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A romantic nation: Eduards Volters' concepts of ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania*

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to show the academic links inherent in the idea of ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania conceived by the Latvian ethnographer Eduards Volters (1856–1941). In as early as the end of the nineteenth century, the Latvian linguist and ethnographer was working at the Imperial Russian Geographical Society and was developing ethnographical-statistical studies to determine the “tribal” composition of the population. In an original way the theory integrated the concepts of the history of ideas and ethnographical statistics. In 1930 Volters engaged in the activities of the Lithuanian Scientific Society and introduced the concept of “the soul of a nation” in his ethnographical-statistical studies. The author of this article tests the hypothesis that the beginnings of “the soul of a nation” concept in relation to the Lithuanians are connected with the historical anthropological perspective. The author theoretically analyses the rhetoric of Volters' idea of ethnographical statistics from the following points of view: (1) ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania, (2) a romantic nation, and (3) the idea of science and education.

Keywords: Eduards Volters, ethnographic-statistical studies of Lithuania, Johann Gottfried Herder, romantic nation, soul of a nation

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It is Herder who merges the impulses of Enlightenment thought into an anthropologically informed and critically motivated philosophy of understanding and interpretation.¹

Introduction

Eduards Volters, a Latvian linguist, well-known ethnographer, archaeologist, and a public figure, wrote in 1930 that since the end of the nineteenth century, he had been trying to convince the politicians of the Russian Empire “that the national spirit of the Lithuanians will not be broken because a nation’s soul dies only with the extinction of the nation as such.”² His work laid research foundations for modern independent Lithuania. Volters, who studied linguistics at the University of Leipzig, worked at the Academy of Sciences of St Petersburg, also helped with the issue of Lithuania’s revival³ and was relocated in 1918 from St Petersburg to Lithuania that had just re-established its independence. Through developing modern research in Lithuania, he re-interpreted theoretical approaches and aims of the understanding of “the soul of a nation,”⁴ which resembles the concept of “a romantic nation”. According to German ethnologist Wolfgang Kaschuba, the romantic notion of a nation is considered the third and the youngest branch of European eth-

¹ K. Gjesdal, *Herder’s Hermeneutics: History, Poetry, Enlightenment*, Cambridge 2017.

² E. Volteris, *Lietuvos etnografinių-statistinių studijų klausimas-straipsnis* (The Article), 1930, manuscript F17-294, p. 2.

³ Eduards Volters was born into a pharmacist’s family in Agenskalns, close to Riga. In 1875, he graduated from a gymnasium in Riga and began linguistic studies at the University of Leipzig. According to Leonardas Sauka, in 1877 he left for Tartu (Dorpat) University where he passed examinations in Russian literature. In 1880, he studied at the universities of Moscow and Kharkov. In 1883, Volters defended his thesis in linguistics and was conferred master’s degree. From 1885 to 1918, he was a privatdozent at the department of Slavonic studies of St Petersburg University, where he taught courses on linguistics, ethnography, old literature, and Lithuanian mythology and folklore. From 1922 to 1934, he headed the Department of Archaeology at the University of Lithuania in Kaunas and was the head of the library until 1925. Volters became a university professor, taught Russian and Lithuanian archaeology and bibliography, the Latvian language, and literature, organised archaeological, ethnographic, folklore, and linguistic expeditions. He was a member of the Statistics Committee of Kaunas, the director of the Kaunas City Museum (for more on this, see: L. Sauka, *Lietuvių tautosakos mokslas XX amžiuje: tyrėjai ir jų darbai*, Vilnius 2016, p. 64; A. Gieda, *Volterijų šeima: emigracijos į Lietuvą keliai ir kontekstai*, “Lithuanistica” 65, 2019, no. 4 (118); V. Savoniakaitė, *Ethnography and Nation-building in Lithuania (1882–1918): The Life and Work of Eduards Volters*, *BEROSE International Encyclopaedia of the Histories of Anthropology [Bérose — Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l’anthropologie, Paris]* 2021, <https://www.berose.fr/?-Nouveautes&lang=fr>).

⁴ V. Savoniakaitė, *Eduardo Volterio etnografinių-statistinių studijų idėja*, “Logos” 97, 2018, pp. 143–152, <https://doi.org/10.24101/logos.2018.77>.

nology, which was substantially influenced by the philosophy of German thinker and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803).⁵

In 1760 Herder suggested that philosophical issues and problems could be addressed from the anthropological and historical point of view. According to Norwegian philosopher Kristin Gjesdal, his philosophy drew on and entered a conversation with such disciplines as history, political science, anthropology, medicine, and biology. Herder views philosophy as a call to enlightenment. Enlightenment, in turn, is a matter of education to independent thought. Education should not be a privilege of few, but a right of many. Philosophy should thus proceed on the assumption that “each human being is free and independent from others” and “the state should be improved from below.” Self-determination is not a given. Nor, for that matter, it is simply an abstract goal. To Herder it is a process: it implies a call for thinking to prove itself as independent and for understanding to realise itself as critical and reflective. Self-determination and education are closely related.⁶ Traces of Herderian thought can be found in the works of such outstanding science personalities as geographer Alexander von Humboldt, philosophers Georg W.F. Hegel, Wilhelm Dilthey, Karl Marx, and others, but a school of Herderian philosophy was never a genuine option.⁷ Herder’s follower in anthropology was German anthropologist Franz Boas who established modern anthropology in the late nineteenth — early twentieth century USA. This third perspective in ethnology, based on the romantic nation notion, exerted a strong influence in Northern and Eastern Europe;⁸ however, it has never been studied whether it spread to or was ever interpreted in Lithuania.

In modern Lithuania Volters voiced a romantic invitation to examine the nation and develop research and education: “without delay, let us move forward to the depths of the nation’s soul with a beacon of culture and science.”⁹ The concepts of “the soul of a nation” were very vividly described by Volters’ disciple, ethnographer and physicist Ignas Končius, in the 1911–1941 statistical study on the crosses and shrines of Samogitia,¹⁰ which he started with Volters. Historiography¹¹ and new documents discovered in the archives of Lithuania and Germany¹² point to Volters’ broad, interdisciplinary academic interests and contacts.

⁵ W. Kaschuba, *Einführung in die Europäische Ethnologie*, München 2012, pp. 32–33.

⁶ K. Gjesdal, op. cit., p. 3.

⁷ Ibidem, pp. 4–5.

⁸ H.F. Vermeulen, *Before Boas: The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment*, Lincoln-London 2015, pp. 321–322.

⁹ E. Volteris, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁰ I. Končius, *Žemaičių padangės kryžių ir koplytėlių statistika*, “Soter” 1934, p. 143–168.

¹¹ S. Bušmienė, *Eduardas Volteris: bibliografija*, Vilnius 1973; L. Sauka, op. cit.

¹² E. Volteris, op. cit.; *Laiškai Volteriui* (The Letters), manuscript F17-207; *Laiškas Volteriui iš Marienburgo 14 birželio* (The Letter), 1930, manuscript F17-208; *Forschungsgeschichte der Prähistorischen Aechaologie u.a. Polen, Litaues, Lettland, Estland, Finnland 1932–1940*, manuscript Hann. 152 Acc. 53/84 No. 86.

Thus a hypothesis is proposed that, possibly, the beginnings of understanding the romantic “soul of a nation” ideas by the Latvian scholar lie, to some extent, in anthropology and the third perspective of European ethnology that encompasses the concept of a romantic nation.

The aim of this paper is analysing the romantic nation concepts in Volters’ idea of ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuanian that he proposed in 1930. Historiography emphasises Volters’ hermeneutic linguistic interest: even in the article *Lietuvių etnografinės darbų apžvalga* (‘A review of Lithuanian ethnographical studies’, 1879–1890), he paid considerable attention to the Lithuanian language.¹³ Vacys Milius referred to “ethno-demographical” material in Volters’ studies.¹⁴ Although scholars agree that Volters made his contribution to Lithuanian research, Baltic and Lithuanian studies, and national revival by taking part in the work of the Lithuanian Scientific Society,¹⁵ supporting Lithuanian students in St Petersburg,¹⁶ and his engagement in the activities of the University of Lithuania,¹⁷ the discourses of a romantic nation, “the soul of a nation,” and this text by Volters have not been researched in greater depth.

Gjesdal’s argument that Herder’s anti-Eurocentric attitude to understanding “the soul of a nation” and to cultural, intellectual, and political practices¹⁸ has been insufficiently researched, adds a new intrigue. Let us take a look at the historical roots of the concept of a nation. In as early as 1883, at Karaliaučius (Königsberg), the works of Adalbert Bezzenberger, Baltic ethnographer and former university rector, inspired Volters to organise linguistic and ethnographical expeditions in Lithuania Minor, and later in Lithuania proper. Between 1883 and 1887 he started exploring settlements in Lithuania¹⁹ and, by interpreting the concepts of the nation, aspired throughout his whole life to reveal the Lithuanian and Latvian national

¹³ V. Milius, *Mokslo draugijos ir lietuvių etnografija (XIX a. antroji pusė–XX a. pirmoji pusė)*, Vilnius 1993, p. 22.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

¹⁵ A. Valaitis, *Iš Lietuvių Mokslo draugijos istorijos*, “Lietuvių tauta: Lietuvių mokslo draugijos raštai” 4, 1932, no. 3, pp. 337–407; *Eduardas Volteris: bibliografija...*; J. Jurginis, *Lietuvių mokslo draugija*, [in:] *Iš lietuvių kultūros istorijos: mokslo kultūros ir švietimo draugijos*, ed. V. Merkys, Vilnius 1975, pp. 37–118.

¹⁶ A. Gieda, *Manifestuojanti Klėja: istorikai ir istorika Lietuvoje 1883–1940*, Vilnius 2017, p. 133.

¹⁷ V. Milius, *op. cit.*; N. Vėlius, *Eduardas Volteris (1856–1941)*, [in:] *Lietuvių mitologija*, vol. 1, ed. N. Vėlius, Vilnius 1995, pp. 336–338; A. Butkus, K. Vaisvalavičienė, *Baltų humanitarai — 150, “Tautosakos darbai”* 31, 2006, pp. 246–250; *Lietuvių etnografinės muzikos fonogramos: 1908–1942 / The phonograms of Lithuanian Ethnographic Music: 1908–1942*, eds. A. Nakienė, R. Žarskienė, Vilnius 2007; L. Sauka, *Lietuvių tautosakos mokslas XX amžiuje: tyrėjai ir jų darbai*, Vilnius 2016, p. 65.

¹⁸ K. Gjesdal, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁹ A. Nezabitauskis, *Prof. Eduardas Volteris (70 metų sukaktuvių proga)*, “Tauta ir žodis” 5, 1928, pp. 344–360; L. Sauka, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

identities.²⁰ Volters studied and worked at the universities of Königsberg and Riga, and was enveloped in the same academic environment where Herder's ideas on linguistic anthropology, philosophy, and education had evolved more than a century earlier. According to Gjesdal, in 1760 the issues of human self-realisation lay at the centre of Herder's anthropological research:

At the center of his work stands the notion of human nature as realized through art, language, history, and cultural practice. His philosophical project — his anthropological turn, as he calls it — is an attempt to establish an alternative to the dominant philosophical methods of the day. He is particularly dissatisfied with so-called school philosophy and its attempts at moving philosophy out of the broader, public space that he views as a condition for an open society. [...]. This philosophy, in Herder's words, cannot be reconciled with 'humanity [*Menschheit*] and politics' (PW 6; WI 108).²¹

Thus let us accept Gjesdal's idea that Herder's hermeneutic ethos lies at the heart of his call for an anthropological turn — his interest in the human being as historical, culture-producing, and understanding.²² Herder became interested in folk poetry during his studies in Königsberg, between 1762 and 1764. When Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), Herder's close friend, taught Shakespeare's dramas to students at the Albertina University of Königsberg, he also acquainted them with Celtic songs and ballads in Old English. At that time, interest in folk creation was influenced by the proto-Romantic *Sturm und Drang* movement, saturated with ideas about the individual's subjective possibilities to freely express one's thoughts in the literature and music of the Enlightenment and the like. Collections of Lithuanian, Latvian, or Estonian folk songs show that Herder gathered them first during his trips to Königsberg and Riga.²³ Lithuanian folk songs written in German and published in his book *Stimmen der Völker* ('Voices of the People') represent the following themes: *A sick bride*, *A girl's farewell song*, *A girl in her flower garden*, and others. The excerpt from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's letter of 1759 at the beginning of the book contains reflections on people's equal opportunities to be poets, a reference to the Lithuanian language known from Pilypas Ruigys' dictionary (Ruhigs *Litauischem Wörterbuche*), and *dainos* — Lithuanian folk songs sung by girls.²⁴

²⁰ V. Savoniakaitė, *Eduardo Volterio kultūros konceptai 1926–1934*, "Logos" 104, 2020, pp. 130–139, <https://doi.org/10.24101/logos.2020.57>.

²¹ K. Gjesdal, op. cit., p. 2.

²² Ibidem, p. 10.

²³ Ch. Käschel, *Nachwort*, [in:] *Herder Johann Gottfried. 1978. Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, ed. Ch. Käschel, Leipzig 1978, pp. 343–356.

²⁴ J.G. Herder, *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, herausg. Ch. Käschel, Leipzig 1978, pp. 11, 20–22, 56, 58; Ph. Ruhig, *Betrachtung der Littauischen Sprache*, Königsberg 1745, <https://kulturportal-west-ost.eu/biographien/ruhig-philipp-2>; A. Šešplaukis, *J. G. Herderis ir baltų tautos*, Vilnius 1995, pp. 47–52.

Herder's interest in folk creation intensified in Riga, where from 1764 to 1769 he worked at the Cathedral school. He was inspired by the ideas of the constitutional reform and raised, in a broad historical viewpoint, issues of the origin and history of the spirit of humankind, language, physical research, religion, mythology, pedagogy, the education. Having left Riga in 1769, Herder undertook a sea voyage to France.²⁵ In his *Journal meiner Reise im Jahre 1769*, which was published much later, in 1846, Herder formulated "the programme of global anthropology." In all *Ideen*, consisting of four volumes, he presented anthropology in the broad sense.²⁶

Analysing the theoretical aspirations of Volter's much later romantic nation idea, we will focus on the following issues from a comparative analytical historical point of view: ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania proposed by Volters in 1930; a romantic nation; studies of ethnographical statistics as an idea for research development and education.

The issue of ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania as presented by Volters in 1930

In 1930 Volters wrote in the manuscript of his *Lietuvos etnografinių-statistinių studijų klausimas-straipsnis* ('The issue-article on the ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania'):

Since it was just in last century that the research world came to understand the importance of ethnographical-statistical research and studies, collection of ethnographical statistics of nations, which today has provided abundance of new data and material for the understanding of spiritual and material culture of humankind, has begun only recently.²⁷

The Lithuanian nation, which a short while ago embarked on independent life and development of new values of spiritual and material culture, has not had either time or opportunity to embrace all spheres of culture studies. Until now, full attention has had to be paid to the management of economic, political, and social life.²⁸

Promoting ideas of the importance of "ethnographical statistics of the nation" in the Republic of Lithuania, Volters wrote that he sought to continue the work he had started in the late nineteenth century in the Imperial Geographical Society of the Russian Empire:

Alongside other no less important branches of cultural studies, we need studies into ethnographical statistics of the nation. Their importance is great, because only they will offer a deeper

²⁵ Ch. Käschel, op. cit., p. 344.

²⁶ H.F. Vermeulen, op. cit., pp. 322–324.

²⁷ E. Volteris, op. cit.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 1.

understanding of the evolution of the nation in the course of centuries, the stages in the development of its spiritual and material culture, and its values.

I have been emphasising the significance of ethnographical statistics to the Lithuanian nation since 1889, in my writings and papers given at the meetings of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society. Shortly after, I started collecting materials of ethnographical statistics of the Suvalkai governorate; having systematised it, I published it in the work *Spiski naseionnykh mest Suvalkskoi gubernii, kak material dlia istoriko-etnograficheskoi geografii kraia*.²⁹

The discourse of Volters' article shows that he was interested in cultural studies, among which — in his opinion — it was ethnographical statistics that would allow a deeper understanding of the formation of the nation, and a focus on the epistemology of spiritual and material culture. A broader discussion of Volters' evolutionary or holistic theoretical approach would be superficial because theoretical discussions in his article are scarce, while the theoretical view on “the formation of the nation in the course of centuries” that he mentions in passing reveals his interest in the nation's historical evolution. His proposition on “cultural growth and development” is related to the ideas of evolutionary cultural development, but is not consistently evolutionist. Rather, because of his historical holistic “studies on nations,” Volters remained loyal to the historical provisions through which he focused his attention on the Lithuanian national character, nation, education of the nation, national spirit, and “the soul of a nation.” He wrote:

With my abundant writings I might have provided sufficient proof to the Russian nation and its science world that the national character of the Lithuanians, its ethnography, language, and cultural values in general are alien to the Slavic spirit, and therefore education and upbringing of the Lithuanian nation are only possible in their national spirit. My studies have contributed considerably to the regaining of the Lithuanian press, because in my writings I provided Russian politicians with actual proof, to the effect that the national spirit of the Lithuanians would not be broken because the soul of a nation dies only with the extinction of the nation as such.³⁰

The proposition that the soul of a nation dies only with the extinction of a nation as such, focus on the construction of a nation, national character, ethnography, and national cultural values through education resemble Herder's discourses and terminology.³¹

By emphasising his considerable contribution in the form of scientific research, political and public activities to the “raising of national and cultural aspirations of the Lithuanians both inside the nation and outside it,” Volters aimed at a broader establishment and dissemination of ethnographical-statistical studies in Lithuania during the interwar period. His goal was to institutionalise theoretical approaches of these studies — in other words, the realisation of ethnographical statistical

²⁹ Ibidem, pp. 1–2; lists of settlements of Suvalkai governorate as material for historical-ethnographical geography of the region.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 2.

³¹ K. Gjesdal, op. cit., pp. 1–5; W. Kaschuba, op. cit., pp. 32–33.

studies had to be assigned to a network of public institutions: their staff was to be charged with collecting the material for ethnographical statistics.

In addition, the scholar invited the State Bureau for Statistics, where he worked,³² to compile a comprehensive list of populated locations in Lithuania, because the old data from 1923 had changed and no longer reflected the linguistic diversity and reality of the place names. According to Volters, it was of utmost importance to compile a list of unpopulated locations. By that he meant making inventory of and describing hill forts, sacred places (*alkai*), sacred stones, swamps, lakes, rivers, hills, forests etc., recording their names and collecting people's stories. Professor Ignas Končius and professor Steponas Kolupaila, Volters' disciples and followers, initiated the implementation of these ideas. The scholar aimed to expand statistical material with studies that had already been conducted by archaeologist Petras Tarasienka. Volters also sought to engage state structures in the collection of statistical ethnographical material.³³

There is no doubt that in this text Volters demonstrated his hermeneutic attitude to the nation, holistically turning his attention not only to the exploration of locations, which were popular at the time, but also to people in a broader sense: "In addition to those [locations], it will encompass the cultural status of the population, the cult, issues of the nationalities problem and many others."³⁴ His concern about archaeological finds reminds that of Franz Boas, who maintained that "the data of pre-historic archaeology reveal the progress of actions of humankind in times."³⁵ Also, this aspect of archaeological-anthropological research is interlaced with hermeneutics. The questionnaire deals with the names of hill forts, people's narratives about old burial grounds, and the like. It is the notion of holistic ethnography,³⁶ which includes holistic methods of research. Three paradigms — holistic, semi-otic, and environmental — point to the holistic aspect of the theoretical approach.

The programme of ethnographical statistics was high-reaching. Similarly to the Russian Empire and other places, ethnographical studies were supposed to incorporate contributions by scholars and public servants. After that, Volters aimed to compare the processed data of new research with the projects that he had implemented in the Russian Empire, and with the statistical material amassed 50–60 years ago by other researchers. Finally,

after systematisation and scientific organisation, it [the material] will have to be published without delay as a separate work, which will greatly assist the historian, the scholar in our culture and in the past. Also, on the basis of this material it will be possible to study and understand more

³² S. Bušmienė, op. cit.

³³ E. Volteris, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 4.

³⁵ F. Boas, *The Aims of Anthropological Research*, [in:] *Theory: Issues in Epistemology*, eds. L.H. Moore, T. Sanders, Oxford 2014 [1932], p. 25.

³⁶ <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/can-ethnography-defined-ultimately-holistic-then-741722>.

exhaustively the issue of the evolution of our national self-awareness and numerous other demographical, geopolitical, economic, cultural and historical issues.³⁷

It would seem that he found it important to record “the monuments of spiritual and material culture,”³⁸ which, in his view and that of many other scholars, the older generation is taking to the grave, while the younger generation is already living with new ideals of the reborn Lithuania.

Eduards Volters remained faithful to his theoretical approach regarding studies on the border areas, which he referred to as “outskirts.” According to him, studies on those regions of Lithuania were especially important because

under the influence of foreign cultures, the national awareness of the residents of these localities is gradually dying away. And we will only be able to nurture it when we systematically study and understand the values of our national culture. A doctor also starts treatment only when he establishes the diagnosis. And we will re-Lithuanise the denationalised element of our country only after we identify the reasons and circumstances that have led part of the nation to denationalisation.

Thus, without delay, let us move forward to the depths of the nation’s soul with a beacon of culture and science. Let us free the living Antiquity of the nation — the enchanted princess from a fairy-tale — from the hill forts. Let us revive the spirit of giants from the old burial grounds. Awareness of the values of the nation’s spiritual and material culture is a matter of our national and state honour.³⁹

Closing the programme of ethnographical-statistical studies on a poetic and patriotic note, Volters expands his research experience acquired in the Russian Empire with new suggestions, and applies it to scientific development and the policy of the Lithuanian nation state in the interwar period.

His idea of ethnographical-statistical studies poeticises the nation, research and education, which will be discussed below.

A romantic nation

Eduard Volters’ abovementioned statement from 1930, that with “abundant writings I might have provided sufficient proof to the Russian nation and its science world that the national character of the Lithuanians, its ethnography, language, and cultural values in general are alien to the Slavic spirit,” opens a new perspective on a romantic nation. Being a professor with extensive experience in statistical research, Volters first of all raised the novelty and importance of ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania, and identified the nation as their object. He also directed them towards “the awareness of spiritual and material culture of humankind.” Quite unexpectedly, the ethnographer used the concept of “the soul

³⁷ E. Volteris, op. cit., p. 4.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Ibidem.

of a nation” in his text: “only a Lithuanian scholar will fully perceive our nation’s soul with its deep aspirations.”⁴⁰ Awareness of “spiritual and material culture of humankind” and perception of “the soul of a nation” are concepts from seemingly different theoretical approaches that correlate with evolutionist, diffusionist, realistic, and romantic theoretical perspectives going back to Herder’s works.

To Herder, soul helped understand the human daily life and much broader ideas. In the book *Ideen zur Kulturphilosophie* (‘Ideas on the Philosophy of Culture’), he reflected on his journey from Riga on 25 May 1769:

You think and feel less than you expected; the activity into which our soul throws itself on its own further career overcomes the sensitivity to what one loses, and when a farewell takes too long a time, it becomes as tiring as a merchant in London.⁴¹

In the book *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (‘Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind’, 1784) Herder substantiated historical philosophical hermeneutic cultural notion of the nation. He distinguished between own and other nation. He sought to describe the character and the ways of life of nations, to compare cultures, and to classify civilizations. To Herder folk songs were a measure of the depth of the people’s soul. Strong and awakened “to re-animate the whole nation,” “the soul of a nation” comes from the village people.⁴²

According to Dutch anthropologist Han F. Vermeulen, in the nineteenth century, before the rise of nation states, the *Völkerkunde* terms “peoples” and “nations” were used interchangeably. Studies on peoples gained global importance before nationalism as a political movement in 1815; “people,” “nationality,” and “tribe”⁴³ featured in discussions on ethnicity.⁴⁴

In the Russian Empire nationalities were ethnic groups. Let us recall that in 1882 the Imperial Russian Geographical Society dispatched Volters to study “Lithuanian and Latvian nationalities.” In 1883 Volters started examining the customs and peculiarities of the daily life of *rubežninkai* (‘border people’), the Lithuanians living along the border of Lithuania Minor that used to be called Prussia.⁴⁵ One could say it was a study on the character, lifestyle, and culture of a people according to Herder, numerous ethnographical descriptions of journeys, and early anthropological programmes. In 1887 Volters thus described his journey to Lithuania and Samogitia: “the aim of my journey is a study into the antiques legal, ethnograph-

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 1.

⁴¹ J.G. Herder *Ideen zur Kulturphilosophie*, eds. O. Braun, N. Braun, Leipzig 1911, p. 25.

⁴² W. Kaschuba, op. cit., pp. 32–33.

⁴³ In the eighteenth century, both terms referred to a group of people sharing offspring, homeland, history, and culture. Nations used to be classified in various ways (F. Vermeulen, op. cit., p. 327).

⁴⁴ Ibidem, pp. 325–327.

⁴⁵ E. Volters, *Obi etnograficeskou poizdki po Litvi i Zmydi litomi 1887 goda*, Canktpeterburgi 1887, p. 9; V. Milius, op. cit., pp. 16–18.

ical, and linguistic peculiarities of the Samogitian-Lithuanian people.”⁴⁶ It means that Volters’ early academic terminology did not broadly conceptualise “people”.

In Volters’ texts the concept of tribe is used as a synonym of nationality:

Despite the complexity of the task I set to myself of a comprehensive study into the Lithuanian tribe, [there was] a series of lucky circumstances, such as affability of the local people who had got used [to me] during the three years of my journeys, and a warm welcome of the Lithuanians and the Samogitians.⁴⁷

In 1889 Volters borrowed the theoretical approach of ethnographical-statistical studies from Piotr I. Keppeni and interpreted it in his own way. The project of the Russian Empire in Suvalkai governorate was focused on the tribal composition of Lithuania and Belarus — studies on others. The aim was to find out local names in the residents’ household language. In these studies, “tribe” mostly referred to an ethnic group; people were asked which tribe they belonged to⁴⁸, with the aim to record different identities from historical and philological points of view.

The terminology of Volters’ studies on the nationalities of Lithuanians and Latvians was closer to Herder’s⁴⁹ concepts; he used the term “people” in a broader yet inconsistent way, and the term “tribe” in his historical-ethnographical study of the geography of Suvalkai governorate. The study on the tribe resembled the ideas of genetic history known in Europe and Russia. According to the studies conducted by Lithuanian historian Gieda, late in the nineteenth century genetic history focused on the propositions “on the integrity of the truth of the past.”⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Volters maintained that ethnographical statistics in Suvalkai governorate comprised studies in tribal composition of the population of Lithuania and Belarus.

In 1930 Volters changed the direction of his studies from others in the Russian Empire to own: “the values of a nation’s cultural scholarship can only be created by its own sons.”⁵¹ Such terminology as “growth,” “national character,” and “people’s spirit” in the discourse of Volters’ ethnographical-statistical stud-

⁴⁶ E. Volters, *Obi etnograficeskou poizdki...*, pp. 1–2.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ E.A. Volters, *Spiski naseleennychi mesti Suvalkskoj gubernij, kak materiali dlja istorikoetnograficeskoj geografiji kraja*, collected E.A. Voliteri, Sanktpeterburgi 1901, pp. 3–7; V. Savoniakaitė, *Eduardo Volterio etnografinių-statistinių...*

⁴⁹ According to H.F. Vermeulen, Herder perceived “a people” as a natural organic unity through which humankind expresses itself. In analysing peoples (*Volk*), Herder took interest in ethnography. When from 1762 to 1764 Herder was studying at the University of Königsberg together with Immanuel Kant, a Prussian philosopher and the father of classical German philosophy, whose works also influenced European ethnology, he criticised the concept *ethnographisch* and the mechanistic theory of the history of the world by the German historian ethnologist August Ludwig Schlözer (1735–1809). Herder rejected the understanding that humankind was progressing in stages of civilization (W. Kaschuba, op. cit., p. 28; H.F. Vermeulen, op. cit., p. 322).

⁵⁰ A. Gieda, *Manifestuojanti Klėja...*, p. 153.

⁵¹ E. Volters, *Lietuvos etnografinių-statistinių...*, pp. 1–2.

ies are fresh reminders of Herder's perception of history. Unlike the scholars of the Enlightenment, Herder analysed such concepts as organic growth,⁵² national character (*Nationalcharakter*), and people's spirit (*Volksgeist*) in his works⁵³ and, as mentioned above, rejected the mechanistic theory of the history of the world. It should be admitted that Volters was not consistent in his interpretation of the theoretical approaches to growth: he wrote about "the formation of a nation in the course of centuries" and "growth and development of culture," and imparted the aspect of nationalism to the people's spirit.

Volters paid considerable attention to local studies. To him, the processes of assimilation were processes of extinction of national awareness. As has been mentioned above, in the theory of his ethnographical-statistical studies great importance was given to the studies into the culture of the border areas of Lithuania, because "national awareness of the residents of these localities is gradually dying away." Let us recall the history of science. Herder introduced natural peoples (*Naturvölker*), that is "peoples living in the bosom of nature," as an alternative to the German term *Wilden*, or "savages," and to the French *les natureles*. Very likely it was not incidental that the concept of the soul of the land recurred in the discourse of Ignas Končius, who was Volters' disciple. In anthropology this term evolved into "home" or "household." Herder's ideas about the originality of folk life and unicity of individuals and cultures was assimilated by nationalist programmes in the early nineteenth century, especially in Poland and Bohemia.⁵⁴ A hundred years later, the concepts of national awareness emerged in Volters' works in modern Lithuania. Let us emphasise that Volters' romantic nation stands out as the concept of local residents, and take a closer look at it.

Studies of nation as the idea of research and education through ethnographical statistics of individuals and locations

In 1930, Volters sought to understand the people, "the soul of people," and national awareness through hermeneutical historical studies of localities, to develop science, and "encompass all spheres of cultural scholarship."⁵⁵

In the programme/questionnaire of ethnographical-statistical studies, Volters called to record the toponyms of populated and unpopulated places of the rural

⁵² Herder perceived history as the process of the growth of humankind. He was critical of classical European ethnocentrism: he was interested in non-European cultures and spoke of European ones as exhausted and frozen in the sense of civilization (W. Kaschuba, op. cit., pp. 32–33).

⁵³ H.F. Vermeulen, op. cit., p. 322.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, p. 324.

⁵⁵ E. Volters, *Lietuvos etnografinių-statistinių...*, p. 1.

districts of Lithuania as they were before / before 1914 / at present. Examining toponyms from the historical point of view, he called to look at the consequences of the Great War and land reforms, including ethnographical statistics of whole Lithuania, and not only of the people living in the village, but also of the people living in the manors. He concentrated on the names of lakes, rivers, other water bodies, hills and hillocks, forests and groves, and invited to record people's stories about these places.⁵⁶

To Volters, language was similar to “the actual door to the soul,” as Herder put it.⁵⁷ In his hermeneutics language, as constitutive and reflective of human development, discloses a possibility for self-formation through understanding and education.⁵⁸ In Herder's view an individual's understanding and interpretation are rooted in their specific linguistic expressions or symbolic utterance.⁵⁹

Volters sought to perceive the soul of the nation through the names and interpretations of individuals' locations. He call proposed recording the names of sacred places and the narratives about them. He was interested in old burial grounds, cemeteries, and “plague pits,”⁶⁰ Volters is original in his explanation of the hermeneutic interpretation where “the factuality of a fact”⁶¹ and “the process of contextualization” are relevant.

Volters did not search for the soul of culture; he strove to protect cultural heritage and through it to understand the soul of the people, and that is why we cannot consider him a consistent follower of the German-Austrian diffusionism. Social issues in the protection of cultural monuments, which entered Volters' field of research while he was still in the Russian Empire, remind of the area research by the

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 3.

⁵⁷ J.G. Herder, *Sprachphilosophie. Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. E. Heintel, Hamburg 1964, p. 41.

⁵⁸ K. Gjesdal, op. cit., pp. 103–108.

⁵⁹ “»A human soul,« he writes, »is an individual [*ein Individuum*] in the realm of mind [*Geister*]« (PW 167; W II 571). Language is used by particular individuals, who see the world from a particular vantage point (Herder, as we saw in Chapter Three, makes this point in his work of taste). Language not only determines one's perspective and expressive registers (in that each language embodies an outlook on the world), it also entails the possibility of individual self-formation. In Herder's words, “each head who thinks for himself [*selbst denkt*] will also speak for himself, and so his manner of expression gets formed in his own way too: he will impress on his language characteristic features of his manner of seeing” (PW 51; W I 560). The core of Herder's programme of the Enlightenment was formed by the idea that each individual can think for himself. This idea questioned new ways of using language, which expressed world perspectives intersubjectively. In explaining how to understand “the human soul, Herder maintained that someone incapable of speaking or hearing must invent a universal language, and, in his view, it was poetry that reflected the diversity of language” (Ibidem, p. 111). Understanding the human soul and sensation are the deepest means of education (Ibidem, p. 123).

⁶⁰ E. Volters, *Lietuvos etnografinių-statistinių...*, p. 3.

⁶¹ R.J. Thornton, *The Rhetoric of Ethnographic Holism*, [in:] *Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology*, eds. L.H. Moore, T. Sanders, Oxford 2014 [1988], pp. 378–379.

diffusionists.⁶² Volters studied at Leipzig University, where diffusionist Friedrich Ratzel taught numerous students. According to British anthropologist Alan Barnard, Ratzel's methods were taken up and the idea of the soul of the people (*Volksgeist*) was originally interpreted by German anthropologist Leo Frobenius, also a diffusionist, who maintained that the soul of the people is the soul of culture. Such terminology had been spreading for several decades and up until 1930,⁶³ when Volters proposed his concept of ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania.

His idea interprets the anthropological-historical hermeneutical theoretical approach, which helped him to reveal nationalism from his first studies of Lithuanians and Latvians in the Russian Empire. At the end of the nineteenth century Volters took interest in Lithuanian toponyms and proposed studying the names of yet unexplored and symbolic locations historically through the narratives of individuals. According to Lithuanian historian Darius Staliūnas, self-awareness was linked to the imagining of Lithuania and its symbolic places during that initial stage of the national movement:

In *Aušra*, attempts are made not to accurately define the boundaries of Lithuania, but to emphasise certain locations that symbolise Lithuania. Both in this publication and other texts of the late nineteenth century, historical capitals of Lithuania Vilnius and Trakai, also Birutė Hill in Palanga are such space-concentrating centres. In addition to such symbolic places, a special role falls to 'hydrography', especially in poetry.⁶⁴

Lithuanian folklorist Leonardas Sauka observed that Janis Rainis, a well-known Latvian poet, saw Volters' activities as a struggle for the essence of the two fraternal nations.⁶⁵

In 1909 Volters wrote in *Latvian Literature* that

apart from Valdemars, Barons, and Juris Alunans, the giants of those times, [...] Frīcis Brihsemneeks-Treuland (born in 1848), a well-known collector of ethnographical tales, texts, proverbs, and riddles, must also be attributed to the more important associates of the Young Latvians movement between 1850 and 1880.⁶⁶

⁶² According to British anthropologist Alan Barnard, diffusionism evolved from German and Austrian geographers-anthropologists at the end of the nineteenth century (A. Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 49–51).

⁶³ Ibidem. According to more debates in historiography, Frobenius' "Kulturmorphologie," as he called it, and the concept of a "folk soul" (Paideuma) was quite controversial and had not been widely accepted. The "German-Austrian diffusionism" was by no means an unanimous theoretical framework. Frobenius' approach differed strongly, for example, from the theologically orientated approaches of Father Wilhelm Schmidt and his confreres, as well as from the writings of Hermann Baumann, who emphasised the importance of "races."

⁶⁴ D. Staliūnas, *Lietuviškojo nacionalizmo erdvėkura iki 1914 m.*, [in:] *Lietuvos erdvinės sampratos ilgaime XIX šimtmetyje*, ed. D. Staliūnas, Vilnius 2015, p. 145.

⁶⁵ L. Sauka, op. cit., p. 63.

⁶⁶ E. Volteris, *Latvių literatūra*, Kaunas 1909, p. 12.

He points out that in 1893 “healthy realism emerges next to poetry, which is brimming with mythological beings and national idealism.”⁶⁷ This is how Volters voiced his thoughts on Latvian literature and ethnology of the Latvian land:

Whether at its beginning Latvian literature was a result of the workings of German culture or not — today it is obvious that with developing national awareness and independence, there was a period of serious attempts to learn about one’s homeland and to exploit the inherent literary drive. Today, Latvians stopped looking at others and thus are following their own paths in literature. Thanks to Bielenstein, Bezzenberger, Muelenbach, Endzelins, and others, language and the ethnology of the Latvian land are accessible to scholarship. Literature and language thus developed can auspiciously serve the cause of the nation’s further education. The conditions under which literature has been developing are poorly examined, because there is still no historical culture, censorship, or state policy in the Baltic lands.⁶⁸

Due to the healthy realism he had singled out, Volters can be considered a moderate romanticist and an advocate for realism in the studies of a romantic nation’s nationalism.

It should be emphasised that Volters’ manner of thinking resembled Herder’s and was directed against ethnocentric views, since he wrote about the nations of the Earth. The point of observation is rather the search for what is one’s own and what is foreign amidst the customs and circumstances of life. Similarly to Herder’s idea of a romantic nation⁶⁹, the concept of race is absent from Volters’ studies of ethnographical statistics.

Volters’ non-mechanistic approach to the growth, and not formation, of a people points to an attitude characteristic of Herder, which featured not only in Volters’ discourses. Together with dr Jonas Basanavičius, Eduards Volters was involved in the founding of the Lithuanian Scientific Society, whose objective was “to examine the life and growth of the Lithuanian nation.”⁷⁰ He aspired at broader development of science in Lithuania and to encompass “all spheres of cultural scholarship.” In his idea of ethnographical statistical studies, Volters originally linked the objectives formulated in the regulations of the Lithuanian Scientific Society: to research Lithuanian anthropology and ethnography, and especially Lithuanian archaeology and history, geography and statistics, and other branches of the nat-

⁶⁷ Ibidem, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Herder influenced the attitudes to races of Georg Forster, a traveller who worked in Vilnius, and the notion of the cosmos of ethnographer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (W. Kaschuba, op. cit., p. 38; H.F. Vermeulen, op. cit., p. 376). Volters propagated an image of a no-homogeneous “nation”; he did ethnographic-statistical research of ethnic Poles and other minorities (E. Volters, *Spiski naseleennychi mesti...*; see more V. Savoniakaitė, *Eduardo Volterio etnografinių-statistinių...*, pp. 143–152). In the latter works he focused on Lithuanian research.

⁷⁰ J. Basanavičius, *Ar reikalinga mums etnografiška draugystė?*, “Varpas” 2, 1902, pp. 43–45; *Lietuvių Mokslo...*; V. Savoniakaitė, *Jono Basanavičiaus požiūris į lietuvių tautos tyrimus, 1879–1927*, “Lietuvos etnologija: socialinės antropologijos ir etnologijos studijos” 19 (28), 2019, pp. 181–195, <https://doi.org/10.33918/25386522-1928004>.

ural sciences.⁷¹ There is no doubt that his programme of ethnographical-statistical studies correlates with Franz Boas' anthropological approach⁷², which also includes archaeological studies.

The 1930 programme of ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania was aimed at shaping new priorities for modern Lithuania: "A short while ago the Lithuanian nation embarked on the independent life and creation of new values of spiritual and material culture, [...] and we are mature enough for cultural tasks and therefore must initiate broad cultural work."⁷³ Education, which is a political state's priority, should be related to cultural nationalism⁷⁴ in the broad sense of political interests of a national state. Retrospectively, it reminds of the situation in Prussia, where, according to Kaschuba, due to Herder's influence pedagogy gained considerable significance next to the general humanistic picture of humankind.⁷⁵ Pedagogy of such nature strengthened the connection between science and the national attitude of civil servants.

Conclusions

Eduards Volker's concept of "the soul of a nation" is an original neurocentric interpretation of anthropological hermeneutic understanding of a romantic nation. The ethnographical-statistical studies of Lithuania, which he proposed in 1930, focused on historical hermeneutical studies of "the soul of the nation" and national spirit. Theoretical approaches, which are based on modern self-awareness through the understanding of the soul,⁷⁶ point to the historically known connection with Herder's concept of the people. Volker's theoretical approaches correlate with evolutionist, diffusionist, realistic, and romantic theoretical perspectives that go back to Herder's works. The concept of race was alien to Volkers.

From his studies into others in the Russian Empire, Volkers turned to those of own in Lithuania, although he identified himself as a Latvian. He paid special attention to the national character of the Lithuanians, nation, "the soul of a nation," national spirit, and education of the nation. Volkers proposed a non-mechanistic perception of history. He offered a new interpretation of the theoretical approaches to organic growth and wrote about the "formation of a nation in the course of centuries" as well as growth and development of culture.

⁷¹ *Lietuvių Mokslo...*

⁷² F. Boas, op. cit.

⁷³ E. Volters, *Lietuvos etnografinių-statistinių...*, p. 1.

⁷⁴ J. Spencer, *Nationalism*, in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, eds. A. Barnard, J. Spencer, London-New York 2002, p. 391.

⁷⁵ W. Kaschuba, op. cit., p. 39.

⁷⁶ J.G. Herder, *Ideen zur Kulturphilosophie*; A. Barnard, op. cit., p. 15.

He sought to understand the soul of the people from the bottom. The programme of ethnographical-statistical studies was directed at local studies through the perception and language of individuals and their narratives about those locations. Nationalism was also studied through the names of historical symbolical places. It embraced the histories of villages and manors, assimilation and studies into border areas — the rise and decline of our national consciousness.

Interlaced with the romantic concepts of “the soul of a nation” and not those of the soul of culture, ethnography-related realism clearly distinguishes Volters’ ideas of local studies from the theories of German diffusionists such as Leo Frobenius.⁷⁷

Similarly to Boas’ anthropology, the idea of ethnographical-statistical studies embraced archaeology⁷⁸ and broader interdisciplinary studies. The romantic nation concept identifies the beginning of nationalist discourses⁷⁹ in Lithuania as well as in Northern and Eastern Europe. The theory was in line with the aspiration of the Lithuanian Scientific Society to explore “the Lithuanian nation par excellence.”⁸⁰ The programme reveals German, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Russian academic historical connections through terminology, perception of the history of humankind, and anthropological hermeneutic theoretical approaches.

Romantyczny naród. Eduarda Voltersa koncepcja etnograficzno-statystycznych badań Litwy

Abstrakt

Zadaniem artykułu jest ukazanie pochodzenia i założeń koncepcji etnograficzno-statystycznych badań Litwy, które sformułował łotewski etnograf i językoznawca Eduard Volters (1856–1941). Już pod koniec XIX wieku badacz ten pracował w Carskim Rosyjskim Towarzystwie Geograficznym i prowadził etnograficzno-statystyczne badania „plemiennego” składu populacji. Teoria ta w oryginalny sposób integrowała koncepcje „historii idei” i „statystyki etnograficznej”. W 1930 roku Volters zaangażował się w działalność Litewskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego i wprowadził do swoich badań etnograficzno-statystycznych koncepcję „duszy narodu”. W artykule zostanie sprawdzona, w jakim stopniu początki idei „duszy narodu” Litwinów wiążą się z historyczną perspektywą antropologii i romantyczną koncepcją narodu w etnologii europejskiej. Teoretyczne podstawy i retoryka statystyki etnograficzne Voltersa poddane zostaną analizie z następujących punktów widzenia: 1. etnograficzno-statystycznego badania Litwy, 2. romantycznej idei narodu oraz 3. pojmowania nauki i edukacji.

Słowa-kлючe: Eduard Volters, etnograficzno-statystyczne badania Litwy, Johann Gottfried Herder, romantyczna idea narodu, dusza narodu

⁷⁷ A. Barnard, op. cit., p. 51; E. Volters, *Lietuvos etnografinių-statistinių...*

⁷⁸ E. Volters, *Lietuvos etnografinių-statistinių...*

⁷⁹ H.F. Vermeulen, op. cit.

⁸⁰ J. Basanavičius, op. cit., p. 3; D. Alseika, *Daktaras Basanavičius, kaipo Lietuvių Mokslo Draugijos įkūrėjas, vedėjas ir mokslininkas*, “Lietuvių tauta: Lietuvių mokslo draugijos raštai” 4, 1932, no. 3, pp. 164–165.

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