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THE CHANGE OF SURNAMES AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN LATVIA IN THE 1920S AND 1930S

Abstract

This anthroponymic study is based on recently gathered archival materials from 1921–1929. According to the latest data, after the first *Law on Changing Surnames* [*Likums par uzvārdu maiņu*] (1920) until 1940, a total of 9,400 people changed their surnames in Latvia (LVVA). This article analyses changes during the first nine years of this period – 4,313 cases of changed surnames. The goal of this analysis is to identify the main trends, possible reasons, and motivations for choosing a new surname. These name changes also testify to transformations of identity.

In most cases, surnames of nickname origin were considered less preferable (even offensive): e.g., surnames describing outward appearance (*Mazais* 'small', *Resnais* 'fat'), surnames with a primary meaning referring to fauna (*Vepris* 'hog', *Bullis* 'bull'). Most often, people chose a new surname referring to flora, physio-geography, or fauna (birds) (*Sarkanbiks* 'red-pants' → *Rubenis* 'black grouse'). Names referring to flora (especially tree names) were considered neutral or particularly desirable. The most popular new surname of anthroponymic origin was *Viesturs* – the name of the great Semigallian duke (13th cent.), which was a result of trends of national romanticism. When changing their surname, people often preferred a new anthroponym with the same initials (*Leitis* → *Līcis*). There are many double surnames or surnames with variants which people tried to avoid (*Bērstiņš-Berziņš* → *Bērziņš*). During this period, a relatively small amount (374 persons) changed their foreign last names to Latvian. However, it was not uncommon for people to choose a new foreign name as well – (*Čigans* 'Roma person' → *Teikmanis*).

This study seeks to determine not only the trends of changed surnames at the beginning of the 20th cent., but also to show how these and later changes have been reflected in the contemporary surname system. The second part of this article is devoted to the surnames which were recorded in the 1935 census in Latvia but did not survive to the present day.

As far as possible, the results (main tendencies) of the changes in Latvia are compared with the data from Lithuania and Estonia from that period.

Key words: historical onomastics, anthroponymy, surnames, changing of surnames, Latvia

1 Introduction

During the first independence period of Latvia, many Latvians obtained Latvian family names due to a campaign of Latvianisation of surnames.

This article describes a historical onomastic study, which analyses surname changes in Latvia in the 1920s, establishing the etymological semantic categories of these surnames based on their primary semantics, in order to understand the tendencies, possible reasons, and motivations for surname changes at the beginning of the 20th century. To ensure reliability, the data are taken from the *Latvian State Historical Archives* (*Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs*, LVVA). To arrange all analysed surnames, the classification proposed by Balodis (2018, pp. 221–225) has been used. This classification is the most recent and most compact one, which includes the primary semantic groups from Blese's (1929, pp. 130–144) and Staltmane's (1981, pp. 88–89) monographs. It divides surnames into two main categories: surnames of appellative origin (surnames describing a person's appearance or character; surnames related to ethnonyms; surnames describing professions or occupations; surnames describing fauna; surnames describing flora; surnames related to physio-geography; surnames related to other specific or abstract meanings) and proper origin surnames (surnames of anthroponymic origin; surnames of toponymic origin). All "old" surnames as well as "new" surnames chosen by Latvians after changing their family name were analysed and grouped according to this scheme. The anthroponymic terms *surname*, *last name*, and *family name* in this article are used as synonyms.

The majority of residents of the territory of Latvia received their surnames rather late – in the 19th century. However, it should be noted that the oldest surnames (also of Latvian origin) can be found much earlier (Upelnieks 1938, p. 16; Staltmane 1981, p. 7). According to Blese (1929, p. 6), it turns out that surnames in the cities, especially in Rīga, were already in use in the 15th–16th cent. Latvian surnames did not all appear naturally – most surnames were assigned artificially. After the abolishment of serfdom it was established that all peasants must have surnames. The need arose to specify surnames, which one could not change. As is noted in the monograph by Balodis (2018, p. 14), when choosing a surname, homestead owners were often advised to take the name of their homestead. Nevertheless, clerks often changed homestead names, Germanised or sometimes even vulgarised them. The clerks chose two-stem surnames with German components, e.g., using German names for professions for surnames, etc. In the eastern part of Latvia – Latgale – many persons were given surnames of Polish or

Russian origin. In the second half of the 19th century, at the start of the National Awakening in Latvia, the Neo-Latvians (Latv. *jaunlatvieši*) recommended that people Latvianise their names and surnames. These processes became very active in the 1930s–1940s.

A brief overview of the historical circumstances and legal norms of the first half of the 20th cent. in Latvia shows that along with the establishment of a nation state, new legislation was being developed, including laws relating to personal names. After Latvia gained independence on November 18, 1918, its first legislature was the People's Council, which was tasked with preparing the legal basis for an elected assembly. The first elected Latvian legislature was the Constitutional Assembly, which began its work in May 1920 (saeima.lv). On September 15, 1920, the Constitutional Assembly adopted the *Law on the Change of Surnames*, and on September 30 of the same year, this law was published in the *Collection of Laws and Government Orders* (LVRK 1920, p. 3). Considering the rapid adoption of the law after the convening of the Constitutional Assembly, one must conclude that it was seen as urgent. It is the 209th law adopted by the Constitutional Assembly. The text of the law is not long; it includes 12 articles. The first article states that one has the right to "change one's surname for established reasons" (LVRK 1920, p. 3). Thus, the permission to change one's surname is given, and as a result it can be concluded that until September 15, 1920, Latvian residents did not have such a right, at least not after 1918.

Although the provisions listed below do not directly apply to the change of surnames, they do, directly or indirectly, indicate situations that had to be addressed. The rules standardise the surnames of a particular group, and the rules include extensive explanations of how to deal with ambiguous situations. The law passed in 1927 provides for changes in the spelling of surnames. It states that the spelling of a man's name and surname must include Latvian case endings. It also notes that Latgalian (eastern Latvian) surnames should be written in the relevant dialect. Women's surnames should be written in the same way as the corresponding male surname, but if desired, the surname's feminine form can be included by writing it in brackets (VV 1927, No. 48). It is important to mention that together with this law, the spelling of names and surnames of foreign origin was standardised, specifying that they must be written according to Latvian pronunciation and, if possible, by adding Latvian case endings (VV 1927, No. 48).

Soon after the law was issued on March 1, 1927, the Cabinet of Ministers announced *The Instruction on the Rules on Domestic Passports* (VV 1927, No. 145). There are some items in this instruction that provide insight into the reasons why so many double surnames and surname variants have been recorded in the surname change lists. The new instruction strictly

defined the procedure for making entries in passports, excluded the possibility of adding a new personal name at the time of issuing the document, and mentioned that a surname change or addition of a pseudonym may be entered into the passport only with the permission of the Minister of the Interior (VV 1927, No. 145). Overall, this strengthens the idea that in the past when documents would be changed, surname variants arose as a result of incorrect entries or deliberate influence on the entry.

The next decision of the Cabinet of Ministers concerning personal names was issued on July 28, 1927 – *The Instruction on Writing Names and Surnames in Passports* (VV 1927, No. 164). Although a new orthography had been adopted in Latvia several years earlier, the transition was slow due to the need to update technical equipment and the time it took for officials to adapt to the new style. The goal of the instruction was to achieve a transition from the use of Gothic script to Latin script and to newly developed norms, while attempting to exclude the possibility that several new variants of one personal name could arise again due to the orthographic change.

The number of surname changes in the 1920s is shown in Table 1. This demonstrates that the transition to Latin script and clarifications in the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers encouraged people to change their surnames. An upward trend is evident during this period, reaching its peak in 1928.

year	number of persons
1921	233
1922	199
1923	283
1924	281
1925	362
1926	433
1927	401
1928	1245
1929	866

Table 1. *The number of surname changes in Latvia in the 1920s.*

2 The main trends in surname changes in the 1920s

This anthroponymic study of surname changes in Latvia focuses on the 1920s and is based on recently gathered archival materials from 1921–1929. According to the latest data, between the

adoption of the first law – *The Law on Changing Surnames* (1920) – and 1940 approximately 9,400 persons changed their surnames in Latvia (LVVA). This article analyses the changes from the first nine years of this period – 4,313 cases of changed surnames. In the near future, the authors of this study also plan to collect and analyse changed surnames up to 1940. Unfortunately, the lists of applications found in archives do not reveal the motivations of individuals or families for changing their surnames. Thus, conclusions can only be based on the primary semantics of each surname. It should be noted that out of 4,313 cases of changed surnames, approx. 2,286 surnames were double surnames or surnames with variants. In those cases, the old surname contains the part of the surname which has been abandoned in the new surname, for example: *Riekstiņš-Kauliņš,* also *Rozentals*[1] → *Kauliņš, Strauja-Straume* → *Straume, Žuburs-Žubbels-Šubergals* → *Žuburs*. It is difficult to distinguish double surnames from surname variants in archival records. This is due to discrepancies in the form and presentation of double surnames in different records during this period. In this respect, 1928 stands out the most in the 1920s. Out of 1245 cases, 641 persons have double surnames or surnames with variants.

2.1 The semantic groups of changed surnames

Examining the surname change lists, family names with meanings referring to appearance or character make up approximately 15% of all changed surnames of Latvian origin. People did not feel any reluctance towards their last name if it had a positive meaning (such as *Jaunais* 'a young person' or *Stiprais* 'a strong person'). However, if a surname had negative connotations such as *Mīkstais* 'a soft person', *Resnais* 'a fat person', *Vārgulis* 'a weak person (either physically or in character)', then most likely people did not want to be identified with those qualities. Some more frequently mentioned last names on the surname change lists include the surnames *Nabags* 'pauper' (describing the social status of a person), *Pauts* 'testicle' (describing a particular part of body), *Sarkanbiks* 'someone who has red trousers' (describing appearance), *Antiņš* (< Latv. personal name *Antiņš*, which became popular after Rainis' play was published, where one of the characters is known by this name) 'simpleton' (describing mental ability), and other surnames with meanings considered to be unflattering.

There are very few cases when a person with a surname describing appearance or character chose a new surname from the same group.

[1] The spelling of surnames is preserved as it is recorded in archival documents.

Only approximately 7% of all Latvian-origin changed last names are surnames relating to the semantic category of ethnonyms. The most frequently changed surname from this category describes a neighbouring nation – *Leitis* 'Lithuanian'; however, in colloquial speech, Latv. *leitis* has some negative connotations, cf. Latv. standard *lietuvietis* 'Lithuanian'. Other surnames relating to ethnonyms include *Krievs* 'Russian', *Žīdiņš* DIM < *žīds* 'Jew', *Čigāns* 'Roma person', *Svede* 'Swede', and *Pusvācietis* 'Half-German'. The last of these surnames, *Pusvācietis*, has the pejorative meaning of 'a Latvian pretending to be German'. Blese (1929, p. 132), in his text about the ancient surnames of the 16th century, notes that the Latv. word *vācietis* 'German' is not found as a surname, which is also understandable, because Germans did not mix with Latvians. Nowadays, however, the Latvian surname *Vācietis* 'German' exists and is used.

Moving on to the next category, namely, surnames describing professions or occupations, it should be noted that the most represented professions in surname change applications are not the most common ones. According to Balodis' semantic analysis (2018, p. 580), the most popular Latvian last names describing occupations are: *Mucenieks* 'cooper', *Mūrnieks* 'bricklayer', *Kalējs* 'blacksmith'. For example, among changed surnames, *Podnieks* 'potter' and the compound surname with negative connotations *Nabagkupše* 'pauper-seller' are found. Examining the list of applications, it can be concluded that a large proportion of surnames are double last names with one component being the name of a profession, e.g., *Dakters-Indulis dakteris* 'doctor' + personal name *Indulis*. Only approx. 4% of changed surnames of Latvian origin can be grouped into this category.

Surnames related to the semantic category of fauna were the most changed category during this period: approx. 30% of all Latvian-origin changed surnames. These family names, perhaps more than any others during the period, were derived from nicknames (see also Blese 1929, p. 135, Siliņš 1990, p. 11, Butkus 1995, pp. 36–57, Balodis 2018, p. 186). It should be emphasised that not all animal names have positive associations. For example, the changed surname *Vepris* 'hog', most likely would evoke associations with something uncivil, rude, or dirty; *Bullis* 'bull', *Vērsis* 'ox' could suggest associations with something strong but also stubborn or obstinate; *Blusa, Blusiņš* DIM < insect name *blusa* 'flea', could have associations with small parasites, even dirtiness. Not all changed surnames in this group give a strong negative connotation, but there could also be unwanted associations in such cases as *Krancis* 'mongrel' – a very popular dog's name in Latvia, or *Pincis* – a popular cat's name, but cf. also the Latvian colloquial word *pincis* 'penis', so referring to male genitalia (see Tēzaurs.lv).

When analysing surnames related to the semantics of flora, two tendencies can be observed. First, surnames in this group were changed to surnames with other flora-related meanings (approx. 50%): *Stumbris* ‘trunk, bole’ → *Ozols* ‘oak’, *Blīgzna* ‘goat willow /*Salix caprea*/’ → *Smilga* ‘bent(grass)’. Second, surnames were changed due to an unwanted association, such as *Dirš* < Latv. DIAL *dirši* meaning ‘field brome, rye brome /*Bromus secalinus*/’ (see Tēzaurs.lv), which also has a strong association with the impolite verb ‘to defecate’: *Dirš* → *Daukste*, *Dirš* → *Bekers*.

Changed surnames with meanings relating to physio-geography are rare – only about 50 cases. The only tendency that is reflected in this group is that almost half of new surnames are from the same category, i.e., their meanings also relate to physio-geography, for example: *Urga* ‘streamlet’ → *Grava* ‘ravine’.

The second largest group (approx. 20%) are surnames with other specific or abstract meanings. The reason for this could be that these are last names that cannot be included in the other categories. The diversity in the meanings of names in this group can be seen in the following examples: *Dieviņš* DIM ‘god’, *Dievaberns* ‘child of god’, *Puika* ‘lad’; names of dishes – *Ķīselis* ‘kissel (a dish made from fruit juice and gelatine)’, *Putra* ‘porridge’; names of household tools and other objects – *Pods* ‘pot’, *Lupata* ‘rag’, *Kaplis* ‘hoe’, *Zābaks* ‘boot’, *Naudiņš* DIM ‘money’. Almost all of these surnames were once nicknames.

Last names derived from proper names can be divided into two categories, namely, surnames of anthroponymic origin and surnames of toponymic origin. As is known from history, the singular genitive form of a father’s name was added to a person’s name even by the ancient Greeks (Blese 1929, p. 9). There are many surnames derived from patronyms also used in Latvia (see Balodis 2018, pp. 537–566). The lists of changed surnames show that in the majority of cases (99%), a masculine name (such as *Brencis*, *Jaņķelis*, *Juris*, *Mozus*) is the basis for a surname of anthroponymic origin and only 1% (or less) are feminine (such as *Eva*). This category of changed surnames is relatively small – approx. 100 names. The motivation for changing these names was probably because a surname of anthroponymic origin is easier to confuse with a given name, thus making it difficult to distinguish, therefore making it inconvenient.

Surnames derived from place names – names of homesteads, settlements, bodies of water, etc. – are of toponymic origin. Such anthroponyms indicate where a person (hypothetically the first person with that surname) originates, the place where a person lives, property location (Balodis 2018, p. 566). Surnames with such semantics are very rare in the

lists of changed surnames: *Stalidzans* < *Stalidzāni*, a village in Daugavpils region and an inhabited place in Madona region.

To summarise, when changing their surname, in most cases a person chose a new family name of Latvian origin with a meaning relating to flora (approx. 28%, as in: *Zibens* 'lightning' → *Liepiņš* DIM 'linden-tree', *Dakša* 'fork' → *Krumiņš* DIM 'bush', *Skuķis* 'girl, lass' → *Skujiņš* DIM 'fir needle', *Pakalns* 'hill' → *Ozols* 'oak', *Bullis* 'bull' → *Ziediņš* DIM 'flower'), new surnames with meanings relating to physio-geography (approx. 23%, *Dundurs* 'gadfly' → *Kalniņš* DIM 'hill', *Sisenis* 'locust, grasshopper' → *Līdums* 'clearing', *Tēviņš* 'male, buck' → *Strauts* 'brook', *Nabags* 'pauper' → *Krastiņš* DIM 'shore', *Garais* 'a tall person' → *Avots* 'source, spring'), as well as surnames with other specific or abstract meanings (approx. 13%, *Strenge* → *Dainis* 'song', *Pumpiņš* 'knob, lump, pimple' → *Etiķis* 'vinegar', *Bezbiksis* 'someone without pants' → *Vētra* 'storm', *Dzērējs* 'someone who drinks' → *Dzintars* 'amber'), and also surnames motivated by fauna (most often bird names) (approx. 11%, *Barbals* → *Dzenis* 'woodpecker', *Mīkstais* 'soft, cowardly' → *Strads* 'thrush', *Biks* 'pants' → *Bite* 'bee', *Kapostiņš* DIM 'cabbage' → *Balodis* 'pigeon, dove'). Only a small portion of new surnames describe a person's appearance or character, relate to ethnonyms, professions or occupations, are of anthroponymic origin, are of toponymic origin, or have unknown semantics. At the time and motivated by national romanticism, stories, plays and operas about the eponymous Semigallian duke (13th cent.) revived the name *Viesturs* – not only as a popular given name, but also as a surname (*Auniņš* → *Viesturs*, *Vārna* → *Viesturs*, *Naudiņš* → *Viesturs*, *Runga* → *Viesturs*).

2.2 Changing surnames of German and Slavic origin

It is well known that Latvianisation of all anthroponymic systems was one of the reasons for changing family names. Consequently, a portion of changed last names are surnames of German and Slavic origin (384 during the reported period). In most cases, changed surnames have Latvian endings, for example, *Goldfelds*, *Freimanis*, *Vulfsons*, *Šuravlovs*, *Jeremovičs*, *Marovskis*, but in some cases, the original written form has been retained *Eiche*, *Kremer*, *Rozenfeld*, *Puzinikevič*, *Zurovskij*. More than two-thirds of people with foreign surnames chose a new surname based on Latvian lexis, for example: *Bogdanovs* → *Melnis* (< *melns* 'black'), one *Blumberg* family became *Vētra* 'storm', but another one → *Aizkrauklis* (< Latv. place name *Aizkraukle*). Very often during the changing process the same capital letter is preserved: *Zurovskis* has kept the first letter of their earlier surname becoming *Zeltiņš* DIM 'gold', *Skavarovkis* has chosen a new family name *Saulītis* DIM 'sun', *Pluke* → *Pavasaris* 'spring'.

In 16 cases, German-origin surnames have been translated literally, i.e., as calques: *Goldbergs → Zeltkalns, Grünbergs → Zaļkalns, Rozenbergs → Rožkalns, Sterns → Zvaigzne.* Although the largest portion of foreign-origin surnames were changed to Latvian, there are some cases where Slavic family names were changed to German-origin surnames, such as *Borisova → Bernhard, Jermocenko → Baumanis, Žilinskis → Arensons.* It is not uncommon for persons to choose, instead of a Latvian surname, a new foreign last name: *Čigans* 'Roma person' → *Teikmanis, Silgails* 'wood grouse' → *Kaufmans*. This testifies to the fact that surnames of foreign origin, especially of German origin, continued to have higher prestige in society, even in the 20th century.

3 Extinct Latvian surnames after 1935

The goal of the second part of this article is to show the consequences of the Latvian surname changing process and to note the surnames which still occurred at the beginning of the last century, but are no longer found in Latvia today. Anthroponymic material is taken from a slightly later period than analysed in the first part of the article. This study is based on archival data – mainly on the 1935 census lists published recently in Mežs, Stafecka, Siliņa-Piņķe, Kovaļevska (2019), which included approx. 9,500 entries (based on an analysis of approx. 20,000 surnames and surname variants) (LUAM II), and on contemporary data from the *Latvian Population Register of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs* (2017 data, which includes 141,786 different surnames). As much as possible, it is also compared with mid-20th century materials: Velta Staltmane. *Materialy dlja slovarja latyshskih familij* (*Materials for the dictionary of Latvian surnames*, manuscript in Russian, 1120 pages). This comparison revealed more than 377 Latvian surnames recorded in 1935, which are no longer in use.

3.1 Semantics of extinct surnames of Latvian origin

Among extinct Latvian surnames, which were recorded in 1935, there are many anthroponyms with pejorative meanings, the replacement of which would be expected *a priori* and justified, for example: *Murmulis* (8)[2] 'someone who speaks unclearly', *Bimbelis* (< 6) 'someone who cries a lot', *Čučelis* (7) 'someone who sleeps a lot', *Pintiķis* (11) 'a strange, stupid, foolish, clumsy person', *Duraks* (< 6) 'a fool', *Mangotājs* (20) 'beggar' (mostly a surname used for Roma people), *Dižausis* (22) 'a person with large ears', *Garvēderis* (< 6) 'a person with a large

[2] A number in parentheses after a surname shows the number of times that name was recorded in 1935.

stomach', *Kraķītis* (< 6) 'an old, weak horse; an old, weak, sick man', *Pusčūcis* (9) 'half of a pig', *Vērškāja* (7) 'bull leg', *Mēsliņš* (< 6) 'small piece of manure', even several surnames meaning 'a drunk': *Dzērājs* (8), *Iemetējs* (< 6), metaphoric last names *Alutiņš* (10) 'beer', *Miežabrālis* (13) 'barley brother' (a variation of this name still occurs nowadays – *Miežubrālis* (11x)[3]), *Traktieris* (< 6) 'pub' – all of these last four surnames are clear euphemisms for 'a drunk'.

Anthroponyms with neutral or even positive meanings also disappeared after 1935, for example, surnames with neutral etymological meaning: *Sirmgalvis* (8) 'old man', *Mazuliņš* (< 6) 'baby', *Pašlaiks* (10) 'current time', *Tenciņš* (< 6) 'a person, who often says "Tencinu/Thank you!"', *Mežpuika* (< 6) 'forest lad', *Mežlauks* (11) 'forest + field', *Maize* (< 6) 'bread', *Trauks* (< 6) 'dish', *Auziķis* (6) < *auza* 'oat', *Graudavs* (8) < *grauds* 'grain', *Čumurs* (< 6) 'buzzer', *Stobrīti*s (8) DIM < *stobrs* 'tube', *Zutītis* (7) DIM < *zutis* 'eel', *Izkaptiņš* (< 6) < DIM *izkapts* 'scythe', *Lemesis* (12) 'ploughshare', *Mākons* (< 6) 'cloud', as well as a very unusual surname with rather strange primary semantics – *Viņš* (< 6) 'he'. There are surnames that could initially be called anthroponyms with positive meanings which are no longer found, for example: *Taisnais* (7) 'a fair, honest person', *Labais* (< 6) 'a good, right person', *Gaišums* (< 6) 'brightness', *Kukuliņš* (< 6) < *kukulis* 'bribe', *Glābējs* (< 6) 'saviour', *Daiļacis* (10) 'someone with beautiful eyes', *Rož(u)mežs* (8) 'rose + forest', *Dārzābele* (< 6) 'garden + apple tree', *Zvaigžņkalns* (11) 'stars + hill'.

Several surnames based on names of professions/occupations have also disappeared, for example, the following surnames derived from Latvian appellatives: *Kannesis* (10) 'jug carrier', *Krāmnieks* (9) 'retailer', *Riebējs* (6) 'quack, magician, healer', *Mežkopis* (<6) 'forester', *Ganis* (< 6) 'shepherd, cattleman', *Kapsētnieks* (< 6) 'cemetery caretaker', *Jumtnieks* (< 6) 'roofer'; as well as names derived from borrowed lexemes: *Bečkers* (5) – Slavism 'cooper' (cf. another surname with the same primary meaning – *Mucinieks, Mucenieks*, which is very popular nowadays in Latvia), *Kisners* (16) – Germanism < *Küssner* 'pillow maker', *Vursteris* (8) – Germanism 'sausage maker, butcher'.

Only one example – a compound surname of ethnonymic origin – *Polleitis* < *polis* 'Pole' + *leitis* 'Lithuanian' – was recorded in 1935, which is not known in the contemporary anthroponymic system.

[3] A number together with x in parentheses after a surname shows the number of times that name was recorded in the 2017 data.

An especially large group of compound surnames with various different types of meanings, which were recorded at the beginning of the 20th century, could be considered extinct, for example: *Kalnabaļķīts* (22) < *kalns* 'hill' + *baļķis* DIM 'log, timber', *Zirņakalns* (8) < *zirnis* 'pea' + *kalns* 'hill', Briežrags (< 6) < *briedis* 'deer' + *rags* 'horn', *Zaķrags* (11) < *zaķis* 'hare' + *rags* 'horn', *Rubeņgailis* (7) < *rubenis* 'grouse' + *gailis* 'rooster', *Silakrankalis* (9) < *sils* 'pine forest' + *krankalis* DIAL 'raven', *Mežlācis* (< 6) < *mežs* 'wood' + *lācis* 'bear', *Rīgasputnis* (4) < city name *Rīga* + *putns* 'bird', *Dreilups* (6) /recorded already in 1835/ < *dreilis* DIAL 'boat puller' + *upe* 'river', *Augstporis* (7) < *augsts* 'high' + *pors* DIAL 'swamp, bog', *Platcepure* (< 6) < *plats* 'wide, flat' + *cepure* 'cap', *Jauncukurs* (< 6) < *jauns* 'new' + *cukurs* 'sugar', *Jaunnāburgs* (< 6) < *jauns* 'new, young' + *nāburgs* (DIAL, colloquial word) 'neighbour'. Perhaps some compound surnames (often consisting of 12–14 letters) seemed too long and inconvenient for everyday use and communication, for example: *Jaunzemkalējs* (< 6) < *jauns* 'new' + *zeme* 'land' + *kalējs* 'blacksmith', *Kārklusaknīte* (< 6) < *kārkls* 'willow' + *sakne* DIM 'root', *Laukbraucējs* < *lauks* 'field' + *braucējs* 'driver', *Laukabērziņš* < *lauks* 'field' + *bērzs* DIM 'birch', *Kalnavēderis* (8) < *kalns* 'hill' + *vēders* 'belly', *Spēlesķeiris* (6) < *spēle* 'game' + *ķeiris* DIAL 'left-handed', *Gruntakmenis* (< 6) < *grunts* 'ground, earth' + *akmens* 'stone'. The Latvian contemporary anthroponymic system (and also its toponymic system) is famous for a large number of different compound names. However, it seems that there used to be even more such surnames, which disappeared in the 20th century.

Frequently, one of the components of these extinct compound surnames is a Latvian given name: *Sarkanjānis* (6) < *sarkans* 'red' + *Jānis*, *Bišjānis* (13) /mentioned already in 1850/ < *bite* 'bee' + *Jānis*, *Salmjānis* (< 6) < *salms* 'straw' + *Jānis, Purpēteris* (7) < *purvs* 'bog, swamp' + *Pēteris*, *Kalnakaspars* (< 6) < *kalns* 'hill' + *Kaspars*, *Baltklāvs* (< 6) < *balts* 'white' + *Klāvs*; sometimes a given name is used as the first component: *Annkroģers* (< 6) < *Anna* + *kroģeris* 'innkeeper', *Jēčkalējs* (< 6) < *Jēcis* + *kalējs* 'blacksmith', *Jēkabsprogs* (< 6) < *Jēkabs* + *sproga* 'hair curl'. Even two given names can be connected in order to form a compound surname, for example: *Ansklāviņš* (8) /mentioned in 1858/ < *Ansis* + *Klāvs* (DIM), *Frickarlis, Fričkarlis* (10) < *Fricis* + *Kārlis*, *Jaņmačs* (< 6) < *Janis* + *Mačs*, *Peterpauls* < *Pēteris* + *Pauls*.

Surnames formed from Latvian dialectal lexemes are also not preserved, for example, the following names with positive or negative/sarcastic connotations: *Apīlis* (9) < *apīlis* DIAL 'autumn-born lamb', *Alksna* (5) < *alksna* DIAL 'alder forest', *Drupals, Drupala* (13) < *drupala* DIAL 'crumb', *Vanckulis* (10) /mentioned already in 1850/ < *vanckulis* DIAL 'babbler, chatterbox', *Muriks* (6) < *murika* DIAL 'cloudberry'.

Sometimes surnames could cause misunderstandings. For that reason, some of them have been eliminated, for example: *Čura* initially invokes association with the verb *čurāt* 'to pee', but there are many other etymological hypotheses: < *čura* 1. DIAL 'bird, common house martin /*Delichon*/', also 'swallow', *čura* 2. DIAL 'clumsy person', 'an often crying, tearful man', 'liquid food consisting mainly of vegetables', *čūra* 'spring spot' (see Tēzaurs.lv), *Pautiņš* (6) < *pauts* DIAL 'egg', but in colloquial speech it is understood as 'testicle'; *Kakusis, Kakuzis* (8) /mentioned already in 1850/ < toponym *Kakūži*, its meaning has no connection with excrement (cf. Latv. verb *kakāt* 'to poop'); *Miskaktiņš* < *Misa* + *kakts* DIM 'corner', not from the verb Latv. *mīzt* DIAL 'to piss'. All these associations and negative connotations could lead to undesirable names that over time people wanted to change.

Comparison of the surnames from 1935 with those used in contemporary Latvia shows that the form of some former surnames has changed – mostly shortening of vowels – as a result changing the primary meaning of these names or at least overshadowing any negative connotations or unwanted allusions. For instance: *Pavārds* (9) – nowadays appears only as *Pavards* (3x) (cf. two different lexemes with different meanings: Latv. *pavārds* 'surname; nickname' and Latv. *pavards* 'fireplace'), *Mēslītis* – nowadays is known only as the very rare surname *Meslits* (1x) (cf. Latv. *mēsls* 'manure'), *Čūska* – nowadays is recorded as *Čuska* (1x) (cf. Latv. appellative *čūska* 'snake' which is an uncomplimentary name for a man and can also be understood as a swearword).

Analysing the list of Latvian surnames from 1935 *a priori* it seemed that certain strange and unusual anthroponyms could not have survived up to the present: *Negribs* (17) < Latv. *negribēt* 'not to want', *Nudiens* (17) < Latv. repeatable exclamation word *Nudien!* 'indeed', *Muļķis* (< 6) < Latv. *muļķis* 'a fool', *Mua* – a surname of obscure etymology (recorded in 1935 for 4 persons in southern Latvia – in Dviete), *Nabadziņš* (25) < Latv. DIM *nabags* 'pauper', *Nāviņš* (11) < Latv. DIM *nāve* 'death', *Reksis* (8) < Latv. extremely popular dog name *Reksis* < Latin *rex* 'king', *Svilumbērzs* (< 6) < Latv. *svilt* 'to singe, to burn' + *bērzs* 'birch', *Vilktrīceklis* (7) < Latv. *vilks* 'wolf' + *trīcēt* 'tremble'. And yet it came as a big surprise realising that these surnames are actually still in use: cf. the rather popular contemporary surnames *Negribs* (14x), *Nudiens* (20x), or very rare last names *Muļķis* (3x), *Mua* (2x), *Nabadziņš* (3x), *Nāviņš* (1x), *Reksis* (1x), *Svilumbērzs* (1x), *Vilktrīceklis* (2x) (numbers according to the 2017 Population Registry). These linguistic facts show that strange and unusual surnames do not always bother their bearers.

3.2 Extinct Latvian surnames of foreign origin

Among the surnames not found in the modern Latvian surname register are also many last names of foreign origin, most of which are Germanisms, for example: *Altfūsis, Altfuss* (9) < Germ. *alt + Fuss, Aurats* (6) < Germ. *Haurath, Ausbergs* (8) < Germ. *Haus + Berg, Albrehtsons* (11) < Germ. *Albreht + Son, Binģers* (10) < Germ. *Binger, Blicis* (11) < Germ. *Blitz, Freidorfs* (9) < Germ. *frei + Dorf, Frištiks* (15) < Germ. *früh + stück, Getlers* (13) /recorded already in 1858/ < Germ. *Göttler, Hinše* (11) < Germ. *Hinsch, Knors* (12) /mentioned already in 1605/ < Germ. *Knorr*. Also, very long surnames of German origin have disappeared from the territory of Latvia, for example: *Brandenbrūders* (8), *Klingengrūbers* (< 6), *Landenfelds* (8), *Mollenbergs* (6), *Strunkšteins* (8), *Šlosmanis* (9), *Valbedaksts* (6), etc. We do not precisely know the reason for the disappearance of these last names, but it is credible that such surnames were too long for daily use; they were shortened or even changed. In general, Latvians liked to have German surnames because they were associated with a higher social status, with nobility. Although perhaps in 1935, already another tendency was more relevant – the tendency of Latvianising names and surnames.

Not only surnames of German origin, but also last names of Slavic origin (mostly Russian, Belarusian, Polish) are listed among extinct surnames in Latvia, for example: *Daņa* (6) < Russian *Даня* < *Данила, Gruzovskis* (10) < Polish *Gruzowski* ?, *Makinskis* (11) < Polish *Makinski* ?, *Minovskis* (7) < Belarusian, Polish *Miniewski* or Lithuanian *Minauskas* ?, *Pluškevics* (6) < Polish?. Quite a few surnames could be of Lithuanian origin, even those not recorded near the border with Lithuania, for instance: *Abolevičs* (18) < rare Lith. surname *Abolevičius* < *Obuolevičius* < *obuolys* ‘apple’, *Balbariškis* (10) < Lith. DIAL *balbieris* ‘barber’, *Peilis* (15) < Lith. *peilis* ‘knife’, *Susnis* (7) < Lith. *susna* ‘skinny’, ‘scabies, itching’ ?, *Žmogus* (< 6) < Lith. *žmogus* ‘man, human’ ?, though peculiarly these surnames are unknown in the territory of Lithuania.

Some of the extinct last names may be hybrid surnames with one of the components of Latvian origin, for example: *Grīnvalks* (10) < Germ. + Latv., *Pēterbergs* (6) < Latv. *Pēteris* + Germ., *Liepenbergs* (< 6) < Latv. + Germ., or one of the components possibly from Livonian: *Jeigsons* (5) < cf. surname *Jeige* < Livonian *jei* ‘ice’ + Germ. *Sohn*.

3.3 Reasons for the disappearance of some surnames

There are several possible reasons for the disappearance of certain surnames: 1) bearers of the relevant surname – including all family members – have died, and these surnames can be found only on gravestones in cemeteries; 2) there were only daughters in the family and after

marriage, according to tradition, each took the last name of her husband; 3) the bearers of the surname were deported or emigrated from Latvia; 4) the surname has been changed due to an undesirable connotation (see the surnames *Murmulis, Kraķītis, Dzērājs* in 3.1.); 5) the form of the last name has changed over time, for example, *Pavārds* (in 1935) and *Pavards* (in 2017), *Mēslīts* (in 1935) and *Meslits* (in 2017), *Ūbulis* (in 1935) and *Ūbelis* (in 2017). It should be noted that all surnames that disappeared during this period without exception were rare last names already in 1935.

4 Comparison

It is not so easy compare surname changes at the beginning of the 20th century in Latvia and the other Baltic countries, because anthroponymic materials have not all been collected and analysed in all three countries in the same ways. Lithuanian onomasticians have done great work in historical anthroponymy, but there is no research focusing on the changes of given names or family names in the 20th century. Lithuanian linguist Antanas Salys (1983, pp. 203–490) has compiled a list of re-Lithuanised last names of Lithuanians changed under Slavic language influence in the area of Vilnius. However, it is difficult in this case to compare these Lithuanian surname lists with Latvian material.

Historically, there are far more features in common between surname changes in Latvia and Estonia. Estonianization of foreign (mostly German) sounding names took place between 1920–1944, with 99% of the name changes taking place during 1935–1940 (Puss 2021). Must (2000) and Henno (2001) have written about the history of surname changes in Estonia. Additionally, Põld (2002) gives an overview in her Bachelor's thesis of the Estonianisation of surnames between 1919 and 1935. Põld (2002, p. 8) notes that in 1920–1934 in Estonia, 1,124 surnames – of a total of 2,672 persons – were changed. In 1935, Estonians were especially active in Estonianising their surnames (Ibid, p. 12). The main aim of this study is to examine the structure of Estonianised surnames as well as to find a relationship between former surnames of foreign origin and later Estonianised last names. Põld (2002, pp. 2, 3) concludes that there are some similarities between former and new surnames, which make up 61.2 % of the 980 analysed names. In addition, symmetry of first phoneme(s) between former and new surnames (257 cases) was found to be the main similarity, followed by the combined method, translation with adoption, accepting one version of the former name as the new name, direct translation, etc. Least common was taking only one part of a former compound name as the new surname (only 6 cases).

The most recent study about Estonianization of surnames was published by Puss (2021). According to Puss, the Estonianization of names has its roots in Finland. The Estonian campaign is unique in terms of its relatively short time period and the share of name changers within the population: every sixth inhabitant changed their name. The resulting number of approximately 195,000 surname changers is smaller than has been estimated. The number of unique names is high. New names were often taken from a 1935 book of suggested surnames titled Eesti nimi ("Estonian name") (Puss 202, p. 818).

In general, these conclusions by Estonian researchers are quite similar to the patterns observed for Latvian surname changes in the 1920s and 1930s. There are clear similarities in the way new surnames were chosen: the first letter coincides with the old name in 56.8% of the cases (Puss 2021) (cf. Est. *Anberg → Aas, Adamson → Aasoja, Elbreht → Ehala, Ermann → Endlamaa*, and Latv. *Dakša → Dalbe*, *Pluke → Pavasaris*, *Skavarovskis → Saulītis*, *Vērsis → Vītoliņš*), similar sounding surnames (cf. Est. *Oinas → Einas*, *Härg → Erk*, Latv. *Dieviņš → Drīviņš, Dieviņš → Ziediņš, Pisenieks → Bisenieks*), or sometimes also surnames which are close semantically (*Rudzutaka → Rudzītis*). Only a small number of translations with adaptation or calques are observed in Latvia during the period studied (Latv. *Lepps* < Est. *lepp* 'alder' → *Alksnis* < Latv. *alksnis* 'alder', *Rozenbergs → Rožkalns* < Latv. *roze* 'rose' + *kalns* 'hill, mountain', cf. more frequent analogical calques in Estonia: Est. *Grünfeld → Haljaspõld, Jaagoberg → Jaagumäe*), though perhaps this type of change was more popular later in Latvia. It seems natural that people in both countries tried to get rid of surnames with negative connotations (*Mēslis* < *mēsls* 'manure' → *Strautiņš* < DIM *strauts* 'brook').

Avoiding double surnames or surname variants and adopting one version of several previous forms is typical in Estonia as well as Latvia (Est. *Dahl-Taal → Taal*, *Eer-Äär → Äär*, Latv. *Driķis-Celmiņš → Celmiņš, Resne-Resnais-Roešnis → Resnis*). Not only the general mind-set of people, but also similar political situations, similar laws, official recommendations have led to similar processes for changing surnames and relatively similar results in observed changes of the entire anthroponymic system.

5 Conclusion

This study of surname changes in Latvia has shown that in 1921–1929, last names originating from nicknames – mostly with meanings relating to fauna as well as those describing appearance or character – were changed more often than surnames with other types of

meanings. Surnames from certain categories may have unwanted negative connotations (*Nabags* 'pauper', *Ubags* 'beggar', *Skranda* 'rag'). This study also identified that more neutral surnames were chosen as new family names: surnames with meanings relating to flora (especially names derived from tree names) – *Bērziņš* < *bērzs* 'birch', *Liepiņš* < *liepa* 'linden-tree', *Krūmiņš* < *krūms* 'bush', *Zariņš* < *zars* 'branch', *Ziediņš* < *zieds* 'flower', or physio-geographical meanings – *Krastiņš* < *krasts* 'shore, coast', *Straume* 'stream', *Strautiņš* < *strauts* 'brooklet', *Puriņš* < *purvs* 'swamp, marsh'. Moreover, a wave of national romanticism revived the first name *Viesturs* (a 13th cent. Semigallian duke) as a popular new surname as well as *Auseklis* < *auseklis* 'morning star', *Austrums* < *austra* 'dawn, morning glow' and *austrums* 'land in the east'.

The analysis of new chosen surnames shows that people avoided double surnames or surname variants – approx. 2,286 old changed family names were double surnames or surnames with variants. Overall, the analysis gives the impression that the intention was to shorten the full-form long former surnames. This conclusion is also confirmed by the numerous examples of extinct surnames found in the 1935 census.

During the 1920s, 374 persons changed their foreign surnames to Latvian names (*Eichmanis → Ozols*), or by making calques (*Grinbergs → Zaļkalns*), but it was also quite common for people to choose a new foreign name. That means that in the beginning of the 20th cent., foreign surnames remained associated with a higher social stratum (*Čigans → Teikmanis, Džuka → Grinfelds, Jermocenko → Baumanis, Rutkasts → Kreicbergs*).

Around 400 people chose a new surname with the same initial letter as their old name (see *Dzērājs → Dzintars*, *Resnais → Rudens*, *Skuķis → Skujiņš*).

These findings suggest that in general the following key tendencies can be observed: 1) new surnames were chosen having neutral or positive connotations, 2) preference was given to Latvian-origin surnames, 3) new surnames were chosen having the same initial letter.

The second part of the article analysed Latvian surnames that were recorded in 1935 but are no longer found in Latvia today. This part of the study confirmed very similar tendencies for changing family names. Among extinct Latvian surnames are many anthroponyms with pejorative meanings (see *Murmulis* 'someone who speaks unclearly', *Dzērājs* 'a drunk') – an undesirable connotation is one of the main reasons for changing family names also after the 1920s. Later archival material shows an especially large group of long compound surnames which were inconvenient for everyday use and communication (*Jaunzemkalējs, Kārklusaknīte, Brandenbrūders*, *Klingengrūbers*), and which may have been shortened and changed for of this reason. The same examples of long surnames that were

changed were recorded at the beginning of the 20th cent. (*Cūkasdziesma* → *Ozols*, *Tiltiņbrencis* → *Tiltiņš*).

The comparison of Latvian surname changes in the 1920s and 1930s with Estonian surname changes from the same period shows many similarities in the way new surnames were chosen: old and new surnames show similarities in their first letters or have a similar sound, calques are made of compound surnames, attempts to get rid of surnames with bad connotations, attempts to avoid double surnames or surname variants. Such similarities can be explained by similar political situations, analogous laws, official recommendations which have led to a similar process for changing surnames as well as relatively similar results.

Abbreviations

DIAL	dialectal
DIM	diminutive
Est.	Estonian
Germ.	German
Latv.	Latvian
Lith.	Lithuanian
LUAM I	Mežs, Ilmārs: *Latviešu uzvārdi arhīvu materiālos: Latgale* [Latvian Surnames in Archive Materials: Latgale]
LUAM II	Mežs, Ilmārs/ Stafecka, Anna/ Siliņa-Piņķe, Renāte/ Kovaļevska, Otīlija: *Latviešu uzvārdi arhīvu materiālos: Kurzeme, Zemgale, Sēlija* [Latvian Surnames in Archive Materials: Courland, Semigallia, Selonia]
LVRK	*Likumu un valdības rīkojumu krājums* [The Collection of Laws and Government Orders]
LVVA	*Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs* [The Latvian State Historical Archives]
MK	*Ministru kabinets* [The Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia]
Saeima.lv	*Latvijas Republikas Saeima*. [Parliament of the Republic of Latvia, History of the legislature]
Tēzaurs.lv	*Mūsdienu latviešu valodas vārdnīca* [Dictionary of Contemporary Latvian]
VV	*Valdības Vēstnesis* [Government Gazette]
< (with numbers)	less
< (with lexemes)	from
> (with lexemes)	to

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