



Anonymous. "The Register of Count Krasinskii B Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia | СПИСОКЪ ГРАФА КРАСИНСКАГО. Б. ЛѢТОПИСЕЦЪ ВЕЛИКОГО КНАЗѢСТВА ЛИТОВЪСКОГО И ЖОМОИЦЬСКОГО". Trans. Alana Felton. *Global Medieval Sourcebook*. 2021. sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/roman_origins_lithuanians/.

The Register of Count Krasinskii B Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia СПИСОКЪ ГРАФА КРАСИНСКАГО. Б. ЛѢТОПИСЕЦЪ ВЕЛИКОГО КНАЗѢСТВА ЛИТОВЪСКОГО И ЖОМОИЦЬСКОГО

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Collection |

URL | http://sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/roman_origins_lithuanians/

Transcription, translation and introduction by Alana Felton.

Introduction to the Text

Compiled in the 1520s, the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia* (henceforth *Chronicle*) is an original composition of unknown authorship. Aristocratic in tone, the *Chronicle* includes a description of the legendary origins of the Lithuanian princes and nobles: that they descended from Roman patricians who, under the leadership of Prince Palemon, fled the tyranny of Emperor Nero. It was likely compiled at the court of the powerful magnate Albertas Goštautas while he was the Voivode (governor) of Vilnius and Grand Chancellor of Lithuania from 1522 to 1539. Most scholars agree that the *Chronicle's* focus on Lithuania's noble origins suggests that it was used in the 16th century as a historical justification for Lithuania's autonomy in its union with Poland and to distinguish Lithuania from neighboring Slavic realms. This love poem features a sustained and multifaceted praise of the lady with attention to both her physical and moral beauty as well as a declaration of the steadfast love of the lyric voice. A dense, object-oriented imagery pervades each stanza. The text is considered the most remarkable love song of the trobar ric tradition in medieval Catalan poetry.

The Polish historian Jan Długosz (1415-1480) was the first to write in a work of history the idea that the Lithuanians descended from Roman patricians in his *Chronicles of the Kingdom of Poland*. It is likely that the anonymous author of the *Chronicle* found this information in Długosz's work and developed a detailed and dynamic narrative of the foundation of the Lithuanian state. The *Chronicle* with an enumeration of the Roman emperors from Augustus to Nero, and attributes the flight of Palemon, the legendary founder of Lithuania and Nero's relative, to Nero's tyranny. It describes how Palemon, along with four well-known noble Roman families by the names of Centaurus, Columna, Rose and Ursini, and five hundred others, sailed to Lithuania in search of a safe place to live. The remainder of the text provides vivid descriptions of the great beauty and abundance of what would become Lithuanian lands and describes how names were chosen for important cities. It also provides a genealogical record of Palemon's progeny and founded important cities and regions in Lithuania. In fact, the text credits Palemon's son Kernus with giving the Lithuanians their name by combining the words riverside "litus" and pipe "tuba" which became "*Litustuba*" in Latin and "*Litva*" in Ruthenian.

The *Chronicle* is ambiguous about the temporal and geographical settings of the events it describes. Besides the year of Christ's birth and mention of Palemon's flight during Nero's reign, no dates or indicators of time are provided. Moreover, Palemon, a figure from antiquity, is anachronistically tied to prominent Roman families from the Middle Ages. Additionally, many of the cities and other locations in the text cannot be linked to existing 16th-century locations. These ambiguities reflect the legendary nature of the *Chronicle's* narrative and suggest that its author intended to emphasize the antiquity of the Lithuanian state and its nobility.



Scholars today argue that the *Chronicle's* portrayal of Lithuanians' ancient Roman roots speaks to the 16th-century Lithuanian nobility's historical and political consciousness. By linking the 16th-century Lithuanian state to Roman culture and history, the *Chronicle's* author(s) influenced future official state historiography and political doctrine, as well as conceptions of collective identity. In fact, Uladzimir Kananovich (see Further Reading below) has argued that the *Chronicle* speaks more to the political and cultural reality of the 16th century than to the much earlier period it describes. Some of the names of rulers and noble families mentioned in the *Chronicle* belong to well-known noblemen of the 15th and 16th centuries, suggesting the author(s)' intent to legitimize contemporary authority figures by connecting them to historical legendary leaders. Therefore, the *Chronicle* can be read as providing a history not only of the Lithuanian state but of regional noble communities in power in the 16th century.

Introduction to the Source

The text used for this translation is taken from the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia*, a 16th-century compilation written in Ruthenian from the Świdzinski Miscellany of Lithuanian Chronicles, once part of the Krasinśki Collection. Unfortunately, the manuscript itself burned during World War II; however, paleographic descriptions by Evfimii Karskii and Franciczek Pułaski provide necessary information about its contents, while individual texts, including *The Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia*, were published by Afanasii Fedorovich Bychkov in 1893 and later in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*. Two versions of the Chronicle are known: the shorter version was witnessed by the lost Krasinśki copy and the longer version by the Alshevskii, Archeographic, Patriarch, Rumiantsev (Moscow, Russian State Library, Collection 37, № 435), and Tikhonravov copies.

The manuscript used in this translation represents the second redaction of the *Chronicle*, in which the account of the Roman descent of the Lithuanians first appears. The *Chronicle* is written in Ruthenian, the written language of the ethnic East Slavic population of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland. This area, generally referred to as Ruthenia, corresponds to portions of modern-day Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, and southern Russia.

About this Edition

The transcription accompanying this translation is derived from the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia* from the Świdzinski Miscellany of Lithuanian Chronicles as printed in the *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei izdannoe po vysochaishemu poveleniiu Arkheograficheskogo komitcieiu: Tom semnadtsaty: Zapadnarusskiiia letopisi* in 1917. It has been created according to the following criteria: All transcribed words rendered in italics in the transcription in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* have been reverted to superscript letters that are indicated with a "titlo" (). The original punctuation has been maintained to introduce modern readers to medieval composition and reading style. The English translation uses punctuation and spacing in accordance with modern notions of sentence and paragraph composition. Common English spellings of the names of peoples and locations are used when known and transliterated otherwise.

The translator would like to thank Professor Julia Verkholtantsev for her substantial assistance in translating this excerpt.

Further Reading

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The Register of Count Krasinskii B Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia СПИСОКЪ ГРАФА КРАСИНСКАГО. Б. ЛЬТОПИСЕЦЪ ВЕЛИКОГО КНАЗЬСТВА ЛИТОВЬСКОГО И ЖОМОИЦЬСКОГО

Сталоса естъ воплощеніе сѣа Бжѣево ѿ стго Дха зъ
бѣвеное дѣци прѣтоє Мри ѿ почѣкѣ сотвореніа
всего свѣта. лѣта пѣтысѣаго пѣсотного двѣцѣтъ
шестого. ѿно чѣу пѣство Рѣское. было прѣ цесарѣ
Августѣ. которыѣ иже не токо ѿдномоу Римѣ. але
и всемоу свѣтѣ панова. іакѣ вышєи писано чѣу
цесарства Августа. сѣѣ Бжѣи нарѣдѣла. а чѣу
Тивиріа цесара второго по Августѣ на крѣтѣ вѣнѣю
моукѣ принѣа дѣа збавѣа. и ѿкѣпѣа рожаю члѣвего.
за которого Тивиріа цесара. вси рѣчи и прѣрчєства
напѣднѣвши по востанію из мѣртѣвъ встоупилѣ на
нѣбо и сѣлѣ на правици Бѣа ѿца. ѿколѣ дѣа соуного
маєтъ прѣити соудити живыхъ и мѣртѣвъ и ѿдати
комоудѣ подѣлжѣтѣ заслѣуги єго. а по смѣрти Тѣвиріа
цесара. былѣ цесарємъ Гайусѣ. по Гайусѣ. Клавдї.
по Клавдїи цртѣвоа сѣѣ єго Нѣрѣѣ.

которыи Нѣронѣ былѣ панѣ ѿкрѣтныи а
невѣставичныи власнѣю макоу свою и докторѣ своего
навѣышѣшого. своею рѣжкою забїѣ вѣ каждое причины.
ѿ смѣртѣ приправилѣ. и некѣко крѣ мѣсто Рѣское.
казѣа запааливати. а ни дѣа чоѣо толко дѣа то. ѿ бы
са томоу дѣвоа. а потѣхѣ с тоѣо мѣвалѣ. и кѣжѣатѣ и
панѣтѣ Рѣскїи. и шѣлѣтамъ и всѣѣд поспѣдѣствѣ кривды
и втиснѣа великиа чинїи. дѣа чоѣо всѣакїи подѣаны
єго. дѣа великого ѿкрѣтѣства єго и невѣставичности
не бы ни хѣто пѣвенѣ а ни бѣпѣчѣ. не толко именеи.
альбо скарѣвоѣ але и здорѣа своего. а такѣ многыѣ
ѿпѣскаючи имѣа а сѣбѣы свои втѣкаѣ до рѣмантѣ
земѣа наследжѣючи справѣливѣости поѣа. гдѣ ѿдно
ѿже Рѣское имене Пѣлемѣ. которыи же цесарѣ
Нѣронѣ бы кровныи. забралѣса з жѣноу и з дѣтѣми и
скарѣы свои и подѣдѣанныи свои с которыѣ жо
кѣжѣтѣ собралѣса пѣсѣо шѣлахѣты з жѣнами и дѣтѣми.
и многыи лѣѣми.

и вѣзѣши с соѣоу ѿдноѣо ѿстроѣа и пошлїи в
кѣрѣабѣ морѣ по захѣдѣ сѣнѣа хѣтѣ соѣе знѣити на
землїи мѣсѣо слѣушѣное. и гдѣ бы мѣли посѣлїтї.
а мѣшѣкѣти с поѣеѣмъ а с тѣѣ шѣлахѣты чѣтыри
былїи рѣжѣи навѣышїи имене Кїтоврасы Колѣѣны
Рѣжї Оуѣргы а тѣ ѿни не малыи чѣ по морю хѣдѣчи
прїшлїи Мѣжїзѣского морѣ. и дошлїи до рѣки до
Шѣма. и тоу рѣкою Шоуѣмоу в морѣ ѿкїнанѣ. и морѣ
ѿкїнанѣ дошлїи до оуѣстѣ. и гдѣ рѣка Нѣмѣо вѣпадѣваѣ.
в морѣ ѿкїнанѣ.

The incarnation of the Son of God by the Holy Spirit from the
Blessed Virgin, most pure Mary, happened in the year five thou-
sand, five hundred and twenty-six from the beginning of the
Creation of the entire world. At that time, the Roman Empire
was under Caesar Augustus, who ruled not only Rome, but also
the entire world. As is written above, in the time of Caesar Au-
gustus' rule the Son of God was born, and at the time of Caesar
Tiberius, the second after Augustus, He accepted voluntary suf-
fering on the cross for the deliverance and redemption of the
human race. At the time of Caesar Tiberius, He [Christ], having
fulfilled all sayings and prophecies, entered into heaven and sat
at the right hand of God the father, whence on the Day of Judge-
ment He will come to judge the living and the dead to to give
to each according to his merit. And after the death of Caesar
Tiberius, Gaius was caesar, after Gaius was Claudius, and after
Claudius, his son Nero reigned.

This Nero was a cruel and temperamental ruler who killed his
own mother and his highest tutor with his own hand, murdered
them without any reason, and several times ordered the city of
Rome to be set on fire just so that he could watch it and enter-
tain himself. And on the dukes and Roman nobles and gentry
and all the common people he inflicted great injustice and op-
pression. And because of that, due to his great cruelty and tem-
peramentality, there was no one among all his subjects who was
sure and safe, neither about their property and belongings, nor
their life. And so, many people, abandoning their properties and
belongings, fled to other lands in search of justice and peace.
And there, one Roman duke by the name of Polemon, who was a
relative of Caesar Nero, gathered his wife, children, belongings,
and subjects. And with this duke there gathered five-hundred
gentry with their wives, children, and many domestics.

And having taken with them an astronomer¹, they left by sea
to the west, desiring to find for themselves a suitable place on
earth where they could settle and live in peace. And among
those noblemen, four were of the highest birth, named: the
Centaurus, the Columns-Colonna, the Rose and the Urs. And so,
travelling by sea for a long time, they came to the Mediterranean
Sea and reached the Shum River. And by that Shum River into
the Ocean Sea, and by the Ocean Sea they came to the mouth of
the River Neman, where it flows into the Ocean Sea.



потом пошли Немном оу верхъ. ажъ в море зовемое Малое которое называется. море Нѣновое. а с тое причины тое море Немновое называется. ижъ в тое море впадаетъ Немѡ дванацѣми оустыи и кѡдое зовется свой именѣ Скиа. и пошли тѣ оустьемъ оу верхъ и дошли цѣлого Немна. гдѣ вжо шнѣ самѣ во вднѡ мѣсци течѣ весь а оу верхъ Нѣномъ пошли до реки Дѡбисы гдѣ вшѣши в тѣю рекѡ Дѡбисѡ. и на нею нашли горы высокиѣ. И на шнѣ горѡ ровнины великиѣ и дѡбровы на шнѣ горѡ ровнины великиѣ и дѡбровы роскошныѣ. и рѡмантоѣ шдѣтости напѡненѣ рѡного рожая. зверѣ то естъ напервѣ. тоуровъ зоубрѣи лосѣи еленѣи сѣрнѣ рѣи кѡницѣ лисицѣ вѣлокѣ горнастаѣвъ ласицѣ. и инѣ рѡманитѣ рожаяѣ. и тѣ тѣ в рекѡ великѡю обѣдѣтѡ рыбѣ непосполитѣ. и не тѡко тѣе рыбы которыѣ в тѣ сѣ рекѡ плодѣ. але множество рыбѣ рѡманитѣ а дивнѣ з мора приходѣ а то за тою причиною. иже недалеко оустѣе Немновое гдѣ Немѡ в море впадываетъ.

на которыми рекѡми на Дѡбисю. и на Немнѡ и на Юрою тѣ сѣ поселили. и почали рѡмноживатисѣ. и шно мешьканыѣ ихъ на тѣми рекѡми велми имѣ побалосѣ. и назвали тою землѡ словеньскѣи ѡзыкѡ побережнаѣ землѣ. а Литовѣскимѣ. ѡзыкѡ назвали Жемойскаѣ землѣ. а потѡ вышереченое кѣже Палемѡ вродилѣ трѣ сѣновъ стѣшѣи Боркѣ. дрѡгѣ Коуна. третѣи Спера старшинѣ сѣнѣ Боркѣ вчинѣ горѡ на Юре рецѣ и ложено имѣ того кѣжати посполе з рекѡю. и имѣ рецѣ Юра а кѣжати Боркѣ. и назвѣ тотѣ горѡ Юрборкѣ. а середнѣи сѣнѣ Коуна пришѡ на оустѣе реки Нѣважи и гдѣ шна впадаетъ в Немѡ и вчинѣ тоу горѡ и назвѣ его именѣ своимѣ Кѡнасовъ горѡ а третѣи сѣнѣ Спера пошѡ далѣ в поуци к восходѡ сѣнца. и перешѡши рекоу Нѣважоу. и рекѡ Сѣтѡю и третѣю рекѡ Шѣвентѡ и нашолѣ шзеро лоуками и рѡманитѣ деревѡ шкрашено. гдѣ то полюбивши на тѣ шзеро посѣанасѣ. и тоѣ шзеро именѣ свой назвалѣ Спера.

а потѡ шныѣ лѣ мешькаючи школо него. и почали шдѣри чинити и за Бога мети а потѡ коли тѡ болванѣ сказѣлсѣ. и шни тоѣ шзеро и тоѣ мѣстѡ хвалили. и мѣли за Бѣа. и по немѣ межи собою гѡра не мѣли и мешкали бѣ пана. и навратившисѣ воспакѣ. по малѣ часѣ брѣ его Боркѣ которы мешка на Юрборкѣ вмѣ не маючи детеи. ино брѣ его Коуна вѡметѣ и тѣю чѣ брата своего Борка. и горѡ Юрборкѣ и тою чѣю его боудѣ и город Юрборкѣ. пановати. шное кѣжа Коуна мелѣ двѣхъ сѣнѣ. шдного Кернѣса а дрѡгѡ Кгинѣбоунта.

Then they travelled up the Neman all the way to the sea called Little, also called the Neman Sea because the River Neman flows into it by twelve mouths (one is called by its own name, Skilia). And they went up this estuary and covered the whole of the Neman, where it already flows undivided in one place. And they went up the Neman to the Dubysa River, where, having entered into that Dubysa River, they found tall mountains overlooking it, and, on these mountains, great plains and magnificent forests, and a various abundance of different kinds of animals, above all, bulls, bison, moose, deer, antelopes, lynx, martens, foxes, squirrels, ermine and weasels and other different species. And here in the rivers there was also a great abundance of extraordinary fish, not only those fish which breed in these rivers, but also a lot of different and unusual kinds of fish come from the sea because the Neman Estuary where the Neman flows into the sea is close by.

There on those rivers, on the Dubysa, the Neman and the Jūra, they settled and began to procreate, and they really liked that life on these rivers. And they called this land in the Slavic language 'the Poberezhnaia² land', and in the Lithuanian language they called it 'the land of Samogitia'. And later, the aforementioned Duke Polemon begat three sons: the oldest Borkus, the second Kunas, and the third Spera. The oldest son, Borkus, established a city on the river Jūra and the name of this duke was joined with the name of the river – that is, the name of the river is Jūra, and the name of the duke is Borkus, and he named this city Iurbork. And the middle son, Kunas, came to the mouth of the river Nevėžis where it falls into the Neman and established a city there and named it with his own name – the city of Kaunas. And the third son, Spera, went further eastward into the dense forest and having crossed the river Nevėžis and the river Svia-taia³ and a third river Širvinta, he found a lake ringed by fields and a variety of trees, where, finding it to his liking, he settled and gave the lake his own name – Spera.

And then these people who lived next to the idol began making sacrifices and considering him a god, and then, after that idol deteriorated, they worshipped the lake and the whole area as divine. And after Spera they did not have a ruler and lived without a leader, and they came back⁴. After a short time, his [Spera's] brother Borkus who lived in Iurbork died without children. His other brother Kunas took both Borkus' land and the city of Iurbork and he began ruling both that land and the city of Iurbork. That Duke Kunas had two sons: one Kernus and the other Ginbunt.



пѣуучи емоу в земли в Жомонтьскон. почѣса
множити и рѣширати. и выхѣти за рекоу Велью
в землю Завѣскоу и прошѣ рекѣ Свѣтѣю вышѣ. и
нашолѣ место вѣми хорошо. и сподобалосѣ емѣ
тоѣ мѣстѣ велми. и внѣ тѣ поселисѣ. и назвѣ тоѣ
мѣстѣ именемъ сѣа своего Кернѣса Керново. и дѣ
томуу сѣнъ своѣмъ Кернѣсѣ. а потѣ оумре. и почнѣ
сѣнъ его пановѣ Керноу на всей земли Завѣскои по
границѣ Латыгалъскѣю и по Завеленскѣи Браславѣ
ѣ по рекѣ Двинѣ. а брѣ его Кгѣвоу на Юрьворкоу.
а на Коунасовѣ и на всей земли Жомонтьскѣ. а в
тотъ чѣ гдѣ Керноу пановѣ на Завеленскон сторонѣ.
лѣ тыи его што за вѣею посели. игрывали на трѣбѣ
доубасны. и прозвѣ тѣ Керноу берегъ по вѣлоскѣ.
гдѣ сѣ лѣ его множать литоусѣ а трѣба што на нѣ
играють тоуба. и далѣ имѣ тѣ людѣ свой по латинѣ
зложивши берѣ литоу. а трѣба тоуба и дѣ имѣ имѣ
литоутоуба.

то пакъ простыѣ лѣ не вмѣли звати по латинѣ. и
почали звати Литва и ѿ того чѣу пѣство Литовѣское
почалосѣ звати и множити ѿ Жомонти. кѣзѣ
великыи Керноу пановѣ на Литвѣ а кѣзѣ Кгѣвоу на
Жомонти. и не малы чѣ пановали. а жили межи
собоу вѣв покон. кѣзѣ пакъ Керноу не мѣ сѣновъ.
тѣко вднѣ дѣкѣ именѣ Поатѣ. а боудѣчи внѣ в
старости своѣи. а не хотѣчи пѣства своего ѿ дѣчки
своеѣ ѿдалити. и принѣ до нѣе зѣтѣ собѣ с Кнтаврау
именѣ Кгирѣсѣ а Кгѣвоутѣ на Жомоньскон земли и
пѣуучи Кгѣвоутѣ на Жомонти оумре. а сѣа своего
мѣ вѣла зоставитѣ на Жомонтьскѣ кѣзѣстве. и
Монѣтвѣнѣ много кѣжѣ на Жомонти. а мелѣ двоу
сѣновъ вднѣ Немноса а дрѣжого Скирмѣта.

When he was ruling in the Samogitian land, he began to increase and expand it beyond the river Veliia⁵ into the land beyond the Veliia, and having passed the river Sviataia upwards, he found a very good place, and he liked that place very much, and he settled there and named this place Kernovo after his son, Kernus, and gave it to that son of his, Kernus, and after that he died. And his son Kernus began to rule over all the land beyond the Veliia up to the Latgalian border and to Braslav Zavel'ski, all the way to the Dvina River. And his brother Gibunt ruled in Iurbork and in Kaunas, and over the whole land of Samogitia. And at that time when Kunas ruled over the trans-Veliia land, his people who had settled beyond Veliia used to play wooden trumpets, and in Latin⁶ Kunas called that shore where his people were procreating 'Litus', and the trumpet which they played 'tuba'. And he gave the name to his people in Latin, combining riverside, 'litus,' and trumpet, 'tuba,' and he called them 'litustuba.'

But then the common folk did not speak Latin and began calling it Litva, and since that time, the Lithuanian state derived its name and arose from Samogitia. The Grand Duke Kernus ruled over Lithuania and Duke Gibunt over Samogitia, and they reigned for a long time and lived with one another in peace. But Duke Kernus did not have sons, only one daughter named Poia-ta, and being in his old age and not wanting to take his principal-ity away from his own daughter, he accepted for her a son-in-law from the Centaurus family, named Girus. And Gibunt ruled over the land of Samogitia, and when Gibunt ruled over Samogitia he died, and left his son, Montvil, to rule over the principality of Samogitia. And Montvil ruled in Samogitia for a long time and had two sons – one Nemnos and the other, Skirmont.

Critical Notes

- 1 A celestial navigator.
- 2 "Poberezhnaia" translates to "along the shore" or "coastal."
- 3 In Lithuanian, the river is called Šventoji.
- 4 The sentence does not specify to where Spera's subjects returned but simply indicates that they turned back, perhaps to where Spera lived prior to establishing his own settlement, as described above.
- 5 This river is referred to by as both the Veliia, of Slavic origin, and Neris, of Baltic origin. In modern-day Lithuania, it is most often referred to as Neris but the Chronicle uses the Slavic name.
- 6 Although the author uses "po-vlosku," which means Italian, here, he more likely means Latin.