

HISTORICAL CHARACTER IN REGION'S IDENTITY TRANSFORMATIONS: PRUSSIAN LITHUANIA – LITHUANIA MINOR – WESTERN LITHUANIA

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ABSTRACT

The concept of contemporary identity guides to exclusiveness of culture's role and history as well. Queen Luisa is not only an attractive symbol while talking about fatal period for Europe and Prussia in the years 1806–1815, but also interesting is her personality while looking for parallels between identities of Memel (Klaipėda), the small province town of the German empire, and Klaipėda, the largest contemporary Western Lithuanian city. Present inhabitants of Klaipėda pay a lot of attention to Queen Luisa's merits for development of education and culture in the city and in the region. The fact that in newest discussions about Klaipėda's vision of cultural politics, the need to integrate cultural heritage into consciousness of citizens and formation of identity is highlighted, testifies about signs of new quality in region's identity structure of Western Lithuania. Research is based on historical sources and literature.

KEY WORDS: identity, Queen Luisa, cultural heritage, Prussian Lithuania / Lithuania Minor, Western Lithuania, Klaipėda.

ANOTACIJA

Šiuolaikinė identiteto samprata orientuoja į tai, kad kultūros vaidmuo yra išskirtinis, o kultūra yra gyva, kai ji nuolat kontaktuoja su kitomis kultūromis, kaip, beje, ir su istorija. Karalienė Luisė – ne tik patrauklus simbolis kalbant apie lemtingą Europai ir Prūsijai laikotarpį 1806–1815 m., bet jos asmenybė yra įdomi ieškant paralelių tarp Vokietijos imperijos provincijos miesto Klaipėdos (Memelio) identiteto ir dabartinės Klaipėdos identiteto. Šių dienų klaipėdiečiai pradeda vis giliau suvokti karalienės Luisės nuopelnus miesto ir regiono švietimo ir kultūros raidai. Faktas, jog naujausiose diskusijose apie Klaipėdos kultūros politikos viziją pabrėžiamas būtinumas kultūros paveldą integruoti į miestiečių savimonę ir identiteto formavimą bei nuolat regioninėje spaudoje akcentuojama kultūros paveldo išsaugojimo problema, liudija naujos kokybės požymius Vakarų Lietuvos regiono identiteto struktūroje.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: identitetas, karalienė Luisė, kultūros paveldas, Prūsų Lietuva / Mažoji Lietuva, Vakarų Lietuva, Klaipėda.

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The concept of contemporary identity guides to exclusiveness of culture's role and states that culture is alive when it is in constant contact with other cultures and history. In parts of former German lands, Silesia, Pomerania (Poland), Kaliningrad region (Russia), and Klaipėda (Lithuania) last decade of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century has highlighted region's identity problem. For people who live in those regions, a search of own specific identity remains an actual problem. This process is not evolving equally everywhere however it is obvious that people are adapting region's consciousness. First of all it occurs through learning about the past, which is history because every human is affected by material and spiritual heritage of the region he/she lives in.

The Baltic Sea Regions which rely on cultural identity have distinct historical landmarks, like Hansa cities' tradition in the Middle Ages (Danzig, Riga, etc.). Many diverse nationalities have lived in those regions and many different languages were spoken. However in culture of the cities' a certain German element usually prevailed: German language, which was also a public language.

Nevertheless local people had a common regional and cultural identity, common concept of *Native land*, and love to their city of birth¹.

One of the cultural regions was Lithuania Minor, in history longer known as Prussian Lithuania, and its part – Klaipėda region. Even such variation of terms, considering the same geographical area, distinctly reflects the problematic nature of Klaipėda and Western Lithuania region's identity.

Of course it is a broad problem which guides to a discussion of different forms of identity (public, cultural, religious, ethnic, etc.). We will concentrate on region's cultural identity development and, closely related to it, certain aspects of religious identity. Only religion, more precisely Protestant Reformation establishment in Prussian principality in the 16th Century, was one of the main presumptions which let Prussian Lithuanians have their cultural niche in a country where German language was dominant. Protestant Reformation regulation on native spoken language and script usage in Prussia have inspired first Lithuanian book "*Katekizmas*" by Martynas Mažvydas in Königsberg in 1547, first translation of Bible in Lithuanian by Jonas Bretkūnas, and other religious writings in Lithuanian (more than 20 in a second part of the 16th Century) .

The need to consolidate Protestantism in Prussian principality stimulated its lord Albrecht Hohenzolern to not only establish the University of Königsberg, which was intended to train protestant theologians, but also to ratify regulations of 1561 according to which money for 8 Lithuanian, Prussian or Sudovian youngsters were allocated yearly to pay for their studies of theology in the University of Königsberg². Realization of those regulations and activity of Lithuanian language school, which was established at the University of Königsberg by command of King Friedrich Wilhelm I in 1718, were very important presumptions that determined prosperity of Lithuanian literature in the 18th Century with "*Metai*" by Kristijonas Donelaitis, even several Lithuanian-German dictionaries, Lithuanian language grammars, books of songs etc. There are many facts reflecting close relationship between government policies in Prussia, whose one of most important aims was to raise obedient citizen with help of protestant church, and satisfying cultural needs of Prussian Lithuanians. For example in year 1735 first Bible was published in Lithuanian and it was financed by Prussian monarch and private patrons³. It is not an ordinary fact in culture's history which, among other things, stimulated foundation of secular literature in Lithuanian language. Aforementioned King Friedrich Wilhelm I performed colonization of plagues that devastated Prussian Lithuania in the first part of the 18th Century. Many Germans moved to Prussian Lithuania and this caused strengthening of multicultural atmosphere which, on its behalf, influenced further processes of assimilation. Interpretations of this difficult process (Kristijonas Donelaitis was suggestive in his writings), which changed Prussian Lithuania or Lithuania Minor lifestyle, differ in Lithuanian and German historiography. German historic Manfred Klein very accurately noted that up till now writings concentrated only on one nation that is they were either about Germans or Lithuanians, although the two nations mingled and lived in a neighbourhood⁴. Lutheran church and governmental policy, which was embodied by Prussian monarchy, not only determined survival of Prussian Lithuanian ethnic group, dispersion of Lithuanian literature in Prussia, but also influenced formation of a very distinct mentality of this group – respect for church and Prussian monarchy.

¹ TARVEL, E. *Regionen im Ostseeraum und ihre Identitäten. Mare Balticum*. Lübeck, 1995, p. 11.

² 1561 m. Prūsijos kunigaikščio Albrechto Brandenburgiečio „Nuostatų apie šviesiausio kunigaikščio aliumnus“ fragmentas. In: LUKŠAITĖ, I. (sud.). *Lietuvos mokykla ir pedagoginė mintis XIII – XVII a.* Vilnius, 1994. p. 193.

³ GINEITIS, L. *Prūsiškasis patriotizmas ir lietuvių literatūra*. Vilnius, 1995, p. 69.

⁴ KLEIN, M. Pressisch Litauen. Neue Aufgaben für die kulturantropologische Forschung. In: *Die Grenze als Ort der Annäherung 750 Jahre deutschlitauische Beziehungen*. Köln, 1992, S. 14.

In connection to respecting monarchy in Prussian Lithuania / Lithuania Minor one of the most distinct examples is wife of Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III – Queen Luisa (1776-1810). Her name's dialectal variation – *Luvyza* – was very popular in this region for several hundred years.

Queen Luisa – is not only an attractive symbol while talking about fatal period for Europe and Prussia in years 1806 – 1815, when Napoleon conquered lots of lands and finally was beaten, but also interesting is her personality while looking for parallels between identities of Klaipėda (*Memel*), a small province town of German empire, and biggest contemporary western Lithuanian city – Klaipėda. It is worth noting that „Luisa topic“ is some kind of indicator pointing out characteristic complications which are related to region's history adoption and interpretation in different eras.

One of the most common complications, while talking about identity problem and Queen Luisa, is what can be called a “principle of segment”. It means that at the intersection of the 19th and the 20th Centuries, at the end of the 20th Century, and even at the beginning of the 21st Century Queen Luisa's topic is exploited while emphasizing different segments of her connections with Prussian Lithuania – Lithuania Minor – Western Lithuania. Indeed, this topic has constant accents shaped in Luisa's era – one of the most beautiful representatives of Europe's monarch elite. A Clear example would be Queen Luisa participation in Tilsit peace negotiations: “disgraced by Napoleon” Queen's interpretation, which conform to that time and later widely cultivated Queen Luisa – “Prussian savior” myth, is dominating in German historiography⁵. Similar interpretation of this fact was presented by Napoleon's servitor Konstan, and his memoirs are interesting because he rather comprehensively describes the impression of Queen Luisa:

... Prussian Queen arrived to Tilsit. She was average height but looked very imposing. Her profile was remarkable, beauty blinding, though she was 32 years old; her youth vitality was already going out. I saw her when she came to have a dinner with my master. This lady thought she could negotiate better peace conditions by her mind and charm. Though Napoleon Bonaparte was treating her very respectfully, all complaints, begging and requests, all feminine ruse of a disgraced Queen were condemned to fail and provided no positive output. Actually, everything was decided before the Queen arrived. She did not achieve anything except that two agreements – with Russia and Prussia – were signed quicker. Queen was pretty and nice, maybe a little too lean and strict, nevertheless surrounding people admired her. Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte wanted her to like him and she, with her innocent feminine coquettishness, did everything to warm her into husband's conqueror. I have many times seen Queen having dinner with lords, sitting between two emperors. They always showed her attention and sweetness.⁶

So at the end of the 19th Century and at the beginning of the 20th Century it was not handy for manipulators of German empire's historical consciousness to talk about factual Prussian royal couple exile to Klaipėda, and about tragic situation of the Kingdom because of Napoleon's almost taken over Prussia (it was Prussia which was most important in creating the German empire in 1871). Therefore the only officially appraised direction for interpreting these events was romanticized. One of the best examples of such interpretation is work of Johann Sembritzki called “History of Prussian sea and trade city – Klaipėda”. This writing only partly mentions two unsuccessful battles near Jen and Auerstädt in 1806, where, in fact, Napoleon shattered Prussian army which was

⁵ OHFF, H. *Königin Luise von Preussen. Ein Stern in Wetterwolken*. München. 2005. S. 361–368.

⁶ *Napoleono Bonaparto triumfas ir tragedija 1805 – 1810. Nežinomos imperatoriaus rūmų dramos, papasakotos jo kamerdinerio Konstano*. Žara, 2005, p. 159.

considered to be unbeatable in the 18th Century. A little more time in his work J. Sembritzki devoted to merits of King Friedrich Wilhelm III while solving problems of Klaipėda city (repairing streets, illumination, land donations, improving life quality of the poor, etc.) and emphasized Queen Luisa's attention to educational facilities, especially to higher school for girls⁷. However J. Sembritzki mainly wrote about entertainments of monarchs, their beloved picnic places and promenades, and thus created an impression King and Queen Luisa arrived to Klaipėda not like exiles but like taking a recreational journey. Most noticeable contrast between historical reality and details which retouch it, is emphasized meaning of "Luisa's sofa" in J. Sembritzki work:

Long lasting correspondence between royal dynasty members and Klaipėda citizens families (Consents, Plaws, Argelanders, Griffins) and till now saved relics, "Luisa's sofa" being one of the most valuable, once used by the Queen and now owned by captain and landlord Mr. Graff senior, proves nice relationships which developed between lords and subordinates at that period.⁸

Such romance-like interpretation of history stimulated clerks, who were protecting means and shapes of state – empire consciousness formation, to eternalize every feet of the land which was touched by the Royal Highness. Therefore in Klaipėda and its surroundings many such kind signs of memorial appeared: main city streets named after Friedrich Wilhelm (now *Tiltų* street) and Luisa (now *Danės* street), memorial stone devoted to Queen Luisa in Tauralaukis, Luisa's hotel in Nida, Luisa's health resort in Juodkrantė (Luisenbad) and others.

It makes sense to talk broader about relics⁹, related to Queen Luisa, importance while discussing identity problem of different epochs. We will mention two less known episodes. The First one – year 1878 publication about Lietzmann's collection to memorize Queen Luisa, which was printed in „*Altpreussische Monatsschrift*“, a journal by cultural fellowship for history research „Prussia“ from Königsberg, founded in 1849. This publication stated that the mentioned collection contained not only painted portraits of Queen Luisa but also portraits made from gypsum, including porcelain articles with her image and books. Quite impressive speed of collecting: in 1876 there were 120 portraits of Queen and 5 books, after two years (in 1878) – 178 portraits, 60 books and 120 various porcelain articles⁹. Interestingly for discussion of this collection a separate fellowship meeting was held. Usually during meetings lectures were read and discussions held on the latest scientific publications related to eastern Prussia and the archaeological findings, ethnography, folklore. This unique topic of fellowship meeting testifies that ideological engagement did not bypass bright minds of eastern Prussia, concentrated around fellowship "Prussia". In other words, it is a sign showing that Queen Luisa was an important dominant of period's identity, reflecting means and shapes in which monarch institution's image was formed in the end of the 19th Century.

Another example reflecting Queen Luisa's image configurations is a hundred years ago in Klaipėda written document, found in a secret cultural heritage archive of Prussia in Berlin: it is Klaipėda's magistrate paper which was sent to Cult Ministry in Berlin on March 15, 1911. The paper writes that magistrate agrees to fulfil request of Ministry for lending Queen Luisa's portrait, painted by famous German artist Gerhard Kügelgen, from City Hall with purpose of making a copy for Queen's teachers' seminary. Painting had to be temporarily transferred to Art Academy of Königsberg. Interesting is concluding part of the mentioned paper: it highlights that because of

⁷ ZEMBRICKIS, J. *Klaipėdos karališkojo Prūsijos jūrų ir prekybos miesto istorija*. T. I. Klaipėda, 2002, p. 218–224.

⁸ Ibid, p. 218.

⁹ Altertumsgesellschaft Prussia 1878. Sitzung dem 17. Mai. *Altpreussische Monatsschrift*. Bd. 15, 1878, S. 21.

high importance and value of the painting (bei der grossen Bedeutung und Werte der Bildes) and also in pursuance to safely transport it, Ministry is asked to provide 10 000 marks. Moreover after a month Klaipėda's magistrate insured with another paper from possible temptations to reproduce the made copy of the painting¹⁰.

This document inspires several important thoughts while discussing Queen Luisa and identity problem: it is a very distinct example resembling how Luisa was romanced or you can say mythologized at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th Century. Hereby one more important moment has to be mentioned: a copy of a mentioned painting was designated for Queen's teachers' seminary, and this reveals one of the most positive sides of Luisa personality's interface with Klaipėda and Prussian Lithuania or Lithuania Minor. It was Queen Luisa who took care for the teachers' seminary to be established in 1811 (after a year of Queen's death in 1810) in *Aukštųjų Kumečių* manor, not far from Königsberg (now *Zelionųj Bor*), which would prepare teachers for Lithuanian schools in Eastern Prussia. Not only Lithuanian language was taught there but also 25 state scholarships were paid to students from Prussian Lithuania / Lithuania Minor¹¹. Soon in memory of Queen Luisa – embossed Maecenas memory, seminary was named *Karalienė* (The Queen). The mentioned document testifies exactly such name of this institution – „*Königliche Lehrerseminar in Karalene*“.

Not only this example but also the fact that in 1891 Klaipėda's gymnasium was given the name of Queen Luisa, and up to the end of World War II was called the Royal gymnasium of Luisa (Königlichen Luisen-Gymnasium), testifies that most memorable in history of Klaipėda and its region is Queen Luisa's – the education patron's image.

In this part it would be sensible to proceed to today's Klaipėda citizens' relationship with Queen Luisa, and we can state that search for a place, where Queen Luisa should undoubtedly be in Klaipėda and its region residents' identity took a long time. To trace more distinct stages of this search we should start from 1990, when on facade of a house in *Minijos* street, No. 1 sign appeared with words “Luiza's pharmacy”. Back then this name had no associations with Prussian Queen probably for nobody, more likely it was a return of a historical name. Undoubtedly the latter intention was the main inspiration to change the name of the pharmacy because it is known that in 1909 a “Luisa” pharmacy was based in this house¹². However the house and pharmacy was then in Klaipėda's suburb *Smeltė*, which was connected to the city in 1918 and since then “Luisa” pharmacy name and address – *Malūnų Vartų* street, No. 1a – stayed the same up to 1945, when post-war changes in Klaipėda affected “Luisa” pharmacy also.

Another step which “geographically” brought us nearer to the most important place of Queen Luisa's life in Klaipėda is former merchant's Consentius house which became residence of the Royal (City Hall later on) – was a café named “Luize” which appeared in the mid 90s. Yet another link which paid more attention to this historical character was a fact that this café was established very close to former Luisa's gymnasium building and already could raise more specific associations to those who heard at least something about Luisa's gymnasium. However we could probably attribute both examples to accidental allusions of Queen Luisa's topic in Klaipėda on the last decade of the 20th Century.

¹⁰ 1911 metų kovo 15 d. ir balandžio 13 d. Klaipėdos (Memelio) magistrato raštai Kulto reikalų ministrui. Geheimstaatsarchiv Preussische Kulturbesitz (GStaPK). Ostpreussen-Litauen II, HA I, Rep. 76 VII neu, Sec. 3c, T. IV, Nr. 2, O.P.

¹¹ KENEŠIS, A. Karalienės Luizos portretas Klaipėdoje. *Klaipėda*, 1999 05 29.

¹² JUODYTĖ, G. Klaipėdos akvarelės: namai ir žmonės (82). *Vakarų ekspresas*, 2008 12 22.

First distinct fact which emphasized Queen Luisa's name in Klaipėda citizens' identity in the end of the 20th Century is tablet's with Luisa's bas-relief uncovering in 1999 near former city hall building, where King Friedrich Wilhelm III and Queen Luisa lived between 1807 and 1808. By the way, bas-relief resembles Gerhard von Kügelgen painted portrait of Luisa, which was hanging in the meeting chamber of former Klaipėda town hall building (now Klaipėda County Administration building), and which we discussed earlier in the text.

The growing understanding of Queen Luisa's merits for development of education and culture in the city and the region is reflected by the fact that in autumn of 2006 a proposal to the city politicians was submitted to entitle Klaipėda's youth center (which is by the way located in a former Luisa's gymnasium building) by the name of Queen Luisa¹³. Unfortunately these intentions weren't implemented.

While talking about problems of contemporary identity of western region of Lithuania, which is strongly influenced by inertia with acceleration of fifty years, and maintains a variety of phobia related to the former German state tradition and culture in this region, we can ascertain it is not easy for Klaipėda's citizens to decide which urban history prominent characters or events to perpetuate today or what form to accomplish this in. There are some who think that only the 20th Century characters and only those with Lithuanian surnames are important, nevertheless history of the city goes back 750 years. Characteristic episode of such tendency – disputes about newest monument “*Arka*” near historical “*Birža*” bridge. It was mostly discussed not about artistic value or consistency with environment of this monument but about whether it is a symbol of Klaipėda region's annexation or voluntary joining to Lithuania in 1923¹⁴. It is obvious there was a big dilemma hidden in the context of such discussions – adapt or not city's history which reaches almost eight hundred years back.

Categorical form of these discussions remind of year 1989 when it was decided to build a monument, popularly called “*Anikė*” (Anchen von Tharau) in a Theatre Square for a German poet, born in Klaipėda, Simon Dach. Then local newspapers excessively disputed the idea of whether or not to rebuild monument which was firstly built in 1912. However “*Anikė*” returned to Old Town of Klaipėda city and now is one of the biggest tourist attraction centres and a popular meeting place in Klaipėda. It can be stated that rebuilding of this monument symbolized a start of a multicultural Klaipėda history adaptation. Here it is essential to highlight that we talk about multilayered bed of cultural past of the city, although heritage of German culture is very distinct, during centuries in Klaipėda there lived Lithuanians together with English, Swedish, Dutch, Jewish, Polish, Russian (etc.) people. There were not only Lutheran (Germans' and Lithuanians') churches in Klaipėda but also chapels of Catholics, Reformats, Anglicans and synagogues. This alone allows describing Klaipėda as a city having multiethnic and multicultural heritage.

Importance of the history in evolution of Klaipėda's identity was particularly felt in celebration of city's 750 anniversary in 2002. It was mostly reflected in an opening of a museum in a former castle territory and with a visit to Klaipėda of still existing German order (which is associated with foundation of castle and city) magistrate during days of anniversary. Therefore Klaipėda's cultural community which organized anniversary proved that it got rid of complexes associated with the city's historical past¹⁵.

Today there are already enough signals which show that syndrome of “inconvenient history” is slowly being overcome. Near historians the bravest are business people. Several years ago in one

¹³ Centrai – karalienės Luizės vardas. *Klaipėda*, 2006 10 10.

¹⁴ Po „Arka“ jausimės saugesni? *Vakarų ekspresas*, 2003 01 15.

¹⁵ STRAKAUSKAITĖ, N. *Kultūros kraštovaizdis prie Kuršių marių*. Klaipėda, 2010 (forthcoming).

warehouse built in the 19th Century near *Danė* river established beer restaurant was called „*Memelis*“, we can also find “Memel optics” and this doesn’t surprise anyone anymore, although a decade ago this was hard to even imagine.

Klaipėda’s citizen, philosopher Leonidas Donskis once accurately noted that:

... sooner or later in multicultural cities generation forms, which recognizes themselves as being inherent part of their hometown and thus owing to the city’s history which was ignored or voluntary perverted by previous generations. (...) Real citizen of Vilnius will never ignore Polish and Jewish effects on Vilnius and also cultural traces of both. As a real Klaipėda’s citizen will never protest against resuscitation and exploration of German layer of Klaipėda.¹⁶

The fact that in newest discussions about Klaipėda’s vision of cultural politics, the need to integrate cultural heritage into consciousness of citizens and formation of identity is highlighted¹⁷, testifies about signs of new quality in region’s identity structure of Western Lithuania.

Conclusions

The problem of Western Lithuania’s identity is associated with evolution of Klaipėda’s history and its fateful turning-points, especially with the end of the World War II when composition of population, ethnic tradition, and other things had changed. At the end of the 20th Century and beginning of the 21st Century, search of own and specific identity showed up in Klaipėda and history occupied an important part in this search. Prussian Queen Luisa is not only a symbol of battles against Napoleon but is also a historical character which allows for a comparison of identity shapes between the 19th Century Klaipėda (Memel) and the biggest city of contemporary Western Lithuania – Klaipėda. At the end of the 20th Century and in the beginning of the 21st Century in search of Western Lithuania’s identity Queen Luisa’s role in region’s educational development was also highlighted. New commemorative symbols in Klaipėda along with the books dedicated to this historical character reflect the idiosyncratic role of cultural heritage in the structure of Western Lithuania’s identity.

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¹⁶ DONSKIS, L. Kaliningradas, arba XX amžiaus miesto likimas. In: *Baltija*. Klaipėda, 2005, p. 8.

¹⁷ LUKOŠEVIČIENĖ, R. Kultūros politikos viziją subrandino „smegenų šturmas“. *Klaipėda*, 2005 11 30.

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ISTORINIS REGIONO IDENTITETO TRANSFORMACIJŲ POBŪDIS: PRŪSŲ LIETUVA – MAŽOJI LIETUVA – VAKARŲ LIETUVA

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S a n t r a u k a

XX a. pabaigoje Vakarų Lietuvoje, ypač Klaipėdoje, tapo aktuali savojo regiono identiteto formų paieška, paremta daugiatautės miesto kultūros tradicija, kurioje ryškus buvo vokiškos kultūros pėdsakas. Vakarų Lietuvos kultūrinio identiteto ištakos remiasi ir platesniu kontekstu – Prūsų Lietuvos / Mažosios Lietuvos kultūriniu regionu. Šio regiono priklausymas Prūsijos valstybinei erdvei daugiau nei 300 metų suponavo Prūsų Lietuvos lietuvių socialinį, kultūrinį ir konfesinį bendrumą su valstybe, kurioje jie gyveno, ir ryškų šios etninės grupės identiteto bruožą – ištikimybę bei lojalumą Prūsijos valdančiajai dinastijai.

Vienas ryškiausių monarchijos respektavimo Prūsų Lietuvoje / Mažojoje Lietuvoje pavyzdžių – Prūsijos karalienė Luisė (1776–1810). Jos vardo tarmiška variacija – Lovyza – buvo labai populiari šiame regione kelis šimtmečius. XIX–XX a. sandūros spaudos publikacijos apie karalienę Luisę lietuvių kalba atskleidė platų Prūsijos monarchijos adoracijos spektrą. Tai liudija šios istorinės asmenybės įamžinimo ženklai, kurių nemažai būta ir Klaipėdoje iki Antrojo pasaulinio karo, o vienas ryškiausių – Luisės gimnazija. Klaipėdos Luisės gimnazijos istorija byloja, kad labiausiai įsimintinas Klaipėdos ir regiono istorijoje yra karalienės Luisės – švietimo patronės – įvaizdis.

Tokios istorinės asmenybės kaip Karalienė Luisė yra įdomios ieškant paralelių tarp Vokietijos imperijos provincijos miesto Klaipėdos (Memel) identiteto ir didžiausio dabartinės Vakarų Lietuvos miesto – Klaipėdos – identiteto. Verta pažymėti, kad „Luisės tema“ yra tarsi indikatorius, nurodantis skirtingoms epochoms charakteringas komplikacijas, susijusias su šio regiono istorijos interpretacija. Viena būdingiausių komplikacijų, kalbant apie identiteto problemą ir karalienę Luisę, – kintanti rodomo dėmesio šiai istorinei asmenybei amplitudė: nuo didžiulės adoracijos iki beveik visiškos užmaršties. Karalienės Luisės mitas tarnavo valstybinio identiteto konstravimui Vokietijos imperijoje XIX–XX a. sandūroje, romantizuojant beveik šimto metų senumo įvykius ir akcentuojant karalienės – Prūsijos gelbėtojos – siužetą. Daugiau kaip šimtmetį Prūsijos karalystės, vėliau Vokietijos imperijos, visuomenė, o kartu ir Prūsų Lietuva / Mažoji Lietuva gyveno karalienės Luisės mitu, tačiau po Antrojo pasaulinio karo dėmesys šiai istorinei asmenybei išblėso: Klaipėdoje neliko Luisės vardo gimnazijos ir daugelio kitų jos atminimą įamžinusių objektų, o karalienės Luisės vardas tapo kolektyvinės atminties problema.

Vienas ryškiausių faktų, liudijančių karalienės Luisės vardo akcentavimą klaipėdiečių identitete baigiantis XX amžiui – paminklinės lentos su Luisės bareljefu prie buvusios rotušės pastato, kuriame 1807–1808 m. gyveno karalius Friedrichas Vilhelmas III ir karalienė Luisė, atidengimas 1999 m. liepos 30 d. Visgi šių dienų Vakarų Lietuvos regiono identiteto problemškumą lemia pokario dešimtmečių inercija, palaikanti įvairias fobijas, susijusias su vokiška valstybine tradicija ir kultūra šiame regione, lemiančia tai, jog klaipėdiečiams vis dar nelengva apsispręsti, kurias iškilias miesto istorijos asmenybes ar įvykius šiandien verta įamžinti.

Karalienės Luisės kaip ir kitų ilgaamžės Klaipėdos istorijos puslapių pažinimas, jų įprasminimas miesto kultūriniame kraštovaizdyje liudija pozityvią tendenciją įveikti „neparankios istorijos“ sindromą. Visa tai svarbu integruojant kultūros paveldą į Klaipėdos miestiečių sąmonę ir identiteto formą. Naują kokybę Vakarų Lietuvos regiono identiteto struktūroje rodo ir diskusijos apie Klaipėdos kultūros politikos viziją, kuriose pabrėžiamas būtinumas kultūros paveldą integruoti į miestiečių savimonę bei identiteto formavimą, ir nuolat regioninėje spaudoje akcentuojama kultūros paveldo išsaugojimo problema.