz** [**pīlḱkijiz**] 'the one who despises (GSg)'.

### The gospel of 1880

In 1880, a third book in Livonian appeared in St Petersburg. It was yet another Gospel of Matthew (Mt 1880), which became the first Livonian book which made it to the actual users of the language — the Livonians.

The translator of the book and the creator of the orthography is not known and therefore the book's story of creation has been the source of fierce debates. One of the main questions has concerned the dialectal background of the book. Oskar Loorits (1938 : 149) considers this book to be the successor of the Eastern Livonian gospel which was published in 1863 whereas Laimonis Rudzītis regards it as a new variant of the Western Livonian gospel. Pētōr Damberg (1978 : 85) thinks that the book represents the dialect of the Īra village, and Tiit-Rein Viitso claims it to be a compromise language which contains elements of both East Livonian and Īra. The present author also supports the theory of an orthography which was supposed to suit the users of both sub-dialects.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The vocalism of the book contains features which are characteristic of both Eastern and Western Livonian, e.g. **juva** (LiW **juvā**, LiE **jevā** 'good'), **ḱhḱg** (LiE, Īra **ḱ'dəC** ~ LiW **ḱ'dəC** 'evening'), **tulub** (LiW, Īra **tulūb**, LiE **tulāb** '(s)he comes) etc. Considerable

Unlike the gospels of 1863 the orthography of the gospel of 1880 used a Gothic script and orthography which was similar to the so called old orthography of German and Latvian, which the people who knew how to read Latvian would be familiar with and were able to read. Regrettably, this gospel was the only book ever published in this orthography.

The need to create a spelling system for the Livonian language which would correspond to the systems of the other languages used in the area where the Livonians lived caused a change in the principles of sound representation. The vowel length in initial syllables is marked in the same way as in the old orthography of German and Latvian with the help of the letter *h*, e.g. *juhrō* 'to', *õhððg* 'evening'. The vowel length in non-initial syllables is indicated in closed syllables e.g. *welíð* [*vel'íð*] 'brothers' while like in the gospels published in 1863, the length of the second syllable vowel is not given in open syllables, e.g. *jema* [*jemà*] 'mother', *šeda* [*šedà*] 'this (PSg)'. Similarly, the length of the first long component of a diphthong is not given, e.g. *tiegíð* [*tiegíð*] 'do/make (Imp2Pl)'.<sup>1</sup>

In order to render the vowels  $\bar{o}$  or  $\bar{a}$  the character  $\bar{a}$  is used in this book, e.g. *tāb* (LiE *t $\bar{o}$ B*, Īra, LiW *t $\bar{a}$ B*) '(s)he wants', cf. *aḥndab* (LiE *āndab*, LiW *āndab*) '(s)he wants' and *tōhwaš* (LiE and LiW *tōvaz*) 'sky'. It seems that such a way of marking is chosen in order to show a different pronunciation of this vowel from the ordinary *o* and *a*, but at the same time also as a compromise between the Eastern and Western dialects because the first syllable  $\bar{o}$  or  $\bar{a}$  forms the most striking difference between these two Livonian dialects. A similar solution was offered again fifty years later, possibly under the influence of the same book.

The gospel of 1880 also shows important changes in the representation of other special vowels as compared to the earlier gospels:  $\bar{a}$ ,  $\bar{o}$  and  $\bar{u}$  are marked with an umlaut (diaeresis) as is customary in Estonian and German; the vowel  $\bar{o}$  is not differentiated from the vowel *o*; the vowel  $\bar{e}$  is given with a letter  $\bar{e}$  (this letter seems to have been borrowed from the Estonian language). The same sign is used to mark the  $\bar{e}$  in non-initial syllables, e.g. *õhððg* (LiE *ē'dəc* ~ LiW *ī'dəc* 'evening').

The palatalisation of consonants is shown as a rule by crossing a letter but the palatalisation of *d* and *t* is not shown, e.g. *juvdi* [*ju'vd'i*] 'good (PPI)'. Like in the gospel of 1863, the word-final sibilant is marked in one way in the past tense marker, e.g. *fīhtis* [*kīttiz*] '(s)he said', and in the nominative, e.g. *tōhwaš* [*tōvaz*] 'sky', and in a difference way in the genitive forms of the nominals ending in *-i*, e.g. *waḥimif* [*vaḥimiz*] 'older (GSg)'.<sup>2</sup>

There are many other such similarities with the older publications. It is clear that the orthography of the gospel published in 1880, even if superficially very different from its predecessors, shares many principles with the earlier versions. This refers to the fact that the creator of this gospel has at least used the previous publications if not actively participated in their preparation.

confusion has been caused by  $\bar{o}$  and  $\bar{a}$ , written with the letter  $\bar{a}$  e.g. *tāb* (LiW, Īra *t $\bar{a}$ B*, LiE *t $\bar{o}$ B* '(s)he wants'). At the same time this refers to an attempt to compile some sort of an artificial spelling system which would suit both dialect areas. A precise identification of the principles used in the book would mean further investigations which unfortunately are complicated without any information about the creator of the spelling system and his ideas and intentions while working on the book.

### The beginnings of modern orthography

After the Gospel of Matthew in 1880 there was a longer pause in publishing written Livonian texts. This lasted until after World War I when in 1920 the first expedition to the Livonians of Lauri Kettunen and Oskar Loorits took place. Afterwards, steps were taken by the Academic Society of the Mother Tongue (Akadeemiline Emakeele Selts) to provide mental and financial aid to the Livonians. "The First Livonian Reader" (Lr1) in 1921 was the first publication of the society. Its official compilers were L. Kettunen and O. Loorits but in reality it was O. Loorits alone (Kettunen 1948 : 144–145; Blumberga 2002 : 134).

A new spelling system had to be devised for the reader. It has been maintained that the basis for this orthography was the new Latvian orthography (Damberg 1978 : 86) but there is reason to think that the modern Livonian spelling system was based on phonetic transcription, which was later adapted so that its principles would correspond to the new Latvian orthography. Rather, the orthography of 1921 could be considered to be the result of mixing the phonetic transcription and Estonian orthography.

One of the main arguments for regarding the Livonian spelling system as an offspring of the new Latvian orthography is the similar way in which the vowel length and the palatalisation of consonants are given. This, however, is not absolutely correct, as while looking at the first Livonian reader (the same is true for the following four readers Lr2 — Lr5) it can be seen that the vowel length is indicated with a macron above the letter as in the new Latvian orthography, but this is also the way the vowel length is shown in the Finno-Ugric transcription. Similarly, palatalisation in the first three readers is shown as in the phonetic transcription, i.e. with an acute accent above or next to the letter (e.g. *siññi* 'blue' or *sel'i* 'such'), and not with a comma under the letter as in the new Latvian orthography (c.f. *ziņas* 'news', *gaļa* 'meat'). Another reference to the phonetic transcription is the phonetic sign *ə* used to represent *ɛ̃* in non-initial syllables in first readers (Lr1; Lr2; Lr3), e.g. *livəd* 'Livonians'.

An influence from Estonian is the use of the letter *õ* to mark the vowel *ẽ* in the first syllable. Another important Estonian influence is the non-marking of vowel length in the second syllable as is the case in Estonian.

It can already be sensed in the first reader that it is the Eastern Livonian dialect which is going to be the standard language. The texts written in the Western Livonian dialect still retain the traits characteristic of Western Livonian, e.g. *utist* (LiW *uttist*, LiE *vettist* 'took'), but sometimes Eastern Livonian explanations have been added, e.g. *mik* (*mõk*) 'sword', whereas there are no translations into Western Livonian. The strengthening of the position of the Eastern Livonian dialect as the standard language was probably facilitated by the compromise between the dialects whereby *õ* or *ä* were left unmarked and these sounds were marked in the texts of both dialects with a *ō* e.g. *Letmō* (LiW *let̃-mā̄*, LiE *let̃-mō̄*) 'Latvia'.

On the whole the tendency in the first reader is towards the simplification and generalization of the orthography. Thus, *ō* is not marked with a special sign but instead the ordinary letter *o* is used. Nor does this reader have the sounds *ö* and *ü* although this is related to the fact that by the

time the orthography was created they had almost completely disappeared from the eastern dialect and been replaced by *e* and *i* respectively.

The next publication which was important from the point of view of orthography was the first collection of poems in Livonian published in Tallinn in 1924 — "Līvõ lōlōd" ('Livonian songs') by Karl (Kōrli) Stalte. In this book, the earlier orthography has been corrected considerably although due to printing technique some confusion prevails as to special signs. The *ð* in non-initial syllables is written in the same way as the first syllable *g* — with *õ*, e.g. **lōlōd** 'songs'. Another vital innovation is that the palatalisation is given like in Latvian — under the letter, e.g. **siņņi** 'blue'. In the fourth and fifth editions of the reader (Lr 4; Lr 5), however, palatalisation is again given in the same way as in the phonetic transcription, although the *ð* of non-initial syllables is still written everywhere with an *õ*.

In 1929, a small song book with accompanying sheet music appeared in Helsinki (Stalte 1929) which also contains some spelling innovations. The main difference is that for the first time in this book the length of the first long component in the diphthong, e.g. **sie** [*sie̯*] 'this (G)', **kūord** [*kùord*] 'choirs'. Additionally, for the first time in the new orthography (albeit in only one sing) *ā/ǣ* is written with *ā*, e.g. **izāmā** (LiW, Īra *izamā*, LiE *izāmǣ*) 'fatherland'. Another novelty of this book lies in the marking of the length of the consonant with a macron, e.g. **liīnd** 'bird'.

### **The journal "Līvli" and subsequent publications**

The first issue of the journal "Līvli" was published at Christmas in 1931. Initially, the journal was printed in Jelgava but starting from the autumn of 1933 the editorial office was transferred to Irē (Blumberga 2002 : 165). Before the journal only seven books had been published using the new Livonian orthography. Considering the regularity of the journal there was a clear need to decide several questions related to the spelling system. In the course of this work the existing orthography was corrected considerably and the principles already developed were fixed.

In the first issue of the journal, an article appeared by L. Kettunen "Kui um kēratōmōst" ('How to write') (1931), where he describes the sounds of Livonian from the point of view of the corrected orthography. It is still not clear to what extent L. Kettunen himself was involved with the spelling changes carried out by the journal "Līvli". According to Pētōr Damberg the other people beside himself who participated in the correction of the orthography were Hilda Tserbah and Alise Gūtman (Damberg 1978 : 87) who were all students of the Jelgava Teachers' Seminar. P. Damberg claims that he later discussed issues of orthography for the purposes of the reader that he was compiling "with the best speaker of Livonian of the time, dr. phil. Oskar Loorits" (Damberg 1978 : 89).

Therefore it is possible that the article in the journal "Līvli" by L. Kettunen served as an approval by an authority to the spelling changes which had already been carried out in order to help to convince people of the correctness and necessity of these changes. At the same time it cannot be ruled out that L. Kettunen himself took part in drafting the changes. This would not be surprising as he had a similar role during the compilation and editing of the first Livonian reader. Another argument in favor of this hypoth-



esis can be found in the preface to the reader compiled by P. Damberg where he acknowledges the help of O. Loorits, K. Stalte and A. Štāler (but not L. Kettunen) but when talking about the orthography used in the book he writes: "This orthography has been approved by the linguists who have studied Livonian such as Prof. Kettunen and others" (Damberg 1935 : 3).

The changes in the first issue of the journal "Līvli" already carry considerable weight. The most striking change is the wish to revive the vowels *ö* and *ü* that had virtually disappeared from the Livonian language by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was done by writing the sound *ö* with **ö** and the sound *ü* as in Finnish with **y** (e.g. **ykš** 'one', **kylā** 'village'). It is thought that this choice was triggered by the existence of this letter on the typing machine and because several publications in Livonian were printed in the printing works of Finland<sup>4</sup> (Damberg 1978 : 87). Instead of using **ō** to mark *ā/ō*, **ā** was introduced as a compromise between the users of Eastern and Western dialects<sup>5</sup> (e.g. **mā** 'land, country'). Also, the writing of *ϕ* was considered but was not put into practice following the tradition according to which *ϕ* is marked with the ordinary **o** (Damberg 1978 : 87), e.g. **voļ** 'was'.

The most interesting aspect in the first issue of the journal is that the length of the second syllable vowel is systematically marked with a macron, e.g. **kievād** 'spring', **liestād** 'flounders'. Such marking of the second syllable vowel length has disappeared in all the other issues of the journal, and is not used in other publications either until 1980.

In 1933, Pētōr Damberg started the compilation of his reader. This reader (Damberg 1935), which was published in Helsinki, became the first book printed using the new orthography and it finally fixed the principles which had been devised for the journal "Līvli". These principles were maintained in all the publications until the end of the 1970s.

### **The change of the function of orthography**

By the end of the 1970s the number of Livonian mother tongue speakers had decreased considerably. The Livonian choirs founded in Riga and Ventspils in 1972 reflected the reality that most of the singers could not speak Livonian. Therefore the existing orthography, which previously was meant for the usage of native Livonians, had to be changed so that people whose mother tongue was not Livonian could pronounce the written texts as accurately as possible.

In 1980, the first book in Livonian since World War II was published by the Latvian State University in Riga — "Lībiešu tautasdziesmas" ('Livonian folk songs') (Damberg, Karma 1980). The book which was intended as a study aid for students of Latvian philology contained Livonian folk songs with Latvian translations. The compilers of the book were Pētōr Damberg and Tōnu Karma, and the advisor of orthography Tiit-Rein Viitso.

<sup>4</sup> The second of these reasons is questionable because by the time the first issue of "Līvli" appeared only one small Livonian book had been published in Finland.

<sup>5</sup> P. Damberg (1978 : 89) maintains that **ā** came into use only when he started compiling his reader, i.e. in 1933, but the letter **ā** used to mark *ā/ō* appears in the journal "Līvli" from its first issue.

It was the first book which reflected an approach based on the new function of orthography. The main differences were the following: the letters **y** and **ö** were removed from usage because these vowels had already completely disappeared from Livonian; in their place the letters **i** and **e** were used. As the vast majority of the remaining mother tongue speakers of Livonian were originally from the Eastern Livonian territory, the  $\bar{a}/\bar{o}$  of the first syllable was again marked with  $\bar{o}$  instead of  $\bar{a}$  (e.g. **ōj** [ $\bar{o}j$ ] 'oven'). In order to mark the vowel  $\varrho$  a new character was introduced: **ó** (e.g. **póis** [ $p\varrho i\bar{s}$ ] 'boy'). The vowel length of the second syllable was shown (e.g. **võřim** [ $v\varrho\check{r}\bar{i}m$ ] 'key'). In study texts, the broken tone was represented (e.g. **si'nnõn** 'to you').

After Latvia regained its independence the cultural life of Livonian became livelier and new publications in Livonian appeared. These publications also follow the principles of the orthography corrected in 1980. Issues concerning Livonian orthography were discussed and solved during seminars dedicated to the standardization of Livonian which were held in 1995 in Irē (Latvian *Mazirbe*) and in 2005 in Tartu. The main topics were the final fixing of Livonian orthography and finding a solution to some of its details. One of the most important decisions was to follow morphological principles in some word types, e.g. **livli** 'Livonian' : GSg **livliz** : PSg **livlizt** (before **livli** : **livliz** : **livlist**) and **ārmaz** 'dear' : PSg **ārmazt** (before **ārmaz** : **ārmast**), **rij** 'threshing barn' : PSg **rijō** (before **ri** : **rijō**).

### The orthography devised by Laimonis Rudzītis

An entirely idiosyncratic phenomenon in the context of Livonian orthographies is the spelling system devised by the Germanic philologist Laimonis Rudzītis in the 1930s.

L. Rudzītis was the secretary of the Society of the Friends of Livonians in Latvia (*Libiešu draugu biedriba Latvijā*) founded in Riga in 1932. Under his management the society published two calendar books — "Rāndalist ājgarāntõz 1933. āigastõn" (Ār 1933) and "Livõd Rāndalist ājgarāntõz 1934. ājgastõn" (Ār 1934). For the purpose of these books a new orthography was designed which differed completely from any previously used systems (Damberg 1978 : 88).

L. Rudzītis studied Livonian under the guidance of Mart Lepste, a teacher of Livonian and a later chairman of the Union of the Livonians. As M. Lepste originated from Īra, L. Rudzītis used the variant of Livonian spoken in the Īra village as a basis for his orthography. The most important and novel element of this orthography was the marking of the broken tone. It has to be admitted that the system used is relatively complicated. Thus the vowel length is shown with a macron when there is no broken tone in the word (e.g. **mā** [ $m\bar{a}$ ] 'land, country'). In the case of the broken tone, the vowel affected is written with two letters (e.g. **raa** [ $r\bar{a}$ ] 'money'). If the broken tone appears with a short vowel, an acute accent is written above this letter (e.g. **vál** [ $va'l$ ] 'light'). If the broken tone appears in a diphthong an acute is written above the second component of the diphthong (e.g. **mié** [ $mi'e$ ] 'man (G)', **tuónt** [ $tu'on\bar{t}$ ] 'thousand'). L. Rudzītis does not show the length of the second syllable vowel or the first component of a long diphthong.

The first syllable vowel  $\varrho$  is written with the letter  $\tilde{o}$ , e.g. **võib** 'may/might', but for the  $\hat{\delta}$  of the non-initial syllables the letter  $\tilde{o}$  is used. The same sign is used for the vowel  $\varrho$  in the first syllable (e.g. **mõizõ** [ $m\varrho iz\hat{\delta}$ ] 'manor'). Similarly to the orthography used in the journal "Livli", L. Rudzītis uses the letters  $\tilde{o}$  and  $\tilde{y}$  which represent the sounds  $\ddot{o}$  and  $\ddot{u}$ .

The palatalisation of consonants is marked in the same way as in the phonetic transcription and in earlier spelling systems — with an acute sign either above or next to the letter. Another special characteristic of L. Rudzītis' orthography is that instead of the consonants clusters  $ts$  and  $tš$  he uses the letters  $c$  and  $\check{c}$  or the corresponding geminates (e.g. **mic** [ $m\check{i}t\check{s}$ ] 'several' and **võccõ** [ $v\check{o}\check{t}\check{s}\hat{\delta}$ ] 'to find').

It can be concluded that the new spelling system devised by L. Rudzītis is in some ways perhaps even more accurate than the other systems but it is so complicated that it never became used more widely and the two calendars were the only books ever published using this orthography.

## Conclusion

The history of the development of the modern Livonian orthography shows that the spelling system which withstands time is the one which is optimally suited to the needs of people, adapts with the writing conventions of surrounding languages and is as easy as possible to use. Soon, it will be 150 years since the publication of the first Livonian books but the written language and together with it the orthography are developing further despite the fact that the number of users at present is smaller than ever.

## Abbreviations

**Ār 1933** — Rāndalist ājgarāntõz 1933. ājgastõn, kien at 365 pāvõõ. Ulz andõn Līvõd sõbrād seļč Letmās, Rīvõ [1932]; **Ār 1934** — Līvõd Rāndalist ājgarāntõz 1934. ājgastõn, kien at 365 pāvõõ. Ulz andõn Līvõd sõbrād seļč Letmās, Rigā, [1933]; **Livli** — Livli, Jelgava—Irē 1931—1939; **Lr 1** — Esimene Liivi lugemik. Kokkusäädnuð Lauri Kettunen ja Oskar Loorits. Ežmi Līvõd lugdõbrõntõz. Sasædænd Prof. Lauri Kettunen un Štud. Oskar Loorits, Tartu 1921 (Akadeemilise Emakeele Seltsi Toimetused I); **Lr 2** — Teine liivi lugemik. Toi līvõd lugdõbrõntõz, Tartu 1922 (Akadeemilise Emakeele Seltsi Toimetused V); **Lr 3** — Kolmas liivi lugemik. Kolmæz līvõd lugdõbrõntõz. Sasædænd August Skadiñ, Tartu 1923 (Akadeemilise Emakeele Seltsi Toimetused IX); **Lr 4** — Neljas liivi lugemik. Nellõz livõd lugdõbrõntõz, Tartu 1924 (Akadeemilise Emakeele Seltsi Toimetused IX); **Lr 5** — Viies liivi lugemik. Vidõz livõd lugdõbrõntõz, Tartu 1926 (Akadeemilise Emakeele Seltsi Toimetused XV); **Mt 1863a** — Das Evangelium Matthäi in den östlichen Dialect des Livischen zum ersten Male übersetzt von dem Liven N. Pollmann, durchgesehen von F. J. Wiedemann, London 1863; **Mt 1863b** — Das Evangelium Matthäi in den westlichen Dialect des Livischen übersetzt von dem Liven J. Prinz und dessen Söhnen P. Prinz und J. P. Prinz; durchgesehen von F. J. Wiedemann, London 1863; **Mt 1880** — Püwa Matteus Ewangelium lihischki, Pehterburg 1880; **Sjögren, Wiedemann 1861a** — Joh. Andreas Sjögren's Livische Grammatik nebst Sprachproben. Im Auftrage der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften bearbeitet und mit einer historisch-etnographischen Einleitung versehen von Ferdinand Joh. Wiedemann, St. Petersburg (Joh. Andreas Sjögren's Gesammelte Schriften. Band II. Theil I); **Sjögren, Wiedemann 1861b** — Joh. Andreas Sjögren's Livisch-deutsches und deutsch-livisches Wörterbuch. Im Auftrage der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften bearbeitet von Ferdinand Joh. Wiedemann, St. Petersburg (Joh. Andreas Sjögren's Gesammelte Schriften. Band II. Theil II).

**LiE** — East Livonian; **LiM** — Modern Livonian; **LiW** — West Livonian.

**ElaSg** — elative singular; **GSg** — genitive singular; **ISg** — instrumental singular, **IIISg** — illative singular; **Inf** — infinitive; **PPI** — partitive plural; **PSg** — partitive singular; **Trl** — translative.

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*ВАЛТ ЭРНШТРЕЙТ* (Рига)

#### ЛИВСКАЯ ОРФОГРАФИЯ

В статье рассматриваются процесс формирования ливской орфографии и связанные с ним проблемы, начиная с появления первых книг на ливском языке и до наших дней. Всего при публикации ливских изданий использовались четыре разных письма. Первые книги на ливском языке увидели свет в 1863 году, исполненные в фонетической транскрипции. В 1880 году на восточном и западном ливских диалектах было опубликовано Евангелие от Матфея, в котором употреблены фрактур и письмо, близкие к старой латышской орфографии. В 1920-е годы путем упрощения финно-угорской фонетической транскрипции создана восточноливская орфография. Позже она была дополнена элементами латышской орфографии, а с 1931 года — и некоторыми чертами западноливского диалекта. Поскольку во второй половине XX века численность носителей ливского языка существенно сократилась, в 1970-х годах в интересах не владеющих языком орфография была еще больше упрощена. В 1930-е годы в двух книгах было использовано письмо, отражавшее некоторые фонетические явления лучше, чем принятой орфографии, но этот факт не нашел широкого распространения.