

SELONIA

For several centuries, the territory of Latvia consisted of five cultural and historical districts, which united the territories with a common cultural and historical heritage — Kurzeme, Zemgale, Selonia, Latgale and Vidzeme.

Selonians are one of the indigenous people of Latvia, which inhabited the south-eastern region of Latvia in the Iron Age and the Middle Ages. 10th–13th centuries in the territory of Selonia, several territorial counties were formed, with about 30 castle mounds and a Selonian centre in Sēlpils.

In the territory of Sēlpils during the 2nd–4th centuries, iron mining furnaces were discovered, which are the oldest furnaces of this type in Latvia. Some areas were rich in bog ore deposits. The amount of iron mined in the territory of Selonia indicates its specialisation in ferrous metallurgy.

Selonians were mentioned for the first time in the 13th century in the Livonian Chronicle of Henry (Heinrici cronicon Lyvoniae) and the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle (Älteste Livländische Reimchronik; Selen). Very hypothetical is the mention of Selonians in the maps of Claudius Ptolemy that have been preserved as copies from the 12th to the 13th century. According to some authors, Selonians are also mentioned along with such reliably identifiable Baltic nations as Galindi (galindę) and Suduvi (sudeni),

Selonians. Some scholars have noted that the map of the Roman Empire (Tabula Peutingeriana) marks the Selonian River, but such an ethnonym is not mentioned on the map or in the register.

Selonia is located in the south-east of Latvia, on the left bank of the Daugava. In the west, it is separated from Zemgale by the Taurkalne forest massif, but in the east its borders extend as far as Krāslava near Belarus. In the north, it is separated from Vidzeme and Latgale by the Daugava, but in the south it shares a border with Lithuania.

Selonia can be defined in different ways: both as an area of inhabitation of the ancient Selonian tribe, and as an ethnographic region with soft, syllabic dialects, and as a cultural-historical region with a special mentality, with its own cultural-historical differences.

After the founding of the Republic of Latvia at the beginning of the 20th century, Selonia was annexed to the cultural and historical region of Zemgale and no longer existed as a separate territory. The revival of the traditions of Selonia as a historical land began in 1989, when the Riga Selonian Club was founded, while in 1995, the Selonia Association was established.

Selonian dialect and chants.

The Selonians and their language existed until about the 15th century, gradually merging with other related tribes. Nowadays, the ancient features of the Selonian language can be heard in the syllabic dialects of the High Latvian Dialect, which are spoken in Selonia, around Krustpils, and in East Vidzeme. The most characteristic feature of these dialects is ascending intonation. It has survived in many places, even if the speakers no longer speak in the dialect. Selonian dialects have many similarities with the Latgalian language both in terms of vocabulary and grammar.

Selonians

Selonians can be characterised by a gracefully structured skeleton, small stature, medium-long and narrow face. According to some archaeologists and physical anthropologists, during the late Iron Age, Selonians were an ethnic relic, a witness to ancient Baltic history, one of the earliest branches of the Baltic tribes, dating back to Europe's oldest farmers.



The mindset in Selonia is formed by a slow, green, but hilly, lovely landscape, also by relatively many areas of the duke, later the crown territories, so less subordination to the nobles, also two coexisting denominations — Lutheranism and Catholicism, later joined by Orthodox and Old Believers, quite active Jewish communities in villages, Daugava raftsmen from Belarus. There is a strong multicultural element in the region. The direct influence of the German pastors, especially the Stenders family, who were born and worked here for generations, is also undeniable.



Selonian women wore bronze ribbon spiral crowns, which, in the 13th century, were gradually replaced with fabric crowns. Sometimes several crowns — two or three — were fastened together. Women wore woollen shawls ornamented with bronze rings, checkered semi-woollen shawls and also a woollen shawl ornamented with tin

has been found. Tin is also widely used for cross-shaped pendants. Compared to Latgalians, chains were less popular, but bronze and tin pendants were very diverse.

The men of Selonia used horseshoe-fibulas with poppy-headed ends, as well as special belt dividers. Men usually wore only one, less often two or three fibulas, which were massive. Bracelets with animal-head ends and massive bracelets with segment-shaped ends were also used. At the site of several men's burials, hat ornaments made of three to six bronze spirals weighed on basts or woollen yarn with bronze trapezoidal pendants on the ends were found.

Photos: <http://www.katramsavutautasterpu.lv/tautasterpi/12-gadsimta-selu-sievietes-terpa-rekonstrukcija/>

The land of Selonia can be proud of people who have proven themselves and who have made significant contributions both nationally and internationally. Some of them:

GOTTHARD FRIEDRICH STENDER, called OLD STENDER (1714–1796)

Pastor, writer, linguist of Baltic German origin

Stender's most significant contribution to Latvian culture is related to the reforming of Latvian religious, secular and educational literature, the popularisation of the sciences, as well as literary and scientific works written in German. Under Stender's care, Latvians gained the first encyclopedia, the first illustrated alphabet, the first secular poetry and short prose books. Old Stender was the first to describe a mechanical washing machine in the European German-speaking space. In the Pauls Stradiņš School section of the Viesīte Museum, Selonia, there is an Old Stender's office, where a replica of Stender's washing machine can be seen.

RAINIS (1865–1929) (real name JĀNIS PLIEKŠĀNS)

Latvian poet, playwright, translator, journalist, thinker, cultural worker, politician

A modern, universally educated and socially engaged writer with deep roots in world culture. A purposeful creator of the Latvian literary language, culture and national identity, reinforcer of Latvian self-confidence, one of the most influential voices of the idea of socialism and national statehood in Latvian literature and journalism.

Rainis' works have been translated into Lithuanian, Estonian, German, Italian, Russian, Polish, English, French and other languages. Rainis' most translated play is Joseph and His Brothers; it has been staged several times outside Latvia.

Rainis wrote 20 collections of poems and 15 plays. Currently, the most complete compilation of his literary heritage is Collected Works, in 30 volumes (1977–1986), and the edition J. Rainis' Translations, in 4 volumes (1989–1990). In a survey conducted in 2004 about the 100 most notable personalities of all times in Latvia, Rainis was ranked 9th.

ALEKSANDRS GRĪNS (1895–1941)

Writer, translator, officer of the Latvian Armed Forces

The greatest Latvian battle scenes writer, the most outstanding master of historical novels and short stories in Latvian literature, has published ten novels, collections of stories and short stories. After his historical novel, The Blizzard of Souls, about World War I and the War of Independence, a film was made in 2019, which has been the most watched film in Latvian cinemas in the history of restored Latvia and has attracted media attention also outside the country.

VIKTORS OREHOVS (1909–1998)

Internationally known breeder and gardener

One of the brightest personalities of the 20th century in Latvian floriculture. V. Orehov's name will be written in golden letters not only in Latvian, but in the gardens of the whole world—he has created about 450 gladiolus and more than 300 lily varieties, of which 130 are documented in international catalogues and lily yearbooks. He has also published magazine articles on horticulture and floriculture, as well as written four books on lilies.

Important in the history of the city of Jēkabpils is the fact that the gladiolus and lily gardens once created by the breeder spread over an area of three hectares, which encouraged the city to be called the gladiolus and lily capital of Eastern Europe.

STRADIŅŠ FAMILY

The Stradiņš family, whose many descendants have achieved professional success and earned attention and recognition both in Latvia and in the world, originated from Viesīte in Selonia. The most famous members of the family are Pauls Stradiņš, who was born in Viesīte in the family of craftsman Jānis Stradiņš in 1896 and his son, Jānis Stradiņš, who was born in 1933.

PAULS STRADIŅŠ (1896–1958)

Surgeon, oncologist, medical historian, Doctor of Medicine, professor

Latvian surgeon and health-care organiser, professor at the University of Latvia and Riga Medical Institute. He managed the Riga 2nd City Hospital for a long time, transforming it into a modern medical and educational

institution. Founder of the Scientific Research Institute of Biology and Experimental Medicine. His collection of medical history materials became the basis for the establishment of the Medical History Museum.

JĀNIS STRADIŅŠ (1933–2019)

Physical chemist, historian of sciences, president of the Latvian Academy of Sciences

J. Stradiņš is the author or co-author of seven books and more than 330 scientific publications in chemistry, as well as 20 books and more than 270 scientific publications in the history of science.

Academician J. Stradiņš has dedicated many years to the Pauls Stradiņš Museum of Medical History, taking care of his father's memory. He took the initiative in updating the history and modern problems of the Selonia region. At his initiative, Selonian congresses, conferences and exhibitions dedicated to the region have taken place in Ilūkste, Aknīste, Nereta, Jēkabpils, Sēlpils, Jaunjelgava and Viesīte.

PĒTERIS BARISONS (1904–1947)

Composer, conductor

An outstanding Latvian composer. At the heart of Barison's creative work is his symphonic music (2 symphonies, 10 other works) and vocal symphonic music (3 cantatas). He has also appeared in many instrumental genres. Leading in the vocal genres, the choir's original songs (about 30) — with many of them Barisons has for a long time now recorded himself in the history of Latvian music.

ARVĪDS ŽILINSKIS (1905–1993)

Composer, pianist, professor at the Latvian State Conservatory

During 1950s/60s Arvīds Žilinskis had no equal among the people in Latvia in terms of popularity. His music is easy to understand, melodic, filled with Latvian kindness, true love and the beauty of the homeland. The composer has created about 1,500 larger and smaller compositions — more than 200 solo songs, 80 choral songs and more than 300 children's and youth songs, ballet miniatures, operettas, operas, and other works.

Since 1 June 2002, Jēkabpils Music School has borne the name of Arvīds Žilinskis.

MĀRTIŅŠ BULCERS (1866–1944)

Photographer, entrepreneur, founder of professional photography in Latvia

In 1906, Mārtiņš Buclers founded the first Latvian Photographers' Association, organised photo exhibitions and photography courses. He published the magazine, Stari, where he published photographs, art photographs, literature. M. Buclers is the author of the book titled Photography (1904). Between 1987 and 1997, the Mārtiņš Buclers Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Art Photography was awarded in photography.

GUNTARS GODIŅŠ (1958)

Poet and poetry translator

He debuted in poetry in the second half of the 1970s and belongs to a generation of young poets called the "young angry", who harshly and ironically treated Soviet double morality, creating a new view of the value system of life unlike previous generations of Latvian poets. Author of five poetry collections. He is one of the most active Latvian translators from Estonian and Finnish — he has translated about 40 works, including poetry.

AGITA IKAUNIECE-RIMŠĒVIČA (1971)

Choral conductor

Notable Latvian choral conductor. Former chief conductor at the XXIII (2003), XXIV (2008) and XXV (2013) at the Latvian Song and Dance Festivals. Participated in the 2010 Latgale Song Festival as a chief choir conductor. Artistic director of the mixed Jasmine Choir.

ELĪNA ŠIMKUS (1982)

Opera singer

Notable Latvian opera singer. Elīna Šimkus has performed with the Oslo Symphony Orchestra, the Breton Symphony Orchestra, the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, the Estonian National Opera Orchestra, the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, the Sinfonietta Rīga Orchestra and the Collegium Musicum Rīga. She has collaborated with conductors Darel Anga, Andres Mustonen, Risto Joost, Jan Ola Amundsen, Arvo Volmer, Aleksandrs Viļumanis, Andris Veismanis, Andris Poga, Māris Kupčs and many others.