Miraslau Shpakau

THE ROMAN MYTH: CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY LITHUANIA

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Central European University

Budapest

May 2016

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(Belarus)

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Abstract

This study is dedicated to the analysis of the Roman myth contained in the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia* composed in Lithuania in the sixteenth century. It aims to demonstrate the identity-creating role of the myth and reveal the nature of the collective identity it constructed. With the help of narratological analysis and the contextualization of its results in the framework of the newest theories of ethnicity and nationhood, the author describes the structure of the collective identity reflected in the myth, attempts to classify it and determine the social groups which shared this identity. He concludes that the myth reflected one of the models of Lithuanian ethnic identity widespread among the multi-lingual and multi-confessional elites of Lithuania proper.

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Introduction

Sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century the idea about the Roman origin of Lithuanians emerged in the intellectual circles of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (hereafter GDL). This idea was first written down by the Polish chronicler Jan Długosz (1415-1480). Pointing out linguistic and cultural similarities between Lithuanians and ancient Romans, Długosz developed his own version of the Roman descent of Lithuanians tracing their origins to the army of Pompey which had to flee from the Roman republic after its defeat by Caesar.[1] At the beginning of the sixteenth century another version of the legend appeared in the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia* (hereafter the *Chronicle of the GDL*) commissioned by a circle of powerful Lithuanian magnates.[2] The chronicle traced the origins of Lithuanians back to a group of Roman refugees fleeing from the tyranny of Nero. From that time onwards the legend became an integral part of historical discourse in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was copied extensively by Lithuanian chroniclers and was the subject of vigorous discussion and reinterpretation by Lithuanian and Polish humanists in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The myth has attracted the attention of historians since the first half of the nineteenth century. Researchers have been mostly interested in questions of authorship, time of appearance, sources, literary evolution, political purposes of the legend and its relation to the Sarmatian mythology promoted in Poland.[3] Historians also discussed the ways in which actual

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[1] Jan Długosz, *Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, vol. 10, ed. D. Turkowska (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1985), 164-169.

[2] *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей* [The complete collection of Russian annals], vol. 17, ed. С.Л. Пташицкий et al. (Saint-Petersburg: Типография М.А. Александрова, 1907), col. 227-38, 357-71. Hereafter: PSRL 17.

[3] These questions were extensively discussed in Maria Zachara-Wawrzyńczyk, "Geneza legendy o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów" [The origin of the legend of the Roman descent of Lithuanians], *Zeszyty Historyczne Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego* 3 (1963): 5-35; Ewa Kulicka, "Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów i jej stosunek do mitu sarmackiego" [The legend of the Roman descent of Lithuanians and its relation to the Sarmatian myth], *Przegląd historyczny* 71 (1980): 1-21; Konstantinas Avižonis, "Lietuvių kilimo iš Romėnų teorija" [The

historical events and figures were reflected in the myth.[4] In recent years scholars have

thoroughly analyzed the social aspect of the legend, revealing its role as a means to enhance

the prestige of concrete noble families and to justify political aspirations of the Lithuanian

nobility in general.[5] Interesting views were expressed regarding the possible influences of

Biblical *topoi*, as well as various antique and medieval literary traditions on the legend's

narrative.[6] Impressive work was carried out to determine the relations between the legendary

geography and onomastics and the broad historical context of the legend.[7]

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theory of the Roman Origins of Lithuanians], *Praeitis* 3 (1992): 49-72; Mečislovas Jučas, "Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów" [The legend of the Roman descent of Lithuanians], *Przegląd Wschodni* 4, no. 2-14 (1997): 289-97; [Al'bina Semiančuk] Альбіна Семянчук, "Роля рымскай легенды ў фармаванні дзяржаўнай ідэалогіі Вялікага Княства Літоўскага" [The role of the Roman legend in the formation of state ideology of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania], *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne* 18 (2002): 178-184. For a more detailed discussion of historiography see Jan Jurkiewicz, "Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów w świetle historiografii. Czas powstania i tendencje polityczne" [The legend of Roman descent of Lithuanians in the light of historiography: Time of appearance and political tendencies], in *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia: Ideologia, historia a społeczeństwo; Księga poświęcona pamięci Profesora Wojciecha Peltza*, ed. Jarosław Dudek et al. (Zielona Góra: Uniwersytet Zielonogórski, 2005), 336-350.

[4] [Boris Floria] Борис Флоря, "Историческая традиция об общественном строе средневекового Полоцка" [The social system of medieval Polatsk in the historical tradition], *Отечественная История* 5 (1995): 110-116; [Iurii Zaiats] Юрий Заяц, "История Белорусских земель X – первой половины XIII в. в отображении летописей и хроник Великого Княжества Литовского" [History of Belarusian lands from the tenth and to the first half of the thirteenth century as reflected in the annals and chronicles of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania], *Histarychna-archealahichny zbornik* 12 (1997): 85-91.

[5] Rimvydas Petrauskas, "Socialiniai ir istoriografiniai lietuvių kilmės iš romėnų teorijos aspektai" [Social and historiographical aspects of the theory of the Roman descent of Lithuanians], *Senoji Lietuvos literatūra* 17 (2004): 270-284.

[6] Rymvidas Petrauskas, "Tautinė ir istorinė savimonė XVI a. pradžios Lietuvos metraščiuose" [Ethnic and historical consciousness in the Lithuanian chronicles of the beginning of the sixteenth century], *Metai* 11 (1995): 111-21; [Aleksandr Myl'nikov] Александр Мыльников, *Картина славянского мира: этногенетические легенды, догадки, протогипотезы XVI - начала XVIII века* [The image of the Slavic world: Ethnogenic legends, speculations and proto-hypotheses from the sixteenth up to the beginning of the eighteenth centuries] (Saint-Petersburg: PV, 1996), 206-13; Eligijus Raila, "Palemono legenda. Istoriografines teksto ištakos" [The legend of Palemon. The origins of the text], *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* 4 (1997): 130-34; Stephen Rowell, "Amžinos pretenzijos arba kaip turime skaityti elitinę literatūrą?" [Ageless pretentions or how should we read elite literature?] in *Seminarai: straipsnių rinkinys*, ed. A. Jokubauskas and A. Kulakauskas (Vilnius: Vyturys, 1998), 7–29; Gintaras Beresnevičius, *Palemono mazgas: Palemono legendos periferinis turinys: religinė istorinė studija* [Palemon's knot. The peripheral content of the legend about Palemon] (Vilnius: UAB Sapnų sala, 2003); Sigitas Narbutas, "Lietuvių kilmės iš romėnų legenda kultūrinės integracijos šviesoje" [The legend of the Roman descent of Lithuanians from the perspective of cultural integration], *Senoji Lietuvos literatūra* 17 (2004): 286-315.

[7] Oleg Łatyszonek, "Polityczne aspekty przedstawienia średniowiecznych dziejów ziem białoruskich w historiografii Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XV-XVI w." [Political aspects of the image of Belarusian lands in the historiography of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries], *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne* 25 (2006): 6-44; Jan Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina: Wczesnonowożytne wyobrażenia o początkach Litwy,* vol. 1: *W kręgu latopisów litewskich* [From Palemon to Gediminas: Early modern theories about the beginning of Lithuania, vol. 1: Among Lithuanian chronicles] (Poznań: UAM, 2012).

However, much less attention in historiography has been paid to the identity-creating aspect of the Roman myth. This aspect was discussed only in passing and has never been the object of a separate in-depth study. The existing scholarship has failed to formulate a comprehensive theory about the nature of the collective identity constructed in the legend.

The question of the identity-creating role of the Roman myth was first raised in the nineteenth century. At that time scholars viewed the legend as the expression of growing national self-awareness of medieval Lithuanians.[8] At the beginning of the twentieth century this view was developed by the Polish historian Jan Jakubowski who suggested that the legend "flattered the national pride of Lithuanians and [...] led to the awakening of [their] national feeling."[9] His understanding of national consciousness, however, was very blurred. He used the term "national" inconsistently. In some parts of his study it denotes Lithuanian ethnic self-awareness, in others loyalty to the state felt by both Lithuanians and Ruthenians. This inconsistency was further aggravated by a number of remarks pointing to the ethnocentric nature of the legend.[10] Postulating the importance of the legend as the expression of "national" identity Jakubowski failed to explain the respective weight of territorial, linguistic, religious and social elements in the structure of that identity.[11]

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[8] Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski, *Wilno od poczatkow jego do roku 1750* [Vilnius from its beginnings to the year 1750] vol. 1 (Vilnius: Wydanie Adama Zawadzkiego, 1840), 445; Aleksander Brückner, *Starozytna Litwa. Ludy i bogi* [Ancient Lithuania. People and gods] (Olsztyn: Pojezierze, 1979), 70-71.

[9] Jan Jakubowski, *Studia nad stosunkami narodowościowymi na Litwie przed Unią Lubelską* [The study of national relations in Lithuania before the Union of Lublin] (Warsaw: Nakład Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego, 1912), 34.

[10] Ibid., 51-52.

[11] In the 1990s, Ewa Lenard performed the content analysis of fifteenth-century Lithuanian chronicles with the aim to prove the hypothesis of Jakubowski about the growth of "national" consciousness among the elites of the Grand Duchy in that period. Yet, just like Jakubowski, she did not consider it necessary to differentiate between national (which she unjustifiably equated with ethnic) and political loyalties. Thus, although she managed to prove that in the fifteenth century history was increasingly perceived in "ethno-political" categories, she did not shed light on the collective identity reflected in such categorization. See: Ewa Lenard, "Państwowość i narodowość w kronikach litewskich litewskich od końca XIV w. do początku XVI w. Próba analizy treści" [Statehood and nation in the Lithuanian chronicles from the end of the fourteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century: An attempt of content analysis] in *Państwo, naród, stany w świadomości wieków średnich*, ed. Aleksander Gieysztor and Stanisław Gawlas (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), 130-37.

The subsequent generations of scholars failed to address this issue as well. Following in the footsteps of Jakubowski and his predecessors, Maria Zachara-Wawrzyńczyk[12] and Ewa Kulicka[13] emphasized the role of the legend as a means of "national" self-assertion. However, they too did not make any consistent attempts to dissect the nature of the collective identity promoted by the legend and to substantiate the use of the term "national" in relation to this identity.

A more precise opinion on the nature of "national" identity constructed in the legend was expressed by the Belarusian historian Viačaslau Čamiarytski, who presented the legend contained in the *Chronicle of the GDL* as the expression of Lithuanian ethnocentrism.[14] This idea received its full expression in the works of the Polish historian Jerzy Suchocki, who introduced the concept of political nation into the studies of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[15] By this term he meant a multi-ethnic and multi-religious group of nobility who took part in the governance of the state. Suchocki argued that the legend was a reaction to the formation of the political nation. It was meant to strengthen Lithuanian ethnic solidarity against the Ruthenian nobility whose weight in state administration by the sixteenth century had reached such proportions that it started to endanger the political monopoly of ethnic Lithuanian magnates. The legend was meant to redefine the political nation in exclusivist ethnic terms.[16]

Recently the German researcher Mathias Niendorf repeated Suchocki's opinion about the ethnocentric nature of the myth in the *Chronicle of the GDL*. However, he did not propose his own analysis of the chronicle version of the legend and concentrated on its later versions,

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[12] Maria Zachara-Wawrzyńczyk, "Geneza legendy o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów," 5-35.

[13] Ewa Kulicka, "Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów i jej stosunek do mitu sarmackiego," 1-21.

[14] [Viačaslau Čamiarytski] Вячаслаў Чамярыцкі, *Беларускія летапісы як помнікі літаратуры* [Belarusian annals as monuments of literature] (Minsk: Навука і тэхніка, 1968), 120-121.

[15] Jerzy Suchocki, "Formowanie się i skład narodu politycznego w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim późnego średniowiecza" [The formation and composition of the political nation in the late medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania], *Zapiski Historyczne* 48, no. 1-2 (1983): 31-78.

[16] Jerzy Suchocki, "Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej. Aspekty polityczne i narodowe" [The origins of the Lithuanian ethnogenic legend. Political and national aspects], *Zapiski Historyczne* 52 (1987): 27-66.

compiled in the second half of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, demonstrating their role in the legitimization of social inequalities. He also pointed out the role of the Roman myth as one of the components of collective identity of Lithuanian elites after Lithuania's unification with Poland in 1569.[17]

In 2005 Suchocki's radical position was scrutinized by the Polish historian Jan Jurkiewicz. He expressed doubts that the image of the distant mythical past presented in the *Chronicle of the GDL* contains any indications of ethnic rivalry between Lithuanians and Ruthenians.[18] This view received a fuller expression in his *From Palemon to Gediminas: Early Modern Concepts of the Beginnings of Lithuania* recently published in Polish. In opposition to Suchocki, Jurkiewicz concludes that the story about the Roman refugees and their descendants "reflected to a certain extent the process of transformation of the Lithuanian ethnic nation into the political nation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania."[19] Nevertheless, Jurkiewicz does not fully dissociate himself from the ethnocentric interpretation. Just like Suchocki he views the legend as a text about the origins and deeds of ethnic Lithuanians.[20] Thus, although Jurkiewicz criticizes the radical hypothesis about the anti-Ruthenian tone of the legend, in general he still shares the opinion about the essential ethnocentrism of its creators. Both researchers, however, failed to analyze the legend's conception of *lituanitas* and its relation to language and religion. They simply imposed their own definitions of ethnicity on the narrative without trying to verify how it correlates with the narrator's vision of the community of Lithuanians. Although Jurkiewicz pays much more attention to the details of the legend's plot than his predecessors, he discusses the identity-building dimension of the legend only in passing, leaving many

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[17] Mathias Niendorf, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie. Studia nad kształtowaniem się narodu u progu epoki nowożytnej (1569-1795)* [The Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Study of the formation of nation on the threshold of the modern epoch], tr. Małgorzata Grzywacz (Poznan: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2011), 32, 76-89, 282. However, on page 78 the author somewhat self-contradictorily refuses to pronounce judgements about Suchocki's interpretation.
[18] Jurkiewicz, "Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów w świetle historiografii," 346.
[19] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 270.
[20] Ibid., 236.

questions unanswered. For example, it is not clear from his account to what extent the identity constructed in the legend reflects, on the one hand, the ideals of a political nation and, on the other, ethnic consciousness, and how at all the elements of inclusive national identity can coexist with exclusivist ethnocentrism.

Oleg Łatyszonek doubts that the myth contained in the *Chronicle of the GDL* reflected ethnic identity. According to him, the Roman myth acquired ethnic coloring only in the humanist writings of the second half of the sixteenth century. In the *Chronicle of the GDL* it had purely ideological role of justifying political and social ambitions of Lithuanian aristocracy and countering the anti-Lithuanian propaganda of Poles. Łatyszonek also denies any connection of the legend with the ideology of a political nation whose existence in Lithuania he questions.[21]

The major drawback which characterizes all previous studies of the issue is the lack of systematic analysis of the legend's narrative. To this date, no scholar has approached the legend from the perspective of narratology, analyzing the representation of space, language, religion and class in the narrative of the legend and verifying one's interpretation of its identity-creating aspect by revealing the literary strategies which the narrator used to construct these entities. Previous studies not only lack narratological depth; they also make no attempts to contextualize the legend in the framework of contemporary theories of nationhood and ethnicity.

This study aims to fill the existing gap in research by demonstrating the identity-creating role of the myth and revealing the nature of the collective identity it constructed. Such analysis entails addressing the following research questions:

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[21] Łatyszonek, "Polityczne aspekty przedstawienia średniowiecznych dziejów ziem białoruskich," 31-32; *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów: u źródeł białoruskiej idei narodowej* [From White Ruthenians to Belarusians: the sources of Belarusian national idea] (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2006), 265-304.

1) Along what lines – linguistic, religious, social, political, or territorial – does the narrator draw the imaginary border between "Us" and "Them"? In other words, what were the main components of the identity the legend constructed?

2) Can this identity be classified as national and/or ethnic?

3) Which groups (if any) of the population of the GDL shared this identity?

The legend is preserved in various versions in Polish and Lithuanian sources. This study concentrates on the Roman myth contained in the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia* (hereafter: the *Chronicle of the GDL*), which describes the events from the immigration of Romans to the Baltic coast to the elevation of Casimir Jagiellon (ruled from 1440 to 1492) to the grand ducal throne. This chronicle exists in three redactions.[22] It is generally agreed that all three redactions, preserved as copies in later codices, were created in the period between 1510 and 1539.[23] I analyze the myth in the first redaction represented by the mid-sixteenth-century Krasiński Codex[24] and the myth in the Evreinov Codex compiled at the end of the seventeenth century.[25] The Evreinov Codex is hard to classify in terms of redactions since it was a compilation based on a number of different sources. However, the narrative of the myth it contains was certainly based on the first redaction – either on the

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[22] The first redaction is represented by the Krasiński Codex; the second by the Raczyński, Rumiantsev, Al'ševa, Patriarchal Codices and the Codex of the Archeological Society; the third by the Bykhovets Codex.

[23] Jerzy Ochmański, "Nad Kroniką Bychowca" [On the Chronicle of Bykhovets], *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 12 (1967): 157-59; [Čamiarytski], *Беларускія летапісы як помнікі літаратупы*, 157-58; Rimantas Jasas, "Bychovco kronika ir jos kilmė" [The Chronicle of Bykhovets and its origins], in *Lietuvos metraštis: Bychovco kronika*, ed. Rimantas Jasas (Vilnius: Vaga, 1971), 26-38; Mečislovas Jučas, *Lietuvos metraščiai* [Lithuanian chronicles] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2002), 44-85; Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 77-78.

[24] In this codex the legendary part has its own title–"The Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia" (*Летописецъ Великого Князьства Литовъского и Жомоицьского*)–and is separated from the rest of the chronicle which is titled "The Chronicle of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania" (*Кройники о Великихъ Кнзех Литовъскыхъ*). This suggests that before these texts were joined into one chronicle by the scribe of the Codex of Krasiński, most probably they were separate literary pieces. However, in other codices the legend constitutes an integral part of the *Chronicle of the GDL*. See [Nikolai Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания* [Introduction into the study of Lithuanian-Belarusian chronicle-writing] (Moscow: Наука, 1985), 130.

[25] On the dating, history and physical characteristics of the codices see [Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания*, 55-58, 65-66.

chronicle contained in the Krasiński Codex or on some other unknown chronicle of the first redaction. [26] The texts of the legend in the two codices are almost identical except some insignificant differences in wording and small omissions in the Evreinov Codex. For some reason the scribe who compiled the Krasiński Codex did not write down the second half of the legend. Yet, given the similarities between its existing part and the respective passages in the Evreinov Codex, one can assume that the continuation of the legend in the Krasiński Codex looked almost exactly as in the Evreinov Codex.

For the purposes of this study it is not necessary to analyze the legend in the codices representing the second redaction of the *Chronicle of the GDL*. The differences between the texts of the myth in the two redactions are minor. These differences were caused by a few omissions, slight changes in phrasing,[27] names of protagonists and genealogies.[28] In terms of plot and the overall narrative structure they are identical, which makes the legend in the first two redactions essentially one and the same narrative. The third redaction, represented by the Bykhovets Codex, contains a number of long interpolations from the thirteenth-century *Galician-Volhynian Chronicle* which compromise the stylistic and logical coherency of the legend and makes it impossible to give consistent answers to the research questions of this study.

There is no clear boundary between the "legendary" and the "historical" parts in the *Chronicle of the GDL*. In the concluding parts of the myth legendary events gradually intermingle with actual events. In this study I analyze the representation of events before the

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[26] [Teoktyst Sušyt'skyi] Теоктист Сушицький, *Західно-руські літописи як пам'ятки літератури* [West-Russian annals as monuments of literature], vol.1 (Kyiv: 7-ма державна друкарня, 1921), 80-84; [Čamiarytski], *Беларускія летапісы як помнікі літаратупы*, 160. Ulaš'čik suggested that the Evreinov Codex contains the oldest version of the legend. See [Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания*, 144.
[27] In the Al'sheva Codex the difference in phrasing is more significant because it is a translation into Polish.
[28] Ochmański, "Nad Kroniką Bychowca," 157; [Čamiarytski], *Беларускія летапісы*, 159.

advent of Grand Duke Vytenis and his successor Gediminas, who were actual rulers of Lithuania in the first half of the fourteenth century.

There is no consensus regarding the exact dating of the first redaction of the *Chronicle of the GDL*, with proposed dates ranging from 1510 to 1527.[29] Since this study deals with a more or less stable phenomenon of collective identity, which is unlikely to change within a couple of decades, a more precise dating of the source is not instrumental here.

Apart from the chronicle version I also use other versions of the legend to draw occasional comparisons needed to demonstrate a point. These versions are contained in the writings of authors such as Jan Długosz (1415-80), Maciej Stryjkowski (1547-93), Michalon Lituanus (c. 1490-1560) and Augustinus Rotundus (1520-82). Juxtaposing the legend with its historical context I use a wide range of legal, narrative and epistolary sources from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

My approach to the sources is based on narratological analysis used to reveal the role of territories, languages and religions in the narrative structure. Such analysis rests on the structuralist assumption that the representation of these entities in the narrative reflects their role and function in the structure of the narrator's identity.

The results of the narratological analysis are contextualized in the framework of contemporary theories of ethnicity and nationhood and studies dedicated to political, religious and cultural situation in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century GDL. This contextualization enables me to determine the relations between the legend's narrative and its historical context and to establish a more accurate and nuanced interpretation of the identity it constructed.

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[29] Jakubowski, *Studia nad stosunkami*, 45; Ochmański, "Nad Kroniką Bychowca," 157-59; [Čamiarytski], *Беларускія летапісы*, 157-58; Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 77.

Chapter 1 – The Image of Homeland

Every narrative has a setting: a physical space in which the events are taking place. The setting of the legend's narrative is constituted by three named territories: *Żomoit'* (Samogitia), *zemlia Zavel'skaia* or *Litva* (trans-Neris land or Lithuania) and *Ruskaia zemlia* (Rus') (see the map in the appendix). In this chapter I analyze how the narrator views each of these territories and perceives the relations among them in the narrative structure. This analysis will nuance our understanding of the collective identity the narrator constructs because it will show whether or not (and if yes, how) the narrator connects this identity to a certain territory.

Samogitia, Lithuania and the space of future Vilnius

According to the narrative, Samogitia is the territory where the Roman refugees under the leadership of prince Palemon land and establish their first settlements. Describing the newcomers' voyage along the Dubisa River the narrator concentrates on their visionary experiences of Samogitia. They see "high mountains", "great plains" and "magnificent woods" full of "various kinds of animals." [30] The narrator thoroughly enumerates rare animals inhabiting the forests and remarks on the "great amount of various kinds of unusual fish" discovered by the settlers in the local rivers.[31] Then the travelers establish their first settlement and we read that "they very much enjoyed living beside these rivers."[32] In narratology such conveyance of protagonists' subjective impressions and feelings is called "embedded

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[30] PSRL 17, col. 228, 359.
[31] Ibid., col. 229, 359.
[32] Ibid.

focalization".[33] By means of this technique the narrator presents the territory of Samogitia as the new homeland of the newcomers to which they become emotionally attached.[34]

The way embedded focalization is used and the meaning it communicates to the reader in the aforementioned episode defines the general framework in which this literary device functions throughout the whole narrative (with the exception of a few instances which will be discussed in the following chapter). As a rule, embedded focalization either precedes or follows the accounts of city foundations (Kernave, Navahrudak, Hal'šany, and Rajgród) and aims to highlight their symbolic importance as geographical markers of homeland.[35]

The story continues with an account of the travels of the sons of Palemon – Bork, Kunas and Spera[36] – and the foundation of new settlements and pagan cultic places by them in Samogitia and Lithuania. A considerable amount of narrative time[37] is dedicated to the description of the cultic places.[38] This is meant to invest the territory of Samogitia and Lithuania with a sacred aura, thus emphasizing the spiritual link of the newcomers with their homeland.

Bork and Spera died without heir, leaving Kunas as the only lord of Samogitian land. Upon crossing the Šventoji River Kunas entered trans-Neris land (*zemlia Zavel'skaia*). There he founded the town of Kernave named after his elder son Kernus. The people who "settled across the Neris" together with Kernus had the habit of playing trumpets. For this reason Kernus called his subjects *litustuba* (the combination of Latin words for "bank/shore" and

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[33] See Irene J. F. de Jong, *Narratology and Classics: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 50-56; Burkhard Niederhoff, "Focalization," in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn (New York: Walter de Gruyter Berlin, 2009), 115-124.

[34] A similar idea was expressed by Suchocki, "Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej," 45. He noted that the tone of fascination with the newfound lands was meant to nurture the emotional attachment to them.

[35] PSRL 17, col. 229, 231, 236-238, 360-361, 368. The cities whose foundation is not accompanied by embedded focalization are Jurbarkas, Kaunas, Giedraičiai. See PSRL 17, col. 229, 236, 359, 368.

[36] Personal names of protagonists are transliterated from Ruthenian.

[37] On the concept of narrative time see Jong, *Narratology and classics*, 92-99.

[38] PSRL 17, col. 229, 359-60. The representation of pagan practices of Lithuanians will be discussed in chapter 2.

"trumpet"), which was transformed by the "simple people" ignorant of Latin into *Litva* (the name of Lithuania in Ruthenian). From this point onwards the narrator refers to trans-Neris land exclusively as *Litva* (Lithuania).

Upon Kunas' death the realm of the Palemonids split into two: Kernus became the Duke[39] of Lithuania, while his younger brother Ginbut received Samogitian land as his domain. Both Samogitia and Lithuania are referred to by the narrator as "duchies" (sometimes "grand duchies") and their rulers as "(grand) dukes".

Kernus did not have sons. After his death Lithuania became the possession of his daughter's husband Girus from the Kitovrasy dynasty. Soon the Samogitian Palemonids died out as well, and their duchy passed on to the Kitovrasy. Thus, Samogitia and Lithuania merged into one political entity. They remain united throughout the whole narrative with the exception of their temporary division between brothers Trabus and Goligin.[40]

Before the Samogitian Palemonids died out they had expanded their rule to the neighboring territories of Rus' where they founded a separate Grand Duchy of Navahrudak. The legend recounts the deeds of six generations of the Navahrudak Palemonids. Upon the death of their last representative the *panove* (lords) of Navahrudak chose Švintorog from the Kitovrasy dynasty as their new ruler. Upon the death of his father Utenus, the duke of Samogitia-Lithuania, Švintorog and his descendants concentrated the power over all three duchies in their hands.

The geographical terminology of the legend is quite unusual, primarily due to the narrator's notion of Lithuania which he equates with trans-Neris land. In the sixteenth century the grand ducal chancery used the term "trans-Neris land" to denote a part of the Vilnius

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[39] I will use the terms "duke" and "prince" and their derivatives interchangeably.
[40] PSRL 17, col. 367-368.

palatinate north of the Neris.[41] Trans-Neris land was regarded only as a part of Lithuania which covered the whole territory of the Vilnius, Trakai, Navahrudak and Podlachia palatinates.[42] In the legend, however, Lithuania and trans-Neris land are fully equated[43] and the Neris marks the border between Lithuania and Rus'.[44] This is certainly a projection of sixteenth-century geographical notions on the mythical past. Zbysław Wojtkowiak points out that in the sixteenth century the Neris was frequently perceived as the boundary between Rus' and Lithuania as geographical (not administrative) regions.[45]

The space of the future capital of the GDL, Vilnius, is invested with deep symbolic meaning in the narrative. Here Grand Duke Girmont establishes the crematorium for all grand dukes and famous noblemen:

> After the death of his father, Švintorog became the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Samogitia, Navahrudak and Rus'. He had a son Girmont. Grand Duke Švintorog chose a very fine place in the woods beside the river Neris, where the river Vilnia flows into the Neris, and asked his son Girmont to establish a crematorium at that place, where he wished to be cremated after death. And he ordered to cremate all Lithuanian dukes and famous noblemen (*vsikh kniazei litovskikh i znamenitykh boiar sožženo*) at the place where his son was to burn his dead body.

This story clearly serves as a prefiguration of the foundation of Vilnius, which is reported later in the chronicle. However, it is not only meant to sacralize the space of the future capital and turn it into a symbol of religious unity.[46] The passage is also meant to emphasize the role of

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[41] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do* Giedymina, 186; Zbysław Wojtkowiak, *Litwa Zawilejska w XV i w pierwszej połowie XVI w.* [Trans-Neris Lithuania in the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century] (Poznań: UAM, 1980), 17-25.

[42] The meaning of the term "Lithuania" in sixteenth-century sources will be discussed in chapter 3.

[43] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 187

[44] [Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания*, 150; Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 187, 196.

[45] Wojtkowiak, *Litwa Zawilejska*, 19-20. It is interesting that in the legend the land where Vilnius, the future capital of the GDL, was to be founded is technically situated in Rus'. Yet, this hardly has any symbolic meaning beyond simple projection of sixteenth-century geographical notions on the past. See also Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 275.

[46] This interpretation was proposed in Suchocki, "Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej," 45; Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 224.

this space as a supra-territorial link symbolically connecting all parts of the Romans' homeland. Such intention is reflected in the rhythm of the episode and the causal connections it creates. The narrator spends very little time recounting the election of Švintorog as the Duke of Navahrudak, his father's death, his becoming the ruler of the three duchies and the birth of his son. These events are followed by a much more detailed and slow account (in terms of narrative time) of Švintorog choosing a place for the crematorium and explaining its purpose to his already grown up son. Such compression of time between the unification of the duchies and the establishment of the crematorium is meant to emphasize the symbolic connection between the two events and to present the crematorium as the symbol of political unity of the Romans and their lands.

Rus' and Navahrudak

Rus' first appears in the narrative as the object of Tartar aggression: "Tsar Batyi [Batu Khan who invaded Rus' in 1237-1240] attacked the land of Rus' and conquered the whole of Rus' land […] and burned and ravaged Kiev, the capital of the whole of Rus' land."[47] When the Grand Duke of Samogitia Montvil "learned that the land of Rus' had been devastated and the princes of the Rus' land dispersed" he gave the army to his son Skirmunt and dispatched him to Rus'.[48]

Upon crossing the rivers Neris and Neman Skirmunt and his followers founded the city of Navahrudak which they made the capital of the new independent duchy. Afterwards the newcomers raised Hrodna and restored Brest, Drohiczyn and Mielnik which were "defaced and depredated" by the Tartars. Having described these events the narrator starts a detailed

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[47] PSRL 17, col. 230. In the Evreinov Codex this passage is omitted.
[48] PSRL 17, col. 230-31, 360-61.

enumeration of Skirmunt's land-grants in the newly-created principality to the *pany*[49] who accompanied him in this campaign.[50]

The episode with the restoration and foundation of new cities in Rus' is preceded by the description of the Tartars' devastation, which is meant to create a sharp contrast between destruction and creation. The desertedness of this area is purposefully and consistently emphasized in these episodes by the repetitive use of epithets and verbs in relation to Rus' derived from the root "poust" (empty). Thus, by means of contrast and emphatic use of epithets the narrator creates the image of Rus' as a wrecked and deserted space filled and reinvigorated by the immigrants from Samogitia. Against the background of this image of destruction and desertedness the foundation of Navahrudak and the settlement of the Roman nobility in the newly acquired lands become metaphors of the new authority which arrives from outside, brings peace and prosperity to the depredated region and transforms it into new homeland. This symbolism is reinforced by the embedded focalization of Navahrudak which asserts the newcomers' emotional attachment to their new capital: they discovered "a beautiful mountain which they liked and where they built a citadel and called it Navahrudak".[51] Thus, just like Lithuania and Samogitia, the territory of the Duchy of Navahrudak is presented as the new homeland of the Romans.

What were the geographical borders of this homeland? The confines of Samogitia and trans-Neris land are more or less clearly defined in the legend (see the map). The confines of the Duchy of Navahrudak are less obvious. They are certainly larger than the area around the city itself, as believed by Jurkiewicz.[52] However, it is also incorrect to view its borders as

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[49] *Pan* (pl. *pany* or *panove*) was a term in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Lithuanian sources denoting a representative of the upper layer of nobility.
[50] PSRL 17, col. 231, 361.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 200-204.

dynamic and strictly following all territorial acquisitions of the Navahrudak dukes, as Ulaš'čik seems to suggest.[53] The border between the Duchy of Navahrudak and the rest of Rus' is only dynamic up until a certain limit. This limit can be defined if we analyze which of the territorial acquisitions of the Palemonids in Rus' permanently remained within the political structure of the Navahrudak duchy and which of them seceded and regained independence. The narrator mentions three military campaigns of the Navahrudak dukes which resulted in territorial acquisitions: first they captured Polatsk,[54] then Pinsk and Turau,[55] and finally Mazyr, Černihiv, Starodub and Karačev.[56]

Polatsk was never incorporated into the Duchy of Navahrudak. Mingailo, its conqueror, is characterized as "the Grand Duke of Navahrudak and Polatsk,"[57] which points to the separateness of the two entities. For two generations Polatsk was ruled by a separate branch of the Palemonids. Then it completely restored its independence and lost all political connections to Samogitia, Lithuania and Navahrudak.

Karačev and Turau also became independent polities ruled by Liubart and Pisimont, the brothers of the duke of Navahrudak Skirgailo, son of Švarn.[58] The narrator does not specify the extent of these newly formed duchies. Did they include Mazyr, Černihiv and Starodub? Most probably they did, since geographically the Duchy of Turau would separate the Duchy of Navahrudak from all these territories. Besides, the authors of the legend must have been aware of the historical connections between the cities of Karačev, Mazyr, Černihiv and Starodub. From the twelfth century onwards they formed a separate historical region, Černihiv-Siversk

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[53] [Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания*, 155.
[54] PSRL 17, col. 231-232, 362.
[55] Ibid., col. 232, 363.
[56] Ibid., col. 233, 364.
[57] Ibid., col. 232, 362.
[58] Ibid., col. 233, 364.

land, which later disintegrated into a number of smaller political units.[59] The awareness of these connections is probably reflected in the narrator's implicit inclusion of Mazyr, Černihiv and Starodub into the newly formed duchies of Turau and Karačev. Interestingly, the authors of the late-sixteenth century version of the legend contained in the *Lithuanian and Samogitian Chronicle* make this inclusion explicit: Pisimont inherits not only Turau, but also Starodub, while his brother Liubart becomes the lord of Karačev and Černihiv.[60] Thus, all territories gained after the third campaign seceded from Navahrudak. Ulaš'čik assumes that they soon returned under its control, since Pisimont and Liubart perished during the battle against the Tartars.[61] However, the fate of these territories is not specified in the narrative, a significant omission given that the narrator always specifies such details in relation to other territories controlled by the Romans. This suggests that for the narrator these lands remain outside the principality of Navahrudak after the death of Pisimont and Liubart.

The only conquered land which permanently stays within the Duchy of Navahrudak is Pinsk. Thus, it can be assumed that Pinsk marks the south-eastern border of the duchy. The eastern border is clearly marked in the narrative by Koidanava and Mahilna. The former is explicitly referred to as the "border": "and [Grand Duke Švarn] met him [the khan of the Tartars] at his [Švarn's] border near Koidanava";[62] while the latter is the location of another battle with the Tartars.[63] There is an interesting detail in the story which suggests that the north-eastern border was marked by the river Berezina. Ginvil, the Roman ruler of Polatsk, founded

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[59] See Stefan Maria Kuczyński, *Ziemie czernihowsko-siewierskie pod rządami Litwy* [Černihiv-Siversk lands under the rule of Lithuania] (Warsaw: Fundusz Kultury Narodowej, 1936).
[60] *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей* [The complete collection of Russian annals], vol. 32, ed. Н.Н. Улащик (Moscow: Наука, 1975), 24.
[61] [Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания*, 155.
[62] PSRL 17, col. 233.
[63] Ibid., col. 235, 366.

the city of Barysau by this river.[64] The possible implication of this is that the narrator probably

viewed the river as the boundary between Polatsk and Navahrudak principalities.

Thus, the border of the Duchy of Navahrudak with the rest of Rus' can be roughly

marked as a line running along Pinsk – Mahilna – Koidanava – Barysau – the Berezina – the

mouth of the Neris (see the map). The eastern border of trans-Neris land in the legend runs

from the mouth of the Neris to Braslau.[65] Together these lines constituted the eastern border of

the unified Lithuanian state and thus the eastern border of the Romans' new homeland.

In order to fully understand the representation of Rus' in the legend it is necessary to

differentiate between Inner and Outer Rus'. By Inner Rus', also referred to as "Navahrudak"

here, I mean the territory of the Duchy of Navahrudak within the borders outlined above.[66] By

Outer Rus' I mean the lands that lay outside Navahrudak. The way the narrator represents Inner

and Outer Rus' is different. Outer Rus' is never pictured as a territory restored and

reinvigorated by the Romans. It never functions as an object of positive embedded focalization

by them. Its rulers, even if they have Roman origin, are never portrayed in a heroic light. We

read nothing about the victories of the Polatsk Palemonids, while the Roman dukes of Turau

and Karačev merely partake in the victory of the Navahrudak duke over the Tartars.[67] Only

outer Rus' is presented as a victim of destruction and unprovoked aggression on the part of

Roman princes. For example, Prince Troiden, the vassal and brother of Grand Duke Narimunt,

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[64] Ibid., col. 232, 362.
[65] In PSRL 17, col. 230 we read that Kernus reigned "over the whole trans-Neris land up to the Latgalian border and Braslau."
[66] Jurkiewicz and Łatyszonek questioned that Navahrudak was viewed by the narrator as part of Rus' (Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 195, 228-9; Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 278). They pointed out that the narrator never explicitly refers to it as a Ruthenian city, while in the titles of the rulers of the unified state it is occasionally separated from Rus'. Although Navahrudak is never directly called a Ruthenian city, there is a number of indirect references to its location in Rus' ([Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания*, 151). The occasional separation of the Duchy of Navahrudak from the Duchy of Rus' in the titles of the legendary grand dukes is emphatic and aims to accentuate Navahrudak's symbolic importance and centrality *within* Rus'. Besides, it is Rus' which Skirmunt entered and where he founded Navahrudak. Thus, for the narrator the Duchy of Navahrudak and the Duchy of Rus' were essentially the same entity.
[67] We read that they joined their brother Skirgailo in his battle against the Tartars along with other "Ruthenian princes". See PSRL 17, col. 234, 365.

is described as a warlike ruler who "was waging great wars against the Poles, Ruthenians and Mazovians; he was always victorious and inflicted extreme cruelties on their lands."[68] Another case of unjustified aggression against Outer Rus' is the violent capture of Polatsk by Mingailo, the duke of Navahrudak, who routed the army of Polatsk and burned the city of Haradets.[69] The lands of Outer Rus' receive only sporadic attention by the narrator, which points to their relative unimportance in the historical landscape he constructs. They function merely as a scene of the military exploits of Roman princes, but do not have importance as the seat of their power.

Thus, the narrator's vision of Rus' is highly differentiated. For him it constitutes two essentially different parts: the Duchy of Navahrudak and the rest of Rus' outside its confines. The former is the new homeland, restored and turned into a superpower by Roman princes. The latter is an alien area which can be plundered and destroyed, just like the lands of Poles and Mazovians. Outer Rus' in the narrative is marginal: it functions mostly as the battlefield in the wars of the Navahrudak princes against the Tartars and occasionally as the object of their destructive aggression.

The concept of the Lithuanian state

How does the narrator view the relation between Samogitia, Navahrudak and Lithuania in the narrative structure? Most scholars tend to see this relation in hierarchical terms. According to Čamiarytski, the narrator consciously aims to demonstrate the superiority of Lithuania and Samogitia over Rus' (including Navahrudak). Only the first two are presented in a heroic light,

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[68] PSRL 17, col. 238, 368. The narrator does not specify the adversaries of Troiden, but the logic of the narrative and actual clashes of the GDL with the Galician-Volhynian principality in the thirteenth century suggest that Troiden waged wars against the princes of Southern Rus'. See [Vladimir Pašuto] Владимир Пашуто, *Образование литовского государства* [The genesis of the Lithuanian state] (Moscow: Академия наук СССР, 1959), 398-426.

[69] PSRL 17, col. 231, 362. Although the rule of the Palemonids in Polatsk is pictured as benevolent (Ginvil built churches and "was kind to his subjects") it is hardly enough to say that the narrator constructs the image of Polatsk as the homeland of Romans.

while Rus' functions merely as a stage for the heroic deeds of Roman rulers.[70] A somewhat less radical but still hierarchical interpretation was proposed by Jurkiewicz. According to him, Lithuania and Samogitia are presented in the legend as "the basis of the Lithuanian statehood," while the Duchy of Navahrudak performs in relation to them a subservient and instrumental function of defense and expansion.[71]

Ulash'chik proposes an opposing, but similarly hierarchical interpretation whereby he asserts the central importance of Navahrudak in the legend.[72] He estimates that approximately eighty per cent of the narrative are dedicated to the representation of the heroic deeds of the Navahrudak princes. Ulaš'čik also notes that only the Navahrudak principality is ruled by the direct descendants of Palemon, which, for him, is a clear indication of its political superiority over the Lithuanian-Samogitian duchy in the eyes of the narrator.[73]

Arguing for hierarchical relations between Lithuania, Samogitia and Navahrudak researchers often refer to the title of the chronicle. Jakubowski, Čamiarytski and Kulicka point out that the compilers of the legend deliberately omitted the name of Rus' from the title of the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia* in order to present the history of the Grand Duchy as the history of ethnic Lithuanian territory only.[74] A similar explanation is given by Oleg Łatyszonek. For him this omission suggests the narrator's indifference to Rus', which he explains by the fact that the geographical limits of the possessions of the Lithuanian magnates in the sixteenth century rarely exceeded the river Dnepr and concentrated in the area roughly corresponding to the duchies of Navahrudak and Polatsk as represented in the legend.[75]

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[70] [Čamiarytski], *Беларускія летапісы*, 151-152.
[71] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 228.
[72] [Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания*, 159.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Jakubowski, *Studia nad stosunkami*, 46; [Čamiarytski], *Беларускія летапісы*, 151; Kulicka, "Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów," 8. In the Krasiński Codex it is the title of the legend itself.
[75] Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 279. This theory, however, does not explain why, then, there is no mention of Navahrudak and Polatsk in the title of the chronicle.

Jerzy Suchocki takes a step further and interprets the omission as reflecting not simply the chronicler's indifference, but outright animosity towards Rus' and its inhabitants.[76]

The afore-mentioned interpretations are incorrect. Constructing a hierarchy of lands settled by the Romans is not at all the aim of the narrator. The analysis presented in the previous sections rather suggests his desire to emphasize the unity of these lands leaving the question of hierarchy aside. As was demonstrated above, not only Samogitia and Lithuania, but also Navahrudak are presented as the homeland of the Romans. Another way in which the narrator emphasizes the oneness of the three lands is by constructing the image of Švintorog's crematorium as a symbol of political unity of the Romans. And finally, the narrator asserts the unity of the three lands by structuring the legend's events into a teleological process aimed at the unification of the three duchies into a single Lithuanian state.

The concept of the Lithuanian state first appears in the episode about the naming of Lithuania. After explaining how Lithuania (trans-Neris land) got its name the narrator notes: "and from that moment the Lithuanian state began to be called [in this manner] and reproduce itself from Samogitia".[77] This is the only time the narrator uses the term "Lithuanian state". Judging by its association with the act of naming Lithuania and characterization of Samogitia as the source of population for the "Lithuanian state," the term seemingly refers only to the territory of trans-Neris land and Samogitia. However, it can and should be interpreted as referring also to the Duchy of Navahrudak which, just like the Duchy of Lithuania, was founded by Samogitian immigrants – the army of Skirmunt. This broad territorial understanding of the term "Lithuanian state" is supported by the fact that the grand ducal crematorium founded by Švintorog at the place of future Vilnius was designed for "all Lithuanian dukes."[78] Švintorog

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[76] Suchocki, "Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej," 32.
[77] PSRL 17, col. 230.
[78] Ibid., col. 231, 366.

was the unifier of the three duchies. Therefore this phrase cannot refer to the rulers of "Lithuania" in the narrow territorial sense (trans-Neris land). It implies that all rulers of the united realm starting from Švintorog were understood by the narrator as rulers of "Lithuania" in the political sense. Thus, the narrator introduces the notions of "Lithuania" and "Lithuanian state" which refer not only to trans-Neris land, but to the whole area controlled by the ruling dynasty including Samogitia and Navahrudak.

The political meaning of the term "Lithuania" is visible in the following episode. After his death Grand Duke Narimont is succeeded on the throne by his brother Troiden. Soon after that Troiden is assassinated by his brother Dovmont and an internecine struggle ensues between Dovmont and Troiden's son Rymont:

> [Rymont,] lamenting the death of his father, Grand Duke Troiden, revoked his monastic vows and arrived to the Lithuanian *panove*. Having assembled all Lithuanian forces he advanced against Dovmont with the desire to avenge the blood of his father. […] And God has helped [Rymont] and he has defeated the whole army of his uncle Dovmont…[79]

The territorial interpretation of the phrase "Lithuanian *panove*" would imply that in his righteous struggle against villainous Dovmont Rymont was supported only by the nobility of trans-Neris land. But it is important to remember that Rymont and the Lithuanian *panove* defeated Dovmont with the help of God. Accepting the territorial interpretation of the phrase would imply that the narrative portrays the nobility of Samogitia and Navahrudak as acting against the will of God: they did not support Rymont's righteous cause and the narrative does not contain any details to excuse them. Such blackening of the nobility of Samogitia and Navahrudak certainly could not be the intention of the narrator. Thus, the phrase "Lithuanian

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[79] Ibid., col. 370.

panove" in the passage about Rymont's revenge is better understood in the political sense as the nobility of the whole Lithuanian state.

If the narrator aims to assert the unity of Samogitia, Lithuania and Navahrudak, how then can we explain the absence of Navahrudak or Rus' in the title of the chronicle? It is hard to agree with the opinion that the narrator was indifferent or even hostile towards Rus'. As demonstrated above, this may be true for Outer Rus', but certainly not for Inner Rus' (Navahrudak). Given the importance of Navahrudak in the legend its absence from the chronicle's title may seem striking. But a closer look at the way the narrator perceives the structural relations between trans-Neris land and Navahrudak resolves this seeming contradiction. In the final parts of the legend the narrator tends to apply the term "Lithuania" (in territorial, not political sense) not only to trans-Neris land but also to Navahrudak. This is evident in the episode about the attempt of Dovmont to usurp the grand ducal throne of the unified state: "And Dovmont assembled his troops from Pskov and Polatsk and headed for Lithuania wishing to become the Grand Duke of Lithuania and Samogitia."[80] According to the legend, since the times of Grand Duke Roman, the grandson of Švintorog, the three duchies remain unified. It is unlikely that Dovmont claimed only trans-Neris land and Samogitia intending to grant independence to Navahrudak. Nothing in the narrative points to that. According to the logic of the story, Dovmont rather intended to become the lord of the whole Lithuanian state including Navahrudak. The only way we can explain the fact that the narrator mentions only Lithuania and Samogitia but not Navahrudak as the object of Dovmont's craving for power is to stipulate the broadening of the territorial sense of the term "Lithuania". In this episode it denotes not only trans-Neris land but also Navahrudak. Thus, in this episode the narrator introduces the third meaning of the term "Lithuania". Apart from narrow territorial

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[80] Ibid., col. 370.

(trans-Neris land) and political dimensions (the whole tripartite state) it acquires broad territorial sense (trans-Neris land and Navahrudak taken together).

The broad territorial meaning of the term is also visible in the episode about the election of Troiden as grand duke by "the Lithuanian and Samogitian *panove*".[81] The narrow territorial interpretation of this phrase would imply that the nobility of Navahrudak did not take part in these elections. But the logic of the narrative does not provide reasons for such discrimination. Earlier in the text the narrator emphasized the historical importance of the Navahrudak *panove* who were responsible for the election of Švintorog to the throne of Navahrudak and the subsequent unification of the three principalities.[82] Therefore, the phrase probably refers to Lithuania in the broad territorial sense. "Lithuania" in the title of Grand Duke Viten', whose election concludes the legendary part of the chronicle, should also be understood in the broad territorial sense–"the Grand Duke of Lithuania and Samogitia".[83]

Thus, by the end of the narrative the term "Lithuania" acquires three distinctive meanings: political, narrow territorial and broad territorial. Therefore, the absence of Navahrudak or Rus' (in the sense of inner Rus') from the chronicle's title (the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia*) is not surprising. They are not mentioned here because by the end of the narrative the territory they denote had completely merged with trans-Neris land to form Lithuania in the broad territorial sense.

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[81] Ibid., col. 370.
[82] Ibid., col. 235, 366.
[83] Ibid., col. 371.

Chapter 2 – Constructing a Community of Common Descent

There is a widespread consensus in historiography that the Roman legend was a text about the origins and early history of ethnic Lithuanians interpreted by scholars as Lithuanian speakers (including Samogitians) who first professed paganism and then converted to Catholicism.[84] That is why the legend is usually referred to as an ethnogenic myth. This chapter will test this assumption by analyzing the role of language and religion in the narrator's conceptions of *lituanitas* and otherness.

The narrator's notion of *lituanitas*

According to the legend, Palemon travelled to the shores of the Baltic together with "his subjects", five hundred noblemen and their wives, children and "multitudes of people" (subjects of the noblemen).[85] Although later in the narrative none of the characters is explicitly referred to as Roman, this image of social all-inclusiveness implies that the narrator understands all individual and collective characters representing Lithuania, Samogitia and Navahrudak as Romans.[86] It is also apparent that he equates Romans and Lithuanians. For him *lituanitas* and *romanitas* are essentially identical concepts. This can be seen in the episode about the battle on the river Iasel'da, in which princes and armies coming from Samogitia,

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[84] Jakubowski, *Studia nad stosunkami narodowościowymi*, 44, 53; Kulicka, "Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów i jej stosunek do mitu sarmackiego," 7; Suchocki, "Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej," 43-45; Petrauskas, "Tautinė ir istorinė savimonė," 111-21; Niendorf, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, 32; Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 234-35.

[85] PSRL 17, col. 227-28, 358.

[86] Augustinus Rotundus and Maciej Stryjkowski believed that Samogitia and Lithuania were already inhabited before the arrival of Romans. See Augustinus Rotundus, *Rozmowa Polaka z Litwinem*, ed. Józef Korzeniowski (Krakow: Drukarnia C.K. Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1890), 67-68; Maciej Stryjkowski, *Kronika Polska, Litewska, Żmudzka i wszystkiej Rusi*, vol. 1, ed. Mikołaj Malinowski (Warsaw: Nak. G.L. Glüsksverga, 1846), 78. However, the narrative of the myth in the *Chronicle of the GDL* does not mention any autochthonous population. This is not surprising because the chronicle was not yet affected by the Renaissance interest in complex ethnogenic structures involving interactions of many peoples. Medieval myths of origins, by which the Roman legend was affected, tended to picture the new homeland as uninhabited. For example, see the discussion of Polish-Czech myth in [Myl'nikov], *Картина славянского мира*, 139-165.

Lithuania and Navahrudak are referred to as "Lithuanians".[87] However, it is incorrect to assume, like many scholars do, that these "Lithuanians" are presented in the legend as the ancestors of sixteenth-century Lithuanian speakers professing Catholicism. The problem with such a statement is that there is no strict one-to-one relationship between the narrator's notion of *lituanitas* and a particular language and religion.

According to Jan Długosz, the Lithuanian language originated from Latin.[88] By using this linguistic analogy he presented contemporary Lithuanian speakers as descendants of Romans. A similar idea can be found in the works of the Vilnius humanists Michalon Lituanus, Augustinus Rotundus and Venceslaus Agrippa who were active in the second half of the sixteenth century. All three intellectuals viewed Lithuanian as originating from Latin and called upon their compatriots to revoke the alien, barbaric, and unpractical Ruthenian in favor of Latin, the true language of Lithuanians.[89] Jerzy Suchocki, Pietro Dini and Ihar Marzaliuk assumed that all these ideas were present already in the *Chronicle of the GDL*.[90] However, this assumption is groundless. Nothing in the chronicle points to the identification of Lithuanian with Latin. The work of Długosz could hardly have any influence on Lithuanian chronicle-writing in the first half of the sixteenth century since at that time it was unknown in Lithuania,[91]

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[87] Ibid., col. 233, 363.

[88] Długosz, *Annales*, 164: "Quamuis autem parum constet, cum id nemo scriptorum reliquerit, qualiter, quomodo et quando gens Lithwanica et Samagittica in has, quas modo incolit, septemtrionales regiones venerit, aut a qua gente stirpem et genus ducat, verisimilis tamen presumpcio et idiomatis ac lingue eorum sonus et proporcio, ex variis circumstanciis et rerum qualificacionibus sumpta, ostendit Lithuanos et Samagittas Latini generis esse."

[89] Pietro Dini, "The dispute among Vilnius Humanists regarding Latin, Lithuanian and Ruthenian," *Historiographia Linguistica* 16, no. 1-2 (1999): 23-36; "Baltic Palaeocomparativism and the Idea that Lithuanian is a Neo-Latin language," in *Studies in Classical Linguistics in Honor of Philip Baldi,* ed. Richard Page and Aaron D. Rubin (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 21-30; Maria Baryczowa, "Augustyn Rotundus Mieleski, wójt wileński, pierwszy historyk i apologeta Litwy" [Augustinus Rotundus, the mayor of Vilnius, the first historian and apologist of Lithuania], pts. 1 and 2, *Ateneum Wileńskie* 10 (1935): 70-96; 11 (1936): 117-72; Jerzy Ochmański, "Michalon Litwin i jego traktat o zwyczajach Tatarów, Litwinów i Moskwicinów z połowy XVI wieku" [Michalon Lituanus and his treatise about the customs of the Tartars, Lithuanians and Muscovites from the mid-sixteenth century], *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 83, no. 4 (1976): 756-83.

[90] Suchocki, "Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej," 44; Dini, "The dispute among Vilnius Humanists," 27; [Ihar Marzaliuk], *Людзі даўняй Беларусі: этнаканфесійныя і сацыякультурныя стэрэатыпы, X-XVII стст.* [The people of ancient Belarus: ethno-confessional and socio-cultural stereotypes in the tenth and up until the seventeenth century] (Mahiliou: МДУ імя А.А. Куляшова, 2003), 74.

[91] Kulicka, "Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów i jej stosunek do mitu sarmackiego," 5.

whereas the works of Lituanus, Rotundus and Agrippa appeared later and in a very different intellectual milieu. The ideas contained in these sources should not be automatically projected onto the *Chronicle of the GDL.*

The legend in the *Chronicle of the GDL* is not only devoid of any linguistic analogies between Latin and Lithuanian, but also does not reveal a strict correlation between *lituanitas* and any particular language. As noted previously, the "people" (*liudzi*) who arrive to trans-Neris land together with Kernus do not know Latin, which is said to be the mother tongue of their prince: "And he [Kernus] gave name to his people by combining the Latin words for shore (*litus*) and trumpet (*tuba*) and called them *litustuba*. But since common people could not speak Latin they began to call themselves *Litva*".[92] Jan Jurkiewicz explains this linguistic difference among the Roman settlers by saying that the narrator "did not pay much attention to the language of the commoners and did not consider the possibility of using the Lithuanian language as an argument in favor of the Roman origins of Lithuanians."[93] On the other hand, he self-contradictorily supposes that the commoners in this episode speak Lithuanian, which reveals his assumption that for the narrator *lituanitas* necessarily correlates with the Lithuanian language. However, if one looks closer at the representation of the Lithuanian language, it will become clear that *lituanitas* in the legend does not strictly correlate with it. Illustrative in this respect is the episode where the Roman settlers name Samogitia: "They enjoyed living beside these rivers. And they named that area 'the coastal land' in the Slavonic language (*sloven'skim iazykom*) and 'Samogitian land' in the Lithuanian language (*litovskim iazykom*)".[94] Apparently,

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[92] PSRL 17, col. 230. The Evreinov Codex refers to Latin in this episode as the "native tongue" of Kernus (PSRL 17, col. 360). This detail reinforces the fact that princes and commoners in the legend do not share native language.
[93] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 235.
[94] PSRL 17, col. 229. In the Evreinov Codex the mention of languages is omitted.

the narrator does not see any contradiction in the fact that the Roman settlers use the Slavonic language.[95] For him Romans were a multilingual community from the very beginning.

The Lithuanian language in the narrative does not have any major symbolic importance. It is mentioned just twice. First it appears in the episode about the naming of Samogitia. Here, as previously demonstrated, it shares its symbolic function with the Slavonic language and does not serve as the exclusive marker of *lituanitas*. It is mentioned for the second time when the narrator comments on the name of Rymont: "and the aforementioned monk Lavryš, whose name in Lithuanian (*po litovski*) was Rymont and in Ruthenian Vasilii, lamenting the death of his father Grand Duke Troiden, revoked his monastic rank."[96] Earlier in the narrative we also read that Rymont's father

> sent him to learn the Ruthenian language (*dlia nauki iazyka Ruskago*) to Lev Mstislavovich who had founded the city of L'viv in his own name. And while Rymont was living at Lev's place he learned the Ruthenian language (*nauchilsia iazyku Russkomu*) and fell in love with the Christian faith and converted.[97]

Why did the narrator provide the details about Rymont's name and his studies of the Ruthenian language? Did he want to draw our attention to the fact that Rymont and the grand dukes in general were Lithuanian speakers? This is very unlikely. Firstly, it is not explicitly said that Rymont was a Lithuanian speaker. This fact does not logically ensue from his Lithuanian name because some grand dukes in the legend have names characteristic of the culture of medieval Rus' (Švarn, Roman), which makes it impossible to determine what language the grand dukes speak in the narrative. Secondly, it is not clear what is meant by the Ruthenian language (*ruskii iazyk*). At the beginning of the sixteenth century this term

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[95] The phrasing of the passage clearly suggests the instrumentality of the Slavonic language in relation to the performed action. The narrator does not simply translate the Lithuanian name into Slavonic. He informs us that the name was given *by using* this language. To indicate translation it would be more logical to use the form "*po sloven'ski*."
[96] PSRL 17, col. 370.
[97] Ibid., col. 369.

designated the written language of the East Slavic population of the GDL and Poland.[98] It differed from Church Slavonic which was generally referred to as *slovenskii iazyk*.[99] However, sometimes *ruskii iazyk* also denoted Church Slavonic.[100] In the passage cited above the term "Ruthenian language" may have a religious connotation since the acquisition of this language, or rather, the acquisition of learning (*nauka*) associated with it, leads to Rymont's conversion. This suggests that Rymont went to L'viv to study Church Slavonic. This does not exclude the possibility that in the eyes of the narrator Rymont could speak some form of East Slavic vernacular as his native or one of the native languages before going to L'viv. Therefore, the passages cited above were not meant to present Rymont as Lithuanian speaker and Slavic languages as alien to him. Even if the narrator meant that Rymont did not know any Slavic language, he certainly did not aim to emphasize this fact for its own sake. The mention of languages in these episodes does not have a symbolic function. It merely serves as a means to explain events. The note about the Baltic nature of Rymont's name is meant to clarify why this character has three distinct names (Rymont, Lavryš and Vasilii). The remark about the study of the Ruthenian language by Rymont is meant to explain his conversion. This instrumentality of the Lithuanian language in the narrative suggests that the narrator did not aim to attach any symbolic value to it. Of course, the very mention of the Lithuanian language indicates that he associated it with Romans/Lithuanians. Yet, the narrative structure of the above-mentioned passages suggests that the narrator did not see the knowledge of Lithuanian as an indispensable sign of *lituanitas*.

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[98] Julia Verkholantsev, *Ruthenica Bohemica: Ruthenian Translations from Czech in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland* (Berlin: Lit, 2008), 1-2.

[99] For example see the passage from the work of Piotr Skarga *On the Unity of the Church under One Pastor* (1577) cited in Verkholantsev, *Ruthenica Bohemica*, 11.

[100] A number of examples of such use of the term *ruskii iazyk* is given in [Marzaliuk], *Людзі даўняй Беларусі*, 33-7.

According to Jurkiewicz and Suchocki, the narrator's emphasis on the paganism of Romans/Lithuanians is another way to present them as ancestors of Catholic Lithuanian speakers.[101] However, just as in the case of language, there is no strict correlation between *romanitas/lituanitas* and a concrete religious system. The legend is replete with descriptions of pagan practices. After the death of Spera, the son of Palemon, his subjects erect a wooden idol in his honor and venerate it as their god.[102] Idols are also made by Grand Duke Kukovait in honor of his mother Poiata and by his sons who want to commemorate their father. The narrator clearly associates this religious practice with *romanitas* since he indicates that the idols were erected "according to the Roman custom."[103] The longest digression about pagan rite and beliefs, which can be found in the episode about the establishment of Švintorog's crematorium, reveals other religious implications of *lituanitas*:

> And whenever the body of a Lithuanian prince or a nobleman (*pan*) was cremated, caracal or bear claws were left beside it. This was done because they believed that when the judgement day would come […] and God would descend and sit on the top of a high mountain to judge the dead and the living, it would be difficult to climb this mountain without the caracal or bear claws. […] And although they were pagans […] they still believed in one God. They believed that the judgement day would come and that the dead would rise. And they believed in one God who would judge the dead and the living.[104]

As suggested by Mathias Niendorf, the narrator did not view the pagan past of his community as problematic; for him it was a sign of honorable Roman origin.[105] According to Jurkiewicz, the Christian narrator, on the contrary, was deeply uneasy about the pagan past of his community and tried to vindicate it by accentuating its positive aspects, for example, honoring the dead.[106] Given the pronounced Christian character of the legend, evident in the emphasis on the agency of God and the absence of typical humanistic features such as cultural

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[101] Suchocki, "Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej," 45; Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 234-5.
[102] PSRL 17, col. 229, 360.
[103] Ibid., col. 229.
[104] Ibid., col. 235-236.
[105] Niendorf, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, 79.
[106] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 236.

and linguistic analogies with antiquity, the position of Jurkiewicz seems to be more justified; moreover, it can be further developed. It is remarkable that the passage quoted above quite emphatically connects Lithuanian paganism to the Christian belief in one God and the Last Judgement. This connection can be interpreted in the framework set by Jurkiewicz: as the narrator's vindication of the pagan past by emphasizing the parallels between the Lithuanian paganism and Christianity. However, the significance of this episode should not be limited to simple vindication. Rymvidas Petrauskas made a very interesting observation in this respect by noting that the location of the legendary crematorium coincides with the actual location of the Vilnius Catholic cathedral erected in 1387.[107] Thus, the whole story about the crematorium may function not only as the vindication of paganism, but as the prefiguration of the Catholic conversion of Lithuania at the end of the fourteenth century. Such a teleological framework of interpretation can be supported by the following feature of the narrative: Roman princes and their armies, despite being pagans, are always aided by God. At the first glance this may seem to be a glaring contradiction. But in reality this feature constitutes a logical and necessary element in the teleological process the narrator constructs: the pagan Romans are predestined to accept Catholicism and uphold it as vigorously as they used to venerate their idols; divine intervention throughout the whole narrative is a sign of this predestination.

Interestingly, this framework of interpretation sheds a totally new light on the very *topos* of the Roman origin. It might be more than a sign of prestige for sixteenth-century Lithuanian elites, as it is usually understood by historians. It could also have a strong religious connotation: just as Rome used to be pagan and upheld Christianity, in the same way Romans who arrived in Lithuania were destined to become Christians.

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[107] Petrauskas, "Socialiniai ir istoriografiniai lietuvių kilmės iš romėnų teorijos aspektai," 282. On the history of the cathedral see Stephen Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire Within East-Central Europe, 1295-1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 134-7.

Thus, in terms of religion, *lituanitas* is metaphorically connected to Catholicism. However, Orthodoxy can also be interpreted as its possible component. When Ginvil, the Roman prince of Polatsk, converts to Orthodoxy, this makes him a Ruthenian in the eyes of the narrator: "And Ginvil married the daughter of the Grand Duke of Tver Boris, Maria by name, for the sake of whom he converted to the Ruthenian faith […] And being a Ruthenian he was very pious."[108] Although Ginvil becomes a Ruthenian, the narrator does not say that he ceased to be Roman/Lithuanian, as suggested by Jurkiewicz.[109] The legend is essentially a narrative about the deeds of Romans/Lithuanians. The fact that the deeds of an Orthodox convert Ginvil and his successors are no less important in the narrative than the deeds of other Roman princes implies that Ginvil retained his *lituanitas* in the eyes of the narrator. He became a Ruthenian not in the ethnic, but in the religious sense.[110]

After enumerating the churches and monasteries founded by Ginvil, the narrator tells the story about his daughter Paraskoviia (the prototype of the twelfth-century Orthodox saint Euphrosyne of Polatsk) who became a nun and travelled to Rome where she converted to Catholicism and was buried in a church built in her honor.[111] This episode is yet another evidence of the value the narrator placed on Catholicism; however, it does not disprove the link between Orthodoxy and *lituanitas* in the narrative.[112] The figure of Rymont provides further evidence of this link. Being a son of the Lithuanian grand duke he converted to Orthodoxy and founded a convent near Navahrudak. Just like Ginvil, Rymont plays an important role in the narrative. What is even more important, being a devout Orthodox believer he is assisted by

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[108] PSRL 17, col. 232.
[109] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 236.
[110] This episode was interpreted as describing a change of ethnic identity by [Marzaliuk], *Людзі даўняй Беларусі*, 62.
[111] PSRL 17, col. 232, 362-63.
[112] The ideological implications of the episodes about Ginvil and Paraskovia were discussed in [Floria], "Историческая традиция," 110-16; Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 273-74; Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 133, 138-141. In this study I am interested exclusively in the identity-creating implications of the narrative rather than its hidden attempts to justify political, religious, social or other claims of the Lithuanian ruling elite.

God: "and God helped [Rymont] and he defeated the whole army of his uncle Dovmont."[113] In this context the Orthodoxy of a leader of Lithuanians becomes a part of God's plan for his chosen people.

To sum up, it is not tenable to say that Romans/Lithuanians are presented in the legend as the ancestors of Lithuanian speakers professing Catholicism. Romans/Lithuanians are a multilingual and multi-confessional community. Apparently, the narrator's conception of *lituanitas* differs substantially from the rigorous linguo-religious definition which contemporary historians try to impose on the narrative.

Religion, language and the construction of the Other

Along what lines is the Other constructed in the narrative? Without giving concrete examples from the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy* Suchocki insisted that the legend creates a sharp contrast between the Romans and others along religious and ethno-linguistic lines.[114] However, a closer analysis of the narrator's criteria of otherness shows that this is not true.

The most frequent adversaries of Romans/Lithuanians are Ruthenians. The term "Ruthenians" has clear religious connotations since the narrator acknowledges the existence of "Ruthenian faith" (Orthodoxy) to which Ginvil converts. Its linguistic meaning is questionable, because it is not certain what the narrator means by "the Ruthenian language." What is more important, however, is that the conflict in the narrative is never based on linguistic or religious differences. The most dramatic encounter between Romans/Lithuanians and Ruthenians takes place on the river Iasel'da. The duke of Navahrudak Švarn leads a joint army from Samogitia, Lithuania and Navahrudak "against Ruthenians" and crushes them: "And Ruthenians cried out

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[113] PSRL 17, col. 370.
[114] Suchocki, "Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej," 45.

loudly with despair at being so cruelly defeated by godless Lithuanians."[115] It may seem that here we have a clear representation of ethno-religious conflict. However, this is a misleading interpretation. This conflict should not be viewed as ethnic, because the linguistic difference is not mentioned; as was shown above, the narrator hardly imagined such a difference at all. The significance of religious contrast, which is clearly made in the episode, should not be exaggerated either. Presenting Ruthenians as crying out with despair at being defeated by "godless Lithuanians" is not meant to mark the difference. This is proven by the fact that the characterization of Lithuanians as "godless" is not part of the narrator's vision of the event; it is the perception of the protagonists, that is the Ruthenians. The function of the embedded focalization here is not to mark the difference, but to emphasize the scale of the victory won by Švarn. For the narrator Lithuanians are not godless. This is evident from the episode about Švintorog's cremation.

Thus, it is not language and religion which mark Ruthenians as the Other. Their otherness is rather determined by their location outside the homeland of Romans/Lithuanians. The narrator specifies the territorial belonging of all protagonists who attack Romans. First they are attacked by the Prince of Pinsk and Lutsk.[116] Then the princes of Kiev, Vladimir and Drutsk launch a joint intervention.[117] And finally, the Lithuanian state is attacked by the people of Pskov and the people of Polatsk led by usurper Dovmont.[118] By specifying the territorial belonging of the attackers the narrator marks their otherness. Besides, it is not coincidental that most of the wars with Ruthenians in the narrative are defensive. The defensiveness of the Roman/Lithuanian dukes is not only meant to justify their territorial acquisitions, but also to present them as protectors of their people and their adversaries as the evil and unjust Other. It

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[115] PSRL 17, col. 233.
[116] Ibid., 232, 363.
[117] Ibid., 234, 365-6.
[118] Ibid., 370.

is important that Roman princes are never perceived as evil by the narrator. He informs the reader that according to some unspecified "Ruthenian chronicle" Troiden, who constantly attacked Poland, Mazovia and Rus' "was worse in relation to those lands than Antioch of Syria and Herod of Jerusalem and Nero of Rome, since he was so cruel and militant."[119] Yet, just as in the case of the battle on the river Iasel'da, this evaluation is not by the narrator, but by the adversaries of Troiden. The narrator, on the other hand, never gives a negative evaluation of Roman princes. To sum up, Ruthenians represent the Other in the narrative because they live outside the homeland of Romans/Lithuanians and have negative intentions in relation to the latter.

It is not entirely clear from the text whether any Ruthenian population lived inside the Lithuanian state. Was the territory of Rus', colonized by Romans/Lithuanians, completely abandoned by Ruthenians after the Tartar attack, or did some of them remain there? Ulaš'čik and Łatyszonek assumed that the narrator viewed the duchy as a bi-ethnic state where Lithuanians and Ruthenians lived side by side.[120] This interpretation is problematic. The narrator rarely specified ethnic belonging of the army of the dukes of Navahrudak. But when he did, like in the case of the battle with "Ruthenians" on the river Iasel'da, it turned out that it consisted of "Lithuanians."[121] Nevertheless, this is not a compelling argument against the interpretation of Ulaš'čik and Łatyszonek. Unfortunately, the narrative does not provide enough details to solve this problem. Yet, it is clear that even if the narrator did implicitly acknowledge the presence of Ruthenians in the Lithuanian state, he viewed them as a marginal group of commoners subjugated by the Roman/Lithuanian nobility whose colonization of the

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[119] Ibid., col. 238, 368.
[120] [Ulaš'čik], *Введение в изучение белорусско-литовского летописания*, 151-54; Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 287.
[121] PSRL 17, col. 233, 363.

region is clearly emphasized in the narrative.[122] The image of an unambiguously bi-ethnic Navahrudak duchy appeared only in much later works of Maciej Stryjkowski.[123]

The narrative constructs the otherness of the Tartars and Latgalians in the same way as that of Ruthenians. Their language and religion are never mentioned; what matters is their location and destructive intention in relation to the homeland of Romans/Lithuanians. This is especially visible in the case of Latgalians:

> The Latgalians, who lived on the sea shore, gathered together and invaded the Samogitian land to which they did a great deal of harm. And there was a lot of bloodshed among the Samogitian people because of them. Grand Duke Girmont, having his forces assembled, has advanced against them and has inflicted terrible suffering and murder on them and their land. Some of them he has taken captives and has devastated their land.[124]

Thus, the main criterion of otherness for the narrator has nothing to do with language or religion. It is primarily the territory one belongs to which determines the Other.

An ethnogenic myth?

Oleg Łatyszonek states that the legend in the *Chronicle of the GDL* cannot be regarded as an ethnogenic myth.[125] Firstly, its protagonists are not Lithuanians but Romans. Secondly, the common people are presented as mere "objects of nobility's actions."[126] Thirdly, the legend does not attach value to the Lithuanian language. Łatyszonek seems to believe that the legend was a purely ideological text aimed to justify the political ambitions of Lithuanian magnates and to enhance the prestige of concrete magnate families and Lithuanian aristocracy in general. In particular, it was an apotheosis of Albertas Goštautas (d.1539), one of the most powerful

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[122] Ibid., col. 231, 361.
[123] Stryjkowski, *Kronika Polska*, vol. 1, 235.
[124] PSRL 17, col. 236.
[125] Łatyszonek, "Polityczne aspekty przedstawienia średniowiecznych dziejów ziem białoruskich," 16-21; *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 287.
[126] Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 287.

Lithuanian magnates and one of the commissioners of the legend (see the next chapter).[127] Łatyszonek contends that the narrative reflected Goštautas' political career which was largely connected to Navahrudak, Podlachia and Polatsk.[128]

Łatyszonek is certainly right in emphasizing the conformity of the legend with the interests of aristocracy. A similar conclusion was made by Rymvidas Petrauskas, who contended that the legend was to a great extent about the appearance of Lithuanian noble estate.[129] Jurkiewicz also argued that the legend reflected the political aspirations of Lithuanian magnates.[130] Indeed, the text presents the nobility, or to be more precise its higher echelons, the *panove*, as one of the main state-building agents and the source of grand ducal power. It was the *panove* of Navahrudak who elected Švintorog, the son of the Lithuanian-Samogitian ruler, as their grand duke and thus caused the unification of the state.[131] It was the *panove* who supported Rymont in his struggle against usurper Dovmont and elected a new ruler after Rymont resigned, thus ensuring the integrity of the state.[132] However, the aristocratic coloring of the legend and the depreciation of the agency of commoners do not deny the legend's ethnogenic nature. In the Middle Ages there was hardly any ethnogenic myth which ascribed significant role to commoners. What is important is that the legend presents, albeit implicitly, all classes of Romans as sharing the same origin. As shown above, it also equates Romans with Lithuanians.

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[127] The legend mentions the ancestor of Goštautas Krump from the Kolumny dynasty. According to the legend, Vytenis and Gediminas, who replaced the Kitovrasy dynasty on the throne, were from the Kolumny family as well. Thus, Goštautas and his family are implicitly presented as relatives of the ruling Jagiellonian dynasty.

[128] Łatyszonek, "Polityczne aspekty przedstawienia średniowiecznych dziejów ziem białoruskich," 16-21; *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 275.

[129] Petrauskas, "Socialiniai ir istoriografiniai lietuvių kilmės iš romėnų teorijos aspektai," 276.

[130] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 233-4. Nevertheless neither Petrauskas nor Jurkiewicz denied the ethnogenic nature of the myth.

[131] PSRL 17, col. 366.

[132] Ibid., col. 371.

It is very doubtful that the text had a purely ideological function of justifying political claims and building up prestige. For these purposes it would not be necessary to construct a community of common descent. Although certain events in the narrative might have reflected Goštautas's or somebody else's career, the image of the community and the idea of homeland one finds in the legend were not merely ideological constructs meant to fulfil social and political purposes, but rather conceptualizations of pre-existing ethnic solidarity aimed to rationalize and further promote it.

Łatyszonek is right when he alludes to the marginal role of language in the legend. The analysis above has shown that it does not function as the essential symbol of *lituanitas* or the marker of otherness. However, this does not mean that the legend is not ethnogenic. Although the narrator does not imagine *lituanitas* in strictly linguistic or religious terms, it can still be treated as an ethnic category because it refers to the community of common descent. Thus, the widespread labeling of the legend as ethnogenic should be accepted. However, an important stipulation must be made: the narrator's vision of the Lithuanian ethnogenesis cannot be approached from the perspective of traditional essentialist ethnology. The legend was not a text about the origins of sixteenth-century Catholic Lithuanian speakers, as scholars usually interpret ethnic Lithuanians. The narrator's concept of Lithuanian ethnicity was quite different from that of contemporary historians.

Chapter 3 – The "Roman" Identity: Structure and Classification

In this chapter I will use the results of the narratological analysis performed in the previous chapters to reveal the structure of the collective identity constructed in the Roman myth contained in the first redaction of the *Chronicle of the GDL*. I will discuss whether or not this identity can be classified as national and/or ethnic. I will also investigate which groups (if any) in the Lithuanian society of the first half of the sixteenth century might have shared this identity.

The border between "Us" and "Them"

Having analyzed the representation of space, language and religion in the legend one can now determine along what lines the narrator drew the imaginary border between "Us" and "Them." This border was certainly not defined in terms of social differences. The legend is to a large degree a text about the *panove* and their state-building role, but these *panove* share the same origin with common people and the rest of the nobility. Apart from a clearly ideological purpose of justifying social, political and personal ambitions of Lithuanian magnates, the legend performs an identity-building function by constructing the community of common descent.

The narrator's vision of this community is quite peculiar. The legend does not reveal a strict correlation between common biological origin and language. Romans/Lithuanians speak a variety of languages from the very first day of their landing in Samogitia. The Other in the narrative is never defined linguistically. Although in the eyes of the narrator the Lithuanian language was certainly a sign of Lithuanian origin, it seems that for him it was not a crucial

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and indispensable marker: speakers of Slavic dialects/languages could also be members of the Lithuanian community of descent.

The role of religion in the identity constructed in the legend is also ambiguous. On the one hand, the legend metaphorically connects *lituanitas* with Catholicism, which suggests that Catholic faith constituted an important criterion of inclusion. Yet, there is no strict correlation between *lituanitas* and Catholicism in the narrative. The legend contains examples of Orthodox Lithuanians who, despite their Orthodoxy, retained their key role in the narrative. This suggests, that confession was not a decisive criterion of inclusion either.

The only element with which *lituanitas* strongly correlates in the narrative is the territory defined as homeland of Lithuanians. This suggests that for the narrator the most important marker of belonging to the Lithuanian community of descent had a territorial nature. In order to better understand this crucial component of identity it is necessary to analyze the relation between the mythical boundaries of homeland with the actual geographical and administrative divisions inside the GDL of the first half of the sixteenth century.

It has long been recognized that the term "Lithuania" had multiple meanings in the medieval and sixteenth-century GDL. On the one hand, it referred to the whole territory of the grand duchy.[133] On the other, it also denoted a smaller unit inside the state, which is called by historians "Lithuania proper".[134] There is no consensus in historiography on the territorial extent of Lithuania proper. According to Matvei Liubavskii, it included Aukštaitija (the territory of today's eastern Lithuania) and the areas around Braslau, Navahrudak, Vaukavysk,

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[133] Halecki, *Litwa, Ruś i Żmudź*, 4-5.
[134] The GDL was a conglomerate of territories with different legal status in relation to the center. Lithuania proper was viewed as the core of the state and sometimes referred to as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the narrow sense. There was also a number of autonomous Ruthenian lands each possessing its own land privilege – Volhynia, Kyiv, Smolensk, Vitebsk, Polatsk. In the legal documents these and other possessions in Rus' were called in Latin *cetera dominia*, *terrae subiectae*, in Ruthenian *panstva naši russkie*. See Halecki, *Litwa, Ruś i Żmudź*, 12.

Slonim, Zdzitau, and Hrodna.[135] According to Jerzy Ochmański, it also included Minsk.[136] This scholar also emphasized the role of the river Berezina as the boundary between Lithuania proper and Rus'.[137] Another researcher who contributed to this discussion was Oskar Halecki. He believed that Lithuania proper coincided with the administrative boundaries of the Vilnius and Trakai palatinates in the fifteenth century, which, according to him, extended as far East as Mstislau and included the areas on the middle Dniepr.[138] Viačaslau Nasevič and Mikhail Spirydonau also made an important contribution to the discussion.[139] They criticized Halecki for concentrating solely on medieval legal materials and ignoring the use of the term in sixteenth-century epistolary and chancery sources.[140] Nasevič and Spirydonau demonstrated that on the territory of the Duchy there was a number of named geographical regions which did not coincide with administrative divisions. These regions were Lithuania, Samogitia, Rus', Podlachia, Polesie and Volhynia. The boundaries of Lithuania proper proposed by them roughly coincided with the boundaries proposed by Ochmański. Recently the discussion was summarized by Krzysztof Pietkiewicz.[141] He adopted the position of Halecki and identified

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[135] [Matvei Liubavskii] Матвей Любавский, *Областное деление и местное самоуправление Литовско-русского государства ко времени первого Литовского статута* [Regional divisions and local self-government of Lithuanian-Russian state by the time of the first Lithuanian statute] (Moscow: Университетская типография, 1892), 1-26.

[136] Jerzy Ochmański, *Litewska granica etniczna na wschodzie od epoki plemiennej do XVI wieku* [The Lithuanian ethnic border in the East from the tribal epoch to the sixteenth century] (Poznań: UAM, 1981), 69-73.

[137] Ibid., 71. Ochmański noted that the Berezina was viewed as a boundary between Lithuania and Rus' by Jan Długosz and Muscovite ambassadors. This boundary-forming role of the Berezina is also visible in the *Smolensk Chronicle*. See PSRL 17, col. 62-63. For this reason I marked the Berezina as the eastern border of the legendary Navahrudak principality (see the map).

[138] Oscar Halecki, *Litwa, Ruś i Żmudź jako części składowe Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego* [Lithuania, Rus' and Samogitia as constituent part of the grand Duchy of Lithuania] (Krakow: Akademija Umiejętności, 1916), 5. The same definition of Lithuania proper is given in Zugmantas Kiaupa et al., *The History of Lithuania before 1795* (Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of History, 2000), 163.

[139] [Viačaslau Nasevič] and [Mikhail Spirydonau] Вячаслаў Насевіч and Міхаіл Спірыдонаў, "Русь у складзе Вялікага княства Літоўскага ў XVI ст." [Rus' as a part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the sixteenth century] in *З глыбі вякоў: Наш край; Гістарычна-культуралагічны зборнік*, vol. 1, ed. Аляксандар Краўцэвіч (Minsk: Навука і тэхніка, 1996), 4-27.

[140] Ibid., 7. This criticism of Halecki was repeated by Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 103.

[141] Krzysztof Pietkiewicz, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie pod rządami Aleksandra Jagiellończyka: Studia nad dziejami państwa i społeczeństwa na przełomie XV i XVI wieku* [The Grand Duchy of Lithuania under the rule of Aleksander Jagiellończyk: A study on the history of state and society at the turn of the sixteenth century] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1995), 47-54.

Lithuania proper with the territory of fifteenth-century palatinates of Vilnius and Trakai.[142] Pietkiewicz, however, emphasized the fact that the middle Dniepr region was never fully incorporated into these palatinates.[143] There was also a number of other territories which were not directly controlled by the palatines in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. These were the regions of Kletsk, Slutsk, Turau and Davyd-Haradok which were continuously ruled by various semi-independent appanage princes or by the wife of Sigismund I Bona Sforza.[144] Therefore, it seems more justified to limit the palatinates of Vilnius and Trakai and, respectively, Lithuania proper, to the territory directly controlled by these palatines and their administration, as it is shown on the map of Jan Jakubowski.[145] This definition of Lithuania proper does not necessarily contradict the theory of Nasevič and Spirydonau who defined it in geographic rather than administrative terms. It makes sense to differentiate between two units called "Lithuania" in sixteenth-century GDL: administrative, which was reflected in the grand ducal title,[146] as well as in legal and diplomatic sources, and geographical, reflected in chancery and epistolary materials. From this point onwards by Lithuania proper I will mean Lithuania in the administrative sense. Since the first decades of the sixteenth century Lithuania proper included not only the Vilnius and Trakai palatinates, but also the palatinates of Navahrudak and Podlachia which became separate from Vilnius and Trakai in 1507 and 1520 respectively.[147]

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[142] Ibid., 47, 66.

[143] Ibid., 47, 51-52.

[144] [Aleksandr Gruševskii] Александр Грушевский, *Пинское Полесье*, vol. 2: *Очерк истории Пинского княжества в составе литовско-Русского государства XIV-XVI в.* [The Pinsk Polesie, vol. 2: The essay on the history of the Pinsk principality in the Lithuanian-Russian state from the fourteenth to sixteenth century] (Kyiv: Типография университета Св. Владимира, 1903), 1-40; [Mikhail Krom] Михаил Кром, *Меж Русью и Литвой: Пограничные земли в системе русско-литовских отношений конца XV - первой трети XVI в.* [Between Rus' and Lithuania: Borderlands in the system of Russian-Lithuanian relationships between the end of the fifteenth and the first third of the sixteenth century] (Moscow: Квадрига, 2010), 119-123.

[145] Jan Jakubowski, *Mapa Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w połowie XVI wieku. Część północna, skala 1: 1.600.000* [The map of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the mid-sixteenth century: The northern part, scale 1 to 1600000] in *Atlas historyczny Polski*. Seria B, Mapy przeglądowe, no. 1 (Krakow: Akademia Umiejętności, 1928).

[146] The official title was the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Samogitia and Rus'.

[147] On the map of Jakubowski Pinsk is included in the Trakai palatinate, although it was also continuously controlled by appanage dukes and Bona Sforza. Nevertheless, the fact that in the legend it constitutes an integral part of the Lithuanian state suggests that despite its control by appanage princes it was still viewed as a part of Lithuania proper.

In chapter 1 it was shown that the term "Lithuania" in the legend has three distinctive meanings: political (the whole state), narrow territorial (one of three lands constituting the state) and broad territorial (tans-Neris land and Navahrudak merged together). It is striking that the boundaries of the legendary Lithuania in the broad territorial sense almost fully coincide with the actual sixteenth-century confines of Lithuania proper (see the map). The same correspondence is visible between the legendary and sixteenth-century Samogitia.[148] This suggests that the Roman myth was essentially a history of these two regions and was meant to explain how they came to be in their sixteenth-century borders.[149]

Lithuania proper and Samogitia are constructed in the legend as homeland: an empty space settled by Romans/Lithuanians and transformed into a powerful and glorious state. The correlation between *lituanitas* and the territory of Lithuania proper and Samogitia in the legend suggests that for the narrator being a native of these lands and having ancestry originating from them was the most important criterion of belonging to the Lithuanian community of descent. Lithuania proper, however, was a bi-ethnic region with a substantial Orthodox Slavic-speaking population. Does this mean that native Orthodox Slavic speakers of Lithuania proper were also viewed by the narrator as descendants of legendary Romans/Lithuanians? The answer to this is problematic. As was shown above, Catholicism was certainly an important component of the identity the legend constructed. However, a number of princes in the narrative are Orthodox Lithuanians. On the other hand, we do not see any mentions of Orthodox Lithuanians among commoners. This detail may suggest that the narrator viewed conversion to Orthodoxy as a prerogative of nobility. Thus, it is possible that for him the contemporary Orthodox nobility of

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[148] In fact, this correspondence is another evidence that in the first half of the sixteenth century the inhabitants of the GDL imagined Lithuania in the narrow sense (Lithuania proper) as the territory directly controlled by the Vilnius, Trakai, Navahrudak and Podlachia palatinates.

[149] It is hard to agree with Jurkiewicz who believes that the legend was meant to explain the tripartite structure of the actual Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Samogitia and Rus' (Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 226). It seems that the legend was not a history of the whole state. It was concerned only with Samogitia and Lithuania proper.

Lithuania proper, irrespective of their knowledge of Lithuanian, were descendants of Romans/Lithuanians, while the Orthodoxy of commoners, unless they spoke Lithuanian, was perceived by him as a sign of otherness and belonging to a different, Ruthenian community of descent. To sum up, the hierarchical order of the criteria of Lithuanian origin according to the narrator can be outlined as follows (from the decisive marker to less important ones): 1) an individual's and his or her ancestors' territorial origin; 2) confession; 3) native language.

National identity?

Having determined the structure of the collective identity created in the legend it is time to analyze it from the perspective of theories of nationalism. Can this identity be classified as national? The answer to it depends on our definition of nationhood.

Modernists assume that nations are products of recent modernity and are not related to pre-modern collective identities. Two of the most prominent theoreticians of nationhood who challenged the modernist paradigm were John Armstrong and Adrian Hastings. According to them, it is perfectly possible to talk about national identity in pre-modern contexts. Acknowledging significant qualitative differences between modern and pre-modern nations, they nevertheless view them as variations of the same phenomenon.[150] Their theories, however, do not always provide useful analytical tools for the study of concrete historical sources because they tend to equate national and ethnic identities in a pre-modern context. In the framework of their theoretical constructions such equation is instrumental in proving the continuity between modern nations and their predecessors. However, for the purposes of historical research it seems more productive to stick to the sharp distinction between the two kinds of identity made by Anthony Smith, who emphasizes the strong ideological component

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[150] John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 3-13; Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2-30.

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of national identity.[151] To better analyze the nature of pre-modern collective identities it will be quite instrumental to analyze whether or not they contain any elements similar to modern nationalist ideologies. As will become clear later in this section, the identity constructed in the legend can certainly be characterized as ethnic. But does this identity in any way approximate the concepts of modern nationalism?

According to Smith, although national ideologies may vary significantly, there are a number of ideals/principles that underlie them all.[152] These are unity, autonomy and identity. The ideal of unity rests on the image of a nation as a unified whole, which dictates the necessity of eliminating economic and political divisions inside a nation. The meaning of autonomy in Smith's theory is two-fold. On the one hand, it implies political independence; on the other, mass citizenship as the means of expression of a nation's collective will which is viewed as the ultimate source of political power. The ideal of identity rests on the assumption that every nation has its peculiar national character embedded in its unique culture and sometimes in the sense of a mission. This ideal dictates the revival, development and preservation of language, literature, music, customs, traditional arts, crafts and other cultural elements which distinguish "Us" from "Them".

The nationalist ideals are not present in the Roman myth. It does not aim to eliminate political divisions inside the GDL. On the contrary, by othering the inhabitants outside Lithuania proper and Samogitia it serves as a symbolic reinforcement of internal divisions. The legend also does not create an image of Romans/Lithuanians as a self-governing community. The power of rulers and the *panove* does not spring from the collective will of common people. They enjoy it by virtue of their birth, not because they were invested with it from below. Also, the legend does not attempt to construct a peculiar national character of Romans/Lithuanians:

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[151] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 1-18.
[152] Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 22-41.

language does not serve as a symbol of *lituanitas*, while the representation of customs is hardly meant to emphasize cultural uniqueness of Romans/Lithuanians. It is rather intended to place their history in a Christian teleological framework. And finally, there are no traces in the myth of constructing a messianic idea. Thus, the identity constructed in the legend cannot be characterized as national.

It is important to note, however, that subsequent versions of the myth did acquire certain traces of national identity construction. In the mid-sixteenth century the Vilnius humanists started to emphatically associate *lituanitas* with the Latin/Lithuanian language and discuss the collective character of Lithuanians,[153] which makes them much closer to the modern nationalist thinking than the creators of the *Chronicle of the GDL*.[154]

The discussion of the possible national aspect of the legend will be incomplete if one does not critically evaluate the term "political nation" which is so often applied to the grand duchy's elites starting from the fifteenth century. This term was introduced into the subject by Jerzy Suchocki and Juliusz Bardach.[155] They defined political nation as a circle of nobility involved in the governance of the GDL and foreign policy-making, who were aware of being subjects of the sovereign Lithuanian state and shared loyalty to it. This concept was generally accepted and further developed by historians who associated the formation of a political nation with the crystallization of the noble estate, which shared social solidarity, and the development

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[153] In his *De moribus Tartarorum, Lituanorum et Moschorum* (Basel: Conrad Waldkirch, 1615) Michalon Lituanus criticized the lifestyle and attitudes of contemporary Lithuanians and called upon them to adopt the virtues of their Roman ancestors.

[154] The association of *lituanitas* with the Lithuanian language viewed as different from Latin was characteristic for sixteenth-century Lithuanian intellectuals affected by ideas of Reformation. See Darius Kuolys [Дариус Куолис], "Понятия литовец и Литва в литовской письменности XVI-XVII веков," [The notions of 'Lithuanians' and 'Lithuania' in the Lithuanian literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth century] *Славяноведение* 5 (1999): 37-41. However, the author is hardly correct when he says that this view was a product of Lithuanian patriotism. It rather was determined by purely religious considerations of making the Scripture understandable for large masses of people.

[155] Suchocki, "Formowanie się i skład narodu politycznego," 31-78; Juliusz Bardach, "Od narodu politycznego do narodu etnicznego w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej" [From political to ethnic nation in East Central Europe], *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 37 (1993): 3-16.

of cliental relations, which facilitated the diffusion of political values and ideas to lesser nobility.[156]

Despite its popularity among historians the use of the term "political nation" is not justified. First of all, there is no consensus among theoreticians of nationhood regarding its definition. Justifying the use of the term, Suchocki referred to the writings of the Hungarian medievalist Jenő Szűcs and the Polish historian and researcher of nationhood Benedykt Zientara.[157] However, their views were quite different. Szűcs made a sharp distinction between nationality and political nation. The former was understood by him as a community sharing the same language and belief in common origin. He emphasized the fact that pre-modern political elites never displayed loyalty to nationality and always excluded commoners from their idea of nation. This idea was based not on the attachment to ethnic community and its cultural features, but on the emotional attachment to state and/or dynasty. Zientara regarded such division between political nation and nationality as artificial and far from historical reality.[158] He convincingly demonstrated that medieval and early modern ideas of nation (*natio*) rarely excluded common people. National consciousness in this period entailed not only loyalty to the state and ruling dynasty, but also attachment to language and customs. It also entailed the belief in common origin. Even when early modern ideologists of noble estates attempted to restrict the notion of nation to nobility, their ideas were never unanimously accepted.[159]

[156] Mečislovas Jučas, *Unia polsko-litewska* [The Polish-Lithuanian union] (Toruń: Europejskie Centrum Edukacyjne, 2003), 174-204; Niendorf, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, 14, 36-48; Jūratė Kiaupienė, "The Grand Duchy and the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in the sixteenth century: Reflections of the Lithuanian Political Nation and the Union of Lublin," in *The Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context, c. 1500-1795*, ed. Richard Butterwick (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 82-93; Robert Frost, *The Oxford history of Poland-Lithuania*, vol. 1: *The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 317.

[157] Jenő Szűcs, "Nationalität und Nationalbewusstsein im Mittelalter: Versuch einer Einheitlichen Bergriffssprache," pts. 1 and 2, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 18, no. 3 (1972): 1-38; 18, no. 4 (1972): 245–66; Benedykt Zientara, "Struktury narodowe średniowiecza: Próba analizy terminologii przedkapitalistycznych form świadomości narodowej" [National structures of the Middle Ages: An attempt of analysis of the terminology of the pre-capitalist forms of national consciousness], *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 84, no. 2 (1977): 287-311.

[158] Zientara, "Struktury narodowe średniowiecza," 298.

[159] Ibid., 298-300. Recently this point was brilliantly demonstrated in a case study by David Althoen who deconstructed the widespread misconception about the existence of "noble nation" (*naród szlachecki*) in Poland

Deconstructing the theory of Szűcs, Zientara, nevertheless, regarded the term "political nation" as a useful analytical category which can be used to denote an early phase in the formation of nation when a national idea was confined to the upper strata of the society.[160]

Both models are problematic when applied to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Although Szűcs's scheme seems to be applicable to the Lithuanian case, it hardly stands up to Zientara's criticism. On the other hand, Zientara's culture-based definition of political nation does not fit the realities of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Apparently, in order to solve this problem Suchocki tried to combine both approaches. He viewed political nation as a structure with two levels of loyalties: ethnic and political.[161] Lithuanian and Ruthenian elites were loyal to their respective ethnic groups and, at the same time, felt solidarity with each other as members of the same political community. Suchocki thus introduced a more dynamic model of political nation which presupposes the co-existence of conflicting visions of the community formulated by its members. Nevertheless, it fits the realities of the GDL no better than Zientara's concept.

There is one essential characteristic of nationhood about which students of this phenomenon generally agree and which is blatantly ignored by historians applying various concepts of nation to the Grand Duchy. Whether theoreticians of nationhood talk about the political nation in the sense proposed by Szűcs, or about the political nation as understood by Zientara, whether they share modernist or revisionist definition of nation, they invariably emphasize the emotional aspect of this phenomenon. Nationhood entails strong emotional

starting from mid-sixteenth century. He demonstrated that the noble estate of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth never conceived of itself as a nation and that there were no concepts of nation (*naród* or *natio*) which would exclude commoners. On the other hand, he also pointed out that although the idea of nation did exist at that time in Poland, *naród* was never a primary object of loyalty for people and was absent from the political discourse. See: David Althoen, "*Natione Polonus* and the *Naród Szlachecki*: Two Myths of National Identity and Noble Solidarity," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa Forschung* 52, no. 4 (2003): 475-508.

[160] Zientara's understanding of political nation is very close to Anthony Smith's concept of "ethnic core." See Smith, *National Identity*, 37-42.

[161] Suchocki, "Formowanie się i skład narodu politycznego," 31-78, esp. 33.

attachment to the entity or entities embodying or symbolizing nation. Even Szűcs's model involves intense devotion to the state, perceived in terms of homeland (*patria*).[162]

The problem with the idea of Lithuanian political nation encompassing the whole GDL is that there is no evidence of such emotional attachment to the Lithuanian state on the part of the nobility from the autonomous Ruthenian lands. Indeed, participation in the government and sharing common rights and privileges with Catholic Lithuanian nobility must have produced a degree of social solidarity with them and loyalty to the Lithuanian statehood. However, there is absolutely no evidence that this solidarity and loyalty had devotional rather than pragmatic character. It is likely that the elites of Ruthenian autonomies perceived Lithuanian statehood not as the object of emotional attachment, but merely as external structure facilitating their individual well-being understood in terms of privileges, prestige and profit-making capacity of administrative offices. There is no evidence that the elites of Ruthenian autonomies ever viewed the whole territory of the grand duchy as their homeland.[163] Available sources rather suggest their devotion to the autonomous lands where they were born and where their wealth and social connections were concentrated.[164] Their patriotism rarely crossed the boundaries of these local homelands. There is no evidence of strong and widely shared ethnic (or ethno-religious) identity which united the elites of Ruthenian autonomies and motivated their joint political action.[165] Given this dominance of local identities, emotional attachment to the idea

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[162] Szűcs, "Nationalität und Nationalbewusstsein im Mittelalter," 23-27.

[163] Although Ruthenian chroniclers sometimes referred to the whole territory of the GDL as Lithuania, nothing points to their emotional attachment to it. See: *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей* [The complete collection of Russian annals], vol. 35, ed. Н.Н. Улащик (Moscow: Наука, 1980), 52, 57-8.

[164] Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 109-21. Emotional attachment of Polatsk elites to Polatsk land in the sixteenth century was demonstrated by [Vasil' Varonin] Васіль Варонін, "Полаччына і палачане ў нацыянальна-культурным і рэлігійным жыцці Вялікага Княства Літоўскага першай паловы XVI ст." [The people of Polatsk in the national and religious life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania of the first half of the sixteenth century], *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne* 17 (2002): 211-19.

[165] According to Plokhy, such identity existed in the 1430s. He reached this conclusion on the basis of the analysis of the *Chronicle of Smolensk* (c. 1436) which described the civil war of 1431-1437 in Lithuania. He also pointed out that being sparked by a conflict, it quickly lost its intensity and gave way to local identities. See Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*, 100, 119-21. On the *Chronicle of Smolensk* see [Čamiarytski], *Беларускія летапісы як помнікі літаратупы*, 81-85.

of Lithuanian statehood seems highly doubtful. The participation of the nobility of Rus' in the government could not lead to the eradication of the local attachments, as Niendorf seems to suggest. [166] The nobility of each Ruthenian land occupied mostly local offices. [167] The participation of the nobility from Rus' in the government of Lithuania proper was marginal.[168] It is also important that representatives of Rus' had a very limited access to the council of lords which consisted of the most important officeholders in the GDL. Most of the Orthodox Ruthenian members of the council, enumerated by Frost as the evidence for the existence of a political nation in the GDL (the Khadkevičy, Soltany, Hoitsevičy, Illiničy, and Iuršy),[169] were from Lithuania proper. The elevation of the nobility from Rus' to the key administrative offices in Rus' which gave access to the council was exceptional and open only to the richest and the most influential families.

Another argument against the existence of a political nation in the GDL is the absence of compelling evidence that the elites from Lithuania proper and Rus' ever referred to themselves as a single nation. Suchocki argued that this happened in 1501 in Mielnik where Lithuanians and Poles signed the acts of union "ad […] nobilissimarum Poloniae et Litwaniae nationum […] honoris diffusionem."[170] However, the term *natio* was a part of a formula used both in Polish and Lithuanian acts, and it is impossible to determine which side initiated its use.

Thus, it would be wrong to associate the identity constructed in the legend with nationhood. Ideals it embodied were far removed from the ideals of nationalism. It is also

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[166] Niendorf, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, 41.
[167] Oswald Backus, *Motives of West Russian nobles in deserting Lithuania for Moscow, 1377-1514* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1957), 54-56.
[168] Ibid., 61-9.
[169] Frost, *The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union*, 316-17.
[170] Suchocki, "Formowanie się i skład narodu politycznego," 74; *Akta unji Polski z Litwą, 1385-1791* [Acts of the union of Poland with Lithuania, 1385-1791], ed. Aleksander Semkowicz and Stanisław Kutrzeba (Krakow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1932), 136, 140.

incorrect to say that the myth in any way reflected the ideology of the Lithuanian political nation. This view, proposed by Jurkiewicz, is based on the assumption that the tripartite structure of the legendary Lithuanian state reflected the narrator's recognition of Ruthenians as equal citizens of the GDL.[171] However, the narrator does not associate the "Ruthenian" part of the legendary state, that is, Navahrudak, with Ruthenians. Navahrudak for him is the homeland of Lithuanians only; he does not mention any Ruthenians living there. As shown above, by the end of the narrative Navahrudak ceases to be Rus' and merges with trans-Neris land to form Lithuania. Besides, Ruthenians are unambiguously pictured as the Other. Such exclusiveness makes it impossible to associate the legend's vision of community with the inclusive ideology of political nation.[172] To say that the legend was a reaction to such ideology is equally wrong because the very existence of such formation as political nation in Lithuania is highly uncertain.[173] Given the close association of *lituanitas* with territory in the legend, it would be more justified to characterize the identity (or identities) the legend constructed as local and regional, rather than national. On the one hand, the legend reflected the Samogitian and Lithuanian particularisms, that is, strong identification of local elites of Samogitia and Lithuania proper with their lands.[174] On the other hand, it reflected the regional identity of these elites based on their awareness of ethnic and historical unity of the region.

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[171] Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 270. This opinion was also voiced by Kiaupienė, who, however, did not provide any justification for it. See Kiaupienė, "The Grand Duchy and the Grand Dukes," 88.

[172] Pietkiewicz and Łatyszonek also expressed their doubts regarding the existence of Lithuanian political nation. See Pietkiewicz, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, 79; Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 287.

[173] Apparently, the problematic character of the term "national" in the context of medieval and early modern GDL was the reason why Marzena Liedke refused to use this term altogether and instead suggested to differentiate between five types of group identity: political, territorial, religious, ethnic and social. See Marzena Liedke, "Państwowa, religijna, czy narodowa tożsamość? Ruscy możni i szlachta w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim i w Rzeczypospolitej" [Political, religious or national identity? Ruthenian magnates and nobility in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth], in *Istoriniai tekstai ir vietos kultura (Historical Scripts and Local Culture)* (Šiauliai: Lucilijus, 2004), 192-200.

[174] This was also pointed out in Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 226-7. On Samogitian particularism see Niendorf, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, 237-263.

Legend and ethnicity

It is time to discuss the ethnic dimension of the legend. As was mentioned in chapter 2, the legend is viewed by historians as the origin myth of ethnic Lithuanians interpreted linguistically and religiously. This view is based on the widespread assumption that Romans/Lithuanians in the legend and "Lithuanians"[175] in late medieval and sixteenth-century Lithuanian sources stood for a self-conscious community of Lithuanian speakers which almost exactly coincided with the totality of Catholic believers in Lithuania,[176] except the Gediminid princes who were predominantly Orthodox.[177] However, it was shown that Lithuanians in the legend cannot be defined in strictly linguistic and religious terms. Does this mean that there is a discrepancy between the image of the community in the legend and the meaning of the term "Lithuanians" in the sources? Not necessarily. It has never been convincingly proven that the term "Lithuanians" denoted a community with a shared sense of identity based exclusively or primarily on religious and linguistic commonalities. This interpretation was criticized by a number of scholars. Oscar Halecki and Henadz' Sahanovič argued that religious and linguistic boundaries did not coincide: there were Catholic Ruthenians as well as Orthodox Lithuanians. [178] Halecki suggested to interpret the term territorially as all inhabitants of Lithuania proper.[179] Nasevič and Sahanovič believe that the term can be interpreted ethnically

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[175] It is generally agreed that this term had political and ethnic meanings. In a political sense it referred to all inhabitants of the GDL. In this chapter I will discuss the ethnic meaning of the term.

[176] The latest examples of this view can be found in Jerzy Ochmański, *Biskupstwo wileńskie w średniowieczu. Ustrój i uposażenie* [The Vilnius bishopric in the Middle Ages. Organization and endowment] (Poznań: UAM, 1972), 80-88; *Historia Litwy* [History of Lithuania] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1982), 68-69; Henryk Łowmiański, *Studia nad dziejami Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego* [The study of the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1983), 413-22; Jerzy Ochmański, "The National Idea in Lithuania from the Sixteenth to the First Half of the Nineteenth Century: The Problem of Cultural-Linguistic Differentiation," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 10, no. 3-4 (1986): 301-15; [Marzaliuk], *Людзі даўняй Беларусі*, 53-68; Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 112.

[177] Marzena Liedke, "Następstwa chrystianizacji Giedyminowiczów przed 1386 rokiem" [The consequences of Christianization of the Gedimins before 1386], in *History, Culture and Language of Lithuania*, 117-127.

[178] Halecki, *Litwa, Ruś i Żmudź*, 21; [Henadz' Sahanovič] Генадзь Сагановіч, "Прывід нацыі ў імгле стэрэатыпаў" [The ghost of nation in the darkness of stereotypes], *Беларускі Гістарычны Агляд* 10, no. 1-2 (2003): 280-318.

[179] Lithuania proper, especially its eastern parts, was heavily populated by Slavs. There were also large mixed areas where Balts and Slavs lived side by side.

with the stipulation that both Slavic and Baltic inhabitants of the geographical region of Lithuania (not to be confused with Lithuania proper) considered themselves to be a single ethnic community.[180] Although these scholars did not provide sufficient justification for their theories, their criticism deserves attention and further elaboration.

The main assumption underlying the traditional linguo-religious interpretation of the term "Lithuanians" is the automatic identification of language with ethnicity. It rests on the following logic: if there was a concept of the Lithuanian language and it referred to a clearly Baltic tongue, then "Lithuanians" in the ethnic sense must have denoted the speakers of this language.[181] This assumption is based on the postulates of traditional ethnology according to which ethnicity is an objective category defined by a universal and fixed set of criteria, among which language is one of the most important.[182] However, this approach has been strongly criticized in the last several decades. Fredrik Barth proposed an alternative model of ethnicity which views this phenomenon as essentially subjective and fluid.[183] In the area of medieval studies his approach was developed by Patrick Geary.[184] These researchers hold that the criteria of ethnicity are not universal and fixed, but defined by the members of each ethnic community *themselves* and may vary across space and time.[185] Barth qualified such phenomenon as "a

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[180] [Viačaslau Nasevič] Вячаслаў Насевіч, "Да пытання пра саманазву беларусаў у перыяд ВКЛ" [Regarding the self-name of Belarusians in the period of the GDL], in *Фарміраванне і развіццё нацыянальнай самасвядомасці беларусаў: Матэрыялы Міжнароднай навуковай канферэнцыі ў Маладзечне 19-20 жніўня 1992 г.*, ed. Аляксандар Анціпенка et al. (Minsk: Нацыянальны навукова-асветны цэнтар імя Ф.Скарыны, 1993), 97-100; [Sahanovič], "Прывід нацыі ў імгле стэрэатыпаў," 280-318.

[181] [Marzaliuk], *Людзі даўняй Беларусі*, 57-58; Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 115.

[182] [Iulian Bromlei] Юлиан Бромлей, *Очерки теории этноса* [Essays on the theory of ethnicity] (Moscow: Наука, 1983); Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22-30. On application of this approach to ethnicity in medieval studies see Walter Pohl, "Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity" in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of the Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 20.

[183] Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1994), 9-39.

[184] Patrick Geary, "Power and Ethnicity," *History and Anthropology* 26, no 1 (2015): 8-17; Patrick Geary, "Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages," *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983): 15-26.

[185] Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, 14: "although ethnic categories take cultural differences into account, we can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are […] only those which the actors themselves regard as significant."

native model" of ethnicity.[186] The situation is further complicated by the fact that there is never one single concept of "Us" inside an ethnic community. Usually there are a number of "native models" which compete with each other.[187] Moreover, ethnic identity is never binding. Under the influence of various circumstances groups and individuals who live in culturally mixed areas may change their identity retaining the cultural features significant for their former ethnic communities. Alternatively, they can change their culture but retain their ethnic identity.[188] All this makes a simple model of ethnicity, which would allow a researcher to identify who is part of an ethnic group and who is not, impossible.

It seems that the Roman myth, which constructed a community of common descent, represented one such native model of Lithuanian ethnicity. It is remarkable that, according to this model, language was not an important criterion of inclusion. Approached from this perspective, the legend constitutes a strong argument in favor of deconstructing the traditional interpretation of the medieval term "Lithuanians" as a self-conscious linguistic community. The absence of strict correlation between biological descent and language was not something untypical for medieval collective identities. Adrian Hastings pointed out that in pre-modern times language was rarely the prime criterion of ethnic identity.[189] According to him languages were viewed mostly as "alternative codes rather than identifying symbols or prescriptive communication media."[190] Discussing identity-transformations in early medieval Britain, Susan Reynolds also noted that linguistic differences did not always prevent people from sharing a belief in their common origin and identifying with the same *gens/natio*.[191] Fourteenth century Scots, who at that time did not have a common language, believed in their common

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[186] Ibid., 120.
[187] Geary, "Power and ethnicity," 16.
[188] Ibid., 13.
[189] Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, 279-282.
[190] Ibid., 5.
[191] Susan Reynolds, "What Do We Mean by Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Saxons?" *Journal of British Studies* 24 (1985): 403-04.

Scythian origin.[192] Fifteenth-century Swiss, being a multilingual community, shared a myth of common Scandinavian descent.[193] Given the fact that bilinguism was an extremely widespread phenomenon in the Middle Ages and early modern times it is not surprising that language did not always serve as a marker of otherness.[194] It is very unlikely that language was perceived as such a marker by the inhabitants of late medieval Lithuania proper. Here, by the sixteenth century, bilinguism among the elites and the common people in the areas of linguistic contact had become a part of everyday experience.[195] Ruthenian, which was largely based on East Slavic dialects,[196] became the language of grand ducal chancery, court, education and culture. This facilitated the widespread adoption of Ruthenian by Lithuanian-speaking elites of Lithuania proper.[197] Thus, it should not be surprising that in the structure of the ethnic identity constructed by the legend language did not play any significant role. Of course, the fact that the narrator was aware of the existence of the Lithuanian language implies that he viewed it as a feature signalizing the Lithuanian origin of an individual. But this does not mean that for him it was the decisive criterion of *lituanitas*. In the situation of linguistic diversity of the region and the dominance of Ruthenian among the elites of Lithuania proper, not knowing Lithuanian could be viewed by the narrator as a result of natural adaptation to the environment, especially

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[192] Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, 274-76.

[193] Benedict Zientara, "Świadomość narodowa w Europie Zachodniej w średniowieczu. Powstanie i mechanizmy zjawiska" [National consciousness in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. Appearance and mechanisms of the phenomenon], in *Państwo, naród, stany w świadomości wieków średnich*, ed. Aleksander Gieysztor and Stanisław Gawlas (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), 13.

[194] This idea permeates Walter Pohl and Bernhard Zeller, eds., *Sprache und Identität im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012).

[195] Leszek Bednarczuk, "Languages in Contact and Conflict on the Territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL)," *Acta Baltico Slavica* 37 (2013): 19-39; Józef Marcinkiewicz, "Processes of Linguistic Integration in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Light of the Theory of Communicative Networks and Other Sociolinguistic Concepts," in *History, Culture and Language of Lithuania*, ed. Grzegosz Błaszczyk and Michał Hasiuk (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2000), 53-56.

[196] The linguistic nature of Ruthenian was discussed at length in Verkholantsev, *Ruthenica Bohemica*, 10-11; [Uladzimir Sviazhynski] Уладзімір Свяжынскі, "Праблема ідэнтыфікацыі афіцыйнай мовы Вялікага Княства Літоўскага" [The problem of identification of the official language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania], *Metriciana. Даследаванні і матэрыялы Метрыкі Вялікага Княства Літоўскага* 1 (2001): 109-36.

[197] The adoption of Ruthenian or some form of East Slavic vernacular by Lithuanian-speaking commoners in the areas of linguistic contact was facilitated by a centuries-long process of East Slavic cultural and linguistic assimilation of the Balts on the territory of Lithuania proper. This process was discussed in [Aliaksandar Krautsevič] Аляксандар Краўцэвіч, *Стварэнне Вялікага Княства Літоўскага* [The creation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania] (Minsk: Беларуская Навука, 1997), 101-22.

in case a person came from Slavic-speaking parts of Lithuania proper. This could be the logic by which the bearers of the "native model," reflected in the myth, rationalized and plaid down their linguistic differences. One might object that ethnic dichotomy entails the presence of diacritical features which would unambiguously signal a person's ethnic identity, such as language, dress, lifestyle and so on;[198] besides Catholicism, the Lithuanian language seems to be the only such feature proposed by the narrator, therefore one should not underestimate its importance. It is possible, however, that given the general cultural Ruthenization of Lithuanian elites it was extremely hard for the narrator to propose any distinctive and indispensable markers of *lituanitas*. This determined a rather blurred character of the ethnic boundary constructed in the narrative.

The Roman myth was indeed a story about ethnic Lithuanians. But the narrator's perception of ethnicity differed dramatically from the concepts employed by researchers of the GDL. He associated ethnicity not so much with language, as with territorial origin and, to a great extent, although not in a strict one-to-one fashion, with religion. This is not to say that the term "Lithuanians" in medieval and sixteenth-century GDL *always* reflected the outlined ethnic identity. As will be shown in the following section, there might have been several competing definitions of Lithuanians in the Lithuanian society of those times.

The bearers of "Roman" identity

Susan Reynolds suggested that, despite a great deal of inventiveness involved in the creation of myths of origins, they were thought up and written down to reinforce and rationally justify already existing identities.[199] In other words, the identity-construction undertaken in these narratives was often a magnified reflection of the actual ideas and solidarities shared by the

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[198] Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, 14.
[199] Susan Reynolds, "Medieval *Origines Gentium* and the Community of the Realm," *History* 68 (1983): 375-90.

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society. The Roman *topos* was undoubtedly the invention of Lithuanian literati, influenced by Western European tradition. Moreover, many details in the plot of the *Chronicle of the GDL* had clearly ideological purposes: they aimed to counter the anti-Lithuanian propaganda of Poles and possibly Muscovites, to justify the right of Lithuania for independence and territorial integrity, and, finally, to support the political and social ambitions of Lithuanian aristocracy. Nevertheless, despite all this inventiveness and ideological agenda, the image of the community the Roman myth created may well have reflected the collective self-perception of certain groups of Lithuanians.

Due to the lack of sources, it is not possible to determine the extent to which the identity constructed in the legend was shared by the society of the first half of the sixteenth century. We do not have access to what Patrick Geary calls "native voices," that is, the accounts of how average people perceived themselves and others. What we have, however, is the voice of one of the commissioners of the legend, Albertas Goštautas[200] (d.1539). From 1522 and until his death, Goštautas was the palatine of Vilnius and one of the most powerful and influential magnates of the GDL.[201] Together with prince Pavel Hal'šanski (d. 1555), the Catholic bishop of Lutsk (1507-1536) and Vilnius (1536-1555), and a number of other magnates, he commissioned the *Chronicle of the GDL*.[202] Although one cannot be sure that his conception of ethnicity reflected the identity of large parts of Lithuanian society, it is highly probable that his views were to a great extent representative of the Catholic aristocracy. It is also possible that the collective identity of this social group was disseminated down the social ladder through cliental relations with lesser nobility.

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[200] The names of historical personalities will be transcribed from Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukranian according to their confession and the territory of origin.

[201] See Marja Kuzmińska, "Olbracht Marcinowicz Gasztold," *Ateneum Wileńskie* 4, no. 13 (1927): 349-391.

[202] Ochmański, "Nad Kroniką Bychowca," 157-9; Łatyszonek, "Polityczne aspekty przedstawienia średniowiecznych dziejów ziem białoruskich," 16-21; Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina*, 77.

One of Goštautas's most formidable foes was Kostiantin Ostroz'kyi (d. 1530), a powerful Ruthenian magnate from Volhynia. In 1522 Ostroz'kyi was appointed palatine of Trakai by Sigismund I, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, despite the prohibition of the act of Horodło (1413) which reserved the palatinates and castellanies of Vilnius and Trakai exclusively for Catholics.[203] Goštautas orchestrated a resistance to this appointment and Sigismund had to issue a declaration in which he stated that Ostroz'kyi's nomination was due to his exceptional services and promised to appoint "neither a schismatic nor a Ruthenian" to this office in the future without the consent of the Lithuanian council of lords.[204] In 1525 Goštautas wrote a letter to Bona Sforza, the wife of Sigismund I.[205] In this letter he tried to win her support against Ostroz'kyi portraying him as the enemy of the state.

The letter is replete with invectives against Ruthenians. The analysis of the image of Ruthenians in this letter can shed more light on the identity of the Lithuanian Catholic aristocracy and its relation to the identity constructed in the legend. Throughout the whole letter Goštautas emphatically ascribes all vices and faults of his enemies to their Ruthenian origin.[206] Ruthenians are characterized as "evil and perfidious people" (*mali et perfidi homines*) and "that perverted nation" (*ille perversus gens*). Goštautas often invokes "the Ruthenian nature" (*natura ruthenica*) and talks about inborn negative traits characterizing this people such as duplicity (*sycophanticus modus ruthenicus*), thoughtlessness (*temeritas ruthenica*), arrogance and cunning (*superbia et astutia ruthenica*). The fact that Goštautas perceives these traits as innate means that he talks about Ruthenians as an ethnic group, that is, a community of common biological descent with characteristic inborn features. According to Robert Frost, this letter

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[203] *Akta unji*, 61-72.
[204] Wiktor Czermak, *Sprawa równouprawnienia schizmatyków i katolików na Litwie (1432-1563)* [The equalization of rights of Catholics and schismatics in Lithuania (1432-1563)] (Krakow: Akademia Umiejętności, 1903), 39-40.
[205] *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 7, ed. Stanisław Górski (Kórnik: Biblioteka Kórnicka, 1857), 258-269.
[206] Frost, *The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union*, 421.

illustrates that "Ruthenians were still regarded with condescension and suspicion by many Catholic Lithuanian aristocrats, at least if, like Ostroz'kyi, they remained Orthodox."[207] This is true, but one needs to specify what Catholic Lithuanians meant by Ruthenians. Did they define them linguistically, religiously, or territorially?

It is doubtful that language was an important criterion of ethnicity for Goštautas. He certainly viewed Ruthenian as a barbaric language. In the preface to the translation of the first Lithuanian Statute (1522) into Latin he wrote: "e Rutheno Statuta ipsa ut in Barbaro sonant, directe de verbo ad verbum translata."[208] However, barbaric does not necessarily mean alien, as Łatyszonek seems to suggest.[209] Compared to Latin, Lithuanian was also a barbaric tongue. Besides, there is no evidence that Goštautas perceived the knowledge of Lithuanian as the essential sign of Lithuanian origin. In this respect it is remarkable that the legend, which reflected the Lithuanian ethnic identity, was written in Ruthenian. It is also unlikely that Goštautas viewed confession as a decisive criterion of ethnicity. On the one hand, he clearly associated Orthodoxy with Ruthenians and emphasized their hostility towards "us Catholics."[210] On the other hand, he must have recognized that some Lithuanians were Orthodox (for example, the family of Hal'šanskie).[211] It seems that the definitive criterion of ethnicity for Goštautas was a person's territorial origin. All individuals whom he calls Ruthenians in the letter (Kostiantin Ostroz'kyi, the Gediminid Prince of Slutsk Yuryi Alel'kavič, and Mikhail Hlinski, a powerful favorite of King Alexander Jagiellon) originated from Rus'. Thus, for Goštautas Ruthenians were, first of all, the people originating from Rus'

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[207] Ibid., 422.
[208] Cited from Jučas, *Unia polsko-litewska*, 217.
[209] Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, 290.
[210] *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 7, 261: "At noster capitaneus [Ostroz'kyi], Ruthenus favens plus Ruthenis quam nobis Catholicis."
[211] Pavel Hal'šanski was Goštautas's kinsman and co-commissioner of the legend. Although Catholic, he came from an Orthodox family of Lithuanian descent. See Józef Wolff, *Kniaziowie litewsko-ruscy od końca czternastego wieku* [Lithuanian-Russian princes from the end of the fourteenth century] (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1895), 101-04.

regardless of their mother tongue and confession, while Lithuanians were first of all the natives of Lithuania proper. Such a vision of the border between "Us" and "Them" mirrors the identity constructed in the legend.

Does this mean, however, that Goštautas and Catholic Lithuanians viewed the whole population of Lithuania proper, both Catholic and Orthodox and both Slavic- and Lithuanian-speaking, as Lithuanian by origin? The letter to Bona does not give a clear answer to this. Just like the narrator of the legend, Goštautas could certainly imagine Orthodox nobility of Lithuanian origin. But whether or not he could imagine Orthodox Lithuanian commoners is not clear. Probably, this could have been possible in case of Lithuanian-speaking Orthodox commoners, while their Slavic-speaking counterparts were viewed by him as Ruthenians.

Since the legend does not propose a one-to-one relation between language and *lituanitas*, it can be assumed that its commissioner, Goštautas, also did not define ethnic Lithuanians in strict linguistic terms. For him Slavic speakers, at least those of noble birth, could also be Lithuanians, even if they were Orthodox. The following evidence supports this hypothesis.

Lithuania proper was home to a number of rich and influential magnate families of East Slavic origin professing Orthodoxy such as the Khadkevičy,[212] Soltany,[213] Khraptovičy,[214] Illiničy,[215] and Bahavitsinavičy.[216] These families originated from Lithuania proper and had

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[212] On the origins and history of this family see Genute Kirkiene, "Korzenie rodu Chodkiewiczów" [The roots of the clan of Khadkevičy], *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne* 17 (2002): 34-56.

[213] About the family of Soltany see Adam Boniecki, *Poczet rodów w Wielkiem Ksistwie Litewskiém w XV i XVI wieku* [The list of clans in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries] (Warsaw: Ośrodek Kultury Polskiej nad Renem, 1887), 330-32; Rymvidas Petrauskas [Рымвідас Петраўскас], *Літоўская знаць у канцы XIV – XV ст.: Склад, структура, улада* [Lithuanian nobility of the end of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: Composition, structure and power], tr. Алесь Мікус (Smolensk: Інбелкульт, 2014), 298-99.

[214] Boniecki, *Poczet rodów*, 27-30.

[215] Petrauskas [Петраўскас], *Літоўская знаць*, 249-50. According to Kuzmińska and Frost, the Illiničy were Orthodox (Kuzmińska, "Olbracht Marcinowicz Gasztold," 372; Frost, *The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union*, 316-17). Petrauskas argues that the family professed Catholicism. It is possible, however, that they were Orthodox who supported the church union.

[216] Boniecki, *Poczet rodów*, 10-12.

their estates concentrated there. They were intermarried with other magnate families of the region and were closely involved in the government on the local and state levels. Did they view themselves and did others view them as members of the Lithuanian community of descent? Unfortunately, we do not have evidence about the self-perception of most of these families. The case of the Khadkevičy, however, can shed some light on this question. Judging by a mid-sixteenth-century genealogical legend commissioned by them, they believed to originate from Samogitia.[217] We do not know whether the members of these families spoke Lithuanian. Given their East Slavic origin and the dominance of Ruthenian in the culture of the GDL, this is unlikely. These families were not discriminated against by the Catholic aristocracy. For example, in 1501 Aliaksandar Khadkevič, despite his Orthodoxy, was the palatine of Trakai. In practice the discrimination based on the act of Horodło was directed not against the Orthodox in general, as usually believed,[218] but against the elites of Rus' who were viewed as potential competitors for the magnates of Lithuania proper.[219] The local Orthodox nobility was not prohibited from occupying the palatinates of Vilnius and Trakai.[220] The protest arose only when a non-native, Kostiantin Ostroz'kyi, was allowed to do that by Sigismund I.[221] This

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[217] Kirkiene, "Korzenie rodu Chodkiewiczów," 52-5. According to Marzaliuk, the appearance of this genealogical legend was a product of the Catholic conversion of the Khadkevičy in the mid-sixteenth century ([Marzaliuk], *Людзі даўняй Беларусі*, 63-4). Marzaliuk believes that in the GDL conversion always led to a change of ethnic identity. However, the analysis of the legend has demonstrated that there was no strict correlation between confession and ethnicity in the Lithuanian society. Thus, it is possible that the Khadkevičy believed in their Lithuanian origin even before they converted to Catholicism.

[218] This view is expounded in [Matvei Liubavskii] Матвей Любавский, "К вопросу об ограничении политических прав православных князей, панов и шляхты в великом княжестве Литовском до Люблинской унии" [On the limitation of political rights of Orthodox princes, aristocrats and nobility in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania before the Union of Lublin], in *Сборник статей, посвящённых Василию Осиповичу Ключевскому* (Moscow: Печатня С. П. Яковлева, 1909), 1-17; Czermak, *Sprawa równouprawnienia schizmatyków*.

[219] A similar opinion was expressed by Mikhail Krom who mentioned "local patriotism" of Lithuanian elites. See [Krom], *Меж Русью и Литвой*, 134.

[220] This was probably facilitated by the fact that Orthodox nobility of Lithuania proper embraced the church union retaining their Orthodox rite. For example, the Soltany and the Sapehi, being Orthodox families, openly recognized the primacy of the Pope. See Oscar Halecki, *From Florence to Brest: (1439-1596)* (Rome: Sacrum Poloniae Millennium, 1958), 102, 115.

[221] Czermak interpreted the term "Ruthenian" in Sigismund's discriminative 1522 declaration in ethno-linguistic sense. He believed that Ruthenians were discriminated against not only along religious but also ethnic lines. See Czermak, *Sprawa równouprawnienia*, 37. However, given the considerations presented above, it is probable that by this term Sigismund meant the inhabitants of Rus', regardless of their confession and native tongue.

suggests the existence of local solidarity in Lithuania proper shared by native aristocracy regardless of their tongue and confession. The fact that the abovementioned East Slavic families were so closely integrated into local political and kinship networks suggests that Goštautas and the Catholic Lithuanian aristocracy in general did not regard them as alien Ruthenians. Despite linguistic and religious difference, they may well have perceived them as their ethnic kin.[222] In other words, it is possible that the identity constructed in the legend was shared by a large portion of multi-confessional and multi-lingual nobility of Lithuania proper and was the basis of its solidarity against the elites of Rus'.[223]

This is not to say that all the Slavic-speaking Orthodox nobility of Lithuania proper regarded themselves as Lithuanians by origin and were regarded as such by the Catholic population. Firstly, as was mentioned above, the concept of *lituanitas* constructed in the legend was hardly the only native model of identity that existed in Lithuanian society. Some Catholic members of political and intellectual elites of Lithuania proper at the beginning of the sixteenth century may have defined Lithuanians in strictly linguistic or/and religious terms. In the mid-sixteenth century this model of identity found its expression in the works of the Vilnius humanists and Lithuanian intellectuals affected by the ideas of the Reformation. Secondly, the model of identity one finds in the legend presupposed that a person must be a native of Lithuania proper. It is unlikely that those families who immigrated to this region from Rus' regarded themselves as Lithuanians by origin and were regarded as such by locals (unless the

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[222] Edvardas Gudavičius also noted that a part of Slavic aristocracy adopted the Lithuanian "national self-consciousness" by which he understood ethnic identity. According to him, this identity-shift was facilitated by the total abandonment of the Lithuanian language by Lithuanian aristocracy in the first third of the sixteenth century. See Edvardas Gudavičius [Эдвардас Гудавичюс], *История Литвы с древнейших времен до 1569 года* [History of Lithuania from ancient times to 1569], vol. 1, tr. Г.И. Ефремов (Moscow: ГМП Первая Образцовая типография, 2005), 464, 471-3.

[223] Stephen Rowell acknowledged that the myth could be shared by both Slavic and Baltic nobility of Lithuania proper, since, according to him, it was primarily a myth of political rather than ethnic origins (Rowell, "Amžinos pretenzijos," 25-6). Rowell did not realize that sharing the same myth of origins could also imply sharing the same ethnic identity.

memory of the immigration faded away).[224] Thirdly, as noted before, identities are never binding. On the crossroads of cultures individuals always have a choice and under the pressure of circumstances they can change their identity. Orthodox Slavic speakers of Lithuania proper had the choice between various ethnic identities. It would be far-fetched to assume that they all felt the need to renounce Ruthenian identity in favor of the Lithuanian one. There is not enough data to adequately evaluate the scale of possible identity shifts in the region. Yet, it is probable that many retained their emotional attachment to the Ruthenian or other community of descent.[225] Such individuals were unlikely to be perceived as Lithuanians by others. This can explain why the Gediminid Alel'kavičy were not identified as Lithuanians by Goštautas. Having their patrimonies in Rus' and professing Orthodoxy, most of the Gediminids were fully assimilated by Ruthenians and adopted Ruthenian ethnic identity. This change of identity was probably facilitated by their intermarriage with Ruthenian aristocratic families, which created an opportunity for the identity-change with a simultaneous preservation of Gediminid genealogical consciousness.[226] It is possible that many representatives of lesser Orthodox Slavic-speaking nobility either did not possess an ethnic identity at all or were indifferent to it. Given that Orthodoxy and the Ruthenian language (or an East Slavic vernacular) were not markers of *lituanitas*, Orthodox Slavic-speaking nobility was not automatically assumed to be of Lithuanian origin by Catholic neighbors, and had to make their identity known in case they felt affinity to the Lithuanian community of descent and wished to be identified as its members. In case they were ethnically unconscious or indifferent they were unlikely to be identified as

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[224] For example, the Sapehi migrated from Smolensk in the fifteenth century (Boniecki, *Poczet rodów*, 300-308). At the turn of the seventeenth century they still retained the memory of their non-Lithuanian origin calling themselves Slavs ([Marzaliuk], *Людзі даўняй Беларусі*, 37).

[225] A good example of that is the family of Zianovičy. Judging by the concentration of their estates, they might have originated somewhere from the region of Navahrudak or Slonim. Nevertheless, unlike the Khadkevičy, they did not adopt Lithuanian identity and believed in their Serbian descent. See Rymvidas Petrauskas, *Літоўская знаць*, 216-17.

[226] On assimilation of the Gediminids see [Marzaliuk], *Людзі даўняй Беларусі*, 62; Liedke, "Następstwa chrystianizacji Giedyminowiczów," 117-27. On the intermarriage of the Alel'kavičy with Ruthenian aristocratic families see Wolff, *Kniaziowie litewsko-ruscy*, 327-36.

Lithuanians. This may also explain why Orthodox Slavic-speaking commoners were not regarded as Lithuanians.

In the GDL Orthodoxy was often called "Ruthenian religion."[227] Thus, it is possible that those individuals who professed Orthodoxy and held Lithuanian ethnic identity could refer to themselves as Ruthenians in the religious sense.[228] Probably it is this religious sense in which the author of the *Chronicle of the GDL* in the Bykhovets Codex noted that the daughter of Andrei Hal'šanski (d. 1422) was "of Ruthenian descent."[229]

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[227] Liedke, "Państwowa, religijna, czy narodowa tożsamość?"

[228] This idea was expressed by [Sahanovič], "Прывід нацыі ў імгле стэрэатыпаў," 280-318. Patrick Geary gives a number of examples of individuals in the Early Middle Ages who were called by different ethnic designations in different contexts. See Geary, "Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct," 21.

[229] Jogaila said to Vytautas: "a teper proszu tebe, ziednay mi u kniazia Semena, sestrycznu ieho menszuiu Soffiu, iżby ieie za sebe poniał, a z pokolenia Ruskoho, aczeby mi Boh płod dał" [And now I am asking you to persuade prince Semen to give me his niece of Ruthenian descent as a bride, so that God may give me children]. See PSRL 17, col. 518.

Conclusion

The analysis performed in this study has demonstrated that the Roman myth contained in the *Chronicle of the GDL* was an identity-building project initiated by a group of influential Lithuanian magnates. Apart from fulfilling political and social purposes, it constructed a community of common origin. Due to the lack of sources it is not possible to measure the extent to which the identity promoted in the legend was shared in the Lithuanian society. Available material suggests that it was widespread among the multi-lingual and multi-confessional elites of Lithuania proper, the core administrative region of the GDL which has a special symbolic status in the narrative of the legend. According to the model of Lithuanian ethnic identity reflected in the myth, the native tongue of a person did not matter. Lithuanian was certainly viewed as a sign of Lithuanian origin, but those who did not know it were not automatically assumed to be outsiders. A member of the Lithuanian community of descent was, first of all, an individual whose ancestry originated from Lithuania proper. Another important, yet not defining marker of *lituanitas* was Catholicism. Nevertheless, according to this model, Orthodox Lithuanian speakers regardless of their social standing and Orthodox Slavic-speaking nobility were also viewed as Lithuanians unless they were ethnically unaware, indifferent or felt emotional attachment to other imagined community of descent. In the society of Lithuania proper this model of Lithuanian ethnic identity coexisted with another concept of *lituanitas* which presupposed a much closer association of ethnicity with language. It found its expression in the mid-sixteenth-century works of religious activists and the Vilnius humanists.

The identity constructed in the legend should not be characterized as national. The narrator of the legend did not espouse the ideals characteristic for nationalist thinking. It is also not correct to say that the legend in any way reflected the ideology of Lithuanian political nation, the existence of which seems doubtful. The narrative rather reflected the regional

particularism of the elites of Samogitia and Lithuania proper. Approached from this perspective the Roman myth is yet another argument in favor of Serhii Plokhy's contention about the overwhelming dominance of local and regional identities among the motley nobility of sixteenth-century GDL.

The study has also shown that although the legend's concept of *lituanitas* is not primarily based on language, the identity it reveals still can be characterized as ethnic. Historians usually interpret the legend as an origin myth of sixteenth-century Lithuanian speakers. This view is determined by their adherence to the traditional essentialist ethnology which views ethnic groups as ahistorical categories defined by a fixed set of objective features and the feeling of solidarity ensuing from the possession of these characteristics. However, the image of the ethnogenesis constructed in the legend does not correspond to this model. In this respect, this work can be viewed as a case study in historical anthropology providing evidence in favor of Barth's model of ethnicity. In this study I have challenged the widespread opinion that the solidarity of ethnic Lithuanian elites was based exclusively or primarily on common language and religion. By challenging the widespread misconceptions about the identity-creating aspect of the Roman myth, I have demonstrated the primary importance of territorial origin in the structure of the ethnic identity of Lithuanian elites.

My conclusions, however, are suggestive. I have analyzed just a small part of Lithuanian chronicle-writing. To further increase our knowledge about the identity constructed in the chronicles and its correlation with social reality one needs to apply the methodology employed in this study to the rest of Lithuanian narrative sources starting from the fourteenth century. In order to evaluate the extent to which these narratives reflected collective identities in the society it is necessary to perform a comprehensive analysis of ethnic terminology of legal, epistolary and diplomatic sources. This analysis should be free from projections of

modern ethnic thinking onto the past and aimed at revealing the native model(s) of Lithuanian identity.

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Appendix – The Narrative World of the Roman Myth
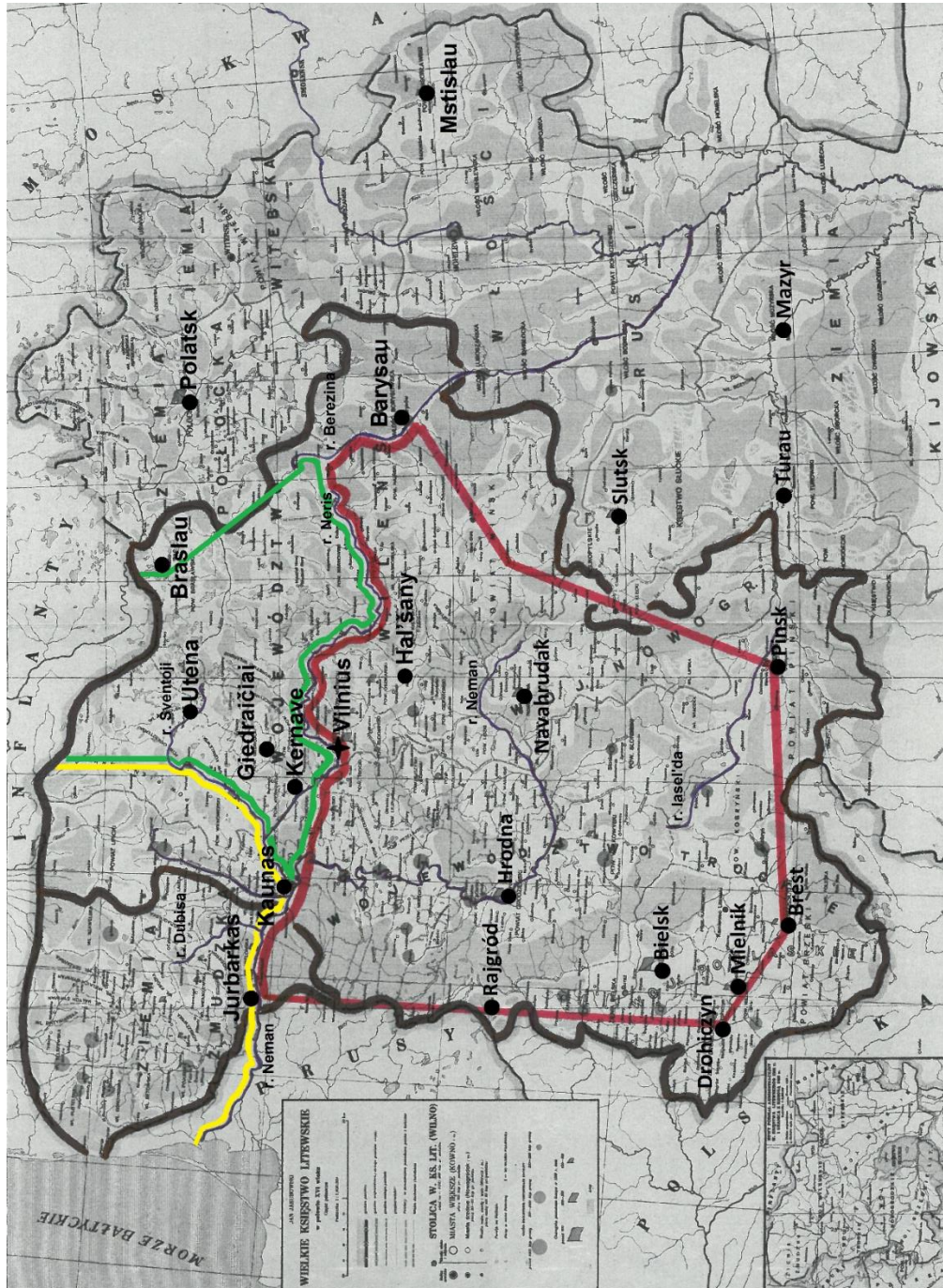
Narrative world is "the space relevant to the plot, as mapped by the actions and thoughts of the characters […] completed by the reader's imagination on the basis of cultural [historical] knowledge" (Marie-Laure Ryan, "Space," in *Handbook of narratology*, 422). The map is based on *Mapa Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w połowie XVI wieku. Część północna, skala 1: 1.600.000* [The map of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the mid-sixteenth century: The northern part, scale 1 to 1600000] in *Atlas historyczny Polski*. The bold black line denotes the boundary of Samogitia and Lithuania proper as defined in this study. Yellow, green and red lines denote the boundaries of legendary Samogitia, trans-Neris land and Navahrudak respectively.