

ZINĀTNISKIE RAKSTI

WOMEN IN THE FAMILIES OF RIGA TRADE ASSISTANT PROFESSIONS IN THE COURSE OF THREE GENERATIONS IN THE 18TH CENTURY AND THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY: THE CASE STUDY OF TOMASS SĒLIS' FAMILY

Anita Čerpinska

Dr. hist., researcher, Institute of History of Latvia, University of Latvia.
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The article is focused on the women of one family – the mother, wife and daughter of the elterman of boaters Tomass Sēlis – over three generations, attempting to reveal the fate of women in the context of the trade assistant professions in Riga in economically favourable and unfavourable circumstances for the boaters. The article reveals the consolidated environment that was established by the families of trade assistant professions in Riga to strengthen mutual kinship ties in a certain part of the city. The article also illustrates the diversity in terms of property, the terms and conditions of marriage contracts, as well as the circumstances of widows and orphans in such families. The article is based on the materials of Riga court proceedings.

Key words: Anna Sēle, Marija Magdalēna Sēle, Anna Ģertrūde Sēle, boaters, Mūkusalā.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Riga, trade assistant professions were taken by those groups of people who were united in terms of their trade and who were engaged in the transportation, processing, weighing and assessment of trade goods, namely, liggers¹, salt carriers, wine carriers, hemp swinglers, hemp sowers, salt and grain

measurers, mast and oak graders, anchor handlers, harbour pilots, cabmen and boaters (also called ferryman, ger. Übersetzer). Some sources refer to these trades as Latvian professions, although the ethnic composition among these groups was not homogeneous. To some extent, it would be correct to add the profession of fishermen to this group, too, because many family members working in the trade assistant professions were related to the profession of fishermen and were involved in fishing in the course of their lives.

The members of the profession were often united by family ties and many of them belonged to St. John's Latvian parish. From the most ancient maps and the lists of population, it can be concluded that the inhabitants involved in the processing or transportation of goods along the Daugava, as well as those engaged in fishing traditionally lived in the vicinity of the Daugava, on the islands, as well as on the left bank of the Daugava (the so-called Pārdaugava) near the river.² The inhabitants of Pārdaugava from generation to generation were buried at the cemeteries of St. John's parish in Torņkalns and Āgenskalns (currently Mārtiņa cemetery). Since these people belonged to one parish, lived in one locality and worked in related professions, they can be considered a community of Riga with a sense of group awareness taking a particular place among the inhabitants of the city. Although they were united in their trade, they did not belong to the Small Guild and differed from the craftsmen's guilds both in terms of their profession and the regulations; however, they never equated themselves with regular labourers. The difference from the latter was manifested in the fact that they belonged to one profession, they swore an oath and carried out certain work for the sake of the city. As any community, the members of trade assistant professions did not form a homogeneous group. Both among the professions and within the limits of one profession there were differences in terms of the property and social status of the brethren. Historian Meta Taube has distinguished the mast graders as the most prosperous and self-confident group among the other professions.³

A few words must be said about the trade assistant professions and their belonging to the social groups in the city. Up to the end of the 18th century only burghers were considered eligible citizens of Riga. They were the traders of the Big Guild and the craftsmen of the Small Guild, constituting approximately 20% of the total population of Riga. The rest of the inhabitants constituted a cluster of non-burghers and they were called either *Beisassen* or *Beiwohner*.⁴ However, in the first half of the 19th century the law stipulated that the citizens in the Baltic cities could be divided as follows: 1) honourable citizens, 2) traders belonging to the guilds, 3) literati, 4) petit bourgeoisie (meshchane ili posadskie), 5) the craftsmen of guilds, 6) the free men, servants and labourers. The burghers of the City of Riga (grazhdane) were still the members of the guilds and the law only prescribed principles according to which one could receive the status of burgher. Other groups of citizens were not defined in such detail.⁵

The attempts of the well-off part of the non-burghers, including the mast graders, to obtain the rights of burghers in the mid-18th century were met with resistance by the traders, because non-burghers proved themselves in trade and wanted to extend their opportunities to do business in Pārdaugava (the left bank of the Daugava).⁶ The strictly regulated trade system of Riga, on the one hand ensured the income of the mediators and traders of Riga export goods, because only the members of the Big Guild could buy the goods in wholesale from the suppliers of Central Russia and sell them to foreign companies; on the other hand, the system also determined mandatory sorting, weighing, packing and shipping of all export goods, which ensured income to the trade assistant professions. These rules granted the quality of the export goods, yet at the same time raised the costs and time resources, as well as encumbered the circulation of goods, therefore in the first half of the 19th century more and more traders stood for the annulment of restrictions.⁷ Both the Riga trade regulations of 1765 and the tradition-bound division of citizens were outdated and in the late 18th century did not correspond to

the development tendencies of trade and urban community, yet changes took place very gradually.⁸

Overall, there were no restrictions in terms of the number of members stipulated in the regulations of assistant professions. It changed depending on the economic situation and the number of goods imported in Riga, therefore there could be a great degree of fluctuations in the periods when trade flourished or was on the decline.⁹ With this order in force, personal and kindred contacts were crucial to get a job in one of the professions, because the enrolment of new members could happen only with the acceptance of other members in the profession. A profession could be “inherited” by a son from a father, but one could also get the job by marrying into a family, for example, by marrying a daughter or a widow of the profession brethren. Consequently, the women from families involved in trade assistant professions played a certain role in the continuity of the profession. There are many cases when a widow got married for the second or the third time, consequently giving rise to continuous conflicts regarding inheritance since each marriage was usually blessed with children.

This article is focused on the family of a long-term elterman¹⁰ of boaters, Tomass Sēlis (1763–1830), in Riga, drawing special attention to women over three generations – his mother, wife and daughter. The author hopes to reveal the fates of women in the framework of one family in the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century, which was a period of gradual change both in the history of assistant professions and the entire history of Riga.

In the respective period of time the society and trade of Riga, which was the basis of Riga’s economy, experienced significant changes. With previous restrictions in trade and craftsmanship withdrawn, the classes of bourgeoisie and labourers characteristic of the second half of the 19th century in the industrial cities of Europe were established. In historiography, the members of trade assistant professions are referred to as “the representatives of the emerging Latvian bourgeoisie”.¹¹ If in the mid-18th century most

of the well-off and ambitious part of this bourgeoisie constituted mast graders, in the late 18th century boaters were those who took Riga Town Council to the courts in St. Petersburg demanding the rights of burghers. Tomass Sēlis was also among them. The traders justified their reluctance to give rights to the boaters based not only on their humble origins and lack of knowledge in the matters of trade, but also on their excessive arrogance and vanity, which they had obtained along with their prosperity.¹² Despite the “arrogance” of Tomass Sēlis, he, contrary to other rebellious boaters, held a management position. Taking the position of elterman for decades was an exception and not a common practice in the trade assistant professions. Due to all the previously mentioned circumstances, it is essential to examine the origins of Tomass Sēlis and what happened with his “legacy”, because the historiography reveals other prosperous members of the trade assistant professions both in relation to further accumulation of wealth and pauperization within the same or the next generation.¹³

In the more recent history the fate of a woman to a great extent was determined by the social class she belonged to, although no group was homogeneous,¹⁴ whereas the family history cannot be analysed without the socio-political and economic context.¹⁵ In the families of trade assistant professions at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries several groups of belonging overlapped. Belonging to the closed groups of professions made them similar to the craftsmen in guilds whose lives were regulated by the rules of the craft. Belonging to the inhabitants of Pārdaugava put them among the rural dwellers of Riga, because in this suburb the dwelling houses were located in comparatively big properties of land and meadows, which the inhabitants cultivated. Belonging to the “emerging bourgeoisie” manifested changes in lifestyle and world perception, because from closed craftsmanship they moved to free and unrestricted entrepreneurship.

In the historiography of Latvian history so far, the researchers have focused on assistant professions mostly in relation to their professional activities.¹⁶ Even in works that have been dedicated

to certain families, women are mostly briefly mentioned and the greatest attention is drawn to the legal or economic activities of men of the respective families.¹⁷ While in other countries there are discussions on what and how should be studied in relation to the women in history, in Latvia we can mention only some works in the last decades where the woman of recent history (up to the mid-19th century) has attracted scholars' attention as a self-sufficient object of research, unrelated to the studies of biographies.¹⁸

It must be noted that there is a completely different situation in terms of research sources on the women belonging to the upper classes of Baltic Germans, because thanks to the status and education level the female representatives of the Baltic German nobility have left personal sources such as letters, memories and diaries, whereas such personal documents of women of lower social classes, even if they did exist, have not reached scholars. When working on the fate of women belonging to the family of trade assistant professions in the respective time period, a scholar has no other choice but to work merely with archive materials where women play only a secondary role. Of course, materials from church records, soul revisions (the taxpayer accounting by taxpayer groups) and various courts of Riga provide considerable information regarding crucial turns in the lives of women; however, this material is often fragmented and nearly never provides any evidence on the world's perception of the woman, her motivation or self-identity. The second half of the 19th century offers a completely different range of sources and the role of a woman in society over this period undergoes a change of paradigms.¹⁹

This article has been written on the basis of the historical materials available at the National Archives of Latvia. The data on baptizing, marriage and burial have been obtained from the church records of St John's parish (Fund 1428). This data reveals the number of children in families, the age of marriage, the number of repeated marriages, child mortality, and the duration of life, as well as godparents, who often are neglected by research even though studies have proven that the ties of "spiritual kinship" both on the religious and social level did not lose their

significance in the period.²⁰ Not all church records have been preserved from the first half of the 18th century, therefore the family tree cannot be reconstructed in its entirety. Data on the number and age of the people living in the households can be obtained from the materials of soul revisions, which can be found at the Funds of the Riga Tax Administration (Fund 1394), the list of Livland revisions (Fund 199) and the crown treasury office of the Livland province (Fund 77). It must be noted that the accuracy of the soul revision data can be varied. Knowing someone's age according to the church records, it can be seen that for certain people the age has been indicated correctly, for others – approximately, and for some – very inaccurately. However, there are cases when there are no other options but to follow the data of revisions. Crucial information provided by the materials of revisions concerns the places where people had lived earlier and where they migrated, as well as additional data on family ties and if they belonged to certain categories of taxpayer. It is possible to draw conclusions about the land property, buildings and the paid taxes according to the materials of the Board of the Treasury (Fund 1390 and 1392), where the plans of building sites can also be found.

In addition to these data, the materials of Riga courts have also been used. The Fund on Custody Court (1380) has the heritage-related information, the signed marriage contracts, last wills and the custody of juveniles. *Landvögtey* (Fund 1379) was responsible for hearing civil claims, therefore disputes related to real property, payment of debts, and questions regarding construction also appear there, whereas the court of professions and *Kämmerei* (Fund 1382) worked on those cases which were related to the professional activities of trade assistant professions, including the appointment to a certain post and disputes among the members of one profession or among the profession and traders. It is essential to note that the less a person happened to be in conflict situations, the less his name appears in court materials, and vice versa.

ANNA, THE MOTHER OF TOMASS SĒLIS

Anna Lau (*Lau*, also *Laue*, *Lauw*, 1729–1792) came from the family of the labourers Jānis and Dārta, who lived in Jurgāmuīža (Jurgenshoff), which was also called Zunda (Sunde). In the 18th century it was a place mostly inhabited by boaters, mast graders, hemp swinglers and fishermen, and nearly all the inhabitants counted themselves as Latvian in the soul revision.²¹

Anna Lau's record of baptism provides evidence that her godparents were several members of boater families.²² Anna was the fifth child in Jānis's family. Before her, there were four boys born, but after Anna another girl Trīne (1732–1785) was born. From the second wife Marija, Jānis had two more children. Most of the godparents were family members of boater families, sometimes of fishermen or salt carrier families.²³ Perhaps, the father of Anna worked on some boat for boaters. Because there are no burial records regarding the time period before 1770, it cannot be known for sure how many of Jānis' children reached the age of maturity and how big Anna's family was.

Due to the lack of lists of spouses from St. John's parish, it cannot be specified at what age Anna got married, yet it can be seen that in 1761, when Anna was 32 years old, her firstborn was baptized. Anna's husband – Niklass Sēlis (*Sehl*, also *Seel*, *Sehle*, [around 1726] –1803) had sworn an oath of a hemp swingler a year earlier, that is, in 1760.²⁴ It can be suggested that similarly to other craftsmen in the period, Niklass Sēlis got married around the time he became an eligible member of trade and could afford to have a family and be the breadwinner.²⁵

There is very controversial information regarding the date of birth of Niklass, because none of the Riga parishes have any records on his baptising. The age mentioned in the soul revisions of 1782 and 1795 (40 and 74 respectively) allowed him to become 34 years older within a 13 year period, providing evidence of the inaccurate data, whereas Anna's data have been recorded accurately.²⁶ According to the burial records, Niklass died in the beginning of 1803 at the age of 76, which suggests he was born

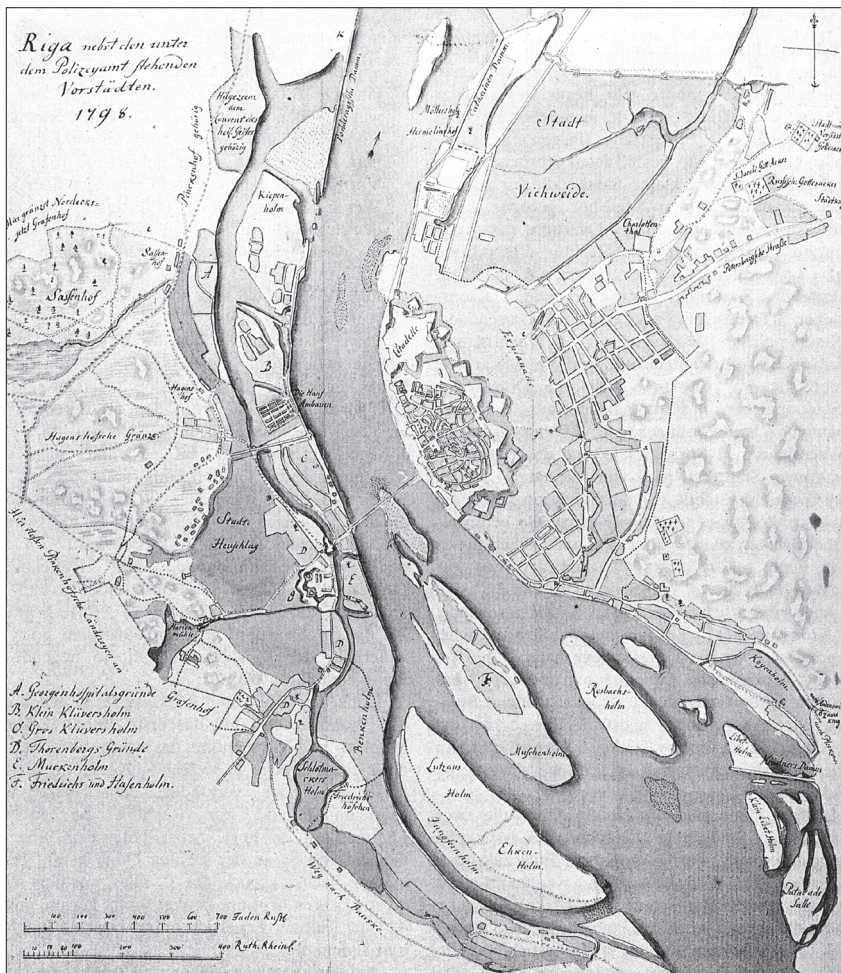


Image: Riga with the suburbs under control of the police, 1798.
 In: Teodors Zeids (ed., 1996). *Johans Kristofs Broce. Zīmējumi un apraksti.*
 Vol. 2. Riga: Zinātne, p. 39

around the turn of 1726 and 1727 and was just a few years older than his wife Anna.²⁷

300 trade brethren worked in the profession of hemp swinglers in the beginning of the 18th century, whereas in 1718 (after the Great Northern War and plague) the number had decreased

to 36, while at the end of the century – there were approximately 60 brethren.²⁸ Those who worked in the profession processed the hemp before exporting and participated in the transportation, loading and unloading of goods. Over his active work years, Niklass also worked as a lighter for a short period of time, engaged in the transportation and measuring of grain, flax and hemp seeds and preparing them for export.²⁹

Niklass Sēlis lived in Zunda with his family, together with a maidservant and servant. Between the age of 32 and 45, Anna gave birth to eight children: 5 boys and 3 girls.³⁰ Six of the children had a hemp swingler named Reinholds Sausiņš (*Sausiņ*) or his wife Anna as godparents, while four of them had either the fisherman Jānis Dāle (*Dahl*) or his wife Anna, who were the neighbours of the Sēlis family. Mostly there were family members of hemp swinglers chosen as godparents, rarely boaters or fishermen. The godfather of the second son Tomass was an export trader, freemason and the owner of a manor in Pārdaugava (Tomass Cukerbekers (Zuckerbecker, 1730–1795).

Anna's family had a close relationship with Anna's sister Trīne, who initially worked as a maidservant for one of the senior hemp swinglers but later got married to the oak grader Mārtiņš Krūmiņš (*Kruming*). There was a half-year period when the entire Krūmiņš family moved to the house of the Sēlis family, because their own house had suffered during a spring flood.³¹ After the death of Mārtiņš Krūmiņš, Trīne got married again – in 1780 to the oak grader Frīdrihs Klange (*Klange*).³² The relationship was complicated, because Niklass Sēlis once had to give a testimony against the brother-in-law.³³

All three daughters of Anna and Niklass died in early childhood, but five sons reached the age of maturity. The oldest son, Jānis, similarly to his father, worked as a hemp swingler; however, he was made redundant due to negligence at work and died at a comparatively young age – 30 years old.³⁴ Niklass sent all the other sons at an early age to work as assistants for boaters. Perhaps over the trade season there was a higher demand for extra

labour than for hemp swinglers. It must be noted that fate was not favourable to the sons of the Sēlis family. Before burying the oldest son, Anna had to say goodbye to her son Reinholds, who was only 19 years old at the time of his death. After Anna's death, her son Ansis drowned (in 1795).³⁵

Anna Sēle died in 1792, at the age of 63. After two years Niklass got married again, to Hedviga Ziemele (*Seemel*), born Ozoliņa – the widow of a labourer who at that time was in her forties. When entering into marriage, Niklass stipulated that after his death three sons would inherit 200 thalers. Niklass and Hedviga had a daughter, Anna Kristīna (1796) – the last offspring of Niklass Sēlis, whose fate is unknown due to a lack of sources.³⁶

Apparently, the range of materials on Anna Sēle is not very extensive. She came from a labourer's family close to the Riga trade assistant professions, lived in nearby Pārdaugava and married someone from the neighbourhood. A long period in her marriage was spent in pregnancy and raising children, but out of eight children only two sons led independent lives. In the household of Niklass and Anna five sons grew up, but apart from Anna there was one more maid and servant in the house, which means that three persons were responsible for managing the food and house for 9 persons. Their family can be defined as a regular family among the representatives of the trade assistant professions, because it did not stand out with prosperity (most of the members of trade assistant professions had a servant or a maid), nor was there a connection with the richest and most influential families of the trade members.

When Anna died, her youngest son was 18 years old. After her death, Niklass lived as a widower for two years and then married once again to another widow and signed a marriage contract with her to secure the children from the first marriage part of the inheritance that they were entitled to.

MARIJA MAGDALĒNA, THE WIFE OF
TOMASS SĒLIS

In November 1788 boater Tomass Sēlis (1763–1831) got married to the widow of fisherman Mārtiņš Ranks (*Ranck*, 1749–1785), named Marija Magdalēna, born Ozoliņa (sometimes referred to as *Helena Osoliņ*, also *Osoling*, 1761–1833). At the time of marriage, she was 27 years old and had been a widow for three years. She came from the family of the fisherman Jēkabs Ozoliņš ([around 1722]–1791) and his wife Madlēna, born Rinka. For her mother it was the second marriage, from her first marriage with the fisherman from Mūkusala, Niklass Ogļmaiss (*Ogelmais*, ?–1759), there were two step-daughters.³⁷ Entering into marriage with Jēkabs Ozoliņš, Madlēna Rinka signed a marriage contract with him where she stipulated a certain part of the inheritance to the daughters from the first marriage:

- 1) For each of them 15 Albert thalers, when they get married, apart from the dowry;
- 2) A garden owned by the Ogļmaiss family in Pārdaugava to the daughter, who gets married first; as a result, the other sister has the right to request 15 Albert thalers from her;
- 3) The salmon catch parts owned by Niklass Ogļmaiss as a fisherman.

The new fiancé meanwhile, promised to bring up the children as his own.³⁸

It is unknown when the mother of Marija Magdalēna died, but in 1770 her father got married again to Grēta Krastiņa (*Krasting*, 1743–1784), the daughter of the fisherman Indriķis Krastiņš and his wife Grēta Krastiņa, born Ogļmaisa. When entering into marriage, Jēkabs Ozoliņš signed a contract which intended to allocate the descendants of the Ogļmaiss family 110 thalers as an inheritance, the salmon catch parts inherited from their father as a fisherman, and a garden which would constitute the entire inheritance part and was stipulated as an inheritance in the first marriage contract, whereas Helēna had the right for 15 thalers. The fiancée Grēta Krastiņa, in the name of love for her fiancé, agreed to raise his daughter Helēna as her own child.³⁹

In the marriage of Jēkabs Ozoliņš and Grēta, three children were born – Margarēta Elizabete (1771–1772), Elizabete Margarēta (1775–?) and Jēkabs Heinrihs (1777–1793). The family members of fishermen and boaters were invited as the godparents of the children. The godmother of Marija Magdalēna was Magdalēna Brasa (*Bras*), the wife of a boater.

Fishermen in Riga were united in one profession, which had the monopoly rights for fishing in a certain section of the Dau-gava next to Riga and for selling the fish at the Riga market. This profession was taken by between 50 and 100 members over various periods of time, who actively guarded their rights to prevent peasants from the surrounding manors trying to earn some additional income by fishing. The post had its own regulations, procedure of enrolment and it took care of the widows and orphans of the members. There were families, for example, the Ranks family, the Nariņš and the Rungainis families, who over several generations through the centuries were engaged in fishing. The sons of these families were a regular addition to the rows of boaters and mast graders, since from childhood they were familiar with work on the river and boats. Jēkabs Ozoliņš “bought himself into” the profession of fishermen in 1760, later he was elected as the assessor of the profession and the senior of the profession.⁴⁰

The family of Jēkabs Ozoliņš lived in Mūkusalā, which in comparison to others was a rather small island of the Daugava with only a dozen plots of land.⁴¹ The second wife Grēta died after 14 years of marriage and Jēkabs Ozoliņš became a widower again.

At the age of 21, Marija Magdalēna got married to the sixth son of fisherman Sīmanis Ranks (1714–1785), called Mārtiņš. He was from a rather prosperous family of fishermen and boaters. Their marriage did not last long, because after a few years Mārtiņš died at the age of 35 without leaving any heirs.⁴²

In 1791, after the death of Marija Magdalēna’s father, the Custody Court of Riga started to work on the distribution of his property among the heirs. Marija Magdalēna was represented at

the court by her husband Tomass Sēlis, her stepsister and step-brother by their guardians in the boaters' profession.⁴³ Pursuant to the rights of Livonian cities, when inheriting their parents' property it was divided in equal parts among all the children.⁴⁴ All the belongings of Jēkabs Ozoliņš were announced as available in auction. An old wooden house with a shingle roof in Mūkusala with one room, chamber, kitchen and laundry room was the most valuable property. There was a stable, a shed and a big garden in the backyard. This property was valued at 160 Albert thalers, but Tomass Sēlis "because of his love towards the relatives of the wife", was willing to pay 165 Albert thalers, which after covering the funeral of Jēkabs Ozoliņš and court expenses were equally distributed among Marija Magdalēna, Jēkabs and Margarēta. Following the death of Jēkabs, his part of the property was distributed between the sisters.⁴⁵ Some gold and silverware, as well as most of the furniture were bought by other fishermen and boaters. One of the most active buyers of jewelry and other things of Jēkabs Ozoliņš, including a fisherman's boat, was the nephew of his second wife, also a boater, Georgs Dāvids Ranks (1765–1836). Tomass Sēlis bought only an old brown horse, two cows, some wicker chairs, two old wooden chests, a bed, table-cloths, fire extinguishing tools, a prayer book and a damaged Latvian Bible; however, he was not interested in text books in Latvian and literature on the subject of religion in German.⁴⁶ The household objects sold at the auction provide an idea of the living conditions and property of Tomass' father-in-law, which was modest taking into account how many things were marked as old or damaged by the officials of the Custody Court.

With the obtained property the Sēlis couple started their own lives in Mūkusala, where they lived until their deaths.⁴⁷ It must be noted that Tomass did not have to pay for the property the entire sum of the bid, because it was decreased by subtracting the inheritance of Marija Magdalēna. The money collected at the auction was divided by the Custody Court among the three children of Jēkabs Ozoliņš.

Having settled down at Mūkusalā, four children were born at the family of Tomass and Marija Magdalēna. The first child was named after Tomass' father Niklass (1793–1798), but he died prematurely, not reaching the age of 6. Later on, every two years the Sēlis family had an addition and thus Johans Jēkabs was born (1795–1821), followed by Margarēta (1797–1797) and Anna Ģertrūde (1798–1848), but only one son and one daughter reached the age of maturity. Mostly, the family members of boaters and fishermen were asked to be the godparents of the children, most of them were from the Ranks and Nariņš families.⁴⁸

The profession of boaters emerged in Riga in the first half of the 17th century as a union of passenger and cargo carriers from one bank of the Daugava to another, but in the 18th century they were mostly engaged in transporting goods from and to the trade ships, which could not moor to the city. Profession-related regulations and fares approved by the City Council were applied to the trade. A candidate who applied to the vacancy of a boater had to be free, able to write and read and experienced in work on water. Several people worked on each boat, but the boater was responsible for the successful implementation of duties. If there were any arguments, the traders usually sued the owner of the boat – the boater. The brethren of boaters chose their steersmen and labourers on their boats and paid their wages, therefore within the profession they acted as small entrepreneurs, especially those who had several boats.

Tomass Sēlis was 17 years old when having bought a boat, he took the position and swore an oath of a boater in the Latvian language. The management of the profession characterized him as a decent and careful person.⁴⁹ In 1788, when Tomass got married to Marija Magdalēna, he was elected as one of the senior boaters in the profession. Despite that, he was too poor to ensure that his boat was reconstructed in accordance with the requirements of the traders in terms of covering the goods.⁵⁰ After a few years, Tomass was elected as the elterman, although he was not even 30 years old. Such an early involvement not only in the profession of the boaters, but also in the management position let

Tomass acquire the necessary skills to gradually improve the living conditions of his family. Despite the fact that the election of elterman took place every three years, Tomass, with a little break between 1798 and 1799, worked in this position until his death, and in the documents of court proceedings there are no complaints against him as an elterman.

Historian Melita Svarāne points out that in the 1780s and 1790s the wellbeing of boaters increased.⁵¹ This was caused by the stable increase of exports from Riga, which is also evidenced by the number of incoming ships, the amount of exported goods and the indicators of export value.⁵² Consequently, the boaters could not complain about a lack of work.

In 1795, Tomass Sēlis owned two land plots in Mūkusalā, one of which was his family's household. The family of Tomass Sēlis was joined by the brother of Tomass Sēlis and his seven year old stepdaughter Ģertrūde Salmiņa (*Salming*).⁵³ Official custody was not arranged at the Custody Court, therefore it cannot be known how the girl happened to be in the family of Sēlis and what her future fate was, except the fact that in 1806 she features as the maid of the Sēlis family.⁵⁴ The household also included two maids and three servants, who, perhaps, worked not only at the house, but also on the boats of Tomass. The second property was the home for a tavern managed by people who were paid by the Sēlis family. There were quite a few people working in the trade assistant professions who had taverns in Pārdaugava. These were the places where newcomers from Courland socialized, waiting for the possibility to get to the right bank of the Daugava or sell their goods without entering the city. The tavern ensured additional income not only to the Sēlis family, but also to their descendants.⁵⁵ Judging from the size of the household and the amount of properties and boats, at that time the Sēlis family was an averagely prosperous boater's family if compared to other families such as the Dāle, Dumpis, Ranks, Šlunis or Rungainis.

The increase of Tomass Sēlis' prosperity over this period of time was also attested by the fact that he worked on three boats, of which one was named *Helēna* (only three other boaters had

three boats). Sēlis also increased his family property in the beginning of the 19th century, buying several land plots, or parts of them, from neighbours.

In 1806, in the household of Tomass Sēlis, apart from the wife and two children, there was also a servant boy, three maids and a servant registered. There were also nine other servants named, who perhaps were not employed at the household but as labourers assisting with the boats of Tomass Sēlis. The entire household had risen to 26 people, if counting the relatives of the servants (excluding the people from the tavern).⁵⁶ The households of other boaters and fishermen also used to have a rather large number of servants, although it was not very common. In terms of the size of the household, Tomass Sēlis could be compared to the rich Ranks family, while other boaters maintained a small amount of servants and let out their free rooms to tenants. In 1811, there were two servants, four teenage trainees and nine servants recorded at Tomass Sēlis's house: two were disabled, one weak-minded, and one physically weak.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, women were not included in this revision.

In 1816 Tomas Sēlis was the second biggest land owner in Mūkusalā. There were seven buildings in his property, including the tavern and the household buildings.⁵⁸ He organised the transportation with 2 boardings and 5 boats with a total hoisting capacity of 360 t. Bigger capacity was possible only by two boaters. However, in the 1816 soul revision three stepdaughters were recorded in the family of Sēlis – the 16 year old Marija Elizabete Peša (*Poesch*), the 12 year old Margarēta Strazdiņa and the six year old Helēna Medne. All of them were registered as the daughters of boaters. In this household nine more persons belonging to the profession of boaters were mentioned, including all the abovementioned surnames, four apprentices and 10 servants and maidservants. Overall, the Sēlis household included 34 people, excluding the staff at the tavern.

The above mentioned girls were from the professional environment of Tomass Sēlis, but due to certain circumstances were taken under the care of the elterman's family. Taking into account

that the Sēlis family was quite prosperous at the time, but contrary to many other families did not have 5–8 children, they apparently fostered children from the families of the trade brethren. Tomass included the boys in the profession of boaters as apprentices, but the girls remained under the guardianship of his wife, Marija Magdalēna. Regarding the girls, Margarēta Strazdiņa came from the steersman Mihaels Strazdiņš' family. After he drowned in 1803, his widow Anna lived at the household of Sēlis together with her three daughters. Later, Margarēta got married to one of Tomass Sēlis's labourers and lived at the same household with her husband and three daughters after the death of Tomass and Marija Magdalēna. Helēna Medne was from the steersman Mārtiņš Mednis' family and Marija Magdalēna Sēle was her godmother. At the time when she was registered as a stepdaughter at the household of Tomass Sēlis, her father worked there as well. Marija Elizabete Peša was from the boater Heinrihs Pešs' family and after her father's death in 1813 became an orphan together with her two youngest brothers. While Marija Elizabete counted as part of the Sēlis family, both her brothers were registered as the assistant boaters of Tomass Sēlis.⁵⁹ It must be noted that the foster children were also registered in other well-off families of boaters, but it was not a very common tradition. In order to provide a broader opinion on the socio-communicative space of Marija Magdalēna Sēle, it can be mentioned that from 1791 to 1816, namely, within a period of 25 years, she was asked to be a godmother in her parish for 27 children from 21 families. Of those, 12 children were named after her. Marija Magdalēna was chosen as a godmother by 10 boaters (Georgs Dāle asked her three times), whereas fishermen Andrejs Rungainis and Andrejs Krastiņš, as well as hemp swingler Kārlis Krūze (*Kruse*) chose her as a godmother for two of their children. The names and the professions have been mentioned in this article several times, giving another reason to believe that by choosing godparents the families strengthened their mutual relationship and friendship, as well as the relationship among neighbours and professions, although it is impossible to say which factor was the crucial one. The

women of the Ranks and Dālis families were asked to be godmothers as often as Marija Magdalēna Sēle, further evidence this position was offered to the wives of influential and rich boaters.

It can also be mentioned that Tomass – the husband of Marija Magdalēna – received several awards over his lifetime and filled his duties in a complicated period of time while trying to find a compromise among the interests of the city, traders and profession, and even spending a certain period of time in prison.⁶⁰ The views of Tomass Sēlis in the beginning of the early 19th century were not the standardized views of a manager protecting monopoly rights who would have to take care of a “secured livelihood” of all trade members, because he declared that:

- 1) A free man cannot be turned into a slave and forced to work without any pay doing humiliating jobs, freedom is only one and it is stipulated by the state law;
- 2) One can live only on profit and the boaters should be paid for their work;
- 3) All people are capable of and have the courage for growth, if only they are not oppressed;
- 4) Each person must be allowed to earn according to his skills and diligence, those who are lazy and slow should not be given any work out of pity.⁶¹

Historian Melita Svarāne is of the opinion that such views “declared the ideology of the emerging bourgeoisie, demanding the right to act as one pleases with their property and profit”.⁶² In the position that the elterman took, one can notice the impact of Enlightenment ideas, yet it cannot be known how he obtained such a worldview and to what extent it influenced the household of the Sēlis family.

Several labourers working on the boats of Tomass Sēlis and people living at his household died at a very young age, and the elterman’s family was not protected from this either. Johans Jēkabs, the son of Marija Magdalēna, continued his father’s profession and started to work as a boater, but died from an unknown disease at the age of 25. After a few years, Marija Magdalēna parted from the last man of the family – her husband

Tomass, who died at the age of 66. In the newspaper of Riga the following funeral notice could be read:

“After a brief sickness, the God took my beloved husband Tomass Sēlis on the 8th day of this month at the age of 66. Anyone who knew him in the profession where he worked as an elterman for 41 years, was a witness to our very, very happy life together, which lasted for 42 years and will be able to understand the burden of grief caused by his loss, especially to me and my children, and will not decline the comfort to participate in his burial, which will take place on 13th August, at 3pm in the afternoon from my apartment in Mūkusalā. I kindly ask to commiserate.

*Riga, 12 August 1830, Marija Magdalēna, the widow of Sēlis, born Ozoliņa”.*⁶³

The wife of Tomass was a widow for three years. Pursuant to the rights in Livonian cities, upon the death of one of the spouses, in this case the husband, the widow and the children received joint ownership of the property, which the widow was entitled to manage and use even after the children came of age, up to the moment she died, married again or the heirs decided voluntarily that they wanted to divide the property.⁶⁴ Because Marija Magdalēna did not have any adult sons, she owned the entire property of Sēlis, including the boats of the boaters. Traditionally, widows were assisted by counsellors to supervise the boat operations and if necessary, to solve work related problems in the profession of boaters either within the profession itself or at court, but there is no evidence that Marija Magdalēna had such counsellors, which could mean that her boats were managed by her son-in-law.⁶⁵

Not long before her death Marija Magdalēna wrote her last will. It says that at the moment of writing the will, Marija Magdalēna was physically weak. The witnesses also testified that she was sick and bedridden. The will indicates that the 42 year long marriage with Tomass was a happy one and the property to be passed on for the inheritance was earned by themselves. The entire property – land plots, boats, one boarding (a small ship), silverware, clothing, linen, furniture, household objects, vehicles,

cash and debt claims – was passed to her only daughter Anna Ģertrūde, married as Sproģe (*Sprohge*), and in the event of her daughter's death, to her husband, the elterman of boaters Michaels Georgs Sproģis, if there were no children born in their family. If Anna Ģertrūde had children, they would become the heirs, but until they came of age the inherited property would be managed by Marija's son-in-law. Small sums were allocated to the charity establishments in Riga. Marija Magdalēna had signed with three crosses, which in her case was not a sign of illiteracy, but physical weakness, since she had signed her father's inheritance documents properly.⁶⁶ Such a formulation in the will protected the potential grandchildren of Marija Magdalēna from the necessity of dividing the mother's property with Mihaels Sproģis. In the case of Anna Ģertrūde, Mihaels as a widower could have claimed half or even two thirds of the property if they'd had one child,⁶⁷ but the will prevented such an outcome.

Marija Magdalēna died at the age of 58. After her death, the town council announced a six month period to claim the inheritance of Sēlis, but no one applied, therefore the property could be divided according to the last will of Marija Magdalēna.⁶⁸

Marija Magdalēna was from a family of fishermen, where she grew up together with her stepsisters and stepbrother. Married into the Rank family, she soon became a widow and married again – to the boater Tomass Sēlis. After the death of her father, she returned to her childhood house as the manager of the house and as a result of the successful work operations of her husband became a rich woman in her socio-economic group. Her husband was the elterman of boaters for several decades and worked on several boats, therefore the household management was something that Marija Magdalēna took care of. She had several servants and maids at her disposal. This also corresponds to the ideas about women's duties in the respective time period and place.⁶⁹ Along with a decent lifestyle, which was required from the Sēlis family by their belonging to the profession and which could not be ignored if they were to keep their high rank in the profession, the family had certain confidence and pride in their achievements.

From her four children, only two became adults, and only the daughter established an independent life. The children of several boaters – the colleagues of Tomass – were fostered by the Sēlis family. Becoming a widow, Marija Magdalēna was one of the few women from the families of trade assistant professions who had written a final will in which she left everything to her only daughter or her daughter's children.

ANNA ĢERTRŪDE, THE DAUGHTER OF TOMASS SĒLIS

Anna Ģertrūde (1798–1848) grew up at the house of Tomass Sēlis and Marija Magdalēna Sēle in Mūkusalā together with her brother and several fostered daughters of boaters. In 1824, at the age of 26, Anna Ģertrūde got married to the boater Mihaels Georgs Sproģis (*Sproģe, Sprohje*, [1795]–1848). He was from the family of anchor handler Juris (1772–1819) and Katrīna Sproģe, and grew up with three siblings in the small land plot of his father in Mūkusalā. Two of his brothers died during their infancy.⁷⁰ The profession of anchor handler was a comparatively small profession (12–25 members). In the trade season they steered the rafts and barges coming from the inner regions of Russia to get them to the city, where they were moored at the banks or islands.

After the death of the mother-in-law, the family of Sproģis inherited the entire property of Tomass Sēlis, which was assessed by Mihaels Georgs:

- 1) A house and other buildings – 1500 silver roubles;
- 2) Silverware – 200 roubles;
- 3) A boarding – 1000 roubles;
- 4) 6 boats – 1500 roubles;
- 5) An oak dugout – 100 roubles;
- 6) Cows, horses and vehicles – 200 roubles;
- 7) Furniture – 150 roubles.⁷¹

Thus, the total sum of the inheritance exceeded 4000 silver roubles. Mihaels Georgs took over the profession of his father-in-law and became an elterman of boaters.⁷² The profession of

boaters was not as profitable as earlier, because the professions based on monopoly experienced a crisis and the traders wanted to transport their own goods. Already in 1820 only 12 boaters remained in their positions, and the transportation of goods was often implemented by individually employed persons, showing that in the 1830s the position of a boater had become an economically decaying group of petit bourgeoisie.⁷³ Also, the Daugava was deepened and some trade ships could reach the port now. Thus, the number of boaters and the total load capacity of their boats gradually decreased.⁷⁴ In the 1830s, Mihaels Georgs became an owner of several schooners. It is unknown whether these ships brought the expected profit to Sproģis. For some reason, in 1840 Sproģis sold the boarding *Helēna* inherited from his father-in-law, a grand piano, five wall mirrors and other furniture. Perhaps, several debt claims from 1840 where Michaels Georgs was involved as the respondent were the reason for selling the property for more than 2600 silver roubles.⁷⁵ On the other hand, in a dispute among several boaters in 1841 it was indicated that Mihaels Georgs was imprisoned due to the complicated financial situation and debts.⁷⁶ As noted by the historian Reinhard Sieder, the people who were raised according to the outdated ideas about trade masters lacked the skills to readjust to the development of an industry oriented to capitalistic needs.⁷⁷ Perhaps Mihaels Georgs also lacked such skills and he could not ensure the workload for his ships in the circumstances of free competition if within 7 years from the moment he received his wife's inheritance he was so badly indebted. Not only him, but also Johans Dāvids (1807–1859), who came from the well-off Ranks family and who was trying to fulfil the duties of a boater for too long, was rather poor at the end of his life.⁷⁸

It is difficult to draw any conclusions about the character of Mihaels Georgs. There was only one unusual comment provided by Captain Karstens Šrēders (*Schröder*) in court proceedings, saying that the duplicity of Sproģis was also revealed by his nationality. Surely, this is not an objective verdict about a person, but evidence of the arguments used in court proceedings against each other.⁷⁹

Mihaels Georgs and Anna Ģertrūde lived at the house No 8/9 of Tomass Sēlis on Mūkusala until 1845, when it was sold, and they became the tenants in the same house. They had taken under their guardianship the children of Mihaels Georgs' sister, Katrīna: Tomass and Anna Ģertrūde, who had Tomass Sēlis as her godfather. Katrīna got married to the previously mentioned boater Tomass Pešs ([1794]–1831), who was registered at the household of Tomass Sēlis and worked for a long period of time as his assistant, but they both died a few years after the children were born.

Mihaels and Anna had three children – Georgs (1839–?) and twins Marija Elizabete and Hedviga Helēna (1840). The girls were born prematurely and Hedviga died a few days after birth.⁸⁰ Like several rich representatives of trade assistant professions, Mihaels Georgs, too, chose to baptise his children at St. Peter's parish. The families of old burger traders belonged to this parish, but Sproģis still continued burying of his family members in Āgenskalns.

The cemetery was also a burial place for Mihaels Georgs and Anna Ģertrūde, when they got sick in July 1848 and died of cholera, which was raging through the entire country. Although there were nine hospitals of cholera working in Riga, 6990 people got sick between June and November, and out of these, 2229 people died.⁸¹ A special committee was established in the Baltics which took care of several hundred widows and orphans of cholera. The daughter of Mihaels Georgs's sister, Anna Ģertrūde, took care of the children of Sproģis, who at the time were 8 and 7 years old. Anna Ģertrūde herself grew up at the family of Sproģis after the death of her parents. She, together with her husband Johans Jēkabsons, called also Šulcs (*Jacobsohn*, gen. *Schultz*, ?–1850), lived in the old house of Sproģis in Mūkusala No 1. The Custody Court nominated anchor handler Maksimiliāns Roze (*Rose*)⁸² and Johans Jēkabsons, who announced themselves as close family friends, the official guardians of the under-age children. After the death of Johans Jēkabsons, it was the boater Tomass Balks, whose father had worked for Tomass Sēlis and who also lived in Mūkusala, that became the children's guardian.

Later, Georgs lived with Ameliāns Roze in Zaķusala. Both children received home schooling.⁸³

The entire property of the deceased, including furniture, clothing, linen, the piano and the violin, was sold by the Custody Court at the auction. At the end of their lives, the household objects of the Sproģis family consisted of a polished bureau, a polished bed and a chest of drawers, an oak wardrobe and a convertible table, a wall clock, eight pictures and two kitchen sideboards. In the shed, there were other pieces of furniture and clothing, which most likely could not be placed in the new apartment. The list also mentions old books, but their titles have not been indicated. Also, the court sold by auction two boats and anchors of Mihaels Georgs.⁸⁴

When the Custody Court announced that the creditors of the Sproģis family could apply, it turned out that Mihaels Georgs owed the Riga Tax Administration 144 roubles in tax from the time period 1839 to 1848. Some boaters, who had unpaid salaries, also applied, but the biggest amount of claims were constituted by the holders of obligations and exchange bills, whom Mihaels Georgs owed money. The total sum of debt exceeded 1400 silver roubles, but the sum obtained from the property auction of the deceased made only 149,13 roubles after the deduction of court tax (from which 103,57 roubles constituted the sum of the household).⁸⁵ It must be taken into account that the number of participants at the auction during the cholera epidemic and thus the obtained sums could be rather small in comparison to the market value of the objects. The most valuable objects were the piano, the polished bureau, a black satin coat and a black jacket for men. Thus, Sproģis only left the debt to his children, and the guardians tried to reach an agreement for decreasing the sum.⁸⁶ One of the witnesses at court noted that at the end of his life Mihaels Georgs was poor and unemployed. Only in 1851 the court concluded the inheritance case of Sproģis and divided the sum among the plaintiffs.⁸⁷

Anna Ģertrūde was from the prosperous family of the elterman of boaters Tomass Sēlis and became the only heiress of the

property after the death of her mother. She got married to the boater Mihaels Georgs Sproģis, who was also raised in Mūkusala. There were two children of their own and two adopted from the sister-in-law. Due to the crisis in the profession of boaters, the Sproģis family went bankrupt and lost their house. Anna Ģertrūde and her husband were the victims of the 1848 cholera epidemic. Her daughter was raised in the family of her husband's sister's daughter, whereas her son was adopted by the family of an anchor handler.

CONCLUSION

In the given time period, the course of life of a woman was determined by legal and socially accepted restrictions, which influenced her everyday life and fate overall. This does not mean that a woman must be viewed as a passive object of history who was always under the control of a man. Sex and the socio-economic group a girl was born into determined her status and range of activities to a great extent, yet it did not turn her into an element devoid of any personality.⁸⁸

The life of a woman mostly must be viewed through the prism of her family. In the beginning it is her father's family and later – her husband's. The example of the Sēlis family shows that girls born into the families of assistant professions or fishermen in Pārdaugava grew up in this community, got married, raised their children and were buried there. Their space of social mobility over the course of three generations (a church, cemetery, father's house, husband's house) consisted of a plot of land stretching across around 9 kilometres on both banks of the Daugava.

Over the course of all three generations, the family of Sēlis – Sproģis was closely related to the profession of boaters and fishermen. The choice of the “other half” could be one of the reasons to enter into the profession, or it could have been to gain some other benefit. The age of marriage for girls was in the range of 23–30 years old. There are no studies which would allow this age to be compared with general tendencies of the time in wider society,

but it is obvious that the average indicators in the Baltic German society and German countries are similar in the second half of the 19th century.⁸⁹ In the example of Jēkabs Ozoliņš, the father of Marija Magdalēna Sēle, repeated marriages to widowed spouses occurred. To escape the subsequent conflicts of inheritance, marriage contracts were signed where the widowed spouse, including a woman, could perform as the initiator of the marriage contract. There are quite a few studies confirming that a widow with a property attracted the attention of property-less men and that this phenomenon was characteristic in various periods of time, although in the 18th and 19th century remarriages of widows happened less frequently than in the previous centuries.⁹⁰ In the framework of the given family, remarriages were frequent, yet it is impossible to mention the reasons why the respective people were eager to enter into marriage again. In the only two documents which Marija Magdalēna Sēle had signed as an author – the last will and the funeral notice of her husband – it was indicated that their marriage was happy. Although the public status of both sources and the relative meaning of “happiness” must be taken into account, it cannot be ruled out that at the end of her life Marija Magdalēna really considered her marriage successful. As noted by researchers, the quality of marriage has raised a lot of debates among historians, because the contradictory evidence of the sources does not allow any overall conclusions to be drawn.⁹¹

The sources that have been preserved from that period of time do not provide any information on the mutual relationship among these people. Usually, children grew up in rather big families, although Tomass Sēlis and Mihaels Georgs Sproģis did not have many children of their own when compared to other families of that time, and they were born after several years of marriage. Thus, Marija Magdalēna and her daughter Anna did not spend a lot of their mature years in pregnancy, caring after infants, which regulated the lives of women in the respective period of time to a great extent.⁹² In the example of the Sēlis – Sproģis family, the co-habitation of several generations within one household can be observed. In the family of Niklass Sēlis a

grown-up single son lived; in the family of Tomass Sēlis, a single younger brother; in the family of Mihails Georgs Sproģis, the children of the deceased sister. This only reveals a few of the possible models of co-habitation at the time. Since the women of the Sēlis-Sproģis families were not involved in the court proceedings between the members of family or neighbours, nothing can be said about their status within their community or the opinions of the residents of Pārdaugava in terms of this family. Neither is it possible to reconstruct their daily activities, except the fact that somebody played music in the family. Because the wife of a boater or any other service provider could not get involved in the activities related to her husband's work, as opposed to the wives of fishermen, who could sell the fish in the market, their everyday lives were focused on the maintenance of their households. Depending on the prosperity of the family and the number of servants, as well as the number of children and their age (little children had to be looked after, bigger children could be helpful themselves), the women of these families were responsible for cleanness, water supplies, cooking, market visits, livestock, gardening and other household-related activities. Also, according to the available sources, it is impossible to tell whether the women of the Sēlis-Sproģis family were involved in contributing towards the family budget.

As it can be seen in the case of Marija Magdalēna, the inheritance of her father was used as the foundation for the household of Tomass Sēlis, which could only increase under the favourable circumstances of the profession of boaters. He belonged to the management of the trade assistant profession protecting monopoly rights; however, his lifestyle and world perception made him closer to an entrepreneur providing transportation services. Over his lifetime, he managed to balance both roles. Whereas Mihaels Georgs Sproģis got married to the only daughter of a rich elderman of boaters, which traditionally ensured the capital for starting one's own economic activities, yet in his case was unsuccessful. Thus, it can be concluded that the fate and wellbeing of a woman to a great extent depended on the success of her father

and later her husband. The man of one generation, Tomass Sēlis, knew how to use the favourable economic circumstances. Starting out as the owner of a partially equipped boat and a small wooden house with one room, he went on to become one of the richest members in a trade assistant profession and held the management position in the circumstances of crisis. Along with Tomass, his wife Marija Magdalēna went her humble beginnings as a fisherman's daughter to become the household manager of a substantial property. The man of another generation – Mihaels Georgs Sproģis – inherited the property, but lost it all in a short period of time, failing to adjust to the new trends in the business environment. Along with Mihaels Georgs, his wife Anna Ģertrūde turned from a rich elterman's daughter into the wife of a bankrupt boater.

Only thanks to the materials of several revisions is it possible to have an insight into the structure of the household of Tomass Sēlis, which reveals the social care model of the time. Several daughters of boaters were fostered by the family of Tomass due to the fact that some misfortune had happened to their parents. The boys were included in the profession of boaters and were taught to work on boats. Those who were not capable of fulfilling the duties of the profession were left at home to work in the household. Of course, it cannot be ascertained what role the wife of Tomass Marija Magdalēna played in the establishment of such a model. However, the niece, who grew up in the family of Mihaels Georgs Sproģis, later took on responsibility for the daughter of Mihaels Georgs, who had been orphaned. This shows that family ties were crucial when relatives were struck by misfortune.

Of course, the fate of the women of the Sēlis family does not allow any overall conclusions to be drawn about the lives of all women in the families of trade assistant professions, yet it does present an insight into the lives of these three women and the opportunity to see how they evolved in the respective time and space and interacted with the surrounding people and events.

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- ⁹ Taube. *Rīgas latviešu tirdzniecības palīgamati*, p. 72.
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SIEVIETES RĪGAS TIRDZNICĪBAS PALĪGAMATU
 DZIMTĀS 18. GADSIMTĀ UN 19. GADSIMTA PIRMAJĀ
 PUSĒ: TOMASA SĒĻA ĢIMENES PIEMĒRS

Anita Čerpinska

Dr. hist., Latvijas Universitātes Latvijas vēstures institūts. Zinātniskās intereses: Rīgas tirdzniecības palīgamati 18.–19. gadsimtā.

Raksts veltīts Rīgas pārcelāju amata eltermaņa Tomasa Sēļa ģimenes trīs paaudžu sievietēm – mātei, sievai un meitai, mēģinot uz viņu piemēra parādīt dažādos sieviešu likteņus Rīgas tirdzniecības palīgamatu vēstures kontekstā pārcelājumiem labvēlīgos un nelabvēlīgos ekonomiskajos apstākļos. Parādīts, cik konsolidētu vidi veidoja Rīgas tirdzniecības palīgamatu dzimtas, kuras savstarpēji saradojās un dzīvoja konkrētā Rīgas daļā, aprakstīta arī dažādā sieviešu mantiskā situācija, laulības līgumu slēgšanas apstākļi, atraitņu un bāreņu stāvoklis šādās ģimenēs. Raksta tapšanā izmantoti dažādu Rīgas tiesu materiāli.

Atslēgas vārdi: Anna Sēle, Marija Magdalēna Sēle, Anna Ģertrūde Sēle, pārcelāji, Mūkusalā.

Kopsavilkums

Raksta centrālā vieta atvēlēta ilggadējā Rīgas pārcelāju eltermaņa (vadošais administratīvais amats palīgamatu iekšienē) Tomasa Sēļa (1763–1830) ģimenei, fokusējoties uz triju paaudžu sievietēm – viņa māti, sievu un meitu, lai parādītu dažādos sieviešu likteņus dzimtas vēstures ietvaros 18. gadsimta otrajā pusē un 19. gadsimta pirmajā pusē, kas ir pakāpenisku pārmaiņu laiks gan palīgamatu, gan visas Rīgas vēsturē.

Par tirdzniecības palīgamatiem Rīgas vēsturē sauc amatos apvienotas cilvēku grupas, kuras nodarbojās ar tirdzniecības preču transportu, apstrādi, svēršanu un vērtēšanu. Ar preču pārvadāšanu pa Daugavu vai apstrādi, kā arī zvejā nodarbinātie tradicionāli apmetās Daugavas tuvumā, uz salām un Daugavas kreisajā krasā netālu no upes. Amatu locekļus bieži apvienoja ģimeniskas saites, un liela viņu daļa piederēja pie Sv. Jāņa latviešu draudzes. Tā kā šie cilvēki piederēja vienai draudzei, dzīvoja vienā apvidū un strādāja radniecīgos amatos, viņus var uzskatīt par Rīgas sabiedrībai piederošu iedzīvotāju kopu ar savu grupas apziņu un savdabīgu vietu Rīgas iedzīvotāju vidū. Raksts tapis, balstoties uz Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīva materiāliem – baznīcu grāmatām, dvēseļu revīziju sarakstiem, nodokļu pārvaldes datiem un dažādu Rīgas tiesu materiāliem.

Avotu materiāls par Tomasa Sēļa māti Annu Sēli, dzimušu Lau (1729–1792), nav diez ko plašs. Viņa nāca no Rīgas tirdzniecības palīgamatiem pietuvinātas strādnieku ģimenes, dzīvoja tuvajā Pārdaugavā un ieprecējās turpat kaimiņos. Ilgs laiks viņas laulības dzīvē pagāja grūtniecības un bērnu audzināšanas zīmē, bet no astoņiem bērniem savu patstāvīgu dzīvi ārpus vecāku mājas nodibināja tikai divi dēli. Kad Anna nomira, viņas jaunākajam dēlam bija 18 gadi. Pēc Annas nāves viņas vīrs Niklass nodzīvoja atraitņos divus gadus un tad apprecējās vēlreiz arī ar atraitni un slēdza ar viņu vienošanos, lai nodrošinātu bērniem no pirmās laulības pienākošos mantojuma daļu.

Tomasa Sēļa sieva Marija Magdalēna, dzimusi Ozoliņa (1761–1833), nāca no Mūkusalā dzīvojošas zvejnieku ģimenes, kurā auga kopā ar pusmāsām un pusbrāli. Lai gan viņas tēvu nevar uzskatīt par bagātu Rīgas zvejnieku amata pārstāvi, tomēr viņa ģimenē bija slēgti vairāki laulības līgumi. Par Mariju Magdalēnu avotu materiāls ir daudz plašāks nekā par iepriekšējo paudzi. 21 gada vecumā ieprecējusies zvejnieku Ranku dzimtā, viņa drīz kļuva par atraitni un apprecējās otrreiz – ar pārcēlāju Tomasu Sēli. Pēc tēva nāves viņa atgriezās bērnības mājā jau kā mājas saimniece un veiksmīgas vīra saimniekošanas rezultātā kļuva par savam sabiedrības slānim bagātu sievieti. Viņas vīrs vairākus gadu desmitus pildīja pārcēlāju amata eltermaņa pienākumus un strādāja ar vairākām laivām, tādēļ saimniekošana īpašumā visdrīzāk palika sievas ziņā. Marijas Magdalēnas rīcībā gan bija vairāki kalpi un kalpones. No četriem bērniem pieauga divi, bet patstāvīgu dzīvi nodibināja tikai meita. Sēļu ģimenē tika pieņemti audzināšanā vairāku pārcēlāju – Tomasa darba kolēģu – bērni. Palikusi atraitne, Marija Magdalēna ir viena no nedaudzām palīgamatu ģimeņu sievietēm, kas kā liecību par sevi atstājusi testamentu, kurā visu novēlējusi savai vienīgajai meitai vai viņas pēctečiem.

Tomasa Sēļa meita Anna Ģertrūde (1798–1848) nāca no pārtikušā pārcēlāju eltermaņa ģimenes un kļuva par vienīgo viņa īpašuma mantinieci pēc mātes nāves, jo viņas abi brāļi un māsa bija miruši. Anna Ģertrūde 26 gadu vecumā apprecējās ar pārcēlāju Mihaelu Georgu Sproģi ([1795]–1848), kurš arīdzan bija uzaudzis Mūkusalā un nāca no enkurnieku dzimtas. Annas Ģertrūdes ģimenē auga divi pašas bērni un divi pieņemti vīramāsas bērni. Pārcēlāju amata krīzes vai kādu avotos neidentificējamu apstākļu dēļ Sproģi izputēja, zaudēja māju un iestīga parādos. Anna Ģertrūde un viņas vīrs kļuva par upuriem 1848. gada holeras epidēmijai. Visu viņu īpašumu tiesa izpārdeva ūtrupē, bet ienākumi sedza tikai nelielu daļu Sproģu atstāto parādu. Annas Ģertrūdes meita Marija

Elizabete uzauga vīra sievas meitas ģimenē, kamēr dēlu Georgu pieņēma kāda enkurnieku ģimene.

Visu trīs paaudžu garumā Sēļu – Sproģu ģimene bija cieši saistīta ar pārcēlāju un zvejnieku amatu. Kā redzams Marijas Magdalēnas gadījumā, tieši viņas tēva mantojums kļuva par pamatu Tomasa Sēļa saimniecības izveidošanai, kas labvēlīgos pārcēlāju amata darbības apstākļos varēja palielināties. Savukārt Mihaels Georgs Sproģis apprecēja bagāta pārcēlāju eltermaņa vienīgo meitu, kas viņam nodrošināja mantību savas saimnieciskās darbības uzsākšanai, kas tomēr bija visai neveiksmīga. Līdz ar to ir redzams, ka sievietes liktenis un labklājība lielā mērā bija atkarīga no tēva un vēlāk vīra panākumiem.

Protams, Sēļu ģimenes sieviešu liktenis neļauj izdarīt vispārinājumus par visu tirdzniecības palīgamatu ģimeņu sieviešu dzīvi, tomēr tas ļauj ielūkoties šo trīs paaudžu sieviešu dzīvēs un redzēt, kā tās veidojās attiecīgajā laikā un telpā un mijiedarbojās ar apkārtējiem cilvēkiem un notikumiem.