

REINIS NORKĀKLS

DIOCESAN CLERGY OF LIVONIA-COURLAND

1685–1772/1795*

INTRODUCTION. A decree by Pope Innocent XI dated 15 January 1685 marked the foundation of a new diocese on the periphery of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, that of Livonia and Courland or Piltene¹. It could be dubbed ‘new’ only in a relative sense, since it incorporated the south-eastern part of the bishopric of Wenden that remained within the Commonwealth in accordance with the 1667 Peace of Oliva and was thenceforth called the bishopric of Livonia; the Catholic parishes in the Duchy of Courland that had been administered by the Bishop of Samogitia since 1639; and the territory of Piltene, the former lands of the medieval Bishopric of Courland. At its founding, the new territory shared borders with Protestant Swedish Livonia and Muscovy, thereby becoming the northernmost outpost of Early Modern Catholicism in Europe. Due to its marginal character² and the fact that it possessed a fewer number of parishes, and of the faithful, by comparison to other bishoprics in Poland-Lithuania, the diocese of Livonia-Courland has attracted less attention from researchers and has primarily been an

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¹ Paulius Rabikauskas, “Dioeceses Livoniae et Piltinensis: Notitia historica”, in: *Relationes Status Dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae*, ed. Paulius Rabikauskas, vol. 2, Roma: Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 550.

² The diocese of Livonia was one of the poorest in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the hierarchy of dioceses held the position preceding the last one (occupied by the diocese of Smolensk), Wiesław Müller, “Diecezje w okresie potrydenckim”, in: *Kościół w Polsce*, ed. Jerzy Kłoczowski, vol. 2, Kraków: ZNAK, 1970, p. 139.

object of study for historians of the Latvian Church³. Along with general surveys of the diocese and portions thereof, the work of the regular clergy, mainly that of the Jesuits⁴, has been the focus of most historians, whilst the secular or diocesan clergy has been subject to far less study⁵. The principal reason for this historiographical tendency is the scarcity of documentary sources. Little remains of the diocesan archive, which likely never existed in a unified form but was instead divided between the regions of Livonia and Courland⁶. This paper is intended as the first attempt at providing a view of the Livonian-Couronian diocesan clergy as a distinct clerical stratum within Poland-Lithuania. Due to the scant and fragmentary nature of the relevant source materials, this can only be considered a preliminary investigation of the subject at hand. The focus will be the background for the activities of diocesan clergy, its origins and education as well as its language skills. The period covered in this paper begins with the founding of the diocese in 1685, but concludes at two different dates due to historical circumstances. In 1772 the Livonian portion of the diocese was absorbed by the Russian Empire as a result

³ From general studies published after World War II, the following have to be mentioned: Staņislavs Kučinskis, "Latvijas zemju katoļu draudžu attīstība un kultūra pēc reformācijas", *Dzimtenes kalendārs, 1982. gadam*, Vāsterās, 1981, p. 57–177; Julijans Vaivods, "Latvijas rekatolizācija", in: *idem, Katoļu Baznīcas vēsture Latvijā*, Rīga: Rīgas metropolijas kurija, 1994, p. 316–497; Heinrihs Strods, *Latvijas Katoļu Baznīcas vēsture, 1075.–1995.*, Rīga: University of Minnesota, 1996, p. 157–184.

⁴ The most significant being the series of articles on particular 16th–18th century Livonian and Couronian Jesuit personalities written by Staņislavs Kučinskis SJ and published in 50–80s of the previous century in Latvian emigre periodicals *Dzimtenes balss*, *Gaisma*, and *Dzimtenes kalendārs*.

⁵ The only publication dealing exclusively with a member of the diocesan clergy of Livonia-Courland is an article by Staņislavs Kučinskis, "Līvberzes prāvests Andrejs Kleins (1700–1758)", *Dzimtenes kalendārs 1981. gadam*, Vāsterās 1980, p. 119–127. Another article by the same Kučinskis, "Bīskaps Juris Nikolajs Hilzens bargu kungu taisnīgs tiesātājs Dagdā", *Dzimtenes kalendārs 1980. gadam*, Vāsterās: Latviešu Katolu Draudze, 1979, p. 127–141 is devoted to the former provost of the Livonian cathedral chapter Georgius Hylzen, but is more concerned with his activities as the bishop of Smolensk.

⁶ An exception is a well preserved collection of Jesuit sources in which, however, the diocesan clergy is rarely mentioned, cf. *Latvijas vēstures avoti jezuītu ordeņa arhīvos*, 1–2. d., ed. Jean Kleijntjens, Rīga, 1940–1941 (hereafter – *Latvijas vēstures avoti*).

of the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and was included in the newly created diocese of White Russia. The remainder of the bishopric, covering Piltene and the Duchy of Courland, was joined with the diocese of Vilnius following the final partition in 1795⁷.

The primary sources on which this research is based can be divided into 4 groups: 1) records of diocesan visitations, which provide the most valuable information on the situation of the clergy⁸, 2) parish registers, which contain precise information on the locations and types of services performed by individual clergymen⁹, 3) bishops' or vicar generals' reports (*ad limina* and others) on the diocese¹⁰, 4) lists of students at the Vilnius, Braunsberg, and Krāslava seminaries¹¹. From

⁷ Paulius Rabikauskas, *op. cit.*, p. 551.

⁸ Only records of two diocesan visitations have been preserved in their full extent, those of 1761 and 1790/92; see respectively *Akta wizytacji generalnej diecezji Inflanckiej i Kurlandzkiej czyli Piltyńskiej z 1761 roku*, red. Stanisław Litak, Toruń: Tawarzystwo, 1998 (hereafter – *Akta*) and the Latvian State Historical Archive (Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs, hereafter – LVVA), 4038. f., 2. apr., 2218. l. The records of some other visitations are available for few parishes only: the visitation of Jelgava (Mitau, Mītaua, Mintauja) in 1689 – LVVA, 4038. f., 2. apr., 2262. l., fol. 1–5; the visitation of Kuldīga (Goldingen) in 1739 – Archive of the Roman Catholic parish of Kudīga (Kuldīgas Romas katoļu draudzes arhīvs), no. 265; the visitation of Ludza (Lucyn) in 1742 – National Historical Archive of Belarus (Національний історический архів Беларусі, hereafter – NIAB), f. 1731, op. 26, d. 1366; the visitation of Alsunga (Alschwangen) in 1743 – LVVA, 2728. f., 3. apr., 19. l., fol. 17–18. Some information can also be gathered from 1800 visitation of the Couronian and Semigallian deaneries of the diocese of Vilnius, Lithuanian State Historical Archive (Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas, hereafter – LVIA), f. 604, ap. 1, b. 8888.

⁹ Only few parish registers of the diocese of Livonia-Courland are available at LVVA (7085. f., 1. apr.), while most of them in the form of consistorial apographs are kept at NIAB, f. 1781, op. 26.

¹⁰ *Relationes Status Dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae*. ed. Paulius Rabikauskas, vol. 2, Roma, 1978 (hereafter – *Relationes*), the description of the diocese and its needs prepared for the apostolic nuncio and dated 19 March, 1713 – LVVA, 6984. f, 1. apr., 64. l.

¹¹ Respectively: Henryk Litwin, “Katalóg alumnów seminarium papieskiego w Wilnie, 1582–1798: Część d. 2: katalóg alumnów nr 501–1037, indeks nazwisk”, *Przegląd Wschodni*, t. 9, s. 2 (34), p. 301–377 (hereafter – “Katalóg alumnów”), *Die Matrikel der päpstlichen Seminars zu Braunsberg 1578–1798*, hrsg. Georg Lühr,

the sources in these 4 groups, information on 134 members of the clergy of Livonia-Courland was collected, forming the basis for this study¹². A problematic question arises with regard to the status of canons of the Livonian cathedral chapter. In circumstances that are still unclear, but most likely after the first partition of the Commonwealth, a larger number of clergymen not actually connected to the diocese were appointed titular canons of Livonia, without the respective duties and benefices¹³. To avoid confusion, only those Livonian canons whose work within the diocese itself is proven and whom the author regards as a part of the diocesan clergy are treated in this paper.

THE DIOCESE AND ITS CLERGY. Until 1772, the diocese of Livonia-Courland comprised the voivodeship of Livonia and the Duchy of Courland together with the Piltene district, territories belonging to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth¹⁴. The confessional situation in each of these regions was the product of separate historical developments. In Livonia, the local aristocracy (with a few exceptions) had converted to

Braunsberg, 1925 (hereafter – *Die Matrikel*), Historical Archive of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (L'Archivio Storico della Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli “de Propaganda Fide”, hereafter – ASCPF), Scritture riferite nei congressi (Moscovia, Polonia et Rutenia), vol. 10 (1769–1772), fol. 162 (only the 1770 list of students of Krāslava seminary).

¹² Hereafter all of the statistical calculations in this article are based on the whole amount of the mentioned sources and references are provided for the individual cases only.

¹³ For this reason a contemporary describes the Livonian chapter, the most numerous of all chapters, as “a decor with neither duties nor incomes”, Hugo Kołłątaj, “Pamiętnik o stanie Kościoła katolickiego i wszystkich innych wyznaniach w Polsce”, in: *idem, Stan oświecenia w Polsce w ostatnich latach panowania Augusta III (1750–1764)*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1953, p. 232–233. Cf., in 1783 11 of 26 deans of the Vilnius diocese were Livonian canons, Tadeusz Kasabuła, *Ignacy Massalski biskup wileński*, Lublin: Rad Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersitetu Lubelskiego, 1998, p. 183.

¹⁴ The diocesan bishops deemed that their jurisdiction also covered that part of Livonia belonging to Sweden since the 1629 Truce of Altmark and later incorporated into the Russian Empire as a result of the Great Northern War, as well as St. Petersburg. This jurisdiction though was more of a symbolic nature.

Catholicism by the end of the 17th century, and it was the dominant denomination there¹⁵. In the primarily Lutheran Duchy of Courland, however, the Catholic community was merely a legally protected minority¹⁶ concentrated around a few parishes founded by noble converts, as well as two congregations under ducal patronage¹⁷. Both the Livonian and Couronian parts of the diocese had in common the fact that most of the faithful were ethnically Latvian peasants¹⁸. In 1761, when the diocese was at its zenith, the number of the faithful was c. 130,000¹⁹. They were served by 24 parish churches, 9 missions *cum cura animarum*, and 37 public chapels or oratoria²⁰.

The nominal seat of the diocese was at Daugavpils²¹. Then known as Dünaburg or Dyneburg, this was the centre of the voivodeship of Livonia from 1677. Though it was legally a town, possessing Magdeburg Rights from 1582²², it was in reality a provincial backwater. Thus, in

¹⁵ In 1715 the voivodeship of Livonia is described as “universa iam ex Dei gratia catholica, exceptis paucissimis lutheranis et schismaticis”, *Relationes*, p. 635.

¹⁶ About the confessional situation and the status of the Catholic faith in the Duchy of Courland, see Almut Bues, “Konfesjonalizacja w Księstwie Kurlandzkim. Przypadek wyjątkowy w skali Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej?”, in: *Rzeczpospolita wielu wyznań*, red. Adam Kaźmierczyk et al., Kraków: Księg. Akademicka, 2004, p. 47–63.

¹⁷ According to some calculations, at the end of the 17th century there were c. 20 000 Catholics in the Duchy, making up a twentieth part of the population, Heinrihs Strods, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

¹⁸ With a remark that especially in Livonia explicit pagan practices survived well into 18th century, cf. 1725 report by bishop Augustinus Wessel, *Relationes*, p. 643. As late as 1742 Jesuit missionaries relate cutting down of 231 tree worshiped by the local population, *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., p. 406–407.

¹⁹ 80 000 in Livonia and 50 000 in Courland, *Akta*, p. 4–5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Livonian bishops did not reside in the diocese and visited it only occasionally, if ever. The only exception was Bishop Iosephus Puzyna (episcopate 1740–1752) who tried to follow the Tridentine prescription about episcopal residence in a diocese as often as it was possible for a state senator whose presence was required in Warsaw. However, instead of Daugavpils, he chose to stay in the manor of Lēnas in Piltene district, where he also died and was buried, Julijans Vaivods, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

²² Boļeslavs Brežgo, “Latgales pilsētas”, in: Kārlis Apinis, *Latvijas pilsētu vēsture*, Rīga: A. Gulbis, 1931, p. 194.

1739, Livonian canon M. Mohl characterised it as a small and decrepit place ‘with approximately 40 houses and 200 inhabitants’²³; a 1765 survey noted 3 streets and 99 lots, 74 of them with buildings²⁴. The town’s growth and development were hampered by its low-lying, swampy location, subject to annual vernal floods²⁵.

A full-fledged cathedral church was constructed and consecrated at Daugavpils in 1694, during the episcopate of Nicolaus Popławski²⁶. It was a rather humble wooden building. Bishop Antonius Ostrowski, writing in 1750, described it as a simple parish church, despite its designation as a cathedral²⁷. The ambitious *starost* of Daugavpils, Konstanty Ludwik Plater, hoped to transfer the bishop’s seat to his estate in Krāslava (Krasław)²⁸; the construction of a more imposing brick edifice was begun there, but this plan was cut short by the first partition of Poland-Lithuania. The establishment of a new cathedral in what remained of the diocese after the partition, in Courland, was never undertaken²⁹.

Along with the consecration of the cathedral in 1694, a chapter of 6 prelates and 6 canons was established³⁰. To date, there are no known sources on the chapter’s activities on behalf of the diocese, but according to episcopal reports, it is clear that the chapter met only rarely, or ‘from

²³ Quoted from Staņislavs Kučinskis, “Miķelis Rots, S.J.”, *Dzimtenes Balsis*, 1956, no. 4, p. 94.

²⁴ Историко-юридические материалы, извлечённые из актовых книг губерний Витебской и Могилёвской, вып. 31, Витебск, 1903, p. 3–11.

²⁵ Devastation caused by these floods is regularly described by the local Jesuits, *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., p. 287.

²⁶ *Akta*, p. 29. Its full title was that of “Mary’s, Jesus’, and Joseph’s Flight into Egypt”, *ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁷ “Titulum quidem retinet ecclesiae, revera tamen est ecclesia simplex parochialis”, *Relationes*, p. 701.

²⁸ The founding act of the new cathedral, see *Akta*, p. 18–25.

²⁹ In 1781 Bishop Iosephus Kossakowski informed the apostolic nuncio about his plans to establish a new seat at Ilūkste (Илукшта), but this never came into being, Julijans Vaivods, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

³⁰ At least the statutes of the Livonian cathedral chapter are dated on June 25 that year, *Akta*, p. 25.

time to time' (*aliquando*)³¹. This can be explained by the fact that a majority of the chapter's members had no income other than parochial benefices and were employed in the care of souls. For instance, in the 1761 visitation, of 11 prelates and canons, 8 were parish priests³². Only a single prelate was permanently resident at the cathedral, and also served as its parish priest³³.

The diocesan clergy of Livonia-Courland was never numerous and usually composed only between a quarter to a third of the clergy serving in the diocese. This distinguished it from the clergy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a whole, in which the difference in numbers of secular and regular priests was relatively small³⁴. This can be explained by the outlying nature of the Livonian-Couronian diocese; a peripheral region where peasants long bore offerings to sacred trees and in one part of which, moreover, temporal power was in the hands of 'heretics', could attract missionaries from religious orders, but not the attention of secular clergy. Working conditions in Livonia-Courland were hard, and the benefices in the diocese were insufficient. Thus, c. 1691, the entire diocese employed only about 6 secular priests³⁵, but the Jesuit fathers here numbered at least 17³⁶. In time, with the expansion

³¹ *Relationes*, p. 600, 625, 696

³² *Akta*, p. 28–29.

³³ *Relationes*, p. 655, 695, 702.

³⁴ According to Stanisław Litak, on the eve of the first partition there were about 9185 regular and 8400 secular priests in Poland-Lithuania, *idem, Parafie w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2004, p. 130–131.

³⁵ Data from different sources allows us to presume the presence of secular priests in Alsunga, which for some time after 1689 was served by an alumnus of Vilnius pontifical seminary ("Katalóg alumnów", no. 596, p. 310), Kuldīga (Ernst Hennig, *Geschichte der Stadt Goldingen in Kurland*, Mitau: Gedruckt bey J. F. Steffenberg und Sohn, 1809, p. 192–193), Līvāni (Livenhof), with a curate serving there since 1678 (*Akta*, p. 169), Ludza (*Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., 274), Rēzekne (Rositten, Rzeżyca) (*ibid.*, 272). The curate of Jelgava also has to be mentioned, although he entrusted his parish to Jesuits while himself living at his family estate near Ilūkste – LVVA, 4038. f., 2. apr., 2262. l., fol. 7.

³⁶ Cf., 1690–1692 catalogues of the Jesuit residences of Jelgava-Skaistkalne, Ilūkste and Daugavpils, *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 2. d., p. 381, 400, 422.

of the network of parishes and the improvement of their provisioning, the number of clerics increased; nonetheless, it must be emphasised that the ratio of diocesan to regular priests was not affected by this growth. In 1761, there were 25 diocesan priests in Livonia-Courland, composing a quarter of the clergy (18 of 63 priests in the Livonian voivodeship and 7 of 29 in the Duchy of Courland)³⁷. The situation in Courland changed with the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, after which some of the former Jesuits left the diocese, but others remained as diocesan priests. The 1790 Courland visitation indicates the presence of 11 former Jesuits in the province, 7 of which were employed in pastoral care³⁸.

The peculiarities of the Couronian part of the diocese in comparison to conditions in the Livonian voivodeship made service in the Duchy challenging. There were cases when diocesan priests were compelled to take up missionary work, serving in an environment that was distinctly unfriendly to Catholics. Such was the case in Liepāja in 1714, when the curate of Kuldīga Simon Langhannig was nearly driven from the city by Lutherans on the third day of his mission there; it was only the intervention of the apostolic nuncio himself that allowed services to continue³⁹. Another case was that of Andreas Klein, a priest under the patronage of Count Wilhelm von Liven, when he was forced to stay in an inn and administer the sacraments there, after the elders of Tukums, a hamlet he visited from time to time, ordered householders not to permit Catholic services to be held within their dwellings⁴⁰. On another occasion Michael Moszyński, the curate of Lēnas (Lehnen) and the custodian of the Livonian chapter, led an armed attack on the

³⁷ *Akta*, p. 4–5, 9–14. Regular clergy was represented by 41 Jesuit, 20 Dominicans, 7 Basilians, 6 Lazarists (in the source though classified as secular priests). In the case of the Basilians, their engagement in pastoral care not only in the Eastern but also in the Latin rite parishes has to be noted; see, for instance, the 18th century baptismal register of Līvāni parish, NIAB, f. 1781, op. 26, d. 1295.

³⁸ LVVA, 4038. f., 2. apr., 2218. l. Because of the imprecision of the source, the number of ex-Jesuits is not clear, but could be a bit higher. This separate group of priests, some of whom later rejoined the Society of Jesus, is not covered in by article.

³⁹ *Relationes*, p. 633.

⁴⁰ *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., p. 114.

Ilmāja church, which had been seized by Lutherans. He was wounded, but regained the church⁴¹. Though excesses of this kind were anomalous, the episode does throw light on the environment Catholic clergy could face in the Duchy of Courland.

ORIGINS. What were the origins of the diocesan priests who came to serve in the Livonian-Couronian diocese? It must be stipulated that first of all their geographical origin is meant; in the 17th and 18th centuries this is more easily determined than their ethnic or social background. Ethnicity was not considered relevant prior to the birth of modern nationalism, and the latter category was rarely revealed by the clergymen themselves⁴². Of the 134 diocesan clergymen currently known, the geographical origin of 79 can be determined.

Taking into account the contemporary attitudes toward ethnicity, a geographical approach to this question might be – how many clerics hailed from within the boundaries of the diocese, and which priests could be expected to know the local languages. At the moment, 19 such priests are known (12 Couronians and 7 Livonians), a comparatively small number. The main reason for this paucity is clear – for many years, there was no local seminary whatsoever. In 1713, the Vicar General of the diocese, Ioachimus Gönner, wrote to the apostolic nuncio, Benedetto Odescalchi, regarding youths who were sufficiently prepared for the priesthood; these were, however, the offspring of impoverished parents and did not possess the resources to continue the necessary studies outside the boundaries of the diocese⁴³. Positive changes in this regard took place in the 1730s, with special funding being designated

⁴¹ Julijans Vaivods, *op. cit.*, p. 376–377.

⁴² Stanisław Litak, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁴³ LVVA, 6984. f., 1. apr., 64. l., fol. 7. Enrolment in a seminary did not always imply graduating from it; e.g., Evagrius von Rappe, the son of a noble Couronian convert to Catholicism, was expelled from the Braunsberg pontifical seminary in 1748 “ob supinam negligentiam et ineptitudinem” (*Die Matrikel*, no. 1255, p. 150), or return to their native land, as happened to Antonius Liszczewicz, a Couronian with a knowledge of Latvian language, who was sent to serve in the diocese of Chełmno after graduation from the same seminary in 1781 (*Ibid.*, no. 1498, p. 170–171).

for training Livonian clerics in Vilnius, their own diocesan seminary being created in the 1750s, but even this could apparently not affect the principal obstacles to the involvement of local persons. It also has to be taken into account that several youths who were raised and educated within the diocese were instead drawn towards the religious orders, the Society of Jesus foremost among them. Being in charge of all the 4 local Catholic secondary schools⁴⁴, the Jesuits surely attempted to recruit the most talented and spiritually inclined pupils into the Order. From 1685 to 1772, 24 Jesuit fathers and 5 *magistri* born in the voivodeship of Livonia and the Duchy of Courland were active within the diocese, with an unknown number of native sons serving abroad.

The social origins of only 5 native priests can be conclusively adduced. Of those, Georgius Hylzen, Theodor Wolff de Ludinghausen, Georgius Siberg and Hieronymus Oskierko were representatives of the landed aristocracy, their place within the chapter therefore guaranteed; one, Iulius Grüner, was the converted son of a Lutheran minister⁴⁵. The remainder of the clergy whose origins can be locally traced could hypothetically have emerged from the Polish, German, and Lithuanian speaking petty nobility, townspeople or, in rare cases, the peasantry. It is difficult to tell if there was any ethnic Latvian among them. The vast majority of indigenous persons were subject to serfdom, with nearly no opportunities to obtain the education indispensable for a clerical career; even so, such origins cannot be ruled out, since, for example, there are indeed records that testify to the ethnic Latvian background of some Jesuit priests⁴⁶.

In terms of geographical origin, most of the clergy in Livonia-Courland – 25 of those clerics whose origins are clearly documented – hailed from Warmia, an autonomous diocese within the Polish crown

⁴⁴ For an overview of the Jesuit educational activities in Livonia and Courland, see Valdis Trufanovs, “Jēzus biedrības darbība izglītības veicināšanā Latvijas teritorijā (16. gs. beigās – 19. gs. sākumā)”, *Latvijas Arhīvi*, no. 1 (2002), p. 24–36.

⁴⁵ ASCPF, Scritture riferite nei congressi (Moscovia, Polonia et Rutenia), vol. 3, fol. 87.

⁴⁶ E.g., Ignatius Rodlewski SJ who was born in Courland in 1714, and in a certain internal document of the Society of Jesus was called “lothavus” instead of “curlandus” or “curo” as would be usual for that time, see Staņislavs Kučinskis, “Ignats Rodlevskis, latvietis”, *Dzimtenes bals*, 1954, no. 6, p. 10–17.

lands. The explanation for this is quite simple: they had all studied at the Braunsberg pontifical seminary, with a single exception; the seminary was located in their native province and was thus more easily accessible. Braunsberg was one of the notable centres for the preparation of the Livonian-Couronian clergy, the significance of which will be treated shortly. There is nothing in any of the source texts regarding the social background of these clerics, but it would likely not be amiss to consider the status of the clergy serving in Warmia itself – 75 % of it came from towns⁴⁷.

The birthplace of 20 priests was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (8 are called Lithuanians, 7 Samogitians, and 5 are identified as hailing from the Vilnius diocese). It is probable that the group with origins in Lithuania was actually larger, and that the Grand Duchy was the likeliest birthplace for most of those clerics whose origins remain unknown. There are two reasons that make this plausible: first of all, Lithuania was the sole part of Poland-Lithuania to border the diocese of Livonia-Courland, and it was linked to Lithuania not only by law (the Lithuanian statute), but also by closer religious ties⁴⁸. The second reason is of linguistic character: it was considered probable that candidates for the priesthood who knew Lithuanian would more easily acquire the closely related Latvian language⁴⁹.

Of the other priests whose origins are documented, 5 were from Prussia (it is not clear whether they hailed from Prussia Royal, which included Warmia, or Ducal Prussia), 2 from Königsberg, 2 from Pomerania and 1 each from the dioceses of Kulm (Chełmno), Płock, and Przemyśl, as well as Saxony, Westphalia, and Austria. Another

⁴⁷ Andrzej Kopiczko, *Duchowieństwo katolickie diecezji warmińskiej w latach 1525–1821*, cz. 1, Olsztyn: Wydział Duszpasterski Kurii Metropolitalnej Archidiecezji Warmińskiej, 2000, p. 38–39.

⁴⁸ E.g., Jesuits, Dominicans, and other regulars working in Livonia and Courland belonged to the Lithuanian provinces of their respective orders.

⁴⁹ Cf. in 1775 in the Krāslava seminary (then already in the Russian empire) 8 of 9 students were from Samogitia and their presence was explained “ob defectum candidatorum ex aliis diaecesibus, partim idea quod eorum lingua similis prope est linguae Lothavicae”, ASCPE, Scrittura riferite nei congressi (Moscovia, Polonia e Rutenia), vol. 12 (1775–1776), fol. 484.

11 priests whose names are unknown came from Silesia and other distant provinces (Vienna is mentioned in one case); Christophorus Szembek, the Bishop of Livonia who never once visited his diocese, recruited these clerics prior to 1715, whilst performing his duties as the Commonwealth's envoy to the Habsburg court⁵⁰. There is no evidence whatsoever of the precise origin for the other known clerics, though their names – German, Polish, and Lithuanian – attest to their origins in the geographical areas mentioned, indicating rather unexpected diversity within a small number of diocesan clerics in Livonia-Courland.

EDUCATION. Though in the statutes of the Livonian chapter Bishop Popławski announced the founding of a diocesan seminary by the Daugavpils Cathedral in 1694⁵¹, there is no indication that this declaration was ever realized. Later, in his testament, T. Wolff de Ludinghausen, the former auxiliary bishop of Livonia, willed 4,000 thalers to the diocese for the founding of a seminary, but in 1715 Bishop Christophorus Szembek noted that this sum was insufficient for the purpose⁵². Due to a lack of funds and an apparent lack of initiative, the seminary only came into being soon after 1755; prior to that, clerics were trained outside the diocese.

Available data shows that at least 48 of the secular priests serving in Livonia and Courland were educated at the Braunsberg pontifical seminary, but no fewer than 17 studied at the Vilnius pontifical seminary, forming 48 % of the known diocesan clergy. Both these institutions were founded in the last quarter of the 16th century with the purpose of training priests for missionary work in Scandinavia, Livonia, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania⁵³, and they also had established traditions

⁵⁰ *Relationes*, p. 636–639.

⁵¹ *Akta*, p. 27–28.

⁵² *Relationes*, p. 640; Staņislavs Kučinskis, “Nikolajs Poplavskis (1636–1711): pirmais Livonijas diecēzes bīskaps (1685–1710)”, *Dzimtenes kalendārs 1975. gadam*, Vāsterās: Latviešu Katoļu Draudze, 1974, p. 73.

⁵³ About the aims and circumstances of the establishing of both seminaries see Oskar Garstein, *Rome and Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia: Jesuit Educational Strategy: 1553–1622*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992, p. 175–210, 234–265.

for the education of clerics who would serve in Latvian lands. The profile of these seminaries and the possibility of study with papal funds in circumstances when the weakly funded diocese sought to minimise expenditures would explain the notable numbers of graduates from these two institutions in Livonia and Courland. There were exceptions with regard to financing, however; Stanislaus Adamkowicz, for instance, seems to have been sent to the Braunsberg pontifical seminary in 1770 at the expense of the curate of Jelgava, Michael Folkmann⁵⁴.

Future priests of Livonia-Courland spent between 1–8⁵⁵ years in the aforementioned seminaries, with a majority studying there for 4–7 years⁵⁶. Nearly all of those clerics who were educated at the Vilnius pontifical seminary obtained bachelors' and masters' degrees in philosophy at the Vilnius Academy, either in parallel to their studies at the seminary or before entering it, and one – later the parish priest of Ludza and a Livonian canon, Petrus Szretter – also earned a licentiate in theology⁵⁷.

After the pontifical seminaries, another institution of significance was the Congregation of the Mission or Lazarist seminary at Vilnius, which was founded in 1725 as a 'seminarium internum' for the inner needs of the Congregation⁵⁸. The insufficient funds Bishop Wolff had bequeathed for the founding of a seminary were used to prepare clerics for Livonia-Courland at this seminary⁵⁹. The Lazarists opened a

⁵⁴ *Die Matrikel*, no. 1472, p. 167; *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., p. 503.

⁵⁵ One of two known cases was that of Mathias Danilewicz, who after a year of studies was expelled from the Braunsberg pontifical seminary at the behest of the Apostolic Nunciature in 1744 "ob incorrigibilitatem", *Die Matrikel*, no. 1241, p. 148. 5 years later, however, he was already serving as a priest in Livonia, LVVA, 7085. f., 1. a., 889. l., fol. 49v–50.

⁵⁶ The longest alternative most often included 3 years of studying philosophy and 4 years dedicated to theological studies. However, studies sometimes lasted for so long since they also included attending lower classes. E.g. the future vicar general of Livonia spent 8 years at the Vilnius pontifical seminary, of which 2 years were in lower classes of "poetics" and "rhetoric", "Katalóg alumnów", no. 753, p. 328.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 786, p. 332–333.

⁵⁸ Ludwik Piechnik, "Seminaria duchowne w (archi)diecezji Wileńskiej do 1939 r.", *Studia teologiczne*, vol. 5–6 (1987–1988), p. 213.

⁵⁹ *Relationes*, p. 658 and 697.

‘seminarium externum’ for the training of diocesan priests in 1744⁶⁰, but documents prove that two vicars from the Ludza parish in Livonia had studied moral theology under the Lazarists in Vilnius before 1742⁶¹, suggesting that at least some Livonian clerics were also educated at the ‘seminarium internum’. There is a lack of documentation on how many Livonian priests were trained by the Lazarists in Vilnius, but it seems likely that more than a few were educated there.

As was already noted, Livonia-Courland obtained its own seminary in 1755, at Krāslava. It was shared with the diocese of Smolensk, and its leadership was entrusted to the Lazarists. In accordance with its founding statutes, the seminary was expected to educate 6 clerics at a time, with 4 of these seminarians prepared for work in the diocese of Livonia-Courland⁶². The seminary started functioning between 1758 and 1761⁶³, and by 1772, according to its last regent, 9 seminarians trained at Krāslava were ordained as priests⁶⁴. It is difficult to estimate the average period of study at the seminary, but the 1770 list of students notes that one seminarian was in his 6th year of studies there, studying Church history in addition to theology and philosophy, whilst another seminarian was admitted to the priesthood after only 3 years and 7 months of study⁶⁵. At the time, there were two professors of dogmatic and moral theology at the seminary, both also teaching other

⁶⁰ Ludwik Piechnik, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁶¹ NIAB, f. 1731, op. 26, d. 1366, fol. 19–19v.

⁶² The seminary was founded by the *starost* of Daugavpils and his spouse together with the bishop of Livonia Ostrowski and the bishop of Smolensk Hylzen, *Akta*, p. 18–25. Cf. also Stanisław Litak, “Fundacja seminarium inflancko-smoleńskiego w Krasławiu”, in: *Ojczyzna i wolność: prace ofiarowane Prof. Janowi Ziółkowi w 70 rocznicę urodzin*, red. Anna Barańska et al., Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2000, p. 113–123.

⁶³ According to the 5 August 1758 report by Bishop Ostrowski, the seminary was not yet functioning, *Relationes*, p. 703–704. The first known list of its students is dated 13 March 1761, *Akta*, p. 18.

⁶⁴ Jan Jałowecki, “Krótka wiadomość o Inflantskiem Krasławskiem Seminarium, zebrana przez ostatniego tegoż Seminarium Regensa”, *Rubon*, t. 7 (1847), p. 25.

⁶⁵ ASCPF, Scrittura riferite nei congressi (Moscovia, Polonia et Rutenia), vol. 10 (1769–1772), fol. 162.

disciplines necessary to a clerical education, including homiletics, the administration of the sacraments, etc.⁶⁶ Though the founding of its own seminary was doubtless a great achievement for the diocese, its capacity was insufficient for the training of the needed number of clerics in the diocese. The fact that 12 alumni of the Braunsberg pontifical seminary began to work as priests in Livonia-Courland between 1761 and 1770 is evidence of this inadequacy.

With the reduction of the diocese to the Duchy of Courland and the Piltene district in 1772, the province lost not only its cathedral, but more importantly its seminary, which then fell within the borders of Russia. A new seminary, again led by the Lazarists and limited to 4 seminarians, was founded only in 1787 at Ilūkste with the support of Siberg family and was located in a former Jesuit college⁶⁷. The operation of this seminary was minor, however; according to its 1790 visitation there were two professors of theology, but only a single student⁶⁸.

At least 3 priests in Livonia-Courland could boast of a Roman education. The first of these was T. Wolff de Ludinghausen, who was the prelate custodian of the chapter prior to his investiture as the auxiliary bishop of Livonia⁶⁹. Between 1688 and 1689, Wolff studied theology in the 'Eternal City', though the institution where he pursued his studies remains unidentified⁷⁰. The other two clerics who were trained in Rome were educated at the College of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Collegium de Propaganda Fide*). Between 1698 and 1700, the Livonian bishop Popławski, then a resident of Rome, provided financial support for the studies of I. Grüner, who later became a canon and missionary⁷¹. Ioachimus Wendt, the future parish priest of Vecpils

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 161.

⁶⁷ LVVA, 4038. f., 2. apr., 2218. l., fol. 45.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 34–35.

⁶⁹ Staņislavs Kučinskis, "Nikolajs Poplavskis", p. 72–73.

⁷⁰ This he did while being a Jesuit. He left the Society afterwards, *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy, 1564–1995*, oprac. Ludwik Grzebień, Kraków: Wydział Filozoficzny Towarzystwa Jesusowego, Instytut Kultury Religijnej, 1996, p. 756.

⁷¹ Staņislavs Kučinskis, "Nikolajs Poplavskis", p. 74–75. Here with reference to

(Altenburg) enrolled in the College in 1723⁷² and was the only Livonian diocesan cleric known to have held a doctorate in theology⁷³.

Besides those institutions mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, only a few others are known to have trained candidates for the Livonian priesthood. In 1786, 2 graduates of the Vilnius diocesan seminary became priests who later served in Courland⁷⁴. Records show that one priest ordained in 1782 had studied not only at Braunsberg, but also at the Samogitian diocesan seminary at Varniai⁷⁵. The Lazarist Seminary of the Holy Cross in Warsaw must be mentioned as well, for Georgius Hylzen, who became the provost of the Livonian cathedral and later the bishop of Smolensk, pursued his studies there c. 1721⁷⁶. Other institutes of priestly training where Livonian clerics received their education can only be guessed at. It cannot be ruled out that some diocesan priests may have studied under the Jesuits, at their residence (later also a college) in Ilūkste, for example, since the relevant lists of personnel there include professors of moral theology after 1740⁷⁷. The 11 clerics who were imported from Silesia and other provinces by Bishop Szembek before 1715⁷⁸ were most likely trained at respective institutions in the Habsburg lands.

In the period covered by this paper, the clergy was expected to pursue

the correspondence of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, from which an impression could be formed that Grüner did not serve in the diocese of Livonia-Courland; however his presence in the diocese is attested by several baptismal records in parish registers, e. g., NIAB, f. 1781, op. 26, d. 1191, fol. 64–64v and 241.

⁷² ASCPF, Scrittura non riferite, vol. 4 (1708–1727), fol. 730.

⁷³ *Akta*, p. 291.

⁷⁴ LVIA, f. 604, ap. 1, b. 8888, fol. 238.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 332–333.

⁷⁶ Staņislaivs Kučinskis, “Bīskaps Juris Nikolajs Hilzens”, p. 128.

⁷⁷ E.g., *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 2. d., p. 411 and 417. It is claimed that in 1740 there was a special class of moral theology opened for training of the diocesan clergy and thus a small seminary established at Ilūkste, see Marek Inglot, *Kollegium księży jezuitów w Ilukście*, Kraków: Wyższa Szkoła Filozoficzna-Pedagogiczna “Igratianum”, 2000, p. 59. So far evidence is lacking for whether any future cleric of Livonia-Courland had been prepared there.

⁷⁸ *Relationes*, p. 639.

spiritual and intellectual studies after ordination as well, particularly in the field of moral theology. In the case of Livonia-Courland, ensuring the post-graduate development of priests meant that they were subject to annual examinations that were focused on their suitability to hear confessions. A general official was appointed by the diocese to administer these examinations⁷⁹. From Bishop Puzyna's visitation record of Ludza parish in 1742, we learn that the local curate, who was also the diocesan official, examined 3 of his vicars in so called reserved cases, whilst a 4th was examined by the bishop himself⁸⁰. Inventories of parish libraries attest to the resources that the clergy could make use of in their continuing education, though such records do not prove that these were always utilised. 8 diocesan churches had notable collections of books in 1761, the number of volumes held varying from 25 (at Feimaņi) to 318 (at Kuldīga)⁸¹. Both liturgical and hagiographical works were included in these collections along with tomes on moral theology, various dictionaries, polemical writings and works on worldly subjects such as history and geography.

LANGUAGE SKILLS. The ability to communicate in the language of the parishioners at a level allowing for giving sermons, teaching the catechism and taking confessions is indispensable to successful pastoral work. A priest serving in Livonia and Courland was expected to know a number of languages in addition to Latin, which was the *lingua franca* of the priesthood throughout the period covered by this paper. Latvian was first among the languages a cleric was required to know, since it was the language of the majority of the faithful. Polish and German, however, were equally important; the former because it was the official language of the Livonian voivodeship, spoken by the regional elite as well as a segment of immigrants of a particular social status, including part of the peasantry, the latter because it was important in the Duchy of Courland, where it was used in the administration, was the language

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 706.

⁸⁰ NIAB, f. 1731, op. 26, d. 1366, fol. 18v–19v.

⁸¹ *Akta*, p. 80–81, 237–246.

of most of the aristocracy, and was spoken by some in the lower classes both in the towns and in rural areas. Less common, but used in border areas, was Lithuanian⁸². Some sources also refer to Slavic⁸³, apparently not distinguishing between the Belorussian and Russian spoken by Slavs in the Livonian voivodeship and the eastern part of the Duchy. Finally, Estonian was also spoken in the diocese, but only by a very few⁸⁴. Nearly all priests with local origins about whom there is information on language skills spoke at least Latvian, Polish, and German, though in a few cases Livonians lacked German, and Couronians lacked Polish. There were few indigenous clerics, however, and one of the reasons the diocese's bishops gave for a lack of clergy was insufficient language skills among priests who could serve in Livonia-Courland⁸⁵. To improve the situation, a 1715 report by Bishop Szembek records a desire to alleviate the problem by sending seminarians from Vilnius to Braunsberg and vice-versa, with the intention of their acquiring German, Polish and Lithuanian, and stipulating the need for an instructor in Latvian at one of the seminaries⁸⁶. It is unclear if Bishop Szembek's plan was actualized, but it is known that among the graduates of the Vilnius and Braunsberg seminaries, with the exception of those who hailed from Latvian-speaking lands, those who knew Latvian when they began service in the diocese were exceptional. Michael Langhannig, a Warmian, was one of these exceptions, and he was sent to Courland in 1724 precisely because of

⁸² E.g., the parish of Smeline in the Duchy of Courland was predominantly Lithuanian, LVVA, 4038. f., 2. apr., 2218. l., fol. 72.

⁸³ *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., p. 492. Alongside with German, Polish, Lithuanian, and Latvian a certain "l'illirica" is mentioned and probably appears there by mistake.

⁸⁴ Estonian as one of the languages required for the work in the diocese is mentioned by Bishop Wessel in 1725, *Relationes*, p. 642. It is said that Theophilus Kwek, a Jesuit missionary who died in 1736, with a purpose to teach the basic tenets of the Faith to Estonians ("advenae ex Islandia Czuhny dicti") who were living among Latvians by the Russian borders, was studying their language, *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., p. 480.

⁸⁵ *Relationes*, p. 639–640, 2 of 11 priests provided by Bishop Szembek soon left the diocese because of an inadequate provision and the lack of necessary languages, see also *ibid.*, p. 642–643.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 640.

his knowledge of the Latvian language⁸⁷. Some priests could acquire the command of Latvian, in certain circumstances, prior to being admitted to the seminary, and they could also seek the aid of fellow students. In 1774, for instance, of 24 seminarians at Braunsberg 6 were reported to have known Latvian⁸⁸. Of those, 2 were from Courland, 2 were Lithuanians, 1 of whom had studied at the Jelgava Jesuit school⁸⁹, and another had taught at the same school⁹⁰. The remaining 2 seminarians with Latvian proficiency were a Warmian and an Austrian.

On the whole, however, it was expected that newly ordained priests would acquire the Latvian language once they had begun their service in the diocese. In a 1729 letter addressed to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Camillo Paolucci, the apostolic nuncio in Warsaw, wrote that the regent of the pontifical seminary at Braunsberg was requested to select some seminarians who would be sent to Courland and were capable of learning the Couronian (i.e., Latvian) language⁹¹. It is possible to deduce the outcome by the fact that some graduates originally without Latvian skills later appear in the visitation records and other documents of the diocese with Latvian already mentioned among their languages⁹². In 1739, for example, a visitation of the Kuldīga parish

⁸⁷ “Katalóg alumnów”, no. 726, p. 325. It cannot be ruled out that Simon Langhannig, a Warmian serving in Courland since 1712 (*Die Matrikel*, no. 1067, p. 127) was related to Michael and somehow fostered his acquisition of the Latvian language.

⁸⁸ ASCPF, Scritture riferite nei congressi (Moscovia, Polonia e Rutenia), vol. 12 (1775–1776), fol. 178–178v.

⁸⁹ Stanislaus Adamkowicz is called a Pole in this list. About his origin from Upytė area in Lithuania and his studies in Jelgava, see LVIA, f. 604, ap. 1, b. 8888, fol. 206–208.

⁹⁰ Ignatius Balserevicz also appears as a Pole in this list. As a Lithuanian with the knowledge of Samogitian and Lithuanian languages he appears in *Die Matrikel*, no. 1485, p. 169. About his previous work in Jelgava see *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., p. 503.

⁹¹ ASCPF, Scritture originali riferiti nelle congregazioni generali, vol. 66. fol. 3–3v.

⁹² E. g., Simon Arewicz, a native of Prussia, cf. “Katalóg alumnów”, no. 771, p. 331, and *Akta*, p. 189, or Ioannes Rotterding, cf. *Die Matrikel*, no. 1411, p. 148, and Archive of the Roman Catholic parish of Kuldīga, no. 393 (pages unnumbered).

revealed that the local vicar, Ioannes Rupsson, possessed merely middling Latvian language abilities, and he was urged to improve them⁹³. It is likely that most priests who hailed from abroad mastered the language by the means of self study, making use of what few Latvian books were available, including grammars and dictionaries⁹⁴, communicating with locals and/or more experienced peers, but these were not the only opportunities. For instance, Count Wilhelm von Liven, one of the most notable early 18th century nobles in the Duchy of Courland to convert to Catholicism, himself taught the Latvian language to Jesuit missionaries⁹⁵, and quite likely also to A. Klein, the diocesan priest at the Līvberze parish that Liven had founded, a native of Königsberg, who later gave evidence of his linguistic proficiency by translating a Latvian lectionary which contained excerpts from the Gospels and the Epistles⁹⁶.

There is reason to believe that diocesan clerics were responsible for the translations into Latvian of fragments of the Gospel published in Latgalian, a form of Latvian spoken in part of the Livonian voivodeship, published in 1753⁹⁷; the translation of this text was previously attributed to the Jesuits. An understanding of linguistic complexities would also suggest that language was a reason why clerics were rarely transferred between the two parts of the diocese, Livonia and Courland; the

⁹³ Archive of the Roman Catholic parish of Kuldīga, no. 265: “monetur, ut in hac ad curam animarum summe necessaria lingua se magis perficiat” (pages unnumbered).

⁹⁴ Columbanus Pfeiffer, a Jesuit missionary coming from Austria, in a 1786 letter from the former voivodeship of Livonia (then already a part of Russian Empire), wrote that due to their high quality and wide repertoire Latvian books published by the Lutherans were very useful when studying the language, *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*, Russ. 1003 09 02.

⁹⁵ *Latvijas vēstures avoti*, 1. d., p. 42.

⁹⁶ This work, which was not, however, the first Latvian Catholic lectionary, was finished in 1738 and was used in a manuscript form (two copies of it are known), Staņislavs Kučinskis, “Līvberzes prāvests Andrejs Kleins”, p. 124.

⁹⁷ Skaidrīte Kalvāne, *Latgaliešu literatūras sākumi (garīgā literatūra 18. un 19. gadsimtā): disertācijas kopsavilkums filoloģijas doktora grāda iegūšanai*, Rīga, 1997, p. 12–13.

dialects in the regions were different enough for both forms to develop separate literary traditions in the 18th century, and a cleric with linguistic skills would have been most useful in the region of the dialect he had acquired.

The regular explanation of the word of God and the things necessary for salvation to the flock was a significant duty for the diocesan clergy. Visitation materials, better preserved from the latter half of the 18th century, bear witness to the fact that the catechism was commonly given in one or more languages spoken by the congregation, most often Latvian and Polish⁹⁸.

CONCLUSION. The diocese of Livonia and Courland was definitely not one of the most notable in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Due to its poverty and the complex relations between religious denominations, it was also not attractive to a diocesan clergy; the low ratio of clerics to missionaries from the religious orders is evidence for this. Despite these circumstances, a study of the diocesan priests serving in Livonia-Courland as a group gives us insight into the clerics' diverse geographical and educational backgrounds as well as their ability to adapt to difficult conditions. It cannot be denied that this diversity also reflected the hindrances faced by the diocese's leadership when seeking to recruit indigenous candidates for the priesthood and their inability to found a local seminary for many years. This paper is one of the first steps toward thorough research on the diocesan clerics in Livonia-Courland, and this attempt must certainly be followed by an analysis of matters such as the involvement of secular clergy in pastoral care, its internal structure, and discipline issues.

⁹⁸ *Akta*, p. 59, 69, 83, 173.