

SUMMARY

The town of Valga in the first quarter of the 19th century

The article describes the life of Valga, the town that had the smallest population of any in the Livonian Province, at the beginning of the 19th century. It is based mostly on Riga ethnographer Otto Huhn's (1764-1832) manuscript topography held in the Latvian National Historical Archives. Out of the 451 permanent residents of Valga - located at the Estonian-Latvian language border - 359 were German, 45 Latvian, 34 Russian and only 13 Estonian. The gender structure, 281 men and 170 women, demonstrates the significant prevalence of men among the residents. The majority of the population were craftsmen. There were also two guilds in the town: tailors and shoemakers, each with eight masters. There were also eight millers in the town. The number of merchants fluctuated between 12 and 17. The first quarter of the 19th century was a period of stagnation for the town: there were no building activities, trade and crafts languished and the residents had to bear a heavy debt burden caused mostly by the building of St. John's Church. The main source of income for the town was the rent for the Oosol Manor owned by the town. Valga was one of Livonian towns where tax rates for the residents were low. The article dwells on the obligation to accommodate the military, which was an extremely unpleasant burden for Valga considering that the town was located at the important St. Petersburg-Riga military route. Due to its location, the town housed a very remarkable institution in Livonia's agrarian history for nearly half a century: the Livonian Land Surveying and Auditing Committee (also known as the Valga Committee) operated here in 1809-1823 and the Livonian Governmental Manors Land Surveying and Auditing Committee in 1823-1854.