

THE DEVIL'S INVASION: CULTURAL CHANGES IN EARLY MODERN LITHUANIA

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The hundred and forty years after the Christianization of Lithuania in 1387 appear, except for the building of not very many churches,¹ to have been a period of almost unrelieved cultural stagnation. This may be due, on the one hand, to the demoralizing shock which the destruction of a cultural universe administers to unenthusiastic converts; on the other hand, to the not very vital state of the fifteenth-century Catholicism which came sweeping in.

But in the sixteenth century, in fairly quick succession, a series of moves are made that add up to the first program of Lithuanian cultural modernization. These moves are then, in the seventeenth century, either reversed or lose steam (Table I). The facts are largely familiar, though there is room for disagreement on the point at which the reversal may be said to have started. The sociological mechanisms of this process — which is not only the main problem of early modern Lithuanian cultural history but of importance to European cultural history as a whole — need more analytical attention than they have received.

TABLE I
 CHANGES OF DIRECTION IN EARLY MODERN LITHUANIAN CULTURE

Law	Higher education	Empirical science	Lithuanian literature	Social criticism	Climate of Tolerance
A. Beginning of Advance (1520's)					
1529 (First Lithuanian Statute)	1539 (First higher school in Vilnius) 1570 (Jesuit Academy of Vilnius)	1544 (Map of Muscovy by Vilnius' resident A.Wied published in Basel)	1547 (First Lithuanian book, Catechism of Mažvydas, in Koenigsberg)	1550 (Mykolas Lietuvis <i>On the Customs of Tartars Lithuanians and Muscovites</i> published 1615 in Basel)	1550 (Chancellorship of M.Radvila the Black) 1563 (Decree on religious equality by the Diet of Vilnius)
B. Beginning of Regression (1580's)					
After 1588 (Third Lithuanian Statute)	1645 (Jesuit examiner finds Vilnius' Academy making "insufficient educational progress)	After 1650 (Publication of K.Semenavičius' <i>Great Art of Artillery in Amsterdam</i>)	After 1646 or 1653 (The hymnals of Slovačinskis' and Jaugelis Telega)	After 1651 (A.Plizarovius' <i>On Political Association of Man, in Dancig</i>)	1581 (Public burning of Protestant books) 1591 (First church burning) 1592 (First blood libel case) 1611 (Only known execution of religious heretic)

The Early Program

The main components of the cultural modernization of the sixteenth century have emerged roughly in the following sequence: the codification of Lithuanian laws (in Chancery Slavonic), the establishment of the first institutions of higher education (operating in Latin), the first texts of natural science, the beginnings of printed literature in the Lithuanian language and of written social criticism, and the establishment of a climate of religious tolerance which allowed, according to a Venetian envoy, 72 religions to flourish in the capital of Lithuania,² Vilnius, which was then probably the most pluralistic city in

Europe. To this may be added the publication in 1563 of a translation of the Bible into a vernacular language — Polish — by the Chancellor of the Grand Duchy who did this, he said, "so that everyone could understand it."³

What is remarkable about this explosion of activity is not only its multi-dimensionality — religion and science, law, literature, and secular criticism all starting to move in the same period (to be sure, four hundred years after Abelard), — but also its multi-lingual character. Cultural modernization proceeds simultaneously in at least four languages — Chancery Slavonic which in its later stages becomes Old Byelorussian, Latin, Lithuanian, and Polish. (There are also hints of a Jewish influence on some Protestants.) This amount of multi-lingualism appears to be a rather unique feature of the Lithuanian program of cultural modernization in this period. It is comparable only to the otherwise very different case of Spain before the fifteenth century, when everything was happening in Spanish, Arabic, Latin, and Hebrew. The Lithuanian modernization in a multilingual mode derives in the main from the peculiar religious-political situation of an East European power presiding over a population divided between a West and an East European religion.

A second distinctive feature of the first Lithuanian version of modernity is the early establishment of the principle of toleration for all religions. After a period of incipient repression of the Protestants which produced in the 1540s the first wave of intellectual exiles in Lithuanian history, equal treatment of Catholics, of the Orthodox, and of the various Protestant sects, including the most radical, is established in practice at least by 1551 and affirmed by the Diet of Vilnius and the Grand Duke in 1563, ten years earlier than the comparable declaration of the Confederation of Warsaw.

The declaration of 1563 was signed even by the Catholic bishops of Lithuania,⁴ whereas the Polish bishops, with one exception, refused to recognize the legitimacy of 1573. In Poland, the declaration of 1573 has remained a statement of intention, to be repeated by each king upon his election; in Lithuania it acquired the force of law, having been incorporated into the Lithuanian Statute of 1588.⁵ These differences begin to indicate the more liberal climate in the Grand Duchy than in the Kingdom of Poland, and support the conclusion that Lithuanian liberality is not of Polish derivation. (On the contrary, Poland helped to transmit Western European religious rigidity, somewhat later, to Lithuania.)

While Poland is more liberal after the fifteenth century than Western Europe, by all pertinent measures Lithuania at least until the end of the sixteenth century is more liberal than Poland (in spite of having a somewhat more centralized political structure). Shall we consult the best witnesses to early modern liberality — the witches, the religious dissidents, and the Jews? About 200,000 witches are estimated to have perished at the stake in Europe, 10,000 in Poland, between "several hundred" and up to 1,000 in Lithuania (where witch-burnings started only 1566).⁶ The Inquisition comes to Poland in 1318 and is abolished in 1572;⁷ in Lithuania it is never established, one of the advantages of late Christianization and the political distance from Rome and Spain.

"In the XV-th century, . . . various heretical sects were persecuted in Poland almost as zealously as in the rest of Europe."⁸ Not so in Lithuania. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Lithuanian Chancery never passes anti-Protestant promulgations as the Polish chancery occasionally does.⁹ Protestant books are burned in Poland by 1564, in Lithuania by 1581.¹⁰ Protestant churches are expelled from Cracow in 1591, from Vilnius in 1640, by which time Vilnius is the only royal city of Poland-Lithuania still to contain a Protestant church within its limits.¹¹

As for anti-Semitism, blood libel accusations, invented in England in the twelfth century, occur in Poland since the fifteenth century; there are 16 known cases from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In Lithuania, blood libel appears only in the sixteenth century (1562 in Vilnius), and only this one case is listed by the *Encyclopedia Judaica* for the whole Grand Duchy from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.¹² Jews are accused of desecration of the host in Poland from the thirteenth century on; no "notorious" case of it is mentioned for Lithuania.¹³

The virtual absence of signs of religious anti-Semitism in the Grand Duchy implies incomplete permeation of Medieval Catholic attitudes among Lithuanians of the early modern age. This is supported by the presence of Jews in the earlier records of witch-trials (1630, 1636) *only as accusers*. Jews come to be *accused* of witchcraft only in the second quarter of the eighteenth century (1725-1740), and even then they are treated exactly as other non-nobles, with nothing whatever made of their Jewishness.¹⁴ In this as in some other respects, Lithuanians fully join the Christian world only in the nineteenth century.

By the measures cited, early modern Lithuania is the European center of liberality, at no time more so than between 1550 and 1580. It is this feature of modernizing Lithuania that attracts to it the most radical Protestant heretics from Western Europe. In the 1560s Vilnius becomes a center of the most advanced thought of the time. The advanced thinking is done mostly by Italians and Poles, but they have received protection, unusual by contemporary European standards, by Lithuanian magnates, and from this country they seek to teach Europe:¹⁵ as Stanislas Kot writes,

"Proselytizing in that area (England) had been started by Budny of Lithuania, and English nobles were being persuaded to Unitarianism by letters and tracts, or through the British merchants of the Moscow Eastern company."¹⁶

Only at this moment was Lithuania in a position to teach enlightenment — that is, both toleration and most advanced theology — to England (just as it was only at this time that Lithuanians could publish the Bible *for Poland*; a century later a Lithuanian Bible had to be printed in *England*). Achievements of this kind matter more than empires extending from the Baltic to the Black Seas. To be sure, the cultural radiation of Vilnius collapsed more quickly than the power of the Grand Duchy.

How can the belated but rapid emergence of the modernizing project in sixteenth century Lithuania and its distinctive characteristics — some of which are by West European standards "quite advanced" — be accounted for? An economic interpretation of history would in this case seem to be insufficient. The only new technology relevant is the printing press (the first Orthodox press is founded in Lithuania in 1524, the first Protestant in 1553, the first Catholic is inherited from Protestants in 1575); but it is less important than in Western Europe even for the spread of Protestantism due to the small size of the urban strata. The printing press, in any case in Europe, does not introduce new ideas but only increases their power.

An improvement in economic conditions is generally dated after the land reform of 1557 — too late to have initiated the movement toward cultural modernization. In its geometric ordering of agricultural land, the land reform itself may be regarded as an expression of the spatial vision of a modernizing culture rather than as a cause of cultural modernization. While there are overlaps in time between the peaks of economic prosperity and religious tolerance, and some economic contents in the Lithuanian Statutes and in the social criticism of the sixteenth century, the latter do not determine the major thrust of these advances, and their authors are associated not with the (still very meager) urban commercial strata but with the traditional nobility. This, in the end, helps to undermine the modern project. The other modernizing developments of the sixteenth century bear no obvious relation to economic conditions.

Is a political explanation of cultural modernization possible? There are two possibilities. The recurrent attacks by Muscovy, from 1499 to 1537, after a long period of relative peace, can have activated the political elements of cultural modernization. This is most evident in what may be regarded as the earliest text of empirical science in Lithuania — a map of Muscovy, presumably needed for military purposes, published by a German resident of Vilnius, Anthony Wied, in 1544;¹⁷ and in the earliest social criticism, the 1550 manuscript of Mykolas Lietuvis, grounded in concerns with the declining strength of the Lithuanian state in comparison with Muscovy. Recent wars had not been very successful for Lithuania, and Mykolas Lietuvis explains this by declining discipline and moral decay. (The sense of decline is evident in Lithuania at least since 1523.)

That such criticism is explicitly made is, however, also a sign of political maturation. This is the second possible political explanation of the cultural modernization of the sixteenth century. Political maturation can mean either increasing rationality of the organization of the state or greater sophistication of the political strata. The best evidence of increasing political maturation is the protracted process, begun around the middle of the fifteenth century, which culminated in the codification of Lithuanian laws in 1529. The need for legal ordering, under the pressure of administrative requirements, became all the more evident as the numbers of Lithuanians educated in Western European universities started to grow towards the end of the fifteenth century.

Renaissance political culture becomes influential, in the sixteenth century, around the royal court. But it cannot explain the religious tolerance component of Lithuanian modernization, since the peak of Renaissance influence in the early 1540s coincides precisely with a wavelet of religious intolerance. Nor can

the hypothesis of political maturation explain the religiously inspired aspects of cultural modernization — higher education and the first Lithuanian books. The political maturation thesis does not account for either the dating or the agency of any element of the sixteenth century modernization other than the Lithuanian Statute. Thus I conclude that the political process can provide only a partial and, in other respects, auxiliary explanation of cultural modernization.

Most aspects of cultural modernization of the sixteenth century, except for the codification of the law, are related to the religious struggles of the Reformation: the first higher school in Vilnius is established by Protestants who are then immediately forced out of the country; the first map-maker also produced tapestry of Luther; the first book is a Lutheran catechism; the first social critic (who has remained anonymous) criticizes the Catholic clergy along the same lines as the Protestants do; the decree on religious tolerance is passed by a Diet in which Calvinist noblemen constitute the largest group.

Not only are there specific "Protestant connections" at the point of origin in each of these developments; the spread of the Reformation can also account for the dating of all except one component of the modernizing program and for the energy with which the program is pursued. What it does not explain is, first, the secular nature of the codified Lithuanian law (in which Christianity is not given any primacy of status) and, second, the establishment of religious tolerance (which, in Western Europe in the middle of the sixteenth century neither the Protestants nor the Catholics favored and which could not be learned from the Muscovites either).

These two features of the early modern program in Lithuania — secularity of the law and tolerance in religion — cannot be explained without taking into account the political experience of pagan Lithuania ruling a much larger Russian Orthodox population. The Grand Duchy under its pagan rulers operated under the principle to each *group its own religions*, which allowed, at the center of the state, a separation of policy from religious ideology — an early version of separation of church and state which neither Western nor Eastern Europe was capable of at that time.¹⁸ The pragmatic political culture originating in pagan times persisted even after the conversion of ethnic Lithuanians to Catholicism. This is what made it possible for the multi-religious state to continue to function well until at least the Union of Brest in 1596 which sought to force the Russian Orthodox into the fold of the Roman church. Until then, the hegemonic tendencies of the Catholic church were contained in Lithuania by the political pragmatism of the multireligious state shaped by "archaic" pagan attitudes. The survival of this "archaic" secularity and tolerance into the sixteenth century helps explain the most "advanced" elements of the Lithuanian program of cultural modernization. (This attitude has also probably supported the movement toward toleration in the religiously more homogeneous Poland of pre-Lublin times, which was, however, based on a different political principle: not to each ethnic territorial *collectivity* its own religion, but to each *individual* noble his own choice.)

The cultural modernization of sixteenth-century Lithuania acquires its distinctive characteristics from the conjunction of the most "advanced" — Renaissance and especially Reformation — borrowings from Western Europe with the surviving "archaic" elements of native pagan derivation (Table II). In these terms, the originality of sixteenth-century Lithuania is due to its late Christianization and somewhat comparable with that of twentieth-century Japan. In both cases modernization is both authentic and derivative.

TABLE II
SOCIAL SOURCES OF CULTURAL PROGRESS IN 16TH CENTURY LITHUANIA

	Law	Higher education	Empirical science	Lithuanian literature	Social criticism	Climate of Tolerance
Pagan-derived political culture ("archaic" East European experience)	XX				X	XX
Renaissance and Reformation borrowings ("advanced" West European influences)	X	X	X	X	XX	X

The Development of Demodernization

The first tangible signs of reversal of the modernization program of the sixteenth century is the burning of Protestant books by the bishop of Vilnius in 1581 and his prohibition of publishing or selling books or conducting Protestant funeral processions in the capital city without his permission.¹⁹ The publishing prohibition remains, for the time being, ineffective, since the governor of Vilnius, the bishop's uncle, is a Calvinist prince, and Protestant books continue to be published in Vilnius into the early seventeenth century. But the bishop's act re-establishes the presumption of medieval Catholicism, never before fully accepted in Lithuania, that as the dominant ideology it is entitled to control the conditions of activity of other religions, a model happily expropriated at a later time by the builders of twentieth-century state Utopias.

Repressive measures continue to be built up, especially after the accession of the fanatical Swedish king, Sigismund IV Vasa to the Polish-Lithuanian throne in 1587. In 1591 the first known church burning by a mob in the history of Christian Lithuania takes place.²⁰ In 1611 the only known execution of a religious heretic occurs.²¹ After 1613, witch burnings, previously only two isolated cases, become (until 1731) regular occurrences.²² In 1639, the Jews of Vilnius complain to the Pope that their children are frequently being baptized against their parents' will by the Catholics.²³ In 1640, the Protestant church is expelled from the capital city.²⁴ Dissidents cease to be treated as equals and become a "tolerated minority." And the tolerance proves to have limits: in 1658, the Antitrinitarian Arian sect is expelled, although in a rather humane manner, from Poland-Lithuania. Over this period from 1581 to 1658, the most distinctive feature of early modernization in Lithuania, its religious tolerance, is reduced to a residual principle, even while the cause of toleration is beginning to advance in Western Europe.

For reasons unrelated to the creeping religious repressiveness, the development of Lithuanian law comes to a virtual standstill. After the Third Lithuanian Statute of 1588 the Lithuanian legal system is never, until 1840 when it is abolished by the Russian Czar, subjected to a fundamental revision. The reason for this ossification of the law is that the Third Lithuanian Statute contains references to the independent existence of Lithuania that conflict with the provisions of the Polish-Lithuanian union of 1569 and the Lithuanians fear that if they start revising their legal code the Poles will insist on removing references to the independence of Lithuania. The Polish-Lithuanian union has clearly contributed to the termination of cultural modernization of Lithuania at least in the legal sphere.

I underline at *least*, because it seems to me that the Union may also have contributed to the creation in Lithuania of a psychological climate adverse to further modernization. Lithuania both had its independence restricted and lost a large part of its territory by a Union imposed against the will of its political leaders.²⁵ Can such a political event not have promoted a psychological regression in the ruling stratum, to paraphrase Alexandre Koyré, "from the infinite universe to the closed world" — from the sense that everything is possible for the courageous who in the fourteenth century had declared that "all Russia must belong to Lithuania" and who in the sixteenth century sought to explore at once a variety of still untried religious horizons, to the fearful conviction that, having lost much, one can only seek to preserve what remains?

The second source of the retentive attitude is the fear that the egalitarianism of the socially radical Protestant sects inspires in the proud hearts of the nobility — a major reason for reconversions to Catholicism after the death of the most compelling of the Protestant leaders, Mikalojus Radvila the Black in 1565.²⁶ This is a characteristic figure of the "infinite universe" who, having converted to Calvinism, enters into a dispute with Calvin on theological grounds and is suspected of consorting with the Judaizers; who, the most powerful and richest of the Lithuanian magnates, protects the most socially radical of the Protestant sects; who tells his son: You yourself decide which religion to choose — whereupon the son becomes a Catholic book-burner whose favorite object of destructive affection is his father's edition of the Bible (and who even demolishes the church in which his father and mother lie buried).

Why do such symbolic patricides of whole generations of conservative sons against liberal fathers take place? There is in the present case no evidence that would allow it to be explained in terms of individual psychology, much as we in the twentieth century are obligated to try. But a sociological explanation may be sufficient.

"Protecting the closed world" is an attitude that the Lithuanian nobility begins to exhibit in religion and in politics from the late 1560s and in economics perhaps by the beginning of the next century. It becomes firmly established after the first decade of the seventeenth century. The ossification of the social structure is evident in the disappearance after 1611 of cases of testamentary liberations of serfs; this is related to declining religious competition, as such liberations are enacted only by Protestant noblemen.²⁷

The "closed world" attitude also becomes established in Poland. "Catholic propagandists in the XVII-th century tended to see Poland as a fortress besieged on all sides by heretics . . . The native religious dissidents were cast in the role of a Trojan horse . . ." ²⁸ While this happened in Lithuania too, I hypothesize that the Lithuanians were also affected by a political dynamic working in the same direction, which originated in the Union of Lublin from which the Poles gained while the Lithuanians lost. (In this respect the situation of Lithuanians within the Commonwealth was somewhat comparable to that of the American South after the Civil War.) I would therefore expect the closed world spirit to have been stronger, "over-determined" in Lithuania. This may help explain the greater cultural vitality in the second half of the seventeenth century in Poland than in Lithuania, in spite of comparable material destruction in times of war and occupation by foreign armies. Polish literature, for example, remains quite alive in the second half of the seventeenth century and declines only at the beginning of the eighteenth.²⁹

Outside of the growing religious rigidity and the paralysis of legal development, modernization of culture continues in the early 1600s, with the initiative in higher education, in Lithuanian literature, and in social criticism (but not in natural science) increasingly taken over, since the arrival of the Jesuits in 1569, by the Catholics. But in 1645 a Jesuit examiner from Rome reports the Academy of Vilnius making "insufficient educational progress";³⁰ after the Catholic hymnal of Slavočinskis, published in 1646, and the Protestant hymnal of Jaugelis Telega, published in 1653,³¹ Lithuanian literature ceases to make visible advances; after the publication of Semenavičius' Great *Art of Artillery* in 1650 there are no scientific landmarks; after the publication of Olizarovius' *On Political Association of Man* in 1651 work in social theory declines.

The dates suggest the beginning of a decline in the intensity of cultural activity, most clearly in the educational system, within a generation *after* the Catholics had achieved a decisive victory over Protestantism (which was clear by 1613, the year in which the struggle between the religions began to be replaced by the persecution of witches among one's own fellow believers); but *before* the devastations of the wars with Muscovy and Sweden which began in 1654 (or in 1648, with the Ukrainian rebellion) and resulted in repeated occupation of the whole of Lithuania, for the first time in its history, by foreign armies. The devastations of the war only finalize a cultural decline that appears to have started earlier. The assumption that decline had already started before the wars — together with the hypothesized "closed world" outlook — helps explain the inability of Lithuania to recover its vitality after the wars, in contrast to other central European nations in the same period (Bohemia, Germany), subjected to similar destruction in the Thirty Years War.³²

The following sequence in the liquidation of the early modern program is suggested. In the 1580s, a repressive religious system begins to be established. In the 1640s, signs of cultural decline appear. After the wars of 1654-1667, all efforts at modernization cease.

The sequence suggests that religious developments have causal priority in the processes by which the modernization of the sixteenth century comes to be terminated.³³ Growing religious rigidity is a protracted process, held in check by the Polish-derived political tradition that individual noblemen cannot be persecuted for their convictions (and that they can protect whomever they choose). Nevertheless, an escalation of rigidity is visible, in Lithuania, from 1581 to the early decades of the eighteenth century.

Religious hegemonism advances, after 1613, together with severity in punishing those accused of witchcraft, with "torturing by the executioner" first mentioned in a witch case in 1615.³⁴ Advances in irrationality are evident in the first legal record of air travel by a witch in 1631 (this mode of mobility disappears only after 1740).³⁵ Devils in charge of an organization of witches emerge in court records only in the second half of the seventeenth century and, while their numbers increase still further in the early eighteenth century, they are not present in most witch-trials.³⁶ (This is partly due to the fact that witchcraft cases are tried in Lithuania in secular courts, to which monastic imagination has limited access.) Incubi and succubi attack Lithuanian peasants for the first time in the early eighteenth century, and they, in this generally less misogynistic culture, concentrate much less on women as their victims than they do in Western Europe. (In Western Europe, the ratio between the victims of male and female demons is 10:1; in Lithuania, 4.5:1.)³⁷

The construction of a repressive religious system continues in Lithuania into the first third of the eighteenth century, the darkest age of Lithuanian cultural history, when the treatment of religious dissidents reaches its peak of severity.³⁸ *To what extent* can religious repressiveness explain the apparent beginning of cultural decline in the 1640s and its finality after the great wars of the mid-seventeenth century?

Religious rigidity does not explain the cessation of legal development, but it is a probable factor in the decline of natural science, which seems to have been sponsored, outside of the royal court, mainly by Protestant magnates.³⁹ But could the rest — the declines in Lithuanian literature, in social theory, and in higher education — not be sufficiently explained by economic impoverishment, especially after the mid-century wars?

This is by no means clear. Literature and theory do not take much wealth to produce, and even after the wars there is considerable wealth in Lithuania, as shown by the building of the most opulent Baroque churches and monasteries in the decade after the end of the wars. But the cultural investment of wealth is more medieval than modern. There is in Catholic Lithuania a turning away from books, schools, and sciences toward churchly magnificence (and, on the popular level, the erection of wayside crosses everywhere in the countryside). Theatricality increases while illiteracy spreads even among the nobility and self-flagellation in churches among the people. All of this does not happen among the Lutherans of Prussian Lithuania, even though the wars and later the plague are as destructive as in the Grand Duchy. Without religious rigidity material devastation does not cause as much cultural decline as in fact did occur.

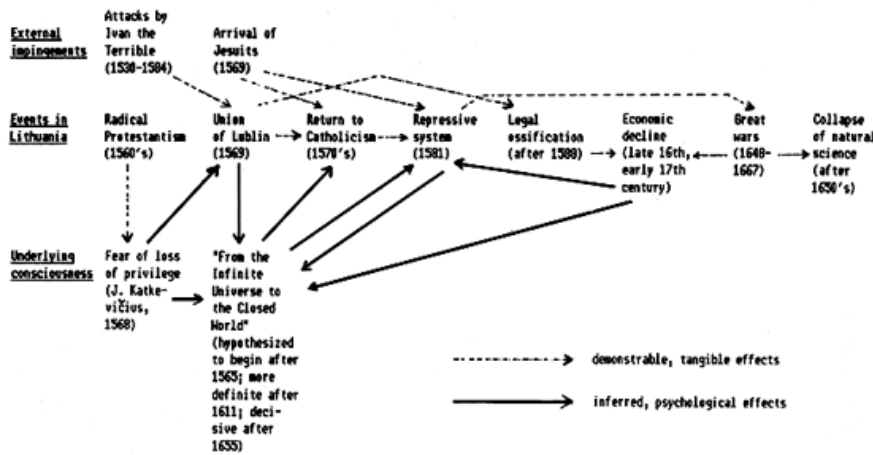
Can the trend toward religious rigidity after the effervescence of the mid-sixteenth century itself be explained by economic decline? Polish economic historians tend to see the beginning of economic decline after a period of protracted growth as having started late in the sixteenth century.⁴⁰ Lithuanian historians tend to locate the beginning of the economic decline in the early or mid-seventeenth century.⁴¹ The Polish dating suggests that economic decline could have contributed to the spirit of ideological retrenchment. The Lithuanian dating allows economic decline mainly to be a material cause of the later loss of intensity of cultural activities. While economic conditions may be more crucial to the termination of the early modern project in Lithuania than to its beginning, their precise significance, in the earlier stages of cultural decline, remains uncertain.

The collapse of early modernism in Lithuania (which transformed this country from a progressive though narrowly based center of cultural development, at least in the law and in religion, into the backwoods of Europe for two centuries to come) is due, in the following sequential order, to the unequally beneficial Polish-Lithuanian union of 1569, the increase in religious repressiveness, the economic decline, and only finally the wars of 1654-1667. (A more complete analysis of the chain of causation is sketched out in Table III.)

In 1563, the future could still have been different. To a dangerous degree, however, cultural modernity in Lithuania depended on the character of the statesman-theologian Mikalojus Radvila the Black. There were no social forces in place that could substitute for a man. It was the last moment when Lithuania could have mattered to the world.

The possibility of such cultural retrogressions — and some conception of their causes — constitutes the message of universal significance to be drawn from this case study. The story has some implications for the present time as well. But only comparative studies can distinguish between what is relevant and what is not.

TABLE III
SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF THE 17TH CENTURY CULTURAL REGRESSION IN LITHUANIA



1 109 churches were built up to the end of the fifteenth century, compared to 300 in the sixteenth century.
2 Juozas Jurginis, *Lietuvos krikštās. Feodalinės visuomenės socialinės ir kultūrinės raidos studija* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1987), p. 21.
3 J. Jurginis, I. Lukšaitė, *Lietuvos kultūros istorijos bruožai. (Feodalizmo epocha. Iki aštuonioliktojo amžiaus.)* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1981), p. 121.
4 *Lietuvių enciklopedija*. Vol. 24, p. 394.
5 "In contrast to the Crown, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania did legally recognize the existence of dissident communities on a par with Catholic parishes." Janusz Tazbir, "The Fate of Polish Protestantism in the Seventeenth Century," in J.K. Fedorowicz, Maria Bogucka, Henryk Samsonowicz, eds., *A Republic of Nobles: Studies in Polish History to 1864* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 204.
6 Nahman Ben-Yehuda, "The European Witch Craze of the 14th to the 17th Centuries: A Sociologist's Perspective," *American Journal of Sociology*, 86 (July, 1980), p. 6; Norman Davies, *Cod's Playground: A History of Poland*, Vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 197; Vytautas Kavolis, "Represyvioji sistema lietuvių kultūroje," *Metmenys*, No. 54 (1988), pp. 123-124, estimate based on records of witch-trials reported in K. Jablonskis and R. Jansas, eds. *Raganų teismai Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1987), pp. 27, 64, 384. (The documented number of witches burned in Lithuania is about 100.)
7 Bernard Hamilton, *The Medieval Inquisition* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981), p. 80; Janusz Tazbir, *A State Without Stakes: Polish Religious Toleration in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: The Kosciuszko Foundation, 1973), p. 138.
8 Tazbir, *A State*, op. cit., p. 29.
9 Rapolas Krasauskas, "Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje XVI-XVII amžiuje: Nuosmukio priežastys ir atgimimo veiksniai," *Lietuvių Katalikų Mokslo Akademija, Suvažiavimo darbai*, Vol. VI (Roma, 1969), p. 199.
10 Tazbir, *A State*, op. cit., pp. 105, 140.
11 Tazbir, "The Fate," op. cit., p. 203.
12 *Encyclopedia Iudaica*, Vol. 4, pp. 1124-1126. On the 1592 case, see Bronius Kviklys, *Lietuvos bažnyčios*, Vol. 5, Vilniaus arkivyskupystė, Part 1 (Chicago: Amerikos Lietuvių Biblioteka, 1985), p. 307.
13 *Encyclopedia Iudaica*, Vol. 8, p. 1040.
14 Jablonskis, Jansas, op. cit., pp. 32, 42, 339, 347-8, 350-1, 362.
15 The only other somewhat comparable case of Lithuania instructing the world is the later rise, in the eighteenth century, of "the Jerusalem of Lithuania" — of Vilnius as a center of rabbinical scholarship with a European reputation. Ethnic Lithuanians have never managed what others in their country have found it possible to do.
16 Stanislas Kot, *Socinianism in Poland: The Social and Political Ideas of the Polish Antitrinitarians in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1957), p. XXII.
17 *Lietuviškoji tarybinė enciklopedija*. Vol. 12, p. 204.
18 John Meyendorff, in "The Three Lithuanian Martyrs: Byzantium and Lithuania in the Fourteenth Century," *St. Vladimir's Quarterly*, 26(1982), pp. 29-44, is, in my opinion, mistaken in interpreting the martyrdom of three Lithuanian courtiers of Algirdas for converting to Russian Orthodoxy as an indication of lack of religious tolerance in fourteenth-century Lithuania. Algirdas was tolerant enough, also at his court, of the Orthodox who were Byelorussians or Ukrainians. What the Lithuanian converts did wrong was not adhering to the cardinal principle of to each *people* *collectively* its own religion just as it would have been wrong, from a pagan point of view, for a Russian to convert to Lithuanian paganism. Only Christians think, at least in principle, of individual conversions.
19 *Lietuvių enciklopedija*, Vol. 24, p. 384.
20 Jurginis, Lukšaitė, op. cit., pp. 173-174.
21 Jurginis, Lukšaitė, op. cit., p. 174.
23 Stasys Yla, *Siluva žemaičių istorijoje*, Vol. I (So. Boston, Massachusetts: Krikščionis gyvenime, 1970), p. 261.
24 Jokūbas Kregždė, *Reformacija Lietuvoje* (Chicago: Devenių Kultūros Fondas, 1980), p. 156.
25 The Union was also a defeat for the Protestants who led the Lithuanian opposition to it, and may have contributed to a decline in the aura of progressive leadership they had acquired under Radvila the Black. While Protestants have retained political leadership in Lithuania into the 1580s, they are no longer as dynamic in their religious thrust as before. They gradually cease to seek to change Lithuania and limit their efforts to managing their own affairs. Their world begins to contract.
26 In a pamphlet published in Vilnius in 1567, the radical Protestant sects are accused of intolerable offences against the feudal order: "Here in Vilnius people are discussing whether those who do not liberate their serfs can be admitted to the Lord's Supper . . . subordinates writing to lords and officials call them brothers . . . simple and unlearned people . . . by their own understanding pass regulations and dare to speak evil of their government." Ingė Lukšaitė, *Radikaliųjų reformacijos kryptis Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1980), p. 24. In responding to such agitation, the noble Jonas Katkevičius in 1568 writes to August Rotundus: "All that is holy has been profaned and turned over to the desires and the will of unenlightened folk to deal with, so that everything be permitted to everyone. I consequently cannot bear to be called a Calvinist any more." Yla, op. cit., p. 96.
27 Ingė Lukšaitė, *Lietuvos publicistai valstiečių klausimu XVI a. pabaigoje — XVII a. pirmojoje pusėje* (Vilnius: Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademijos Istorijos Institutas, 1976), pp. 104-108. This throws some doubt on Tazbir's contention that there were no significant behavioral differences between the Protestant and the Catholic nobility in Poland. Tazbir's thesis may hold for the majority, but at least in Lithuania the Calvinist nobility shows somewhat more interest than the Catholic in natural science and in abolition of serfdom. To be sure, there are no signs of any Weberian *Wirtschaftsethik* or any special concern with predestination among the Lithuanian Calvinists, as among their Polish counterparts. Cf. Tazbir, "The Fate," op. cit., pp. 212-214. And Tazbir's observation that "the cult of the Virgin Mary . . . flourished in Polish dissident communities" (p. 212) finds its analogue in the observation by a Catholic writer that in Lithuania the Calvinists are not known to have destroyed any notable religious painting. J. Vaišnora, MIC, *Marijos garbinimas Lietuvoje* (Roma: Lietuvių Katalikų Mokslo Akademija, 1958), p. 241. Thus Polish-Lithuanian Protestantism did have some original features, which may have made it a more tolerant but less intensely dynamic force than elsewhere.
28 Tazbir, *A State*, op. cit., p. 165.
29 Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 111-158. This may, however, also be due to its far greater creative attainments and the broader population base supporting it before the mid-century crisis. If so, the conclusion would be that *developed cultures can survive the turn toward a closed world without much political coercion for a few generations, developing cultures are quashed by it*. The results depend on the point in the sequence of cultural development at which this factor impinges.
30 *Lietuvių enciklopedija*, Vol. 34, p. 136.
31 Steponas Jaugelis Telega, the mayor of Kėdainiai from 1631 to 1666, is the first bourgeois writer in Lithuanian. Jurgis Lebedys, *Senoji lietuvių literatūra* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1977), p. 96. The city remains a very unusual place of origin for a Lithuanian writer until far into the twentieth century. A stronger Protestant orientation to cities is evident when one compares the Protestant Andreus Volanus in 1599: "Capitals and cities are the greatest pride of states and support of human life . . .", with the Catholic Mikalojus Daukša, also in 1599: "Not . . . by the strength of cities and castles

do nations live ..." Lukšaitė, *Lietuvos publicistai, op. cit.*, pp. 140-141; Mokinio Biblioteka, *Lietuvių literatūra IX klasei* (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1968), p. 27. The subsidence of the urban orientation may be due to the decline of Protestantism, the limits imposed by the gentry, to the destruction of cities during the wars of 1654-1667. For the Catholic Jan Chondzinski in 1657 (Lukšaitė, p. 183), the representative image of the Polish-Lithuanian state is no longer the bustling city as it was for Volanus, but the broken-down castle (an image resurrected by Maironis at the end of the nineteenth century). Chondzinski writes that "Even before the war so many cities were half empty, in which there previously existed good buildings and castles" (*ibid.*), thus supporting the notion that decline preceded the great wars.

32 "Source-material in other countries, and in particular those dealing with the economic consequences of the Thirty Years War, testify to the fact that this war did not entail long-lasting economic decline in the countries in which it was waged. Recovery was relatively rapid, and was *generally based on more modern methods.*" Jerzy Topolski, "Economic Decline in Poland from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in Peter Earle, ed., *Essays in European Economic History 1500-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 138. (My italics). It is the "more modern methods" that were lacking in Lithuania after 1667, and the hypothesis of the "closed world" helps explain why.

33 East Prussian (Lutheran) Lithuanians were religiously as monolithic as those in Greater Lithuania (Catholic) from the second half of the seventeenth century, yet Lithuanian culture continued to advance in Prussia, both in the second half of the seventeenth century (the grammar of Danielius Kleinas), and in the eighteenth century (Donelaitis). To be sure, Prussia had a more orderly government, a tradition of ethnographic-linguistic interest which took the Lithuanian culture into its purview and, at least in the eighteenth century, a better educational system and a popular religious movement challenging the official Church (Pietism). Furthermore, German Lutheran pastors took a more active part in the development of Lithuanian literature in East Prussia than Polish Catholic priests did in Lithuania after the defeat of the Reformation. There are ways to overcome the culturally inhibiting effect of monolithic ideology. But these ways were not taken in Greater Lithuania.

34 Jablonskis, *Jasas, op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

35 Jablonskis, *Jasas, op. cit.*, pp. 40, 362.

36 Jablonskis, *Jasas, op. cit.*, pp. 237-244, 337-339.

37 Norbertas Vėlius, *Chtoniškas lietuvių mitologijos pasaulis. Folklorinio velnio analizė* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1987), p. 161; R. H. Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Crown, 1959), p. 490. The second and third decades of the eighteenth century constitute the period not only of the largest number of devils mentioned in witch-trials (Jablonskis, *Jasas, op. cit.*, pp. 337-339), but also of the appearance of incubi and succubi in the reports of confessions received by traveling missionaries. It is thus the high point of the devil's invasion—a demonological implosion—in Greater Lithuania and occurs within the decade after the termination of destructive wars, famine, and plague. The term "the devil's invasion" refers in this study, however, to the advance of religious rigidity initiated by the Jesuits from the West and their students, not only to the careers of certified demons.

38 *Lietuvos istorija 1* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1985), p. 181.

39 Jurginis, Lukšaitė, *op. cit.*, p. 276-287.

40 Topolski, *op. cit.*, p. 134. But he also says: "The development of noble

landed property at the expense of the peasants had begun to have harmful effects from the first half of the seventeenth century" (p. 139).

41 Trade from Vilnius with the West is adversely affected early in the seventeenth century. Jūratė Kiaupienė, Zigmantas Kiaupa, "Traukė pirkliai į Vilnių," *Gimtas kraštas*, January 1-6, 1988, p. 7. "After the good agrarian conditions in the period from 1620 to 1650, a severe agrarian depression begins from 1650 on. . ." Lukšaitė, *Lietuvos publicistai, op. cit.*, p. 8.