

HISTORY OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA:  
INTERPRETATIONS OF THE YOUNG  
BELARUSIANS AND LITHUANIANS



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*In memory of Eduard Mažko (1971-2011),  
who worked on the initial stage of preparation of this article.*

**SUMMARY.** A hypothesis was raised that the knowledge of the young Belarusians and Lithuanians would be different on the most important facts and topics of the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, such as the foundation of the state, the first ruler and the first capital, the Vilnius issue, as well as the cultural and religious nature of the country. Drawing on the answers of the first and the second year students of Humanities and Social Sciences from J. Kupala University, Grodno (105 respondents) and Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas (184 respondents) the hypothesis was confirmed. The article analyzes the causes of this phenomenon, discussing the most important historiographical works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which formed the national narratives of both countries. The Belarusian as well as the Lithuanian national narratives acknowledge the whole history of the Grand Duchy but are ethnographically and territorially limited, and focus only on the modern frontiers and on the modern nations. As a result, it is not surprising that people feel and understand the common past in different ways.

**KEYWORDS:** Lithuania, Belarus, national narratives, 20<sup>th</sup> century, the youth.

After the destruction of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, its history has always been an integral part of the history of Lithuania and of the Lithuanian Republic. This principle has never been questioned in the country during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Grand Duchy was treated as a source of inspiration for the romantic writers and as an object to be restored by the Lithuanian politicians and intellectuals. The Lithuanian Republic (1918-1940), created after the First World War, declared itself as a restorer and continuator of the

<sup>1</sup> The article is written according to the research project “Central and Eastern European Region: Research of the Construction of National Narratives and Politics of Memory (1989-2011)” – VP1-3.1- MM-07-K-02-024 – sponsored by the Programme for Human Resources Development for 2007-2013 “Support to Research Activities of Scientists and Other Researchers (Global Grant)”.

tradition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Coat of arms, symbols and historical figures became the core elements of the newborn Republic. All past history of the Grand Duchy was claimed but not everything was taken. The Republic was a very homogeneous, Lithuanian speaking country, whereas the Grand Duchy was multicultural and dominated by the Slavonic people. As a result, from the geographical point of view, its history was mostly reduced to the ethnographical Lithuanian speaking territories, ignoring the Belarusian and the Ukrainian lands. From the temporal perspective, the most admired historical periods became those when the Lithuanian speaking elite dominated the country i.e. the Middle Ages. The Early Modern period was not of great interest, because at that time the dominant cultural and political elites were strongly Polonised, and the descendants from the Belarusian lands were becoming more and more active in all the fields of the state life. Such attitudes survived the Soviet occupation (1945-1990) and are still visible in contemporary Lithuania.

The Belarusian lands, as well as the Lithuanian ones, constituted an integral part of the Grand Duchy since its establishment, i.e. from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, during the 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the territories of the Grand Duchy inhabited by the Slavonic people (the forefathers of the contemporary Belarusians) were several times bigger than those of the Lithuanians. Paradoxically, the Belarusians did not develop such an intensive relation to the history of the Grand Duchy as the Lithuanians did. This was mostly caused by the Tsarist Russian influences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Belarusians were forced to think about themselves not as about a part of a common Lithuanian – Belarusian state, but as a part of the greater Russian nation. For the first time in history, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Belarusians were detached from the Lithuanians and the history of the Grand Duchy was made alien to them. This process intensified even more after the First World War, when the Belarusians, contrary to the Lithuanians, did not succeed in establishing their own state. For the most part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Belarusians remained in the Soviet empire, which was further weakening their memories about the Grand Duchy and strengthening the pro-Russian historical narratives. Literarily speaking, the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was bestowed to the Lithuanians. The situation started to change only at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Soviet Union started to collapse. Though the idea that the Grand Duchy was mostly a Belarusian state had never been fully extinguished, from the end of the 80's, more and more texts on this topic began to appear. The establishment of an independent Republic of Belarus (1991) intensified the process. Despite the fact that at the beginning of his presidency, Lukashenko (who came to power in 1994) was trying to revive the idea that only the Soviet period was the true history of Belarus, today we can feel that the idea of the Grand Duchy as of a Belarusian state is much stronger

than ever in the last hundred years. Claiming the legacy of the Grand Duchy, the contemporary Belarusians, similarly to the Lithuanians, focus their attention on the issues that are of the national interest to them: geographically, it is the territory of contemporary Belarus and thematically, these are the topics about the famous Belarusian speaking individuals or cultural, political and economic developments of the Belarusian lands.

As it has been shown, the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, common to the Belarusians and the Lithuanians, is narrated differently in these two countries today. National narratives, born at the turnover of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, aimed at writing the national histories rather than the histories of a state. The problem lies with the fact that Belarus and Lithuania of today are more or less homogeneous national states, whereas the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had always been a multicultural country. It is suggested that when writing a Belarusian or a Lithuanian history, facts which best fit the concept of national history are more likely to be pointed out and taken from the history of the Grand Duchy.

Since 1990, the differences of the Lithuanian and the Belarusian national historical narratives have been noticed, which provoked scientific discussions on the phenomena. Through the last two decades, many conferences on the topical questions were organized and books published.<sup>2</sup> In spite of a vivid interest in the problem, no research has been carried out on how the young Lithuanians and Belarusians without any special education only that of the secondary school and family see their common history.

This article aims at discussing and comparing how and why the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is differently perceived in Belarus and in Lithuania by the young generation, as well as how it correlates with both national historical narratives. It is not a sociological research by its strictest definition. The paper attempts to reveal the contrast between the Lithuanian and the Belarusian views on their common past.

National (or traditional) historical narratives are perceived in this article broadly as representing the main trends in historical narration. No special analysis has been carried out to identify these trends (it is doubtful whether an objective investigation on this topic would be possible); they are ascertained intuitively on the basis of experience. It is necessary to mention that *national narratives* perceived like this differ from the scholarly articles which discuss narrower or wider historical problems (the works of professional historians can be considered as comprising a certain part

<sup>2</sup> One of the most recent and exhaustive collections of articles on the problem: *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir paveldo „dalybos“*, Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2008. In the same year, another set of articles representing discussions on different national narratives of the region was published: *A Book of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Towards the Traditions of European Community. A Joint Publication of Scientists and Writers from Belarus, Lithuania and Poland*, Sejny: Fundacja Pogranicze, 2008.

of the national narrative); they also differ from the narrations created by individual authors (for example, ‘History of Belarus’ written by Kraūcevičor Sahanovičare is not regarded as a national narrative in this article). As a result, *national narrative* is a national history of a country that has never been written by any author. From a scientific point of view, national narrative is a set of misunderstandings and misinterpretations that have a shade of patriotism. The content of the national narrative can be defined only by inquiring people and letting them talk about their past. The article is a contribution to the problem on how national narratives affect young people. The problem, noticed by academic society, has received an increasing attention over the last few decades.<sup>3</sup> Finally, it should be stressed that the article does not aim at analyzing which narrative is more adequate and true. This could be a task of another type of research.

First and second year students of Humanities and Social Sciences were inquired in J. Kupala University, Grodno (105 respondents) and in Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas (184 respondents). First and second year students were selected, because they illustrate very well the knowledge young people bring with themselves from schools. Moreover, they are still not influenced too much by the history lectures at university which are more sophisticated and problematic. Grodno and Kaunas were chosen consciously. Both have been large but non-capital cities; therefore, less mixed from the national and other points of view. In addition, both have been important strongholds of national identity through the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With respect to the questionnaire, the same set of questions in Russian and Lithuanian languages was given to the students together with a choice of 4, 5 or more (depending on the question) answers. One answer had to be chosen by a respondent (in some cases several answers could have been chosen). A hypothesis was raised that the answers of the Belarusians would be different from the answers of their colleagues in Lithuania, because the questions were formulated on some of the most important facts and topics of the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; therefore, of the highest importance for both national narratives. They touched on fundamental themes: foundation of the state, the first ruler and the first capital, the Vilnius issue as well as cultural and religious nature of the country.

*1. Where were the core lands of historical Lithuania located?*

Original question:

Kur buvo Lietuva siauraja prasme (LDK branduolys)?

Летописная Литва находилась на территории:

<sup>3</sup> *History Education and the Construction of National Identities*, ed. by M. Carretero, M. Asensio and M. Rodríguez-Moneo, IAP, 2012.

Answers (choose one):

1. In the highlands of the river Nemunas (contemporary Belarus) / Nemuno aukštupyje (šiandieninė Baltarusija) / Белорусского Понеманья.
2. In the eastern part of Lithuania / Rytų Lietuvoje / Восточной Литвы.
3. Between Navahrudak and Minsk / Tarp Naugarduko ir Minsko / Между Новогрудком и Минском.
4. Between Kaunas and Vilnius / Tarp Kauno ir Vilniaus / между Каунасом и Вильнюсом.
5. The exact locality is not known / Tikslī vieta nežinoma / точное место неизвестно.

“The Core lands of historical Lithuania” refer to the origination territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Sometimes, in historical literature, this territory is also called “true Lithuania”, “Lithuania in the narrow sense” or “Lithuanian territory described in the earliest chronicles”. It is important to stress that there are no sources of the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century with the exact descriptions of the lands the country occupied. However, the Lithuanian and the Belarusian historians cannot avoid this issue in their narratives because none of the national histories can start without discussions “where everything began”. In the Lithuanian tradition, the core of the Lithuanian lands has always been located more westwards (mostly in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania), whereas in the Belarusian tradition, it has tended to be more eastwards (mostly in Western Belarus). One of the greatest historians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Marc Bloch (1886-1944), has very accurately noticed that such search of the nation’s roots and the establishment of “historical truths” when the lack of sources is obvious, is one of the greatest sins and evils of historical science as it is the primal cause of conflicts between nations.<sup>4</sup> We can contribute to this adding that exactly this issue of the “core lands” prompted the most crucial divisions and conflicts between the Lithuanian and Belarusian histories in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Most of the Lithuanian respondents chose “Between Kaunas and Vilnius” (#4, 54 answers); this was followed by “In the eastern part of Lithuania” (#2, 43). A minority chose localities in Belarus: “In the highlands of the river Nemunas (contemporary Belarus)” (#1, 39) and “Between Navahrudak and Minsk” (#3, 27). Only 12 replied that the exact place is not known, whereas 9 respondents did not write anything.

The idea that the cradle of Lithuania was between Kaunas and Vilnius was rooted in the Lithuanian historical narrative in the interwar period. During this period, the

<sup>4</sup> M. Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, Vintage Books, 1962.

most important books that shaped the way the Lithuanian history was written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were published. One of such books was “Lithuanian History” edited by Adolfas Šapoka and published in 1936.<sup>5</sup> It became the most read and the most influential history book in Lithuania of the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century and had been used as a textbook for secondary schools in the 1930’s and in the 1990’s (reprinted edition). To add to this, Lithuania “between Kaunas and Vilnius” was repeated in many other interwar history books, Soviet and post-Soviet times as well as in most of the textbooks for secondary schools. It can be stated, that such approach was dominant in the historical literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century published in the country.

The idea to locate the core of the country in the eastern part of Lithuania started to acquire its strength in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Strongly promoted by famous medievalists, such as Prof. Edvardas Gudavičius, it spread in many publications, the most influential being “Historical Atlas of Lithuania”, published in 2001.<sup>6</sup> The atlas is still viewed as an especially authoritative publication by the Lithuanian historians. According to this perspective, the core Lithuania is more eastwards in the comparison to the “traditional” point of view, established in the interwar period. Thus it is less nationalistic and more pro-Belarusian; nevertheless, the main centers – Vilnius, Trakai, and Kernavė – remain in the territory of Lithuania.

The two remaining answers to the question on where were the core lands of Lithuania refer to the lands in contemporary Belarus. Of course, only a smaller part of Lithuanian students indicated these as the true answers. Still, the numbers are surprisingly high, because in the Lithuanian historiography or school textbooks, these ideas are not widespread.

The majority of the Belarusian respondents chose the Belarusian territory, “In the highlands of the river Nemunas (contemporary Belarus)” (#1, 60 answers), as the location of the core Lithuania. The remaining minority of the answers was divided almost in equal parts: “In the eastern part of Lithuania” (#2, 13), “Between Navahrudak and Minsk” (#3, 7), “Between Kaunas and Vilnius” (#4, 12), “The exact locality is not known” (#5, 10), and blank (6).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of the most important tasks of the national Belarusian historiography (this term is used as an antonym to the dominant Soviet Belarusian historiography) was to prove that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a Belarusian country. Following this task, the first step was to show that the cradle of the Grand Duchy was in the Belarusian or at least in the mixed Belarusian-Lithuanian lands. This trend especially intensified after 1990, prompted by the works of Mikola Jermalovič. His ideas, mostly treated as non-academic, have been modified

<sup>5</sup> *Lietuvos istorija*, red. A. Šapoka, Kaunas, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> *Lietuvos istorijos atlasas*, Vilnius: Vaga, 2001.

and made more scientific by other Belarusian historians, especially Aliaksandr Kraŭcevič<sup>7</sup> since late 1990's. Though Jermalovič was a supporter of an idea that the core Lithuania was to the north-east of Navahrudek i.e. in the middle of contemporary Belarus, inhabited only by the Slavonic people and far away from the border of the Lithuanian Republic, most of other historians (including Kraŭcevič) promoted and supported the region in the highlands of the river Nemunas. Though this was a mixed Lithuanian-Belarusian territory, most of it was located in the lands of contemporary Belarus. Exactly this interpretation has been gradually established in the contemporary Belarusian historiography through the last decade and became dominant in the secondary school textbooks and atlases.

2. *Where was the first capital of the Grand Duchy?*

Original question:

Kur buvo pirmoji LDK sostinė?

Первая столица ВКЛ находилась:

Answers (choose one):

1. In Navahrudak / Naugarduke / в Новогрудке.
2. In Vilnius / Vilniuje / в Вильне.
3. In Kernavė / Kernavėje / в Кернаве.
4. In Trakai / Trakuose / в Троках.
5. In Voruta / Vorutoje / в Воруते.
6. The exact place is not known / Tikslī vieta nežinoma / точное место неизвестно.

The problem of the first capital of the Grand Duchy is closely related to the problem of the core Lithuania, discussed in the previous section. From the perspective of the national narratives, if the first capital is found in the territory inhabited by the Belarusians, the country becomes more Belarusian, whereas if it is located in the territory of Lithuania, the story turns out to be more pro-Lithuanian.

An absolute majority of Lithuanians indicated Kernavė as the first capital of the Grand Duchy (#3, 101 answers). The second choice was Trakai (#4, 32). The rest of the answers were divided among Navahrudak (#1, 19), Vilnius (#2, 13), Voruta (#5, 8) and 'unknown place' (#6, 5). Only 6 students did not provide any answer to the question.

<sup>7</sup> Maybe the most important of his books was A. Krawcewicz, *Powstanie Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, Białystok 2003 (originally in the Belarusian language, 1998). The latest of his books is *A. Краўцэвіч, Гісторыя Вялікага Княства Літоўскага 1248-1341 г.*, Гародня-Увсроцлаў, 2013.

Since the interwar period an opinion that the first capital of Lithuania (the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century) was in Kernavė was intensively promoted in Lithuania. Later, the capital was moved to Trakai, and finally, to Vilnius (1323). Though the period before Vilnius has been generally treated as obscure and Kernavė together with Trakai as hypothetical capitals, up till now almost no one in Lithuania doubts that the first capitals of the Grand Duchy were somewhere in the territories inhabited by the Lithuanians. In other words, they must have been somewhere in the region of Vilnius-Trakai-Kernavė. This notion has always been supported by a conviction that the founders of the Grand Duchy were Lithuanian speaking people; therefore, the first capitals had to be in their lands.

Almost all Belarusians indicated Navahrudak (#1, 90 answers) as the first capital of the Grand Duchy. Vilnius was chosen in the second place (#2, 14). All other answers collected no points, whereas one answer was left blank.

Although there are no clear indications about where the first capital of the Grand Duchy was before Vilnius, some sources point out Navahrudek as a very important center of Mindaugas, the first ruler of the Grand Duchy (approximately 1240-1263).<sup>8</sup> Since the interwar period, the Lithuanian historians have treated these sources as late, incorrect and unreliable. However, the Belarusians continue quoting them as one of the most important proof of the first capital being in the lands of Belarus. Supported by indirect evidence from contemporary sources, this fact became a very solid rock in the Belarusian national narrative. In the historical atlases and textbooks for secondary schools published in Belarus in the last decade, the first capital is located in Navahrudek and nowhere else. In contrast, in Lithuania, young children are taught that the capital could not be in Navahrudek, and that it is an erroneous interpretation of the Belarusians.<sup>9</sup> In rare cases, when Navahrudek is not marked as a capital, the Belarusian authors do not indicate any other possible place suggesting that the exact location is not known. This is done, for example, in an academic and solid atlas on the history of Belarus which has been recently published.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. *When was the first King of Lithuania, Mindaugas, crowned?*

Original question:

Kada buvo karūnuotas Mindaugas?

Когда был коронован Миндовг?

<sup>8</sup> First of all it, is the chronicle of Gustyn (16th) and *Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitia and all of Ruthenia* (1582) by M. Strykowski.

<sup>9</sup> This idea can also be found in a book approved by Lithuanian Ministry of Education for teaching at secondary schools: E. Bakonis, *Vaikams apie senąsias Lietuvos sostines*, Kaunas: Šviesa, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> *Вялікі гістарычны атлас Беларусі*, т. 1, Мінск, 2009.

Answers (chose one):

1. 6 July 1253 / 1253 m. liepos 6 d. / 6-ого июля 1253 г.
2. In 1253 (the exact month and day are not known) / 1253 m. (tikslus mėnuo ir diena nežinomi) / В1253 г. (месяц и день неизвестны).
3. 8 September 1253 / 1253 m. rugsėjo 8 d. / 8-ого сентября 1253 г.
4. The date is not known / Data nežinoma / дата неизвестна.

The exact date when Mindaugas was crowned was not indicated precisely in the available sources. The only reliable fact is that the coronation took place in 1253. For everyone this has been a well-known truth for centuries, which has not been questioned by the Polish or by the Lithuanian and the Belarusian historians. Since 1990, the Lithuanian historians added a month and a day to the year of the coronation. This is visibly illustrated by the results of enquiry.

Nearly all Lithuanian students responded that Mindaugas was crowned on 6 July 1253 (#1, 171 answers). Only a minority chose other two answers: “In 1253 (the exact month and day are not known)” (#2, 6) and “8 September 1253” (#3, 5). No one selected the answer “The date is not known” (#4); 2 answers were left blank.

Among the Belarusians, the answer “In 1253 (the exact month and day are not known)” (#2, 68 answers) dominated as the date of Mindaugas’ coronation. The exact dates were chosen by almost the same number of respondents: 6 July 1253 (#1, 19) and 8 September 1253 (#3, 14). Only two students marked that the day was not known, whereas two students did not mark their answers at all.

The exact date of Mindaugas’ coronation was “found” by the Lithuanians in approximately 1990. The greatest merit goes to Gudavičius. On the basis of only several indirect documents, the researcher deduced when the coronation could have taken place.<sup>11</sup> The discovery of this day coincided with the reestablishment of the Republic of Lithuania. The coming of the new state required fixing a specific day for the state holiday, thus the Lithuanian Seimas accepted a decision to celebrate the coronation of Mindaugas. From this time on, the day has become a state holiday of the Republic of Lithuania, during which each year flags are flown and people are given a day off from work.

The period between the discovery of the exact date of the coronation and the declaration of the 6th of July as a national holiday was very short – just a few years. Therefore, the Lithuanian community of historians did not manage to fully discuss and offer their own opinions about the reliability of the date. Criticism and doubts

<sup>11</sup> E. Gudavičius has been writing in many places about how he “found” the 6th of July, e. g.: E. Gudavičius, *Lietuvos europėjimo kelias*, Aidai, 2002, p. 336.

put forth during the following decades, especially intensively and proof-based by a young historian Tomas Baranauskas, have changed nothing.<sup>12</sup> A question may be asked why colleagues in Belarus did not put this date into circulation: is it because they do not know what Lithuanians are writing about, or because Gudavičius' deduction seems insufficiently well-grounded?

4. *Where was Mindaugas crowned?*

Original question:

Kur buvo karūnuotas Mindaugas?

Где был коронован Миндовг?

Answers (chose one):

1. In Navahrudak / Naugarduke / в Новогрудке.
2. In Vilnius / Vilniuje / в Вильне.
3. In Trakai / Trakuose / в Трoках.
4. The exact place is not known / Tikslī vieta nežinoma / точное место неизвестное.

The place of Mindaugas' coronation is as important as the place of the first capital and of the core Lithuania. It can be presupposed that the Lithuanian narrative tends to locate the event in the Lithuanian lands, whereas the Belarusian – in the Belarusian ones. This hypothesis is very well illustrated by the answers to the question.

Most of the Lithuanians indicated Trakai (#3, 71 answers) as the place of Mindaugas' coronation. The answers are almost equally distributed between Navahrudak (#1, 47) and Vilnius (#2, 41). Only 19 replied that the place is not known, and in 6 cases, the answer was left blank.

Among the Belarusian answers, Navahrudek (#1, 78 answers) as the place of Mindaugas' coronation dominated. A smaller part chose Vilnius (#2, 27). No other options were chosen as other possibilities.

For the Belarusians, it is obvious that Mindaugas' coronation took place in Navahrudak. It was one of the most important cities in Lithuania at the time. It is doubtful whether Vilnius, Kernavė, or Trakai, located in ethnographic Lithuania, could have been comparable to Navahrudak in size. In addition, the city began to figure in the written sources much earlier, as it was an important cultural and political centre. Thus a question may be raised why could Mindaugas not have been crowned there?

It is important to note that in the annals called the *Gustyn Chronicle*, it is clearly written that “Grand Duke Mindaugas of Lithuania was crowned in

<sup>12</sup> *Voruta*, 2004 m. sausio 31 d.

Navahrudak in the Kingdom of Lithuania, blessed by Pope Innocent IV and the Bishop of Chełm, who was the pope's cardinal in Prussia". Today, in Belarus, this excerpt of the annals is published in the collections of sources prepared for those studying in secondary schools and schools of higher education<sup>13</sup>. This is an important detail, supporting the affirmation of Navahrudak as the place of the coronation. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Gustyn Chronicle* was strongly criticised and recognised as unreliable. In Lithuania, this is a clear truth to everyone, which is why many Lithuanian historians question why excerpts from an unreliable source are provided to secondary and higher education students in the neighbouring country without criticism.

Though the opinion that Navahrudak was the place of the coronation has almost become entrenched in the common opinion of Belarus, there are hints of doubt in the works of professional historians. For example, H. Sahanovič writes that the coronation *most probably* took place in Navahrudak.<sup>14</sup> However, in the context of the whole historiography of the Belarusians, such doubt seems like an exception to the rule.

In the Lithuanian historiography of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Navahrudak almost did not figure as a possible location of the coronation. During the interwar and later periods, for example, in the works of Zenonas Ivinskis, the city was occasionally mentioned. However, there is no confirmation that the event could have taken place precisely in Navahrudak. In the last half and especially at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not a single book by a Lithuanian author mentioning Navahrudak as one of the possible locations for the coronation can be found.

The given facts do not imply that the Lithuanians did not search for the location of the coronation. During the entire century, a number of articles were written, and a number of discussions and researches conducted. It is thought that the coronation could have taken place in Voruta, because it was a very important castle of Mindaugas. On the other hand, it is still not clear where the castle was situated. Overall, the Lithuanian historians are more apt to support the opinion that the coronation had to take place somewhere in the lands of Mindaugas' patrimony, for example, Kernavė. This idea is essentially based on the fact that such a significant event had to be centred in the important lands of Mindaugas. In the book of the Lithuanian history published in 1999, Edvardas Gudavičius confidently puts forth an idea that the coronation took place in Vilnius, and that the king even had a cathedral built for this reason.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *История Беларуси в документах и материалах*, Минск, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> H. Sahanowicz, *Historia Białorusi do końca XVIII wieku*, Lublin, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> E. Gudavičius, *Lietuvos istorija*, t. 1, Vilnius, 1999.

Thus, burdened with a host of interpretations, the Lithuanians today say that they do not know where the coronation took place. It is precisely this opinion that is held by the school textbooks and many authoritative historians.

*5. Which nation dominated in Vilnius in the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania?*

Original question:

Kuri tautybė dominavo Vilniuje LDK laikais?

Какой народ преобладал в Вильне во времена ВКЛ?

Answers (chose one):

1. The Lithuanians / lietuviai / литовцы.
2. The Belarusians / baltarusiai / белорусы.
3. The Poles / lenkai / поляки.
4. The Jews / žydai / евреи.
5. The city was multicultural and it is difficult to distinguish one nation / miestas buvo daugiakultūris, sunku išskirti vyraujančią tautą / город был многонациональный, сложно выделить доминирующий народ.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vilnius was claimed to be the most important city and historical capital by the Lithuanians. These pretensions caused conflict with the Poles in the interwar period (in 1920-1939, Vilnius was in the Polish Republic). On the other hand, Vilnius has always been treated as the most important Belarusian town, especially from the point of view of cultural and political history. No Belarusian history or a textbook for secondary schools can avoid mentioning this fact.

Most of the Lithuanian students chose multiculturalism (#5, 68 answers) as the main feature of Vilnius in the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Poles were marked as a second choice (#3, 58). The Lithuanians were indicated in the third place (#1, 35), whereas the Belarusians (#2, 8) and the Jews (#4, 11) were rarely chosen. 4 answers were left blank.

Despite the fact that Vilnius had been the capital of the Grand Duchy, the young Lithuanians have never been taught that it was a Lithuanian populated city, because of the lack of statistical evidence. The city was inhabited by the Poles, the Belarusians (Ruthenians), the Jews, the Germans and other nations. None of them composed a majority, though the Polish language dominated the public life since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These facts have been written in the Lithuanian history books since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the respondents chose multiculturalism. It is also natural that a high number of students “voted” for the Polish Vilnius. The Polish cultural

domination in Vilnius has been explicitly described in the Lithuanian history books of the 20th century.

Less than a half of the Belarusians indicated the Lithuanians (#1, 41 answers) as the dominant nation in Vilnius of the times. Almost similar numbers were counted for multiculturalism (#5, 29) and the Belarusians (#2, 25). The Poles (#3, 5) and the Jews (#4, 4) were rarely chosen. 2 answers were left blank.

Though Vilnius is mentioned in every Belarusian history, it is quite foreign for the young Belarusians. It seems that Vilnius is more known from everyday life than from the historical perspective. This may be the reason why the young Belarusians erroneously indicated that most of the city's inhabitants were Lithuanians. Multiculturalism of the city, emphasized in most of the Belarusian histories, is only in the second place, whereas the city's Polish aspect is almost completely ignored. It is also curious that only a small number of respondents chose the Belarusians as a dominant nation, despite the fact that Vilnius has always been described in literature as an important cultural center of Belarus.

*6. What type of country (from the national point of view) was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania?*

Original question:

Kokia valstybė buvo LDK?

Каким государством было ВКЛ?

Answers (chose one):

1. Lithuanian / lietuviška / литовским.
2. Belarusian / baltarusiška / белорусским.
3. Lithuanian-Belarusian / lietuviška-baltarusiška / литовско-белорусским.
4. Belarusian-Lithuanian / baltarusiška-lietuviška / белорусско-литовским.
5. Multinational state of the Middle Ages, where national aspect did not play an important role / Daugiatautė viduramžių valstybė, kurioje nacionalinis aspektas neturėjo jokios reikšmės / полиэтническим средневековым государством, в котором национальный аспект не имел значения.

Both national narratives discussed in the article tend to nationalize the Grand Duchy i.e. to make it a Lithuanian or, respectively, a Belarusian country. The main obstacle for both sides in pursuing this task is the multicultural composition of the country and, different perceptions of the nation in the past and modern times.

Half of the Lithuanian respondents indicated multinationality as the main feature of the Grand Duchy (#5, 92 answers). Approximately one fourth of all respondents indicated the GDL as a Lithuanian country (#1, 47). The answer

“Lithuanian-Belarusian” was selected by less respondents (#3, 36). Few respondents marked the GDL as a “Belarusian-Lithuanian” (#4, 4) and “Belarusian” (#2, 1) country. Four answers were left blank.

Though the Grand Duchy is treated as an integral part of the Lithuanian history, the academic works or textbooks for secondary schools do not mention that the Duchy was inhabited mostly by the Lithuanians. Traditionally, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Grand Duchy had been perceived as a multicultural country dominated by the Lithuanians who (“unfortunately”) composed a minority of the population. The multicultural side of the country has always been stressed along with the statement that the perception of the nation in the times of the Grand Duchy was related more to the political issues rather than ethnicity and language as is in modern times. Therefore, the choice of most Lithuanian respondents is logical. Having in mind the perspective of the national historiography, it is also clear why almost half of respondents marked the GDL as the Lithuanian state, whereas the Belarusian factor was almost totally ignored.

Similarly to the Lithuanian respondents, almost half of the Belarusians indicated multinationality of the state (#5, 39 answers). An equal number of answers were given to “Lithuanian-Belarusian” (#3, 27) and “Belarusian-Lithuanian” (#4, 27) choices. Eight respondents chose “Lithuanian” (#1) and only one respondent “Belarusian” (#2) as their answers. Two respondents did not mark anything.

Differently from the Lithuanians, the Belarusian national historiography of the last two decades does not promote an idea of the domination of one nation. As a rule, the two ruling nations of the multicultural country, the Lithuanians and the Belarusians, are acknowledged. In 1992, the joint debates of historians were summoned from both countries. A decision (never followed by the Lithuanians) was made to treat the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a Belarusian-Lithuanian or Lithuanian-Belarusian country.<sup>16</sup> Though a number of books on the Belarusian Grand Duchy were published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it seems that the young Belarusians did not read them. These books are, of course, not included into the secondary school curricula (all of them mostly non-academic). This explains the fact that only 2 students marked the Grand Duchy as a Belarusian country.

*7. How did the inhabitants of the contemporary Belarusian lands call themselves in the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania?*

Original question:

Kaip LDK laikais save vadino dabartinės Baltarusijos gyventojai?

<sup>16</sup> Г. Саганович, Великое Княжество Литовское в современной Белорусской историографии, *Lietuvos Džiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir paveldo „dalybos“*, Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2008, 73–92.

Как во времена ВКЛ себя называли жители сегодняшней Беларуси?

Answers (multiple choice):

1. The Belarusians / baltarusiais (gudais) / белорусаами.
2. The Litvins / litvinais / литвинами.
3. The Lithuanians / lietuviais / литовцами.
4. The Ruthenians / rusinai / русинами.

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a multinational country. A Lithuanian speaking population inhabited only a smaller west-northern part of the country. The rest was dominated by the Slavonic people, the ancestors of the Belarusians and, on a smaller geographical and chronological extent, the Ukrainians. If the country was called “Lithuania”, how were its people called? If the people were called *Lithuanians*, most of them spoke the Slavonic languages and were the fathers of contemporary Belarus. Such logic is pursued in a number of significant publications by the Belarusian authors, especially since the 1990’s.

Approximately half of all Lithuanian respondents chose “the Belarusians” (#1, 117 answers) as the name inhabitants of the contemporary Belarusian lands called themselves in the times of Grand Duchy. The second choice was “the Ruthenians” (#4, 66) and “the Litvins” (#2, 42). Only 22 respondents indicated “the Lithuanians” (#3).

In the traditional Lithuanian historiography, all inhabitants of the Grand Duchy were called Lithuanians. However, depending on the circumstances, *Lithuanians* may be divided into the Lithuanians and the Belarusians / Ruthenians: the first spoke Lithuanian, the second spoke Belarusian. It can be seen that in one case, the term *Lithuanians* is used in a much broader sense than in the other. The answers of the Lithuanian respondents show that they do not know anything about the discussions on the subject in Belarus. This situation may be explained in the following way: in Lithuania, nobody translates the Belarusian history books, to add to this, only a small number of the Lithuanian scholars discuss problematic topics with their Belarusian colleagues and these discussions usually are not being exposed for non-scholar public. In this way, the ignorance of the different interpretations of certain historical questions becomes evident. It is important to mention that since the interwar period, when the Lithuanian national narrative was established, the Belarusians as a nation have mostly been ignored. Although the Belarusians composed a huge part of the Grand Duchy, they were not described: no images of the Belarusian cities (except, maybe, Grodno), culture and past can be found. The Belarusians were simply not seen. Especially it is true when talking about the popular histories or textbooks for

schools. Even until the present times, only few Lithuanian scholars discuss how these “invisible people” could be called: the Ruthenians (a general term for the Slavonic people who inhabited the Grand Duchy), the gudai (a synonym for the Belarusians with a bit broader meaning including the Ukrainians) or somehow else.

Most of the Belarusians marked “the Litvins” (#2, 87 answers) as the name they were calling themselves during the times of the Grand Duchy. This was followed by “the Ruthenians” (#4, 41) and “the Belarusians” (#1, 31). Only a small number indicated “the Lithuanians” (#3, 6).

Recent research by Oleg Łatyszonek<sup>17</sup> has shown that most of the inhabitants of the contemporary Belarus, especially in its western and central parts, in the times of the Grand Duchy, called themselves the Lithuanians. In the Belarusian language, the word *Lithuanians* is translated as *Litvins*. Łatyszonek was not the first to suggest such perspective. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially since the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an idea to refer to the Belarusians as the Lithuanians, and the Lithuanian speaking population as the Samogitians or *Lietuvis* was promoted. This trend intensified in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The juxtaposition of Litva and Lietuva has been broadly discussed by the Lithuanian<sup>18</sup> and the Belarusian<sup>19</sup> authors; however, this issue is not in the scope of the current research. It could be noted that the Belarusian respondents tend to treat the Grand Duchy as the country of their ancestors. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in this case, is equaled to the Grand Duchy of Belarus. It is important to mention, though, that neither contemporary nor ancient Belarusians are called the Litvins in the official histories and school textbooks of contemporary Belarus. Thus the Belarusian respondents are strongly influenced by the non-official historiography with respect to this question.

*8. Which of these rulers converted to the Orthodox Christian faith at least for a short period of time?*

Original question:

Kuris iš šių LDK valdovų bent trumpam laikui buvo priėmęs stačiatikybę?

Кто из этих великих князей хотя бы на короткое время принял православие?

Answers (multiple choice):

1. Vaišvilkas / Vaišvilkas / Войшалк.
2. Mindaugas / Mindaugas / Миндауг.

<sup>17</sup> O. Łatyszonek, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów*, Białystok, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> A. Bumblauskas, Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos paveldo „dalybos“ ir „Litva/Letuva“ distinkcijos konceptas, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir paveldo „dalybos“*, Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2008, 15–66.

<sup>19</sup> А. Ліцкевич, Да пытання пра рутэнізацыю Балтаў у XIV – пачатку XV стст., *ARCHE*, т. 11-12, 2009, 24-80.

3. Gediminas / Gediminas / Гедимин.
4. Algirdas / Algirdas / Ольгерд.
5. Jogaila / Jogaila / Ягайло.
6. Vytautas / Vytautas / Витовт.

The main difference between the Lithuanians and the Belarusians in the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was religion. The Lithuanians were Pagan and only in 1387, became Catholic. The Belarusian population has followed the Orthodox tradition since the 10<sup>th</sup> century. What was the religion of the rulers of the Grand Duchy in the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, i.e. in the times of the foundation of the state and its greatest expanse? If the inhabitants were Pagan, the country itself could be treated as Lithuanian; if they were Orthodox, the country should be seen as Belarusian. This distinction is of crucial importance for both national narratives.

Most of the Lithuanian respondents chose Jogaila (#5, 58 answers) and Algirdas (#4, 56) as the rulers who were baptized according to the Orthodox rite. The next choice was Vaišvilkas (#1, 49). Vytautas (#6, 31), Gediminas (#3, 20) and Mindaugas (#2, 17) received the smallest number of points.

Mindaugas and Jogaila (the Grand Duke 1377-1392; the King of Poland 1385-1432) were the rulers who baptized Lithuania according to the Catholic rite. The difference between the two events is that the first attempt to convert Lithuania to Christianity failed whereas the second was successful. In the collective memory, Jogaila is treated as the “true” Baptist of Lithuania. It is thus clear why the respondents chose Jogaila in the first place in spite of the fact that he was Catholic, not Orthodox. Algirdas (1345-1377) ruled the Grand Duchy together with his brother Kęstutis. They divided the territories so that the eastern part (the Belarusian and Ukrainian lands) were under Algirdas supervision. To add to this, according to some hypotheses, Algirdas’ mother was Orthodox and he grew up in an Orthodox environment. Though Lithuanian historians do not talk about his baptism, the activities and facts of the ruler’s life can suggest that he was an Orthodox. This also could have been the reason why Algirdas was chosen by so many respondents.

According to the Lithuanian historiography of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all rulers of the Grand Duchy until Jogaila were Pagan. However, differently for other rulers, Vaišvilkas (1264-1267) converted to Orthodoxy. Although this fact is not widespread in popular literature or textbooks for secondary schools, it is still known by the Lithuanians.

An absolute majority of the Belarusian respondents believed that Mindaugas (#2, 76 answers) and Vytautas (#6, 60) were Orthodox at least for a short time. All

other personalities collected an almost equal number of answers: Vaišvilkas (#1, 24), Gediminas (#3, 19), Algirdas (#4, 21) and Jogaila (#5, 20).

Though no calculations have been made, it seems that Mindaugas and Vytautas are the most discussed rulers of the Grand Duchy in the Belarusian historical narrative of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first one was the founder of the Grand Duchy as well as the first and the only king. The second one has been treated as the greatest ruler of the country. During the times of Vytautas' rule, the Grand Duchy became the largest and the most powerful country in its history. Such evaluations are common for both national narratives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Logically, as the answers of respondents show, the Lithuanians tend to treat both rulers as Pagan, whereas the Belarusians see them as Orthodox. It is very typical for some Belarusian historians to argue that both of these rulers were close to the Belarusian people and at least for a short time were converted to the Orthodox Christianity, whereas later they changed their religion only because of political calculations. We can find such opinions in popular literature and publications for secondary schools issued over the last 20 years,<sup>20</sup> and, with much more reservation and criticism, even in serious academic works.<sup>21</sup>

*9. Which religion in the times of Vytautas the Great had the largest number of adherers in the lands of the Grand Duchy?*

Original question:

Ко Vytauto Didžiojo laikais LDK gyveno daugiausia?

Когов ВКЛ было больше всего во времена Витовта Великого?

Answers (chose one):

1. Orthodox / stačiatikių / православных.
2. Catholic / katalikų / католиков.
3. Pagan / ragonių / язычников.
4. Muslim / musulmonų / мусульман.
5. Jewish / judėjų / иудеев.

As it has been shown in the previous discussion (on the religion of the rulers of the Grand Duchy), confession occupied a very important place in the narratives of both countries. Which religion dominated among the inhabitants in the times of the greatest ruler of the Grand Duchy, Vytautas, the only person who has the title “the great” in the Belarusian and the Lithuanian histories? It is presumed that if

<sup>20</sup> Materials for schools: *100 pytanьяў і адказаў з гісторыі Беларусі*, Мінск: Звязда 1993; A textbook on history for schools published in Poland: E. Mironowicz, *Historia Białorusi*, Białystok 2001.

<sup>21</sup> *Вялікае Княства Літоўскае, Энциклапедыя*, т. 2, Мінск 2007, 312.

the inhabitants were Pagans or Catholics (Lithuanians were Christianized on the eve of Vytautas' rule), then the country should be Lithuanian; if Orthodox, then Belarusians had to dominate.

Almost half of the Lithuanian students thought that the majority of the population of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the times of Vytautas the Great was Pagan (#3, 83 answers). Catholic (#1, 42) and Orthodox (#2, 41) were chosen almost at the same rate. Muslim (#4, 1) and Jewish (#5, 7) were rarely marked. 11 answers were left blank.

The Grand Duchy of Vytautas' times was a huge country, composed of many nationalities. The Lithuanian speaking people occupied only a small part of the territory and there is no publication written by Lithuanian historians where it is argued otherwise. Thus, no textbook for secondary schools or popular historical literature state that the Pagans or the Catholics comprised the largest part of the country. On the other hand, it has always been stressed in the Lithuanian national narrative that the Pagans and the Catholics dominated in the political elites which could have mislead the respondents. It can be said that the answers illustrate the main idea of the Lithuanian national narrative which states that the Grand Duchy was a Lithuanian country.

Almost half of the Belarusian students indicated Orthodox people (#1, 53 answers) as dominant in the times of Vytautas the Great. Catholics (#2, 27) and Pagans (#3, 21) received a similar number of points. Muslims (#4) received only one point, whereas Jews (#5) were not chosen at all. 5 answers were left blank.

In sum, the Belarusian respondents were much closer to the real situation of the Grand Duchy. It is very hard to negate that the majority of the population in the times of Vytautas was Orthodox. On the other hand, this truth corresponds to the core statement of the Belarusian national narrative about the Belarusian dominance in the country.

10. *Which state can use the Knight (Vytyis / Пагоня) as its coat of arms?*

Original question:

Kurios valstybės herbu turėtų būti Vytyis?

Гербом какой страны должна быть Погоня?

Answers (chose one):

1. Only Lithuania / tik Lietuvos / ТОЛЬКО ЛИТВЫ.
2. Only Belarus / tik Baltarusijos / ТОЛЬКО БЕЛАРУСИ.
3. Both Lithuania and Belarus / gali būti ir Lietuvos, ir Baltarusijos / и ЛИТВЫ, и БЕЛАРУСИ.

4. Neither Lithuania nor Belarus: it was the coat of arms of the Grand Duchy, whereas Belarus and Lithuania of today do not have anything in common with the Grand Duchy / nei Lietuvos, nei Baltarusijos: tai buvo LDK herbas, o šiandieninė Lietuva ir Baltarusija neturi nieko bendro su LDK / ни Литвы, ни Беларуси: Погоня была гербом ВКЛ, а соедняшние Литва и Беларусь ничего общего с Великим Княжеством неимеют.

In 1990-1991, when the independent Lithuanian and Belarusian Republics were established, both countries chose the Knight as their coat of arms. It has always been the main symbol of the Grand Duchy, and such a choice was an eloquent claim to the legacy of this country. After Lukashenko came to power (1995), the coat of arms was replaced by the Soviet one in Belarus. Since then, the Belarusian opposition is using the Knight as the proper coat of arms of the country.

An absolute majority of the Lithuanian respondents chose the Knight to be exclusively Lithuanian (#1, 115 answers) coat of arms. The opinions whether the Knight may belong to both (#3, 28) or to none (#4, 29) of the countries distributed nearly equally. Only 6 Lithuanian students believed that the coat of arms belongs solely to Belarus (#2). 6 answers were left blank.

The answers of the Lithuanian respondents clearly show that the main symbol of the Grand Duchy should not be shared with anybody else. This feeling is very strong among the Lithuanians as illustrated by the debates in the Lithuanian Seimas in 2012-2013 when the importance of the national flag (a red flag with the Knight in the middle) was disputed. The key argument was growing nationalism and claims to the legacy of the Grand Duchy in Belarus. As a result of these discussions, the flag with the Knight can be seen at public, official and private buildings.

A majority of the Belarusian respondents believe that the Knight should not be exceptionally Lithuanian or Belarusian (#4, 40). An almost equal number of students agreed that the coat of arms “Can be both Lithuanian and Belarusian” (#3, 28) or “Only Belarusian” (#2, 23). Only 11 respondents declared that it should be “Only Lithuanian” (#1). Two answers were not marked.

The answers suggest that the period of the first half of the 1990’s was too short to root the Knight into the Belarusian tradition. The replacement of the Knight by the Soviet symbols seems to be acceptable for the respondents.

*11. Which of these cities was the most important residence of the Radvila family?*

Original question:

Kuriame iš šių miestų buvo svarbiausia Radvilų rezidencija?

В которм из этих городов была главная резиденция Радзивилов?

Answers (chose one):

1. Niasviž/ Nesvyžiuje / в Несвиже.
2. Biržai / Biržuose / в Биржах.
3. Kėdainiai / Kėdainiuose / в Кейданах.
4. Mir / Mire / в Мире.
5. Sluck / Slucke / в Слуцке.

The Radvila (Radziwiłł) family was one of the several most important families of the Grand Duchy during the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Their contribution to the cultural and political history of the country is especially noteworthy. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both narratives tend to nationalize the Radvila family. The family had many residences all over Lithuania, Poland and some foreign countries (all residences indicated in the answers were the true residences of the family). However, it is especially complicated and controversial to identify the most important residence or residences, because different branches of the family in different periods made different impact on the history. It has been suggested that one of the typical features of the national narratives is to focus on their contemporary territories. As a result, the Lithuanian students should know more about the Radvila residences in the territory of contemporary Lithuania, whereas the Belarusians should highlight their local places. This assumption was verified by the answers of respondents.

Most of the Lithuanian respondents believed that the most important residences of the Radvila family were located in Biržai (#2, 71 answers) and Kėdainiai (#3, 62). Niasviž (#1, 16), Mir (#4, 4) and Sluck (#5, 19) were chosen less frequently. 12 answers were left blank.

From the perspective of the Lithuanian history, the most important Radvilas' residences in the territory of modern Lithuania were in Biržai and Kėdainiai. Pupils are taught about this from the early grades, many popular books mention these facts, events and shows in the former Radvila residences are organized. There is almost no information on the Radvila residences in Belarus, or this information is not emphasized, and no excursions or public events take place in the palaces.

An absolute majority of the Belarusians indicated Niasviž (#1, 95) as the most important residence of the Radvila family. All other localities were nearly neglected: Biržai (#2, 0), Kėdainiai (#3, 1), Mir (#4, 2), Sluck (#5, 7). 2 answers were left blank.

Similarly to the Lithuanians, the Belarusians know only about the places in their country. Without any doubt, Niasvižis is the most known Radvilas' residence in the Belarusian historical narrative, national as well as official. Moreover, the Radvila palace in Niasviž became an especially popular tourist attraction in

contemporary Belarus, whereas only a very small number of the Belarusians visit Biržai and Kėdainiai.

*12. Which cities, at least for a short time, were in the territory of the Grand Duchy?*

Original question:

Žemiau išvardyti Vidurio-Rytų Europos miestai. Pažymėkite tuos, kurie bent trumpam buvo LDK teritorijoje.

Из приведенного ниже списка городов центрально-восточной Европы обозначьте, которые хотя бы на короткое время входили в состав ВКЛ.

Answers (multiple choice):

1. Riga / Ryga / Рига.
2. Klaipėda / Klaipėda / Клайпеда.
3. Kaunas / Kaunas / Каунас.
4. Kėdainiai / Kėdainiai / Кейданы.
5. Hrodna / Gardinas / Гродно.
6. Viciebsk / Vitebskas / Витебск.
7. Polack / Polockas / Полоцк.
8. Minsk / Minskas / Минск.
9. Brest / Brestas / Брест.
10. Mahiliaŭ / Mogiliovas / Могилев.
11. Smolensk / Smolenskas / Смоленск.
12. Navahrudak / Naugardukas / Новогрудэк.
13. Kiev / Kijevas / Киев.
14. Lviv / Lvovas / Львов.

As it has been suggested, the national Belarusian and Lithuanian narratives concentrate on the territories of modern countries, but ignore the parts of the Grand Duchy which today belong to the neighboring states. The current question was given to verify this particular hypothesis. It was expected that the Belarusian respondents would choose the Belarusian cities, whereas the Lithuanians would mark the cities located in contemporary Lithuania. The analysis of the answers verified the initial presupposition.

In the questionnaires filled by the Lithuanian students, more than a half of all respondents marked the following six cities: Kaunas (#3, 137 answers), Hrodna (#5, 132), Kėdainiai (#4, 119), Navahrudak (#12, 111), Klaipėda (#2, 100) and

Smolensk (#11, 92). A considerable number indicated Viciebsk (#6, 71), Minsk (#8, 71), Polack (#7, 70) and Kiev (#13, 63). Less attention was given to Lviv (#14, 46), Brest (#9, 37), Riga (#1, 33) and Mahiliaŭ (#10, 31).

Some results of the questionnaire need to be discussed in greater detail. Hrodna, Navahrudak and Smolensk are frequently mentioned in the Lithuanian history books, although they are outside the territory of contemporary Lithuania. All other non-Lithuanian cities are more marginal in the national narrative, which explains why only 3 Belarusian cities were marked by so many respondents. It is interesting that although Klaipėda, the third largest city, had never belonged to the Grand Duchy, it was marked by the majority of respondents only because it is included in the territory of contemporary Lithuania.

More than half of the Belarusian students indicated the following 8 cities: Navahrudak (#12, 94 answers), Hrodna (#5, 94), Polack (#7, 81), Brest (#9, 77), Minsk (#8, 73), Viciebsk (#6, 66), Kaunas (#3, 59) and Smolensk (#11, 53). The rest 6 cities collected the following number of answers: Mahiliaŭ (#10, 51), Riga (#1, 35), Kėdainiai (#4, 35), Kiev (#13, 32), Klaipėda (#2, 28) and Lviv (#14, 23).

## CONCLUSIONS

On the eve of the creation of the Grand Duchy, the territory of core Lithuania and the first capitals were in the Lithuanian speaking lands, according to most Lithuanian students, and in the Belarusian lands, according to most Belarusian respondents. These answers fully correspond to the main ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's national narratives of both countries which aim at showing that "everything began" in their lands and justifying their claims to the Grand Duchy.

The Lithuanian respondents know when (6 July) the first ruler of the Grand Duchy Mindaugas was crowned but they do not know where. The Belarusians, vice-versa: they know the exact place (Navahrudek) but do not know the date. This confusion is not accidental. The Belarusian academic and non-academic historiography strongly supports the idea that Mindaugas was crowned in the Belarusian city Navahrudek. The Lithuanians denied this idea during the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century, arguing that the event took place somewhere in the territory inhabited by the Lithuanian speaking population. In their own turn, the Lithuanian historians set the date of Mindaugas' coronation in the need of a new state holiday and to commemorate the restoration of the independence of the Lithuanian Republic in 1990.

Both groups of respondents agree on the multinational nature of the Grand Duchy. The differences appear in the discussions about the dominant nation.

The Lithuanians stress the dominance of the Pagan religion among the rulers and inhabitants, as well as the prevalence of the Lithuanian territories over the Belarusian ones. As a contrast, the Belarusians mark all the possible influences of the Orthodox religion on the rulers and population and claim its dominance in the country. Finally, the Belarusians believe that true Lithuanians (Litvins) were their ancestors, who spoke the Belarusian language.

Both national narratives acknowledge the whole history of the Grand Duchy but are territorially limited and focus only on modern frontiers. Thus many important historical details are neglected. This position is evidenced in the answers of the respondents: the Belarusian students feel no attachment to the Knight as a symbol of modern Belarus and treat Vilnius as historically more Lithuanian than Belarusian. Both, the Lithuanians and the Belarusians, “forget” cities that belonged to the Grand Duchy, but today are outside the borders of their countries.

Summing up, the answers of both the Belarusians and the Lithuanians were neither accidental nor unexpected. In general, they almost fully correspond to the dominant trends of the contemporary national narratives of both countries which reach young people through the secondary school textbooks, as well as mass media and other social means.

Rūstis Kamuntavičius

#### LIETUVOS DIDŽIOSIOS KUNIGAİKŠTYSTĖS ISTORIJA: BALTARUSIJOS IR LIETUVOS JAUNOSIOS KARTOS INTERPRETACIJOS

**SANTRAUKA.** Iškeliamą hipotezę, kad lietuvių ir baltarusių jaunuomenės žinios apie LDK turi būti skirtingos pačiais svarbiausiais jos istorijos klausimais, tokiais kaip LDK susikūrimo aplinkybės, pirmosios sostinės lokalizacija, Vilniaus problema, vyraujanti Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės tauta ir religija. Apklausus 105 Gardino J. Kupalos universiteto ir 184 VDU studentus iš esmės ši hipotezė pasitvirtino. Straipsnyje diskutuojama, kas galėjo nulemti tokius studentų atsakymus, pirmiausia kreipiant dėmesį į svarbiausius XX a. istoriografinius darbus, formavusius nacionalinius naratyvus. Tiek baltarusiai, tiek lietuviai savinasi LDK praeitį, tačiau abiejų istoriniai pasakojimai yra apriboti teritoriniu ir tautiniu požiūriu. Abu iš esmės koncentruojasi į dabartines valstybių ribas ir, atitinkamai, į baltarusių ir lietuvių tautas. Dėl šios priežasties natūraliai atsiranda iš esmės skirtingi bendros praeities traktavimai.

**RAKTAŽODŽIAI:** Lietuva, Baltarusija, nacionaliniai naratyvai, XX amžius, jaunimas.