Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe

New Selection 1

Commemorations, festivals : Lithuanian

Cultural Current: Festivals, Remembrance

Cultural Community: Lithuanian

Author: Safronovas, Vasilijus

In the areas on both sides of the Russo-Prussian border that were most densely populated by Lithuanian speakers, the population engaged in commemorations and festivals, most of which were part of a liturgical year, throughout the long 19th century. These naturally differed by religion: Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Jewish, Orthodox. Public holidays in the Russian Empire – celebrations relating to the emperor, his family and the Romanov dynasty (birthdays, coronation days, etc.) – involved primarily the Orthodox Church, the army, and imperial institutions. Similarly, there were monarchical holidays in Prussia related to the Hohenzollern dynasty. Both monarchies emphasized, in their official memory, their victories in the Napoleonic Wars; in addition, the 1870 victory at Sedan was added to the Prussian annual commemorations after the 1871 proclamation of the German Reich. The Lithuanian-speaking subjects of both monarchies participated in these celebrations and commemorations to different extents. The school, the army and similar institutions encouraged engagement on both sides of the border, but in Prussia overall acculturation was stronger, and many Lithuanian speakers assimilated there more easily. Prussian Lithuanians were proudly involved in the war veterans associations (Kriegervereine), which operated both in district centres and in almost every parish, and easily reconciled such participation with their aspirations to preserve their linguistic and cultural identity. Lithuanians in Prussia also contributed to official monuments celebrating Prussia's German mission, such as the Queen Louise statue in Tilsit (now Sovetsk) in 1900 or the Borussia monument in Memel (now Klaipėda) in 1907. Things were quite different on the Russian side of the border. We have no indications of Lithuanians' involvement in the construction of patriotic monuments in cities like Kovna/Kaunas (Victory in the Napoleonic War monument, 1843) or Vilna/Vilnius (Catherine II monument, 1904). At the same time, the nobility in the Lithuanian provinces of the Russian Empire maintained their own remembrance culture throughout the century. Although this social class was most severely affected by the imperial government's reactions to the uprisings of 1794, 1830-31, and 1863-64 (with repressive measures ranging from restrictions on noble rights to deportations to Siberia), it was primarily the nobility which maintained the memory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Part of that memory were the participation in the uprisings and a Lithuanian-themed Romantic cultural production. However, the memory of the Commonwealth (or Lithuania as an integral part of it) reached beyond its stronghold in the nobility. The romanticizations of ancient Lithuania by Polish-speaking Lithuanian nobles like Teodor Narbutt, Michał Baliński, Adam Mickiewicz, Adam Kirkor and Ludwik Kondratowicz (ps. Władysław Syrokomla), trickled down later in the century to the lower strata of society, e.g. through translations into Lithuanian by the likes of Vincas Kudirka. In addition, the

nobility of Western Lithuania (Žemaitija) were active in an intellectual movement that raised interest in the Lithuanian language, literature, and historical origins. They vindicated the existence of an independent Lithuanian nation and searched for its origins before the union with Poland, when pagan culture still prevailed. Foremost among their contributions to a historicist Lithuanian identity-narrative was Simonas Daukantas's history of Lithuania (the first written in the Lithuanian language). Although only one of his four works was published in his lifetime (Budas Senowęs-Lëtuwiū Kalnienû ir ámajtiû, 1845), his further oeuvre remained available in manuscript and was drawn upon by the protagonists of the Lithuanian national movement, as well as in the Lithuanian-language history textbooks by Jonas Mačiulis (ps. Maironis) and Antanas Alekna.Daukantas propounded an inclusive nation-model embracing both the elite and the lower classes. In addressing the latter with his historical texts he went beyond his predecessors; he considered the lower classes descendants of the "ancient Lithuanians", a concept Daukantas used to describe all Baltic people. Their pagan past was idealized as a golden age which came to an end with the Catholic conversion of Lithuania and the rise of Polish influence. Daukantas was one of the first to formulate a clearly anti-Polish attitude, blaming all Lithuanian disasters on the Poles. This was toned down by adepts like Maironis and Alekna, not least because they were Catholic priests. Contrary to Daukantas, Maironis and Alekna made a distinction between Polonization and Church influence; in their textbooks the golden age of the "ancient Lithuanians" ended with the death of the Grand Duke Vytautas in 1430 rather than with the Union of Kreva (1385). Moreover, unlike Daukantas, who finished his history of Lithuania with the Union of Lublin (1569), Maironis and Alekna extended it into the late 19th century (although they, too, presented the pre-1569 history of Lithuania in much more loving detail).Thus, by the beginning of the 20th century, several alternative cultures of remembrance had emerged alongside the (Russian and Prussian) dynastic ones. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth remained the most important mnemonic reference period for a large part of the nobility, which was Polish-speaking. The main symbols of their "oppositional" remembrance culture were concentrated around 1900 in St John's Church in Vilna/Vilnius, with its monuments to Mickiewicz (1899), Kondratowicz (1908), the Philaret Antoni Edward Odyniec, and the composer Stanisław Moniuszko (both 1901). But the appeal of primordial paganism and of the Grand Duchy reached into widening circles among the lower strata of society. The heroic canon in "their" history is wholly anterior to the Polish-Lithuanian Union and includes Lithuanian Grand Dukes, especially Vytautas (and his semi-legendary mother Birutė), Gediminas, Algirdas, and Kęstutis. Narratives focused on the struggle of the "ancient Lithuanians" against the Teutonic Order and against the Polonization that set in the late 14th century. The scattered hillforts and castles of the "ancient Lithuanians" were cherished as the main memory sites from the Lithuanian "golden age"; they were lovingly listed and described in the work of Jonas Basanavičius. These two emerging cultures of remembrance interacted with each other, sometimes providing surprising results. Michał Bażeński (1855–1925), the owner of the Burbiškis manor, placed monuments on his estate both to Adam Mickiewicz (1911) and to Vytautas the Great (1912).In early 20th century, the Lithuanian national movement cultivated its emerging culture of remembrance not only through the press or a handful of history textbooks, but also by means of sociability. Associations, which emerged successively between 1904 and 1914, organized "Lithuanian evenings", a frequent element of which was an acting performance (often based on native history). There were also lectures on historical topics at the Lithuanian Learned

Society (est. 1907) and annual exhibitions of the Lithuanian Art Society (since 1907). The commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald in 1910 is probably the only pre-1914 example of a coordinated commemoration campaign initiated by Lithuanians. It included acting performances, sermons, lectures, and ceremonies in a number of places across the Lithuanian-speaking lands. The campaign is also exceptional in that it involved not only Lithuanians living in the Russian Empire, but also Lithuanians in Tilsit.In Prussia, the circulation of the Lithuanian historical narrative was limited to a few societies which were inclined to communicate with Russian Lithuanians. In Prussian Lithuania, such societies played a rather marginal role, compared, for example, with Wilhelm Storost's Choral Society. Among Lithuanian Lutherans, the prospect of connecting with Lithuanian Catholics met with little enthusiasm. Conversely, in 1913-14, the idea of building a monument to the 18th-century "Homer of Lithuania", Kristijonas Donelaitis, a Lutheran clergyman, received much wider support in Prussia. The site for the monument was envisaged to be Rambynas Hill on the bank of the Neman River, a site that several Prussian Lithuanian societies sought to appropriate as the main venue of their public events. Despite the endorsement from local German-speaking elites, the scheme remained unrealized.

1.1.1.2/a

Baronas, Darius; Mačiulis, Dangiras (2010). Pilėnai ir Margiris: istorija ir legenda (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla) [Pilėnai and Margiris: history and legend]
Ilgievič, Henryka (2010). "Lenkų visuomenės pastangos įamžinti Vilniuje iškilių asmenybių atminimą XIX a. pabaigoje – XX a. pradžioje", Kultūrologija Vilnius Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų, 18: 242-257 [Polish efforts to memorialize prominent figures in Vilnius in late 19th – early 20th century]
Mačiulis, Dangiras; Petrauskas, Rimvydas; Staliūnas, Darius (2012). Kas laimėjo Žalgirio mūšį? Istorinio paveldo dalybos Vidurio ir Rytų Europoje (Vilnius: Mintis) [Who had won the Battle of Žalgiris? Struggle over the historical legacy in the Central and Eastern Europe]
Mačiulis, Dangiras; Staliūnas, Darius (2015). Lithuanian nationalism and the Vilnius question, 1883-1940 (Marburg: Herder Institut)
Safronovas, Vasilijus (2016). he creation of national space in a pluricultural region: The case of Prussian Lithuania (Boston, MA: Academic studies press)