

## = Family of Gediminas =

The family of Gediminas is a group of family members of Gediminas , Grand Duke of Lithuania ( ca . 1275 ? 1341 ) , who interacted in the 14th century . The family included the siblings , children , and grandchildren of the Grand Duke and played the pivotal role in the history of Lithuania for the period as the Lithuanian nobility had not yet acquired its influence . Gediminas was also the forefather of the Gediminid dynasty , which ruled the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from 1310s or 1280s to 1572 .

Gediminas ' origins are unclear , but recent research suggests that Skalmantas , an otherwise unknown historical figure , was Gediminas ' grandfather or father and could be considered the dynasty 's founder . Because none of his brothers or sisters had known heirs , Gediminas , who sired at least twelve children , had the advantage in establishing sovereignty over his siblings . Known for his diplomatic skills , Gediminas arranged his children 's marriages to suit the goals of his foreign policy : his sons consolidated Lithuanian power within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania , while his daughters established or strengthened alliances with the rulers of areas in modern @-@ day Russia , Ukraine and Poland .

The relationships among Gediminas ' children were generally harmonious , with the notable exception of Jaunutis , who was deposed in 1345 by his brothers Algirdas and Kęstutis . These two brothers went on to provide a celebrated example of peaceful power @-@ sharing . However , Gediminas ' many grandchildren and their descendants engaged in power struggles that continued well into the 15th century . Gediminas ' grandchildren converted Lithuania to Christianity and inaugurated the first personal union with Poland .

## = = Origins = =

Because written sources of the era are scarce , Gediminas ' ancestry , early life , and assumption of the title of Grand Duke in ca . 1316 are obscure and continue to be the subject of scholarly debate . Various theories have claimed that Gediminas was either his predecessor Grand Duke Vytenis ' son , his brother , his cousin , or his hostler . For several centuries only two versions of his origins circulated . Chronicles ? written long after Gediminas ' death by the Teutonic Knights , a long @-@ standing enemy of Lithuania ? claimed that Gediminas was a hostler to Vytenis ; according to these chronicles , Gediminas killed his master and assumed the throne . Another version introduced in the Lithuanian Chronicles , which also appeared long after Gediminas ' death , proclaimed that Gediminas was Vytenis ' son . However , the two men were almost the same age , making this relationship unlikely . In 1868 , a letter issued by the Council of Riga in 1323 was published that contained a small note mentioning Vytenis as " the brother and predecessor " of Gediminas . After the letter came to light , textbooks almost universally represented Vytenis and Gediminas as brothers . However , historian Tomas Baranauskas believes the word " brother " has been interpreted too literally , and that the two were in fact cousins .

Grand Duke Vytenis ' origins are relatively well @-@ established ; he was the son of Butvydas , who was Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1291 to 1295 . No consensus exists about the identity of Butvydas ' father . While some genealogies give Traidenis as the ancestor , this has been described as unlikely : the later marriage of Gediminas ' daughter Eufemija and Traidenis ' great @-@ grandson Boleslaw @-@ Yuri would have violated canon law , since the two would have been related by blood , and this violation would likely have been noticed by the pope .

Recent research indicates that Gediminids ' ancestor may have been Skalmantas . In 1974 historian Jerzy Ochmański noted that Zadonshchina , a poem from the end of the 14th century , contains a line in which two sons of Algirdas name their ancestors : " We are two brothers ? sons of Algirdas , and grandsons of Gediminas , and great @-@ grandsons of Skalmantas . " This discovery led to the belief that Skalmantas was the long @-@ sought ancestor of the Gediminids . Ochmański posited that the poem skipped the generation represented by Butvydas , and jumped back to the unknown ancestor . Baranauskas disagrees , believing Skalmantas was Butvydas ' brother rather than his father , and that Vytenis and Gediminas were therefore cousins .

## = = Siblings = =

It is known that Gediminas , born about 1275 , had one sister ( or possibly two , see below for the wife of Andrei of Kozelsk ) and several brothers : Vainius , Fiodor of Kiev , possibly Vytenis , and possibly Margiris . If Vytenis , who was Grand Duke of Lithuania from about 1295 to 1315 , was indeed Gediminas ' brother , he was probably the eldest son . Historians recognize one son of Grand Duke Vytenis , ?velgaitis , who may have died before his father . In 1310 ?velgaitis , already a mature man , led an army to nearby Livonia in modern @-@ day Latvia and Estonia . After Vytenis died in about 1315 , Gediminas became the Grand Duke . There are no sources indicating that Vytenis ' brothers or other family members advanced competing claims .

Vainius first appears in written sources in 1324 . In 1326 , as Duke of Polatsk , he signed a treaty with the Livonian Order and Novgorod . Scholars place his death sometime between 1338 and 1342 . Vainius ' only known son , Liubko , died in 1342 during a battle with the Livonian Order .

Fiodor , whose relationship to Gediminas was not established until the 20th century , was the longest @-@ lived brother , surviving until at least 1362 . In about 1325 , with help from Gediminas , he became a Duke of Kiev . Fiodor was baptized in the Eastern Orthodox rite and his pagan name is unknown . Kiev was still under the influence of the Golden Horde , and Fiodor acknowledged fealty to the Horde 's Khan . This subordination lasted until 1363 , when Gediminas ' son Algirdas soundly defeated the Horde in the Battle of Blue Waters . Scholarly opinion had long considered Fiodor a Rurikid , rather than a Lithuanian , because of his Christian name . In 1916 , however , a list of property belonging to Theognostus , a deceased Metropolitan of Moscow , and compiled in the 1330s , was published ; among the items listed were two silver cups gifted by " Fiodor , brother of Gediminas " .

Margiris , the defender of Pil?nai , is often suggested as the most likely candidate for the fourth brother . The chronicles of Hermann de Wartberge mention that in 1329 Gediminas and two of his brothers raided Livonia . By that time Vytenis was already dead and Fiodor was probably occupied with establishing himself in Kiev . One of these two brothers must then have been Vainius ; the identity of the other still puzzles historians . Alvydas Nik?entaitis suggests that he was Margiris because sources attest to his high status and wealth . Sources mention one son of Margiris , who was captured by the Teutonic Knights soon after his father 's suicide in 1336 and did not return .

The only direct written mention of Gediminas ' sister is a legend describing the murder of two Franciscan friars who came to Vilnius to spread Christianity . This legend was first presented in *Chronica XXIV Generalium* , a chronicle written before 1369 . The events probably took place around 1340 , and some eyewitnesses could still have been alive when the chronicle was written . According to the legend Friar Ulrich 's preaching angered townspeople . He and his companion , Martin , were seized and brought before Gediminas , who ordered the friars killed . Ulrich was tortured and his body tossed into a river . Martin 's body was rescued by Gediminas ' sister , an Orthodox nun . She buried Martin at the monastery where she lived . The legend was possibly as the basis for the legend of 14 Franciscan martyrs of Vilnius , first recorded in the *Bychowiec Chronicle* .

## = = Wives = =

It is uncertain how many wives Gediminas had . The *Bychowiec Chronicle* mentions three wives : Vida from Courland ; Olga from Smolensk ; and Jewna from Polotsk , who was Eastern Orthodox and died in 1344 or 1345 . Most modern historians and reference works say Gediminas ' wife was Jewna , dismissing Vida and Olga as fictitious , since no sources other than this chronicle mention the other two wives . The historian S. C. Rowell argues that Gediminas ' wife was a local pagan duchess , on the grounds that his marriage to a princess from a neighboring land would have been noted in other contemporary sources , and that the reliability of the *Bychowiec Chronicle* has been questioned .

An argument has been advanced that Gediminas had two wives , one pagan and another Orthodox . This case is supported only by the *Jüngere Hochmeisterchronik* , a late @-@ 15th century

chronicle , mentioning Narimantas as half @-@ brother to Algirdas . Other historians support this claim by arguing this would explain Gediminas ' otherwise mysterious designation of a middle son , Jaunutis , as his succession would be understandable if Jaunutis were the first @-@ born son of Gediminas and a second wife .

= = Children and grandchildren = =

Because none of Gediminas ' siblings had strong heirs , Gediminas and his children were in a favorable position to assume and consolidate power in the Grand Duchy . Gediminas had at least five daughters and seven sons , whose shrewd marriages helped to consolidate and expand the Grand Duchy 's influence to areas east and west of Lithuania . Those marriages speak to Gediminas ' diplomatic talent in building alliances with the neighboring states that shared his goals to destroy the Teutonic Order and contain the growing power of Moscow and Poland . The marriages of Gediminas ' sons helped to consolidate the dynasty 's power over various territories already within the Grand Duchy , while his daughters ' and granddaughters ' marriages worked to strengthen Lithuanian relationships with neighboring powers .

= = = Daughters = = =

In 1320 Maria married Dmitri of Tver , ruler of a Russian principality . The marriage took place soon after Mikhail Yaroslavich , Dmitri 's father , was killed ; his sons were searching for strong allies against Yury of Moscow , their principal competitor for the throne of Vladimir and All Rus ' . After 1327 Lithuania began to supplant Tver as Moscow 's chief rival for supremacy in the Rus ' . When Tver sought to rival Moscow , it needed an alliance with Lithuania . Dmitri was killed in 1325 and Maria never remarried . Maria 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , Alexander I , nevertheless maintained friendly relationships with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and his daughter Uliana married Algirdas , the son of Gediminas , who continued the Gediminid line . The cooperation between Lithuania and Tver lasted well into the 15th century .

Aldona ( baptized as Ona or Anna ; her pagan name is known only from the writings of the 16th century chronicler Maciej Strykowski ) married Casimir III of Poland , son of W?adys?aw I of Poland , when he was 15 or 16 years old . The marriage took place on either 30 April or 16 October 1325 , and was a purely political maneuver to strengthen the Polish ? Lithuanian coalition against the Teutonic Knights ( an alliance foreshadowing the Union of Krewo in 1385 and the Union of Lublin in 1569 , with the latter resulting in a stable and powerful new state , the Polish ? Lithuanian Commonwealth ) . This preliminary coalition was short @-@ lived , collapsing in about 1330 , but there is no evidence of military conflict between Poland and Lithuania while Aldona was alive .

The marriage into the Lithuanian dynasty that had ruled since about 1289 might have lent legitimacy to the rule of W?adys?aw I of the Piast dynasty , who was crowned in 1320 , replacing the P?emyslid dynasty . But Aldona died unexpectedly at the end of May 1339 and was buried in Kraków . Aldona had two daughters : Cunigunde ( d . 1357 ) married Louis VI the Roman , the son of Louis IV , Holy Roman Emperor , and Elisabeth ( d . 1361 ) married Duke Bogislaw V of Pomerania , an area in modern @-@ day Germany and Poland . Elisabeth 's daughter , Elizabeth of Pomerania , was the fourth wife of Charles IV , Holy Roman Emperor .

Gediminas ' daughter Elzbieta married Wac?aw of P?ock , one of the dukes of Masovia in modern @-@ day eastern Poland . Her second name is recorded in writings by Maciej Strykowski as Danmila and Teodor Narbutt as Damila . It has been suggested these names are misread versions of Danut? , a name derived from Daniel . Another interpretation is that historians confused Danut? of Lithuania , daughter of K?stutis , with Elzbieta . As an alliance , the marriage was significant because passages to and from western Europe had to pass through Masovia ; it can be seen as an attempt to revive Grand Duke Traidenis ' and his daughter Gaudemunda 's link with Masovia in the 1270s . The marriage 's importance is attested by Elzbieta 's dowry : 720 Kraków silver marks and nine marks of gold ? three times more than an ordinary recorded dowry of the time . This marriage probably took place about 1316 , when Gediminas supported Wac?aw during a civil war in the

divided Duchy of Masovia . After Wacław 's death in 1336 , Elzbieta managed her own wealth . She is mentioned for the last time in 1361 , when her brother Kęstutis escaped from Marienburg and sought refuge at his sister 's house ; historians put her date of death at around 1364 . In 1337 Elzbieta 's daughter Anna , first mentioned in late 1323 , married Henry of Żagań , in modern @-@ day western Poland . Her son Bolesław III or Bolko died without a male heir in 1351 and his land was divided among other dukes .

Eufemija ( also known as Marija , Ofka , and Anka ) married Bolesław Jerzy II of Galicia , in modern @-@ day Ukraine , in 1331 . The marriage was engineered in 1323 when the brothers Lev and Andrew of Galicia were slain without leaving heirs . Instead of replacing them with his own son Liubartas and risking a war with Poland , Gediminas forged a compromise with Władysław I of Poland . Both parties agreed to install Bolesław , cousin of Władysław I and nephew of Gediminas ' son @-@ in @-@ law Wacław of Płock , with the marriage to take place later . Bolesław at the time was fourteen years old . In this way the war for control of Galicia ? Volhynia was postponed until after Bolesław 's poisoning in 1340 ; control of the area was not stabilized until 1370 . According to Teodor Narbutt , Eufemija was drowned beneath the ice of the Vistula River on 5 February 1342 in order to keep her out of the succession disputes .

Aigusta was baptized as Anastasia in order to marry Simeon of Russia in 1333 ; he became Grand Prince of Moscow in 1341 . There is no direct evidence that she was a daughter of Gediminas , but because the marriage was high @-@ profile , most historians have concluded that she was a member of Gediminas ' family . The marriage had great potential because Lithuania and Moscow were fierce rivals for supremacy in Ruthenia , but conflicts broke out again in 1335 , just two years after the marriage . Her two sons Vasilei and Konstantin did not survive infancy ; her daughter Vasilisa married Mikhail Vasilevich of Kashin , a Tverite prince opposing Lithuania . Her brother Jaunutis sought her help when he was deposed by Algirdas in 1345 . Immediately before her death on 11 March 1345 Aigusta became a nun . She was buried within the Moscow Kremlin at a monastic church whose construction she had sponsored .

It is possible that Gediminas had two more daughters . According to Maciej Strykowski , one of Gediminas ' daughters was married to David of Hrodna , his favorite war leader . However , some historians disagree with the conclusion that David was Gediminas ' son @-@ in @-@ law , expressing skepticism about the reliability of Strykowski 's sources . The existence of another daughter , or possibly another sister , has been hypothesized based on the list of Metropolitan Theognostus ' property published in 1916 . The list contains a note describing Andrei Mstislavich , Duke of Kozelsk ( ruled ca . 1320 ? 1339 ) , as Gediminas ' son @-@ in @-@ law . On the other hand , the Ruthenian word ziat ' ( ??? ) can mean either " son @-@ in @-@ law " or " sister 's husband " . Hence Andrei of Kozelsk could have been Gediminas ' brother @-@ in @-@ law .

== = Sons == =

The chronicle of John of Winterthur contains a reference to Gediminas ' eight sons . The names of seven sons can be found in various written sources , while the identity of the eighth remains disputed . Alvydas Nikšentaitis suggests that this son was the Duke of Trakai who perished in 1337 near Veliuona . Duke of Trakai was an important position held either by the Grand Duke himself or his second @-@ in @-@ command . Therefore , 18th- and 19th @-@ century historians believed that it was Gediminas himself who died in Veliuona , which still advertises itself as the place of Gediminas ' burial . Nikšentaitis further postulates that the name of the unknown son might have been Vytautas , as records mention a young and powerful Yuri , son of Vytautas and deputy of Andrei , son of Algirdas . Yuri died in 1348 . His high position in youth could easily be accounted for by being a grandson of Gediminas . However , others dispute these theories , arguing that the note in John of Winterthur 's chronicle was misinterpreted .

It is unclear why , but Jaunutis , a middle son not mentioned in any written sources before the coup d'état accomplished by his brothers , was designated by Gediminas as his heir in Vilnius and consequently became the Grand Duke . His brother Kęstutis , Duke of Trakai , was assisting him in Samogitia . Despite help from Narimantas , Jaunutis was deposed by his brothers Algirdas and

Kęstutis in 1345 , just four years after Gediminas ' death . Jaunutis tried , but failed , to solicit help from his brother @-@ in @-@ law Simeon of Russia and was baptized as Iwan in the process . He was forced to reconcile with Algirdas and in compensation received the Duchy of Zasławe , which he ruled until his death in 1366 .

Several sons of Gediminas continued his male line , but it was Algirdas who continued the main Gediminid line . Before deposing his brother Jaunutis in 1345 , he ruled Kreva and , despite remaining pagan , married Maria , a daughter of the last prince of Vitebsk . After 1345 he became the Grand Duke of Lithuania and shared his power with his brother Kęstutis . Their successful collaboration is celebrated in Lithuanian historiography , and gave rise to a much debated theory that a tradition of co @-@ rule or diarchy in Lithuania was customary and arose as early as 1285 . The Grand Duchy experienced its greatest expansion during their reign . While Algirdas was mostly active in the east , Kęstutis occupied himself by managing the Duchy 's interactions with the Teutonic Knights , Poland , and other western European entities . In 1350 Algirdas contracted a second marriage with Uliana of Tver ; he chose their son Jogaila as the next Grand Duke . In 1385 Jogaila opened a new chapter in the history of Lithuania by converting the country to Christianity and signing a personal union with Poland , becoming King of Poland . This Polish ? Lithuanian union , in various forms , survived until the third partition of the Polish ? Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795 . Jogaila 's branch of the Gediminids is known as the Jagiellon dynasty .

Kęstutis , Duke of Trakai , despite exercising considerable autonomy while controlling the western provinces of the duchy , was loyal to Algirdas and acknowledged his superiority . Kęstutis was a devoted pagan and dedicated his life to defending Lithuania from the Teutonic Knights . A popular romantic legend arose about his marriage to the pagan priestess Birutė of Palanga . They had seven or eight children , including Vytautas the Great . After Algirdas ' death in 1377 , his son Jogaila became the Grand Duke . At first Kęstutis and his son Vytautas acknowledged Jogaila 's rule , but after Jogaila signed the controversial Treaty of Dovydiškės with the Teutonic Knights , Kęstutis seized Vilnius and became the Grand Duke in late 1381 . In August 1382 he was imprisoned in Kreva and died there . Vytautas continued his fight for supremacy , and the conflicts between the descendants of Algirdas and Kęstutis lasted well into the 15th century .

Manvydas was the eldest son of Gediminas and inherited the territories of Kernavė and Slonim from his father . Little is known about him , and he died soon after Gediminas . It is believed that he was killed in the Battle of Strėva in 1348 along with his brother Narimantas .

Narimantas was the second son of Gediminas . He was baptized as Gleb and went on to rule Pinsk , Polotsk , and ? as his patrimony by invitation of Novgorod 's nobles ? Ladoga , Oreshek and Korela . He initiated a tradition of Lithuanian mercenary service north of Novgorod on the Swedish border that lasted until Novgorod 's fall to Moscow in 1477 and helped keep Moscow at bay . In 1345 Narimantas became the strongest supporter of his deposed brother Jaunutis and went to Jani Beg , Khan of the Golden Horde , to ask for support against Algirdas and Kęstutis . There are rumors that Narimantas married a Tatar princess , but they lack credibility . After a few years the brothers reconciled , and it is believed that Narimantas led the Battle of Strėva in the name of Algirdas and died there . He left behind three to five sons who founded Russian princely families , including Kurakin and Galitzine .

Karijotas was baptized as Mikhail and inherited Navahrudak in Black Ruthenia . In 1348 he was sent by Algirdas to Khan Jani Beg to negotiate a coalition against the Teutonic Knights , but was handed over to Moscow for ransom . He died about 1363 . It is uncertain how many children he had : the number varies between four and nine .

Liubartas ( baptized Dymitr ) was Gediminas ' youngest son . In the early 1320s he married a daughter of Andrew of Galicia and ruled Lutsk in eastern Volhynia . After Andrew 's and his brother Lev of Galicia 's deaths about 1323 , Galicia ? Volhynia experienced a power vacuum . Rather than promoting Liubartas and risking a war with Poland , Gediminas married his daughter Eufemija to Boleslaw @-@ Yuri II of Galicia . War with Poland was thereby postponed until 1340 . The Galicia ? Volhynia Wars were settled after 1370 , when Poland received Galicia , while Lithuania retained Volhynia . Liubartas died around 1385 , having ruled Volhynia for roughly sixty years . He had three sons .

= = Graphic representation = =