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History of Lithuanian Historiography

DIDACTICAL GUIDELINES

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About Human Universals (as a Preface)

This student handbook has been produced on the occasion of an innovation project. It was meant to provide Vytautas Magnus University students with English textbooks to be used during lessons taught in English. In turn, this innovation aims to offer Lithuanian students the opportunity to improve their linguistic competence indirectly while studying other, non-language related, subjects: enriching their specialist vocabulary; getting acquainted with English academic writing; and reflecting upon sectorial terminology. In this respect, the present handbook should be particularly useful if adopted in conjunction with a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teaching attitude. Incidentally, this is one of the reasons behind the linguistic and etymologic approach emerging in several sections of this work. Yet, the focus of this textbook is the history of historiography, not the language itself: this handbook is intended as a reference (or a sort of catalogue) for students attending courses in Lithuanian historiography.

Additionally, the opportunity to produce an English textbook about Lithuanian historiography has been understood by the author as a stimulus to introduce foreign students (more and more often visiting this university) to local historiography. Conscious of the lack of sources accessible to an international audience, we printed this work with the intention of offering a systematic reference book: an easy-to-consult reasoned catalogue of historical works. It should serve as both an introduction to in-depth research and as an overview of Lithuanian history of historiography for those who are just preparing to take the exam.

Consequently, we did not aim at the introduction of innovative theories or at presenting new sources and documents not yet studied. Rather, we tried to be systematic (as far as the pragmatic limits of writing allowed). Nonetheless, cognizant of the didactical function of such a handbook, we opted for a pretty unorthodox organization of the contents and a transnational (comparative) outlook on local historiography precisely to convey a methodological precept and to rectify two misleading persuasions.
Methodologically, we believe that only a comparative approach can make evident both the peculiarities of a work and the manifestations in it of universal trends. Likewise, being the historical conscience a manifestation of the spirit – a human-universal, the intention to study a historical work as an end in itself is fallacious. Rather, every historical work should be studied, as expounded by Erich Auerbach (with reference to literature), as the concrete manifestation of the universal. Finally, we intend to prevent students from believing that abstract categorizations can actually represent and frame intellectual expressions. That is, we want to remove the erroneous idea that a medieval historiography existed with its annals, and then the Humanistic one substituted it only to evolve, after some centuries, into the historiographic style of Romanticism. Students (and, sometimes, even teachers) got used to this evolutionistic didactic at school and tend to put everything in categories, which are often perceived as concrete receptacles beginning with a date or a name and concluding with another.

First, to better illustrate the concept of the evolutionistic didactic, we can consider the historiographic genre of annals. Speaking about medieval historiography (abstract category), Zenonas Ivinskis individuates its specific manifestation in annals and chronicles and specifies, “Chronicles evolved from annals mainly written in monasteries. […] The accounts included in the annals expanded and became independent histories, that is, chronicles.” These concepts are absolutely correct. Nonetheless, if presented in this form, this information induces a student to think that a) the Middle Ages are a period of time rather than a 19th century values interpretation; b) annals are typical medieval expressions of history-writing; c) after a certain period of time historians abandoned the annalistic form in favour of chronicles. On the contrary, the reality is much less schematic than this. First of all, the concept of the Middle Ages differs in many respects from country to country, historical schools, etc. Second, the historiographic form of annals was already typical of the Mesopotamian civilizations 5000 years ago; it was common in Ancient Greece; and it was very typical of Hellenistic states, Byzantine Empire, Roman religious authorities. There are, of course, the annals of the 9th to 14th centuries European monasteries; there are the 15th-16th centuries
“Lithuanian annals”; there are, as an example, the 18th-19th centuries *Annals of Degučiai*… And what about national histories written in the 20th century? As pointed out by Benedetto Croce, most of the histories narrating the events of a state (that is, are based on a political conception rather than on a problem of the spirit) are, in actual fact, annals. Moreover, saying that the annals evolved into chronicles is repeating the old idea of the water buckets. Annals and chronicles coexisted and coexist in various forms. That of evolution is a concept extraneous to intellectual expressions. On the contrary, the necessity to transcribe events and to adopt the abstraction of time to frame them is a human universal, and annals, in their various forms, are a manifestation of it. As a consequence, and since pragmatic needs forces us to have recourse to abstract categories, the category of “annals” should be preferred to that of “medieval historiography”. This is precisely the principle on which the structuring of this work is based. The doctrine of the *École des Annales* and specifically the notion of *longue durée* should not be forgotten.

Second, for similar reasons, we will renounce (or at least reduce) the political schematization of history of historiography. Since there are no national histories, there cannot be national historiographies as was clearly demonstrated by the debates of the first half of the 20th century. History and historiography are human universals exactly like painting, telling stories, or the idea of God and their limits are defined by the boundaries of humanity, not by the changing borders of a country. Rather, we can study local manifestations of human universals. Accordingly, the territories of the Kingdom of Lithuania, partially those of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and those of the modern Republic of Lithuania will be adopted as a very general and loose criterion to select the works mentioned and analysed in this handbook. Moreover, these territories are to be understood only as the place of transition, encounter and the manifestation of transnational human universals.

As an example, the problems connected with the ambition to segment historiography by adopting political criteria are evident even in recent Lithuanian historiography. Algimantas Bučys has been forced to include thirty pages of ideological-cultural-philosophical explications into his *Seniausioji lietuvių literatūra* to justify the use of the
term “Lithuanian” referring to the texts in which the life of Vaišvilkas is preserved. The problem would not have arisen if, instead of the political approach, the life of the son of Mindaugas would have been framed in the context of hagiographies – a literary genre of which this text is just a variation.

Third, the necessity of a comparative attitude was made clear by the teaching experience: the modern study curricula provide students with very deep knowledge of local expressions of intellect, but very vague notions about transnational and diachronic phenomena. From here the need arises to present a catalogue offering an evaluation of the “Lithuanian” historiography in a much wider context: that of the European historiography. Such an approach is especially necessary when writing about the period this handbook is dealing with.

To explain the utility of the great attention we are planning to give Greek, Latin, Byzantine historiography, we should consider that too often we understand the modern unity of Europe as a specifically modern phenomenon. Too often we forget that since antiquity peoples have been travelling for the most disparate reasons and with peoples, ideas and information were travelling too as happens nowadays and possibly even more effectively. More precisely, we cannot forget that in the past, the education of nobles and acculturated peoples was based almost exclusively on classical literature. For centuries students, in the whole Europe, had to learn Cicero’s speeches by heart; they had to refine their style commenting and imitating that of Livy; they got acquainted with different cultures reading Tacitus and Herodotus; finally, they learned how to evaluate other writers’ accounts on the basis of Thucydides reflections about truth, past and history.

Accordingly, how could we recognize the so-called “Tacitism” of A. W. Kojałowicz’s works if we do not get ourselves acquainted with Tacitus, with his works and, even more important, with their 17th century interpretation? The examples of these transnational (transcultural) connections can be provided in hundreds: in the Lithuanian historiography of the 16th-early 19th centuries, despite some peculiarities of the region and especially the late Christianisation, it is possible to individuate strong influences from the classical antiquity. As an example, reading Elijas Pilgrimovijus’ account of the Great
Delegation of Leo Sapiega to Moscow we can breathe in the pleasant style of Livy, enjoy Tacitus colourful descriptions and even perceive a sort of irony modelled on that of Horace.

The situation gets even more intricate if we consider that the territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania for centuries had been a crossroad of peoples and cultures: it was a crossroads not only for the classical influences coming from western Europe (as cleverly pointed out by Laimonas Briedis), but also for those coming from the Byzantine area. We could mention, *en passant*, the *Chronicle of Malalas*, which preserves in its Slavic redaction the Baltic “Myth of Sovijus”. This chronicle is written in a plain and popular language typical of the Byzantine tradition. Similarly, the Byzantine tradition emerges in other chronicles relevant for the development of Lithuanian historiography: in the *Chronicle of Nestor*, in that of the bishop of Poznan Boguñal and in the Lithuanian accounts that had recourse to these sources. Comparably, the episodes of apostasy described in the Chronicle of Halych-Volhynia have often been understood as examples of anti-Lithuanian tendencies while they can be situated in the centuries-long Byzantine tradition. The episodes of Mindaugas, King of Lithuania, and Danil, King of Halych, are iconic of the Byzantine conception according to which the religious apostasies lead to political instability – in Western European the embryo of this idea can be individuated in the Roman Empire, in the ecclesiastic tradition and even among Jesuits historians.

Summing up, in this students handbook European examples will be alternated to the specificity of the local expression. In this way, we should be able to achieve a goal which is two-fold: on the one hand we will become acquainted with the main tendencies of European historiography from the ancient times to the “erudite historiography”. On the other hand, we will have the opportunity to better know local historians and understand how they relate to the *koine* of the intellectuals. Furthermore, students will be introduced to the main problems connected with the process of history-writing thanks to the “drill-down sections”. Contrary to the above, we will be touching on the history of historical theories and on historical method only marginally and exclusively if it is necessary to make evident the reasons behind a particular history-writing attitude.
I. Historiography and Hermeneutics: Definition of the Field

Historiography has been often defined as the science and practice of writing about the past. More precisely, in 1988, Michael J. Sal- evoir and Conal Furnay, in their *The Methods and Skills of History*, defined historiography as “how history was and is written” – that is, as the history of historical writings. While this definition is somewhat correct, it expresses only a part of the concept. And the term is still ambiguous exactly because too often scholars tried to define it rather than reflect on it. We will not give a definition of historiography here since definitions cannot ever represent the thought in its integrity. A definition would only exclude those crucial elements like experience and intuition. Subsequently, we will reflect on the concept of *historiography*.

The term is actually much older than its modern definitions. It was coined by Tommaso Campanella in 1638. However, the philosopher gave historiography a meaning quite far from the modern one: historiography in the 17th century was the ‘art of correctly writing history’. In point of fact, the word maintained this meaning until very recent times in French and English. Particularly the German tradition distinguishes between historiography in its wider sense – *Geschichtsschreibung* – and *Historik*, an 18th century concept referring to a branch of the science of history and defined in its modern form by Johann Gustav Droysen in his *Grundriß der Historik*. The Italian tradition, in the wake of Croce, defines historiography as historical knowledge in opposition to the historical reality. Distinctive to the Lithuanian practice of historical studies is the conformity to the German tradition that reflects in the correspondent distinction between *istoriografija* and *istorika*. The latter is a concept that, attested to by Joachim Lelewel (*Historyka tudzież. O łatwym i pożytecznym nauczaniu historii*), permeated the reflection on the study of the past until recent years (an example of this is Zenonas Norkus’ *Istorika* – a reflection on the pattern of Jörn Rüsen theories). As a matter of fact, since the first historical accounts started being written, a
reflection about the reasons and means to register the events of the past developed, and with them the debate on the nature of the discipline itself developed too.

It is an undisputed fact that a prime, fundamental, feature of historiography – the one that permits us to differentiate it from the other disciplines related to the knowledge of the past – is the written form. Distinctive in this, therefore, is the second stem of the Greek compound ἱστοριογραφία (from which the modern lexeme originated). It is the graphic sign that separates the discipline of historiography from, for example, narrative folklore, oral epic, traditional songs, etc.

Still, even nowadays the definition of the discipline of historiography is all but concurred. Debated, in particular, is the interpretation of the first stem of the compound mentioned above: ἱστορία. While, everybody grasps the meaning of the term history, this concept is often ambiguous. Adopting an unpretentious, but handy, etymological approach, we can say that the word is derived from story – from Latin historia and Greek ἱστορία – which properly means research, investigation, cognition. It might be useful, in our attempt to define the subject, to know that from the common Indo-European root derive the Latin vid- (from which vidĕre – “to see”) and the Greek οἶδα (“to know”). Moreover, it is significant that it is only in recent times that the English language has distinguished between story and history, while other languages, especially in the colloquial register do not make such distinction – at least morphologically. Additionally, both terms still preserve the same meaning of “ordered narration of facts”.

Appealing to the indulgence of the reader for the pedantic affectation of this lexicological approach, which, however, was not disdained by Benedetto Croce himself (in the ‘Noterella filologica’ of his La storia come pensiero e come azione), we will carry on according to this outline. Now we have enough material to analyse in order to refine our definition. Three main concepts emerged from the etymological excursus: first, history is research; second, history is to see; third, history is narration. Consequently, we could attempt such a definition of historiography: it is an ordered written exposition (narration) of facts (events) according to the result of an investigation conducted on what has been seen.
Based on this very definition, we can state that Thucydides’ Περὶ τοῦ Πελοποννησίου πολέμου is a historical work and, since it is written, it pertains to historiography. In practice, it is an orderly arranged narration of the Peloponnesian War fought in Ancient Greece between the Peloponnesian and the Delian Leagues. Thucydides wrote it after serving as an Athenian general in that very war (thus seeing the events). It is a noteworthy fact that this composition is nowadays known as the History of the Peloponnesian War – a label in which the original Περὶ “about” has been substituted by History. Now we do have a more precise definition. It might be applied not only to the writings of the ancient Greek authors, but to more recent accounts such as the 17th century report of Elijas Pilgrimovijus on his experience as envoy of the Grand Duke of Lithuania to Muscovy. His account is, precisely, a written and coherent report of the events of which he was an eyewitness.

In summing up, we can say that history is, etymologically, the ordered exposition of an investigation or research while historiography deals with the written account of that research. It is precisely in the etymological sense of ἱστορίης ἀπόδεξις – “exposition of the research” – that, in the 5th century B.C. Herodotus the so-called “father of history” used the term history.

Nevertheless, this definition of historiography is still inadequate. On the one hand, we know that most of the historians have not actually seen for themselves what they are writing about, thus the idea of “to see” has for historians a shade of meanings that differs from the “canonical one”. On the other hand, even if (and especially if) we use the expression “to see” in a more figurative sense, such a definition does not allow to distinguish from Herodotus’ Histories and Aesop’s Fables since both are “ordered written narration of facts according to the result of an investigation (which had as the object different types of sources – from documents to oral tradition).

The first problem can be solved quite easily with a loose (figurative) interpretation of “to see”. The events or facts the historical accounts deal with are “seen” in the sense that, either they have been seen by the author himself, or by someone else (the author deems to be trustworthy) who, in turn, informed the author. Likewise, we could understand “to see” as “to be aware” that is, to infer from evi-
dence and reasoning or to deduce basing on logic and thus see the fact existed. More complex is the second problem: how to distinguish between historical and non-historical narrations?

The solution lies in the correct understanding of what we called facts or events. While it is easy to see the difference between Herodotus’ Histories and Aesop’s Fables in the objects of the narration – human events for the former; mainly animal affairs for the latter – it would be misleading to adopt the distinction human – non-human to decide what is history and what should be considered story. The term history has been used for centuries to describe reports of studies conducted about the nature (flora and fauna), astronomy or geology and not about human events. We are referring, to mention only the most famous oeuvres, to Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia* (1st century) and Félix A. Pouchet’s *Histoire Naturelle* (19th century) or, to come closer to the Lithuanian reality, to Sigismund von Herberstein’s precious natural history of Lithuania in *Rerum Moscovitarum Commentarii* (17th century). What really makes historical and non-historical narrations distinct is the definition of the facts themselves: historians consider some facts as not being “historical”. Consequently, the exposition of these facts, even if conducted by means of a written and ordered narration, cannot pertain to historiography.

Hence, the first and main problem is to define what a historical fact is. Echoing the theorizations of Croce, a first rough characterization might be this: a historical fact is something we can think about, but that nobody can directly experience now because it is not contemporary. Henceforth, a fact is historical exactly because it is thought, and since nothing exists outside the thought, there is no sense in asking the question ‘which facts are historical facts and which ones are not’.

Nevertheless, following the Italian scholar, we cannot deny that in daily praxis we do distinguish between these two contrasting orders of facts. The reason is a pragmatic one: facts, documents and monuments are innumerable and to collect them all would be contrary to the aims of the knowledge and ultimately impossible. Consequently, pragmatic (and not formal) are the criteria to distinguish and select facts: as for the economic market, we choose to preserve or sell what is needed, is considered necessary, or profitable at this very moment.
It is indisputable that in the various époques of human civilization
these needs changed. The reflection on the past was no exception. It
is for these reasons that during the 19th century for the flourishing
nationalist movement historical facts were considered those relevant
for the construction of an identity: historical facts were mainly po-
litical or civil events. History was mainly a *histoire événementielle*.
On the contrary, the historiography of ‘the short century’, marked
by loss of significance of national borders, focused on social and eco-
nomic elements. The *École des annales* is a typical example of this
approach: François E. de Mézeray’s *History of France* is not anymore
a viable approach to the study of the past; rather Fernand Braudel’s
*The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*
mirrors the new interest for long term structures. In the first case
most of the registered facts dealt with national political and cultural
past; in the second one, historical events were those presenting the
*longue durée* – long-term structures able to withstand events.

We can conclude that historical facts and thus historical works
cannot be given and defined once and for all. What is historical now
might not be historical tomorrow; what is historical for us might not
be historical for someone else. This reasoning induces us to reflect
on the fact that history itself is not pertinence of the matter – it is a
product of the spirit. In this respect, the definition Norkus gave of
history and historiography in his work *Istorika* is incomplete. Ac-
cording to the Lithuanian historian, ‘history has a two-fold mean-
ing. First, it refers to a certain event set in time and space.’ This is
something better known as *res gestae* – occurred facts. ‘Second, it
might refer to the information and opinions about that event.’ Some-
thing that, in a loose sense, we could call the narration of the facts or
*historia rerum gestarum*. As an illustration ‘understanding the word
*history* in the first sense, the Lithuanian history of the 19th century is
what happened in Lithuania in the 19th century; according to the sec-
ond meaning, it is what historians wrote about those events. Talking
about history in this second sense we use the word historiography.’
The drawback of this, otherwise useful, definition is in the concept of
event. We intend to affirm that there are no events; rather, there are
definitions of events! Events are simply the product of a pragmatic
decision. Thucydides considered a historical fact the information that
Pericles set up the ambitious project to build most of the structures of Athens; the circumstance that he was sleeping every night was not understood as such. Despite both events being set in time and space, they are not equally considered historical events. Consequently, we have to agree with Croce noting that the distinction between events and non-events as well as the difference between historical and non-historical facts is purely pragmatic and dictated by the practical nature of knowledge. So why are historians forced to select and decide when writing history? According to the radical immanentism of the Italian, it is exactly because ‘historiography, an act that like all other acts of the spirit set itself a practical aim, cannot imitate the life, rather it has to represent the life in the form of knowledge’.

Gnoseology, from Parmenides to Kant, and epistemology (in its 19th century acceptation – the branch of gnoseology devoted to the methods and foundation of scientific knowledge) have always been based on a sort of Ockham’s razor or, at least, on the lex parsimoniiae: the knowledge cannot be based on the totality, rather it is the result of a selection aimed at the reduction of the complexity to the knowable. Moreover, knowledge is something that has to be transmitted and, thus should be simple enough (to use informatics terminology) to be stored on a support: whether it is the mind or a book, the space is limited. When Thucydides decided to narrate in his Peloponnesian War some actions of Pericles (his projects for the acropolis) and omit some other (he used to sleep), he was acting in accordance with the rule of parsimony.

Whence, it follows that decision (in its etymological sense) plays a fundamental role in the definition of the concept of historiography. Decide is to cut off – to exclude something. The decision to include something in a historical account (and thus to exclude something) is the distinctive trait of historiography. Only when an author consciously selects the events according to whatever criterion (that is, decides which ones are historical events to be narrated and which ones are non-historical events and, thereby are not worth mentioning) can we speak about historiography. If this process of selection is absent (as in the oral transmission of the carmina convivalia) or is mainly unconscious (as it was for the authors of the medieval annals or the Ionia’s logographers) we can speak, in the best case, of
proto-historiography. And in this compound, proto- is used more in its biological sense of “first phase in the evolution of a phenomenon” that is, primitive, rather than in its literary acceptation of “first”.

Once we have inspected all the components that make historiography an autonomous and defined discipline, it is necessary to demarcate the influence, in the given definition, of the (decisive) parameter of narration. As we mentioned above, narrative is crucial when trying to define what is pertinent of historiography and what is not. As a matter of fact, rarely can a work be considered historiographical only because it is possible to perceive in it the author’s operation of decision in the selection of the events he is writing about. Peculiar of historiographical works is the connection between the narrated events. The capability and the intention to find a main theme or a central thread is precisely what makes the annals of the ancient world distinct from the early-medieval chronicles or, even more, from the late-medieval universal histories.

An illustrative example is that of the *Annales maximi*. This sort of public archive was kept by the Pontifex Maximus of the Roman Republic and made public every year (from here the name annals – yearly – is derived). Essentially, they are simple enumerations of the most significant events of Rome supplied with the dates. There were no connections between the events except for the fact that they were somehow relevant to the Republic. Consequently, they cannot be considered a proper historiographical expression. As mentioned above we can allow the definition of proto-historiography to define them. Conversely, the chronicle of Vincent Kadlubek, *Chronica seu originale regum et principum Poloniae*, is characterized by the intention of the author to trace a comprehensive history of the foundation and expansion of the principality of Poland. It celebrates, at the same time, the bond of the principality of Casimir II the Just with classical antiquity – a very common attitude of the time. For this very reason, the four books interwove Polish history with well-known episodes of Greek and Roman classical past like the deeds of Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar or the legislative actions of the Gracchi. In this work, the process of selection of historical events, the reasons behind it and the connection between the events are patent. In this case it is possible to speak of a historiographically relevant work.
Likewise, manifest in this chronicle are the rhetorical means adopted to support the main idea of a sort of continuity between the classical world and the principality of Poland. The reasons behind the adoption of Latin as linguistic vehicle are self-evident. Moreover, under the cover of the dialogical form conceals the reference to the classical conventions for treatises of political philosophy. The decision to tell the history of the Polish Principality in the form of a dialogue between Archbishop John of Gniezno and Bishop Matthew of Krakow is coherent with the ambition to perpetuate the Roman tradition set by *De re publica* and *De legibus* of Cicero. The parallels between the medieval and the ancient author and their works are numerous: the *Somnium Scipionis* of the latter is comparable to the legends told by the former; the political influence both treatises exerted for centuries is undeniable. Revealing, in this sense, is the reverberation of Kadlubek ideas in the works of the 16th century political thinker and Bishop of Poznan Wawrzyniec G. Goślicki. In turn, it is exactly from the work of Kadlubek that the concepts of ‘Commonwealth’ and ‘Nobles’ Democracy’ (the *Złota Wolność* or *Auksinė Laisvė* political system peculiar of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) originated. It is precisely in the *Chronica* that the term *res publica* was used for the first time with reference to Poland. Hence, it is first of all the form of this work, its structure and rhetoric that clearly reveals the real nature of the *Chronica*: like a Cicero treatise, this work is, first of all, a philosophical, though historically contextualized, reflection on political systems. What lay under the deceptive title of chronicle has been revealed as a political study by the analysis of the author’s eloquence.

While in 1921 Ludwig Wittgenstein was able to identify in the language the logical representation of the world, thus making philosophy the critic of the language *tout court*, fifty years later Hayden White proclaimed the interdependence between historical thinking and language. According to the American historian, every historical work is ‘a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them.’

The *metahistory* (the *Historik* of Rüsen or the *Istorika* of Norkus) of the 20th century historiography and the metanarrative of post-
modernism are, therefore, to be considered an integral part of historiography. There can be no historical writing without a ‘coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form.’ Consequently, the analysis of the linguistic and rhetorical medium is the first step toward a formal critic of the historical works. More precisely, metahistory is not just the discourse about history intended as historical discourse. It is the rhetoric of historiography: the visual framework that sustains the ideological representation leading the historian to present or represent facts according to a certain narrative model.

Consequently, the history of historiography is not only, and not mainly, the history of the historical method or the chronological contextualization of the philosophies of history. It is, first of all, the formal critic of the narrative models. Analogously, the language in its graphical (written) form is the most evident expression of the historical thought and method of the historian.

To fully understand the ideological representation of the past in the so-called Account of Lew Sapieha Great Delegation to Moscow, the formal critic of the author’s eloquence is much more useful than the philological or erudite approaches. We could collect all the sources of this account, explain the etymology of every single word written in it, nevertheless we will not comprehend the real intention of the author: to dispel the spectre of a Muscovite barbaric influence on the civilized lands of the Confederation. It is the ironic style of the unusually frequent (for this kind of report) descriptions of spreads – a sort of inverted Lucullian banquets – to uncloak the unitary plan to denigrate the baseness of the Muscovites. Accordingly, the whole report is, in actual fact, an apology of the deeds of Sapieha. In Pilgrimovijus’ account, the Court Chancellor is representing not only to the defence of the political and military claims of the regent. Rather, he embodies the resistance of the border of the civilized world. The formal analysis permitted the recognition of the ideological thread of the work.

It is exactly the capability to individuate a logical unity in the project of the account that allows the expert historian to call it a history elevating its author from the rank of chronicler to that of
Historiography and Hermeneutics: Definition of the Field

This is the first task given to the studious of historiography: to recognize which œuvres are historical works and which ones are merely erudite compilations; which are annals or a chronicle and what is history. The exercise is a strenuous one and specific rules cannot be given. As in the methodology of historical research there are no specific rules suitable for every research, but only very general precepts (that only the experience of the scholar can forge in the original methods appropriate for that specific study), likewise, the critic of historiography cannot be based on a series of pre-given guidelines. It is the sharp and exercised intellect of the historian that enables him to perceive what is not a historical work.

Despite this premise, we will try to provide the reader with a rough principle to take this first decision. A historical work is characterized by the unity ensured by the formulation of a historical problem that resolves in the formulation itself. The formulation of a problem guarantees the logical cohesion of the work and when the formulation of the problem is of a historical nature, we are in front of a historical work. It is the formulation of a logical problem that distinguishes the historical work from the erudite compilations. ‘Without the logical unity of the work we have only books that, even if called “histories”, rather than on a problem, base their unity […] on one image. Such are the histories of a country, of a people, of a city, of a lake, of an individual’, commented Croce. These are not historical works unless these images are just labels used to provide the reader with an extrinsic indication of the content (as a sort of tables of contents). ‘Because of the nature of the subject itself, those books, if coherently structured, histories are not; they might be chronicles built around an image’. Nonetheless, the unpractised studious should not mistakenly label all histories of countries as, in the best case, erudite compilations. As an example, Albert Wijuk Kojałowicz’s Historiae Lituanae under the designation of the History of Lithuania conceals a practical need of education, the logical coherence of the ideological unitarist mission of the Jesuits and the formulation of a problem (that of the failure of the resistance of the besieged Christianity) which gains historical relevance in its formulation: in a word, the author understands the ‘real situation’ as ‘the process of the reality as it developed until now and it is historical for this very reason.’
Once made evident such a distinction, historiography will not always exclude from its history what is not a historical work. Rather, the critic should treat these works with consciousness. And speaking about the critic, we want to stress once more the very general rule expressed above: the study of historiography, first of all, passes through the formal critic of the historical works. That is, consists in the so-called literary historiography: the critic of style and language. This is obvious since the formulation of the logical problem on which is based the historicity of the oeuvre is made evident (that is, is transfigured) by the written word – the style and the rhetoric. The rhetoric is just a system of translation that makes evident the logical structures, the methodology and the aims of the writer. Once again, narrative plays a central role in historiography.

While it is the formal critic to play a fundamental role in the history of historiography, it is equally crucial not to forget that ‘the evaluation of a historical work should be based on its historicity, as that of a book of poetry should be based on its poeticism.’ And we intend historicity as ‘an act of comprehension and intelligence, stimulated by a need of the practical life’ that can be satisfied only ‘with the formulation of a theoretical problem’. Whilst Croce’s historicism might appear outdated, it comes in handy since it connects the pragmatic, from which the historical works originate, with its historical contextualization. As a matter of fact, needs – even historical needs – are historical, that is, they change over time. Accordingly, their verbal expression and the historical thought and method lying behind it should be judged only after its historical contextualization. The concept of historical account changed through time: since the theorization and the practical example of Leopold von Ranke, it is unanimously recognized as good practice to adopt a critical-expositive tone when writing history. On the contrary, the value of a historical work resided, according to the orators of the antiquity like Cicero and Quintilian, in the gratification or even amusement generated by a vivacious style. Both styles were historical in their contexts.

Similarly, the methodology of the historical research, and thus the scientific nature of a research are not something given or definable: these are historical concepts. As an example, in the 19th century, a strict philological approach would have guaranteed a book the
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rank of scientific historical work. Nowadays the criteria of scientificity cannot be reduced to that. In contrast, the Renaissance erudites would have deemed scientific a work in which the logic structure of the thought were made evident by the logic of language and the solidity of the rhetorical construction.

In our conclusion of this reflection about historiography, we will try to enumerate concepts that are often misunderstood as history of historiography, but are not. First, a history of historiography is not the history of the philosophy of history. Second, it is not the chronological list of the schools in which historical theories and methods were formulated. Third, it is not the history of the erudite critic and research. Rather, the history of historiography is in close relation with these branches of history, but touches on the history of the historical theories and methods only when they influenced the development of the written production. This is the same approach Eduard Fueter adopted, with good reasons, in his Geschichte der neueren Historiographie. It is for these reasons that here, like in the monumental work of Fueter, brilliant thinkers like Jean Bodin will only be mentioned in passing. We should agree with Fueter saying ‘his Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem is a noteworthy book, but for historiography it did not reveal fecund.’

One last note on historiography: trying to define historiography we became conscious of the fact that some pictorial opus or series can be fully described as historiographic products. As a matter of fact, certain historical works realized in picture form satisfies all the requirements mentioned above to be considered historiographical. The existence of the graphic sign is undoubted. Similarly, the rhetoric of a painting is recognizable in different aspects from the chosen techniques to the disposition and relation of the illustrated elements. From this point of view, it is necessary to distinguish between paintings that adopt one technique only because at the time they were produced there were no alternatives (as in the rock carving of Alta) and those characterized by the conscious choice of a specific method: the former cannot be considered historiographical works. Moreover, some painters decided to represent a certain subject only after the formulation of a historical problem and a series of investigations or simply because they have personally seen that specific event. In this
case, the most important requirement is satisfied. This is the case, as an example, of the Jan Matejko and Franciszek Smuglewicz’ paintings. Particularly with regards to Matejko’s œuvres, they were very detailed and realized using historical sources. Moreover, these paintings originated from an ideological and moral problem: the lack of morality of the magnates was causing the inner disruption of the country. Significant, in this respect, are the recurring theme of the jester (as a symbol of national conscience) and the painting of Piotr Skarga giving sermons to the diet.

Summing up the argument, while the inclusion of pictorial works in the field of historiography might appear pretty revolutionary, it is a concept proposed in the past, and in a roundabout way, by renowned scholars like Nikolai V. Gogol. In a synthetic manner the same concept has been presented and resolved in favour of the inclusion of pictorial opus in the form of literary and rhetorically embellished works in Eglė Patiejūnienė’s book Brevitas Ornata. Here, among the minor forms of literary expression, are included (literary) emblems: icons, heraldic, hieroglyphs, symbols, coats of arms etc. Emblems not only tell a story by the means of signs, but also are enriched by allegorical and metaphorical symbols and are aimed at transmitting an idea (the greatness of a family, the value of virtue, the glory of God, etc.). It is not by chance that Lithuanian Jesuits considered the “emblems encyclopaedias” as a very good means of education.

**Literature**

Handy definitions of historiography have been provided, in recent times, in Zenonas Norkus, *Istorika: istorinis įvadas*, Vilnius, 1996. This work is strongly influenced by the theories of Jörn Rüsen as expounded in *Grundzüge einer Historik*, 3 voll, Göttingen, 1983-1989 and in *Der Strukturwandel der Geschichtswissenschaft und die Aufgabe der Historik, Die Struktur wissenschaftlicher Revolutionen und die Geschichte der Wissenschaften. Symposium der Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsgeschichte anlässlich ihres zehnjährigen Bestehens 8.-10. Mai 1975 in Münster*, Meisenheim, 1977, p. 110-119. Likewise the works of the German philosopher, the Lithuanian book is rich in definitions that are too stringent and rigorous to fully represent the concept. Similarly, explicit are the

Despite these practical elucidations, the academic education requires a deeper and more critical knowledge and the capability to reflect on the concept and not just reproduce it. It is, therefore, advisable for a student to acquire his own personal conception of historiography elaborating it on the basis of the historical reflection about it. For this purpose, stimulating are the considerations in Benedetto Croce, *La storia come pensiero e come azione*, Bari, 1938 and in his *Zur Theorie und Geschichte der Historiographie*, Tübingen, 1915. For the same reason, valuable is Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l’histoire ou métier d’historien*, Paris, 1949. For specific reference to the interpretation of the concept in Lithuania and its historical reasons see Joachim Lelewel, *Historyka tudzież. O łatwym i pożytecznym nauczaniu historii*, Vilnius, 1815. The transformation of the understanding of historiography might also be perceived indirectly flipping through Eduard Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie*, München und Berlin, 1911 (especially in the methodological proem); reading Leopold von Ranke history of Latin and German peoples or even better the introduction of Siegfried Baur, *Versuch über die Historik des jungen Ranke*, Berlin, 1988; or Lucien Febvre, *Problèmes d’histoire et d’économie*, Paris, 1935 and *Combats pour l’histoire*, Paris, 1952.

Finally, a full understanding of the concept should consider what in recent times have become disciplines sometimes distinct from historiography: metahistory and metanarrative. The main works in these fields are Johann Gustav Droysen, *Grundriß der Historik*, Leipzig, 1882; Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore, 1973.
II. History as “Natural Histories”

History has not always been understood as the (reasoned) chronology of political or military events. It has assumed many different meanings through time. One of these was that of a catalogue of nature in its widest sense. As mentioned in the etymologic excursus of the previous chapter, history in the past was just knowledge acquired by means of investigation. And investigations can be conducted almost exclusively on the manifestation of the transcendent will, not on the will itself. In other words, nature, not the spirit, is the object of the research. Natural investigation is the meaning attributed by Aristotle to history in his *History of Animals*. This definition of history is not peculiar to the ancient civilizations. Even Francis Bacon understood history as the knowledge of objects determined in time and space.

It might seem this kind of history has nothing in common with our, mainly political, history apart from the denomination. However, it is precisely from this desire to know and make intelligible the nature that the ethnographic orientation of some historians has emerged. Moreover, in the past both the history of man and that of nature (that is, history, biology, astronomy, zoology etc.) were considered to be integral parts of the history of the manifestation of God’s will. Consequently, it is difficult to individuate in the ancient histories of nature which subjects pertain to, using modern terminology, natural sciences and which ones to human history.

As way of illustration, the most renowned of these “histories” Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia* presents itself as a catalogue of nature, but the Latin writer understood the history of nature as one means to get to know the transcendent will of the deity and its immanent counterpart: the spirit of humanity. It is precisely for this reason that in this 37-volumes encyclopaedia besides cosmology, geography, botanic, etc. also included are anthropology and, unexpectedly, the history of human beliefs (included in the medical section), the history of ancient industry and manufacturing (together with mineralogy) and even the history of art (as a manifestation of the increasing knowledge of mineralogy and chemistry).
Obviously, these kinds of works cannot be considered historical because of the lack of formulation of historical problems from which they originated, because of the unconcern for the writing style and, marginally, for the lack of method. Nevertheless, concluding our excursion about Pliny, it is interesting to note that: first, *Naturalis Historia* books XXXIII to XXXVII are very close, in terms of subjects, to non-political histories of the European tradition – from Herodotus to the *École des Annales*. Second, a sort of method emerges from the lists of sources mentioned at the beginning of every section. Third, it is noteworthy that there is a tendency of nature historians to investigate, in distinct and separate works, the political, artistic and military history of their countries. As an example, Pliny wrote, besides his natural history, *De iaculatione equestri* (Pomponius Secundus’ biography); *Bellorum Germaniae libri XX* (a history of the conquests of German lands); *Afine Aufidii Bassi* (the history of the Empire until Aufidius Bassus).

The understanding of history as the history of nature, man and spirit is not something exclusive to ancient times. In the 19th century, scientists investigating microorganisms and their apparent resurrections after being burned became involved in heated discussions about materialism often outlining a history of materialism in the first chapters of their popular works. Similarly, in the age of geographic discoveries, the interest in the nature of far away countries induced scientists to study the relation of indigenous peoples with their habitat. Some of the most interesting histories of Central African and Amazonian regions appeared in the 19th century as histories of natures.

Even without these striking (and borderline) examples, the history of historiography is sparkling with excursus about nature, physical geography and natural histories. This attitude is evident in Herodotus’ *Histories* and noticeable in the Lithuanian Annals. As a matter of fact, the physical configuration of a territory – its natural resources, the paths of rivers, plains and mountains – has always influenced the developments of human settlements and their economic, military, artistic and even religious ideas. Therefore, most natural histories can be seen as human histories and vice versa some political histories are precious sources for the natural history of a region.
or country. It is not possible to deny the importance of the theories of the environmental determinism in the historical and naturalistic works of Al-Jahiz and especially Ellsworth Huntington’s *Civilization and Climate*.

A similar mixture of interests for both the natural resources of a region, the configuration of the territory and the consequences on the political, architectural and even religious development had already been expressed in the Old Slavic Lithuanian Annals. It is possible to read in the *Chronicle of Bychowiec*:

First of all they found a safe place by the river Smotrich [dniestr] […]. Somewhere else, on a hill, monks were living, and in that place funded the city of Bakota. Going hunting they were able to catch many deers on that island, where now is Kamenecas, and, once cut the wood, built there the masonry-castle of Kameneco.

In the Lithuanian history-writing tradition, several representative examples of this tendency can be enumerated. Some of them, like Grigorij Volovich’s relation about the woods of the ancient Lithuanian State, are of marginal relevance for the history of historiography. Still, despite focusing on woods and nature, it is a precious historical source for the history of the rural settlements in the region. Conversely, there are some other works presenting themselves as naturalistic or zoological-oriented while they are mature historiographic works. Illustrative in this respect is Nicolaus Hussovianus’ poem about the bison.

**Grigorij Volovich’s Inspection of Forests and Animal Trails in the Former Grand Principality of Lithuania**

Grigorij Volovich’s report about Lithuanian forests (published only in 1867 as *Reviziia pushch i perekhodov zverinnykh v byvshem Velikom Kniazhestve Litovskom*) is a work only marginally relevant for the history of historiography. However, it is mentioned here because of two reasons: first, it is representative of the merging of natural and civic histories; second, it has had some influence on more recent works, which adopted the naturalistic framework to expound political or civil history (illustrating, in this respect, is the author
references to Pliny in the introduction of his work). Renowned historians such as Zenonas Ivin-skis have pointed out the importance of this text.

As keeper of the forests of the Grand Principality of Lithuania from 1559 to 1576, Volovich was commissioned in 1558 by King Sigismund Augustus to write a detailed report on the status of the royal woods. This work is therefore an account about forests, their boundaries and, most interesting, the manner and location of settlements from the region of Kiev to Samogitia. It is noteworthy the author’s interest is not only in the nature, but also the settlement processes, the structure of rural built-up areas, problems connected with the definition of territorial borders of the country and borders between private and royal forests. From this point of view it is one of the first examples of urban (and rural) history in the region. It also describes the land reform initiated by Sigismund August, the process of centralization and control of the national economy from the regents viewpoint and, at the same time, it reveals a detailed account of state policy toward resources such as game and timber in a period when the increasing number of conflicts forced the Lithuanian state to pay more attention to its assets. The natural account (written in the official state language – Old Slavonic) can also be read as the praise of the achievement of the state – one of the few in Europe able to regulate natural resources at a national level.

In this respect, it is revealing that out of the 331 pages of the report only 62 are actually dealing with the subject of national forests and game. All other pages are reserved for lists of privileges and definitions of the country’s borders (in a period when a war against the Grand Duchy of Moscow had been evaluated). The technical (naturalistic) approach reveals sometimes political, logistic and administrative interest and great attention to the evolution of civilization through time and in connection with natural resources.

Figure 1: a 16th century map of GDL in which the distribution of forests is well evidenced.
This work has been mentioned here also because it is a peculiar example of history-writing based on a naturalistic frame. It is an instance of non-humanistic style and it constitutes a precedent for the works of Vincas Žemaitis’ *Lithuanian Hydronyms and Barrow-graves from the Vistula to Moscow itself* (Lietuviški vandenvardžiai ir pilkapiai nuo Vyslos iki pat Maskvos, 1972) – an example of patriotic manifest presented in the form of geographical study.

*Nicolaus Hussovianus’ A Poem about the Size, Ferocity, and the Hunting of the Bison*

Hussovianus’ most representative and known work is his 1072 line elegiac couplets poem *De statura, feritate ac venatione bisontis carmen* (1522). It was written initially in Italy, probably concluded in Poland-Lithuania, and published in Krakow in 1523. The poem was written at the request of Hussovianus’ patron Bishop Erazm Ciolek to satisfy the desire of Pope Leo X – “an avid devotee of hunting” – to know more about the European bison. Since at the time of the publishing both the patron and the Pope had died, the author dedicated his work to Queen Bona Sforza.

The poem has been often understood as a naturalist account modelled on the coeval ones of Conrad Celtis (Conrad Pickel) about the hunting of the bison (*Ad Vistulum fluvium ortum et exitum eius describens de bisontibus et eorum venationibus*), or to the description of the bison in Albertus Magnus’ *De animalibus*, or compared to Ercole Strozzi’s *Venatio ad Divam Lucretiam Ferrarae Ducem* of which Hussovianus certainly knew. Descriptions of the bison were a very popular subject among European historians – from Pliny the Elder to Paul the Deacon’s History of the Longobards. Nevertheless, this work is relevant also for the history of historiography both for the literary style adopted and for the very clear ethnographic and political subjects indirectly explored by the author.
Hussovianus’ Latin style is almost entirely free of mythological ornamentation, but it contains many references to classical authors: the work includes numerous allusions to Vergil’s epic poetry and Ovid’s exile poetry. ‘Slavic Latinists in general were fond of Ovid whose exile from Rome to Tomis on the Black Sea had brought him into their territory, where he composed his exile poetry in elegiac couplets, the metre of Hussovianus’ poem.’

With regards to the subject matter, it has been written, ‘it is not certain whether Hussovianus was familiar with the Celtis’ work, but Hussovianus’ poem is far more ambitious in the scope of its natural history, ethnography, and current political events.’ First of all, Hussovianus is also an ethnographer and stresses the value of the woods, games, bees and furs for peoples and the nation. He describes human activities in the woods, hunting and processing materials. Moreover, the author enriches the main subject with a comprehensive background description of the political, social and religious situation of the country. ‘[…] Hussovianus manages both to present detailed accounts of the behaviour of the bison and its hunters and to place his subject within its broader geographic and historical context.’

Despite the title of this work, it has been convincingly suggested that Hussovianus’ bison was just a pretext to introduce noblemen to the ethic of Christian humanism. The whole work, as a matter of fact is a historical and social account about the ancient Lithuanian state and its regents. In this respect, the prise of Vytautas – central figure of the beating – is nothing more than a metaphorical eulogy of the authority able to maintain a united (against internal opposition) state and, in turn, defend Christianity from external aggressions. Dear to him is the support of a regent able to guide the country toward a virtuous political life and the triumph of Christianity.

The importance of Hussovianus’ idea of political unity as the base for the religious fight clearly emerges in the historical accounts about the atrocity committed by Turks: ‘[He] deplores the political turmoil of the times, and […] makes an urgent plea for unity among the Christian states of Europe. He worries that Europe’s Christian kings are engaging in senseless internecine warfare while Turks are invading Christian lands’, commented Harold B. Segel.
As we mentioned when discussing Pliny the Elder, a typical feature of scholars who became famous for works labelled as natural histories is their capability to produce pure historical accounts which testify to their wide interest for the human spirit, not only for the nature. Hussovianus is no exception. Two other works from this same author illustrate the forerunners of contemporary histories and hagiographies, which will be addressed in the next chapters.

**Adam Schroeter’s About the Lithuanian River Nemunas**

While we are writing about natural histories, we have decided to mention Adam Schroeter’s *De fluvio Memela Lithuaniæ [...] Carmen elegiacum* (1553) because it is representative of the mixture of naturalistic interest, historical narrative and literary competence. This Latin elegiac poem expresses the connection between the classical style and the Renaissance taste for erudition. At the same time, it is an interesting account of the efforts to make the Nemunas (Memel) a navigable river mainly thanks to the efforts of Nicolai Tarlo.

This poem is a celebration of the deeds of Tarlo. In typical humanistic style, it is not only the country (understood here as Sarmatia) that is glorified: it is mainly an individual taken as an icon of the nobility of humankind. At the same time the parallels between the magnificence and potential of the river Nemunas and the splendour and capabilities of the country guided by the King Sigismund are evident.

As a historical source, this poem is an interesting account about the Nemunas as a commercial route. It testifies to the mercantile activities from Kaunas to Prussia underlining the fact that Kaunas had the potential to become a great trade city, but only after the river was made navigable did the development begin. The poem describes the difficulties merchants had to face before the river was cleared up: ‘To sail on it is not possible, because it was not fit for boats and because
of the huge rocks, and because of the sharp boulders.’ The poem mainly tries to demonstrate how useful the clearing up of the river for the Lithuanian themselves was, stating that ‘infinite advantages’ will be obtained. The connection between the new reorganization of the river and the foundation of a number of villages on its shores is equally relevant.

**Sigismund von Herberstein’s Notes on Muscovite Affairs (as a conclusion)**

The habit of using natural histories as a pretext or an occasion to describe political, social, and military events or to educate the readers by expounding ideas is not exclusive to the region of the ancient Lithuanian State – it is a European pluri-centenary manner. In most of its concrete manifestations, this tendency produced works verging on the anthropological historiography: it was logical, describing nature, to try to investigate its relations with humans.

Illustrative is the case of the German diplomat, traveller and historian Sigismund von Herberstein. He made two journeys to Moscow (in 1517 and 1526) as an envoy of the Emperors Maximilian I and Charles V and during the first one he visited the cities of Vilnius (where he met Sigismund the Old), Trakai, and Medininkai. Several years after his second journey to the Duchy of Moscow he published his *Rerum Moscovitarum Commentarii* (1549) in Vienna. This, mainly naturalistic, work includes the section *De Lithuania*, which describes Lithuania’s landscape and animals, but also its peasants, their buildings, the relations with the nobility, the army, and their armaments. Despite the predominant interest in zoology (see the rich section about aurochs and bisons – to mention just a traditional European topic) his account is rich with information about Vilnius and civil life in the region. In this work, it is even possible to individuate attempts to describe national political attitude (theories).
Tasks and discussions

1. We have introduced a series of works, which were written in verses. Is it possible to define “historical” a versed account? Are there metric and linguistics canons to be adopted when writing history nowadays? And what about other époques?

2. Hussovianus opted, in his poem about the bison, for the metre of elegiac couplets. Is there a connection between the metre of a poem and the ideas it intends to transmit? Why did Hussovianus opt for this specific metre?

3. Compare Hussovianus’ work about the bison and his “New and Outstanding Victory over the Turks in the Month of July” (see chapter VI). Despite the very different subject it is possible to individuate in the two oeuvres a common ideology and similar topics. Which ones? How does the author construe the narration in these works?

4. Read the description(s) of Vytautas in the poem about the bison. Analyse its structure and function in the narrative of the whole poem.

Literature

About the concept of natural history as a form of systematic study of natural objects but also as historical research tout court, see Lesley Brown, The New shorter Oxford English dictionary on historical principles, Oxford, 1993. The idea to consider some versed accounts as historical accounts in proper sense emerges in other authors. In particular, in recent years some Lithuanian historians have tried to cast new light on their national history having recourse to poetical works. We are specifically referring to Andrius Porutis (ed.), Lietuvos istorija poezijoje, Kaunas, 1997.

Hossovianus’ poem about the bison has been recently republished in Lithuanian in the book series Lituanistinė biblioteka as Nicolaus Hussovianus, Giesmė apie stumbrą, Vilnius, 1977. This translation includes an extensive introduction, which contextualizes the portrait of Vytautas in the 15th and 16th century poetry. In order to be able to better relate Hussovianus’ naturalistic account to the rich humanist influences emerging in it, see Harold B. Segel, Renaissance Culture in Poland:
History as “Natural Histories”

The Rise of Humanism, 1470-1543, New York, 1989. A complete English translation of the poem is going to be published by Fred Booth (possibly in his book Five Neo-Latin Poets of the Polish Renaissance). Unfortunately both Polish and Lithuanian historians have been much more interested in demonstrating Hussovianus nationality claiming he was Polish or Lithuanian respectively. Consequently, these works have to be used with awareness of the debate.

There are almost no Lithuanian or English researches about ancient naturalistic accounts. Nonetheless, most of the works mentioned in this chapter have been republished in recent times. With regards to Grigorij Volovich’s Inspection of Forests and Animal Trails it is possible to consult the first edition of 1867 (Вленская Археографическая Комиссия, Ревизия пущ и переходов звериных в бывшем Великом Княжестве Литовском published by Вильна. В типографии Губернского Правления). The report has been commented in Довнар-Запольский (ed.), Государственное хозяйство Великого княжества Литовского при Ягеллонах, Vol. 1, Киев, 1901. The full text of Schroeter’s poem about the river Nemunas has been published in Ulčinaitė Eugenija (ed), Dainos pasauliui, saulei ir sau, Vilnius, 1993, p. 423–438. Schroeter’s work has been republished and commented by Steponas Kolupaila in the introduction to Bronius Kviklys (ed.), A. Schroeterio 1553 metų “De Fluvio Memela Lithuaniae”: 400 metų pirmajai Nemuno poemai, Chicaho, 1952. Richer is the literature about Sigismund von Herberstein’s Notes on Muscovite Affairs, however there are no significant investigations about his description of territories, flora and fauna of the Ancient Lithuanian State. An English translation of the account is Major H. Richard (ed.), Notes upon Russia: being a translation of the earliest account of that country, entitled Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii, by the Baron S. von Herberstein, London, 1851–52. The extensive introduction and the notes of this work offer a very detailed bibliography. Two studies of Marshall Poe constitute the main sources for the study Herberstein’s naturalistic and ethnographic accounts. We are referring to Foreign descriptions of Muscovy: an analytic bibliography of primary and secondary sources. Columbus, 1995; and A people born to slavery: Russia in early modern European ethnography, 1476–1748. Ithaca, NY, 2000.
III. Proto-Historiography: Annals, Chronicles, State Official Historiography and Letters

As we have mentioned, fundamental in the distinction between historical accounts that might be object of the historiography and those that are not is the possibility to individuate the author’s critical and stylistic choices. Consequently, the definition of historiographic works cannot fully apply to the “literary genre” of chronicles and annals (in the strict sense of these labels) and, with specific reference to Lithuania, can only marginally be applied to other documents of the 14th century such as the epistolary of Gediminas. Notwithstanding the historical and political significance of these documents, their historiographic value is marginal. In them, as a matter of fact, it is not possible to individuate a mature consciousness of the authors in terms of the capability to formulate a historical problem and to produce a text developed around it. Likewise, in these works rarely is some sort of critic exerted on the sources or, even more important, on the selection of the topics discussed and their connections. Finally, the stylistic and register choices are almost always absent: the register adopted is the standard for that kind of texts, that is, is dictated by a technical need or praxis and, consequently, makes it difficult to recognize the author choices.

Nevertheless, the characteristics of later forms of historiography in Lithuania as in most other European countries, stems from annals and chronicles. Therefore, they constitute interesting examples of proto-historiography. These examples are even more interesting for the Lithuanian context in the absence of a Baltic epic and the marginal importance of religious chronicles.

While the ancient Greek historiography (that of the 5th century B.C.) found it hard to get rid of the influence of the epic – the progenitor of the historical conscience – and of that of the religious and oral traditions, the Lithuanian was free from the obtrusive aegis of both epic and religious precepts. This peculiar “freedom” has greatly influenced the development of its historiography that has a marked political approach. Obviously, predominantly political was Gediminas’
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correspondence. Political – and representative of the state’s official interpretation of the events – are the chronicles of the Lithuanian state. In this respect, Lithuanian chronicles and annals represent a variation of insular and continental medieval chronicles and annals characterized by a manifested religious attitude.

Ancient Lithuanian historiography is also peculiar due to the influence exerted on it by the Byzantine historiographical tradition. This was a sort of indirect effect mediated by the Old Slavic chronicles of the Kievan Rus’ like the so-called Tale of Bygone Years or Nestor’s Chronicle, which, in turn, were directly influenced by its Byzantine sources – notably the Chronographia of John Malalas. Such an influence was a natural consequence of the processes of consolidation of the territory under Grand Duke Gediminas and its expansion during the next century. The geographic and cultural position of the country – at the border between the area of influence of the Latin tradition and that of the Byzantine one – is the main factor to have influenced the merging which makes Old Slavic Lithuanian chronicles so peculiar.

On the contrary, a human universal can be considered the historical conscience. It already existed in the ancient Middle East among the Sumerian (about 3000 B.C.) and in Egypt (about 2800 B.C.). It was expressed, first of all, in the monumental forms of the figurative arts; then in the form of inscriptions; accounts of notarial deeds (tablets of Fara – 3rd millennium B.C.); sacred chronicles (the myths of the creation reported in the tablets of Tell Abu Salabikh court – 3rd millennium B.C.); court logs (the History of a Kingdom – a list of Sumerian kings dated about 1900 B.C.) etc. These forms of “immortalization” of the past became more and more methodical. Chronological gaps were filled and the result was a more complete form of chronicle like the Neo-Babylonian Chronicles of the 7th-6th centuries B.C. or the Hittites’ annals of the so-called Ages of the Great Empire (14th-12th centuries B.C.). Even the historical books of the Old Testament, like the Book of Kings (ca. 500 B.C.), might be considered elaborated forms of proto-historiographic works.

This tradition evolved into two directions during the Greece classical period. On the one hand, with the “fathers of history” Herodotus and Thucydides it progressed in the direction of the mature
historiography of Hellenistic and Roman periods. It was a historiography characterized by the interest in the flow of the events in their totality and in the causes of the events. On the other hand, the influence of the religious tradition lent it the traits of chronicles and annals – two historiographic forms that flourished during the Middle Ages. The former are the expression of the tradition set by Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 265-339) and successively revised according to habits introduced in European monasteries of the 7th and 8th centuries; the latter testify to continuity with the accounts of the Pontifex of Ancient Rome. Both examples of chronicles and annals can be found among the first historical accounts of the ancient Lithuanian state. However, as mentioned above, in a number of reports it is possible to perceive the influence of a third, distinct, historiographic tradition: the Byzantine filtered by the Old Slavic one.

III. 1. Annals and Chronicles

Generally speaking, annals (Lit. metraščiai, Rus. lietopisi, Lat. annales) are historical accounts of events. They are chronologically structured and usually the occurrences listed are not connected together by logical, causal or critical links. They are, as a matter of fact, lists of happenings that were, in some respects, relevant to their redactors. Eclipses, fires, births and deaths in the regents’ family, conflicts, pestilences, and the foundation of worship places are just some of the happenings that might have been recorded in classical and medieval annals.

What distinguishes annals from other forms of historical accounts is precisely the prominent importance of the years as a criterion to organize the events. The word annals itself derives from the Latin annus – year. It is possible that this historiographic genre derives its name from the clavi annales – the nails that the Roman priests used to drive into the walls of the temples to mark the number of the years. From here the relation with the idea of “chronicles” reporting the main events of each year.

Similarly, the importance of time (Gr. chronos) is predominant in chronicles. However, at least in terms of a formal definition, in these kinds of historical accounts, facts developed over a period of several
years might be the object of a more articulated narration. Nevertheless, in practice the two genres are not so definite and historians have often used them as synonyms (they are used as synonyms, as an example, in Jan Długosz). Besides, most medieval historical works might be considered a mixture of the two approaches. For that reason, hereinafter we will try to avoid this distinction, which appears to be only formal and not very representative of the written production.

History of historiography tends to individuate two different processes of generation of annals. On the one hand, they might be the result of the development of the so-called *Annales Pontificum* and, thus be the heirs of the *tabulae dealbatae* of Ancient Roman Pontifex; on the other hand, medieval annals are often the expression of a monastic notation habit. In Ancient Rome it was up to the chief priest, the *Pontifex Maximus*, to keep a recollection of the most important events of each year. A list of happenings (triumphs, natural phenomena, wars, etc.) was inscribed on white wooden tables (*tabulae dealbatae*) hanged outside the residence of the Pontifex every year. These tables owe their name, *Annales Pontificum*, to the name of the religious authority. The most renowned collection of these tables is the *Annales Maximi* put together by the Pontifex Maximus Publius Mucius Scaevola in 130 B.C.

More than from the classical tradition, the medieval genre of the annals stems from the fusion of continental and insular (Celtic-Anglo-Saxon) habit of taking notes on the margins of liturgical texts. It is from this practice that “Easter tables” evolved into annals. Easter tables were tablets were the list of Easters cycles (dates) for the years to come. The system of calculating the dates of future Easters had been perfected by the monk Dionysius Exiguus (Dennis the Small) in the 6th century and was already widely spread in Europe in the 7th century. Dionysius defined as a reference point for this calculations the date of the birth of Jesus Christ, which, according to him, coincided with the 754th year from the foundation of Rome. Based on this system, he calculated the dates of all Easters up to the year 626. This work was successively carried on by the historian Beda, whose calculations reached the year 1063. With the process of evangelization of the continent carried out by insular monks from the 13th century, these tablets (and the system with them) spread all across Europe.
Interesting from the historiographic point of view is the fact that these tables (Lat. *tabulae*) were progressively enriched with the dates of other important celebrations of the liturgical year and became sorts of calendars – the perfect place to margin relevant happenings (not necessarily religious) of each year. As mentioned, these tables often travelled across Europe carried by missionary monks either as a separate item or integrated in liturgical texts. Even after the integration of the *tabulae* in liturgical texts the ancient habit to margin (or to note down between the lines of the text) significant worldly events did not disappear. As a result, it became normal in monasteries to transcribe, together with the religious texts, the notes in the margins. Only later did copiers decide to copy on separate sheets the notes. These transcriptions are known as *annales minores* as opposed to the *annales maiores*. The latter were a successive evolution of the former. They are somehow wider, richer and structurally more complex than the interlinear notes.

Still, even the most complex annals were characterized by the lack of interest for cohesion and coherence of the contents. For example, the redactors of the *Annales Francorum* used to note down all the events of the previous year during the month of February. Four centuries later, the redactor of the *Annals of Winchester* suggested keeping a *schedula* – a form or small piece of paper – to note down events as they happen. In doing this it was possible to collect all the forms of one year and transcribe the events more accurately based not only on memory. Nonetheless, chroniclers were rarely working in such a methodical manner. More often, years passed before an event was transcribed. Consequently, recent and far away events used to be put in writings at the same time with a noticeable disproportion in details: much more detailed used to be the narrations of recent events; those of remote happenings were much more vague and fuzzy.

Methodical or not, the redactors of this kind of historical account did not feel, to a certain extent, the need to express their literary and stylistic competence. From this point of view, it is often arduous to define the style of these texts since very often more than one author contributed information to annals and this task was carried out for decades or even centuries. However, especially from the 13th century a certain desire for completeness led chroniclers to look for other
accounts to integrate into their own. This is the main reason for the circulation of such lists from one place to another in the whole of Europe. This is how “families of annals” – or collections (usually named after the collector or the place where they were found) – formed. This is the form in which the so-called Lithuanian annals have been preserved. However, Lithuanian annals have little in common with the annalistic style. Dealing with ancient Lithuanian historiography it is possible to speak about annals and chronicles in proper sense only with reference to German (Teutonic) and Polish narrations recounting the history of Lithuania and a few 19th century Lithuanian compilations.

Jan Długosz’s Annals or Chronologies of the Illustrious Kingdom of Poland

‘It is not unusual to see that historians tend to use the Dlugossian narrative as the groundwork on which they try to trace back how the conversion actually took place at the end of the fourteenth century. Such a way of conducting historical research was adapted, at least in part, thanks to understanding that Długosz had reliable sources at hand when he set out to write about the conversion. It goes without saying that such a view is not altogether misplaced and it is equally true that we will never be able to dispense with Długosz.’ With this introductory statement, Darius Baronas confirmed the influence of Długosz’s Annales seu Cronicae Incliti Regni Poloniae (written until the death of the author in 1480, but published only in 1618 and, as a complete edition, in 1701-1703) until very recent times. As a matter of fact, the most reliable and complete source for the early history of Poland (and Central-Eastern Europe) and that of the Christianization of Lithuania is certainly the historical account of the canon of Kraków. Particularly influenced by the accounts and style of Długosz were the first Lithuanian chroniclers at least until Kojałowicz. On the other hand, the author himself had recourse, among the others, to Lithuanian sources.

The Annals are divided into twelve books covering the history of Central-Eastern Europe from the mythical past of the Polish kingdom to the year 1480. However, the historiographic mastery of the author is evident only in the description of historical times that is, after the year 965. Basing on the model of Livy’s Decades, Długosz
produced a historical oeuvre, which is structured according to the traditional annual partition and divided into books according to a thematic criterion. Similarly, the Latin language and style are lively, intense and sometimes even dramatic. Clearly, the Polish writer intended to produce a work not only critically erudite, but also easy and enjoyable to read. While, as it has been said by other Polish historians, ‘Długosz collected every rag tail of gossip he could find’, his accounts have a lively, almost frenetic style, full of humor and told primarily in the present tense. He synthesized the historical information known to him, with legends and possibly (according to later historians) fiction to create an engaging narrative. While the bulk of Długosz’s history covers time nearest his own, including detailed and not always complementary descriptions of fifteenth century politics and of the campaigns against the Teutonic knights, his depictions of early Polish history give details of the tangled and war-ridden politics of early medieval Central Europe.

Długosz has been prized for his interest and use of foreign sources collected during his numerous travels. This attentiveness toward sources allowed him to critically use the mythological tradition even if, lacking more reliable sources, he did not disdain fantastic reinventions of the past. Similarly, he is not always impartial commenting on coeval politics since it seems he was influenced by his patron Zbigniew Olesnicki. Moreover, a relevant influence has exerted his religious role: greater attention is paid to the conversion of the pagan populations in Poland and in the bordering countries. Religious values and symbolism are attributed to political events and even his numerology should be reconsidered from a Christian perspective (as cleverly noted by Baronas studying Długosz’s account of the foundation of the first seven parish churches of Lithuania). Nevertheless, harsh is the critic toward the abuses of the Teutonic Knights.
The Annals are a useful source for the early history of the Lithuanian state being very detailed about the conflict between Vytautas and Jogaila and about the Christianization of the country. Moreover, it is in this work that one of the first accounts of the legend of the Roman origins of Lithuanians is inked.

Peter of Dusburg’s Chronicles of the Prussian Lands

Peter von Dusburg (died ca. 1327) was a chronicler of the Teutonic Knights probably from the Dutch village of Doesburg. Educated in Keln, he is known for writing the Chronicon terrae Prussiae, which describes the 13th and early 14th century Prussia and, marginally, the adjacent Lithuania and Samogitia. In 1324 he began working on his chronicle on behalf of Grand Master Werner von Orseln. Consequently, this work can be considered representative of the political view of the Order: it is the “official national history” of the Teutonic Knights. As such, it is a relation mirroring those of both the Lithuanian annals and Gediminas’ letters.

Historians have supposed it is an expanded revision of the now-lost work of a Latinist who had written about the campaigns of the early Prussian Crusade. That version was subsequently revised to include events up to 1330 based mainly on official documents preserved in Marienburg. Since the events from 1289 are very detailed, it has been supposed that the author moved to Prussia from that date. It is possible he wrote this chronicle in Marienburg at the residence of the Grand Master even though some scholars indicate Konigsberg as his residence.

The content and structure of the chronicle confirm that Peter von Dusburg had received a theological education. His work is rich in miracles and extraordinary events such as visions and apparitions. At the same time, it is evident the educative intentions of the author presented in the form of moralization and sermon-like passages. This religious teaching balances the political narration that was certainly imposed by his commissioner. However, more often the two dispositions tend to unite in a sort of apology of the Knights’ morality. This tendency is evident since the idealization of the Brothers in the first pages described as simple men committed to work carefully, not interested in secular activities and given to wearing simple clothes.
Many aspects make this chronicle a typical example of medieval religious chronicle. In several passages, von Dusburg tries to demonstrate the divine intervention in favour of the Brothers. Similarly, among crusaders, miracles and manifestation of the providence are frequent. The supposed successes of the Knights against the Baltic peoples are often connected with the wearing of the ensigns of Christ: “the Brothers, marked with the sign of the holy cross, with the help of Jesus Christ, successfully flooded a huge Lithuanian army”. This merging of religious and political tendencies of the author provides a sort of justification of the Knights’ deeds: every act they perform seems to be guided by the will of God and is, therefore, rightful. For analogous reasons Julius Caesar is mentioned as the first antagonist of the Prussians. The mention of the Roman general is intended to demonstrate that it wasn’t only the Teutonic Knights who were fighting against the Prussian pagans, but even the founder of the empire, guided by God’s will, had fought against them. He, like the Brothers, had not fought for his glory, but for God’s sake: “because this is not yours, it is God’s fight.”

Typical of medieval ecclesiastic historiography is also the structure of the whole work. As a matter of fact, the history of the Order is framed upon the scheme of the four monarchies of the prophet Daniel. Similarly most of the medieval universal histories adopted this scheme. Von Dusburg’s reference to Daniel’s prophecy is manifest in the preface to the work. Here, for example, using Daniel’s words, he compares the foundation of the Order to that of the Christ’s Church on rock-solid bases.

From the viewpoint of the subject matter, the third part of the chronicle is particularly interesting. Here alternative descriptions of the fight against Baltic tribes are provided quite diligently. They constitute a plausible integration to Lithuanian sources dealing with the opposition to the crusaders. In this section, the history of the Order falls into the background, while more attention is reserved to Prussian, Jotvingians, and Lithuanians down to the centre of Samogitia – the upper course of the Nevėžis and Nemunas rivers. In this respect, this chronicle has to be considered a precious source for the medieval political history (and partially social history) of the Western Baltic peoples.

From 1331, Nikolaus von Jeroschin translated von Dusburg’s chronicle into Middle High German on behalf of Grand Master
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Luther von Braunschweig. A later transcription (1781) confirmed various integrations by other compilers. The German manuscript preserved in Vilnius includes accounts of Vytautas’ reign and other integrations up to the late 15th century.

**Wigand of Marburg’s New Prussian Chronicle**

Wigand von Marburg’s chronicle is one of the few examples of rhymed prose chronicles dealing with Baltic lands and, marginally, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Proclaimer of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia, von Marburg expanded upon the earlier work of Nikolaus von Jeroschin. His *Chronica nova Prutenica* (1394) is about the history of the Muscovite Rus’, Prussian lands and parts of the adjoining lands belonging to the Baltic peoples: mainly Lithuania and Samogitia. It covers the period between 1293 and 1394.

Because of its sources (Nikolaus von Jeroschin and, indirectly, Peter von Dusburg) the account combines historical facts with legends, miracles, myths and even folk tales. Nevertheless, this historical work is interesting precisely because it preserves sources about the ancient Baltic mythology and folklore. From the point of view of the content, von Marburg’s chronicle is not always original. Most of the information provided is taken, as mentioned, from Jeroschin and Peter von Dusburg. Nevertheless, some passages reveal other sources and original accounts. Among its sources, the influence of the so-called *Chronicle of Oliva* (or *Annales expeditialis Prussici*) is evident, especially for events referring to neighbouring countries. Similarly, Hermann von Wartberge’s *chronicon Livoniae* was used to describe political events dealing with Livonia and Lithuania. This list of sources is not only representative of a sort of historical method, but also (and mainly) of the author’s intention to produce a Christian history of the northern crusades – a celebration of Teutonic Knights’ deeds.

The recourse to oral sources makes this work remarkable. Often introduced by expressions like “*audivi ab antiquis*” (I have heard from old people) are accounts of events either he himself took part in or he had heard about from trustworthy sources. Moreover, some of these passages preserve ancient Baltic folktales, thus they are precious sources for ethnographers and historians alike.
Notwithstanding these numerous sources, von Marburg was not a scrupulous historian. Nor was he interested in providing accurate or at least realistic accounts of the events. Rather, he preferred to have free recourse to fantasy and conceded himself the liberty of poets. From here generate the various chronological incongruences and mistakes. The author himself was probably conscious of these inaccuracies; however, he was much more interested in the poetical representation of the chivalry ethic rather than that of historical facts. In this respect, Wigand’s chronicle is different from that of Peter von Dusburg. While in both accounts the deeds of the Knights are always related to God’s will, the work of Wigand is permeated with chivalry ethic rather than religious fanaticism.

The decision to adopt the form of the rhymed prose is representative of von Marburg’s attitude toward history, ethics and the knighthood. The New Prussian Chronicle is manifestly a local variation of the 14th century admiration for the lifestyle and deeds of Christian knights usually sang by bards and literates all across Europe in verses or prose. From this point of view, similarities between his prose (about his compatriots’ deeds in “the pagan lands of Prussia and Lithuania”) and that of the father of English literature Geoffrey Chaucer’s are evident. Both the German and the English authors celebrate chivalric values and the fight against the pagans. This struggle was seen as a duty and the beginning of the path toward salvation. This interpretation emerges, in the same period, in many literary works. This is the case, as an example, of the historical accounts of Osvald von Wolkenstein and the poetry oeuvres of Peter Suchenwirt, which celebrate the crusades in Samogitia and Prussia.

Literary, as mentioned above, this is a precious example of rhymed prose history even if out of an estimated original length of 17000 lines, only about 500 have survived to the present day. Despite the loss, Wigand’s work has been preserved (almost intact) in a Latin translation ordered by the Polish chronicler Jan Długosz.

The Annals of Degučiai

Speaking about Lithuanian annals we had to admit they fall in the category of annals and chronicle only marginally because of both
the structure of the compilations and the writing style. Moreover, the formulation of historical problems and the connection of events based on this formulation are uncouth, yet perceivable.

For these reasons, the only piece of historical writing produced in Lithuania definable as a proper example of annalistic style is the so-called Degučių metraštis – also known as Chronografas, arba Kuršo ir Lietuvos metraštis (Chronographer, or the annals of Courland and Lithuania).

This is an original annalistic-style historical compilation about Lithuanian and Latvian Old Believers. It was probably transcribed in the monastery of Degučiai near Zarasai. It reports on relevant events for the Old Believers community of North and North-East Lithuania, Courland and, partially, Russia from 1652 to 1850. Structurally these annals are interesting for the combination of a partition by years and a quite unusual partition by region. In other words, a double partition – chronological and territorial – is adopted. According to the widespread tradition, in the margins of the manuscript dates are noted. Less common is the mention of the place or region the events described refer to. Consequently, the works appears to be very patchy. Nevertheless, a number of events are connected in a way that allows us to perceive the author’s intention to create a narrative continuity.

Stylistically these annals are the expression of a quite mature literary taste: firstly, among the narrated events, details about the literary production of the times are provided; secondly, texts in verses are interspersed between narrations in prose. Moreover, the inclusion of some direct speeches makes the narration more vivid. Finally, some passages assume the form of a novelette.

The context in which the annals were produced informed their content. They focus on the 17th century schism of the Russian Orthodox Church. The persecutions suffered by Old Believers are always reported with pathos. Their emigration in the lands of historical
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Lithuania and Courland is minutely described. Despite the lack of interest in civil and social events, in reading the account it is possible to perceive, in the background, the influence of political events especially if they had religious repercussions.

**Other Chronicles (for a History of the Historiography about Lithuania)**

Some measure of influence had been exerted, as mentioned above, in the early phases of the Lithuanian historiography by chronicles of the Rus’ principality like the so-called *Tale of Bygone Years*, the *Ipatiev chronicle*, and *the chronicle of Nestor*. In the *Galitsko-Volynskaia letopis* (*the Halician-Volynian chronicle* – also known as the *Ipatiev chronicle*), for example, abundant information is preserved about political events involving the Ancient Lithuanian State and Rus’ princes; accounts about Mindaugas and the unification of Lithuania. Similarly, the *Primary chronicle* (*Povest’ vremennykh let* or *Tale of Bygone Years*) provides interesting information about the formation of the Lithuanian state as seen from outside the state itself. The principalities of the Rus’ were particularly interested in (and worried about) the evolution of military and political activities among Samogitians, Yotvingians, Prussians and Lithuanians. Consequently, even in the *Chronicle of Nestor* – dealing almost exclusively with the early history of the Kievan Rus’ – it is possible to come across one of the first mentions of the name Lithuania. It is not uncommon to perceive the influence of all these chronicles in the 16th century transcriptions of the Lithuanian annals. These chronicles were used as sources for some passages – as an example, those referring to the prince Tajden. Similarly, it is certain the influence of the Prussian chronicle *Borussorum Origo ex Domino Christiano* on most Lithuanian and Belarusian annals: the Roman origins of the Balts and the account of Roman astronomers “sent to measure the land of the north” are certainly taken from the histories of the first Prussian Christian Bishop. In other cases, the influence of these accounts is more indirect as in the diffusion of the hagiographic taste for the narrations about the ferocity of the ancient emperors.

For the sake of coherence with the systematic approach announced in the introduction of this handbook, we opted for the enumeration of a number of other 14th to 16th century chronicles, which might be relevant
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as historical sources, but are of little or marginal interest for the history of Lithuanian historiography in itself. Nonetheless, useful might be their comparison with coeval Lithuanian chronicles. This is the case of the Laurentius Chronicle (Lietopis po lavrentievskomu spisku – 1377), which preserves unique transcriptions of now lost regional Rus’ chronicles and details about Lithuania’s expansion in this region.

Catholic chroniclers and annalists from outside Lithuania were particularly interested in the process of Christianisation of the country and, consequently, wrote a lot about the time of Mindaugas and Gediminas. Particularly, the intense epistolary activity of Grand Duke Gediminas stimulated the historical interest of chronographers from far away. Chronographers from Poland, Livonia, Prussia, and even Saxony and Switzerland narrated Lithuanian events. A comparison of the description of the events of 1323-1324 in these works and the letters of Gediminas could prove useful. In this respect, the Livonian Chronicles (13th-16th centuries) deserve a separate mention. Under this label are usually indicated several historical works in Latin and German produced in Livonia – nowadays Latvia and Estonia. Since these accounts have been written by Catholics, they mirror the political and ethical interpretation emerging from Lithuanian annals. Nevertheless, we can often find preserved here information, which cannot be located elsewhere: ancient religious customs of the Lithuanians; the accounts of Lithuanian military expeditions to Saaremaa; the plunder of Lithuania conducted by the Livonian order. The main chronicles included under the label “Livonian” are Henry the Latvian’s Chronicon Lyvoniae (about 1225) in Latin; two German rhymed chronicles (a first anonymous work of 1295 and its 14th century continuation by Bartholomew Hoenke); Hermann de Wartberge’s Latin Chronicon Livoniae (late 14th century); and Balthasar Russow’s Chronica der Provintz Lyffland (1577).

Other chronicles (marginally) dealing with the history of the Ancient Lithuanian State are: Annales expeditialis Prussici; Nikolaus von Jeroschin’s Di Kronike von Pruzinlant; the so-called Canonicus Sambiensis’ Epitome gestorum Prussiae; Dietmar von Lubeck’s Dietmar-Chronik; Johann von Winterthur’s Chronik; and the annals of Torun. Naturally, we want to mention the Annals of Quedlinburg where the name Lithuania appears for the first time in a written source. All of
these chronicles have been published and are relevant sources for the history of Lithuania. However, their importance is marginal for the history of history-writing in the region.

On the contrary, even if they do not properly belong in Lithuanian historiography, relevant for the later historiography of the state are the works of Polish professor of the Jagellonian University of Krakow Maciej Miechowita (1457-1523). His *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatis Europiana et Asiana et de contentis in eis* (1517) and *Chronica Polonorum* (1519-1521) influenced both the Lithuanian annalistic and the 16th century historical accounts. In particular the *Chronica* had certainly been used by the compiler of the Bychowiec Chronicle as demonstrated by several identical passages dealing with the reign of Alexander. We will refer to Maciej Miechowita in the drilldown section that tackles the concept of Sarmatism and in the last chapter: “the erudite historiography”.

III. 2. Official State Historiography

The label of Lithuanian Annals given to ancient chronicles produced in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is often ambiguous (as always when political categories are used to label literary works) especially for foreign students. These annals are known in Europe as the Belarusian annals; in Russia they are known as Western Russian annals; in Lithuania the label Lithuanian annals is used. On the one hand, they are written in Ruthenian chancellery language, that is, a language modelled on the Old Church Slavonic. On the other hand, the content clearly mirrors the official political ideology of the ancient Lithuanian state, that is, sometimes the position of the regents and Grand Dukes, sometimes, and especially in the more recent redactions, that of the noblemen.

Ancient Lithuanian state chronicles have been preserved in various fragmentary manuscripts included in wider compilations (collections). They also differ in length and organization of the contents. The original (lost) annals were produced during the 14th and 15th centuries in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and transcribed into more comprehensive chronicles during the late 15th and 16th centuries. Three major versions of the Lithuanian Chronicles
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have been preserved: the short compilation known also as *Chronicle of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania* (conserved in various collections of the 15th century); the larger *Chronicle of Lithuania and Samogitia* (compiled during the first half of the 16th century); and the most comprehensive version known as the *Bychowiec Chronicle*.

The label “annals” is inappropriate to define the structure of these works. It is possible to state that Ancient Lithuanian annals represent a form of sophisticated annalistic. In them, rarely is it possible to individuate the traditional yearly partition. On the contrary, greater attention is reserved to the cohesion of the narration. Attempts to relate events or to contextualize them confirm the maturity of the works. This sophistication can be attributed, in certain cases, to the later compilers of the collections. In other cases a more cohesive narrative form was preferred to the yearly partition to allow the writer to better transmit an idea. As a matter of fact, Ancient Lithuanian chronicles are a manifestation of the official state historiography and thus have to present the official interpretation of the events and justify them with explanations and logical (rational) structuring of the passages. Moreover, the chronological division in years is almost absent in various sections. Rather, narrative unities constitute the micro-structure of the annals.

With regards to the subjects described, clearly they are the ones relevant to the political interests of the regents mainly with regards to disputes with neighbouring countries. However, this general statement has to be clarified: the different redactions of the annals reflect changes in the state power balance. While the older annals are clearly the expression of the Grand Dukes’ vision, it is possible that the recent versions are more representative of the magnates’ positions. An analogous transition can be individuated in the passage from the Slavonic to the Latin tradition, which is manifest especially in the Christian perspective of the later compilations.

Linguistically these chronicles are mature literary works: the language is rich and slightly adorned by rhetorical figures. Technical turn of phrases typical of chancellery appear alongside classical *topoi* and images of the Christian tradition.

Finally, it is necessary to note that with the expression “Lithuanian annals” scholars often refer to the whole collection of the transcribed
texts, which include the *Chronicle of Smolensk* and the summary of the *Chronicle of Moscow* – usually attributed to the short collection.

**The Chronicle of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania**

The short compilation of the Lithuanian chronicle, known as the *Chronicle of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania* (*Letopis velikikh kniazei litovskikh*) is possibly the oldest of the Lithuanian chronicles. It was collected and transcribed, in its earliest form, in the middle of the 15th century in Smolensk. It is difficult to individuate, in the remaining transcriptions of this collection (the original was lost), which part constitutes the original nucleus and what was added later. The structure of the various transcriptions – in the chronicles of Suprasl, Avraamka, and Uvarov – radically differs. In the short collection, the part actually devoted to the Chronicle of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania is about one third of the whole text.

The date of the compilation of the collection – presumably the third decade of the 15th century – and the inclusion in it of the narrative passage known as the *origin of the Lithuanian peoples*, convinced many scholars it was a historical account commissioned by Grand Duke Vytautas himself (being in this passage a justification of his struggle against Jogaila and Skirgaila). This passage is a translation of a legal literary text produced at the time of Vytautas and possibly with his approval. In other words, this chronicle represents the political and ideological view of the Grand Duke himself – not that of the rising nobility.

A further confirmation of this fact comes from the independent fragment (usually regarded as a part of the short compilation) known as the *prise of Vytautas*. It is a literary piece embellished by rhetorical figures written (by the clerk Timofei of Smolensk upon bishop Gerasim’s request) to praise Vytautas political accomplishments. Similarly, representative of the political interest of the Lithuanian state are the passages dealing with the war between Sigismund (Žygimantas) Kęstutaitis and Švitrigaila and the one about Podolia. Clearly these accounts aim at justifying Lithuanian claims to this region in the conflict with Poland.

An almost opposite perspective on the political and military events described in these annals is preserved in the official Musco-
vite *Chronicle of Voskresensk* (*Voskresenskaia letopis*); in the *Chronicles of Polsk* (*Pskovskie letopisi*) – expression of Pskov’s struggle for independence; and the *Chronicles of Novgorod* (*Novgorodskie letopisi*). An intermediate position – between aspiration of independence and cooperation with the Ancient Lithuanian State against Muscovy – is held by the compilers of the *Chronicle of Tver’* (*Tverskaia letopis*).

**The Chronicle of Lithuania and Samogitia**

The *Letopisec velikogo kniazhestva litovskogo i zhomoitskogo* is a collection of historical accounts quite probably compiled during the first half of the 16th century. It is preserved in a number of later manuscripts from the 16th to the 17th century. From the literary point of view, it is less interesting than the larger *Chronicle of Bychowiec*, while from that of the “philosophy of history” it is very representative of a late-medieval conception influenced by the ecclesiastical tradition. The loosely annalistic external form is mirrored by contents organized according to the old biblical partition in four époques – the only variation being the adoption of the birth of Christ rather than the generation of Adam as a starting point for the chronicle.

The succession of the Roman imperators marks the structuring of the first part of these annals. With the empire of Nero, the events listed begin to include the history of Lithuania. Here, one of the first accounts of the *Legend of Palemon* is transcribed. According to this legend, a group of Roman nobles, guided by Palemon – a relative of the emperor himself – fled the territory to escape the brutality of Nero. Once they reached the territories of nowadays Lithuania, they funded a new community from which Lithuania originated. In this legendary style all the events up to the conflicts between Kęstutis, Algirdas and Jaunutis (about 1345) are narrated. Later events, dating from the sons of Gediminas, are structured and recounted according to a 15th century redaction of the so-called short compilation.

The subject matter of this chronicle reflects the growing interest for the safeguard of the infant Ancient Lithuanian States’ political, territorial and even social rights. In this respect, more than a manifest of the Grand Dukes’ policy, it is a revealing document about the political attitude of the new nobility.
In a literary sense, in the more recent compilations it is already perceivable the classical and pre-humanistic taste for personal stories – especially if seemingly influenced by some sort of transcendent will. This new attitude is evident in the legend of the founding of Vilnius by Gediminas, and in the narration of the encounter between Kęstutis and Birutė. It is not by chance that these two stories (and several other firstly attested to in these chronicles) inspired many exponents of 19th century Romanticism.

The Bychowiec Chronicle

The Bychowiec Chronicle is the longest collection of Lithuanian annals. It was integrated until the 16th century. The name is taken from the last known owner: a judge of the circumscription of Grodno – Alexandre Bychowiec. The collection is interesting not only (and not mainly) as a historical source, but also as an example of mature annalistic style. It is a merging of political publicist and literary styles. Precisely for this reason, and in conjunction with the complex understanding of the past exhibited by the compilers, this chronicle has been labelled with the word metraštis – annals – only because of the convention to define all 15th and 16th centuries Lithuanian historical works as “annals”. Even the structure of the texts is not annalistic: events are not always independent one from another, neither are they always presented in the form of short information connected with a date like, for example, in the Chronicle of Peter von Dusburg.

A copy of this chronicle was probably in the hands of the historian Maciej Stryjkowski as quite convincingly demonstrated by some similitudes with his Kronika. Nevertheless, Stryjkowski himself rightly criticised the structure of this chronicle. The absence of dates is noteworthy – a very unusual fact in the annalistic tradition. In the legendary part of the chronicle only four dates are mentioned. In the historical part (after 1377) only eights dates appear. Often, for pages after the mention of a date, the compilers prefer to use references as “next year”, “that same au-
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tumn”, etc. In some cases dates have been covered or removed by the compilers themselves. In some other cases, the month and day are indicated, but not the year. The chronicle results, therefore, in being difficult to read. Moreover, it is not divided into sections and no marginal or interlinear titles are used (as in some other works of that time) to indicate the beginning of a new subject. Only modern editions divide the chronicle in sections adding titles for each of them.

Analysing this chronicle as a historical work, it is enough to mention that the events narrated reach the early 16th century – 1506 – even if several historians have supposed the narration to continue until Sigismund II Augustus and Barbara Radziwiłł’s secret marriage. The fact that neither the beginning, nor the conclusions of the chronicle have been preserved is relevant. The collection reproduced by Teodor Narbutt (on which most of the later publications and translations are based) starts in the middle of a section narrating the fear of the Romans because of Attila’s invasion of Italy. Likewise, it ends with an incomplete narration of the military expedition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania against the Tatars in Crimea (1506).

It is not an entirely original work. Rather, it preserves the traits of a compilation as the short and the long ones. The whole chronicle deals almost exclusively with the history of Lithuania and fills some gaps evident in the long compilation. The events from the year 1446 to 1506 are very systematically described – one of the few original parts of these annals. Except for the original reinterpretation of the legend of Palemon (here set in the 5th century and connected with the descent in the empire of the king of the Huns, Attila), the addition of the lives of Mindaugas and his son Vaišvilkas, and few other, and less relevant, passages, all the accounts up to the conflicts between Vytautas and Jogaila are transcribed from the large collection. The events dealing with the period from the last two decades of the 14th century to the first half of the 15th are taken from the short compilation. In this respect, the compilers of this chronicle filled some relevant gaps evident in previous chronicles about the reign of Vytautas. A detailed description of the period 1405-1430 provides a comprehensive integration to the accounts of the short compilation.

Despite the merits of these additions and the very vivid account of the times of Alexander, as a historical source the Bychowiec Chroni-
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cle is not trustworthy. Even if the events related to the reign of Alexander are presented as “personally seen by the author”, several chronological mistakes and inaccuracies reveal the process of compilation and transcription from other (not preserved) accounts. However, one passage of this chronicle is revealing: a “History of the Grand Duke Alexander” is mentioned as the main source of the account. It is informative because it seems to be a confirmation of the existence of supposed Lithuanian annals – unfortunately not preserved.

Finally, we would like to stress the importance the compilers attribute to “having seen the facts” they narrate. In several occasions, they stress the recourse to sources they have personally read or seen (ut in sua videbis historia) or that they have personally took part in the events narrated. It is a significant testimony of a sort of profession of historical method and, at the same time, an evident influence of classical historiography from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Latin and Byzantine traditions.

From the literary point of view, the frequent recourse to direct speech is interesting. However, it was not an unusual practice. Even in juridical sentences and decrees it was not uncommon to report defendants’ replies by the means of a direct speech. In this historical account, direct speeches are among the few rhetorical tools adopted to make the narration more catching.

Of literary value, in this work, is the poetical and legendary description of Algirdas’ expedition to Moscow, which is not included in either the short or the long compilations. Similarly, the account known as the life of Vaišvilkas has great literary value. This learned passage in particular, because of its peculiar literary nature, will be covered in the next chapter in the section about hagiographies.

### Drilldown section 1: The Legend of Palemon as a Sanction of Cultural and Historiographic Transitions

When writing about Lithuanian annals we stated that they are written in the Old Slavonic language of chancelleries, that is the ancient Belarusian language. Nevertheless, we affirmed the content expresses the specific interests of the Lithuanian regents and nobles. This comes as no surprise since it is widely
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recognized that two elements shaped the Ancient Lithuanian State: on the one hand Slavonic culture and language, Lithuanian military and political power on the other. The political interests of the Lithuanian component are particularly evident in the so-called Legend of Palemon.

As mentioned before, several variants of this legend are preserved in the annals. Some texts connect the origin of the Lithuanian peoples with Emperor Nero’s relatives flee from Rome. Other, substitute Nero with Attila as symbols of violence and tyranny from which the founders of the Lithuanian state escaped. All of the variants insist Lithuanians are descendants of the Roman or, more precisely, of some courageous and virtuous Romans. According to the annals, Palemon had supposedly reached the shores of Samogitia and called that land Litva combining the words litus (seashore) and tuba (the musical instrument peoples used to play here). In these narrative passages, the cultural conflict (and to some extent the military ones) between the forming Grand Duchy and its neighbours clearly emerges. These pieces are, as a matter of fact, ideological and “propagandistic” manifests of the governing power.

Even more important, in the accounts about the legend of Palemon the dichotomy typical of the annals is manifest: the political ideology is informed with the Eastern Slavic tradition, while the form these ideas are presented in is partially influenced by the Western-Latin-Humanistic style. The transition from the Slavic to the Latin attitude can be summarized in the passage from the Letopisec to the Letopis, that is, from the oldest redactions of the annals to the most recent. The latter make evident a new conception of history opting to begin the account with the legendary origins of Lithuania from the Roman Palemon rather than with the death of Gediminas. The legend of Palemon sanctions the transition

Figure 8: Ulpiano Checa, Attila, the Scourge of God, 1915.
of the Ancient Lithuanian State’s Culture from the Eastern-Slavonic to the Classical.

Curiously, most of the classical characters mentioned in the Lithuanian annals have a negative connotation: the sparse information about them accessible in the region came from the Byzantine hagiographic tradition in which Roman and Seleucid Emperors were often depicted as persecutors. It is for this reason, for example, that in the manuscript of Suprasl, Andrew of Polock and Svetislav of Smolensk are likened to Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Julian the Apostate. Similarly, Nero and Herod are associated to the figure of the prince Trojden. The same interpretation of the Classical culture appears in the Letopis’ Halicko-Volynskaja and in the so-called Short Chronicle of Volynia. It is clear that these cultural influences involved an area much broader than the ancient nucleus of Lithuania and Ruthenia. We can note that all of these “tyrants” are mentioned in the annals not as persecutors of Christians, but only for their cruelty. It seems, the Latin (Medieval) hagiography had not exerted its influence yet.

While the stylistic influences are clear, it is necessary to investigate the ideological function of the legend of Palemon. Its oldest attestation is in the 10th of the 16th book of Jan Długosz’s Annales seu Cronicae Incliti Regni Poloniae (before 1480). Despite the positive tone of the Polish historian with reference to the Roman origin of the Lithuanians, scholars agree recognizing that hardly Długosz himself created this legend because of his “Polish patriotism”. It is much more realistic to believe this pseudo-historical legend was created by the governing forces in the Lithuanian nation for legitimistic purposes.

A legitimization of the state was much needed especially in the 15th century for two reasons. Firstly, in Poland and in Western Europe the barbarism of the Balts was proverbial. Authors like Enea Silvio Piccolomini and, later, even Augustinas Rotundus or Michalo Lituano contributed to the spread of this opinion. Secondly, both Prussians and Muscovites had recently claimed their Roman origins. Peter of Dusburg, basing the idea on the name of the Prussian city of Romow (from Rome) advanced
the notion of Roman origins for these Balts. Similarly, the account known as *Borussorum Origo* suggested a Roman origin for these Balts. Later, the Teutons tried to demonstrate the servile origins of Lithuanians mainly in the attempt to justify their aggressions. In the same period the Kievan Rus’ created its own legend (they too were not immune from the western literary influence): in the Primary Chronicle, the Roman origins of the Rurik Dynasty are expounded. This theory is proposed also in the letter of Spiridon Savva to Basil III and here it is clearly used to demonstrate the superiority of the princes of Moscow on the Lithuanian regents – the descendant of servants.

It is clear that the legend of Palemon was necessary for the political and territorial integrity of the Ancient Lithuanian State. It was necessary both to provide equality for the Lithuanians to their neighbours and to deny their claims for rightful military campaigns in this land.

### III. 3. Epistles

Dealing with Lithuanian proto-historiography it is also necessary to mention some epistolary bodies, which, especially in the Middle Ages, reported information and comments on coeval events and let us reconstruct the political life of the state and integrate both Lithuanian chronicles and neighbouring countries’ accounts. These epistolary reports are not only interesting as historical sources, but also because in most of the letters to foreign authorities, local regents tried to present their interpretation of recent and distant political, military and religious facts. We are referring, first of all, to the letters of Grand Duke Gediminas; to the letter of Algirdas; and those related to the political activity of Vytautas.

We believe it is not too rash to include letters in a historiographic catalogue. Besides, even in the 4th volume of Senoji Lietuvos Literatūra, annals and letters are interpreted as the first examples of literary works. All the more reasons to include them in the history of historiography as exemplifications of an official, bureaucratic, and political historiographic style.
**Gediminas’ Epistles**

The body is mainly made up of letters sent by Gediminas between 1322 and 1324. However, in it are traditionally included the reports of the papal legates to Vilnius (1324) and those of some his representative (1326). The political situation of the time – connected with the consolidation of territory, the occupation of Western Rus’, the adoption of the Christian faith and the conflict with the Teutonic Order – informs most of the letters. Particularly interesting are those texts in which emerges the attitude of the Grand Duke towards an international policy intended not only as conflicts but also in cooperation and diplomatic agreements (often with the mediation of the Holy See – of the Avignon Papacy) with neighbouring powers.

Among the most significant epistles, it is possible to mention the first letter of Gediminas to Pope John XXII (possibly 1322) in which a short history of Christianity in Lithuania (from the time of Mindau-gas to the reign of Vytenis) is presented. This text is a good example of legalistic propaganda against the Order being, at the same time, informative about political relation with Riga. It is also one of the few letters where traits of original style (irony) emerge. Also interesting is the letter to Lubeck, Stralsund, Bremen, Magdeburg, Cologne and cities as far as Rome (January the 25th 1323). According to the common practice of that time, the letter was sent to Riga where several copies were created and forwarded to other cities. The letter is an invitation to settlers, merchants, artisan, soldiers, farmers and their spiritual guides to come to Lithuania.

The collection also includes replies to the letters of Gediminas and other acts connected to his political and religious activities: the arrangements between the Duke of Polotsk and Livonia regarding trade; peace and commerce agreements between the Grand Duke and Livonia; a complaint to a notary in Riga about the aggressions of Livonians and Prussians against Lithuanians; the letters of the metropolitan bishop of All Rus’; the “contract of Vilnius”, etc. However, even the content of these letters is not very original since, quite often, standard phrases used in other similar texts are simply repeated by the scribes.

Stylistically, as already mentioned, it is difficult to define this collection as an expression of literature in its narrow sense, nor can we
number it among historiographical works. Therefore, we will just briefly refer to the comments reported in the Lithuanian edition of the collection – *Gedimino laiškai*. Gediminas’ letters are written down in Latin by a German scribe who transcribed what the translator of the Grand Duke was saying. The texts collected are copies of the originals and are preserved in various archives from Riga to Konigsberg. Because of the recourse to a translator and to a German scribe, the Latin of these letters is spurious and sometimes includes terms from the vocabulary of the scribe himself. Technical formulas are frequent not only in the opening and closing of the letters, but also in the body of the text. As commented in the Lithuanian edition of the letters, “they also reflect contemporary political cliché whose colour has faded to our eyes.” The same judgment applies to the other texts included in the collection. Most of them, even if written in German, Old Slavic, or even Greek, preserve the structures and technical formulas inherited from the classical antiquity.

**Vytautas’ Epistles**

We have to admit that the letters of Grand Duke Vytautas are only marginally relevant for the history of the Lithuanian historiography. Nevertheless, they are an interesting example of the epistolary literary genre, an important historical source and an illustrative object of analysis for diplomatic studies experts. Nevertheless, a specific group of these letters has exerted some sort of influence on later historical works.

Vytautas letters are usually divided into three (sometimes two) groups: letters in the narrow sense; acts written in the form of letters; and mixed style letters which deal with both juridical and non-juridical matters. The bureaucratic terminology and the political conception of facts together with the official state interpretation, evident in the public juridical letters, influenced the style of the early Lithuanian annalistic. Old Slavonic Lithuanian annals are very different from most of the Western European annals precisely because the religious attitude of the latter has been substituted by the regent’s “nationalist propaganda” in the former. It is very realistic to believe that Old Slavonic Lithuanian annals have been collected because of the regents’ political needs and it is equally valid to suppose the style and content of the official letters influenced that of the historical accounts.
With regards to the style of these letters, Rūta Čepaitė, Zenonas Ivinskis and other researchers stress both the recourse to standardized formulas and, at the same time, the emerging of an emotional tone. In particular the tone and the colourful descriptions of events permit us to get a glimpse of the feelings of the regent and his interpretation of those events. The inclusion of traditional components of discourse is also a sign of knowledge of oratory art: for example, the *captatio benevolentie* is frequent in the opening of the letters.

**Algirdas’ Greek Letter (as a conclusion)**

In conclusion, a Lithuanian letter in the Greek language deserves to be mentioned. It is Grand Duke Algirdas’ letter written, in 1371, to the Patriarch of Constantinople Philotheos Kokkinos (Philotheus I of Constantinople).

The content of this letter is very similar to those of Vytautas’ and Gediminas’: it reflects the official position of the regent with regards to the eastern part of the country and the bordering territories. Taking advantage of the inner conflicts destabilizing the Duchy of Muscovy and delineating Tatars political and military actions, the Grand Duke presents himself as the guardian of peace in the region. It is, in other words, a description and defence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the debate with the Duchy of Muscovy about the Metropolitan of the Oriental Church. Interestingly, in this letter and, generally, in the correspondence with the Patriarch are the digression about Lithuanian religious rituals made. In particular stands out the fact that Algirdas speaks about the Orthodox religion as something he is not involved in. At the same time, the Patriarch calls the Grand Duke and the Lithuanians “worshippers of fire” – as Michalo Litu anus, did in his historical and anthropological work. In this respect, the letter is relevant to reconstruct the religious situation of that time or to be compared with Lithuanian annals.
Linguistically and stylistically, the letter is an interesting example of formal style enriched by a colourful, zealous language. In this respect, it is an instance of the so-called Byzantine humanism of the first half of the 14th century. Noteworthy is the fact that it is precisely in the period Algirdas was writing this letter that this style found its best expressions in the epistolary genre. Obviously, most of the stylistic effects are expression of the copyist (who intended to submit an elegant letter written according to the Byzantine canon to the Patriarch), not of the Grand Duke’s. In other respects – the lack of artificial constructions, the estrangement from reality and concreteness, and the absence of biblical references – this letter is very specific of the Grand Duchy’s culture: it is a local reinterpretation of this transnational genre.

Nonetheless, it is exactly this merging of Byzantine, Classical (Latin), Old Slavic and Lithuanian traits that characterize early Lithuanian historiography in connection with the absence of an epic tradition and with marginal influence of ecclesiastic annals.

Tasks and discussions

1. List the different languages used in the early Lithuanian historical works. Can you see any relation between the language adopted for the drafting of an account and its content?

2. Have a look at the structure and graphical “layout” of the different redaction of the Lithuanian annals. Compare them with the structure of the Chronicle of Degučiai, those of Peter von Dusburg and Wigand of Marburg, and the modern histories of Lithuania (Kiaupa’s, for example). Is the structure of an account an index of the author’s idea of history?

3. Compare some of Gediminas letters to the Pope with Peter of Dusburg’s Chronicon terrae Prussiae. The two reports seems to reciprocally complement. In which respect? Why the Teutonic priest decided to use the expression “sicut aspis surda” referring to the Lithuanian regents?

4. In the same period when the legend of Palemon “elevated” Lithuanian origins, neighbouring countries were creating similar narrative of their past. The phenomenon is a European
one and western countries were not immune. As an example, France too was divulging the idea of it Greek origins. Can you enumerate similar cases in other countries or regions at that time? How to explain this wide-spread tendency? By which means and why were historians creating and telling these stories? Try to contextualize this practice in the coeval political and religious settings.

Literature

An erudite collection of researches about both Lithuanian annals and Grand Dukes’ letters recently appeared in the form of a collective volume, the 4th of the series Senoji Lietuvos literatūra: Metraščiai ir kunigaikščių laiškai, Vilnius, 1996.

The chronicle of Bychowiec has been translated in several languages. A plain and readable Lithuanian language edition is Kostas Korsakas et al. (eds), Lietuvos metraštis, Vilnius, 1971. It is useful especially for the detailed introduction of Rimantas Jasas. For the literature about other chronicles we remand to the English language articles “Chronicles, Lithuanian and Russian”, Encyclopedia Lituanica, vol., 1, Boston, 1970, p. 519-523; and “Chronicle, Livonian”, Encyclopedia Lituanica, vol., 1, Boston, 1970, p. 523-524. A comprehensive bibliography about Lithuanian annals can be found in Mečislovas Jučas, Lietuvos metraščiai, Vilnius, 1968 and Lietuvos metraščiai ir kronikos, Vilnius, 2002. Finally, one of the most complete English introductions to the Russian chronicles is S. Cross, The Russian Primary Chronicle, 1930.

Prussian and Latvian annals have been published in 19th century series: Scriptores rerum Prussicarum (in Leipzig) and Scriptores rerum Livonicarum (in Leipzig and Riga) respectively. Particularly interesting (even if sometimes invalidated by political conception, which should be extraneous to modern historiography) are the introduction to the editions of Lithuanian chronicles and annals published in the series of book “Lituanistinė biblioteka”. We are referring in particular to: Petras Dusburgietis, Prūsijos žemės kronika, Vilnius, 1985 and Vygaudas Marburgietis, Naujoji Prūsijos kronika, Vilnius, 1999. The latter has a particularly rich bibliography where many English, French and German texts are mentioned. One of these texts – Michael Burleigh, The Knights, Nationalists and the Historians: Images of Medieval Prussia from the
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Algirdas’ Greek letter has been studied almost exclusively by Lithuanians and the most recent one – Kristina Svarevičiūtė, “Lietuvos Didžiojo Kunigaikščio Algirdo graikiškas laiškas bizantijos epistolografijos kontekste”, Literatūra, 2011, 53 (3) – contains a rich bibliography.
IV. Universal Histories, Specula, and Hagiographies

The European historiographic tradition found itself at a crossroads when the classical interpretation of history undergone the influence of Christianity. With the rise of the linear (Christian) interpretation of time, the main interests of historians were not the political and civic events in themselves, nor were the events connected with the history of the Church. The Object of the historical narration was the battles and triumphs of the Truth.

Karl Löwith’s book *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* provides the perfect synthesis of the Christian “theory” of history. Löwith reminds his readers that while the Greeks described history as an endless repetition of events already happened, the Christians perceive in the flow of time the prophetic element: the future as it is offered to humanity by God. Thus, for Christianity, history is no more a stare toward a repeating past – a “permanent origin”, rather it is a “significant training” turned toward the future. Accordingly, history is a “prophetic creation” which deals with an object – the historical reflection – that does not aim to understand the past. On the contrary it works toward an unknown future already set by the faith in redemption.

However, this conception is radically different from the original Christian message. The same conclusion emerges in the reflection of Jacob Burckhardt about the history of humanity. Precisely, both scholars point out that the Christianity of the origins was in absolute contrast with the worldly values. It was independent and unconnected with the worldly community. The Christian faith was the announcement of redemption: it was an eschatological message in total discontinuity with the world.

While for the Christianity of the origins the divinity is transcendent and not involved in the human vicissitudes, from the 5th century theologians like Paulus Orosius (ca. 375-418) and St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) started seeing in the incarnation of God in the Christ the irruption of the transcendent in the immanent. In their view, Christ created a fracture in human history: the divine
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interfered with the secular giving humanity a message of redemption. History then becomes a defined object with a beginning (the creation) and an end (the Last Judgement). By consequence, history that was once an independent object became an integral part of the Christian message.

Consequently, Christian history becomes the history of the Truth and does not hold events to be matters of chance or fate. History is no more the lux veritatis of Cicero; rather it is interpreted as Vox Dei, that is, the narration of the manifestation of God. Similarly, human events are not seen anymore as the deities’ whims. Christian history is something defined which has its aims and rules and a rational principle: the providence. It is now the providence to decide the fate of empires and rulers to guide humanity toward the kingdom of God.

Analogously, the role of (Christian) historians and history transformed. They had to make evident the path of humanity toward salvation and educate people to live according to God’s rules in order to save their souls (and, in the case of regents, those of their subjects). This conception of history had three main consequences on historiography: firstly, it made history the maidservant of theology; secondly, it influenced the chronological structuration of historical works; thirdly, it influenced the content of the narrations imposing the transition from the history of events, battles and empires to the universal histories.

Speaking about the conception of time, it should be enough to indicate that while for the classical antiquity time was a circular (cyclic) structure, for the Christians this structure is linear: it has a beginning and an end. Consequently, history becomes the narration of the events from the creation to the advent of city of God. It is no more the history of empires. Rather, it is the history of creation – a universal history. As a matter of fact, one of the most popular ecclesiastic historiography genres was that of “universal histories” not intended in the classical manner (Ephorus’s, for example) as comprehensive accounts of their world, but according to the Augustinian idea of the tension toward the end of times (see, as an example, Otto von Freising’s Historia de duabus civitatibus). This conception of time and history is too often linked exclusively to the Middle Ages.
On the contrary, still at the end of the 17th century was it a common structure: Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet wrote his *Discours sur l’histoire universelle* in 1679.

Analogously, the historical method changed: it was no more necessary to have seen the facts in order to narrate them. History was not considered exclusively as contemporary history. Even (and especially) the Holy Writings were accepted and used as historical sources mainly because of their moral utility. The new educative (in a religious sense) function of historical accounts is evident in two historical genres: the *specula principum* and the *vitae sanctorum*. The *specula principum* – mirrors for the regents – are meant to educate kings, princes and regents to live a virtuous life. Usually, these works adopted a historical approach since they wanted to provide the readers with righteous examples from the past in order to show the successes of the providence and of those serving it. Quite often the *specula* were written on the occasion of the birth of a new prince. Similarly, educative rather than apologetic, were the intentions of the *vitae* – the historical reports about virtuous peoples’ lives. The preferred subject, in this case was the life of the saints (*vitae sanctorum*), which were, at the same time, biographies of the saints and handbooks for the education of the noblemen.

Lithuanian historiography offers very few examples of this kind of historical account. Ecclesiastic histories never flourished in the Grand Duchy because of political reasons. On the contrary, the ecclesiastical historiography about the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Samogitia, Livonia and Prussia is particularly rich. On the one hand, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) there was a very young and not rooted ecclesiastical tradition. On the other hand, the ecclesiastic approach was typical of the historians of the Teutonic and Livonian Orders – the historiography by which the knight legitimized their continuous aggressions against the Baltic peoples.

Nonetheless, it is possible to perceive the influence of the ecclesiastic historiography tradition in the earliest Lithuanian historical accounts too. We have already mentioned the *Halician-Volynian chronicle* and wish to mention it again in connection with the account of a comet – foretoken of misfortune – in the year 1605. The comet, according to the chronicler was announcing the aggressions
of the infidels. It is interesting that in the same passage a similar comet crossing the skies of Jerusalem at the time of Antioch and then again in the same city during the reigns of Nero and Constantine the Iconoclast is mentioned. Similarly, Julian the Apostate is mentioned in the Chronika Litovskaja i Žmojtskaja when the chronicles narrate the events of the year 1371. At that time, it is narrated, the Metropolitan Cyprian asked Prince Dmitrij to appease the Tatar Imperator Mamaj with gifts as Basil of Caesarea did with Julian the Apostate. Finally, in the same chronicle it is said that Dmitrij, preparing for the battle against Mamaj, appeals to the Holy Cross as Constantine did. All of these are obviously reminiscences of the ecclesiastic historiography and a further indicator of a cultural transition.

**The Life of Vaišvilkas**

In recent years, particular attention has been devoted to the ancient account about the life of Vaišvilkas, the son of the Lithuanian King Mindaugas and a Grand Duke himself (1264-1267). He was a Christian monk but also a knight. Consequently, he tried to maintain friendly relations with the Teutonic Knights and the Livonian Order. Medieval historians prize especially his decision to go back (in 1267) to a monastic life. His killing a year later made his life a perfect subject for religious educative accounts. As a matter of fact, the life of Vaišvilkas as reported in ancient texts is a peculiar case of the genre of *vitae*.

The life of Vaišvilkas is also helpful for the understanding of the characteristics and influences on the earliest Lithuanian literature. It is supposedly transcribed from the south-western Russian Hypatian codex – one of the two remaining manuscripts preserving the *Tale of Bygone Years* or *Nestor’s Chronicle*. The similarities and the style influences of Byzantine chronicles are numerous and consequently the account is literary very close to those of George Hamartolos. Like the stories of the monk of Constantinople, that about the son of King Mindaugas is an example of the Byzantine interest for edifying works able to attract the interest of the readers by means of the realistic (historical) subject rather than recurring to a rich, literary style.

The model of this specific literature is Symeon the Metaphrast’s lives of saints, as celebrated in the Rus’ chronicles, and the life of Vaišvilkas came out in strict observance of this style’s rules. Besides,
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the hagiographic subject of the knight-monk from the Byzantine world spread in the whole of medieval Europe and won peoples’ affection from Vilnius (iconic here is the Chapel of the Saints-Knights in Vilnius’ St. Peter and Paul church) to Spain (renowned is the life of soldier-clerk Ignatius of Loyola).

Stanisław Sarnicki’s Annals, or About the Deeds of Polish and Lithuanians in Eight books

The Annales, sive De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum et Lithanorum libri octo were published for the first time in Krakow in 1587. The Calvinist confession clearly affected Sarnicki’s historical production both from the point of view of the perception of the philosophy of history and the structure of the works itself.

Sarnicki states immediately that his chronicle aims at filling the gaps left by previous works and states that he has compiled various histories of other authors. In particular, the author claims he will present the history of the deeds of Polish and Lithuanians according to a chronological order starting from Asarmoth, the biblical ancestor of Sabeans (mentioned here as progenitor of Sarmatians) up to Lech, the legendary founder of Poland. It is clear that this approach is based on the biblical division of history.

As it was typical for Protestant historians of that time, his account begins with the generation of humankind – more precisely, here Adam has been substituted by Asarmoth – and finishes with the events of the time of the author. Even more explicitly in the preface of his work, Sarnicki makes reference to the history before the deeds of Lech as the times of the four monarchies. The links to classical authors are detailed in the same preface where, among the sources of the work, are listed Jewish, Chaldean, Egyptian and Latin historians (authors representative of the four kingdoms). Beside Herodotus, Xenophon and Thucydides religious sources are mentioned: Berosus, the Holy Writings and even the account of ancient poets such as Homer and Vergil.

This history has two evident aims. Firstly, it wants to celebrate the noble origins of the Sarmatians and their deeds. Secondly, and most importantly, it wants to expound the reasons behind the rise and fall of the empires and the progress of humankind. The attention
to the origin combined with the idea of the progress of humankind toward a goal is a typically Christian interpretation of history. The combination of these two elements emerges in the first argument in favour of the noble origins of Sarmatians: here the main source of historical account is the book of Genesis. Moreover, the chapters are divided according to biblical events: the times of Jacob, the times of Nabuchodonosor etc.

As a Calvinist and historian, Sarnicki was obviously interested in the political and religious events of his time. Consequently, in his history the apology of Sarmatians is specular to the denigration of the barbarians (non-Christian). At the same time the local political events – that of the recently established Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – influenced the author’s intentions writing of history. In demonstrating the noble origins of the magnates he was supporting their claims for the implementation of the laws meant to limit the power of the regent, impose religious tolerance and, implement the so-called executionism (see chapter eight’s drilldown section).

**Drilldown section 2: Daniel’s Four Kingdoms: the Ecclesiastic Partition of History**

Most religious historical accounts were characterized, at least until the 18th century, but mainly during the Middle Ages, by a peculiar chronological partition. They used to begin either with the creation of the world (or that of Adam) and proceed arranging the events according to a four-period timeline. These histories usually concluded with the fall of the Roman Empire or with the announcement of its imminent ending. This very common structure derived from Daniel’s prophecy about the “four kingdoms” (in the second chapter of Daniel’s book of the Hebrew Bible). Histories adopting this chronological structur-
ing often bear the name of universal histories. This biblical exposition of human history is based on the prophet Daniel’s interpretation of Nabuchodonosor’s dream.

The Neo-Babylonian king, once constituted the largest empire ever, had a dream, but instead of asking his diviners to interpret it, he wanted them to guess the content of the dream first. Only the prophet Daniel was able to tell him the dream after a nocturnal vision sent him by God. In his dream the king observed an enormous, radiant and terrible statue. The statue’s head was made of gold, his chest and arms were made of silver, his stomach and thighs were of bronze, the legs were made of iron, while the feet were made of iron and clay. While the king was watching, a rock fell from the mountain banging the statue’s feet and crushing them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed too while the rock transformed in a huge mountain. Finally, Daniel interpreted the dream: “you are the king of the kings. […] After yours a new but inferior kingdom will rise; then a third, that of bronze, which will dominate on the whole hearth. Then a fourth kingdom strong as iron will crush and smash everything. Iron and clay together means that a part of this kingdom will be strong, the other weak. At the end God will impose his kingdom – the only one that will never be destroyed.”

This prophecy has been the object of various, mainly historicist, interpretations. The most common interpretation sees in the golden head the Neo-Babylonian Empire; accordingly, silver represents the Medo-Persian Empire while bronze stands for the Macedonian Empire of Alexander. The Roman Empire is of course represented by the iron parts of the statue and is a composite structure as the mixture of iron and clay. The stone is a representation of the kingdom of God coming after the fall of the Roman Empire.

This interpretation has been clearly expounded by St. Jerome (347-420) who theorized the symbolism of the four monarchies as reported above. This structure was adopted by ecclesiastic historians in particular, but not only, during the
Middle Ages together with other eschatological interpretation of time – the three eras of Augustine of Hippo, as an example. The theory behind this schematization is usually known as *translation imperii*.

This scheme, oriented toward the ultimate reality, flourished among Protestant reformers. Their millenaristic conception of time fitted the adoption of these theories even centuries after their first implementation. Until the 16th century it assumed the form of *universal histories* like Johan Carion’s *Chronicles* (based on both the four kingdoms and the three era’s structure) or the very representative *History of the Four Empires* published in the second half of the century by Johann Sleidan. In this work, the quadripartition is presented as a well-grounded historical theory where the Protestant tone of apocalyptic decline is evident. Even later Reformers, and particularly Anglicans, made frequent reference to these theories in religious, philological and even historical works. Only Jean Bodin’s reflections about the historical method (1566) questioned the validity of this historical paradigm.

With reference to the historiography of Lithuania, it is difficult to individuate oeuvres based on this structure especially because ecclesiastic historiography played a marginal role in the formation of its national historiography. Much more perceivable is this eschatological perspective in the chroniclers of the Teutonic Order like, for example, Peter of Dusburg. Openly based on the idea of the four monarchies was also Stanisław Sarnicki’s *Annals, or about the deeds of Polish and Lithuanians in Eight books*.

*Nicolaus Hussovianus’ Life and Deeds of St. Hyacinth*

Hussovianus’s *De vita et gestis Divi Hyacinthi* (1525) is a representative, even if short and isolated, example of humanist-style hagiographical work. The 1523 canonization of Hyacinth and his marked individualistic attitude stroke the author’s imagination and his fervent religious attitudes combined with his refined taste for humanistic style. The
result is a composition respecting all the canons of the hagiography: the similarities between the life of the Dominican Saint depicted by the Lithuanian author and that of St. Dominic himself as represented in Jacobus de Voragine’s Golden Legend are striking.

Once again, as in the poem about the bison, Hussovianus used the main subject announced in the title of his work to deal with questions more critical: in this case the dangerous spread of the reformation and Lithuanians persistent paganism. From this point of view, this hagiography peculiarly descends into the polemical style and estranges itself from the “canonical” humanist hagiography.

*Gregorius Svencicius’ Life of Saint Casimir*

A typical example of medieval ecclesiastic hagiographic style is Gregorius Svencicius’ *Theatrum S. Casimiri, in quo ipsius prosapia, vita, miracula, et illustris pompain solemni eiusdem apotheoseos instauratio*ne (Vilnius, 1604). The Archdeacon of Vilnius (but the authorship of this work has been contested) expressed with this title his intention not only to report about the life of the Saint, but especially about his miracles and other evidence of his holiness.

Obviously, the whole account is rich with historical details about the life of St. Casimir. Detailed, for example, is the genealogy of his family. Nonetheless, the holiness of the “hero” and the divine intervention invalidates the efforts to produce an erudite historical account. Frequently the life of the saint is extended chronologically to include events occurred after his death in order to attribute Casimir supernatural actions. Writing about the war with the Muscovites, Svencicius attributes the 1518 victory of Polock to the intervention of the saint.

*Piotr Skarga’s Lives of the Saints*

The Jesuits’ interpretation of education is somewhat peculiar. Their hagiographies were original in an analogous manner. Illustrative of this is the *Żywoty świętych* (more than twenty editions) of the first rector of the University of Vilnius, Piotr Skarga. Despite the editorial success of the book of the “herald of the Counter-Reformation”, most scholars defined it, adhering to the traditional definition of Jesuit historiography, as a mechanical transcription of the work of Laurentius Surius and Luigi Lippomano. However, recent studies about the
sources of the *Lives of the Saints* pointed out several relevant discrepancies between this work and its sources.

Clearly, Skarga had elaborated strategies for the selection and transformation of the sources. The *Żywoty świętych* is now represented as an original interpretation of the European hagiographic tradition rather than a simple translation. While it is true that Skarga wrote the book in order to suit the taste of the Polish readers with particular attention to the heterodox and Protestant challenges, it is equally true that in adapting his sources he demonstrated a critical sense similar to that of Jean Bolland and his followers. It has been noted that the Jesuit historian Antonio Possevino, commenting on the “innocent and prudent censures” implemented by Skarga, indirectly confirmed the aim of the selection and rewriting of the sources: the *Żywoty świętych* is particularly careful in matters of customs and morality. It is clear that the Polish Jesuits wanted to offer a portrait of the Christian Saints comparable to the strict morality of the Protestants in terms of virtues, both political and religious. The censure of Skarga was not against the pagan tradition that was the background of the lives of the Saints. The censure was against the mixture of pagan models and Reformation ideologies. As an example, Skarga, like Jan Dymitr Solikowski uses examples from the Roman period of virgins who killed themselves so as not to lose their virginity as opposed to some pagan matrons like Lucretia. These anecdotes are used in the text not to criticize the pagan costumes but simply because of the function of the rhetorical structure of the contrast. It is an example used to prize the morality of the Christians rather than criticize that of the pagan.

With regards to the method, it is possible to note in Skarga the same maturity of the Bollandists: the life of the saints had been expurgated from unbelievable miracles if these were useless in terms of educative purposes. Similarly, the biographies of the saints do not preserve the medieval taste for the fantastic and supernatural intervention in human life.
Albert Wijuk Kojałowicz’s Life of Laurentius Bartilius

De vita et moribus, R. P. Laurentii Bartilii Societate Iesu, liber unicus (Vilnius, 1605) is another example of the Jesuits’ biographical style, that is, a life modelled on Bollandist’s Lifes of the Saints. This life of the Jesuit provincial was written with the clear intention to provide the readers with an educative example of life “lived in accomplishment with the requirements of the monastic life”.

The whole work has a hagiographic tone and the holiness of the Jesuit Father is always the centre of the narration. Nonetheless, Kojałowicz also wants to convince the reader that this account is real, precise and well grounded. Accordingly, he quotes several original sources on which the account is based. Most remarkably, Bartilius’ autobiography Psalmus Vitalis, compendium vitae complectens is used.

This attitude toward sources and composition of the texts is typical of Jesuit historiography: even writing a sort of hagiography, they stressed the importance of the verisimilitude of the account; used as many original sources as possible; and represented the life of the saint as a model of moral virtues rather than enrich it with miracles in the ecclesiastic historiography manner.

Tasks and discussions

1. The title of a historical work, if not later attributed by commentators or editors, is much more revealing then it might seem. What kind of account would you expect from a “universal history” in terms of structure, subjects, and method?
2. Is there an ideological reason for writing a national history rather than a universal history?
3. Compare one of Piotr Skarga’s biography of Saints, one of Bollandists’, and the Life of Saint Casimir by Gregorius Svencicius. Are there common narrative patterns and cliché? Compare these works with some other Medieval hagiographies like those of Jacobus de Vragine. Is it possible to trace an evolution of the genre? In which sense?
Literature

Most of the 16th and 17th centuries works commented in this handbook are available online. Scanned electronic copies of them have been recently collected in online catalogues. The most useful electronic collections, for those studying the Lithuanian historiography are: the Lithuanian electronic archive epaveldas.lt and the Polish online archive Bibliotka Literatury Staropolskiej i Nowołacińskiej (BLSN) – neolatina.bj.uj.edu.pl. The collections of E-rara are a good source for French, German and Italian Renaissance histories of Lithuania; the collections can be found at http://www.lle.lt/. The richest virtual library online is WorldCat – http://www.worldcat.org/ and a number of ancient Polish-Lithuanian historical account are preserved here as electronic texts.

The most valuable introductions to the history of historiography dealing in particular with ecclesiastic historiography of Middle Ages and Renaissance are Federico Chabod, Lezioni di metodo storico, [lessons of historical method], Bari, 1985. This text, as far as we know, has not been translated into English. Even if still based on traditional chronological partitions, illustrating is Benedetto Croce, Theory and history of Historiography, London, 1921.

To get an idea of the literary (including historiographic) production of Renaissance Lithuania, some bibliographic catalogues can be used. Just as a very generic and partial introduction for English readers should be enough Adam and Filomena Kantauskas, A Lithuanian Bibliography, Edmonton, 1975. In this catalogue might be interesting the entries 1167-1177 about ancient travel reports by foreign travellers. The entries 4537-4566 list a series of critical works about the history of Lithuanian historiography. Biržiška Vaclovas, Aleksandrynas; senųjų lietuvių rašiusių prieš 1865 metus, biografijos, bibliografijos ir biobibliografijos, Chicago, 3 vol., 1960-65. A very good English study on Lithuanian historiography is Alfred Senn, “A contribution to Lithuanian historiography” in Studi Baltici, 1 (9), 1952, p. 107-120. With regard to the oldest Lithuanian language accounts, reports and histories the best catalogue is Lietuvos TSR Bibliografija, serija A, vol. 1, Vilnius, 1969.
V. The Ethnographic Historiography

Both Old Slavonic Lithuanian annals and the Grand Dukes letters can be considered examples of political historiography. They represent the most fruitful historiographic “genre” in the region. It is precisely because of these rich backgrounds (and sources) dealing with history as the history of political (military, administrative, diplomatic, etc.) events, in conjunction with the lack of religious-oriented chronicles (at least until the late 18th century), that Lithuanian historiography even nowadays is mainly a political historiography: it is much closer to the evenemential history than to the history of long lasting phenomena. However, between these two extreme conceptions of history there are many more. For example, we have already acquainted ourselves with history as natural histories – a perspective able to combine different fields of study as zoology, ethics and political history.

Similarly, a trans-disciplinary approach was Herodotus’ (ca. 484-425 BC) conception of historical research. In his Histories, the Greek-Persian conflict is the central thread of the narration. Nevertheless, his accounts deal with a geographic illustration of different Mediterranean countries and describe the habits and costumes of many people, revealing a great interest in ethnographic aspects. Despite not being the first to write in such a manner (see Homer’s Iliad) Herodotus has been called “the father of history” specifically because his original understanding of history and working method. Specifically, Herodotus was able to formulate a historical problem: he wanted to investigate the causes of the war and the connections between its different phases and the various people involved. As we mentioned in the introduction, it is precisely the capability to formulate a historical problem that is the criterion when distinguishing historical and non-historical works. Moreover, he stressed the importance of the investigation in historical research and for this reason he travelled to far-away countries. He went to the Persian Empire, Egypt, Babylon, Mesopotamia, and even to the land of the Scythians.

A comparable ethnographic inclination is evident in Tacitus’ Germania. The works and ideology of this Latin historian (56-117) are rel-
evant to Lithuanian historiography for a variety of reasons. Not only was he among the first historians to mention and describe the Baltic tribes. His attitude towards history was also influential in promoting interest towards different cultures, habits, languages and customs – a tendency from which a new form of ethnographic historiography developed. Finally his political ideology (and its reinterpretation) is perceivable in some works of the 15\textsuperscript{th}-16\textsuperscript{th} centuries in the form of the so-called Tacitism.

In the 45\textsuperscript{th} part of Germania, written in AD 98, after the campaign of Trajan, are mentioned for the first time in a historical source the Aestiorum gentes, which could probably be identified with the Balts. Writing about them, the historian says they are living by the Suebian Sea. He goes on to explain that they behave like the ancient Germanic tribe of the Suebi and have the same customs and habit. He specifies that their languages differ since the Aesti use a language similar to that of the Britons. Tacitus is also interested in their religion and reports on their adoration for the “Mother of God” and their habit of carrying amulets. Finally, his approach can sometimes be defined as comparative: as an example, he writes that the Aesti are more ready and willing in agriculture and differ from other German tribes because they collect amber.

This “comparative” attitude has a two-fold function in the historical accounts of Tacitus: on the one hand, it is an expression of interest in the different civilizations the Empire came across when it was expanding its borders; on the other hand, it is a pretext to reflect on the internal political situation (the best form of government, the legitimacy of the regents in power, etc.), morality, education and the behaviour of the Romans themselves. These sorts of interests emerge in most ethnographic-historiographic works from the classical period up until nowadays. Lithuanian historiography and the historiography about Lithuania are no exceptions. The finality of moral and political evaluation of his own country is evident, as an example, in Michalo Lituanus’s account of the habits of the Tatars, Lithuanians and Muscovites. An occasion of reflection on his land is also Simonas Daukantas’ study of the habits of the ancient Samogitians, Lithuanians and Highlanders. The two accounts are, however, very different in their finalities: Lituanus aims at differentiating the barbarism
of the Tatars from the civilization of the Christians; Daukantas aimed at demonstrating the common origins of the “Indo-European family” as is typical for the scientists of the early 19th century.

Despite the similarities with the works of Tacitus, it is clear that in Daukantas’ *Manners* emerges a very different vision of the world. Clearly the times had changed. Since the end of the 15th century new forms of production, the development of cities, geographical discoveries and commercial relations with far-away regions drastically changed Europeans perception of the world. The ancient schematicism focused on the succession of the empires and the medieval theological frame was not fit for historical accounts anymore.

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**Drilldown section 3: The 17th Century Reinterpretation of Tacitus: Tacitism**

Publius Cornelius Tacitus (AD 57-AD 120) was a senator and historian of the Roman Empire. He wrote his historical, political and ethnographic works during the despotic ruling of Trajan. Tacitus never openly opposed the despotism of the emperor, but never bowed to the emperor’s oppression. Even though not being a dissident, he always supported the freedom of speech.

According to Tacitus, the limitation of the freedom of speech was connected with the introduction of Augustus’ laws and especially with the lese-majesty laws (*Lex Iulia maiestatis*). As a matter of fact, before the approbation of that law, it was possible to punish someone for lese-majesty only basing on his actions, not on thoughts or speeches. Since the time of Augustus, even an opinion contrary to the consuls might have lead to imprisonment. Tacitus opposed this situation, but, at the same time, was conscious of the limits of a democratic regime. Consequently, his whole literary and historical production is pervaded by this duality: the intolerance for the despotism and the consciousness of democracy being an unsuitable form of government for the Roman Empire.
This dualistic attitude was later adopted by humanists and historians of the Renaissance. They had recourse to it in order to contest or support the new conceptions of political power in a period when the Church was attentively observing (and in certain cases censuring) the development of the debate. Especially in their dealing with Giovanni Botero’s theories about national interest they tended to reproduce Tacitus’s ambiguous manner. The capability of the Roman historian to conceal his political view and, at the same time, to express his opposition to the despotism was regarded as a very good example by some 17th century’s historians. They, like the Roman historian, criticized the tyranny of some regents but, not daring to do it openly, preferred to use a more subtle tactic: by commenting on the works of Tacitus, they had the opportunity to express a dual or concealed opinion about the contemporary political situation.

The flourishing tradition of Tacitean studies quickly developed into the Tacitism of the Counter-Reformation period. Hidden behind the fictitious label of Tacitean studies, historians and philosopher discussed the theories of Machiavelli and national interest – subjects usually considered immoral and subversive. Initially, these scholars in commenting on Tacitus works had the possibility to discuss the 17th century’s institutions and often in the same ambiguous manner, as the Roman historian. They too often concluded that a monarchy is a despotic form of government, but it is the only form of government guarding against the possibility of not falling into anarchy and particularly into moral anarchy.

From the point of view of the subject matter, rarely is the political situation analysed. Similarly, rarely are political theories expounded. In the same manner as Tacitus, 17th century historians prefer to adopt such rhetorical tools as irony to describe the submissiveness to the political power in matters of personal freedom. However, most of these historians see in the regents the real guardians of morality and civil virtues.

The ambivalent interpretation of Tacitus works and, in turn, of his political ideology, allowed both supporters of the
despotic authority and its opponents to elevate Cornelius Tacitus to their model and use Tacitean studies to support their doctrines. For this reason, in the first scholarly definition of Tacitism (Giuseppe Toffanin, *Machiavelli e il tacitismo*, 1921) two “Tacitist” groups were individuated: the so-called “Black Tacitists” and the “Red Tacitists” – respectively, the supporters and opponents of despotism.

That of Tacitism is an interesting phenomenon also for those studying the historiography of Lithuania before the advent of modern historiography. The studies or references to Tacitus’ *Annals* and *Histories* were very frequent among 17th century Polish and Lithuanian historians. Here the debate about the best form of government was not only a topic for philosophical discussions. Rather, it was a real political problem. Moreover, the tension between the ambitions of the Grand Dukes and Kings and those of Sejm, Szlachta and the higher nobility induced many literates to align with the supporters of individual civil rights – the noblemen – in (concealed) opposition to the regents.

For example, Albert Wijuk Kojałowicz’s position towards the monarchy and regents is ambiguous. Being a Jesuit and a Christian of the 17th century, he is expected to present, in his Latin history of Lithuania, the pagan Dukes in a negative manner and the Teutons and the Christian Dukes with approbation. However, in more than one passage scholars have noticed criticism of the deeds of the Teutonic Knights and even for some Christian Dukes. Mindaugas is criticized even though it was he who introduced Christianity to Lithuania. His fault, according to the author, is his ambition to be crowned king and the consequent utilitarian interpretation of the conversion. Even the Teutons are condemned. They are condemned for disrupting the unity of the Christian Europe attaching the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with the pretext of Christianisation (claiming the Duchy had only been partially converted). Conversely, Kojałowicz describes in a positive manner some pagan Grand Dukes due to their high moral values. Finally, in
other passages (the speech of the King of Alans to his people, as an example), the Jesuit seems to support the unity of every kingdom under the power of a single and absolute king.

These kinds of ambiguities can be considered as forms of Tacitism in its more general sense of concealed criticism of the current political situation or to the existing governing forces. Moreover, with reference to Kojałowicz’s history, these equivocal pronouncements should be understood as comments or reflections on coeval political theories. In a period when state interest had been elevated above moral principles and the ideas of good and bad, Jesuits were trying to spread an opposite interpretation of power: only a moral and virtuous king deserves to reign whether he was Christian or pagan. On the contrary, the immoral rulers, according to this principle, can be deposed of and even assassinated for the common good.

Kojałowicz’s Tacitism consists exactly of the divulgation of these unorthodox ideas by means of a concealed disputation about the regents of the ancient Grand Duchy.

**Michalo Lituanus’ About the habits of Tatars, Lithuanians and Muscovites**

As Juozas Jurginis appropriately wrote, commenting on *De moribus Tartarorum, Lituanorum et Moscorum* (ca. 1550), the intention of Michalo Lituanus was first of all to make the Grand Dukes reflect on the political, moral and religious situation in their country. In this respect the account is more a chance of auto-critic than a handbook to get other people acquainted with these people. The educative intentions of this account emerge in the comment about aspects of other people’s good and bad manners. The comparative approach is meant to underline the good and the bad of all cultures in order to provide the regents with examples and reflections on the best possible government and life models. In this respect, this treatise can be considered a variation of the genre of the *Specula Principis* – a sort of handbook for the (political or moral) education of the regents.

His capability of manipulating the language and the style of his account demonstrates on the one hand that Michalo Lituanus had been educated as a humanist; on the other hand makes even more
evident his intention to stress the negative results of immoral conduct or the dangers hidden under bad behaviours. The author uses particular linguistic techniques to stress his opinion in this respect or to provide colourful descriptions of the bad customs.

It is interesting to note the critical tone the author uses when writing about the spread of monasteries and the great power of the clergymen. This position makes clear that Lituanus was closer to the position of the magnates of his country than other intellectuals of the period. However, a critical stance is directed towards the magnates too: they give lands and resources to these monasteries without making sure whether they are carrying out their spiritual duties or not. According to the historian, this was an inefficient management of the resources and might have led to disastrous consequences. The main cause of decay is, according to him, the fact that uneducated and unprepared personages want to rule the nation. The contrast is made evident by the example of the Tatars: here, during a trial, unreliable and uneducated witnesses are not admitted to testify and “this is the reason why the cases are solved faster.”

The same critical attitude is expressed towards taxation, military recruitment and the juridical systems of his own country. In all of these fields, the investigation of other populations’ habits, customs and laws always has the function of initiating a reflection on the internal situation. Particularly with reference to the proposed reform of the juridical system, it is evident that the influence of the coeval ideology: the opposition to the division of the society into classes and the support for equal juridical rights. In this respect, Tatars are taken as a model and are not criticized for being infidels as in the works of religious authors.

Tatars and the classical antiquity are taken as positive models because of their respect for the ancient traditions and habits. The histories of the origins of these ancient people are detailed and always
connected with classical antiquity. That of the Tatars is the most comprehensive possibly because they were the least known of the three people described. They are considered the heirs of the great Scythians and praised for their military deeds against ancient heroes such as Alexander or Xerxes.

When the relation moves toward contemporary events, and particularly in the description of the modern habits of the people, the author stresses the fact he has personally seen what he is narrating. The frequent use of expressions like “we have seen” reveal the author’s methodological care: even though his main interest is to educate the reader, he wants the readers themselves to believe the accounts are true and reliable, that is – to be historical in the etymological sense.

*Simonas Daukantas’ The Manners of the ancient Lithuanians, Highlanders and Samogitians*

Not only chronologically, but also, and mainly, from the point of view of the philosophy of history presented in his *Būdas senovės lietuvių kalnėnų ir žemaičių* (published in 1822), Simonas Daukantas is much more modern than most of the authors grouped in this section. His comparative attitude is not intended to demonstrate the path humanity is covering toward the end of times like it is for the Christian, and especially Protestant historians. Neither is he trying to demonstrate the barbarism of neighbouring countries. Daukantas’ philosophy of history is based on the idea that everything changes: nothing in the world is given forever, but this should not be understood in a Christian way.

From the pages of his historical-ethnographic work clearly emerges the idea that two forces are shaping the world: nature and man. Precisely because of this peculiar interpretation – but, at the same time, sometimes evident in early 19th century – *the Manners* can be interpreted as a merging natural histories and humanist historiography holding in high regard the human virtue. However, in Daukantas’ view, nature is certainly the dominant shaping force. The history of humanity is therefore understood as the bidirectional interaction between nature and man.

Obviously, the interest toward the role of nature in human history is in great measure the result of both new scientific discoveries and the theory of the *natural human*. When this account was inked, pa-
laeontology was taking its first steps with the discoveries of the biggest fossils and the formulation of the idea of dinosaurs living on the earth before man. Daukantas is fully aware of these discoveries and wants his work to be connected with them from the introduction. In the Būdas it is even possible to perceive a sort of evolutionistic interpretation of natural phenomena and history.

Similarly, the theories on the social contract and the natural human are clearly perceivable in this work, especially in the passages stressing the connection between the ways the society has transformed in the various part of the Indo-European area. According to Daukantas’ interpretation, even the political and legal structures of the state are determined (to some extent) by the natural configuration of the territory. It is not by chance that he often refers to geographical or naturalistic works: Georg Christoph Pisanski’s naturalistic commentary and Friedrich Samuel Bock’ natural history of Prussia greatly influenced the first part of Daukantas book, which is entirely devoted to the description of the territory.

However, the Būdas remains a mainly ethnographical work and this fact, in the early 19th century, meant first of all being a research on origins and specifically about common Indo-European origins. The whole book is an investigation of universal customs of the three ethnic groups of Samogitians, Lithuanians and Highlanders and of the common “Indian” origin of these customs. It is for this reason that Daukantas had recourse to historical-ethnographic studies like those of Herodotus. Even the parts of the book dealing with state policy, commerce and military art are presented more as studies on the habit rather than a relation about events.

**Johannes Łasicki’s Concerning the Gods of Samogitians, other Sarmatians and false Christians**

Jan (Johannes) Łasicki is mainly known as a historian for his eight-volume History and Deeds of the Bohemian Brethren and for several other works about coeval events like the Polish invasion of Wallachia. Nevertheless, in all of these works surfaces Łasicki’s interest for habits and customs of the people. The only preserved volume of the Historia de origine et rebus gestis fratrum Bohemicorum deals, almost entirely, with the customs and organization of the Brethren.
It comes as no surprise his desire to travel across Western Europe to personally study the habits of the people and collect information about their lives and origins. The most relevant literary product of this extensive journey is the eighteen pages treatise *De diis Samagitarum caeterorumque Sarmatarum et falsorum Christianorum* (Basel, 1615).

Being a Reformed Calvinist and a follower of the Unity of the Brethren, Łasicki was obviously interested in religious beliefs. Moreover, as was typical for the Reformed scholars (as opposed to both Catholics and Humanists), his interests were directed more toward the origins than toward future benefits (in opposition to Michalo Li-
tuanus approach, for example). Consequently, his list of Samogitian deities looks like a history on the origins of Samogitians beliefs.

Since he did not speak Lithuanian or Samogitian, he had to refer to previous works for his account. His main source was therefore J. Laskowski’s work about Baltic mythology. Other sources were certainly used as the expounded theory of the Latin origins of the Samogitians confirms. The version he suggests is connected with the atrocity of the Roman Emperor Nero and the fleeing of Littus. Łasicki adds some comments on the religion of the two groups stating that the idolatry of Samogitians is similar to that of the Romans. Lithuanians are described as neighbours of the Samogitians and their common origins are confirmed, according to the author, by the similar language, habits and beliefs. The short history of the “false” Christianisation of “high and low Samogitia” is interesting for the polemical approach which reveals the Protestant faith of the author.

The intent of Łasicki according to most scholars (including Invinski-
skis, Malecki and Brukner) was two-fold: to reveal the wonders of Samogitia and to ridicule the Catholic cult of the saints comparing it to the ancient pagan cults (as it is clear from the title of the account).

**Theodor Lepner’s The Prussian Lithuanians**

Theodor Lepner was born in the Prussian district of Mühlhausen and was educated by his father the pastor Hiob Lepner. He lived in Ragnit, where his father was appointed archpriest in 1635. In 1650 he began studying at the University of Königsberg. Appointed pastor in the newly established parish of Budwethen (the first German and Lithuanian pastor), he had the chance to study the habits and
customs of a variety of Prussian districts. This experience permitted the production of the historical-ethnographic-linguistic account Der Preusche Litauer (1640, but published only in 1744).

This is mainly an ethnographic study in which emerges a historiographic attitude in the investigation of the origins of certain habits and customs. The same historical perspective unfolds in the description of rites and religion. The fifteen chapters of the book cover most of the cultural aspects of the life of the Lithuanians of Lithuania Minor from farming to clothes and from rites to music. The section devoted to language is interesting, especially for the inclusion of a small Lithuanian language dictionary. A diachronic perspective emerges in the review of Lithuanian literature and in the catalogue of the most important Lithuanian books.

**Maciej Miechowita’s About the Two Sarmatias**

The historical-ethnological tradition which focused on the region of Sarmatia has its archetype in Maciej Miechowita’s *De duabus Sarmatiis*. This chronicler of the late 15th century produced literary works in which his interest for both the historical past and astrological knowledge merged in an original commixture. Moreover, Miechowita’s broad geographical knowledge allowed his works to be valuable even for later erudite historians.

His treatise about the two Sarmatias is a perfect example of this mingling (but geography and history are equally important in his *History of Poland* too). Together with one of the earliest and most accurate description of the lands between the Vistula, the Don and the Caspian Sea, he provided a very influential historical, geographical and ethnographical definition of Sarmatia – more precisely of the two Sarmatias.

While the main historical source is certainly Jan Długosz (with which he shares the myth of Sarmatism), Miechowita’s account is an original historiographic example of the frequent reference to as-
trological and astronomical phenomena to explain or comment on historical events. For example, it is written that Lithuanians, Polish, Ruthenians and Muscovites (the people of the European Sarmatia) should have known about the Tatars’ (Asian Sarmatians) invasion “because in the year 1211, in the month of May, big comets had appeared in the sky […] and they meant the Tatars were coming”.

The structure of the whole work might be reminiscent of that of the annals, but the historical conscience in Miechowita is already that of a man of Renaissance. The whole first book is based on the origin and development of the relations between the two Sarmatias, that is, the political and military conflict with the Tatars. According to a yearly structure, the events from the first contact with the Tatars, to their “cruel devastation of Poland and Hungary” are narrated with prophetic accents.

The second book deals with European Sarmatia and specifically, in the first treatise of this book, with the foundation expansion and development of Samogitia, Lithuania and Muscovy. The historical account is very poor in terms of narrative construction and is much more like a chronology of the Lithuanian regents with interposed sections concerning the stages of the Christianisation of Samogitia and Lithuania. The account, influenced by the author’s main source – Długosz, starts with the legend of the Italian origin of the Lithuanians without any mention of the flee from Nero or Attila.

Despite the mention of some sources, the work is mainly an apology of the unity between the European Sarmatians, who should have been united under the guide of the Roman Church. The fifth part of the account is a perfect summa of this idea: the chronology of the action Pope Innocent IV took in order to challenge the Tatar’s siege of Europe.

**Johann Bohemme’s, The Habits, Laws and Rituals of all the People**

The passion for the narration of extraordinary events in conjunction with the geographical discoveries of the 15th to 19th centuries made the historical-ethnographic accounts a very popular “literary genre”. The desire to tell the marvels and extraordinary deeds of far-away countries and people was the main reason for the compilation of such accounts all across Europe.
Among the most ambitious projects of this type Johann of Bohemia’s *Omnium gentium mores, leges, & ritus, ex multis clarissimis rerum scriptoribus* (1542) deserves to be mentioned. It is a work that unites the geographical interests (mainly because of the influence of its source: the cartographer Jakob Ziegler) with the interest in different customs and beliefs. This compilation of “many and famous writers’ accounts” aims to describe the habits, customs, laws and religions of all the people. In the three books dealing with Europe (from the Atlantic Ocean to the Don River) the people of Prussia, Samogitia, Lithuania, Ruthenia and Muscovy are described.

From the point of view of the philosophical reflection about history, these accounts are not particularly relevant. However, the whole work is very representative of the evolution and success of this kind of historiography in all Europe. Interesting in all of these kinds of relations, from that of Michalo Lituanus, to those of the Polish and Teutonic historians up to Daukantas, is the mention of both Herodotus and Tacitus as sources and models. Similarly, it is common to explain in the preface that these accounts are written, to use Johann of Bohemia’s words, “for enjoyment or pleasure, but also for utility and education”.

The understanding of the educative function of these kinds of histories varies from author to author but certain common patterns can be individuated. Firstly, and particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries, the spread of humanism across Europe liven up the debate about man and the society in which he lives: the laws and juridical systems of other people were often described either to suggest a better organization of the authors’ own countries, or to reflect on the connections between virtue, power and laws. Secondly, and mainly among Protestant historians of the 16th and 17th centuries, the study of different religions and their origins were a chance to comment on contemporary religious debate, that is, to criticize the “idolatry” of the Catholics that seemed so similar to that of the ancient pagans. Finally, the philosophical reflection of 18th and early 19th centuries made historians reflect on both the happiness, in his simple life, of the “natural man” of the pre-civilized people, and the common origins of the “Indian” people of Europe.
**Alexander Guagnini’s Description of Sarmatic Europe**

Nonetheless, most of these accounts were written in accordance with Quintilian and Cicero conception of history-writing: as readers, they were reading “these books for entertainment, not for having benefits”. This is certainly the reason behind the debated plagiarism case involving Maciej Stryjkowski and Alexander Guagnini.

Guagnini’s *Sarmatiae Europeae descriptio* (1578) is a reworked copy of the Pole’s historical work, but while some passages about political and military events are missing in the soldier’s account, his work is richer than Stryjkowski’s in curiosities and description of habits and customs (especially the expanded Polish translation of 1611 and the Italian translations of the first half of the 17th century). He obviously wanted to offer the reader a light and unconventional relation of his experience in the far (from his Verona) and little known Sarmatia.

A confirmation of this intention of amusement comes from the configuration of Guagnini’s book. The first edition of the chronicle included (fictional and anachronistic) portraits of Lithuanian dukes. Despite representing the dukes wearing unrealistic clothes or carrying anachronistic weapons, the publication greatly influenced future depictions of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania.

**Guillebert de Lannoy’s Journeys and Embassies**

Relations about distant countries and places, their geography, the religion and traditions of the inhabitants were often offered by travellers of the 16th and 17th centuries who had reached Eastern Europe from the French, German or Italian states. Samogitia, Lithuania, Prussia, Muscovy and predominantly the Tatars caught their attention. Particularly interesting for them were the traits common to all of these populations or the very old traditions and legends connecting these people with classical antiquity.
The knight Guillebert de Lannoy, for example, travelled, as an ambassador to the reign of the Teutonic Knights, to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Poland and the Grand Duchy of Muscovy. When he arrived in Prussia, he was supposed to go and fight the Samogitians, but instead was sent to Poland. He visited the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1413-1414 travelling from Gdansk to Novgorod, Pskov, Königsberg, Klaipėda (Memel) and Livonia. During a second journey in 1421 he visited Trakai, Kaunas and reached Crimea.

His notes on his travels – *Journeys and Embassies and Les Plerinages de Surye et de Egipte* – are good examples of this kind of historical-literary genre. Not only were these light and interesting readings, they also provided valuable historical and ethnographic data about Lithuania: descriptions of the castles of Vilnius, Trakai, Kaunas, Podolia and Volynia, the population of Trakai, the fashion of Lithuanian women, and his reception by Vytautas the Great.

*Nicholas Christopher Radziwiłł’s Journey to the Holy Land, Syria and Egypt*

Great similarities can be observed between Guillebert de Lannoy’s travel book about the pilgrimage to Syria and Egypt and Imperial Prince Mikołaj Krzysztof “the orphan” Radziwiłł’s *Podróż do Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Egiptu 1582-1584* (published also with the significant title *Peregrynacja abo pielgrzymowanie do Ziemie Świętej*).

While from the content perspective this is a travel account, it has also an interesting value as an illustrative example of the ethnographic historiography. Far-away lands also attracted educated and wealthy Lithuanian noblemen who often gave account or memories relevant for the amount of information provided about other civilization habits, customs and past.
Radziwiłł’s account is influenced by a sort of mysticism due, quite probably, to his recent conversion to Catholicism after an encounter in Rome with Piotr Skarga and Stanislaus Hosius. Like in his public life, during his journey he also demonstrated a lack of interest for the political and military situation of the places visited or their past. Rather, he was very descriptive when dealing with nature (and especially local fauna), sacred places – both Christian and pagan – and monuments like pyramids, necropolis and obelisks. General information about the customs and “origins” of the people he met was often provided.

To note that the practice to write diaries of interesting cultural journeys to distant countries was a very common practice in GDL as in other Renaissance European countries. Among the most interesting examples, should be mentioned the Polish diary of the journey to the lands of German, Bohemian and Italians written by the Samogitian Theodor Bilevicz.

Drilldown section 4: Ethnographic, Legendary and Political Sarmatism

In the 16th and 17th century in the literature of Poland and that of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania it was very common to make reference to the glorious deeds of the Sarmatians, to the geographic regions of European and Asian Sarmatia, or to the ancient language of the Sarmatians (to note, incidentally, that it was often erroneously identified with that of the Scythians). Many modern scholars correctly see in this “myth of the Sarmatic origins of the Polish” the expression of nobility’s “arrogant attitude towards townspeople and peasantry” (as stated by Alexandr Osipian) or simply a groundless claim by which the Poles intended to elevate their people above their neighbour’s. This tendency has been labelled “Sarmatism” and often carries a negative shade of meanings.
Nevertheless, the idea of the Schyto-Sarmatic origin of all European people has very ancient roots. Cato the Elder (234 B.C.-149 B.C.) detailed the ancient origin of these peoples and suggested that all the others descended from them. In more recent times and especially since the 14th century the first attempt to study the relations between European languages – a sort of comparative linguistic *ante litteram* – suggested all European languages derived from the extinct language of the Scythians. The first precise formulation of this theory appears in Claude Saumaise’s *De helleistica Commentarius*. The French erudite wrote at the turn of the 16th century “there are almost no European or Asian nations which are not coming from north. But it is from Scythia, with his language, that all these northern peoples are coming”.

On the other hand, it is true that some Polish noblemen and their supporters used this deep-rooted conviction to ground their political claims. According to Osipian, it is possible to individuate different phases in the understanding of Sarmatism. Initially it was directed against the Holy Roman Empire’s expansion and precisely to oppose the Habsburgs’ pretension for the Polish crown. Obviously, it was for the noblemen to oppose the absolutism of Maximilian Habsburg to protect the republican values (and their power and independence). The myth of Sarmatians came in very handy in this situation: “militant Sarmatian nomads, traditional enemies of the Roman Empire, were seen as good ancestors for the Poles in their current confrontation with the Germans.” It is interesting to note that for analogous reasons in the same period “the Frenchmen proclaimed their origins from the ancient Greeks” – enemies of the Trojans, who, in turn, were forefathers of the Romans, i.e. of the Germans.

During the second half of the 17th century, the great interest in the past of the people living by the Baltic Sea and in the region enclosed by the Urals, Carpathians and Caucasus combined with the new political asset of the area; the union of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithu-
ania, the conflicts at the border of Christian Europe and the wars for the control of Livonia in the north and Ruthenia in the south. Historians such as Marcin Bielski, Marcin Kromer, Alexander Guagnini, Maciej Stryjkowski and Stanisław Sarnicki (among others) played on the geographic and ethnographic concept of Sarmatia to support or oppose political and ideological positions.

To exemplify, it is possible to consider Jan Łaski’s anti-Germanic use of the idea of the Sarmatian origins of his people. In his letters “Sarmatism acquired such features as free republicanism, traditionalism, conservatism, and xenophobia. Noblemen were proclaimed the exclusive descendants of the Sarmatians, who dominated Eastern Europe in ancient times. Townspeople and peasantry became descendants of the subjugated Slavs. Thus, Sarmatism legitimized the domination of the nobility and depicted lower estates as their natural subjects. Nobility was depicted as the only political representative of all the estates. Only the nobility constituted the nation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”. Contrary in this respect is the meaning of Sarmatism in Johannesn Łasicki – Reformed Calvinist and a follower of the Unity of the Brethren. A more neutral position is that of Maciej Miechowita: despite the influence of Jan Długosz’s understanding of Sarmatism, he uses the concept as a handy and widely recognized geographical entity.

Figure 17: Jacob d’Angelo, “Cosmographia Claudii Ptolomaei Alexandrini”, 1467. It is a map of Sarmatia, Taurica and parts of Dacia based on Ptolemy. The label “Sarmatia” and the idea of an ancient population living there was very well rooted already in the 1st century. Interestingly, the map was bought by Polish Chancellor Jan Zamoyski. Clearly the idea of Sarmatian origins came handy to him too.
History of Lithuanian Historiography

Tasks and discussions

1. Read the drilldown section 1 and 4 about the legend of Palemon and Sarmatism. Can you find any parallels between the 14th-17th centuries reinterpretations of these legendary reports about the origins of Lithuanians and those of the Polish?

2. We already mentioned the Lithuanian, Prussian and Russian legends about their Roman Origins, the French legend about their Greek origins. Comment and compare these legends as hand down in national historiographies. And what about that of Lech, Čech, and Rus?

3. Read Daukantas’ introduction to his Būdas. What is the role of nature in human history? Is it possible to perceive in this passage echoes of 18th century scientific and geographical discoveries? Which ones?

4. If possible, read the same passage in original language. What language is it? Is it Lithuanian? Comment on its style: the structure of the sentences, the words order, vocabulary, etc…

5. All 20th century editions of Daukantas’ Manners of the Ancient Lithuanians, Highlanders and Samogitians usually adopt the title Lithuanians’ Manners? Is it a relevant change? Is it somehow representative of a new historiographical conception?

6. What criteria does Daukantas adopt to define the subject of his historical-ethnographical account (political, ethnical, historical, geographical, economical, etc.)? Give some examples and comment them.

7. Does Daukantas distinguish Samogitia and Lithuania or use the two terms as synonyms?

Literature

For a short introduction to the historical and ethnographical works about Baltic mythology, see Endre Bojtár, Foreword to the Past – a Cultural History of the Baltic People, Budapest, 1999. In particular, see page 316 where a short review of the ancient studies about Baltic mythology is reported. Here there are information about the interpretations of Łasicki, Laskowski, Stryjkowski and the comments of modern scholars.
A good number of travel (to Lithuania) accounts of the 15th to 18th centuries have been commented on in Laimonas Briedis, *Vilnius City of Strangers*, Vilnius, 2009. Even if the main subject of the article is specifically the journey of Guillebert de Lannoy to Lithuania, the study of Oscar Halecki, “Gilbert de Lannoy and His Discovery of East Central Europe”, Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences in America, n.2, 1944, 314-31 presents very well the idea of ethnographic historiography.

For an insight on the 16th and 17th centuries Polish historians and politicians’ understanding of Sarmatism, see Alexandr Osipian, “The Lasting Echo of the Battle of Grunwald: the Uses of the Past in the Trials between the Armenian Community of Lemberg and the Catholic Patricians in 1578–1631”, Russian History, n.38, 2011, 243-280. In this article, not only the double interpretation of Sarmatism is analysed, but an interesting series of parallels with other European historiographic tradition is offered too. See also Stanisław Cynarski, “The Shape of Sarmatian Ideology in Poland,” Acta Poloniae Historica, n. 19, 1968, 6.

VI. History as Contemporary History

Commenting on the works of Herodotus, scholars specify that “not everything one can find in the Histories is history” in the peculiar sense of the Greek compound. As we mentioned in the first chapter, according to the ancient Greek interpretation, history was a literary genre elected by historians to declaim the deeds of the most distinguished contemporaries and primarily their military feats. Correspondingly, “pure” historical works were short accounts built around a single (recent) war or battle. It is for this reason (and some other considerations on his method) that most histories of historiography award the title of “father of scientific history” to Thucydides. The Athenian’s account of the Peloponnesian War is, using modern terminology, a monographic study of a contemporary event and precisely for this reason was recognized as uncontaminated historical work. On the contrary, Herodotus’ Histories has to be considered a mixture of ethnographic and historiographic research. It is from this very narrow conception of history that the Roman definition evolved: the accounts dealing with conflicts or with the deeds of celebrated leaders were historical. In turn, this interest in single persons, to some extent, evolved into the genre of biography.

Observing these developments and trends of historiography, scholars tend to see in epics and myths the form of preservation of the past typical of the rural (peasant) culture, while history is typical of the political society. Consequently, Herodotus collocates between Homer and Thucydides not only chronologically but also from the historiographical point of view.

Thucydides of Athens (471-455 B.C.) was an aristocrat who participated in the Peloponnesian War against the league led by Sparta. He was the strategist of the island of Thasos, but not being able to give aid to the sieged city of Amphipolis he was exiled for ten years. During this period he wrote The Peloponnesian War; a coherent and cohesive account of the war he participated in. The aim of this account was, quite probably, to provide future readers (and especially the governing classes) with a detailed report of the events as seen by an eyewitness, and to explain its causes and development. Unlike Herodotus, Thucydides
was not interested in geographical and ethnographical details. With this work, history separates from mythology and theodicy. In Thucydides’ research the duties and means of historians are better defined: historians should not be reduced to collecting information and relating it; rather it is necessary to understand the events and their causes and explain them to the posterity. Moreover, the Athenian reserves great attention to the collection and use of sources: he distinguishes between events he had personally seen and those he was told about. Similarly, he separates events as they are from the accounts of the events that have certainly been influenced by a subjective interpretation.

Apart from Thucydides, it is interesting to note that for centuries, and certainly among Greeks and Romans, history was not something connected with chronological perspectives: history was not necessarily the narration of past events. On the contrary, history was mainly a report on contemporary happenings, which the historians could personally see. To write history meant, first of all, to write about the time of the author.

This kind of political-contemporary historiography perfectly fitted in with the educative intents of religious orders like the Jesuits and Piarists: Homer’s epic was inadaptable because of all the frequent references to deities and their influence on human events, and Herodotus’ histories had to be expurgated. However, Thucydides’ account was not problematic: dealing exclusively with political events, it did not pose the problem of being a pagan work. The rare references to the will of Gods could have been easily reinterpreted as manifestations of the Christian God’s providence. Moreover, the Athenian’s style was polished and his structuring of the text very rational. For these reasons it could be used in grammar, rhetoric and Greek language classes as an example of logic.

Some modern historians, Darien Shanske in particular, believe that the scepticism and the political tone typical of late Humanism and Renaissance’s historians are a consequence of the frequent recourse to Thucydides’ works (and other similar classical accounts) in religious orders’ colleges. Particularly in Jesuit colleges the “rational method” of the Athenian had a very important educative function. It is not by chance that some famous sceptics “grew” inside the Society of Jesus or in its institutions: René Descartes wrote his Discourse on
the Method after graduating from the Jesuit college of La Flèche. It is in this work that clearly emerges Descartes’ idea of the impossibility to rely on memory (even historical) and that the past cannot be the subject of knowledge. Similarly, the 18th century French Jesuit Jean Hardouin reflecting on the historical method and on the meaning and function of history concluded, with strong pyrrhonist accents, that it is not possible to know the past.

Lithuanian historiography, once more, makes no exception. The events the literates had the opportunity to observe for themselves often stroke their imagination, or forced them to think about the meaning of the current political and military situation. In particular, great victories against Turks, Tatars, or Muscovites were celebrated with historical accounts. The fact that the authors themselves participated in those expeditions, battles or embassies convinced them they had the right and the duty to portray a true account about those events as they had seen with their own eyes. All the accounts about coeval battles against the Turks, the political missions to the tsars, the reports about the Livonian War, etc. have to be considered manifestations of this historiographic manner.

All across Europe it is possible to find evidence of this conception of history-writing. Already Jodicus Decius distinguished for the interpretation of history as exclusively contemporary history. “Histories of their times” are, for example, Stanislaw Orzechowski’s Annales and Lukasz Górnicki’s History of the Polish Krown, but also the works of Jan Dymitr Solikowski.

The fact that some of these accounts have been composed in verses (in the form of odes, panegyric, poem or even included in threnodies) does not mean they are not historical accounts. It is not the form that distinguishes a literary work from a historical one. It is incorrect to equate prose about the “past” with history, verses about the past with epic, and verses about recent events with poetry and literature. We should not forget that it is only from the 18th century that reading is a personal and silent activity, in the past it was a public act performed aloud. The form of the accounts had not only to be stylistically correct for it was not enough to describe interesting facts: the narration had to be “musical” and easy to remember that is, rich in rhymes and rhetorical expedients like alliteration, assonance, and consonance.
History as Contemporary History

A Lithuanian Knight’s Livonian War Ten Years Deeds

As mentioned above, the main reason to write “histories of their times” were political events such as battles, wars, and diplomatic delegations. With specific reference to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, three main subjects stimulated the production of historical accounts with the traits of “contemporary histories”: the Turks sieging Europe, the 150 years of conflicts with Muscovites, and the Livonian War.

Particularly rich is the historiographic production related to the Livonian War. The conflict generated from the fall of the Livonian Confederation at the end of 16th century and the immediate interest of its neighbour in that territory: The Commonwealth of Two Nations, Sweden and Grand Duchy of Moscow. This conflict soon became part of the Polish-Swedish War and lasted for about 70 years, from 1557 to 1625.

Several historians wrote about it directly or indirectly: Paul Oderborn, as an example, writing about the life of the Grand Duke of Muscovy investigated the political, economical and cultural situation of the many states involved in the war; Saliamonas Risinskis’ narration of the deeds of Christoph Radziwiłł deals mainly with military actions in Livonia. However, the most representative example for the history of historiography is the anonymous account known as Equitis Lituani De bello Livonico per decennium gesto published in Vilnius in 1610. This work deals with the clashes between Swedes and the Commonwealth of the Two Nations in Livonia from 1600 to 1609.

The methodological similitudes (and the announcements about the sources of the account) with Thucydides’ method are striking. The author stresses the fact that he participated in the battles and specifies in which ones – he makes very clear that he served for seven years under Jan Karol Chodkiewicz. Furthermore, he specifies when information is taken from other sources informing the reader that he has heard those details from persons who have seen the events. Finally, what is remarkable is the attempt to define the “prehistory” of the event and search for the causes – a symptom of mature historical thought.

The reason for writing such an account, besides that of describing the development of the war is clearly to celebrate and make clear
the contribution given by Lithuanians to the war. As a matter of fact, most previous accounts were used to praise Polish commitment and merits, but in the *De bello Livonico* the role of Lithuanians is markedly stressed by the mention of Lithuanian divisions serving in the army and the listing of prominent surnames.

It has been convincingly suggested that this account was among the sources of Dionysius Fabricius’ *Livonicae historiae compendiosa series* published in 1610. This work – compiled by a 17th century Catholic priest – focuses on events in Livonia during the Polish period, especially the Polish-Swedish War, which started in 1600. It presents these events from the viewpoint of Polish politics and the Catholic Church, thus somewhat differing from the traditional Lutheran approaches to Livonian and Estonian history.

**Laurentius Bojer’s The Battle of Kirkholm**

The Swedish poet and theologian Laurentius Bojer had the opportunity to spend some time in almost all the Baltic States: he was born in Stockholm, studied theology in Vilnius, worked in Dorpart and finally lived in Jarosław. In 1606 his most renowned work: the historical poem *Carolomachia* about the 1605 Battle of Kirkholm was published in Vilnius. This event, part of the Polish-Swedish war, saw the Lithuanian Hetman Jan Karol Chodkiewicz with barely 4000 hussars defeat a Swedish army of 8000 infantry and 2000 cavalry. The whole poem is a celebration of Chodkiewicz’s deeds and an accurate and detailed account of the battle.

It is entirely understandable why a Swede celebrated the victory of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth against the forces of Charles IX of Sweden: in the dispute for the Swedish throne Sigismund III Vasa represented Catholic Christianity while his rival championed the Protestant cause. Naturally, Bojer – a fervent catholic, educated in Jesuit colleges and a polemist involved in the religious debate of the time – saw in the King
Sigismund the hope for a united Sarmatia under a Christian king. Bojer even refers to Sigismund III Vasa as King of Sweden and he was probably anticipating the Catholic revenge in Scandinavia too. He was not the only one to have these hopes: after the victory, Chodkiewicz received congratulation letters from the Pope and a number of Catholic potentates.

*Carolomachia* is a historical account written in Latin in the epic style common in the 17th century: it was based mainly on the model of Vergil’s *Aeneid*. It can be considered a historical account because of the very precise details about the reasons of the battle, its contextualization and the minute description of its development. Moreover, the report is very detailed in matters of the makeup of the armies involved. Bojer is much less interested in the musicality of the verses than most other writers of the time. It seems his main goals are, on the one hand, to sing the accomplishments of the Christians (praising their rightful and virtuous deeds) and, on the other hand, to provide a detailed description of the battle in order to demonstrate the strategic abilities of the Hetman.

En passant, in this text, the author’s interest for the technical terminology is noteworthy. Of particular interest is the mention of a Lithuanian word in the Latin text: charging the enemies, Lithuanians shout ‘muški!’ Bojer himself tries to define the word and suggests it is from the Lithuanian term for the weapon known as a musket.

*Elijas Pilgrimovijus’ Panegyric for Christoph Radziwili*

Travelling to foreign lands has always been an incentive for the writing of historical and ethnographic accounts. To write about a journey was seen as a duty when the voyage had a collective meaning, was important for the whole state, or allowed the travellers to see with their own eyes peoples and places, object of discussion or interest in their own country. A particular sort of travel was that of po-
political embassies. We have already mentioned Guillebert de Lannoy’s *Journeys and Embassies*, we can now mention Elijas Pilgrimovijus’ account of Leo Sapieha’s great delegation to Moscow. The two authors, Lannoy and Pilgrimovijus, have not been included in the same section of this handbook because of their different interpretation of history: while the former was mainly interested in peoples’ habits, customs and their development through time, the latter understood history as the account of the present-day political events as personally seen by himself.

Pilgrimovijus was a literate and diplomat of the end of the 16th century. He was the official writer of the Lithuanian Chancellery and often travelled with Hetman, Chancellors and other political figures to battlefields and other regents. In 1581, for example, he was in Pskov were a series of battles were going on. In 1583, he wrote in Latin verses a description of the events in the form of a panegyric for Christoph Radziwiłł: *Panegyrica Apostrophe ad Christophorum Raduilo* [...].

The panegyric is just a pretext to comment on the political situation of the time and even the military conduct of the generals. Even though the whole account is focusing on the figure of Radziwiłł the narrative allows the reader to perceive, in the background, the development of the events and even the atmosphere among acculturated and powerful citizens.

**Elijas Pilgrimovijus’ Account of Leo Sapieha’s Great Delegation to Moscow**

Similarly, the events of the 150 yearlong wars with the Muscovites were a topic of interest for noblemen, magnates and political figures of the time. Pilgrimovijus made no exception. On the contrary, his personal involvement in the political missions organized by the Grand Dukes offered his literary personality several chances to write about relevant political meetings. Specifically, in 1583 Pilgrimovijus went to Moscow as secretary of the regent and writer of Leo Sapieha’s embassy in order to define the terms for an exchange of prisoners. That journey impressed the secretary so much to induce him to rewrite in verse and publish a previous official report. The relating of the preparation and progress of the journey are very illustrative of the merging of humanist style and 16th century thought because of both the political ideology expounded and the rich rhetorical style. The texts
have also been deemed very useful as a historical source about the way official embassies were prepared and carried out, the ceremonials of the meetings and the logistic aspects of these journeys.

Despite the preserved transcriptions of this account being incomplete even without the beginning and the end, its structure and contents are quite clear: it starts with a detailed list of the provisions for the huge delegation; describes the different phases of the journey from Smolensk to Moscow; and finally reports on the series of meetings with Ivan IV or his representatives.

The prose version of the account is very precise giving small details about quantities and the quality of provisions, the distances covered every day, timetables, encounters. The relation becomes even more meticulous when dealing with the formalities of the meetings and the contents of each encounter. This work, as stated, is a precious historical source. However, it has been mentioned here as a very peculiar historiographic example. Especially the verse transcription of the work is a perfect example of the humanist capability to play with rhetoric in order to transmit information the words alone cannot or to educate the readers by means of the creation of an imaginative perception.

Curiously, almost half of the report deals with “banquets”. Particularly, the poor and disgusting feasts offered by the rude Muscovites are object of ironic descriptions. The ironic tone is immediately clear at the beginning of the narration of the first breakfast. Here, the accuracy of the logistic rendition, give space to unusually informal and caustic utterances. The state secretary tells the reader about a table

where crockery not washed for sure for more than five years are disposed and for sure, before that, they were kept in coal. […] After one hour instead of the cake, they brought a chicken that was kept in batter for more than a week. […] Eating they [the Muscovites] were belching, and it is disgusting to remember about it, but to watch was even worse. […] Than on the table was placed a hare, which was probably cooked one year before and was even mouldy.

This passage sounds even more intentionally ironic if compared with other descriptions of diplomatic banquets in the Russian Empire like, for example, those described in Alexey Bestuzhev-Ryumin’s pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii moskovcogo gosudarstva s Anglii.
As mentioned in the introduction, to fully understand the ideological representation of the past in the so-called *Account of Lew Sapieha’s Great Delegation to Moscow*, the formal critic of the author’s eloquence reveals more than the philological or erudite approaches. This approach makes clear that Pilgrimovijus was trying to create an idea in the conscience of the readers: he wanted to dispel the spectre of a Muscovite barbaric influence on the civilized lands of the Confederation. It is the ironic style of the unusually frequent (for this kind of report) descriptions of spreads – a sort of inverted Lucullian banquets – to uncloak the unitary plan to denigrate the baseness of the Muscovites. Accordingly, the whole report is, in actual fact, an apology of the deeds of Sapieha. In Pilgrimovijus’ account, the Court Chancellor is representative not only to the defence of the political and military claims of the regent. Rather, he embodies the resistance of the border of the civilized world.

**Drilldown section 5: Rhetoric as a Scientific Method**

Most of the historical accounts reviewed in this section have often been understood simply as literary works not relevant for the history of historiography. The main reason was the predominance in them of the interest for the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of the texts. It has been said that authors like Gradovskis and Eismantas just wanted to imitate the pleasant style of the humanists. Even more severe were the judgements on the historical-literary works of the Jesuits and their students (like Laurentius Bojer). The Jesuits’ literary production was “the empty rhetoric of humanists’ where ‘nothing of Erasmus survives’” because in their hands “the ancient culture turned into its extrinsic values – linguistic and oratorical”.

It is widely recognized that rhetoric shaped the whole historiographical production of the 15th to the 17th centuries. However, in this specific branch of the letters, the *ars rhetorica* seemed sometimes to have the upper hand over the subject matter. Nevertheless, while the formal function of the rhetoric cannot be denied, from the 14th to the 17th century rhetoric was
understood, first of all, as an instrument to achieve absolute knowledge: the oratio was a manifestation of the ratio.

While it is true European historians and literates were imitating the style of humanists, it is equally reasonable to believe they were adopting the same conception of the function of rhetoric. The understanding of rhetoric was much more articulated. Brunetto Latini, in his Livre dou Trésor, expressed the intention to mould the “political man” by the means of the ars dicendi. He, like other intellectuals of that time, understood rhetoric as the science of the “rectors” – the new bourgeois governing class intentioned to substitute the practice of the abuse of power with the exercise of persuasion (resulting from the capability to faultlessly organize the reasoning). Similarly, rhetoric had been intended as a means of education, rather than an embellishment of the texts by Giovanni Villani. He strongly asserted the importance of the rhetorical education to refine mind and mental faculties: the ability to deliver an exact speech implies the capacity to master and structure the logical reflection.

Logic and rhetoric where the fulcra of the epistemological debate that would have led to the Principles of a New Science. In 1624, Galileo Galilei (and, to some extent, Alessandro Piccolomini before him), criticized the formal logic because he considered it an end in itself – that is, not fit for the practical necessity of knowledge. The pragmatic attitude of the time is perfectly summarized in the condemnation pronounced by Stefano Guazzo against ‘the silent and idle philosophy that, like faith, without the doing is dead’.

Mario Nizolio expressed (in 1533) a similar critic for the empty rhetoric. He asserted the necessity to abandon the ancient logic and get rid of all fictitious “super-structures” because “the knowledge passes through the purity of the linguistic expression – spontaneous translation of the fundamental relation between the man and the world.” Noteworthy is the fact that, according to Nizolio, every form of knowledge has a practical orientation guaranteed by the capability of the lan-
guage to represent the live processes of the impulses of the spirit. The study of grammar and rhetoric serves “to reunite with the natural development of the human interiority.” The same idea appears in Stefano Guazzo’s work: the language is the pure manifestation of the humanity and “since nature did not give us the language to speak with ourselves, but with other […], this is the only instrument to transmit the knowledge.”

The similitudes between this sort of definition of the function and the aims of rhetoric and the interpretation Donald Rice and Peter Schofer gave of this faculty in more recent times are striking. In their opinion, rhetoric can be defined by a system of three oppositions: rhetoric as opposed to poetic; ornate style (rhetoric) vs. natural style; and rhetoric vs. hermeneutic. The third of these oppositions is nothing more than a modern revision of the humanist definition. To make this analogy more evident, we could translate the third opposition like this: rhetoric is the science of the generation of the text as opposed to the science of the comprehension of the text. However, neither the Renaissance nor the modern grammarians understood “generation” just as a summation of technical rules for the trans-sentence construction. Rather, it is intended as the act of translation between two systems of representation of the world, that is, between conscience and language. This translation is, for the nature of the systems themselves, indefinite and vague: the conscience is a continuous form of knowledge, while the language is a discrete one. By consequence, the language can give only a partial representation of the conscience. Nevertheless, this irregular translation is the essence of every creative thought. Rhetoric is, therefore, intended as “generation” precisely because it tries to create irregular semantic appositions capable of the expression of a knowledge that transcends the limits of the language.

From this perspective, a pair generated by the apposition of incomparable elements creates a semantic trope. Thus, a trope cannot be considered an external embellishment of speech. On the contrary, it is the essence of the creative thought – the capability to reproduce the system of the world by means of
a language which encompasses an irrational (super-sensible) component too. Such are all the attempts to create concrete analogies of abstract ideas. These are the cases of metaphor and metonymy where the link between “figures of the speech” and “figures of the thought” (according to the distinction formulated by Demetrius of Phalerum) is instituted respectively in absentia or in presentia of a semantic continuity.

Basing on a similar reasoning, humanists held that rhetoric had to be understood as (using modern terminology) the meta-language between the language of the world and that of the written (or pronounced) word. The function of the rhetoric is to make intelligible to the rational mind expressions that can usually only be experienced by the spirit. As an example, the rhetoric of a Byzantine icon is manifest in the plurality of themes expressed by the adoption of a certain pictorial canon – the sign. Here, the sign is a rhetorical construction intended as the result of the translation of the divine λόγος in a language comprehensible to man. Moreover, it is based on a metaphor exactly because that untranslatable λόγος has been juxtaposed in absentia of a semantic continuity to the “language” of the painting.

This definition of the function of the metaphor, “the highest summit of the Ingenious Figures [...] and the greatest brainchild of human intellect”, had been clearly formulated by the Jesuit Emanuele Tesauro. In his theorization, the tropes that belong to the category of the “Ingenious Figures” not only constitute a system of translation, but also a technique for the creation of the conscience. Tesauro critic of those who define the figures of speech as artificial embellishments is harsh. Rather, these figures, “the most noble expression of intellect because neither in the harmony of the sounds, nor in the pathetic forms, but in the ingenious signification have their roots,” are mechanism of creation and the fundamental procedure of the human thought. By consequence, these figures, to use Aristotelic terminology, are Dianoëas – “figures of the thought” rather than figures of the speech. It is exactly for this reason that the metaphor occupies the physical and ideo-
logical centre of the *Cannocchiale*. The metaphor “exceeds the limits of the nude word since it is an Ingenious Figure able to represent, betoken and delight at the same time.”

Hence, Tesauro not only recognizes the metaphor as the universal principle of both the human and the divine consciences. According to his conception, all the Ingenious Figures are means of the “absolute knowledge” because the art of rhetoric is the capability to make sensible the super-sensible. Rhetoric assumes, in the pages of Humanists and Jesuits, an epistemological importance. God’s creation is a rhetorical opus and in the rhetoric of the speech the divine creation is reproduced and made intelligible. In this sense, we can state that rhetoric was almost ontologism – the method that collocates the immediate term of rational cognition in its object: the idea. As a matter of fact, the trope, intended as a mechanism of the semantic indeterminateness, is capable of rendering sensible the inexpressibility of the Truth.

In conclusion, the rich rhetoric of Pilgrimovijus and Eismantas’ decision to opt for the form of the threnody, or Hussovianus’ intention to report in verses are to be considered as technical choices. All of these works had, beside the narrative intention, a pedagogical attitude implemented by the use of rhetoric: “the inseparability of word and image […] was based on a rhetorical project created to serve the man. […] The recourse to the theatricalism […] has to be understood as the creation of a psychological and cognitive space in which the fantastic reinvention, activating memory, imagination, affections and intelligence, educated to observe the reality in an ordered, conscious and orientated manner.”

**Prančiskus Gradovskis’ Ode to the Illustrious Christoph Radziwiłł’s Expedition to Muscovy**

Prančiskus Gradovskis, the secretary of Stephan Bathory and Sigismund Vasa is connected to Elijas Pilgrimovijus not only by literary analogies, but even by family bonds: he married the sister of the official writer of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The connections
with other literates of the period became even stronger with the wedding: he was included in Venclovas Mikalojaitis, Venclovas Agripa and Elijas Pilgrimovijus’ circle. In his Ode a couple of verses are dedicated to “Elia [Pilgrimovijus], above all the dearest friend”.

His most important work is a poem describing the deeds of Christoph (Krzysztof) Radziwiłł during his military expedition against Muscovy: *Hodoeporicon Moschicum illustriissimi principis ac domini, domini Christophori Radiwilonis* (1582). In this poem, the 1564 victory of the army of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is described with epic tones. The ode is an account of the Battle of Ula (Chashniki) fought during the Livonian War. This Latin work obtained immediate success because of the charming literary style and being the only written source about the event accessible to everybody (the letter of Mikołaj Radziwiłł describing the victory was neither accessible nor captivating). Ten years later Joannes Radvanus used this oeuvre in his *Radvilia*. Gradovskis wrote this work in 1582 immediately after Christoph Radziwiłł’s expedition to Moscow in 1581. This second event is included in the same account and is the real reason for writing it.

The whole work is pervaded with faith in the providence that helps the right and virtuous regents. The victories of Radziwiłł are due to the fact that he is fighting to protect his people and Sarmatia because his military actions are based on love. Lexically and stylistically all the humanist repertoire is used in this text in keeping with those of the contemporaries, but particularly evident are the similitudes with Laurentius Bojer’s *The Battle of Kirkholt*. He refers to the Hetman as New Mars – exactly as Eismantas – and appeals to the muses and specifically to Calliope (while Eismantas appealed to Clio – the muse of history). The fact does not surprise: these are common *topoi* of the humanistic style.

*Mikalojus Kazimieras Šemeta’s The Battle of Ochmatov*

The Samogitian poet and knight Mikalojus Kazimieras Šemeta received his education in Vilnius, but formed his literary personality serving in the army during the wars against Swedes and Muscovites. These experiences, and the humanistic education received at the Academy, shaped his whole literary production.
In Polish he wrote a poem to praise the deeds of the regent of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki: *O przeważnych wojennych dziedziach wielkiego rycierza księcia Jeremięgo Michała Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego*. This panegyric is written in typical humanist style, but cannot be considered relevant for the history of historiography since the absence of the formulation of a historical problem and the lack of method and information about the events narrated.

On the contrary, the 1657 account *Potrzeba Ochmatowska* – about the battle of Ochmatov (1644) – can be considered a proper historical account of the battle despite being written in the form of a poem. Some lyrical passages are interposed with detailed descriptions of the events, the structure of the army, precious lists of names, etc. The fact that this account was not an official document, allow the author to pay more attention to the feelings and symbolic values of the events.

*Mikalojus Kazimieras Šemeta’s Relation about the Beginning and Conclusion of the Swedish Protectorate in Samogitia*

A manuscript dated 1657 preserves Šemeta’s *Relatia żmudzkiego wyjścia i wyjścia ze szwedzkiej opieki*. It is a historical account construed around the political and administrative situation of Samogitia before and during the Swedish occupation and is written in the form of a poem. It adopts the Sapphic stanza as verse form.

While the structure of the texts, its style and metre, are typical of the classical epic, its content makes this text a representative historiographic example of the 17th century. Several scholars have already pointed out that Šemeta’s *Relation*, for the detailed narration of the facts and the number of facts expounded, can be considered an important historical source for that period.

Particularly useful is this relation to understand the position of the Samogitian noblemen with regards to the Swedes. The Lithuanian historian Antanas Tyla pointed out the importance of the account as a source to integrate official documents regarding the so-called agreements of Kėdainiai (*Kėdainių sutartis*). Adolfas Šapoka’s reconstruction of the proceedings of the meeting between the Swedes and the Samogitian noblemen, basing almost exclusively on official documents, depicted the latter as submissive and not willing to sup-
port the king of Poland. On the contrary, Šemeta’s Relatia let the historians perceive the real feelings of the noblemen – the aspects of the dealing procedures that cannot be inked on an official document. The account is very precise even with regards to the debate between the representatives of Samogitia. The verses “In fact the situation of that time imposed/ that the representatives of the Powiat united with Samogitians,/ that in case something had to be done,/ the decisions would have been taken together” introduce a representation of the events very different from the one mirrored in official documents.

**Nicolaus Hussovianus’ New and Outstanding Victory over the Turks in the Month of July**

Hussovianus’ concerns for the political and military events occurring on the border of Christianity clearly emerge in his purely historical work *Nova et miranda victoria de Turcis mense Iulio*. It is another 148 line poem in elegiac couplets written in one single day in 1524. It is at the same time a historical narration and a panegyric for the victory of the Polish Grand Hetman of the Crown Mikołaj Firlej over the Turks by Trembowla on July 2 1524.

Illustrative here as in the poem about the bison is the fact that the terms *ferox* and *ferocem* – ferocious, but with bestial attributes – are used only when referring to the bisons and the Turks as to present the aggressors of Christianity as beasts. The attention of the author, in this work is often toward individual deeds or reflections as typical for the humanist interest in the man.

**Albert Wijuk-Kojałowicz’s About the Events of 1648 and 1649 Against the Rebel Zaporozhian Cossacks**

The Jesuit Albert Wijuk Kojałowicz is known mainly as a historian thanks to the two books about the history of Lithuania he wrote in Latin during the first half of the 17th century. Nevertheless, he was not interested exclusively in that kind of erudite and broad “histories of images”. As many other historian and literates of that time, his attention was stroked by contemporary clamorous events.

For that reason he wrote two accounts on the insurrection of the Zaporozhian Cossacks in the years 1648-1649. The first publication, dated Vilnius 1651, is called *De rebus gestis anno 1648 et sequenti contra*
Cosacos Zaporovios rebelles. It is a quite voluminous account relating the damages caused to the Grand Duchy, Poland and the Christian Church by the rebel Cossacks. The second report – Rerum in M. D. Lithuani-ae per tempus rebellionis Russicae gestarum commentarius […] – was printed in Vienna in 1655 and is a compendium about the same events.

The two works are usually mentioned as De rebus anno 1648 et 1649 contra Zaparovios Cosacos Gestis (Vilnius, 1651).

The rebellion of the Cossacks that took place between 1648 and 1657 is often defined as the Cossack-Polish war, but many more countries were involved. During the first period Bohdan Khmelnytsky, the leader of the insurgents, was able to transform the Cossacks rebellion into a war of independence involving the Ukrainian peasants. The brutality of the Cossacks and their alliance with the Karaites shocked the Christian population of the countries involved and most of all that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Christian Church felt, once again, besieged by the barbaric infidels.

It is precisely this perception of the facts that prompted Kojałowicz to write an account of the early stages of the insurrection. This claim is confirmed by the terminology the Jesuit uses to refer to the insurrectionists and to the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen organizing the repression. The former are (partially) identified with the Scythians not only because of the alliance with the Karaites, but especially because since antiquity these people were considered to live at the borders of the civilized world (as Darius of Persia and the Greeks had claimed). On the other hand, the Polish-Lithuanian governors and hetman fighting or killed by the rebels are often called “Sarmatians heroes” to assimilate them to the valiant Sarmatians armies serving in the Roman Empire. Kojałowicz stresses in many different ways the barbarity of the Cossacks and particularly by means of precise lexical choices. Thus, the insurgents conquered cities and strongholds by
trickery and brute force while the victories of the Commonwealth are the results of strategic competences and personal valour.

It seems the intention to depict the events as a siege of the civilized world has been expressed by the author much more with linguistic and rhetorical choices than by the selection of the events described. In this sense the decision to portray only the first two years of the insurrection is relevant: it was the period of the most shocking triumphs of the Cossacks. The Commonwealth defeat at the Battle of Pyliavtsi, for example, dramatically changed the perception of the threat posed by rebels and infidels. In particular, the Christian Church was suffering, according to the author, from these conflicts.

From the methodological point of view, these works appear much more detailed and realistic than Kojałozwicz’s famous History of Lithuania. Since the events were very recent and were seen by the author himself. Described in a very accurate manner the details about military and political decisions are provided according to sources explicitly mentioned in most cases or coherent with other coeval accounts in other cases when no documents are named. Moreover, in many cases it is clear the attempt to explain the causes of certain events and their connections. Logical and consequential explanations are given, for example, in respect to the support rebels received from peasants.

Albrycht-Stanisław Radziwiłł’s Memories about the Polish Events between 1632 and 1656

A devoted Christian and nobleman educated in the Jesuit college of Vilnius, the Lithuanian Grand Chancellor (from 1623) Albrycht-Stanisław Radziwiłł published several works of religious and ascetic tone. He also decided to put in words his memories about his public role in the life of the Commonwealth and particularly concerning the Cossack-Polish War.

His Memoriale rerum gestarum in Polonia, 1632–1656 is a voluminous report about the Cossack-Commonwealth War. It contains valuable observations and information about the period and specifically concerning political, military and diplomatic events. Despite the apologetic and polemic tone typical of a Catholic reformer, the account provides interesting and unique insides in the diplomatic life of the time. Certain descriptions are so detailed that they have been used to reconstruct the social habits and customs of the highest
bureaucratic class. As an example, Radziwiłł was very precise in the description of social and diplomatic events, thus it is even possible to know what kind of music the Russian delegation of May 3rd was entertained with during the evening banquet (“an Italian comedy called recitative”). These memoirs are interesting and valuable for their accurate description of the Vilnius plague of 1653 too.

As a historian Albrycht-Stanisław Radziwiłł was not acquainted with the new precepts of the erudite school, however the influence of the humanist and especially Jesuits education is perceivable. The events are not connected and rarely does the author investigate the causes and connection between them. For him it is sufficient to mention the facts and demonstrate the effort lavished by the state in military affairs and the influence of providence on human vicissitudes.

Jonas Eismantas’ Threnody about the Fire of Vilnius

The definition of what is a historical subject and what is not and the designation of what is history and what is not have changed through time. They varied from place to place, from civilization to civilization, and even in the same period and in the same country there have been different conceptions of history. Quite often, and more commonly, history had been identified with political history or politic tout court. That was Thucydides’ interpretation and, with reference to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, it is clear that there were mainly political and military events to attract the interests of literates and historians.

Yet, the trend of modern historiography is to move toward a broader interpretation of history including especially the social and economical phenomena. This is, for example, the thought of the École des Annales. What kind of history would we be able to expound without detailed information about weddings, ceremonies, culinary habits and even emotions? The risk of a narrow interpretation of history – that is, make it coincide with political history – would assimilate modern accounts to the most primitive annalistic (at least with reference to the content, if not to the capability to formulate a historical problem).

Nonetheless, even in the 16th and 17th centuries some accounts dealt with non-political events or describing political events derail in order to better depict social and cultural happenings or habits. They did that for the most disparate reasons: it was something exotic or unusu-
al; it was something terrible and stroked the collective imagination or perception of the world; the author had a second purpose besides the narration of the events (to denigrate their enemies’ habits, present them as primitive, provide readers with examples of virtues, etc.).

One of the works that better represent this attitude toward history is Jonas Eismantas’ *Threnodia abo Żałosne Piepie o Zgorzeniu Wilna* [...] – a versed account of the 1610 fire of Vilnius that burnt most of the city to the ground. It is a versed rhyme in the form of threnody, or a funeral lament, written in Polish soon after the fire. Obviously, there are other sources about the fire of Vilnius, but rarely with them it is possible to reconstruct the emotions and the general feeling of the population – one could just imagine risking projecting one’s own modern mentality onto the 17th century’s peoples.

Despite the rhetorical embellishments and the very frequent references to classical mythology, this work is very illustrative and precise in terms of dates and facts and much more useful than other sources to build up a social impression of the event. From the title, it is clear the two-fold intention of the author: to concretely describe the events (for those who did not know), and to illustrate the desperation of both the citizens of Vilnius and that of the rest of the country. The date and day of the event appear in the title. A series of about one hundred verses function as the list of the burnt buildings: we are informed that a tower was damaged, that only the chapel of Saint Casimir was spared while the rest of the church (including the pipe organ) was turned into ashes; that part of the city walls burnt as well, etc.

Even more interesting is that, according to Eismantas (but the hypothesis is quite plausible), it was the widespread opinion the fire razed the capital city to punish all the country for not having respected the will of God and the diviner’s warning and reprimands. Not only the city had been published, according to the common opinion, the whole country had.

*Justus Ludwik Decjusz’s A Book about the Time of King Sigismund (as a conclusion)*

The Alsatian Justus Ludwik Decjusz also known as Jodicus Decius (1485–1545) was Finance Minister and secretary to the King and Grand Duke Sigismund I the Elder. As a historian, he is known for
one of the earliest theorization of Polish Sarmatism in *De vetustatibus Polonorum*. He also wrote history in one book about the times of King Sigismund after 1506 (the coronation as King of Poland).

Jodicus Ludovicus Decius’ *De Sigismundi regis temporibus liber* is mentioned here for a variety of reasons: first of all, it is a peculiar example of history intended as contemporary history; secondly, it was a very influential source about the period it deals with having been used by most Lithuanian historians for centuries; finally, it is an illustrating example of the influence of humanism on historiography.

It is a peculiar “contemporary history” because it narrates events contemporary to the authors, but most of them have not been seen or experienced by the author himself. It is something in between the history of a single event (in the style of Thucydides) and the biography of a king (in the style of Xenophon).

For the history of historiography it is also relevant for the announced ambition of being respectful of the new humanist canon (as the author states in the introduction): to faithfully narrate historical facts; critic of the sources; objectivity; attention to the writing style. Despite these programmatical announcements, the work lacks of critical method and assumes in certain cases the form of the apology either for the King or for the author himself.

**Tasks and discussions**

1. Read and compare Pilgrimovijus’ two relations about the Great Delegation to Moscow. Why did he decide to write a second versed report? In what do the verse and prose relations differ?

2. Read Pilgrimovijus’ descriptions of breakfasts, dinners and his stay in Muscovy. Is it possible to individuate a rhetorical construction? Are they faithful reports? Which figures of speech have been used? What is the function and meaning of these detailed descriptions?

3. Compare Eismantas’ Threnody with other reports of the Vilnius fire. Beside the literary form, in what ways do they differ? Where can we find more details about the buildings destroyed by the fire and those not damaged?

4. Try to find methodological announcements (and define them) in *Equitis Lituani De bello Livonico per decennium gesto*. 

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Literature

Few English works about the texts presented in this section can be mentioned. A short reference to Prančiskus Gradovskis’ work can be found in Harry Dembkowski’s *The Union of Lublin. Polish Federalism in the Golden Age*, Columbia University Press, 1982, p. 91–92. Nevertheless, this work provides a good contextualization of the events and could be used as an introduction to GDL’s political debates.

A very good introduction to the literature and the historical background of the Livonian War is Antanavičius Darius, *Lietuvio bajoro dešimtmetis Livonijos Kara ir jo autorius*, Vilnius, 2006. Obviously, this is also the main study of the *Equitis Lituani De bello Livonico per decennium gesto*. Kojałozwicz’s works have been recently republished and commented in the two volumes of Darius Kuolys, *Lietuvos istorijos įvairiobės*, Vilnius, 2003-2004. Mikalojus Kazimieras Šemeta’s *Relation about the Beginning and Conclusion of the Swedish Protectorate in Samogitia* has been translated in Lithuanian: Juozas Girdzijauskas (ed.), *Mikalojaus Kazimiero Šemetos “Reliacija”*, Vilnius, 1994. A series of articles introduce the reader to the reading of the relation, explain the development of the political relation between Samogitia and Sweden and, particularly in the article of Antanas Tyla, explain why this verse account should be considered an important historical source. Tyla clarify how the study of this text could contribute to enrich Šapoka’s investigations about the Kėdainiai agreement.

VII. History as the History of Men: Fasti, Gesta and Biographies

In contrast to Herodotus and Thucydides, the Greek writer and political man Xenophon (450-354 B.C.) has often been defined as a pseudo-historian, nonetheless a master of (plain) style and able narrators. His *Anabasis* – the narration of his journey with the large army of Greek mercenaries hired by Cyrus the Younger – can be certainly included in the “contemporary histories” discussed in chapter six. However, he is mentioned here as the author of the *Education of Cyrus* or *Cyropaedia*.

This is a sort of biography describing the education of Cyrus II of Persia and, marginally, the historical events of his time. This work became, under many aspects, the model for both the medieval *specula principum* and the humanist biography. In the *Anabasis* greater attention is devoted not only to the life of Cyrus, but also to the process of his education, the formation of his temperament, mentality and qualities. The whole work assumes the tones of a panegyric or, rather, that of a biographic novel whose aim is to educate future regents. The rhetoric of this account is rich and elegant. The inclusion of direct speeches is frequent and the periods are structured to satisfy the taste of refined readers. Conversely, Xenophon’s analytical skills are poor as a critic of the sources. It has been said that in his works history became a vassal of the rhetoric. In the *Anabasis* the historical aspects are functional to the educative intentions.

The subordination of history to other disciplines is a diachronic and transnational phenomenon likewise that of its understanding as a means of education. As mentioned before, the ecclesiastic historiography understood history as a Christian’s life teacher and subdued it to theology. In the classical antiquity Cicero famously defined history *magistra vitae*, but in a civil and political sense. However, history has often been seen as narration *tout court*. *Historia* was equated to *fabula* and appreciated especially for his narrative value. History assumed during the classical antiquity, and then again with the humanists, the role of *opus oratorium maxime* – the highest literary or-
atorical composition – valuable exclusively because of his capability to offer *voluptas* and *iucunditas* – pleasure and enjoyment. This attitude toward history can be summarized with one of Cicero’s famous statements: “I usually read these [historical] works for amusement”.

It is precisely this conception that makes history the “maid servant” of rhetoric and historical works just good repertoires of *topoi*. This is the idea of the Latin rhetorician Quintilian: “as a matter of fact, history is much closer to poetry […] and it is possible to say it is poetry in prose which is written for the pleasure to narrate and not to demonstrate something”. This kind of reflections caused a lack of interest in the historical method and it is for this reason that only with the decline of humanism a real method developed. Both classical authors and humanist worked in accordance with those very general principles expounded by Cicero: “who does not know that the first rule is to dare not to lie? And the second rule is to dare saying the whole truth? To avoid any suspect of favouritism?”

While the form and function of these historical accounts had been shaped by the idea of rhetoric, their subjects were the result of the secular conception of life and man. The religious theocentricism of the Medieval Church and Reformed Christians was marginalized by the humanist interest in man and his secular needs. Similarly, the role of God and providence in history became marginal while much more attention was turned toward the man as an individual. The opposition between these two historiographical manners had been expounded by means of a series of oppositions where the first term refers to the ecclesiastical historiography and the second to the secular (humanistic): firstly, *studia divinitatis* - *studia humanitatis*, that is, the knowledge of the past has been understood as the knowledge of divine interference in the human world vs. history as knowledge of man and for men. Secondly, the opposition can be represented by the conflict between Scholasticism and Neo-Platonism and thirdly by that between collectivism and individualism. While the first and the third oppositions are commonly accepted as categories quite representative of real historical production, recently it has been argued that Neo-Platonism was, as a matter of fact, a reinterpretation of the Scholastic or, at least was not in opposition to it. That is why it is possible to speak about Christian Humanism.
Particularly interesting for the history of historiography is the second opposition: while typical of the ecclesiastic historiography was the interest in the events of humanity as a whole, humanist historiography was interested in single men as historical figures and examples of human (not divine or holy) virtues. In such an opposition it is possible to see the different forms of historical accounts: universal histories vs. histories of men and hagiographies vs. biographies.

With reference to Lithuanian historiography, it is possible to notice, as mentioned before, that a real ecclesiastic historiography did not exist and when existed was often the product of a dissimilar culture. On the contrary, numerous and representative are the examples of the secular historiography of classical and humanist ascendance. This comes as no surprise since the intellectuals of the Grand Duchy were “grown” in a laic cultural contest and it was more natural for them to accept the secular ideology of the humanists than that of the unworldly ecclesiastics.

Moreover, since the late 15th century numerous scholars from the centres of humanism were invited or, somehow, worked in the country and especially in the palaces of the Lithuanian noblemen and, naturally, in those of the Grand Dukes. Architects, plasterers, mentors, poets and scholars were particularly active in the Radziwiłł, Pac, Valavicz, Chodkiewicz, Goštautai and Giedraitis families. These palaces were the centres from where the humanist culture spread in the GDL (to not mention the Grand Duke’s palace and its library – celebrated even by Marcin Kromer in his history of Poland).

This situation makes clear the reasons for the biographies to be focusing mainly on noblemen and their families. Noblemen were not only the patrons of these men of letters, but also the military leaders of the GDL ranks in the battles against infidels and barbarians. Most importantly they were the tutors of the civil liberty against the attempt of centralization made by Kings and Grand Dukes. Grand Dukes were celebrated too, but clearly humanists preferred by far the ancient ones like Gediminas, Algirdas, Kęstutis, Vytautas, and Jogaila. Examples of this humanistic devotion to secular deeds are Saliamonas Risinskis’ *Rerum ab illustrißimo principe Christophoro Radvilo* and *De origine gentis Radviliae syntagma* (1604) or Albrycht-Stanisław Radziwiłł’s *De rebus Sigismundi III.*
Ioannes Radvanus’ poem *Radvilias* is a good example of this interest in the ancient Grand Dukes and their celebration as annihilators of Germans and Muscovites, but also as moral and virtue models. He was not the only literate to celebrate the noblemen’s deeds:

As one can see, looking at the merits of yours ancestors in times of war and peace, they always distinguished for outstanding wisdom and conceptions. In difficult and dangerous times for the Republic, they bravely and doggedly lent support to their home country. They were so puissant that in their home country have always been supremely influential and weighty. Being valiant commanders, wisest senators, they won everyone’s recognition.

Unquestionably, from this Andreas Volanus’ passage about Mikolaj VI Radziwill’s family emerges the intention to celebrate noblemen for their military and civil values but not as an end in themselves. Rather, they were praised because of the benefits to the whole civil society.

With reference to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the historical and literary genre defined as humanistic biography from which, according Eduard Fueter (and others), modern historiography has risen, exhibits a rich a various tradition. It was not unusual for these biographies to assume the form of funeral orations. Among the most famous are Veclovas J. Agripa’s *Oratio funebris de illustrissimi principis et domini Johannis Radzvilli* (1553); Andreas Volanus’ *Oratio funebris in laudem Illustriss[imi]Principis Nicolai Radvili* (1584); and Christophorus Varsevicius’ *Vita, res gestae, et abitus Stephani Regis Poloniae oration funebri* (1580).

**Joannis Vislicensis’ The Prussian War**

Joannis Vislicensis is better known as the forefather of Latin epic poetry in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. His style and taste are permeated throughout Renaissance ideology. He wrote an ode to Konstanty Ostrogski celebrating his deeds in the Battle of Orsha (however with little detail about historical facts), an ode to the King Sigismund, an elegy to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and an epigram on the envious. His best-known work is the poem *Bellum Prutenum* (1516).

This historical account in verse consists of three books written in hexameters. The chosen metre clearly indicates the intention to write
a historical account with epic tones. This intention is made clear by the appeal to the muses Olympus and Calliope for an inspiration to glorify the King and Grand Duke Sigismund I the Elder, his grandfather Jogaila and the Jagiellon dynasty (all significantly called “Kings of Sarmats”).

Relevant for the history of historiography is the second book defined by the author himself as a history of Lithuania. Lithuania is described here as the native land of Jogaila and celebrated as the country that produced his glorious dynasty. The main focus of the narration is the Teutonic occupation of Prussia and the battle of Žalgiris (Grunwald).

Despite the intentions to write an epic poem, the account has some relevance from the historiographical point of view too, being based on historical sources. It is mainly a poetic transcription of Jan Długosz’s history of Poland. However, to give a more supranational structuring, and especially in order to elevate the deeds of the Grand Dukes, Vislicensis had recourse to other sources and mainly to Jogaila’s letters. Nonetheless, the tone of the whole account can hardly be defined erudite: the author aims at imitating the classical epic models and pays attention to the form more than to the content.

*Jonas Rivockis’ Portrait of a Great Hero or Leo Sapieha Elegiac Description*

From the title of Jonas Rivockis’ biography of Leo Sapieha, it is possible to understand the tone and the intentions of the whole work: it is significantly called *Idea Magni Herois sive Illustissimus Dominus D. Leo Sapieha [...] panegyrice descriptus* (1645). The baroque rhetoric powerfully displayed in the first pages of the first of the 13th *orationes* which constitute the work. Here the author compares himself to an orator and defends his right to include in the biography of the hero, in contrast with the rules of the *ars dicendi*, the whole Sapieha family. The operation is licit because “not by chance [...] Leo Sapieha merited honour”, but because his family is somehow blessed with fortune.
In this passage the two-fold aspect of the biography transpires. On the one hand, it is a representative example of baroque rhetoric and humanist ideology. On the other hand, the Jesuits’ understanding of power is made evident. The Jesuit Jonas Rivockis could not evade expounding the Society’s conception of authority in such an educative-oriented opus. In accordance to these principles, the whole biography transfigures in a humanistic “mirror for the princes” – something specular to Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Consequently, the Sapieha family is celebrated as rightful and, somehow, transcendentally empowered. Leo Sapieha, in particular, is praised for his morality (the term recurs with unusual frequency) and for his decision to renounce to the heretical doctrine and accept the Roman Catholic faith.

Despite the panegyric label the author attributes his work, the definition *vita* would better represent the character of the biography. As already noted by both Mintautas Čiurinskas and Józef Bieliński, the structure of the text and the research behind it demonstrate scrupulous historical research. For example, the fourth speech in which the delegation to Moscow is narrated is rich in details, as is the sixth where a number of details and precious pieces of information about Sapieha’s activities during the years of the interregnum are provided. Finally, the last oration adopts an almost annalistic structure mentioning the deeds of Leo Sapieha year by year.

**Jonas Rivockis’ Life of Simonas Rudnicki**

The term and literary genre label *vita* appears in a second biographical work of the Jesuit Jonas Rivockis: *Vita illustrissimi ac reverendissimi domini d. Simonis Rudnicki episcopis Varmiensis* (1645). It is an illustrative example of biographic works, however, it is very different from Sapieha’s life.

This account is shorter, not divided in sections and, most importantly, not enriched by rhetorical embellishment. On the contrary, it is the coherence and cohesion of the narration, together with the numerous pieces of information about the life of the bishop that makes this account valuable for the history of the historiography. For example, the fact that the only reliable source about the life of the bishop and the date of his birth is precisely Rivockis’ biography is illustrative.
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**Joannes Radvanus’ Radvilias**

*Radvilias, sive, De vita, et rebus praeclarissime gestis, immortalis memoriae, illustrissimi principis Nicolai Radivili Ge- orgii filii, ducis in Dubinki ac Bierze […] libri quatuor* (1591) is the long and significant title of Joannes Radvanas’ biography of Mikołaj “the Red” Radziwiłł.

It is significant, first of all, because the label *vita* makes evident that it is an example of that humanistic epic aimed at praising one single man (differently from the panegyrics of a whole family as Kojałowicz’s *Fasti Radviliani*). Secondly, the form of the short title – *Radvilias* – clearly recalls other classical and coeval epic poems like, as noted by Sigitas Narbutas, Homer’s *Ilias*, Vergil’s *Aeneis*, or Motiejus Kazimieras Sarbievijus’ *Lechias*. It is clear that the author wanted his work to be immediately recognized as an example of the celebrated “genre” of historical epic of a single person.

Precisely because of the epic tone of the account, the life and deeds of Radziwiłł the Red are neither chronicled in an ordered and structured manner, nor with any richness of detail and connections between facts and their causes. Naturally, information about the Radziwiłł family is provided together with detailed reports about the “hero’s” youth, education and deeds. However, the main focus of the author is the values and the morality of the noble.

**Albert Wijuk Kojałowicz’s Radziwił Chronicle**

The Jesuit historian and theologian Albert Wijuk Kojałowicz decided to “write a concise history of Lithuania to satisfy the expectations of those noblemen waiting for the second part of the larger history of Lithuania in two volumes” and found out that “no better concise history could have been written if not that of the illustrious family” of Janusz Radziwiłł “the young” – to whom the *Fasti Radviliani gesta Illustrissimae Domus Ducum Radziwił (1653)* is dedicated.

Patently, this work is much more a panegyric of the Radziwiłł family than a proper historical research. The family deeds are compared to those of the Iliad. As a consequence, the chronicle is short on details and historical facts, and evidence of an erudite research is scant (as already outlined by Vladas Žulys). Moreover, the whole account is very tendentious and one-sided: the Protestant branch of the family receives almost no mention. Evidently, Kojałowicz wanted to
celebrate, together with the noble family, their support for Catholicism and the Society of Jesus.

Nonetheless, the Jesuit demonstrates, at least in the first pages of the chronicle, some kind of research: first of all in the annals of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which he calls Russian annals. Among other “sources” for the most ancient history of the family “the stories of elder” are mentioned. Indirectly, Kojałowicz demonstrates his awareness of other sources about the history of the family and in some passages is probably referring to the recently published work of Maciej Stryjkowski and, possibly, some accounts reported Długosz’s annals.

Peculiar to this Kojałowicz’s work is the continuous reworking of his sources to make them relevant for the history of the Radziwiłł family. For example, the legendary finding of Lizdeika is here connected with the origin of the Radziwiłł family while in other sources – and especially in Stryjkowski – there are no such relations.

Boguslaw Radziwiłł’s autobiography (and biography)

Only a few examples of humanistic autobiographies could be provided dealing with the historiography of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. One of the most representative is Boguslaw Radziwiłł’s autobiography.

The reason for writing an autobiography had been made clear by Radziwiłł himself: it was to be used as a model to understand what to say and how to narrate his life in the newly-commissioned biography. Radziwiłł himself admits writing this autobiography also because of feeling underestimated.

This text became the main sources of an anonymous work completed in 1674: Vita clarissimi ac illustrissimi principis domini Boguslai Radzvili. It is possible to define this work as a summa of the humanistic biographical “canon”. First of all, the genealogy and deeds of the family are introduced. Then, the gesta of the princely magnate are described in epical tones and his morality and virtues are praised by means of rhetorical embellishments. Finally, the death of the hero is recounted respecting the rules of funeral elegies.

Maciej Stryjkowski’s The Polish, Lithuanian, Samogitian and All Russia Chronicle

Maciej Stryjkowski’s Kronika Polska, Litewska, Zmodzka i wszystkiej Russi […] published in 1582 is among the most relevant historical
works at the turn of the 16th century especially for its influence on future Lithuanian histories. We are referring, primarily, to Albert Wijuk Kojalowicz’s History of Lithuania and August Ludwig von Schlözer’s studies.

As mentioned above, the late 16th century was characterized by the writings of synthesis of national history. Stryjkowski’s work is representative of this tendency even if his interpretation of national history radically differs from that of Kromer, for example. Moreover, the Masovian seems to have a conception of nation and motherland that is very different from the modern one. Sarmatia and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the latter especially in the epic poem O początkach, wywodach, dzielnościach, sprawach rycerskich i domowych sławnego narodu litewskiego, żemojdzkiego i ruskiego – *On the Genesis, Descent, Courage, and Valiant Endeavours of the Lithuanians, Samogitians, and Ruthenians*) are the two entities with which he identifies himself (that he calls motherland). However, political and ethnographic criteria often overlap each other.

The historiographic value of the *Kronika Polska* can be perfectly summarized with Józef Ignacy Kraszewski’s words: “Stryjkowski’s chronicle is a monstrous compilation full of falsification, imagination, artistry, and anachronisms.” However, the 19th century author was mainly referring to the pantheon depicted by his 16th century precursor. The harsh critics apply to other aspects of the Chronicle to a lesser degree. Other researchers have commented “this work can hardly be called scholarly, but it served as a useful reference source for many later authors”.

Nevertheless, Stryjkowski used various sources and, even if did it not in a critical manner, his work is meritorious for having saved some of those sources from oblivion. As an example, it seems he had recourse to the so-called Lithuanian annals and great similitudes emerge with the Chronicle of Bychowiec, which is integrated with the missing initial part. In this respect, Stryjkowski’s work proves useful in reconstructing now lost older accounts.

Similarly to most coeval historians, and in sharp contrast with Marcin Kromer’s history, the author of the chronicle often makes reference to his own experience and his participation in the events narrated. Some extracts of his history even assume the form of an
autobiography. For example, the Lithuanian campaign he experienced for himself is highly emotive. The reasons why these autobiographical passages and other imaginative descriptions of events are included in the account have to be seen in Stryjkowski’s declared hate for the Teutonic Knights and his interest in the contemporary religious and political conflicts.

To exemplify, we can refer to a recent study on Stryjkowski’s popularization of the deeds of the powerful Russian family of Romanov. It is narrated in the context of the rivalry between Russian-Orthodox and Lithuanian-Catholic parts of the political elites of the GDL, which was taking place at the time of Stryjkowski’s life. “In this context one might also consider a new version of Ostrogski family legend contained in The Chronicle. It appears that Stryjkowski was the first ever author who attempted to trace this family roots not to the princes of Druck, which was generally accepted at that time, but to Romanovichi, who in any case presented themselves as ideal protoplasts for an ambitious, powerful family at the crossroads between the orthodox and catholic faith on the one hand and the Crown and the Grand Duchy on the other”.

The political and religious ideology of the author strongly influenced the style of his works. “Stryjkowski used the first line of Vergil’s Aeneid to glorify the armoury and bravery of Sarmatians warriors at the beginning of his fifteen page description of the battle [of Grunwald- Tannenberg]. He also compared the great noise produced by the fighting multitude with the destruction of Troy and Cartage”. As other authors had, he emphasized the self-confidence of the Germans before the battle. However, Stryjkowski “added a hypothetic claim of the Teutonic Knights’ plans to kill all the Poles, Lithuanians, and Ruthenians, to wipe these nations’ names off the face of the earth and to settle their lands with Germans.”

**Tasks and discussions**

1. Read and compare the openings of the two most significant histories of Lithuania before the advent of the erudite historiography: Stryjkowski’s and Kojałowicz’s. In one of them are evident classical reminiscences, in which one? Whose words
are echoed? Is it possible to glimpse the historical method and the aims of the two historians from these introductions?

2. Stryjkowski demonstrated in several passages at least attention for the verisimilitude of the account, if not a real method. However, it has been correctly noted that in other passages there are clamorous chronological incongruences. Similarly, the Baltic pantheon he depicts is unrealistic. What do these “mistakes” depend on?

3. It has been said that Lithuania does not have a national epic. However, Stryjkowski’s poem “On the Genesis, Descent, Courage, and Valiant Endeavours of the Lithuanians, Samogitians, and Ruthenians” has all the characteristics of the national epic? In which sense? What is the connection between this work and Jan Czeczot’s “Spiewki o Dawnych do Roku 1434”?

Literature

Unfortunately, almost non-existent is the English literature about the subjects introduced in this chapter. Similarly, as far as we know, there are no English translations available. About biographies in Lithuanian historiography, the most important study is Mintautas Čiurinskas, XVI–XVII amžiaus Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės biografistika, Vilnius, 2006. Here a number of other biographies are mentioned. Moreover, the book contains a rich bibliography listing works in many different languages. It should be a perfect starting point for an investigation in this specific area.

Once more we invite to read Mečislovas Jučas, Lietuvos metraščiai ir kronikos, Vilnius, 2002 for a detailed study about Maciej Stryjkowski’s Kronika Polska, Litewska, Zmodzka i wszystkiej Rusi [...]. However, the reader should be aware of the author tendency to focus almost exclusively on passages and aspects of the chronicle supporting his thesis of the “Lithuanian patriotism” of Stryjkowski. The same work is valuable for the comparative study of Stryjkowski and Kojałowicz.

It was not included in the authors analyzed in this chapter because his literary production hardly can be defined historical, but Albertas Goštautas memorials to the Queen Bona Sforza should be investigated in order to understand other coeval works and the intellectual milieu of 17th century Lithuania. A Very good reference, in this respect, is Sigitas Narbutas (ed.), Šešioliktojo amžiaus raštija, Vilnius, 2000.
VIII. The Transition towards the Erudite Historiography

As noted in previous sections, in the course of time the function and meaning of history have been variously interpreted. There were historians who understood history as the narration of stories either for the pleasure of reading and narrating, or for the necessity to educate. In contrast, there were historians who continuously reflected on the method of the historical research either to make the narration more likely or to develop appropriate instruments both to investigate sources and to efficiently report their researches’ results. In the antiquity, Polybius was a representative example of the latter tendency. This is the result of Polybius lack of interest in the rhetorical aspects of the narration and the non-influence of religious belief on his conception of history.

It is the progressive freeing of history from rhetoric and theology that make possible the transition to the erudite method. Chronologically, it is with the humanism that a sort of philological method developed: as an example, Lorenzo Valla in 1440 investigated a Church document – the so-called Donation of Constantine – from the linguistic and historical perspective daring to demonstrate that the Donation was a false.

In conjunction with this process, scholars continued to reflect on the meaning of history as an independent discipline. In 1446 Guarino Veronese sanctioned the necessary distinction between history and poetry like this:

History must be clearly distinct from poetic. The latter, because of its own nature, prises without reasons things that do not deserve to be prised, and without shame tells of doubtful events, without any scruple they invent winged horses, and transform men into deities […]. At the same time, history – as a strict mother – does not dare to pronounce words, which might be denied or accused of fallacy.

The debate led to a clear distinction between poetry and history and the understanding of the latter as an autonomous discipline. In con-
junction with this process, history is praised as a pragmatic tool. This is the reason for Jean Bodin’s apology of history:

The lives of the men must evolve in accordance with the holy teaching of history. [...] by the means of history it is not only possible to explain past situations, but also glimpse future ones. [...] this is the ultimate end of history, that is to tell readers which examples to imitate and which not.

However, a second and equally successful conception of history co-existed with these: basing on Aristotle’s thought, history is compared to poetry and the latter is praised because more philosophical and, consequently, more elevated. Poetry speaks about universal things while history only about specific ones. Nonetheless, the ancient Ciceronian understanding cannot be salvaged. To use Bodin’s words, now “history should be nothing else than a reverberation of the truth.”

Together with the debates about the meaning of history evolved that about the profession and characteristics of the historian and his “tools”. One of the first such definitions appears in Giovanni Pontano’s Actius:

The historian’s cardinal skills are brevitas [concision] and celeritas [swiftness]. More precisely [writing a historical account] it is necessary to frequently use the asyndeton, the descriptive infinitives, digressions, and direct speech, in order to make the narration livelier.

Similarly, more refined became the discussion about the means to obtain knowledge about the past and especially about how to know the truth. Marcin Kromer and Jean Bodin are among the first historians to try to define a sort of historical method. The first such attempts, while somewhat amateurish, produced a noticeable progress. For example Bodin wrote:

When the authors do not agree, I would say that it is much better to believe those who are [chronologically] closer to our times if they use realistic or verisimilar argumentations. As a matter of fact this is the nature of the truth. It does not display itself unless a lot of time is passed
The Transition towards the Erudite Historiography

Despite being a precept opposing modern methodology, it produced other very innovative conclusions. For example, Bodin himself surmised that “a historian will not be able to express a judgment about a historical account until he has deeply understood its author’s mentality and habits”.

With respect to the subject of these historical researches, it is possible to state that most of them are political histories. Moreover, most of these histories tried to somehow include discussions and facts about Roman political life and institutions because it was considered an interesting cue for the coeval debate about political power. It is specifically this interest in the political situation of the past to stimulate the curiosity toward a variety of historical sources previously considered irrelevant. The antiquarian taste of the humanists produced progresses in the historical discipline too. Among the new investigated sources were included not only ancient accounts, but also coins, monuments and other documents. During the second half of the 16th century the methodology of the historical research made a qualitative jump especially because of the progress of archaeology. We are referring, in particular, to the activities of Flavio Biondo and of the so-called erudite school.

Despite these progresses, the methodology of historical research still suffers from incoherence. Even Biondo, while critical when analysing other historians’ account, seems blind in front of the documents: “once he found a document, he believed it and seemed certain of having found the truth.” The contribution of the humanists is mainly the widening of the concept of sources. Johann Turmair’s (Aventinus) declaration is illustrative:

It is with great interest that I visited private archives, public libraries, I flipped through pamphlets, manuscripts, votive tablets, narrations, fasti, the annals of all the people, certificates, I have analysed statues, relics, gravestones, trophies, epitaphs, paintings, carvings, churches, in one word all the testimony of the past.

Due to these debates and speculations, it is in the 16th century that the first treatises about history as an independent discipline appear. Among the most relevant, it is possible to mention Iovianus Ponta-
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nus’ *Actius* (1507), Francesco Patrizi’s *Dialogues about History* (1560), and François Baudouin’s *De institutione historiae universae et eius cum iurisprudentia coniunctione* (1561). The debate about history as an independent discipline spread across Europe and found its culmination in the collection of texts on the subject known as *Artis historicae penus* and published in Basel in 1579.

In the whole of Europe two works stems for the new conception of the discipline of history. From the theoretical point of view Jean Bodin’s methodological treatise *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566) sanctioned the transition to the modern notion of history. The most concrete and mature implementation of these theorizations is possibly Marcin Kromer’s *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX* (1555).

Despite this early example of critical historiography, it would be necessary to wait until the works of Adam Naruszewicz and specifically the imposition of the so-called “Naruszewicz school” to see the embedding of a substantial critical production. In particular, it is with the critical attitude and brisk archive research of Ignacy Danilowicz and Matthew Dogiel that the modern historiography arises in the region.

**Marcin Kromer’s About the Origin and Deeds of the Polish in 30 books**

As just mentioned, Marcin Kromer’s *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri 30* (1555), can be considered one of the earliest examples of erudite method in Europe. Not only is it one of the first historical accounts to include a distinct and evident section devoted to the list of the sources; it also discusses the information provided in each source in order either to draw conclusions, or to give the reader the opportunity to evaluate for himself the status of the sources.

Similarly, Kromer’s history of Poland is one of the first accounts where notes are systematically used. As in the research of Pontano and Biondo, in Kromer’s work an interest in the sources and especially in their variety is evident. Nevertheless, his conception of historical sources is still pretty limited as in the works of the Canon of Krakow Stanislaw Górski. Quoting the documents, Kromer exhibits competence in this field and reveals his knowledge of the works of the Italian humanists. Like Biondo and Francesco Robotello he usu-
ally omits the opening and closing formulas quoting only the relevant parts of the documents. Likewise, the humanist style is perceivable in the transcription of the documents themselves (in this respect Paolo Giovio is the model). Finally, it has been noted that Kromer is particularly accurate when quoting documents: such citations are always introduced by expressions like *verbis diplomati utor* (we are quoting the word of a document); always the place where the document was found is mentioned and always the reader is made aware of the fact that some documents are not original, but just copies.

The influence of Górski is particularly evident in the method of Kromer and precisely in his study of archive acts. Nevertheless, precisely like Bodin and Biondo, Kromer rarely doubts the authenticity and sincerity of the documents. Using the history of Długosz he prefers to believe archive documents when the narration of his predecessor is not realistic. However, the lack of criticism toward the documents themselves is evident: “consequently, I will stick to the truth of the ancient writings and privileges”. He even openly states “to me, I prefer to believe a privilege than Długosz.”

As typical of the 16th century, the account of Kromer presents itself as a synthesis of the national history. On the contrary, the author’s attitude towards his own experience of the more recent events is original: differently from Marcin Bielski and Maciej Stryjkowski, in the *rebus gestis Polonorum* there are no traces of autobiographical facts or, to use a fortunate expression, of the confessions “*de se ipso*”.

As a matter of fact, Kromer’s history is an extract of various histories and in particular of those written by Długosz, Miechovita, and Wapowski. In contrast to his predecessors, the author realizes this synthesis with an evident critical attitude: he distinguishes between relevant and marginal events and problems. Moreover, and most importantly, he tries to find relations between events and to connect his country’s affairs with its neighbours. It is for these peculiarities that
his work was extremely influential on the historiography of the 16th and 17th century. At least as much as Naruszewicz’s was for that of the 18th and early 19th.

**Augustine Rotundus’ Short History of the Lithuanian Dukes**

Augustine Rotundus (original surname Mieleski) is often defined as the first Lithuanian historian. His most significant works are associated with his political and legal activities. Such an attitude does not surprise in a scholar educated to the Renaissance principles in Wittenberg and Padua. The precept to avoid theoretical speculations if no practical results can be achieved is evident in all his activities, in his life and, consequently, in his literary production. Precisely because of his education – he took a doctorate in civil and canon law – and his role in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – he worked for the royal chancellery in Cracow and was then appointed chief magistrate in Vilnius – Rotundus has always exhibited great interest in the legal debate.

Illustrating, in this respect, are the letter to Andreas Volanus *De libertate politica sive civili* and the *epistola illustrissimum ad Dominum et reverendissimum Georgium Radivilum*. Even when writing about religious events, his legal and legislative interests occupied a prominent role: in *De dignitate ordinis ecclesiastici Regni Poloniae* not only he criticises the Reformed Faith, he also tries to contextualize the religious debate in the political situation of the Commonwealth. This attitude is typical of most representatives of the lower nobility of the Republic of Two Nations in a period when the power of the king was fluctuating between absolutist tendencies and total loss of control on many regal properties in favour of the higher nobility. Legislators and scholars were trying to find a balance between these two tendencies. During the 16th century this debate took the form of a political movement claiming a right to public and state lands which were illegally held by various magnates: it is known as *executionist movement* or *executionism* (see the next drilldown section).

Very influenced by the theories of the executionist movement are Rotundus historical works. On the one hand this influence made his historical accounts tendentious since they were aiming at an ideological education of the readers, not to the knowledge of the past. On the
other hand, the interest for the development of civil rights and laws led to a historiographic style closer to that of the law historian Ignacy Danilowicz (even if no comparisons can be made between the primitive method of the former and the scholar one of the latter). Nonetheless, mythological excurses are very common in Rotundus narrations. Representative is Rotundus’ *Epitome principum Lituaniae* (1566).

The otherwise critical attitude of Rotundus (he refused most of the unsustainable legends and accounts preserved in the Lithuanian annals) was somehow attenuated by the necessity to intervene in the polemic with the supporter of a Polish superiority in the Union of the Two Nations. Rotundus felt the need to defend Lithuania rights, but did it at the expenses of his critical method. Severe criticism was launched against Lithuania and its people by Stanislas Orzechowski in his pamphlet *Quincunx*. In 1566 the *Dialogue of a Polish with a Lithuanian* or *Rozmowy Pole z Litwinem* appeared. It has been supposed Rotundus was the author (possibly together with Volanus). It is an answer to the accuse of Tyranny because in Lithuanian the throne was inherited in line of succession whereas Poland had an elected monarch. The Lithuanian pamphlet, by the means of a historical investigation, tries to show that a system of government which prevented its monarch from controlling the all-powerful nobles was a questionable achievement and resulted in weakening the nation as a whole. Clearly, the execution of the law is central again in this work.

In order to contest the claim of superiority of the Poles, Rotundus included in the *Dialogue* a short appendix on the genealogy of Lithuanian rulers, emphasizing their established and honourable lineage. A more exhaustive genealogy, the *Epitome*, was included in the preface of Rotundus’ Latin translation of the Second Lithuanian Statute. The anti-Polish tendency is evident in this work too. In his preface he proposed that Latin should be used in the writing of Lithuanian state documents and laws, because he maintained that Latin was the original language of the people. This is connected to his intention to prove the superiority of Lithuanian over the Poles. The use of the mythological origins of the Lithuanians from the Romans (an interesting version of the legend of Palemon) is functional too.

Unfortunately his most important historical work, *Chronica sive historia Lithuaniae*, is now lost.
Drilldown section 6: The Executionist Movement

The so-called executionist movement or just executionism was a 16th century political, legislative, religious, and philosophical movement very influenced by the spread in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the ideas of both Reformers and humanists. The meaning of the label is more evident in the Polish terms used to refer to it: egzekucja praw or enforcement of the laws and egzekucja dóbr – enforcement of property. The supporter of the movement, mainly representatives of the lesser nobility (most famously Jan Zamoyski), asked first of all for the restitution of public and state lands which were illegally held by various magnates. Jan Łaski in Poland and Augustine Rotundus were among the most prominent philosophers and writers involved in the debate.

This ideological debate was, however, much more complex and did not limit to the opposition to the abuse of the existing laws by the higher nobility or demanding the actual implementation of the already existing laws. Relevant for the supporter of the movement was the religious debate and in particular the freedom of faith. They also demanded the return of crown lands to the king, mainly for their relevance in the taxation and military recruitment systems, and more power for the parliament (Sejm). Specifically the supporters of the executionism were opposing the possibility for one person to hold more state offices at the same time. The executionists, as it is evident in the works of Rotundus, supported a strong central authority, more power for the lesser nobility and less influence of the magnates.

The recurring political theme of many Sejms in the forty-year-period between 1537 and 1578 was the dissatisfaction with the way in which laws made by the Sejm
were enforced by the executive. We are mainly referring to the Łaski’s Statute of 1505. Eventually, the Sejm developed its own leadership and political movement. It went through several phases starting from a conflict of the legislative with the executive Church over the crowning of Sigismund Augustus without the consent of the Seym.

It is at the Sejm of Cracow in 1538 that Sigismund I made a first commitment to enforce the laws promulgated by the Seym and to not publish laws without the consent of the Seym. The resolutions revealed partially successful and lead toward a partial return to state of Crown lands. Less successful was the debate about the other problem tackled by “the Sejms of the execution of laws”: the question of the freedom of conscience. Much more difficult would have been the solution to the rise of antagonism between the Catholics and the Protestants.

Albert Wijuk Kojalowicz’s Short History of the Church in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

The Miscellanea rerum ad statum ecclesiasticum in Magno Lithuaniae Ducatu pertinentia of the Jesuit Albert Wijuk Kojalowicz was published in 1650, the same year of the first part of his History of Lithuania, and precisely for this reason received less attention from the scholars.

This work is interesting and representative for the history of historiography because of the merging of erudite method and propagandistic attitude. As a matter of fact, the whole research, even if meticulously conducted, clearly aims to represent a situation favourable to the union of the (Orthodox and Christian) churches. Accordingly, some facts and sources have been distorted or ambiguously interpreted to promote Jesuit ideologies – primarily, the connection between a good government and the morality of the regents.

As an example, narrating the origins of Catholics, Provoslaves, Uniates and Protestants he stresses the moral virtue of the regents who brought Lithuania to Catholicism and particularly of Jogaila, pointing out the relation between the moral values of the noblemen and the strength of the Catholic religion. As expected, great stress is
placed on the description of the Union of Brest of 1596. As well with no surprise comes the quotation of Marcin Kromer at the beginning of the section devoted to the Christian religion. The quotation of Kromer (together with Guagnini) makes evident the fact that the history of Latin Church in this region is a history of the struggle of this faith against the spread of the reformed one and the persistence of the Greek.

Moreover, citing the work of Kromer, Kojałowicz aims to refer to the Polish scholar’s idea of “rebirth” of the individual and of the whole society through the reformation of the most important social institution and regents. This idea is reflected in the eighth sermon to the Diet of Skarga and is a persistent theme in the polemic literature of the Jesuits of the first half of the 16th century. Kojałowicz makes no exception and wants to make clear this position from the first page of his Miscellanea Rerum.

Soon after, the connection between unity of faith and political unity is stressed describing the development of the reign of Jogaila after 1386: “And after 1386 he [Jogaila] united all his domain of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania not only with the Kingdom of Poland, but with the Church of Christ”. Even writing about the Orthodox Church, Kojałowicz takes every chance to mention the unitarist effort of the ancient Lithuanian regents. Therefore, great relevance is given to the years 1415-1418 when the Metropolitan of Kiev Grigoriye Camblak participated in the Conceleal of Constance where he gave a speech about the union of the churches: “he was sent there by Vytautas for several other reasons but mainly to take care of the union between the Greek and the Roman Churches”. It is revealing that Kojałowicz wants to stress two things: first of all that it was the regent who sent him to the council; second that his main mission was that of taking care of the union of the churches. No mention of the other tasks he was requested to do is made. The centre of the passage is about his religious mission and the effects it had on his country. Once more, the strong connection between religious and political matter is stressed.

In other passages, Kojałowicz changes his apologetic tone to a more severe one with reference to the decision of Duke Alexander to give some Vilnius citizen a privilege that consisted of a partial tax
reduction. The Lithuanian Jesuit criticizes this action of the regent because the privilege was given only to Roman Christians living in the city and, in his opinion, this discriminatory act had certainly weakened the Unitarian effort. As a matter of fact, this measure induced many Orthodox to renounce formally their faith while keeping the Greek creed as their private faith. This act, in fact, would have stressed the difference between Orthodox and Latin based mainly on the exteriority of the rites in open opposition to what the sustainers of the union, and particularly Jesuits, were suggesting.

If a further confirmation of Kojałowicz’s intention to stress the unionist attempts made by Orthodox is needed, nothing might be more representative than a voluntary and conscious manipulation of historical facts. While up to this point, Kojałowicz respected the reports of his openly quoted sources – Marcin Kromer and Alexander Guagnini, he betrayed them when describing the events related to Harasim Voluin-Vladimir. Despite Harasim being elected Metropolitan in Constantinople thanks to the support of the Duke and because of his rigid Orthodoxy, Kojałowicz affirms that Harasim was a supporter of the Union of the Churches. The sources used by Kojałowicz to make this claim are unknown. However, it is more realistic to believe he deliberately manipulated the historical truth in order not to compromise the image of Lithuanian regents he was trying to give his readers. The involvement of the Duke in the election of a Metropolitan of Constantinople was as a matter of fact contrary to the idea of the continuous effort of the regents to reach a union. By presenting the Metropolitan as a unionist himself, Kojałowicz was not only preserving the image of the regents he created, but once more stressed the fact that the Orthodox themselves were favourable to the union of the Churches.

*Albert Wijuk Kojałowicz’s History of Lithuania*

The most renowned and studied early modern Lithuanian historical work is certainly the two volumes of the Jesuit Albert Wijuk Kojałowicz’s *Historiae Lithuaniae* (1650 and 1669). This articulated and mature oeuvre as been considered one of the most important studies of the Lithuanian history from the mid-seventeenth century and was used as main source for Lithuanian history until 19th century.
The whole work has been presented by the author himself as a translation of Stryjkowski’s Polish chronicle. However, it is evident the Jesuit had recourse to a number of other sources certainly in order to make his narration more realistic and accurate. It has been demonstrated that he used Peter of Dusburg chronicle, the history of Długosz, compilations of the Lithuanian annals, and even state documents preserved in the archives of noble families. Certainly, by doing this, Kojałowicz intended both to demonstrate his erudition and respect the dictates of the contemporary “art of history-writing”. He was unquestionably aware of the developments of the debate about historical method and conscious of the achievement of the Society of Jesus in this field. In the same period the Bollandists were publishing their very accurate and modern lives of the saints where no traces of medieval miracles and fantastic reinvention of the past were perceivable. Similarly, the speculation of another historian of the Society, Antonio Possevino, had produced a new interest for the “science of history” reinterpreted as a structuring frame for the human knowledge. In particular Possevino had appealed for the production of critical histories where unbelievable events have to be removed in order to not be ridiculed by Protestants and humanists. Kojałowicz’s History of Lithuania, in this respect, is a representative illustration of Jesuits’ historiographic canon: it is a critical compilation of other sources carried out in accordance with a precise conception of the means and function of history.

This elegant Latin work deals with the history of Lithuania from the mythical origins of the Lithuanians to the events connected with the death of the King Sigismund Augustus and concludes with the year 1572. Despite the remains of a certain annalistic partition, the work is characterized by a modern subdivision and connection of the events: the narrative unities are construed basing on the succession of the supreme rulers of the country, but also according to causal relation between facts. This circumstance, in conjunction with the programmatic announcements of the author, makes evident Kojałowicz’s practical intentions: he meant to produce an easy to read book in order to provide students with a nice “expurgated” Latin prose. More precisely, the linguistic education of the students has a marginal role in the conception of the whole book; it is the moral education of the noblemen the focus of this pedagogical oeuvre.
This impression is confirmed by the analysis of the narrative construction and specifically from that of the rich rhetorical composition. The frequent interposition of direct speeches (mainly in the form of deictic speeches) clearly has a didactical function: to provide the readers with enjoyable, visual, and dramatic examples of good and bad conducts and their consequences. It is for this reason that, despite being a Catholic priest and a Jesuit, Kojalowicz never criticizes the ancestors of modern Lithuanian just because of their paganism, nor prizes indistinctly the Christian regents. Rather, it is a moral criterion to operate.

Despite being a historical work influenced by religious faith and annalistic tradition, Kojalowicz’s History of Lithuania is an illustrative example of the transition toward the critical historiography. It is representative because the whole work has been produced basing on a historical problem – the diachronic study of morality – rather than on an image. Moreover, the use of a critical method is evident. This critical method is still far from that of the erudite humanist philologists, but still it is based on the logic of the verisimilitude that induced the author not only to have recourse to a variety of sources (thus adopting a comparative method), but even to critically use the documents themselves.

**Tasks and discussions**

1. What are the cultural, political and religious reasons that produced a change in the historical practice at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries? Try to connect the development of the methodology of the historical research with the Reformation, the humanists’ interest for the man, and Renaissance scepticism.

2. *Kojalowicz’s history of Lithuania can be understood as an educative tool. However, it has been suggested there are many reading “levels” of it. It has been defined as an handbook for Latin rhetoric; we defined it as a collection of examples of moral and immoral conducts. Other authors interpreted his message differently. Read the studies included in the second volume of Lietuvos istorijos įvairenybės and try to list and comment on the various functions of Kojalowicz narrative.*
Literature

Once more we invite to read Mečislovas Jučas, *Lietuvos metraščiai ir kronikos*, Vilnius, 2002 for a detailed study for the comparative study of Stryjkowski and Kojałowicz. Kojałowicz’s most important works have been published in two volumes: Darius Kuolys, *Lietuvos istorijos įvairenybės*, Vilnius, 2002-2003. These two volumes contain also a number of articles, which offer different perspective on the Jesuit’s historical works.
Register of the Historians  
(until early 18th century)

BOHUSZ, Francis Xavier (1746-1820)  
Jesuit (from 1761) and historian. He studied theology, law and philosophy in Vilnius and Rome. From 1773 adviser of the Lithuanian treasurer A. Tyzenhauz in Grodno. Engaged in activities against the Russian authorities, he was arrested in 1794. He than returned to Warsaw where served as a judge. He wrote (in Polish) historical essays and political and biographical articles. He was very interested in the history and culture of Lithuania. **Historical works:** *O początku narodu i języka litewskiego* (his most significant work on the origins of the Lithuanian nation and language). It was translated into Russian, German and French.

BOJER, Laurentius (1562?-1619)  
Jesuit priest and author born in Stockholm. He was a lecturer of theology at the Vilnius Academy; later teacher of poetry and rhetoric. He is recorded as writer of occasional poems and comedies. **Historical works:** *Carolomachia*, Vilnae, 1606 (published under the pseudonym Christophorus Zavisza. It is a work about John Carol Chodkiewicz, who defeated the swedes in 1605).

BRETKŪNAS, Jonas (1536-1602)  
Lutheran priest and first translator of the Bible into Lithuanian. He grew up in East Prussia where people, besides Lithuanian and German, spoke Old Prussian and Courish. He studied theology at the Universities of Königsberg and Wittemberg. In 1562 was appointed pastor of a parish in Labguva where served for 25 years while working at his translation of the Bible. **Historical works:** Bretkūnas was interested also in the history of his native country and their folk customs. He wrote *Historia rerum prussicarum, 1584?* (only fragments remain thanks to K. Henkenberg, however this manuscript was used by Bretkūnas’ grandson: the Prussian historian M. Praetorius).

CAMPANO, Giovanni Paolo (ca. 1546-1592)  
Jesuit Provincial of Poland and Lithuania native of Reggio Emilia. During the ten years of his rule invigorated Lithuanian pastoral work in Vilnius and in the Jesuit possessions. **Historical works:** His extensive correspondence with the administration of the Order in Rome gives detailed accounts of conditions and events and is an important source on the activities of the Jesuits in Lithuania. In 1581 he accompanied the papal nuncio Antonio Possevino to the court of Ivan IV. He described the five-month journey in a long letter to the General of the Order Aquaviva (published by A. M. Ammann in *Antemurale*, VI, Roma, 1960-61)

DANILOWICZ, Ignacy (1787-1843)  
Law historian. After graduating at the University of Vilnius, studied in Warsaw. From 1819 assistant professor at the University of Vilnius (professor from 1823). In 1823 he was exiled from Lithuania by Russian authorities. Professor of law at the universities of Kharkov (1825-1830), Kiev (until 1839) and Moscow (until 1842). He collected material on the legal history of Lithuania in Moscow and St. Petersbourg and was one of the most eminent of investigators in to the early law of Lithuania. **Historical works:** He also took a gen-
eral interest in the past of Lithuania, collected historical documents and prepared them for publication. Among the most representative collections are worthy of mention the *Kodex Napoleona w porównaniu z prawami polskimi i litewskimi*, 1817; *Historischer Blick auf das Litauische Statut*, 1834; *O litovskikh letopisakh*, 1840; *Zbiór praw litewskich*, 1841; *Skarbic diplomatów*, 1860-1862.

**DAUKANTAS, Simonas** (1793-1864)  
Historian and prose writer, pioneer of the Lithuanian national revival, born to a peasant family in the village of Kalviai, Samogitia. In 1818 he entered the University of Vilnius wherein studied languages and literature and than philosophy. From 1825 went to Prussia to collect material about the past of Lithuania. In the same year worked as translator in Riga than, for fifteen years worked and lived in St. Petersburg at the senate and in archives where he was able to find Lithuanian state documents of the 15th-18th century. **Historical works:** *Darbai senųjų lietuvių ir žemaičių*, 1822 (a description of Lithuanian and Samogitian languages, Lithuanian and Samogitians people, their way of life, religion, as well as political events up to the death of Vytautas the Great); *Istoria żemaitiška*, 1838 (a history of Samogitia and Lithuania until the Union of Lublin rewritten in a much more popular form in 1850 and published as *Pasakojimas apie veikalus lietuvių tautos senovę*, Bitėnai, 1893); *Būdas senovės lietuvių kalnėnų ir žemaičių*, St. Petersburg, 1845 (this is the only work of Daukantas published during his lifetime).

**DAUKŠAS, ladislaus** (1676-1747)  
Jesuit priest and provincial. He completed his studies at the Vilnius Academy with doctorates in theology and canon law. Lecturer of philosophy (1711-1714) and theology (1720-1721) at the Vilnius Academy. Rector of the Vilnius Academy from 1727 to 1731 and from 1741 to 1745. His most famous work is the translation of the catechism of J. Ledesma – the first known Lithuanian book to appear in Lithuania Major. **Historical works:** the Latin preface to his translation of the Polish Jesuit Jakub Wujek (Postilla Catholicka) can be considered a manifesto of the political and legal conception typical of that time. Here Dauškas raised as of the utmost importance the natural right of all peoples.

**DAVID, Lucas** (1503-1583)  
Chronicler and historian of the Teutonic Order. He was particularly interested in the history religion and tradition of Prussians, Lithuanians and Samogitians. From 1550 he was a member of the ducal court in Königsberg. **Historical works:** for 40 years he collected material for his *Preussische Chronik* in 8 volumes that, however, remained unpublish until 1812. It is a chronicle, written in German, about the history of the Teutonic Order up to the battle of Tannenber (1410). The work is mainly a transcription of Simon Grunau’s chronicle. However, David tries to reduce the pro-Polish and pro-Catholic tendencies of his source. The most original parts of the work refer to the Old Prussian religion and the weak hold of the Christianity in Samogitia.

**DŁUGOSZ, Jan** (1415-1480)  
Polish historian, Roman Catholic priest and bishop, secretary to bishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki (a leading politician in Cracow) and educator of the sons of the King Casimir. **Historical works:** his first work was *Banderia Pruthenorum* (written in 1448), an account of the flags of the Teutonic knights captured in the battle of Tannenbern (1410). However,
he is better known for his history of Poland in 12 volumes: *Historiae Polonicae* (written between 1455 and 1475, but printed for the first time in its entirety only in 1811 in Leipzig). This work is modelled on the style of Livy and thus characterized by an elegant literary form. With regards to the contents of the history, it is necessary to point out that most of the attention is devoted to battles of the past. His personal experience to the politician Z. Oleśnicki influenced his interpretation of the LDK past: he strongly opposes the ambition of independence of the Grand Duchy.

**DOGIEL, Matthew** (1715-1760)
Piarist priest and historian. After studying in Paris, Leipzig and Strasbourg, he returned to Lithuania and in Vilnius founded a Piarist college. He also established a printing house where he edited and published collections of historical documents. In the attempt to provide the most accurate information, Dogiel visited numerous libraries in Germany, France and Holland. **Historical works:** his most representative work is the historical collection *Codex diplomaticus Regni Poloniae et Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae*, Vilnius, 1758-1764 (only volumes I, V and IV). The work collects documents about the relationship of Poland and GDL with Western Europe and Balkan states (vol. I), to Prussia (vol. IV), and Livonia (vol. V). In 1758 he also published a collection of documents about the boundaries of GDL and Poland: *Limites Regni Poloniae et Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae*. This work has been translate in verse in German (*Chronicon vetus*) and in Latin. The latter version had been used by Jan Długosz. *Chronicon terrae Prussiae* was published for the first time in its entirety in Frankfurt in 1679.

**DUSBURG, Peter von** (14th century)
Chronicler, author of the first Prussian chronicle. The author was a catholic priest, who came from the town of Dusburg in Westphalia. While writing his chronicle he was living in Königsberg, Prussia, and performed the duties of a priest of the Teutonic Order. Because of his background and the context in which he lived, his historical account sounds like an apology of the crusade against the pagan “children of the devil” (*filii Belial*) – Prussians, Lithuanians and the other pagan populations of the Baltic shores. Dusburg’s narratives are mostly about the military campaigns of the Order against the Prussian tribes. **Historical works:** he is the author of *Chronicon terrae Prussiae*, a history of the Teutonic Order and of the Prussian lands divided into four parts. The first and second parts include the history of the Teutonic Order from its founding in Palestine to their settlement on the Baltic shore (1230). The third and fourth parts deal with the wars of the Order against the pagans (1230-1326). The chronicle is based on lost written sources and eyewitness accounts. He does not mention many political or cultural events. However, significant are the accounts about old Prussian religion and customs. This work has been translate in verse in German (*Chronicon vetus*) and in Latin. The latter version had been used by Jan Długosz. *Chronicon terrae Prussiae* was published for the first time in its entirety in Frankfurt in 1679.

**GUAGNINI Alexander** (1538-1614)
Soldier and chronicler from Verona. He served in the Polish-Lithuanian army with his father from 1561 to 1582 and participated in the wars against Moscow. Later he settled in Cracow, where he died. **Historical works:** he is known for the two works *Sarmatiae Europae Descriptio* (1578), and *Kronika Sarmacej Europeyskiej* (1611) – a revised Polish translation of the former work. Guagnini gives geographical and historical descriptions of Poland, Lithuania, Prussia, Livonia, Muscovy, and the Tatar Khanates. Lithuanian
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history is traced to 1608 and the description of the period 1561-1608 is the most reliable. The Polish chronicler M. Stryjkowski, who published his chronicle in 1582, complains that Guagnini, when they served in the army together in Vitebsk, plagiarized his manuscript. Part of Guagnini chronicles do indeed seem to be a Latin translation of Stryjkowski’s work, however some parts seems original.

HARTKNOCH, Christoph (1644-1687)
Prussian historian. Graduated from the University of Königsberg in 1672 and teacher of classical languages and history at the same university. Before that he was a teacher in Kaunas and Vilnius. Historical works: in 1679 he published the first edition of Peter von Dusburg’s Chronicon Prussiae, for which he wrote (added) 19 chapters in Latin about the origin, early religion and social structures of the Prussians. In 1684 he published his first independent work: Alt und neues Preussen. This work describes in detail the customs of Prussian and Lithuanian. Among other unpublished work of Artknoch, there are historical studies about the Polish and Lithuanian laws and the history of the Prussian Church.

HERBERSTEIN, Sigismund von (1486-1566)
German diplomat, traveller and historian. He made two journeys to Moscow (in 1517 and 1526) as envoy of the Emperors Maximillian I and Charles V. In his first visit to Vilnius he met King Sigismund the Old. He also visited Trakai and Medininkai. Historical works: Herberstein published his travel memories as Rerum Moscovitarum Commentarii, Wien, 1549. This work includes the section De Lithuania, which describes Lithuania’s landscape, animals, peasant, their buildings, relations with the nobility, the army, and their armaments.

HUSSOVIANUS, Nicholas (ca 1480-after 1533)
Poet and humanist. His date and place of birth are uncertain. It is believed that he was born near the great Bolovezha Forest (at that time part of the Grand Principality of Lithuania). From 1492 he lived in Vilnius under the patronage of Canon Erasmus Vitelius (Ciołek). In 1518 went to Rome and lived there until 1522. Historical works: Carmen de statura, feritate et venatione bisontis, Cracow, 1523 (the work is at the same time an interesting example of “natural history” and a panegyric of Vytautas the Great); Nova et miranda victoria de Turcis; De vita et gestis divi Hyacinthi carmen; Carmina minora.

JAROSZEWICZ, Josef (1793-1860)
Historian born in Bielsk. He graduated from the University of Vilnius in 1815. Here professor of history of Polish-Lithuanian Law from 1826 to 1831. He then moved to Bielsk, where devoted himself to the study of Lithuanian history. He is reputed a very erudite scholar celebrated for his objectivity. Historical works: O stanie Litwy do przyjęcia wiary chrześcijańskiej, 1834; Litwa pod względem cywilizacji w trzech pierwszych jej chrześcijaństwa wiekach, 1835; O Herulach pobra tymcach Litwinów, 1840; Obraz Litwy pod względem jej oświaty i cywilizacji od czasów najdawniejszych do końca XVIII wieku, 3 vols., 1844-1845.

JEROSCHIN, Nikolaus von (ca 1290-ca 1345)
German chronicler and poet, who versified into German Peter von Dusburg’s Chronicon terrae Prussicae. Although the translation was in verse, it
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was done objectively and become very popular in its new form even if in its entirety was published only in 1861 (in *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, I). This work is significant for Lithuanian history for its additional data on early 14th century, the period when the translator himself lived.

KOJAŁOWICZ-WIJUK, Albert (1609-1677)
Jesuit priest, educator and historian born in Kaunas. Kojałowicz obtained the degrees of doctor of philosophy and doctor of theology at the Vilnius Academy. Here had been rector from 1654 to 1656 and taught philosophy and scholastic theology. After 1666 he lived in Warsaw. He wrote in a period when the Lithuanian nobility had largely accepted Polish culture and customs, and considered the union of the two countries to be an insoluble bond. **Historical works:** *De vita et morbius P. Laurentii Bartlii S. J.*, Vilnius, 1648; *Miscellanea rerum ad statum ecclesiasticum in Magno Lithuaniae Ducatu pertinentia*, Vilnius, 1650; *Historiae Lithuanae pars prior, de rebus Lithuanorum ante susceptam Christianam religionem conjunctione cum regno Poloniae, Gdansk*, 1650; *De rebus gestis anno 1648 et sequenti contra Cosacos Zaporovios rebelles*, Vilnius, 1651; *Fasti Radziviliani compendio continentes gesta Ducum Radziwil*, Vilnius, 1653; *Rerum in M. D. Lithuaniae per tempus rebellionis Russicæ gestarum commentarius*, Vienna, 1655. *Historiae Lithuanae pars altera a conjunctione cum Regno Poloniae ad unionem corum Dominiorum libri octo*, Antwerp, 1669.

KOTZEBUE, August von (1761-1819)
German writer and historian. He lived and worked in Germany, Austria and Russia. **Historical works:** he wrote two works pertaining Lithuania. *Preussens ältere geschichte* (1808), and *Swidrigal* (1820). The latter is of greater interest being based on documents from Königsberg’s archive. It describes the Lithuanian Grand Prince Svitrigaila.

LANNOY, Guillebert de (1386-1462)
Burgundian knight and traveller, Anglo-French ambassador, visitor to many European countries including Lithuania. When he arrived in Prussia, he was supposed to go fighting the Samogitians, but was sent in Poland. He visited, in 1413-1414, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania travelling from Gdansk to Novgorod, Pskov, Königsberg, Klaipėda and Livonia. During a second journey, in 1421, he visited Trakai, Kaunas and reached Crimea. **Historical works:** Ghielbert’s notes on his travels - *Les Plerinages de Surye et de Egipte*, and provide valuable historical and ethnographic data on Lithuania: the descriptions of the castles of Vilnius, Trakai, Kaunas, Podolia and Volynia; the population of Trakai; the fashion of Lithuanian women; and his reception by Vytautas the Great. A collection of his writings appeared several centuries later as Ch. Potvin (ed.), *Ouvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy*, 1878. See also *Scriptores rerum prussicarum*, III, 1865.

ŁASICKI, Johannes (1534-ca 1602)
Polish nobleman, publicist and historian. He travelled across Western Europe teaching in several Protestant universities. He personally knew John Calvin in Geneva. Arrived, after a first visit, in Vilnius in 1580 and lived here until his death. **Historical works:** he wrote and published several historical and polemical works. *De dis Samagitarum ceterumque Sarmatarum et falsoorum Christianorum* (Basel, 1615) is a short essay on Samogitian deities. Most of the information included in this sev-
enteen-pages relation are taken from Guagnini, Herberstein, Michalo Lituanus, Jakob Laskowski and Maletius. Distorted Lithuanian words confirm that he did not know the language. For a long period, Łasicki’s work was considered the only accurate description of Lithuanian mythology and for this reason Theodore Narbutt had recourse to it writing his history of Lithuania.

LELEWEL, Joachim (1786-1861)
Polish historian and political activist. Born in Warsaw and educated at the University of Vilnius (1804-1808). Influenced by the Enlightenment culture of the time, he was naturally in favor of a sort of liberalism and based his thought on the democratic principles of that time. Teacher at the University of Vilnius from 1815, he was dismissed by Russian authorities for his involvement with the patriotic student movement in 1818. In Warsaw he took part in the 1830-1831 insurrection, but the failure of the act forced him to move to Paris. Exiled from France because considered an anarchist, he settled in Brussels in 1833. Because of the influence of his colleagues at the University of Vilnius, he became interested in the language and history of the country and urged its citizens to learn more about it. Historical works: his first remarkable works about the history of Lithuania include the 1808 study on the early Lithuanian tribes and the 1809 review of Francis X. Bohusz’s work on the origin of the Lithuanian nation. The most significant historical work is, however, his History of Lithuania and Rus Until the Union with Poland (Dzieje Litwy I Rusi aż do unji z Polską), 1839. Of even greater relevance is his methodological treatise Historyka tudziej. O łatwym i pożytecznym nauczaniu historii, published in Vilnius in 1815. Here Lelewel expound his theories about the science of history. It is possible to state that this has been the first manifesto of a Lithuanian historical school. Its founding principles were: independent scholarly research, idealization of the past, the importance of the geographical element in the historical process and the elevation of national characteristics.

LEPNER, Theodor (1633-1691)
Lutheran priest born in Germany, but raised in Lithuania Minor. Educated at the University of Königsberg. Historical works: Der Preusche Lituaer (The Prussian Lithuanian) written in 1690, but published for the first time in 1744, is an important source for the study of the old peasant culture even if written from a subjective perspective (that of a Protestant priest criticizing the pagan beliefs).

MÉZIÈRES, Philippe de (1327-1405)
French soldier. Fervent propagandist for the crusade, he travelled through many countries in Europe. In 1364 he was in the Teutonic-ruled Prussia. Historical works: in his allegorical description of Europe, Songe du Vieil Pèlerin, he described the royaume de layco – the Lithuanian Kingdom. Despite the allegorical approach and frequent use of irony, the account is a respectful comment about the transition of Lithuania from paganism to Catholicism.

Michalo Lituanus*
Pseudonym used by an unknown 16th century author. The historians Lubavsky and Jonynas suggest he might be identified with Mikhail Tyshkevich, the Lithuanian envoy to the Crimean Tatars in 1537-1539. For sure he must have been a well-educated person influenced by humanism and reformation movement. Historical works: he is the author of a Latin relation or historical account describing the customs
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of the Tatars, Lithuanians and Muscovites known as De moribus Tartarorum, Lithuanorum et Moschorum, ca. 1550. The essay was published for the first time, together with Johannes Lasicius’s account about Samogitians, in Basel in 1615. This work contains a biting criticism of the Lithuanian social order and bring about concerns for the future of the country. The author sees the main political threat in the Muscovite and Tatars expansionism. The social structure of Lithuania was seen as a weak point opposed to that of the two neighbours where the rulers had absolute power. In this memorandum, Lituanus included the theory of Lithuanians descending from the Romans basing mainly on linguistic similitudes.

NARBUTT, Theodore (1784-1864) Military Engineer, historian and author of an extensive history of the Lithuanian nation. Studied mathematics at the university of Vilnius until 1803, than specialized in military engineering in St. Petersburg. The romanticism that permeated the University of Vilnius stimulated his interest in history. Working as an engineer he discovered ancient artefacts than preserved in personal collections. In 1810 he began his own archaeological researches. Historical works: basing on these discoveries Narbutt wrote several articles about the prehistoric burial customs and fortress hill design (mostly published as Badania starożytności Litewskich). All of his works express a strong patriotic feeling combined with lack of critical judgment. The romantic spirit pervades is extensive study (nine volumes) about the history of Lithuania: Dzieje narodu Litewskiego, Vilnius 1835-1841. The history of Lithuania is separated from that of Poland and, thus ends with the Union of Lublin and the death of King Sigismund August. At the time of his death, Narbutt was preparing a more accurate edition of this work of which only the summary was published in 1847 as Dzieje narodu Litewskiego w Krótkości zebrane. Narbutt revealed many unknown historical sources as the so-called Chronicle of Bychowiec published in 1846 as part of Pomniki do dziejów Litewskich: Kronika Litewska.

NARUSZEWICZ, Adam (1733-1796) Polish Jesuit, Bishop of Smolensk and Lutsk, and critical historian. He travelled trough France, Italy and Germany and taught in Warsaw. He became known for his satiric verses and the translations of Sarbevius, Horace and Tacitus into Polish. Historical works: his six-volumes History of the Polish Nation (1780-1786) reflects the spirit of Enlightenment. Having being commissioned by the King Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski, this work support the idea of a stronger royal power and opposes the excessive freedom of noblemen. His critical method was soon to be known as the “Naruszewicz school”. He compiled a 230-volumes collection of historical documents: Teki Naruszewicz, Vilnius, 1781.

OGIŃSKI, Michael Cleopas (1765-1833) Statesman and memorialist. At the age of 19, he entered the service of King Stanislas Augustus as diplomat. In 1789, he was sent on diplomatic missions to Holland and England from where he had the opportunity to observe the outcomes of the French Revolution. Elected Minister of Finances of Lithuania in 1793. After the failed Revolution of Kosciusko (1794) emigrated to Vienna and travelled across Italy, Turkey, Malta and France. Finally, he returned to Vilnius. Historical works: Ogiński published a four-volumes memoirs written in French – a valuable source
for Lithuanian and Polish history. The third volume contains a brief history of Lithuania. He left his autobiography up to the year 1788.

ONACEWICZ, Ignacy (1780-1845)
Historian born in the province of Grodno. He graduated from the University of Königsberg (1805) and completed his master at the University of Vilnius (1811). From 1819 to 1822 taught world history in Vilnius. Among his students was the historian Simonas Daukantas. Historical works: most of his works, including his history of Lithuania, have been lost.

POŠKA, Dionizas (1757-1830)
Writer and active participant in the Samogitian national movement. Coming from a family of petty nobles he resided mainly in Bardžiai and Raseiniai. Maintained strong relations with the University of Vilnius. Influenced by the Samogitian literary movement, got interested in local history and customs. He himself dedicated to archaeology and built a small museum. One of Poška main concerns was to introduce someone competent to write a comprehensive Lithuanian history and turned to the historian Joachim Lelewel. Historical works: Poška wrote Polish and Lithuanian treatises (often versified) on various aspects of the Lithuanian past. The booklet Rozmysłania wiesniakra rolnika (Contemplations of a Peasant Agriculturalist) was published in 1829. He largest work is Mužikas žemaicių ir Lietuvos (The Samogitian and Lithuanian Peasant), first published in Aušra, 1, 1886.

PRAETORIUS, Matthew
(ca. 1635-1707)
Protestant religious writer and historian, grandson of Jonas Bretkūnas, born in Klaipėda. Studied in Rostock and Königsberg. Historical works: in East Prussia he collected historical and ethnographic data about pagan Lithuanian customs than described in the manuscript Deliciae Prussicae oder Preussische Schaubühne. Part of this work is a compilation of material from the Grunau chronicle and Bretkūnas’ manuscript Historia rerum Prussicarum. In 1688-1689 he published the four-volumes work Orbis Gothicus in which he attempted to show Lithuanian kinship with the Goths.

ROSTOWSKI, Stanislas (1711-1784)
Jesuit priest and historian. Studied theology in Vilnius and was ordained priest in Warsaw (1739). Earned his doctorate in theology in Vilnius (1750). Historical works: his most renowned work is the history of the Lithuanian province of the Society of Jesus – Lituaniarum Societatis Iesu historiarum provincialium pars prima, Vilnius, 1768. It covers the first century (1564-1664) of the province’s existence. The second part remained in manuscript form. Rostowski preferred to concentrate on famous personalities.

ROTUNDUS (MIELESKI), Augustinas
(ca. 1520-1582)
Jurist, publicist, and historian who studied at the universities of Wittenberg and Padua taking a doctorate in civil and canon law. He was very active in the Royal chancellery of Cracow until 1550. Subsequently, he was appointed chief magistrate of Vilnius and personal secretary of Sigismund Augustus until 1582. He was a fervent supporter of the “executionist movement”. Historical works: historical excurses enrich his Rozmowy Pole z Litwinem, Vilnius, 1566. Epitome principum Lithuaniae, Vilnius, 1566. His first history of Lithuania, Chronica sive historia Lithuaniæ, is now lost.
SKARGA, Piotr (1536-1612) Jesuit priest and first rector of the Academy of Vilnius. Studied in Cracow and Rome. Since 1573 active at the College of Vilnius where he became the first rector of the Academy (1579). In Vilnius he gave sermons and wrote books of mainly polemical and hagiographic nature. **Historical works:** his most representative work of historical nature is Żywoty świętych — a collection of hagiographies written in accordance with the canon of the Jesuits and similar to those of the Bollandists. Miracles receives a marginal role while the morality of the Saints has a predominant importance.

SZRUBOWSKI, Pranciškus (ca. 1620-1680) Jesuit priest and writer. Born in Kaunas, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1638. Studied theology at the Academy of Vilnius. **Historical works:** two hymns of historical nature were included in his hymnal Balsas širdies (the Voice of the Heart) of 1679. They deal with the Muscovite invasion of 1655-1657.

STRYJKOWSKI, Maciej (1547-after 1586) Soldier, historian and author of the first printed history of Lithuania. Educated at the University of Cracow, served in the army from 1565. During his service, he collected documents and historical accounts. **Historical works:** Kronika Polska, Litewska, Zmodzka i wszystkiej Rusi […], Konigsberg, 1582; Historical nature has also the poem O początkach, wywodach, dzielnościach, sprawach rycerskich i domowych sławnego narodu litewskiego, żemojdzkiego i ruskiego.

SUCHENWIRT, Peter (d. ca 1400) German poet who described Christian crusades against pagan Lithuania. He was a typical medieval travelling bard. **Historical works:** one of the most vivid accounts is a 500 lines long poem about the three weeks spent by Duke Albert killing pagans in the Sūduva forests.

*VITUS (13th century) Dominican friar and second bishop of Lithuania. He was probably subject directly to the Apostolic See. **Historical works:** even if he was not a historian, remarkable is his account on the (deplorable) situation of the Christianity in Lithuania (De christianorum in Litovia conditione deplorabili). It is a report sent to Pope Innocent IV and the only document testifying that Vitus actually spent some times in his dioceses.

VOLOVICH, Grigorij (d. 1577) Keeper of the forests of the Grand Principality of Lithuania from 1559 to 1576. **Historical works:** even if not historical in its more traditional acceptation, his report about the forests in Lithuania (published as Reviziiia pushch i perekhodov zverinnykh v byvshem Velikom Kniazhestve Litovskom, Vilnius, 1867) is a precious source about territorial and civic history of the country. The Inspection of Forests and Animal Trails in the Former Grand Principality of Lithuania was commissioned to Wałłowicz in 1558 by King Sigismund Augustus. It is a report about the forests, their boundaries and the manner and location of settlements from the region of Kiev to Samogitia.
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