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## THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE LITHUANIAN STATE (1315-1377)

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The Lithuanian state appeared on the European scene during the second half of the thirteenth century. Due to a number of factors: remoteness, relative inaccessibility, and above all the constant warfare waged by the Teutonic and Livonian Knights, the Lithuanians remained largely pagan for over a century after their organization into a state.

In spite of the constant warfare with the Teutonic Knights, the newly organized Lithuanian state expanded rapidly. After the political decline and demise of the once great Kiev, vast areas of western and southern Russia came under Lithuanian rule. At times, this was accomplished through conquest, but more frequently it was affected through shrewd diplomacy which included the taking advantage of neighborly quarrels as well as marriage alliances. Although this expansion continued into the fifteenth century, the greatest territorial increment of the Lithuanian state had been achieved by the middle of the fourteenth.

As a result of this territorial expansion, many non-Lithuanians became subjects of the Lithuanian Grand Prince. These Slav subjects enjoyed considerable advantages under Lithuania. While their faith, traditions, and customs were safeguarded, they were spared civil wars among the descendants of Rurik.<sup>1</sup> Many areas were also protected from Tartar raids, though in the Ukrainian steppes these continued long after the territory came under Lithuanian control.

Statistics on the respective percentages of Lithuanians and non-Lithuanians in the Lithuanian state are non-existent, and the various figures which are given are but speculative. However, we feel it fairly safe to state that the number of Slavs in the state increased with the constant expansion of the frontiers. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, Lithuania was not a homogeneous state. The state never had represented a unitary political organization but rather a "**svoe go roda simbioz neskolkikh politicheskikh organizatsii.**"<sup>2</sup> Even the purely Lithuanian areas did not constitute a single political entity; Samogitia was only loosely controlled by the Grand Prince. With the addition of the Russian lands, the organization became even more complex. Only the person of the Grand Prince held the entire Grand Principality together.

The incorporation of the Russian lands into Lithuania was bound to have some effect on Lithuania proper, mostly on the ruling classes but also to some extent on the masses as a whole. The Russians had reached a much higher level of cultural development than had the Lithuanians. Their political and social organization was far more complex, and they had a written language which the Lithuanians lacked.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the only field in which the Lithuanians surpassed their Russian subjects was military organization. The Byzantine historian Nicephoras Gregoras (died 1360) wrote:

The Lithuanian people subject to one ruler are numerous and very brave, even unconquerable... Their king surpasses immensely all the Christian princes of northern Rus in the power and the warlike qualities of his army. He also does not pay the Mongols any yearly tribute, because his kingdom is very great and well fortified.<sup>4</sup>

It is logical to assume that with this state of affairs, a gradual process of Lithuanian absorption of Russian culture was under way. The process was most marked among those members of the Lithuanian ruling family who had been appointed overlords of various annexed Russian principalities. As had happened to the Norseman several centuries earlier, these soon became indistinguishable from their Russian subjects; they married local ladies and settled permanently in their provinces.

The process was also to some degree noticeable in Lithuania proper. The Russian influence on the shaping of the Lithuanian state administration was strong.<sup>5</sup> Russians also appear increasingly both in Lithuanian campaigns against the Knights<sup>6</sup> as well as in garrisons defending the Nemunas (Niemen) frontier.<sup>7</sup> Old Church Slavic became the official written language of the state.

Lithuanians very early ceased to be hostile in Slavic eyes. The Bishop of Polotsk could call the pagan Grand Prince Vytenis his son,<sup>8</sup> and the Slavs began to regard the Grand Principality as their own realm.<sup>9</sup> The Grand Prince Gediminas was no foreigner to the Russians. **The Chronicle of Livonia** mentions that: "The Kievans greeted Gediminas not as a foreigner but as one of their own princes, that the clergy — abbots, monks, and deacons — went to meet him with crosses and icons."<sup>10</sup> Very likely, the uninformed Russian masses considered Gediminas an Orthodox like the other princes.<sup>11</sup>

As did members of their families in Russia, the Grand Princes Gediminas, Algirdas, and some of their sons also married Russians. Their wives brought Russian retinues along with them and these undoubtedly played an important role at court, the more so as many of these marriages were political.

However, Slavic influence only affected the upper classes to a noticeable degree.<sup>12</sup>

As Slavic cultural influence on the Lithuanian state was at work, it is only logical to assume that the citadel of this culture, the Orthodox Church, should have played a role in the Lithuanian state especially during the period of the pagan state's greatest expansion — the reigns of Gediminas and Algirdas. However, although individual orthodox occupied important positions in the Lithuanian state, the church as a body seems to be marked by its passivity. It reacted to challenges, but allowed itself to be used as a political pawn and generally seems to have supported the political efforts of the pagan rulers. In the long run such a policy allowed the adoption of Roman Christianity by the Lithuanians, and this was to bring hardship for the Orthodox within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The political question of the status of the Orthodox Church in the Lithuanian state arose early. Large scale Lithuanian expansion into Russia can be said to have begun with the 1305-06 expedition into Halicz<sup>13</sup> The first elements of the Russian church had come effectively under Lithuanian rule slightly earlier with the expansion under King Mindaugas, but these lands were loosely held and subsequently lost in the late thirteenth century. At first these areas were still ecclesiastically subordinate to the Metropolitan of Kiev, but soon a separate church organization was provided for Lithuania, and a Metropolitan appeared at Novogorodek. This was a totally new see in town with no previous bishopric.<sup>14</sup> Pfitzner dates this at 1300,<sup>15</sup> but gives no reason. Others set the date at 1316-17<sup>16</sup> when Constantinople must have approved of Theophilus as Metropolitan of Lithuania. There is a mention in the Patriarchal records from the time of the Emperor Andronicus Paleologus the Elder (1284-1327) that Lithuania was given a separate metropolitanate during the reign of the Patriarch John Glikas. As the latter became Patriarch in May, 1316, and as the Lithuanian metropolitanate existed during the synod of August, 1317, it must have been established sometime between the two dates.<sup>17</sup>

The Metropolitan of Lithuania appears in the sources several times, but the see was probably abolished in 1328.<sup>18</sup> Theophilus went to Constantinople in 1329, probably to argue the secession, but he died that year, and with him died the question of a separate metropolitanate, for the time being at least.

The establishment of the Metropolitanate of Novo-gorodek is difficult to explain. Priselkov suggests that Gediminas gained a metropolitanate for Lithuania with the promise that Lithuania would be converted and that this metropolitanate was abolished as there were too few Christians in Lithuania.<sup>19</sup> The fact that it was established roughly simultaneously with the beginning of the reign of Gediminas<sup>20</sup> and that it was located on the fringe of ethnic Lithuania seems to corroborate this contention. Gediminas was already married to an Orthodox and he most certainly was not hostile to the Orthodox faith. As the concept of **Rus** could be interpreted both as religious and political<sup>21</sup> and was in all likelihood originally religious, the possibility that the Slavs expected the Lithuanians under their new Grand Prince to accept Eastern Christianity and thus to become **Rus**<sup>22</sup> is very great. However, the second part of Priselkov's claim that the abolition of the metropolitanate was due to the lack of Christians is suspect. The scarcity of Christians in ethnic Lithuania cannot be questioned, and Vasilevskii's contention of deep penetration among the upper classes and peasantry<sup>23</sup> is unfounded. The Novogorodek metropolitanate was, however, not primarily established for Lithuania proper which was pagan but rather for the Slavs who had come under Lithuanian rule.

The exact reason for its demise, though in all probability political, remains a mystery. However, events in Lithuania in the 1320's could in some way be connected with the event and possibly have influenced its outcome.

The Teutonic Knights were officially crusading for the conversion of Lithuania to Roman Christianity, though in reality mundane motives were most likely of greater import as a driving force in their attempts. The Grand Prince Gediminas, though described as inclined to Orthodoxy<sup>24</sup> could also be called a Latinizer in his own lands.<sup>24</sup> It seems as if in the early 1320's, he tried to outwit the Knights and to bring about the conversion of Lithuania to Roman Christianity through the good auspices of the Knights' enemy the Archbishop of Riga.

This can be seen from a series of letters which Gediminas wrote to the West: to Pope John XXII, to several of the larger West European cities, to the Franciscans and the Dominicans of Saxony, to several of the Hansa cities, to the bishops of Reval (Tallinn) and Dorpat (Tartu), to the city council of Riga, and to the Danish viceroy at Dorpat. The date of the first letter is unknown. Four date from 1323 and the last from 1325.<sup>26</sup> Although some German historians contend that these are forgeries, the majority of scholars now accept their authenticity.<sup>27</sup>

The letters and the return correspondence which they elicited are an important source on conditions within Lithuania at the time. In addition to information which is outside the scope of the present paper, the correspondence indicates the inroads of Roman Christianity in the Lithuanian state. It seems that in 1323, there were at least three Roman Christian churches in the country,<sup>28</sup> a Franciscan and a Dominican one at Vilna as well as an additional Franciscan church at Novogorodek. Gediminas requests in the letter to the ecclesiastical province of Saxony that four friars having a knowledge of Polish, Semigallian, and Russian (one version has "**ruthenicum**" — Russian, another "**pruthenicum**" — Prussian) be sent.<sup>29</sup> In view of the above language requirements and of the fact that there was a church at Novogorodek, there is cause to believe that the Franciscans worked among the Russians as well as among the Lithuanians.

The letters of Gediminas also show a glimpse of the personality of the Grand Prince. There is a claim that his language is that of a man familiar with Christian dogma, especially since he seems to repudiate polytheism.<sup>30</sup> "The Christians worship their god according to their customs, the Russians according to their ritual, the Poles also according to their rites, and we worship god according to our custom and we all have but one god."<sup>31</sup> However, he need not necessarily have heard that from his Orthodox followers as Vasilevskii claims,<sup>32</sup> nor for that matter from his Roman Christian scribes. His words which in themselves do not preclude polytheism are perfectly in accord with pagan Lithuanian beliefs.<sup>33</sup>

The letter which is of most import to our study, however, is the one to John XXII mainly because of the response which it elicited. Gediminas wrote, that he, all his princes, and barons would become firm upholders of the Roman faith.<sup>34</sup> The pope replied in 1324<sup>35</sup> and an active attempt to bring Lithuania into the Latin camp was made. Envoys were dispatched to Vilna, but when they arrived the situation had changed. Gediminas claimed that he had never said in his letters that he was ready to be baptized and that his scribes, the Franciscan brothers Henry and Berthold apparently had written things which he had never told them.<sup>36</sup>

On the other side of the report of the papal legates, there is written:

What followed, we heard secretly of that event from Brother Henry and Brother Berthold and other brethren and even laymen, that the brethren the knights of Prussia gave many robes and goods to the magnates of Samogitia with the condition that they rebel against the king and say that if he accepts the faith, they will exterminate him, his sons, and all his followers and will chase them all away in conjunction with the brethren of the order of Teutonic knights, from his kingdom and will tear them all up with their roots. Those threats were many times uttered in those years to the king to his face, like threats against him were also made by the Russians, it is for this that the king renounced the faith to the point that he no longer dared to utter a word about baptism..<sup>37</sup>

Although the actual facts sound preposterous, the above can be taken as an indication of internal opposition to the plans of Gediminas. The Samogitians had always been semi-independent of the Grand Prince and it is not surprising to discover the evidence of an ideological conservative struggle against the introduction of Christianity<sup>38</sup> harbored in their midst. However, they were the greatest foes of the Teutonic Knights and had to bear the brunt of the German attacks. Therefore, it is incredible that they could be influenced in any way by the order.

The passage also contains evidence of Orthodox opposition to Gediminas' plans. This seems to be centered among the boyars, whose importance is attested to by the report of the papal legates.<sup>39</sup> "After the meal [breakfast] we were called [before the king]. Having arrived, we found him in his study with his advisors. This displeased us highly as we had anticipated finding him alone. After a discussion among them, the decision seemed clear to us."<sup>40</sup> It is not unlikely that there were some Orthodox boyars among this group of advisors, and they would have been averse to any projected introduction of Roman Christianity. To all appearances, they, in conjunction with the Samogitians, influenced Gediminas to abandon all flirtation with Roman Christianity. However, these boyars need not necessarily have been of the entourage of the wife of Gediminas, as Jurgela claims. The contention that these members of the entourage of the Grand Princess engaged in silent intrigues not recorded in the chronicles<sup>41</sup> is also unfounded. Equally untenable and undocumented is the claim that it was the peasantry which opposed the acceptance of Roman Christianity, the favored religion of the feudal landlords.<sup>42</sup> Though Orthodox opposition to the plans of Gediminas is unquestionable, whether or not the Teutonic Order had plans to encourage a Russian revolt if Gediminas accepted Roman Christianity from the Archbishop of Riga<sup>43</sup> is uncertain. The Orthodox opposition, moreover, in so far as we can determine was the work of individual Russian boyars rather than an organized effort of the church.

Gediminas' personal feelings toward the affair are unknown. Vasilevskii's claim that he spent a bad night and wept bitterly after the last interview with the papal legate because he really desired to become a Roman Christian<sup>44</sup> seems spurious.

The pope welcomed a chance to Christianize Lithuania in the Latin manner, for Lithuania would be a good stepping stone into Russia.<sup>45</sup> In 1351, Clement VI, in a letter to the Archbishop of Uppsala, referred to the Russian Christians as enemies of the faith: "*Rutheni catholicae fidei inimici [sunt]*."<sup>46</sup> Very likely, the attitude had not been different twenty-five years earlier.

John XXII was interested in Russia. In 1317, he issued an appeal to the Russian princes to unite with Rome.<sup>47</sup> The claim, however, that the founding of the Latin bishopric of Kiev in 1320<sup>48</sup> was an example of an active papal policy to gain influence in Russia<sup>49</sup> can be questioned, especially since the first Roman bishop of Kiev was a member of the Teutonic Order. It might have been partially done with a view that some day Russia would come into the fold. However, at the time prospects for this were remote; Gediminas had in all likelihood not yet written his first letter. A more plausible explanation is the papal need for revenue in the reign of John XXII, especially due to the pope's struggle with Louis the Bavarian. One of the most expedient methods for obtaining money which was open to the papacy was the creation of benefices, and John XXII was notorious for his setting up of new sees. He even set up a bishopric for Sultaniyah in Persia.<sup>50</sup>

Although there was no persecution of Roman Christians in Lithuania after Gediminas changed his mind, later Roman Christian writings speak very unfavorably of him: "[He is] worse than any pagan, a monster and a freak of nature, a transgressor against human rights and the laws of nature, a predecessor to the anti-Christ."<sup>51</sup> The effort to convert Lithuania to Roman Christianity had failed. The fact that it had made the considerable headway which it did doubtlessly had some influence on the Orthodox church, especially on some of its members. Upon the appointment of a new Metropolitan of Kiev, Theognost, in 1328, the Lithuanian metropolitanate was suppressed. Due to the opposition of Theognost, Gediminas could not get a replacement after Theophilus died in 1329.

At a time when religious allegiance played an important role in politics, the non-existence of a permanent metropolitanate for the inhabitants of the Grand Principality was a detriment to the efforts of the Vilna court to promote the idea of one state (**Eigenstaatlichkeit**).<sup>52</sup> In all likelihood, the Russian church within Lithuania became afraid of the possibility of Latinization. The question as to how best to combat it arose. Should a separate metropolitanate for Lithuania be sought or should the continued cultural and religious unity of **Rus** as of yore be insisted upon?<sup>53</sup> Were the Lithuanian Grand Prince to accept Roman Christianity, the Russian church would sooner or later fall under the influence of Rome,<sup>54</sup> but if there was a separate Lithuanian metropolitanate, the chances of the ruler's acceptance of the Latin faith might diminish. The discussion of this question appears in letters of Russian bishops to Constantinople between 1328 and 1347.<sup>55</sup> It seems as if by the mid-1350's the consensus among Russian churchmen in Lithuania was for the desirability of a separate metropolitanate.

As time went by and as increased numbers of Orthodox Russians became subjects of the Lithuanian Grand Prince, the factual split of the Russian church into two parts became increasingly pronounced. The metropolitan's representative at Kiev, residing in the Metropolitan Palace at Saint Sophia became the factual leader of the church not only in Kiev but also of the several bishoprics within the Lithuanian state. Kiev was not yet part of Lithuania, though it had paid allegiance to Gediminas for a short period of time. The question of a separate metropolitanate did not die with the death of Theophilus; it was raised again in 1331 and 1345.<sup>56</sup>

Gediminas died around 1341. Of his seven sons, six had received specific regions to rule while the youngest, Jaunutis, was in Vilna at the time of his father's death. He became the ruler of Vilna and *ipso facto*, Grand Prince.<sup>57</sup> It seems, by the later succession pattern of Jogaila and Vytautas, that the eldest son by the last wife of the Grand Prince became the principal heir.<sup>58</sup> This, if true, is an added reason for the accession of Jaunutis.

There is a general consensus that Jaunutis was a weak ruler and unfit for his newly acquired position. The chronicler states: "He was not brave."<sup>59</sup> In 1345, a coup was effected by Kęstutis, the ruler of Trakai and the purely Lithuanian lands which bordered on the domains of the Teutonic Knights. Kęstutis, having chased away the Grand Prince, invited his elder brother, the ruler of Vitebsk Algirdas, to become ruler of Vilna and titular Grand Prince. The latter accepted, and the state was, in fact, for a long time ruled jointly by the two.

The putsch was without doubt mainly political in nature. However, there is also a possibility, which has not been investigated, of a religious undercurrent to the affair. This can unfortunately only be speculated on the basis of the coincidence of a series of facts. Jaunutis is mentioned several times as an Orthodox.<sup>60</sup> When he became an Orthodox, however, is not specified, except by Sruogienė who states that this occurred after the coup when Jaunutis had fled to Moscow to seek support.<sup>61</sup> As none of the works document their contentions, the religion of Jaunutis must remain a mystery, but the possibility of his having been an Orthodox remains. Kęstutis on the other hand, the man who led the revolt and performed the unpleasant tasks connected with such an undertaking was the chief representative of the old Lithuanian party and remained a staunch pagan his entire life. The religion of Algirdas is an enigma; probably, he was unwilling to disclose it for political reasons.<sup>62</sup> It is not at all unlikely that Algirdas as ruler of Vitebsk would have adopted Christianity; that was the normal pattern. When he became Grand Prince he could either have apostasized or at least kept his faith generally unknown so as not to alienate the pagan element in his realm.<sup>63</sup>

It might well have been that after the revolution, the pagan Lithuanian party which had carried it through, needed to retain the support of the Russian lands, and Algirdas became the candidate most acceptable to both factions due either to the uncertainty of his beliefs or to his readiness to change them according to the dictates of political expediency.

Algirdas carried on the struggle to gain a separate metropolitanate for Lithuania. The political nature of the effort becomes paramount during his reign.<sup>64</sup> It was not so immediately and openly present in the efforts of Gediminas. Whereas the policy of the latter had been anti-Muscovite, he does not seem to have entertained such notions as did Algirdas that "Omnis Russia ad Litwinos deberat pertinere."<sup>65</sup> To Algirdas, therefore, church affairs, and as we have seen, possibly even religion, were primarily political matters and he approached them as such.<sup>66</sup>

He was moreover, in a better political position to carry on the effort as he greatly increased the territorial extent of the state in the south. In 1360, he deposed the last Ukrainian prince of Kiev, Theodore,<sup>67</sup> and put his own son Vladimir on the throne. The Tartars attempted to protect their vassal Theodore but were defeated two years later at the battle of the **Sinie vody**. Now he could offer Kiev itself as the see for a Metropolitan of Lithuania. In accord with his political ambitions, he desired that there not only be a Metropolitan of Lithuania, but also that such a metropolitan also be the Metropolitan of All **Rus** as well.<sup>68</sup> In all likelihood, Algirdas considered the concept of **Rus** in its religious sense and desired a metropolitanate for all those who professed the faith of **Rus**. Whereas there was bound to be Muscovite opposition to any separate metropolitanate for Lithuania, the possibility that such a creation could be extended over all Rus served to stiffen the opposition considerably.

The first attempt of Algirdas to set up a separate metropolitanate came in 1354<sup>69</sup> even before his conquest of Kiev. The Metropolitan of Kiev Theognost died in 1353. Before his death, he had designated as his successor the candidate of Moscow for his post, Alexis. Algirdas, meanwhile, taking advantage of the split between the Byzantine and Bulgarian churches welcomed the appearance in 1352 in Kiev of a new metropolitan, Theodorit, who had been consecrated by the Bulgarian Patriarch at Timovo. It is very likely that he had been sent from Southwest Russia to Constantinople to be consecrated Metropolitan of Lithuania and Galicia and that when the Byzantine patriarch had refused to do this, the one in Bulgaria had obliged.<sup>70</sup>

In 1354, Alexis was duly appointed Metropolitan of Kiev and managed to have the Patriarch of Constantinople approve the move of the metropolitan's see from Kiev to Vladimir,<sup>71</sup> which considerably undercut Algirdas.

Algirdas, however, also had won a point. He agreed to cease his support for Theodorit as one consecrated against law and tradition, but only when his relative and mentor<sup>72</sup> Roman was also appointed Metropolitan of All Rus. There were now two metropolitans for all Rus. As the chronicler puts it:

In the same year there was a disturbance among the clergy, such as had hitherto never occurred in Russia. At Constantinople two metropolitans for the Russian land were appointed, Alexis and Roman and there was great hostility between them.<sup>73</sup>

Roman's authority did not extend beyond the area which had paid allegiance to Theodorit. Golubinskii thinks that all of Little Russia recognized Theodorit, though Klepatskii is doubtful of the contention.<sup>74</sup> We know from two letters of the Patriarch Philotheus to the Archbishop of Novgorod that the latter acknowledged Theodorit.<sup>75</sup> We do not know whether the archbishop accepted Roman.

Theodorit had located his see at Kiev. Roman apparently began his career as Metropolitan of Novogoro-dek, but Algirdas had him move to Kiev.<sup>76</sup> He was apparently escorted in this venture by a Lithuanian military contingent.<sup>77</sup> A struggle between the two metropolitans now ensued. Roman gained some successes, but failed to gain the allegiance of Tver.<sup>78</sup> Both Metropolitans appealed to Constantinople and went there in person, Roman first, followed by Alexis. Nicephoras Gregoras mentions the use of bribery on the part of Alexis to gain support.<sup>79</sup> In 1356, their cases were heard by a Patriarchal Synod. Alexis was confirmed Metropolitan of Kiev while Roman retained his see at Novogorodek, and in 1361, the two sees were formally divided.<sup>80</sup> Only the death of Roman during the winter of 1361-2 ended the conflict, and finished the existence of the second see. The formal suppression of the Lithuanian metropolitanate is evident from a record in the archives of the Constantinople Patriarchate dated not earlier than October, 1364.<sup>81</sup>

Algirdas' successes in his political struggle against Moscow and the support which he enjoyed in the endeavor from the Russian princes led Alexis, who during the infancy of Dimitrii was at the helm of Muscovy, to excommunicate the magnates who supported Lithuania. He declared the war against Lithuania to be a holy war for the ideals of Christianity.<sup>82</sup> In 1371, Algirdas retaliated and renewed his attempts at securing a separate metropolitanate. He wrote to the Byzantine Patriarch strongly condemning Alexis of neglecting the Lithuanian areas ecclesiastically subject to him and of subordination of religion to politics.

Such metropolitans we did not have in the days of our forefathers. He blesses the Muscovites to slaughter, but never comes to us. And to Kiev he does not come . . . the metropolitan should bless the Muscovites that they help us as we are fighting for them against the Germans. We invite him, but he never comes. Give us another metropolitan for Kiev, Smolensk, Tver, Little Russia, Novoselsk, and Nizhni Novgorod.<sup>83</sup>

Constantinople replied with an ironic reference to Algirdas' being the king of "fireworshippers,"<sup>84</sup> which is yet another indication of the fact that he was a pagan. Before the death of Algirdas, however, his candidate Cyprian was appointed Metropolitan of Kiev and of All Rus<sup>85</sup> even though Alexis was still alive.<sup>86</sup>

A new struggle ensued particularly after the death of Alexis when Cyprian actively began to claim his post, but this is a matter which was settled only when political conditions in Lithuania had been drastically altered by the Polish union.

Although Orthodoxy did not embrace a great number of ethnic Lithuanians during the fourteenth century<sup>87</sup> it seems certain that one or more Orthodox churches must have been standing in the capital.<sup>88</sup> The church, through its members, however, enjoyed a dominating position at the court during the reign of Algirdas.<sup>89</sup>

The Grand Princess Juliana, sister of the Prince of Tver, was a woman of remarkable personality whose Orthodox piety is attested to by her deed to the Uspenskii Church at Ozerishche after the death of her husband.<sup>90</sup> In addition to her retinue which without doubt included clergymen, there were many Orthodox Slavs in the service of the Grand Prince. Besides those who were in military contingents, Slavs went as envoys of Lithuania to many countries.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the Russian element supplied the very impetus for the organization of the Lithuanian state.<sup>92</sup>

There is a good possibility that in 1360, when a new coinage was minted for the Lithuanian state, those coins intended by Algirdas for the Russian portions of the realm were embellished with a Greek cross in deference to the Orthodox subjects of the state. The coins minted at the same time for Lithuania proper were of a different design and were issued by Kęstutis.<sup>93</sup>

The mention of Nizhni-Novgorod in the letter of 1370 -71 to the Byzantine Patriarch indicates that Algirdas enjoyed support for his efforts even among Russians outside of the realm. The support of the Slavs within the state must have been correspondingly great. Apparently, the Orthodox had lost the fear of a possible Lithuanian acceptance of Roman Christianity. The possibility indeed was remote. The ethnic Lithuanian areas were ruled by a staunch pagan, Kęstutis, and Algirdas was favorable to Orthodoxy, if not a crypto-Orthodox himself.

Attempts to introduce Roman Christianity, however, had not ceased. The Teutonic Knights continued their efforts at conversion through conquest. The papacy also did not cease trying after its near success during the reign of Gediminas,<sup>94</sup> even though its anti-Lithuanian propaganda was on the increase. In 1349, Clement VI wrote Kęstutis, who maintained Catholic monks as scribes at his court,<sup>95</sup> exhorting him to be baptized.<sup>96</sup> That same year, the pope also wrote to the Archbishop of Gniezno urging him to send missionaries to baptize Kęstutis.<sup>97</sup> A letter of 10 November, 1355 from the Holy See to King Louis d'Anjou of Hungary mentions the desire of the papacy for the conversion of the heathen Lithuanians.<sup>98</sup> The Emperor Charles IV sent the Archbishop of Prague to convert the Lithuanians; however, Algirdas demanded that the Teutonic Knights turn over to him all of East Prussia<sup>99</sup> and move south to combat the Tartars, conditions obviously unacceptable to them. The Roman Christian churches which had existed at Vilna already under Gediminas continued to minister to the foreign Roman Christian population<sup>100</sup> which had been growing ever since the efforts of Gediminas to attract foreign traders, mainly from Riga, had met with success.

However, during the reign of Algirdas, there were but few Lithuanian Roman Christians. The story of Goštautas and his bringing of seven Franciscans to Vilna, their subsequent murder, and the punishment of 500 citizens by Algirdas in retribution of the deed<sup>101</sup> is in all probability legendary. Roman Christianity made no headway in Lithuania during the reign of Algirdas.<sup>102</sup>

In view of the policy which Algirdas was pursuing it would have been logical for him to have brought Lithuania into the Orthodox camp. Nicephoras Gregoras even mentions that he had promised to do so when Roman would become metropolitan,<sup>103</sup> but that he had reneged in a long and eloquent speech on the evils and greed of Orthodoxy,<sup>104</sup> after Alexis had been recognized. It is impossible to know whether Algirdas actually said that which Nicephoras Gregoras attributes to him and if indeed he did utter it, whether he was sincere or merely making a shrewd pronouncement calculated to gain sympathy.

It is very likely, however, that any consideration of receiving Orthodox baptism was tied to the desire for an opportune moment. It would not have been overly difficult to introduce Orthodoxy into Lithuania from above,<sup>105</sup> especially in the core around Vilna. But the reception of Orthodoxy would not have saved Lithuania from further oppressive political claims on the part of the Knights.<sup>106</sup> As long as it would make little or no difference in Constantinople and would not strengthen Lithuania's case against Alexis,<sup>107</sup> it was not worth the possible alienation of the pagan elements in the state by the Grand

Prince. It should be noted that the union with Poland and the acceptance of Roman Christianity came only after the defender of paganism Kęstutis was no longer among the living and after the most strongly pagan part of ethnic Lithuania, Samogitia, had been given up, in theory, to the Knights by all the contending parties to the Lithuanian throne.

Although Makarii claims that Cyprian baptized many Lithuanians<sup>108</sup> his claim is uncorroborated. Apart from the legend of the three Orthodox martyrs of Lithuania, which seems spurious, there is no evidence that the Orthodox church ever pursued or attempted to pursue any missionary work among the Lithuanians.<sup>109</sup> Throughout the century, the Greek Orthodox population felt indifferent to the paganism of the commoners in Lithuania<sup>110</sup> and in ethnic Lithuania Orthodoxy as a faith was insignificant.<sup>111</sup> After the attempt of Gediminas to introduce Roman Christianity, the Orthodox Church must have been awakened to the danger, yet it seemingly did nothing to bring Lithuania into the Orthodox camp.

Possible attempts were made at proselytization, but without the approval and coercive support from the throne these ended in failure. It should be noted that Roman Christianity was finally adopted by the Lithuanian commoners not through an eagerness to receive the faith of Christ but rather through force<sup>112</sup> or through gifts of white woolen shirts.<sup>113</sup> The approval of the ruler would have been requisite for any successful attempts to introduce Christianity, and this was lacking until Jogaila gave it for political reasons.

Most likely, however, there are no indications of Orthodox missionary work among the Lithuanians because there was none. In addition to a lack of desire and readiness among the Lithuanian masses to accept Christianity and the non-existence of any royal sanction for any effort with that goal, there might well have been a dearth of Orthodox missionaries to carry out a sustained effort at proselytization even had royal approval been granted. Although statistics are unavailable, the generalization that the Russian territories under Lithuanian rule had suffered a decrease in population after the Mongol conquest seems to be valid. The fact that the Metropolitan of Kiev left for the northeast might be indicative that perhaps the greater number of Orthodox were living in the northeast. Nicephoras Gregoras mentions that the areas around Kiev had been so devastated that it had been imperative to move the metropolitan's residence to the north.<sup>114</sup> The pious types who tended to become monks went largely to the uninhabited northern wilderness where the Mongols could not get them. The great monasteries of the period seem to have all been located in regions outside of Lithuanian control.<sup>115</sup>

In addition to the factor of the natural tendency of Orthodoxy to subordinate itself to the interests of the state, the Orthodox church in West Russia might have been forced to concentrate the greater part of its energies to combat Latinization in Galicia which posed an immediate threat, whereas the existence of a pagan people which fought against the Germans and whose leaders were friendly to their cause posed no threat to Orthodoxy.

It is furthermore not unlikely that the Metropolitans of Kiev, residing at Moscow and closely allied to the political aims of Muscovy found solace in the fact that Lithuania was pagan, and discouraged, in so far as it was in their capacity, to convert the ethnic Lithuanian masses to Orthodoxy. Like that of the Teutonic Knights, their political position could be improved if their foes could be labelled godless fireworshippers. The Lithuanian masses, then, remained pagan until suddenly, to the surprise of all, Lithuanians, Russians, and Teutonic Knights alike, they were brought to Roman Christianity through royal fiat. This marked the beginning of a long period of hardship for the Orthodox Church in Western Russia.

#### Notes:

1 Henryk Paszkiewicz, *The Origin of Russia* (London, 1954), p. 223.

2 M. K. Liubavskii, *Ocherk istorii Litovsko-Russkago gosudarstva do Liublinskoi unit vkliuchitelno* (Moskva, 1910), p. 36.

3 V. Biržiška in *Senųjų lietuviškų knygų istorija* (Chicago, 1953), I, pp. 39-52, gives a survey and refutation of the contention that the old Prussians and Lithuanians had their own written language. Apparently, the notion first arose in the early sixteenth century in the writings of one S. Grunau who provided samples of this script. Although he did not indicate his source, German scholars generally treated him seriously until the early part of the present century, and various attempts to decipher Grunau's samples were made. The claim was also very appealing to and widespread among early nineteenth century romantic Lithuanian nationalists including the historian Narbut. Biržiška concluded that not only is there no convincing proof of the existence of any such system of writing but also that there was no need for it, and therefore the claim that it was developed is absurd.

4 "Notice sur le livre XXXVII de Nicéphore Gregoras," trans. and ed. by V. Parisot, *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque National* (Paris, 1851), v. XVII, part 2, p. 71.

5 George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia* (New Haven, 1953), p. 238.

6 *Ibidem*, p. 239; Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademija, Istorijos Institutas, *Lietuvos istorija nuo seniausių laikų iki 1957 m.* (Vilnius, 1958), p. 42.

7 Enumerated in Paszkiewicz, *op cit.*, p. 222.

8 *Ibidem*, p. 224.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 225.

10 V. Vasilevskii, "Obrashchenie Gedimina v katolichestvo," *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshcheniia*, 159 (1872), p. 169.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 170.

- 12 The contention of T. Chase, *The Significance of Ruthenian and Muscovite Elements in Lithuanian History* (New York, 1944), p. 11 that the Russian influence in Lithuania in no way affected the masses is questionable, especially since it is not documented.
- 13 V. Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, *Lietuvos istorija: Lietuva amžių sūkury* (Chicago, 1956), p. 92.
- 14 E. Golubinskii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi* (Moskva, 1900), II, p. 129.
- 15 Josef Pfitzner, *Didysis Lietuvos kunigaikštis Vytautas kaip politikas*, trans. from the German by J. Talmantas (Kaunas, 1930), p. 53.
- IS E. Vinter, "Rossiia v politike rimskoi kurii v XIV v." *Voprosi Istorii Religii i Ateizma*, VI (1958), p. 299; Constantine R. Jurgla, *History of the Lithuanian Nation* (New York, 1948), p. 98; W. H. Frère, *Some Links in the Chain of Russian Church History* (London, 1918), p. 49.
- 17 Golubinskii, *loc. cit.*
- 18 *Ibidem*, p. 148; Jurgėla, *loc. cit.*; Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 220 sets the date at 1330.
- 19 M. D. Priselkov and M. R. Fasmer, "Otryvki V. N. Beneshe-vicha po istorii russkoi tserkvi XIV veka," *Izvestiia Otdeleniia Russkago lazyka i Slovenosti*, XXI (1916), pp. 66-67.
- 20 Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 208 states that 1315 is generally used as the date of the accession of Gediminas since his predecessor last figures in the sources on that date.
- 21 Adolfas Šapoka, *Senasis Vilnius* (Brooklyn, 1963), p. 14.
- 22 Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
- 23 Vasilevskii, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
- 24 N. Talberg, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi* (Jordanville, N. Y., 1959), p. 110.
- 25 Makarii, Metropolitan of Moscow, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi* (Sanktpeterburg, 1886), VI, p. 338.
- 26 K. Sideravičius, "Sunkiausių kovų šimtmetis," *Lietuvių karas su kryžiuočiais*, ed. by J. Jurginis (Vilnius, 1964), p. 208.
- 27 Z. Ivinskis, "Lietuvos valstybės galybės kūrėjas didysis Gediminas," *Aidai*, 124 (November, 1959), p. 377.
- 28 Makarii, *op. cit.*, pp. 339-40.
- 29 Vasilevskii, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- 30 *Ibidem*, p. 167.
- 31 Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademija, Istorijos ir Teisės Institutas, *Lietuvos TSR istorijos šaltiniai: feodalinis laikotarpis* (Vilnius, 1955), I, p. 39.
- 32 Vasilevskii, *loc. cit.*
- 33 The nineteenth century Lithuanian historian S. Daukantas, *Būdas senovės lietuvių, kalnėnų ir žemaičių*, ed. by J. Talma-tas (Chicago, 1954), pp. 108ff., though admitting that the ancient Lithuanian religious beliefs are uncertain, titles one chapter: "One god but his names are many." The best short treatment of the pagan Lithuanian religion is probably contained in Marija Gimbutas, "The Ancient Religion of the Baits," *Lituanus*, VIII (No. 4, 1962), pp. 97-109.
- 34 Vasilevskii, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
- 35 *Historica Russiae Monumenta*, ed. by A. J. Turgenev (Sankt-peterburg, 1841), I, pp. 102-105.
- 36 Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademija, Istorijos ir Teisės Institutas, *loc. cit.*
- 37 *Ibidem*, p. 40.
- 38 V. T. Pashuto, *Obrazovanie litovskogo gosudarstva* (Moskva, 1959), p. 363.
- 39 F. Lecntovich, "Rada velikikh kniazei litovskikh," *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshcheniia*, XI (1907), Part I, p. 127.
- 40 Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademija, Istorijos ir Teisės Institutas, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- 41 Jurgėla, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
- 42 Sideravicius, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
- 43 Z. Ivinskis, "A Contribution to the History of the Conversion of Lithuania." *Baltic and Scandinavian Countries*, V (January, 1939), p. 15.
- 44 Vasilevskii, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
- 45 Vinter, *op. cit.*, p. 292.
- 46 *Historica Russiae Monumenta*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 115.
- 47 *Documenta Pontificum Romanorum Historiam Uerainae Illustrantia* (1075-1953), ed. by Athanasius G. Welykyj, OSBM (Rome, 1953), I, pp. 55-56.
- 48 *Ibidem*, pp. 56-58.
- 49 Vinter, *op. cit.*, p. 293.
- 50 G. Mollat, "The Popes of Avignon and the Great Schism," *Cambridge Mediaeval History* (Cambridge, 1929), VII, p. 287.
- 51 Makarii, *loc. cit.*; we have been unable to date this. Of the two references made by Makarii, the one to *Sobranie Drevnikh Gramot i Aktov Gorodov: Vilny, Kovna, Trok* (Vilno, 1843), pp. XXXV - XXXVII, is erroneous, the other to Karamzin IV, *primech.* 279, does not indicate an edition and we have not been able to locate the passage.
- 52 Z. Ivinskis, "Lietuvos valstybės galybės kūrėjas didysis Gediminas," *Aidai*, 125 (December, 1959), p. 425.
- 53 Vinter, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
- 54 *Ibidem*, p. 302.
- 55 *Ibidem*, p. 299; W. Regel, *Analecta Byzantinorussica* (Sankt-peterburg, 1891), pp. XXVIII - XXVIII.
- 56 Vinter, *op. cit.*, p. 297.
- 57 A. Šapoka, *Lietuvos istorija* (Fellbach, Württemberg, 1950), p. 79.
- 58 Ivinskis, "Lietuvos valstybės galybės kūrėjas didysis Gediminas," p. 426.
- 59 Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, *op. cit.*, p. 115. She does not refer to the chronicle.



- 60 Chase, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Talberg, *loc. cit.*
- 61 Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
- 62 Vernadsky, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
- 63 There are various opinions as to the religion of Algirdas. Frère, *op. cit.*, p. 45, claims that Algirdas received an Orthodox baptism. Makarii, *loc. cit.*, believes him to have been an intermittent Orthodox. Talberg, *op. cit.*, p. III, states that Algirdas received Orthodoxy when his father was still alive but that he later went back to paganism and, *ibidem*, p. 112, was again baptized an Orthodox before his death. Vernadsky, *loc. cit.*, holds that there are grounds to believe that he was an Orthodox but does not specify. The Lithuanian historians Šapoka, *Lietuvos istorija*, p. 94, and Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, *op. cit.*, p. 117, claim that he was a pagan and mentions his cremation according to the old ritual at the wood near Maišogala. A. Alekna, *Lietuvos istorija* (Tilsit, 1923), p. 41, also considers him a pagan while Jurgėla, *op. cit.*, p. 102, states that he was a convinced heathen. None of the above claims are documented. Only Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 229, bases his contention on a contemporary source and quotes the Byzantine historian Nicephoras Gregoras: "The entire people of the Lithuanians... is as yet immersed in paganism, and adore fire as a god. ... Their king.. .bows to the sun." ("Notice sur le livre XXXVII de Nicéphore Gregoras," *op. cit.*, 79-81.) This would seem to be a valid indication that Algirdas was a pagan at least in the 1350's.
- 64 Makarii, *loc. cit.*
- 65 Pfitzner, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- 66 *Ibidem*, p. 51.
- 67 M. Hrushevskii, *A History of the Ukraine*, ed. by O. J. Frederiksen (New Haven, 1941), p. 125; Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 226, states that Algirdas was in control of Kiev at least in 1358. Jurgėla, *op. cit.*, p. 99, mentions that Kiev was a possession of Lithuania already before 1360. And Šapoka, *Lietuvos istorija*, p. 92, claims that Kiev "belonged to Lithuania already at the time of Gediminas, but loosely." The exact nature of Kiev's allegiance to Lithuania prior to 1360 is uncertain, though it would seem that Lithuania did not have full control over the city since Algirdas had in the 1350's to send a military contingent to seat his metropolitan there and since this contingent met resistance.
- 68 Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 227.
- 69 *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei*, XV, p. 63.
- 70 Golubinskii, *op. cit.*, p. 180.
- 71 *Ruskaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka*, VI, Prilozheniia, pp. 63-70.
- 72 "Notice sur le livre XXXVIII de Nicephore Gregoras," *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- 73 *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei*, X, p. 227.
- 74 P. G. Klepatskii, *Ocherki istorii Kievskoi zemli* (Odessa, 1912), p. 141.
- 75 *Ruskaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka*, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-64.
- 76 Paszkiewicz, *loc. cit.*
- 77 Akademiia Nauk URSR, Kiev. Institut Istorii, *Istoriia Kieva* (Kiev, 1963), p. 100.
- 78 *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei*, X, p. 231.
- 79 „Notice sur le livre XXXVIII de Nicephore Gregoras," *op. cit.*, p. 83.
- 80 *Ruskaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka*, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-84.
- 81 *Ibidem*, pp. 91-98.
- 82 *Ibidem*, pp. 97-124.
- 83 *Ibidem*, pp. 138-140; Pfitzner, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- 84 *Ibidem*, p. 53.
- 85 *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei*, XI, p. 25; XV p. 436.
- 86 Jurgėla, *loc. cit.*, states that Alexis was deposed, but there is no evidence for this.
- 87 Ivinskis, "A Contribution to the History of the Conversion of Lithuania," *op. cit.*, p. 16. Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademija, Istorijos Institutas, *op. cit.*, p. 45, claims that there were many Orthodox in Lithuania who were forced to change their religion in 1385; however, this is vaguely stated and undocumented. Talberg, *loc. cit.*, states that at the beginning of the reign of Jogaila, half of Vilna was Orthodox; this also is undocumented.
- 88 Šapoka, *Senasis Vilnius*, p. 45; Pfitzner, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- 89 Ivinskis, "A Contribution to the History of the Conversion of Lithuania," *loc. cit.*
- 90 *Akty, otnosiaschiesia k istorii Zapadnoi Rossii* (Sanktpe-terburg, 1846), I, p. 21; Institut Istorii Akademii Nauk BSSR, *Belorussia v epokhu feodalizma* (Minsk, 1959), I, p. 99.
- 91 *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei*, III, pp. 73-4.
- 92 Chase, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- 93 J. Karys, *Senovės lietuvių pinigai* (Putnam, Conn., 1959), pp. 114-119.
- 94 Vinter, *op. cit.*, p. 303.
- 95 Jurgėla, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
- 96 Vinter, *op. cit.*, p. 295.
- 97 *Ibidem*.
- 98 *Ibidem*.
- 99 Makarii, *op. cit.*, p. 341.
- 100 Šapoka, *Senasis Vilnius*, pp. 47-48.
- 101 Makarii, *loc. cit.*; Alekna, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- 102 Makarii, *op. cit.*, p. 340.
- 103 "Notice sur le livre XXXVIII de Nicéphore Gregoras," *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- 104 *Ibidem*, pp. 85-95.

- 105 Ivinskis, "A Contribution to the History of the Conversion of Lithuania," *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 106 *Ibidem.*
- 107 Paszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
- 108 Makarii, *loc. cit.*
- 109 Pfitzner, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- 110 Ivinskis, "A Contribution to the History of the Conversion of Lithuania," *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- 111 Alekna, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- 112 Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, *op. cit.*, p. 161; Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademija, Istorijos Institutas, *loc. cit.*
- 113 Šapoka, *Lietuvos Istorija*, p. 111.
- 114 "Notice sur le livre XXXVIII de Nicephore Gregoras," *op. cit.*, p. 71.
- 115 See A. Ratshin, *Polnoe sobranie istoricheskikh svedenii o vsekhn byvshikh v drevnosti i nune sushchestvuiushchikh monastyriakh i primechatelnykh tserkvakh v Rossii* (Moskva, 1852).