

UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW
Department of Baltic Philology

LINGUISTICA BALTICA

International Journal of
Baltic Linguistics

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Volume 2
(1993)

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Linguistica Baltica (abridged LgB) is edited by the Department of Baltic Philology,
Warsaw University, Poland

Sponsors:
The Ministry of National Education
Warsaw University, The Faculty of Polish Philology



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DTP by TEX: Aleksy Kerner

Cover design: Zbigniew Salaj

ISSN 1230-3984

Printed in Poland

by Omnitech Press, 00-020 Warszawa, ul. Chmielna 16/2

Linguistica Baltica 2 (1993)

ISSN 1230-3984

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La communauté linguistique du Grand Duché de Lituanie*

LESZEK BEDNARCZUK

The main languages of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th-18th centuries were Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Polish. These languages did not only exercise a mutual influence, but also influenced the minor ethnolects used here, sc. those of the Muslim Tatars, Karaites, Jews, Russian Old Believers and Lithuanian Gypsies. This resulted in the following structural similarities: (1) a correlation of palatalization; (2) a symmetric vocalism with a tendency to change short unstressed *o* into *ā*; (3) a similar structure of consonant clusters; (4) a tendency towards a two-gender system (masculine and feminine); (5) an aspect opposition (perfective vs. imperfective); (6) the use of the past active participle instead of finite verb forms; (7) a possessive construction of the type *mihi est*; (8) certain common onomastic formants and a number of lexical items connected with local culture. This allows us to speak of a linguistic community similar to the Balkan *Sprachbund*.

Une communauté linguistique s'est formée sur le territoire du Grand Duché de Lituanie dans la période entre l'Union de Lublin (1569) et les partages de la Pologne (1772, 1793, 1795). A cette époque le Grand Duché, qui faisait partie de la Sérénissime République et avait le même rang que la Couronne de Pologne (Martel 1938), est devenue, grâce à une politique intérieure tolérante, l'asile de groupes ethno- i religieux persécutés dans différentes parties de l'Europe.

*La version polonaise de ce texte a été publiée dans: *Wilno – Wileńszczyzna jako krajobraz i środowisko wielu kultur*, tom IV, Białystok 1992, 19–30.