

## Book Review

### LITHUANIA MINOR

**Studia Lituanica I** — Mažoji Lietuva (Lithuania Minor), published by the Lithuanian Research Institute, Inc., New York. 1958. 323 pp.

Even though Lithuania is a small country with a small population, there are two Lithuanias: Major and Minor. The division is not an artificial one but is a result of the historical development of the Lithuanian nation. Lithuania Major is that area which from the 13th to the end of the 18th centuries constituted the core of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and which after 1795 passed under Russian rule. But to the west there lay lands that were inhabited by Lithuanians yet never belonged to a historical Lith. state. These lands were conquered by the Teutonic Knights as early as the 13th century, and later they became part of the Kingdom of Prussia; they make up the northern areas of so-called East Prussia. Up to the end of the 18th century these areas were referred to simply as "Litauen" in the administrative division of East Prussia. Even today, Lithuanians refer to the area as Lithuania Minor.

When the Lithuanian state was reconstituted in 1918, these Lithuanian lands remained outside the boundaries of Lithuania. Only the northernmost part of the region, the Klaipeda (Memel) area to the north of Nemunas River, joined the Lithuanian Republic in 1923, and in 1939 it reverted to Germany as the result of an ultimatum.

The first volume of **Studia Lituanica** contains five studies of Lithuania Minor. Dr. M. Gimbutas surveys the prehistory of the area; Juozas Lingis writes of the use of the plow for cultivating the soil in Lithuania Major and Lithuania Minor. Each study is illustrated and heavily documented. The text is in Lithuanian with English and German summaries; biographical sketches of the authors appear in all three languages.

Dr. M. Gimbutas, a recognized expert on the prehistory of Eastern Europe and author of the book **The Prehistory of Eastern Europe I** (Peabody Museum, Harvard University Bulletin No. 20), after surveying the findings of other students of the area, states that there were no population shifts after 2000 B.C.; from that time up to historical times there is a cultural continuity here, the work of a single ethnic group. These people maintained extensive trade relations with far-distant countries, to which they sent the area's chief export commodity, amber. Because of this extensive trade the area between the Vistula and Nemunas had already become part of the culture of central Europe by the Bronze Age. The time of this cultural flowering coincides with the first centuries of the Christian era. The area was not directly involved in the barbarian migrations, though these did disrupt the ancient trade routes. Relations with Scandinavia began to develop in the 7th century, and with this we reach historical times. Written sources dealing with this area date from the 1st century A.D. There are few of them from the earliest period, but there are enough to furnish ample testimony that there were no population shifts for more than a millennium, that the 13th century Prussians and related tribes were the direct descendants of the people called by Tacitus and later writers the "Aesti."

This survey of some 3,000 years of prehistory brings the author to the conclusion that the culture of these people is in essence similar to that of the other Baltic peoples (the Lithuanians and Latvians). She discovers no evidence to support that latter-day German nationalistic theories that attempt to explain certain cultural aspects of the area as due to the influence of Germanic cultures or even the immigration of Germanic people. The author also concludes that the influence of the Goths, whose lands for several centuries bordered on those of the Prussians, was slight. Gothic loan-words in the Baltic language are often adduced as evidence of this supposed influence, but such loan-words are few, numbering less than ten. No evidence of other foreign cultural influence is discovered either. The author's final conclusion is that during some 3 thousand years of prehistory the Prussian lands constituted a unit of uninterrupted cultural evolution, with close ties with other Baltic peoples — the Lithuanians and Latvians—and that they can be definitely distinguished from their neighbors to the west and south, with whom they merely maintained normal trade relations.

Juozas Lingis defended a dissertation on plows at the University of Stockholm in 1952. In this study, he shows that plows of two types predominated in the Baltic areas, and that the western limits of their use approximate the western boundaries of the Baltic settlements.

Jugis Gimbutas surveys the farmhouse types and village architecture of Lithuania Minor. He reaches the same conclusions as earlier investigators of the subject, namely, that the farm buildings of the indigenous population of Lithuania Minor are of the same type as those of Lithuania Major from the point of view of arrangement and architecture, and that they are clearly

distinguishable from the types of Germanic village architecture, introduced into the area by German colonists. The author finds the limit of this Lithuanian village architecture to lie substantially to the south of the Pregel River. This study is extensively illustrated.

The first examples of Lithuanian folklore reached the scholarly world by way of Lithuania Minor. Here the first collections of Lithuanian folk poetry were prepared and translated into German in the 18th and early 19th centuries. New collections appeared during the 19th and 20th centuries, although during this time Lithuania Major caught up with and surpassed Lithuania Minor. However, the riches of Lithuanian folklore were still unexhausted even as late as the last war. Here Jonas Balys analyzes the words of 40 typical folk songs of Lithuania Minor and concludes that 24 of them are unique to this area, 12 others are more or less known in parts of Lithuania Major while the four others are familiar in all areas inhabited by Lithuanians. His conclusions are in agreement with those of the German E. See-mann, who has made a special study of the question. It would seem that during the two centuries when the German colonists lived side by side with the native Lithuanians in Lithuania Minor, their influence on the native folklore was negligible, even though the Germans are at times referred to in these folk songs.

Juozas Žilėvičius reaches a similar conclusion in his survey of the folk music of Lithuania Minor. There are foreign influences, but they do not destroy the native originality. Approximately 70 percent of the melodies are common with those of Lithuania Major, although they retain a more archaic form here, a fact that the author attributes to the fact that the inhabitants of Lithuania Minor lived in single settlements and that therefore the conditions for community singing were absent. Besides, the predominant Lutheran faith condemned secular singing and therefore, while the fields and forests of Lithuania Major rang with songs, the songs in Lithuania Minor found themselves "in the underground," as it were, and could get around only with difficulty. On the other hand, the folk melodies here had a greater influence on the religious music itself; the Lutheran hymns were for the most part borrowed from the German, but only a few kept their original German melodies. The same hymns were sung in the same church in one form during services in German and in another form (as can be seen from a Lithuanian hymnal published by Hoffheinz in 1894) during services in Lithuanian.

Lithuania Minor's folk music instruments are identical with those of Lithuania Major, except that some instruments disappeared from use in Lith. Minor because the Lutherans frowned on all secular music, not only singing.

It may be said in concluding this review that all the authors agree in the conclusion that Lithuania Minor maintained extremely close cultural ties with Lithuania Major from prehistoric times, although the two regions were politically separate. This is not a new theory but one that is commonly accepted in all scholarly literature on the subject. The authors clarify and expand some aspects of the theory. It is true that many points were explained differently in Nazi Germany, since an attempt was made there to discover influences of German culture where such influences never existed. Obviously, however, there was no need for the authors of this book to comment at any length on these political theories, whose very foundations had been disproved by earlier German science.

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