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LITHUANIA ASCENDING

From 1250 to 1795 Lithuania covered a vast area of eastern and central Europe. Until 1387 the country was pagan. How this huge state came to expand, defend itself against western European crusaders and play a conspicuous part in European life are the main subjects of this book.

The emergence of pagan Lithuania is presented against the background of the political and religious crises of fourteenth-century Byzantine and Catholic Christendom. An attempt is made to show how the Lithuanians manipulated their position on the commercial, denominational and colonial frontier to maintain an expanding dominion in the face of Polish, Teutonic and Russian opposition. It questions the mirage of the 'age of faith' as the 'age of totalitarian Christian Europe'.

The book has relevance to the expansion of the Church and Empire between the ninth and eleventh centuries. The rise of the new ruling elites in the fourteenth century, familiar to French and English historians, has its counterpart in Bohemia, Poland, Russia, and in Lithuania, although centralising forces were very weak, thus contributing to the strength of the later Polish-Lithuanian Republic of the Two Nations. Sources are used from across Europe, from Ireland and Spain to the Caucasus. The use of 'literary', 'mythological' chronicles is analysed. Reliance on non-written sources has also proved necessary. The lack of extensive Lithuanian documentation requires a focus on all sides of international affairs: a *desideratum* which is usually missing from western studies.

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LITHUANIA ASCENDING

*A pagan empire within
east-central Europe, 1295–1345*

S. C. ROWELL

Centre for West Lithuanian and Prussian History, University of Klaipėda



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PREFACE

On 6 September 1991 the Bolshevik regime in Moscow formally renounced the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and all pretensions to the Baltic states which it had seized in 1940. That same day in Vilnius the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences held an international symposium to commemorate the six hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the death of the founder of Lithuania's medieval power, Grand Duke Gediminas (1315/16–1341/42). Lithuania has a long and distinguished history. In 1386 Grand Duke Jogaila, Gediminas' grandson, married Queen Jadwiga of Poland to become king of a Lithuano–Polish state which stretched from Silesia to Smolensk, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Lithuania disappeared from the map of Europe as a sovereign state when the last part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth of the Two Nations was annexed by Russia in 1795. It emerged from the Russian Empire, as did Poland, in 1918.¹

This study aims to show how Lithuania first came to international prominence. From his citadel in Vilnius, Gediminas governed a state which controlled not only ethnic Lithuania, but also, in the western principalities of Orthodox Rus', more Rus'ian territory than that held by the grand duke of Moscow. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania straddled the major trade routes between the Baltic and the rivers Dvina and Dnepr, between Rus', Poland and the Teutonic Order. Its territory comprised vast Christian lands subject to the Church of Constantinople; its realm promised room for further expansion by the Church of Rome. It *chose* to remain pagan.

There is no detailed account of pagan Lithuania in a Western European language. The present work seeks to remedy this lacuna

¹ For general histories of Lithuania and east-central Europe which are relatively light in their bias see O. Halecki, *The borderlands of western civilisation. A history of East Central Europe* (New York, 1952) and J. Ochmański, *Historia Litwy*, 2nd edn (Wrocław–Warsaw etc., 1982).

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in scholarship and add to the achievements of Henryk Paszkiewicz, Zenonas Ivinskis and Vladimir Terentevich Pashuto whose histories of Lithuania (in Polish, Lithuanian and Russian) show some signs of wear and are, in any case, unavailable to an English readership.² This monograph gives full treatment to Gediminas, the most prominent of the secondary figures in John Fennell's excellent study of the rise of Moscow.³ It aims to recount events from all sides and especially from Vilnius rather than from Warsaw, Moscow or Königsberg, by dealing with the Grand Duchy in its own right not merely as an aspect of Teutonic, Polish or Russian territorial expansion. In the process an attempt will be made to counter those pernicious western approaches to eastern and central European history which marginalise, from ignorance, Slavonic and Baltic contributions to European culture. For too long medieval Lithuanian history has been treated as a *tabula rasa* awaiting the inscription of the glories of its neighbours as the powers which 'civilised' the Grand Duchy.

We shall examine Lithuania's rise to prominence under Gediminas with reference to the achievements of his predecessor and brother Vytenis (1295–1315) and his chosen heir Jaunutis (1342–45). Our major concerns will be the Grand Duchy's exploitation of its neighbours' military and political weaknesses, its manipulation of the confessional frontier between Baltic Catholic Christendom and Orthodox Rus', and its diplomatic skill in dealing with foreign princes who were as ready to connive with pagan Lithuanians (and seek pagan princesses in marriage) as they were to maintain a crusade against them. Such a study questions presuppositions of the place of a pagan polity within Christendom and the 'necessity' of conversion as a condition of participating actively in the affairs of the international community in the later Middle Ages.

This approach requires us to examine the tensions in European history in the fourteenth century. The sparsity of native sources available to the student of Lithuania encourages this recourse to the wider context, the European wheel of which Lithuania forms a hub and diverse regional ambitions the spokes: the conflicts

² H. Paszkiewicz, *Jagiellonowie a Moskwa I: Litwa a Moskwa w XIII i XIV wieku* (Warsaw, 1933); Z. Ivinskis, *Lietuvos Istorija iki Vytauto Didžiojo mirties* (Rome, 1978; Vilnius, 1991, 2nd edn); V. T. Pashuto, *Obrazovanie Litovskogo Gosudarstva* (Moscow, 1959).

³ J. L. I. Fennell, *The emergence of Moscow 1304–1359* (London, 1968).

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between Rus'ians and Germans and Tatars; Moscow and her rivals for power in Rus'; Poland and Rus', the Holy Roman Empire, the Teutonic Ordensstaat and the Baltic pagans; the Papacy and the Empire; Byzantium and her Commonwealth and the Papacy. Hence a survey of Lithuania's immediate neighbours is given in the first chapter. The confines imposed on students of medieval Lithuania by the exiguity of many sources are discussed before a general introduction to the pagan realm is provided in chapter 3. Studies of Lithuanian expansion in Rus', the pagan cult, the Orthodox hierarchy and the Catholic Mission of 1323–24 ensue before chapters devoted to military diplomacy, the last years of Gediminas' reign, and the dynastic and military problems which bedevilled the reign of Grand Duke Jaunutis.

In this account the terms *Lettovia* and *Lettovia* have been adapted from medieval Latin usage (for Lithuania) to provide a general term for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a whole. They are used sparingly for clarity and stylistic ease. Lithuania proper (roughly the equivalent of the modern Republic) controlled vast territories whose inhabitants were Slavs. Since the revival of Lithuanian national sentiment in the nineteenth century, 'Lithuanian' has come to refer almost exclusively in an ethnic sense to speakers of that Baltic language, rather than being used as a political term for those subject to Lithuanian rule. Given the sensibilities of the descendants of these peoples (the modern Belorussians and Ukrainians) to that term, we have decided to invent a shorthand term to distinguish actions involving the Grand Duchy which are primarily Slavonic rather than Baltic. The days when a poet born in Belorussian Novgorodok and writing entirely in Polish would refer to himself as a Lithuanian have faded like good health and we appreciate how good they were only now that we have lost them.

Non-specialist readers may be confounded momentarily by the use of the name Rus' to refer to the land inhabited by the eastern Slavs. This is a harmless scholarly convention which denotes an area of common political, religious and literary culture before the rise of the Great Russians (that is the Muscovites) over their brother Rus'ians of Ukraine and Belorussia.

On occasion reference to medieval Rus'ian customs of chronology cannot be avoided. The reader may find it helpful to note that Rus'ian and other Orthodox chroniclers date events from the creation of the world (*annus mundi*) in 5508 BC. The year was held

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to begin on 1 March, a day which falls usually after our 1 January but sometimes before it. Thus AM 6808 is the equivalent of 1 March 1299/29 February 1300 or 1 March 1300/28 February 1301. The translation to our system depends largely on a comparison of the record with events occurring outside Rus’.

Foreign names are given for the most part in their native forms, except where they are well known (such as popes, writers or rulers) in English. Given the international nature of previous studies of Lithuanian history, the names of rulers of the Grand Duchy are known under a confusing variety of forms. Thus Gediminas appears as Gedimin (Russian and German), Giedymin (Polish) and Gedeminne (Latin); his son Algirdas (Olgerd, Olgierd) likewise has a number of disguises. Lithuanian names are given according to established Lithuanian custom. Non-Lithuanian variants of the names of major figures may be found in brackets in the index. Orthodox Christian names have not been Lithuanised. Cyrillic texts are transcribed, where common sense does not rebel, according to the system used by the Library of Congress (the ligatures *ia* and *iū* are disregarded). The use of patronymics for Lithuanian and Russian characters helps concise reference. Thus the forms *-aitis/-aitė* (son/daughter of; plural *-aičiai/-aitės*) and *-ovich/-ovna* (plural *-ovich/-ovny*) appear regularly throughout the text. Hence we meet (in Lithuanian) Aigusta Gediminaitė, the wife of Semën Ivanovich (in Russian).

The author readily acknowledges the assistance of many individuals and institutions in Great Britain, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Germany, the United States of America, Canada and Rome which have lightened his burden: Mr and Mrs C. Rowell, the Grabowski Fund, the University of Warsaw and the British Academy, Magdalene and Clare College, Cambridge. Valuable assistance has been rendered by the directors and staff of: Archivio Segreto Vaticano; Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, (Königsberg Archive), Berlin; the libraries of the Universities of Warsaw and Kraków; the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Czartoryski Library (Kraków); the City Archives of Riga and Tallinn; the Central Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (Vilnius) and the City Museum of Pskov.

The unnodding supervision of Dr J. E. B. Shepard, the advice of Mr M. Giedroyc and consistent encouragement from Dr R. J.

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Mažeika, heated discussion with Dr A. Nikžentaitis and the support of the Revd Professor P. Rabikauskas have rendered a complex task pleasant.

Clare College, Cambridge
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, 1993

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Acta Ioannis</i>	<i>Acta Ioannis PP XXII (1317–1334)</i> , ed. A. L. Tautu (Vatican, 1952)
<i>AE</i>	<i>Arkheograficheskii Ezhegodnik</i> (Moscow, 1957–)
<i>AIuZR</i>	<i>Akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii iuzhnoi i zapadnoi Rossii</i> , ed. N. Kostomarov, I (1361–1598) (St Petersburg, 1863)
<i>AO</i>	<i>Arkheologicheskie Otkrytia</i> (Moscow, 1965–)
<i>AW</i>	<i>Ateneum Wileńskie</i> , 14 vols. (Vilnius, 1923–39)
<i>AZR</i>	<i>Akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii Zapadnoi Rossii</i> , ed. I. Grigorovich, I (1340–1506) (St Petersburg, 1846); II (1506–1544) (St Petersburg, 1848)
<i>ChOidr</i>	<i>Chtenia v obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom Universitete</i> (Moscow, 1846–1918)
<i>CDP</i>	<i>Codex Diplomaticus Prussicus</i> , ed. J. Voigt, 6 vols. (Königsberg, 1836–61)
<i>CEV</i>	<i>Codex Epistolaris Vitoldi magni ducis Lithuaniae (1376–1430)</i> , ed. A. Prochaska (Kraków, 1882)
<i>Długosz</i>	<i>Ioannis Długossi Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Poloniae</i> ed. J. Dąbrowski, D. Turkowska <i>et al.</i> (Warsaw, 1964–)
<i>EpG</i>	<i>Epitome Gestorum Prussiae (Canonici Sambiensis)</i> , SRP, I, 272–90
<i>FRB</i>	<i>Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum</i> , ed. J. Emler <i>et al.</i> 6 vols. (Prague, 1871–1907)
<i>GL</i>	<i>Gedimino Laiškai</i> , ed. V. T. Pashuto and I. Štal (Vilnius, 1966)
<i>GVNiP</i>	<i>Gramoty Velikogo Novgoroda i Pskova</i> , ed. S. N. Valk (Moscow–Leningrad, 1949)
<i>HW</i>	Hermann of Wartberge, <i>Chronicon Livoniae</i> , SRP, II, 21–116

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IORIaS	<i>Izvestia otdelenia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk</i> (St Petersburg, 1896–1927)
ILKI	<i>Iš Lietuvių Kultūros Istorijos</i> (Vilnius, 1958–)
JBS	<i>Journal of Baltic Studies</i> (1972–) [Published by the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies]
KDKDW	<i>Kodeks dyplomacyjny Katedry i diecezji wileńskiej</i> , ed. J. Fijałek and W. Semkowicz (Kraków, 1948)
KDWP	<i>Kodeks dyplomacyjny Wielkopolski</i> , 5 vols. ed. F. Piekosiński (Poznań, 1877–1908)
KH	<i>Kwartalnik Historyczny</i> (Lwów–Warsaw, 1887–)
KSIIMK	<i>Kratkie Soobshchenia Instituta istorii materialnoi kultury</i> (Moscow, 1939–)
LAMMDI	<i>Lietuvos TSR Aukštųjų Mokyklų Mokslo Darbai: Istorija</i> (Vilnius, 1958–). [Usually abbreviated to <i>Istorija</i>]
LMADA	<i>Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademijos Darbai. Serija A</i> (Vilnius, 1955–). [now <i>Lituanistica</i>]
L ₁ , L ₂ , L ₃	Redactions of the Lithuanian Chronicle, PSRL, XXXV (Moscow, 1980) and XXXII (Moscow, 1975)
LR	<i>Livländische Reimchronik</i> ed. L. Meyer (Paderborn, 1876). English translation by J. C. Smith and W. L. Urban, <i>The Livonian Rhymed Chronicle</i> , <i>Indiana University Publications: Uralic and Altaic Series</i> , CXXVIII (1977)
LU	<i>Liv- Esth- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch, nebst Regesten</i> , ed. F. G. von Bunge, 6 vols. (Reval–Riga, 1853–71; Aalen, 1967–74)
MM	<i>Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani</i> , ed. F. Miklosich and J. Müller, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1862)
MGH SRG	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum</i> 32 vols. (Hanover–Leipzig–Hahŋ, 1826–1934); new series 12 vols. (Berlin–Weimar, 1922–)
MPH	<i>Monumenta Poloniae Historica: Pomniki dziejowe Polski</i> ed. A. Bielowski <i>et al.</i> , 6 vols. (Lwów, 1864–93); new series (Kraków–Warsaw, 1946–)

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MPV	<i>Analecta Vaticana</i> (1202–1306), ed. J. Ptaśnik, <i>Monumenta Poloniae Vaticana</i> , III (Kraków, 1914)
NL	<i>Novgorodskaiia Pervaia Letopis'</i> , <i>starshego i mladshego izvodov</i> , ed. A. N. Nasonov (Moscow–Leningrad, 1950)
OF	<i>Ordens Folianten</i> , manuscripts in the Teutonic Order's Königsberg Secret Archive now in PKKA, Berlin
OSP	<i>Oxford Slavonic Papers</i> (Oxford, 1950–).
PD	Peter of Dusburg, <i>Chronica terrae Prussiae</i> , SRP, I, 3–219
PG and PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus ... series graecus</i> , ed. J. P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857–66) and ... <i>series latina</i> , ed. J. P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–55)
PG	<i>Polotskie Gramoty XIII – nachalo XVIv.</i> , ed. A. L. Khoroshkevich, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1977–80)
PH	<i>Przegląd Historyczny</i> (Warsaw, 1905–)
PKKA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Königsberg Archive, now in Berlin
PL	<i>Pskovskie Letopisi</i> , ed. A. N. Nasonov, 2 vols. (Moscow–Leningrad, 1941–55)
PSRL	<i>Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei</i> (St Petersburg–Moscow, 1841–)
PU	<i>Preussisches Urkundenbuch</i> , 6 vols. ed. M. Hein, E. Maschke, K. Conrad <i>et al.</i> (Königsberg–Marburg, 1882–1986)
PVL	<i>Povest' vremennykh let</i> , ed. D. S. Likhachev, 2 vols. (Moscow–Leningrad, 1950)
RAU	<i>Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności. Wydział historyczno-filozoficzny</i> , 25 + 47 vols. (Kraków, 1866–1952)
RIB	<i>Pamiętniki drevnerusskogo kanonicheskogo prava</i> , ed. A. S. Pavlov, <i>Russkaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka</i> , VI (St Petersburg, 1880)
RLA	<i>Russko-Livonskie Akty</i> , ed. K. E. Napiersky (St Petersburg, 1868)
Sof.	<i>Sofiiskaia Pervaia Letopis'</i> , PSRL, V (St Petersburg, 1851)

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<i>SRP</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum</i> , ed. T. Hirsch, M. Töppen and E. Strehlke, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1861–74; 2nd edn, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1965, vol. VI added)
<i>TrRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i> , 6 series (London, 1873–)
<i>TL</i>	<i>Troitskaia Letopis'</i> : <i>rekonstruktsia teksta</i> , ed. M. D. Priselkov (Moscow, 1950)
<i>TODRL</i>	<i>Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoi Literatury</i> (Moscow, 1934–)
<i>VMPL</i>	<i>Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae gentiumque finitimarum historiam illustrantia</i> , ed. A. Theiner, I (Rome, 1860)
<i>Wig.</i>	Wigand of Marburg, <i>Cronica nova Prutenica</i> , <i>SRP</i> , II, 429–662
<i>ZH</i>	<i>Zapiski Historyczne</i> (Toruń, 1908–)
<i>ZfO</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Ostforschung: Länder und Völker im östlichen Mitteleuropa</i> (Marburg/Lahn, 1952–)
<i>ZhMNP</i>	<i>Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshchenia</i> , 362 + 72 vols. (St Petersburg, 1834–1917)

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FOREIGN TERMS

Basqaq – Tatar official, tax collector*Bajor-as/-ai*; *boiar* – nobleman/-men*Druzhina* – princely retinue*Grivna* – silver ingot*Iarlyk* – charter, patent to throne or diocese issued by the Tatar khan*Kunigaikštis* – Lithuanian prince, analogous with Russian *kniaz'**Kunigas* – Lithuanian priest, originally also a political leader*Namestnik* – governor, lieutenant (representing a prince or bishop)*Posadnik* – mayor (Novgorod, Pskov)*Prigorod* – defensive outpost of city; town dependent on a larger town*Reise* – military campaign led by Teutonic Knights usually with the assistance of Catholic princes and knights from western Europe*Svod* – chronicle compilation*Tysiatskii* – militia commander, police chief*Veche* – popular assembly of a largely oligarchic naturePRONUNCIATION CHART FOR CENTRAL EUROPEAN
LANGUAGES

Most letters can be pronounced more or less in the English fashion. Some combinations of consonants however may cause the reader to stumble. The strangest are listed below:

ą (Polish) = French <i>on</i>	è = eh (as in <i>care</i>)
ai = eye	ë = yo
au = ow	ł = w
c = ts	ř = rsh
cz/č = ch	rz/ż/ź/ż = zh
ę (Polish) = French <i>un</i>	sz/ś = sh

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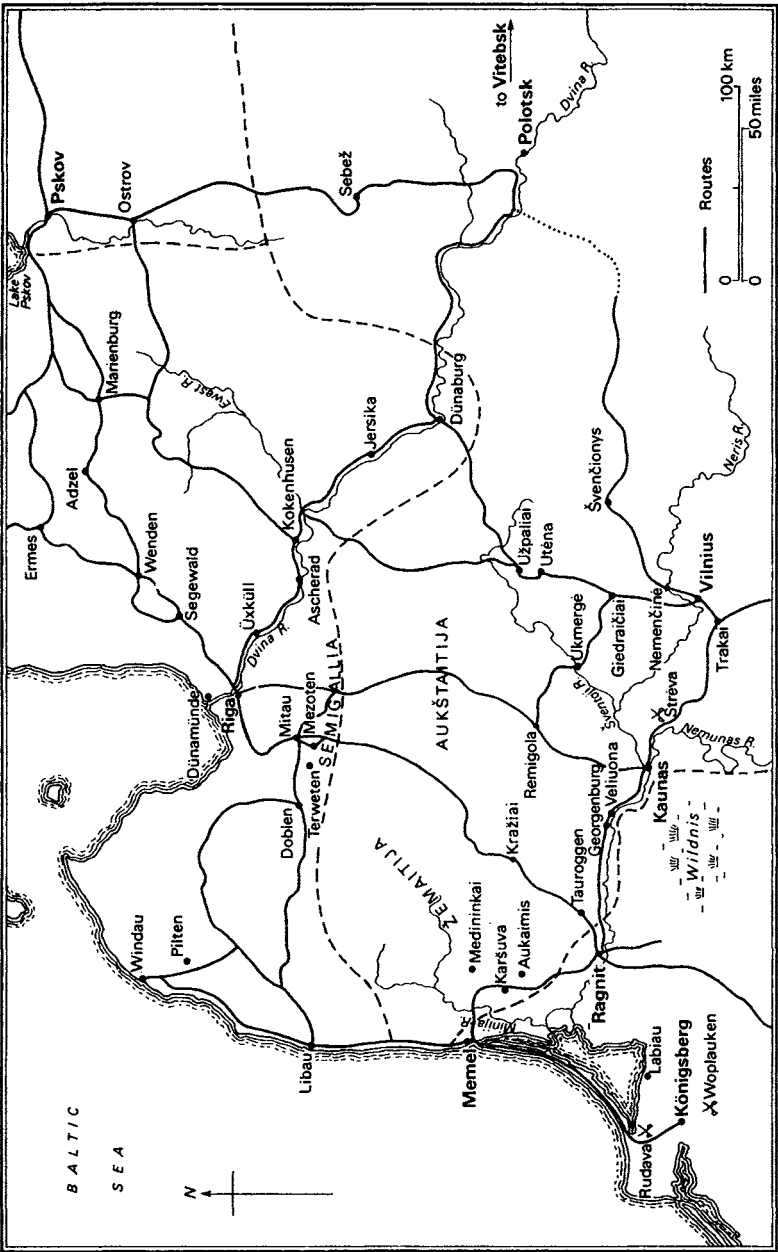


Map 1. Central and eastern Europe c. 1340.

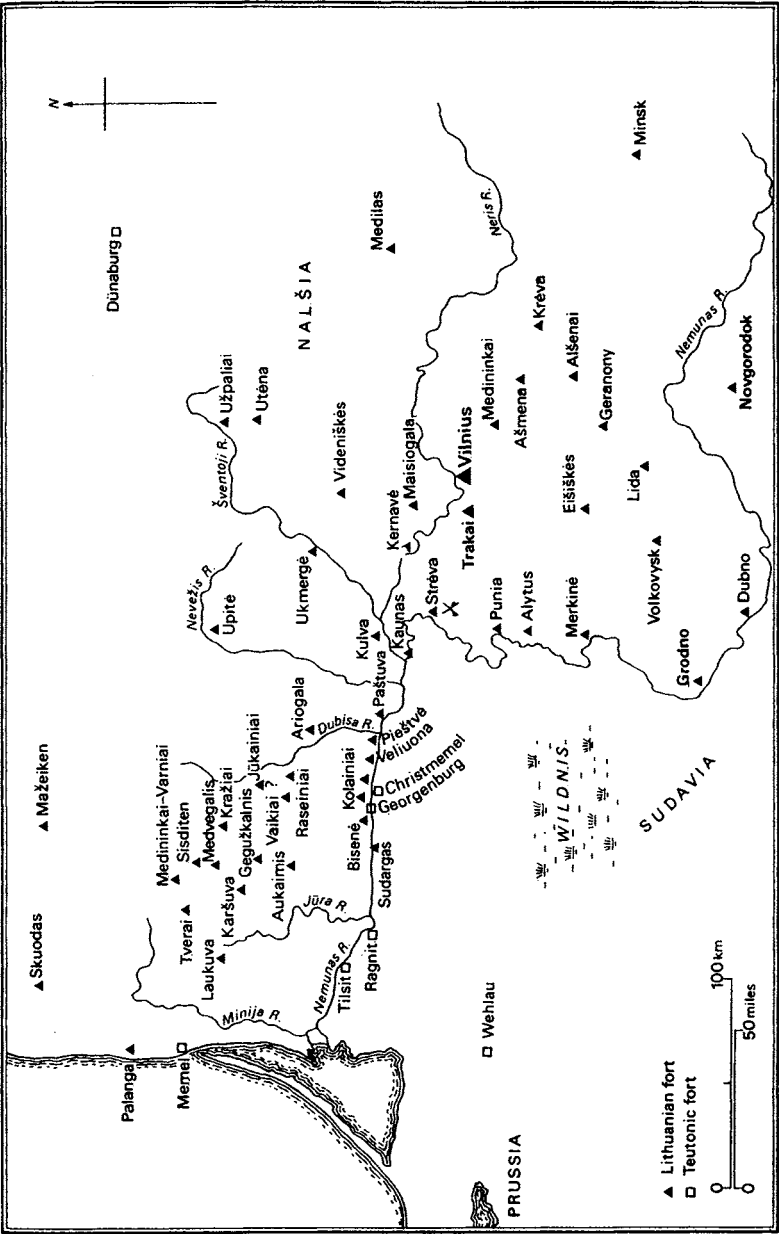


Map 2. Expansion of Lithuania c. 1248–1342.

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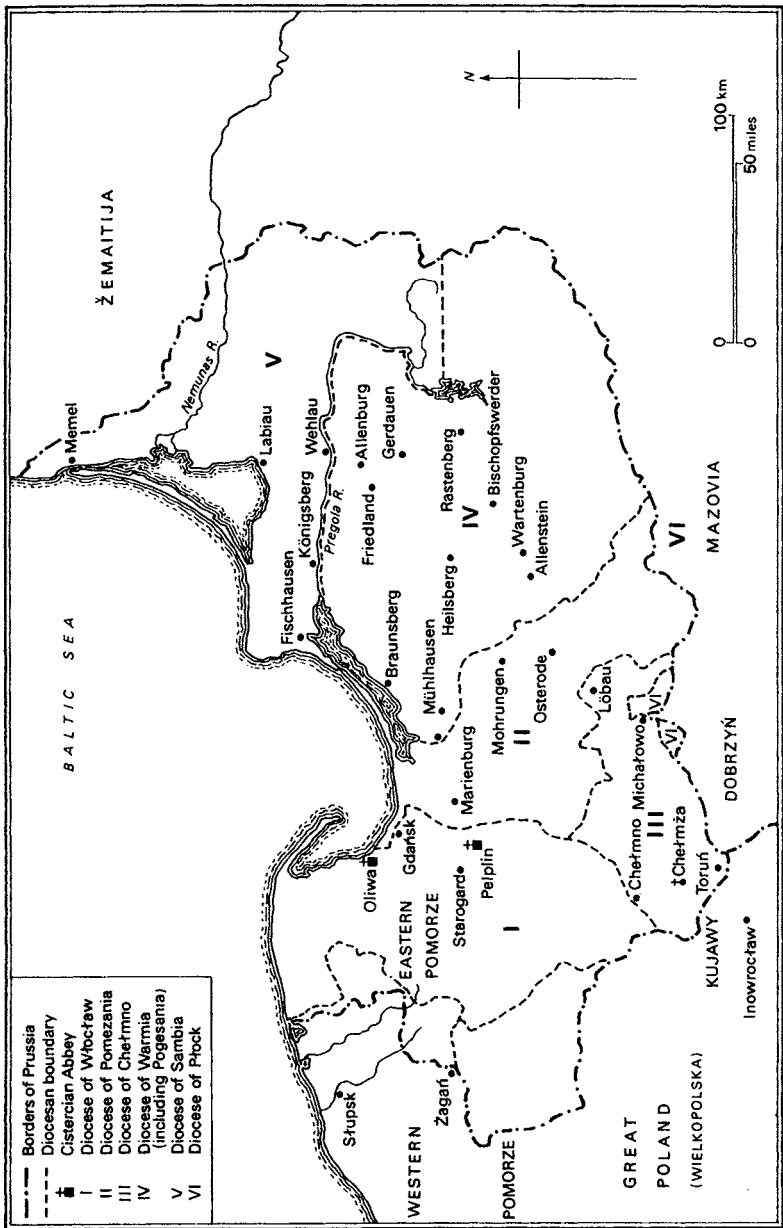


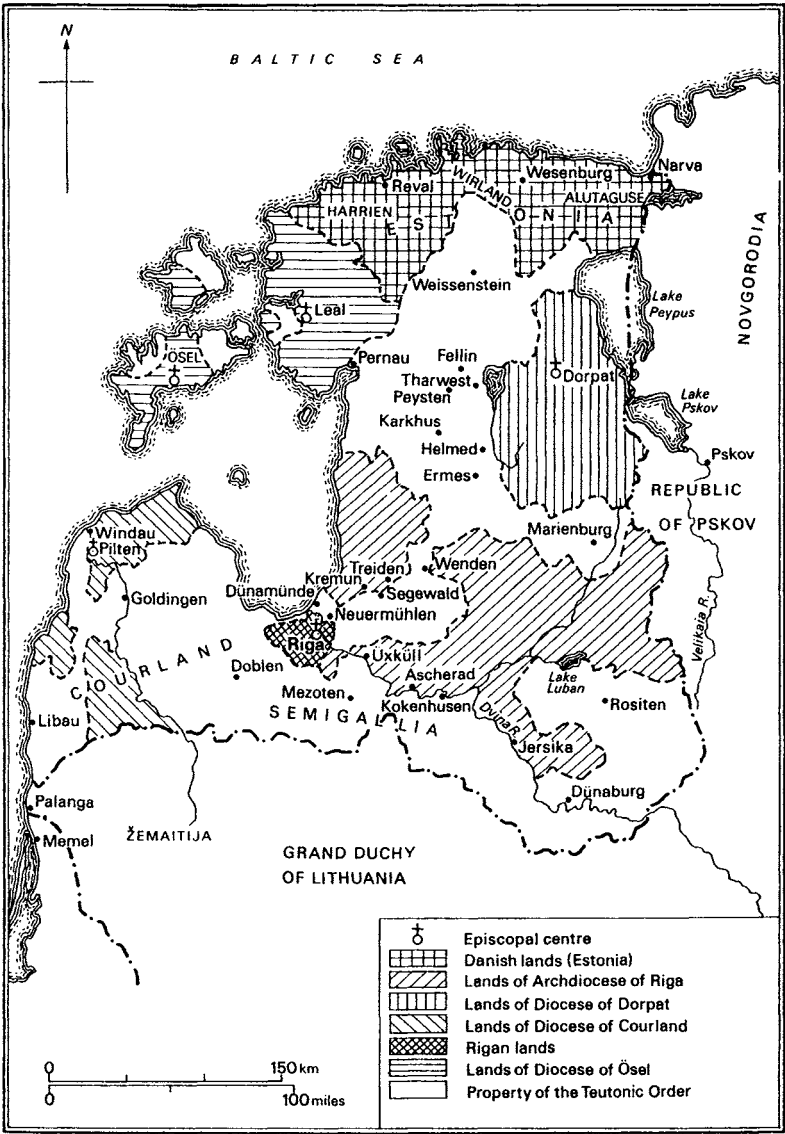
Map 3. Trade routes in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.



Map 4. Map of Lithuanian forts.

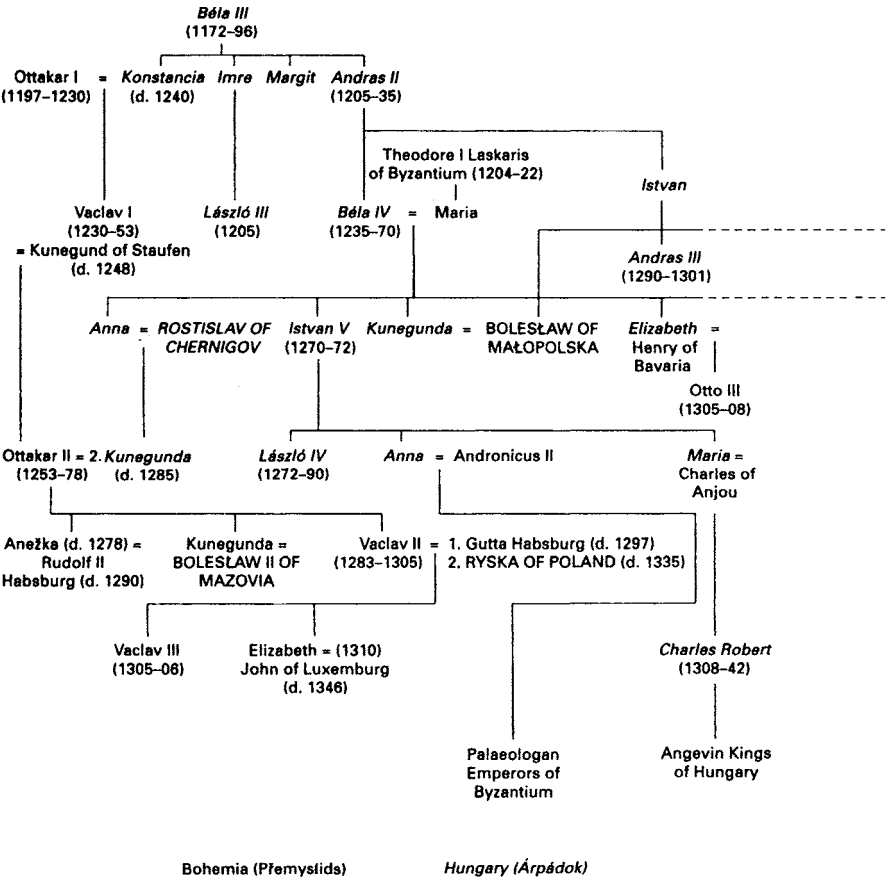
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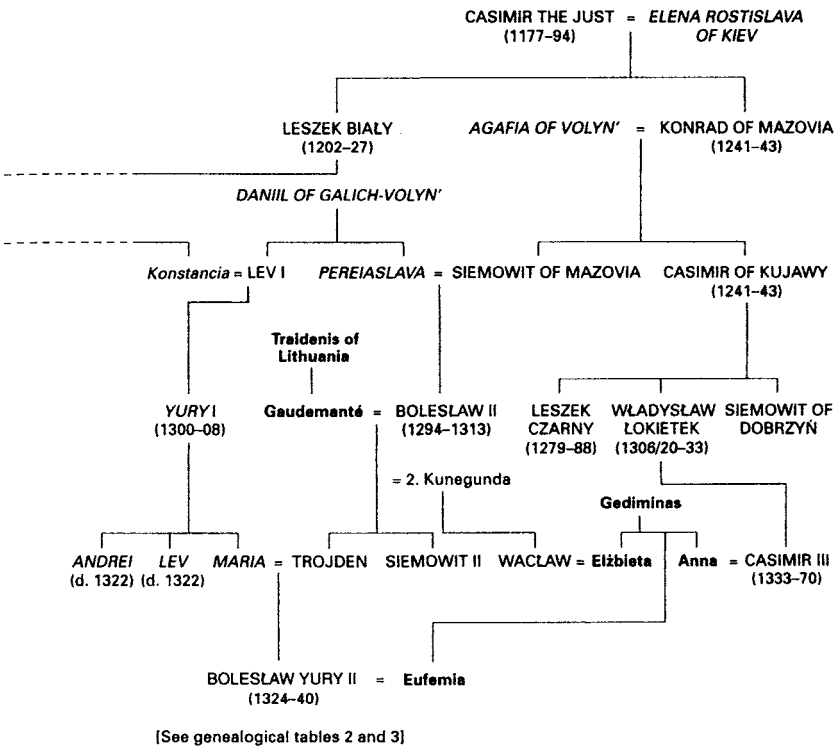
Map 5(b). The Teutonic Ordensstaat in Livonia.

Genealogical table 1. Central European monarchies



Dates given are regnal; those after '=' refer to date of marriage.
d. 1300 – died in 1300
d.a. 1300 – died before 1300
d.p. 1300 – died after 1300
♀ – daughter, female
♂ Boris – daughter of Boris
♂ son

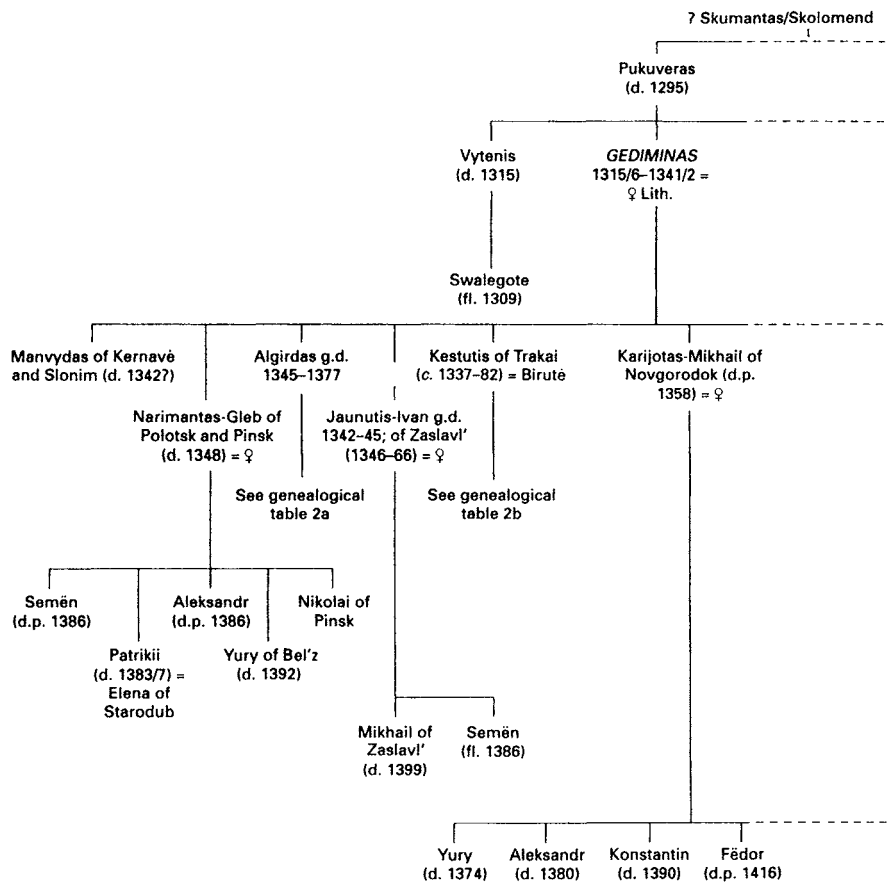
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GALICH-VOLYN' (DANILOVICH)

POLAND (PIASTS)

Genealogical table 2. The Gediminids



Dates given are regnal; those after '=' refer to date of marriage.
d. 1300 – died in 1300
d.a. 1300 – died before 1300
d.p. 1300 – died after 1300
♀ – daughter, female
♀ Boris – daughter of Boris
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