

von Dalins „Svea rikens historia“.¹²⁸ Die „Historia Moscovitica“ wäre die erste moderne Geschichte Russlands gewesen, rund hundert Jahre vor den bedeutenden Werken von Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer, Gerhard Friedrich Müller, Vasilij N. Tatiščev und Michail V. Lomonosov. Eine Veröffentlichung in russischer Sprache, wie sie Menius' vorschwebte, hätte den Stellenwert seiner Arbeit noch erhöht.

Die „Dialoge für die Schuljugend“ schließlich hätten Friedrich Menius in Estland und Lettland zu einem bekannten Mann gemacht – ein „undeutsches“ Schulgeschichtsbuch in den 1630er Jahren wäre für die Entwicklung der estnischen und der lettischen Schriftsprache von einer nicht zu unterschätzenden Bedeutung gewesen.¹²⁹ Als Sprachpionier stünde Menius dann wohl auf einer Stufe mit Georg Mancelius in Lettland oder Bengt Gottfried Forselius in Estland – und in Tartu gäbe es zumindest eine Gedenktafel für ihn.

Friedrich Menius hatte Ambitionen, hatte Visionen und vermutlich auch das Potential zu einer großen Gelehrtenlaufbahn. Dass aus ihm statt eines „historiae borealis parens“, eines Vaters der nordischen Geschichte, nur ein „vagus agnus“, ein umtriebigen Schaf, geworden ist, ist eine der kleinen Tragödien der baltischen Geistesgeschichte.

SUMMARY

Writings and Projects of Dorpat Professor Friedrich Menius (in the 1630s)

Friedrich Menius, the first Professor of History and Antiquities at the *Academia Gustaviana* in Dorpat, is certainly one of the most unusual and interesting characters among the scholars of 17th century Livonia. Menius lived the life of an itinerant academic adventurer that led him all over the Baltic Sea region. He earned his first merits as a pioneer of Shakespeare translation in northern Germany, spent years collecting historical manuscripts in Poland, became a pastor and professor in Livonia and ended up in Sweden – first as a mining entrepreneur and later as a pansophist philosopher. But his manifold talents were overshadowed by his quarrelsome

¹²⁸ Vgl. STEN LINDROTH: *Svensk lärdomshistoria. Frihetstiden* [Geschichte der schwedischen Gelehrsamkeit. Die Freiheitszeit], Stockholm 1978, S. 662-672.

¹²⁹ Ob Menius imstande gewesen wäre, den Text für die lettische und estnische Fassung seiner Dialoge selbst zu übersetzen, sei dahingestellt. Im „*Syntagma de origine Livonorum*“ versuchte er den Eindruck zu vermitteln, zumindest Grundzüge beider Sprachen zu beherrschen, doch wie weit seine Kenntnisse tatsächlich gingen, lässt sich nicht nachweisen.

personality and his amazing ability to make influential enemies wherever he went. After a bigamy trial and a conviction for heresy, Menius' promising career ended rather ignominiously.

During the early 1630s, as a teacher and professor at Dorpat, Menius enjoyed the calmest and most productive time in his troubled life. He published six small treatises, mainly preliminary studies in preparation for his major enterprise – a grand chronicle of Livonia from ancient times to the present. In addition, Menius announced that he had written no less than forty-six manuscripts that were, supposedly, just awaiting publication. Contemporaries have voiced serious doubts on the veracity of this claim, and, ominously enough, none of these manuscripts have ever resurfaced.

Even if these writings were little more than vaguely planned projects that never came to fruition, they offer interesting insights on the scope and the versatility of Menius' scholarly ambitions. Most of his projected treatises dealt with Scandinavian and Livonian history, but Menius apparently tried to live up to the ideal of an early modern polymath, covering a great variety of topics including theology, jurisprudence, geography, economics as well as contemporary politics and local trivia (such as the preferred hairstyle of the Polish nobility). The most intriguing aspect of Menius' projects is his emphasis on the vernacular languages of northeastern Europe. He intended, for example, to publish chronicles of Scandinavia and Muscovy in Swedish, respectively in Russian and even planned a history textbook for schoolboys in Latvian and Estonian. If the latter project had been realized, it would have certainly left a lasting impact on the development of Estonian and Latvian as written languages.