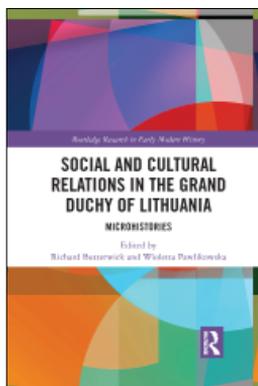


**Social and Cultural Relations in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Microhistories**, ed. by Richard Butterwick, Wioletta Pawlikowska, Routledge Research in Early Modern History, Routledge, New York–Abingdon, 2019, xii + 257 pp., 5 tables

The literature in English on the history of the Polish-Lithuanian union has grown exponentially in the last two decades, but there remains a certain imbalance in that literature, in that it mainly centres



on Poland or on the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania as a whole. Even in the latter case, much of that literature has tended to view the union through Polish eyes, and studies devoted to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its territories are under-represented. There are good general accounts, notably Stephen Rowell's superb study of pre-union Lithuania, but much of what is available tends to be written within the confines of Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian national history. That has begun to change, but there are far fewer detailed studies of purely Lithuanian than Polish or, indeed, Ukrainian topics.

This volume, the product of a 2015 conference held at London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, is therefore very welcome, not least because its editors organised the conference in the spirit of microhistory. While not all the results would necessarily satisfy the great paladins of microhistorical theory,

the result is an interesting volume much more coherent than many conference proceedings. All the chapters are substantial and worth reading. After a brisk and thoughtful introduction, which lays out the microhistorical philosophy behind the collection, the book is divided into three sections: 'Urban Spaces and Communities', 'Families and Networks', and 'Texts and Travels'.

The first section begins with a lively meditation by David Frick on the problems of writing microhistorical studies of multicultural, religiously plural Polish-Lithuanian cities in the light of his classic depiction of seventeenth-century Wilno. He casts a slightly envious eye at studies of west European cities like Augsburg, where the survival of sources is so much greater, but suggests some interesting ideas on how to overcome the problems, as he did magnificently in his study. Wioletta Pawlikowska continues with an unusual piece on the *jurydyka* of the Wilno cathedral chapter in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Like other *jurydyki* (plural form in Polish), it was exempt from city jurisdiction, which was a problem for the authorities, since far from forming a coherent enclave, the *jurydyka* was formed by individual properties scattered throughout the city. Martynas Jakulis gives a briskly informative account of Lutheran charity in eighteenth-century Wilno, and Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė raises some fascinating points concerning the effect on Jewish communities in the aftermath of the fires that were such a common hazard in Lithuanian towns. Finally, Vaida Kamuntavičienė looks at the efforts of the Bernardines in Kowno to use an image of

the Virgin to influence local Catholic society. It raises interesting questions about the role of religion in creating a common culture across the union, although some may be sceptical about the claim that the painting actually saved people from drowning.

The second section starts with an excellent consideration by Rimvydas Petrauskas of the changing culture of naming among Lithuanian nobles from the pagan period onwards, and the role played by names in the establishment of family memory. The theme is taken up by Agnė Railaitė-Bardė, who takes an expert and original look at the use of heraldry by the Radziwiłłs. However, her claim that her findings can be applied to the Lithuanian nobility as a whole should be regarded with a considerable degree of scepticism. The Radziwiłłs were far from a typical Lithuanian noble family. Neringa Dambrauskaitė points out that although slavery was effectively abolished in legal terms in the sixteenth century, unfree individuals and families continued to exist deep into the seventeenth, often as family servants. Artūras Vasiliauskas contributes an important piece on the noble community and local politics in the district of Wilkomierz, which charts the emergence of a genuine political community among the middling nobility who were far from the obedient tools of magnates as which they are so often portrayed in general accounts. The image of a chaotic polity at the end of the eighteenth century is challenged by Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, who provides a thought-provoking account

of the growing class of propertied public servants in Lithuania that emerged following the reforms of Poniatowski and the Four-Year Sejm. Her article suggests that a major cultural change had taken place, and that the Grand Duchy was further down the road to modern state structures than the standard picture suggests.

The final section is, in some respects, the most original. Hanna Mazheika convincingly shows that there were substantial cultural and religious connections between Britain and the Grand Duchy. Aleh Dziarnovich analyses accounts of cannibalism during wars and famines. He cites anthropological studies, and the piece is stimulating, although he rather sits on the fence with regard to the veracity of the accounts. He might read with advantage John Theibault's work on Hesse-Kassel in the Thirty Years' War, which considers similar problems. Jakub Niedźwiedź's original look at Stanisław Samuel Szemiot's account of his 1680 trip to Poland reveals that Poland was in many respects a foreign country for a middling Lithuanian noble. Finally, Richard Butterwick and Michał Gochna make unusual use of a letter from the reverend canon Szymon Waraksa containing proclamations calling for insurrection in 1794, which he sent round the local parishes, which provides the basis for meditation on the topography and communication strategy in a region that straddles the modern Polish-Lithuanian border. ■

Robert Frost  
(Aberdeen)