Jan Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina. Wczesnonowożytny wyobrażenie o początkach Litwy, część 1: W kręgu latopisów litewskich*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2013. 319 p. ISBN 978-8323-224-90-7

The theory of the origin of the Lithuanians in the Romans was born in the world of Latin historical images in the Middle Ages and early modern times, as an answer to one essential question: what was the origin and beginning of the political organisation and the ruling elite representing it? The thinking scheme marked in European writing, by which various nations and tribes were derived from several ‘places of memory’ of glorious tradition, Troy, Rome, Sarmatia, the stopping places of the troops of Alexander the Great, dominated the historical consciousness of the time.

The theory of the Lithuanians’ origin had attracted great interest from researchers for a long time, and in recent decades it has become an extremely popular topic of research by historians, literary critics and art historians.¹ This is not surprising, because for several centuries this theory

¹ Here is only a selection of the broad historiography: J. Jakubowski, *Studia nad stosunkami narodowościowymi na Litwie przed unią Lubelską* (Warsaw 1912); K. Avižonis, ‘Lietuvių kilimo iš romėnų teorija XV ir XVI a.’, *Praeitis*, t. 3 (1940/1992), pp. 49–72; M. Zachara-Wawrzyńczyk, Geneza legendy o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów, *Zeszyty Historyczne Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*, z. 3 (1963), pp. 5–35; E. Kulicka, Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów i jej stosunek do mitu sarmackiego, *Przegląd Historyczny*, 71 (1980), pp. 1–21; J. Suchocki, ‘Geneza litewskiej legendy etnogenetycznej. Aspekty polityczne i narodowe’, *Zapiski Historyczne*, t. 52 (1987), pp. 27–67; E. Raila, ‘Palemono legenda: istoriografinės teksto ištakos’, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, t. 4 (1997), pp. 130–134; S.C. Rowell, ‘Amžinos pretenzijos arba kaip turime skaityti elitinę literatūrą?’ *Seminarai*, Vilnius, 1998, pp. 7–30; M. Jučas, Legenda apie lietuvių kilmę iš romėnų, *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos unija (XIV a. vid. – XIX a. pr.)*, (Vilnius, 2000), pp. 222–241; A. Vasiliauskas, Antika ir sarmatizmas, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos kultūra: tyrinėjimai ir vaizdai*, sud. V. Ališauskas, L. Jovaiša, M. Paknys, R. Petrauskas, E. Raila (Vilnius, 2001), pp. 13–31; R. Petrauskas, ‘Socialiniai ir istoriografiniai lietuvių kilmės iš romėnų teorijos aspektai’, *Literatūros istorija ir jos kūrėjai (Senoji Lietuvos literatūra 17)*, (Vilnius 2004), pp. 270–285; K. Gudmantas, ‘Vėlyvųjų Lietuvos metraščių veikėjai ir jų prototipai: „romėnai“’, *Istorijos rašymo horizontai (Senoji Lietuvos literatūra 18)*, (Vilnius 2005), pp. 113–139; A. Baniulytė, ‘Pacai ar Pazzi? Nauja Palemono legendos versija Lietuvos raštijoje’, *ibidem*, pp. 140–168; O. Łatyszonok, *Od Rusinów Białych do Białorusinów. U źródeł białoruskiej idei narodowej* (Białystok, 2006); A. Railaitė, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės kilmingųjų genealoginė*

was the most common interpretation explaining the origin of the Lithuanian nation, and its development provides a lot of interesting material for studies of the political, cultural and historical consciousness of the society of old Lithuania. True, there has not so far been a synthetic work, devoted to an overview of the Roman theory.² This gap in historiography probably encouraged Professor Jan Jurkiewicz³ of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań to undertake a large task: to investigate the existence of the theory since its inception in the 16th century until the end of the 18th century.⁴ The reviewed work is the first part of this, devoted to the early phase of the legend, which is revealed first of all in the 16th-century Lithuanian Chronicles. The author has aptly called the book 'From Palemonas to Gediminas'. The first has been established for a long time as the 'pioneer' of the Lithuanian nation, while from the era of Gediminas the legendary history in the Lithuanian Chronicles begins to be replaced by a narrative based on real events.

The book consists of seven chapters, starting with the oldest explanations of the origins of the Lithuanians in writings by foreigners, and ending with a specific version of the legendary origins of the Lithuanian princes, which was formed in Muscovy.

Jurkiewicz starts from the first scholarly interpretation of the origin of the Lithuanians in the work of the famous late 15th-century Polish historian Jan Długosz (pp. 27–38). Długosz looked for the Lithuanians' roots in ancient Rome, and it may be that he was the one who for a long time directed these searches towards Italy. In the author's opinion, Długosz was prompted to choose the Roman origin interpretation, not due so much to the similarity he observed between the Latin and Lithuanian languages (unlike Mykolas Lietuvis writing later, he does not cite a single common word

savimonė ir jos atspindžiai heraldikoje XVI–XVIII a. Doctoral dissertation, Vilnius University, 2013.

² The small popular book of Juozas Jurginis *Legendos apie lietuvių kilmę* (Vilnius, 1971), is an exception.

³ The fundamental works: *Rozwój polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie i Białorusi w latach 1905–1922* (Poznań, 1983); *Powinności włościan w dobrach prywatnych w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w XVI–XVII wieku* (Poznań, 1991).

⁴ The works of the author started on the topic of the theory of origins: 'Palemon, Kolumny i Centaury. Kilka uwag o bohaterach legendy o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów', *Cała historia to dzieje ludzi... Studia z historii społecznej ofiarowane profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyczańskiemu* (Białystok, 2004), pp. 123–142; 'Legenda o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów w świetle historiografii. Czas powstania i tendencje polityczne', *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia. Ideologia, historia a społeczeństwo* (Zielona Góra, 2005), pp. 335–350; 'Albertas Vijūkas-Kojelavičius – heruliškos lietuvių kilmės teorijos pradininkas' *Lituanistica*, nr. 3/4, 2009, pp. 105–115; 'Podróże Palemona i jego synów po Litwie', *Studia z dziejów Europy Wschodniej* (Poznań, 2010), pp. 61–77, et. al.

from the languages), but more likely from his understanding of features of pagan religion and culture (p. 36). Długosz's narrative is presented in the broader context of 15th-century works which took an interest in the origins of the Prussians, Lithuanians and Žemaitijans. Commenting on individual stories within a broader framework is a method characteristic of Jurkiewicz's narrative, which allows us to understand better the assumptions of specific theories and claims. An important point the author makes is that in spite of the fact that Długosz's chronicle remained in manuscript form, its content could have been well known in the chapter of the Cracow diocese and beyond. Some of the more interesting stories could certainly have been discussed verbally. This is evidenced by the alternative version of the origins of the Lithuanians in the Celts and the residents of the Bosphorus, by the Italian humanist Philip Callimachus, whom Długosz had met at the court of Casimir Jagiellon (pp. 42–46). Nevertheless, the important question of the relationship between the narrative of Długosz and the new version of the Roman origin of the Lithuanians in the Lithuanian Chronicles about half a century later remains open. Agreeing essentially with the dating (1510s–1520s⁵) of the new version of the Lithuanian Chronicles accepted at this time, Jurkiewicz links the genesis of the theory of the origins of the Lithuanians in the Romans and the ideological tendencies of this narrative with the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which at that particular time was able to assert its power along with the Jagiellonian dynasty.

The second section (pp. 66–89) examines problems at the time of the appearance of the Roman legend and the political trends. In view of the very extensive literature on the subject, the author chose a historiographic strategy of presentation, presenting in detail the opinions of various researchers on one issue or another. This approach was fully justified, although at times Jurkiewicz also 'plays too long' unnecessarily on small matters, such as the possible influence of Lithuanians studying in Cracow on the emergence of the theory, about which sources do not allow us to decide anything. However, in many cases, Jurkiewicz's findings are solid and well thought out, confirming some of the insights of historiography about the independent emergence of the theory in Lithuania at the beginning of the 16th century and its fundamental political ideas.

The third part of the monograph is devoted to an analysis of the main heroes of the Roman narrative: Palemonas and four Roman families (Kolumna, Centauri, Rose and Ursinus). In the middle of the 16th century, Augustyn Rotundus tried to explain the name of the 'Lithuanian ancestor' Palemonas. This question still haunts historians up to now. Jurkiewicz

⁵ True, the transfer of the final version of the Bychovec Chronicle to 1538 is not convincing, essentially relying on the basis of only one story (pp. 81–83). The version developed by Rimantas Jasas that the chronicle is an integral piece, dated about 1525, has many more arguments.

makes his contribution in his characteristic style, carefully presenting the views of various historians, adding to them, albeit with reservations, an original theory about a possible link between Palemonas and St Panteleimon (pp. 90–95). Meanwhile, the author links the selection of the name of the Kolumna/Column (Colonna) family (the Jagiellonians and Goštautas are descendants of it) to the competition between the Jagiellonians and the Habsburgs (who, according to one of the versions of the origin, are also descendants of the Columns) (pp. 100–101). I think that we are dealing here with a more general phenomenon, the internal logic of the construction of a theory, when the spread of European historical and literary archetypes and stories, including ‘popular families’ (Colonna, Orsini), gave greater weight and persuasion to the narrative.⁶ Meanwhile, the Centauri family, based on heraldic criteria, are linked with the Alšėniškis, about the genesis of whose use of the Hipocentaur coat of arms, the author offers several new hypotheses (pp. 101–106).

The fourth and fifth chapters of the book are the most original. The fourth interprets the political panorama of the Roman theory: the expeditions by legendary dukes and the creation of a new state. It is shown how the change of dukes and dynasties described in the annals formed a consistent image of the emergence of the great state. The author presents a kind of ‘prosopography’ of legendary rulers of Lithuania, a total (the number varies in different transcripts) of 15 to 17 genealogical generations, explains the etymology of the names of the dukes, describes the history of their rule, looks for historical parallels, and presents the further development of their image in the chronicles of Augustyn Rotundus, Maciej Strykowski and Alessandro Guagnini. The typical structure of the ‘absorption’ of territories imagined by the chroniclers is disclosed, where the most important place belonged to the erection of a castle in a new place (p. 115), and the turning points in the legendary history (change of dynasties, the final unification of the state) are separated. I would also note the section about the Polotsk Palemonidus, and the author’s hypothesis about the overlap of the Lithuanian (Catholic) and Ruthenian (Orthodox) approaches in this part of the annals (pp. 131–141).

In the fifth chapter, the author reconstructs the historic landscape of the chronicles: how they envisioned and described the geography of the country. Jurkiewicz asks why some other areas end up in the spotlight of the chroniclers, while others are ignored; why next to the major rivers the small Lake Spera appears; and among the main political positions next to Vilnius, Trakai, Kernavė and Naugardukas, why do Jurbarkas and Žaslai (p. 171, 191) appear? It is clear that the authors of the annals were not concerned so much with a precise knowledge of physical geography, but

⁶ R. Petrauskas, ‘Palemon und die vier Sippen: die römische Abstammungstheorie der Litauer’ (forthcoming).

the political and symbolic significance of areas. Therefore, Kaunas is found at the confluence of the Nemunas and Nevėžis rivers (p. 181), and Jurbarkas on the River Jūra (p. 183). The mention of individual areas was often determined by the close links of their rulers (for example, the nobleman Albertas Goštautas) with the people writing the chronicles. At the same time, we note a clear regional hierarchy: a key area of the state in the legendary part is called 'Užneris' (Kernavė, Deltuva, Ukmergė, Utena) (pp. 186–191), and Naugardukas dominates the Ruthenian lands (pp. 192–196). And the conclusion about aspects of the political realities at the beginning of the 16th century is important: the Chernigov, Seversky and Starodub lands lost in the 1503 Treaty of Moscow are understood in the annals as legitimate Lithuanian territory, once reclaimed from the Tartars by force (pp. 203–204).

The main part of the book concludes with a section on the image of the state recorded in legends (pp. 225–237). The main highlights are: state building in the annals is described as a long-term process; it is not formed around one centre, but emerges in three different areas, Žemaitija, Užneris and Naugardukas (this corresponds to the titles of the ruler at the beginning of the 16th century, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Ruthenia and Samogitia), which only gradually merge into one; the representatives of the Palemonas dynasty departing to rule the lands of Rus' remain Lithuanians (with the exception of the case of Polotsk), who dominate regardless of the state's expansion to the east; the Rivers Nemunas and Neris play a geographically important role, around which the political formation of the Lithuanians expands, and their transgression marks a new stage of political development. The rulers are the patrimonial hosts, sovereigns of the state, but 'fair and generous' to their subordinates, and the nobility are the indispensable helpers of the rulers. So the picture of the state in the Roman legend essentially conforms to the political system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the start of the 16th century.

At first glance, the last section of the monograph stands out from the general context. It deals with the genealogical story of the princes of Lithuanian origin (pp. 238–265) that appeared in Muscovy at about the same time (the beginning of the 16th century). This story is also important because of the competitive struggle going on between the rulers of Lithuania and Moscow (in which historical reasoning began to play an increasingly important role), and because many of the senior nobility of Moscow (including the ruling dynasty) had the blood of Lithuanian princes. Jurkiewicz compares the Lithuanian and Moscow theories, and tries to find thematic similarities and differences, and possible influences.

In a work characterised by the density of factual material, smaller errors are inevitable, of which I was able to detect only a few. The author demonstrates proper caution with regard to various hypotheses of historiography (and over the many years of exploring annals, many have

been expressed), but sometimes does not abstain from making dubious claims. For example, like J. Ochmański, he indicates that until then in the Lithuanian tradition, Grand Duke Vytenis was not mentioned at all until he entered into the annals of 16th-century Lithuania from local traditions, perhaps from the circle of the Olelkaičiai (pp. 161–162), although there is no basis for this assumption: from the beginning of the 15th century in the tradition of the Gediminids/Jagiellonians, their history only began with Gediminas. Treniota, one of the assassins of Mindaugas, was not the son of the Samogitian Duke Vykintas (pp. 131, 159).⁷ In 1279, Kernavė is mentioned for the first time in the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle, written at the end of the 13th century, and only from this did the 14th-century Livonian chronicler Hermann von Wartberge take up this news (p. 187). There is no reason to associate Mikalojus Butrimas, who lived at the end of the 15th century, with the famous Butrimas nobles in the first half of the 15th century (pp. 205–206). The Butrimas name was fairly widespread, for example, the mentioned Władysław Butrimas in 1445 sources in Krakow was the son of Kęsgaila. Meanwhile, the mentioned Mikalojus Butrimas was the son of Jokūbas Jonaitis Nemiravičius.⁸ In the accounts of the routes of the Teutonic Order at the end of the 14th century, the mentioned owner of Alšėnai, Algimantas, (p. 208) is John Algimantaitis, whom sources often called Father.

What one misses most in the monograph is the presentation of the Lithuanian legend in the context of the theories of other European origins (peoples, relatives). Such a comparative approach would help to reveal more clearly the cultural and social image of the formation and spread of the legend, and perhaps answer as well some of the outstanding issues (a more accurate time of the emergence of the theory in Lithuania, its initial reception in different social and confessional social groups in society, and so on). Also left unexplained were the nature of historical thinking of that time (although in different places of the book there are manifestations of such analysis) and the method of writing/designing historical works, which allowed the creation of a historical narrative compelling for the times, that became the structural axis of the historical consciousness of the Lithuanian nobility until the 19th century. In summary, one needs to emphasize that thanks to his great erudition the author managed to summarise the very abundant, fragmented, multilingual historiography, and provide new insights about the concept of history, which made a great impact on the further development of Lithuanian historiography (p. 237). The book should be a toolbox for anyone who wants to go further, not only in the theories of

⁷ E. Gudavičius, 'Ar Treniota žemaičių kunigaikštis?', *Lietuvos TSR Mokslo akademijos darbai. Serija A*, no. 4, 1982, pp. 63–70.

⁸ R. Petrauskas, *Lietuvos diduomenė XIV a. pabaigoje – XV a.: sudėtis – struktūra – valdžia* (Vilnius, 2003), p. 280.

the origin of the Lithuanians, but also into the whole cultural situation in Lithuania in the 16th century. One has to wait for the second part of the work, the theme of which will be the much less explored images of the 'beginning of Lithuania' in later centuries.

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