

CHANGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN AND NATURE: FROM THE BAL TIC BELIEF TO THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERNIST SOCIETY

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The article is grounded on the attitude that the natural balance between inhabitants and environment prevailed only under the communal system. The relationship between the later populations of people and nature underwent changes. Until the nineteenth century, major stages can be distinguished in terms of the most rapid nature management. These are the origin of agrarian society, formation of castes, emergence of religious movements and the industrial revolution. In Europe, these historical periods did not happen in parallel because separate territories were unevenly advanced in the aspect of economic and cultural development. Particularly this is the focus of the present article dealing with the relationship between Lithuanian nation and nature from perspectives of different worldviews, political and economic environments. Referring to historical sources, the author aims at revealing the development of the relationship between Lithuanian nation and nature as well as identifying the directions of legal regulation in the area. In a historical discourse, despite late christening, the medieval Lithuania (Grand Duchy of Lithuania, GDL) managed to successfully absorb almost all the achievements of European medieval civilisation, to create well advanced for that time legal acts, especially to emphasise the documents regulating supervision of forests and hunting economy. After the occupation in 1795, Russian law was introduced in the region; however, woodedness decreased and part the species of hunted animals became extinct.

Key words: Middle Ages, polytheistic religion, protection of nature recourses, feudal law, Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

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INTRODUCTION

The interaction between man and nature is inseparable from the development of social relations. In different periods of development, partnership between nature and man varied as was being impacted by historical, cultural, political and economic environment (United Nations... 1972). In the primitive society, knowledge

on the use of natural resources was modest. Later populations of people started evaluating nature and benefit obtained from it in different ways. A great influence on the quality of the relationship with nature was made by emergence of religious groups. Not a single nation of the world existed without religion, and certain religious ideas influenced man's attitude towards natural environment (Weber 2005). Emergence

of the agriculturalist community and massive deforestation were major facts in the history of nature management (Kaplan et al. 2009). In the Middle Ages, there were left no natural resources that did not belong to anyone, the principle of feudal law “who owned the land owned the power of the rule” came into force. Feudalists had almost absolute rights to all natural resources across their lands (estates) (Marchak 1998). The feudal and community rights to these resources were regulated by the unwritten law, various statutes that differed from country to country (Kube 1997). European history is characteristic of wars that lasted for various periods; and these wars are hard to estimate in terms of nature conservation (Van Creveld 2004). The industrial revolution that started in Britain in around 1760 is treated as an epoch of gigantic changes in natural environment (Ogilvie 2000). Majority of European countries which would live solely on agriculture until that time turned into developed industrial countries. Pollution increased significantly; therefore, in many European countries the problem of man’s moral relationship with nature became increasingly relevant.

Since ancient times, the state of Lithuania stands at a crossroad between Western and Eastern cultures. Its geographical location determined that the territory was the war battlefield for numerous times in the sixteenth century. Lithuania (Grand Duchy of Lithuania) has designed an advanced to that time system of legal regulation of the use of natural resources; however, as an outcome of the occupation of the state in the eighteenth century, this development was impossible. Until the early twentieth century, industry was not developing in Lithuania, and export of the state constituted of forest and agriculture produce.

The current article deals with the relationship between Lithuanian nation living in the historical-cultural region of Central Europe and nature in different worldviews, political and economic environments.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The region of research covers only ethnical Lithuanian lands and part of the present-day Belarussian territory (Belovezh Forest). To implement the formulated aim and objectives, an essential analytical descriptive method is employed. This enabled the focusing on concrete historical sources and naming of circumstances related to the periods under investigation. Historical periods have been divided into three stages. During the first, Baltic, stage natural environment had a mythological, symbolical and sacral value. The Feudal period was the second stage; throughout this period the right to natural resources was linked to the caste interests. The third stage covers the attitude of residents of the land occupied by Tsarist Russia towards natural environment. The article includes a comparative analysis employing the historical and comparative-historical methods. The applied historical method reveals certain historical facts, whereas the comparative-historical method helps to compare the historical facts. Moreover, the performed causality analysis enabled finding out the causal links in relation to the obtained data. Part of historical sources are interpreted and presented from a perspective of the author’s perception.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Baltic stage of the thought on nature conservation. Grounding on the fourteenth century German Order chronicles describing war campaigns across Lithuanian lands and travel conditions, it is obvious that the land was famous for impenetrable woods and marshes. The Chronicle of Lithuanian Forests (Juodvalkis et al. 2003) and other sources (Kuprionis 1964) put it that in early eleventh century woodedness of the region was some 60-70%. Information on Lithuania as a wooded region is provided in written works of a Franciscan traveller Bartholomew the Englishman (Tazbir 2001). This monk characterised Lithuania (Lectonia) as

a marshy and wooded land of rivers and lakes. Another anonymous work dating back to the same period, 1237–1246, “The Word on the Fall of the Russian Land” states that “Lithuanians residing in marshes would not show themselves” (Dmitriev & Likhachev 1997). It is hard to predict the objectivity of such narrative sources; nevertheless, such stereotypical depiction of the region remained for many centuries. In this case, historians Zenonas Ivinskis (Ivinskis 1986) and Jacques Le Goff (Le Goff 1985) hold it that such formation of an image of the region was suitable during the Crusaders’ war campaign: in the Middle Ages forests and marshes were treated as the habitats of demons, whereas non-baptised (pagan) local residents were “devil’s children”.

Baltic tribes (Latvians, Lithuanians, Prussians) since ancient times residing by the Baltic Sea would form a long-lasting opposition to Christianity and practice a polytheistic religion. Inseparability of both culture and personality from nature was a characteristic feature of the Baltic religion (Fleming & O’Carroll 2016).

Ancestors of Balts worshiped the sun, thunder, waters, hills, stones and forests; they believed that souls of the dead reincarnated in them after death. An eleventh century chronicler Bishop of Paderborn, Adam of Bremen (Vélius 1996 (a)), in his “History of the Kings of the Sacred Land” mentioning Baltic customs wrote that in such a way pagans would worship not the objects of nature but rather deities living there. Baltic tribes would greatly respect forests, and the cult of a tree was one of major sacral pillars of the belief. People believed that old, mighty multi-trunk trees held healing powers. Such trees were untouchable and nobody had the right to cut them (Dundulienė 2008). Both birds and beasts living in these forests were treated as sacred. In sacred groves Baltic priests would keep sacred fires burning, pray and offer sacrifices to gods, arrange calendric feasts related to natural phenomena. In 1263, a Dominican monk Thomas of Cantimpré in his allegorical work “The Book of the Bee State” stated: “pagan people maintain hallowed forests which cannot be cut and enter them only when wish to offer sacrifices to their gods”

(Vélius 1996b). Unfortunately, contemporaries do not tell what the size of these sacred groves was. Analysing historical facts, one can draw a conclusion that sacral forests were not big in their coverage. Single trees or small forests identified as sacred sites or ancient burials of Balts could be worshiped. It is acknowledged that even after introduction of Christianity in Lithuania the Baltic belief was maintained for some time. The Manuscript of Ipathius (Shakhmatov 1908) presents such information on the hunting performed by a Lithuanian King Mindaugas (1253–1263): “if when setting off for hunting a rabbit would run in front, nobody dared to enter a forest and break a slightest tree branch.”

In the late twelfth century, intensive household activities were being maintained, people would live in villages. The already mentioned Manuscript of Ipathius (Shakhmatov 1908) provides information on a campaign of the Prince Danylo of Volhynia to the lands of Lithuania in ca. 1254–1255: “Having stopped in Karkavich village with his numerous army of soldiers he was surprised to find here abundance of crops plenty for both soldiers and horses, and much of it were left.” Having compared written historical sources and materials of archaeological excavations it becomes obvious that in early Middle Ages the role of hunt decreased in the region of Lithuania, as agriculture and stock-raising began developing. For instance, if analysis of the bones found in the fifth-tenth century layers of Aukštadvaris mound suggests that bones of wild animals constituted 27.6% of all the bones found, a layer dating back to the tenth-fifteenth centuries displays only 3.1% of wild animal bones (Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 1970). The evolution of agriculture in the region is defined in a more complex way. It is assumed that a three-field system which was advanced at that time became established in the eleventh-twelfth centuries (Volkaitė-Kulikauskienė 1978); other authors state that a two-field system was neglected only in the early thirteenth century (Moore & League 1969). In Europe, a three-field household was started to be used in the ninth-tenth centuries, and, as some authors hold it, this facilitated the increase of the area of cultivable land by 50% (Moore 2002). The transition to a

more advanced agricultural system required new lands which would be taken at the expense of forest territories.

The GDL stage of the thought on nature conservation. In the thirteenth century, after unification of several Baltic tribes, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) began developing. In the state under formation there were no written laws: prohibitions were established in customs or depended on the ruler's will. For instance, following the example of European states, the order of 1468 proclaimed Casimir's Statute (Janulaitis & Jurginis 1967) which prohibited illegal deforestation, and the capital punishment was applied for the fire-raising in forests.

For a young state, natural resources played an important economic role. A law prohibiting hunt of European bison in Belovezh Forest was passed in 1409 by the Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland, Jogaila (Jagiello), the son of the Grand Duke Algirdas (Krasnitskiy 1983). Back then, the population of European bison was in vast numbers; in autumn-winter of 1409 the king preparing for the war with the Livonian Order stocked meat reserves to feed 100,000 warriors (Solovyov 1951)! Prohibitions of hunt aimed at defining the caste rights; hunting became entertainment and privilege of the rich (or representatives of an exceptional caste). On the other hand, legacy or romantic fiction of that period suggests that hunting was quite modest at that time and the hunting was not merely for the sake of entertainment. In the context of late medieval culture, Lithuanian historiography proposed a hypothesis that hunting in the period under discussion could be a kind of a chivalry tournament because there were quite little of manifestation of European chivalric culture in Lithuania. A chronicler Marcin Kromer's (1512–1589) historical legacy comprises a story about such kind of hunt: a hunter hiding behind a tree was on the watch for European bison (Bogucka 1994). If an animal did not approach the tree, a hunter would show himself and wave a red cloth. When the animal attacked, the hunter would stab it with an iron spear. A meaningful, masculine and even soldiership-like character of hunting

that ended in around the middle of the fifteenth century was highlighted by Nicolaus Hussovianus (Mikolaj Hussowczyk) (Husovianas 1977) in his Latin poem on the hunting of a European bison ("The Song about Bison, Its Stature, Ferocity and Hunt"). The M. Hussovianus' poem printed in 1523 in Krakow, Vietor's printing house, likely, reflected the attitude to hunt and natural environment at that time; the poem's line 285 displays a highly modern and presently relevant stereotypical attitude emphasising that ostensibly unused natural treasures would perish anyway:

- "Because of this, winged birds and beasts perish themselves
- If those, who keep them, behave too stingily.
- I've seen numerous times how fish perish in vast lakes,
- If a master too much spares to catch them;
- And in a fenced orchard the trees get more often thinned."
- In lines 375-378 the poet emphasised useful characteristics of nature contributing to physical development of one's body and holding healing powers:
- "It helps the body much more than good medicine.
- If someone has lust for pleasure of hunt
- And wishes to harden one's body thanks to the toil in the forest,
- Or someone wants to spend healthy time in the woods,
- To avoid tiresome boredom, —
- The one will laugh at doctors, and will survive
- For many years to come, without asking for help."

In the fifteenth century there left no natural resources that did not belong to anyone in the GDL; the principle of the medieval law "who owns the land owns the power of the rule" came into force. In this period advanced statutes of the GDL were approved (in 1529, 1566, 1588) (Vansevicius 1981). They defined the foundation of the legal system of the GDL until 1840. The first Chapter 9 of the feudal Statute was highly advanced: it regulated the appointment of directors of forest directorates, supervision of forests and the hunting. The Statute also foresaw certain preventive measures to protect natural

resources. In the Third Statute (1588) even more attention is paid to nature conservation – it includes a separate Chapter 10 constituting of 18 articles. The notion of a forest back then encompassed marshes and water bodies surrounded by a forest. The following examples of the Statute are to be mentioned: a landlord on whose land there was a habitat of beavers had no right to plough a field, to mow a meadow or to clear bushes nearby. Destroyers of hollow trees or thieves of bee hives full of honey were punished the most. Hunt before reaping the harvest was forbidden. According to the Statute, only rulers of Lithuania and the privileged stratum of nobility were allowed to hunt for big-game; whereas non-free citizens could not even enter forests without permission. Those accused in setting forests on fire, destroying hollows with wild bees or illegally hunting were punished with fines; those who did not pay the fines, “like other thieves”, were sentenced to death (Chapter 10 Article 14). Obviously, it had nothing in common with the present-day concept of nature conservation. First of all, the Statute cared of the feudal lord’s wealth; nevertheless, it took care of protection of nature, too. The historians who investigated history of the GDL notice that, besides the written law, there was the custom law valid in parallel. Until the end of the sixteenth century, royal peasants (Dovnar-Zapolskij 1901) and noblemen (Picheta 1958) could freely embrace the goodies of ruler’s forests. Statutes of the GDL weren’t single legal acts of such a kind. Rulers of the GDL passed numerous orders concerning forests and hunt; however, they were applicable to serfs, townspeople, clergymen and noblemen at different extent.

A great progress was prompted by the Voklo Reform after which the income from the landed property of the ruler of the GDL, Žygimantas Augustas (Sigismund Augustus), increased three times. The rise of agriculture stimulated deforestation and drainage of marshes which resulted in irreversible changes in the local landscape. Timber and its products were listed among major areas of forest operators’ activities securing the profit. In the late eighteenth century, timber constituted 25% of the entire export from

Lithuania (Miškų departamento...1940). It should be noted that throughout the period of existence of the GDL craftsmanship did not develop. For many centuries, Lithuania was a state based on the estate system. Noblemen were awarded many privileges, including free and duty-free trade. To emphasise, such conditions for increasing wealth were not available to any other social stratum of Western Europe. The rise of an exceptional stratum of noblemen conditioned underdevelopment of towns as well as the caste of townspeople (Kula 1976), whereas merchants facing noblemen as tough competitors did not become a politically influential stratum of society. The dominating agrarian culture of the state that began forming in this period later made a great impact on local economy and its development. The region became a European economic periphery for a long time. The core of state export consisted of timber and agricultural produce (Žiemelis 2011). The type of agrarian economy was under intensive development by employing serfdom bondage workforce of peasants in the region. Low productivity of economy was determined by frequent crop failure, long-lasting famines, epidemics. Two plague epidemics of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries are to be highlighted; as a result, the region lost approximately 48% of the citizens within this period. After the pandemics, economic property of feudal lords underwent processes of natural succession. As historical sources (Ragauskienė 2004) record, at that time 15 villages with arable land around became afforested in a small rural district (volost) of Birštonas alone.

In the Enlightenment period, new ideas of enlightening began spreading in the region and natural sciences became the focus of interest. In 1773 at Vilnius University, having rejected a traditional monopoly of religion, two colleges were established: these were of Physics and Moral Sciences; also, the botanical garden was founded. The University printing house started issuing secular publications on natural sciences. Mammals and plants of the GDL were described in the Latin, Prussian, Lithuanian and Latvian languages. However, these and many other published works were not used in practice.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, hunt in the GDL became an element of uncontrolled luxury. Moreover, the attitude of the nobility towards hunt formed in earlier centuries has changed. Here is a description of hunting in Belovezh Forest in 1752: more than 3,000 peasants were ordered to drive beasts to the enclosure with a tent for hunters in the middle. The game would be hunted from such a tent equipped with tables piled up with treats. As the witness holds it, in the course of hunt, forty-two European bison, thirteen moose and other game have been shot (Kuchowicz 1993). There is information on such royal hunt including musicians and sophisticated escort lasting for several months. The landed gentry and noblemen did not lag behind their rulers and tried to arrange hunt lasting for at least several days. Uncontrolled hunt and lawlessness of feudal land owners resulted in extermination of the biggest game of the region (tarpan, European bison, aurochs, bears).

The Tsarist Russia stage of the thought on nature conservation. In 1795, Lithuania lost its statehood and was forced to join the Tsarist Russian Empire. Despite common tendencies of industrialisation across the empire, industry in Lithuania did not develop. In 1897, according to the population census, approximately 3 million people lived in the region, including 93.3% of Lithuanians who attributed themselves to agriculturalists (Čepulienė 1989). It is a very important fact because in medieval Europe some 90% (Sarfo-Mensah 2009) of the population were involved in agriculture. Development of the region felt enormous impact of the abolition of serfdom. The reform impoverished part of landowners. Having lost unpaid labour force and gaining no income noblemen would obtain money from cutting down the forests they owned. The area covered by forests in Vilnius Governorate solely shrank almost twice (Juodvalkis et al. 2003).

In 1888, the law concerning forests in tsarist Russia was passed (Stavskiy 1905); it had to legalise the practice of normal use of forests in the region. The new legal act completely

prohibited bare cutting of forests and restricted the alteration of forests to cultivated lands. Nevertheless, majority of the law's provisions were implemented in state forests only. The changes of landscapes and biodiversity were much impacted by the Stolypin Agrarian Reform which dispersed peasants to single farmsteads. If the forest area in peasant's disposition did not exceed 15 ha, owners were allowed to cut them without any permission. In the tsarist empire, the most rapid decline of Lithuanian forests and decrease of woodedness of the region took place, and agricultural landed property covered 67.2% of the region's territory in 1900 (Matonienė & Sudonienė 2004).

The Hunt Laws approved in tsarist Russia in 1871 and 1886 (Turkin 1889) were advanced, with little difference from the Western law. Hunting was divided to large-scale and small-scale. Small-scale hunt regulated the right to hunt for small game; whereas large-scale hunt dealt with big-game (European bison, moose, deer, boars, roes) hunt and the right to hunt (having paid a certain fee) in state forests. Public stroll with a hunting rifle or a gundog without permission was the object to a fine from 1 to 50 roubles, more serious violations led to servitude exile in Siberia. Much harm was made to Lithuanian forests by the World War I (1915–1918). Over the period under occupation of Kaiser Germany, 11,667 thousand cbm of timber, at the value as high as 22 million golden roubles, were exported from the state (Isokas 2006).

First protected territories in their purpose close to the ethics of nature conservation already functioned in tsarist Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1874 on the Ukrainian territory, Friedrich Eduard Falz-Fein allocated over 500 ha of his own estate territory for establishment of the nature reserve. In the neighbouring Estonia, an ornithological reserve was founded in 1910 on Vilsandi isle and in Latvia protection in a similar mode commenced in 1912 near the lake Usmas. In this historical period, there were no protected territories in Lithuania.

While being part of the tsarist empire, Lithuania became an agrarian back-country. Tsarist Russia that incorporated Lithuania for 120 years executed strict policy and made great impact on education and culture of the region. In 1832, Vilnius University was closed. After the uprising in 1863–1864, prohibition of printing, import and distribution of Lithuanian (Latvian Catholic) publications in Latin characters was introduced in Lithuanian governorates. Noblemen still remained a socially dominating power in the region; in ethnic Lithuania they constituted 8–12 % of the population. Majority of them did not speak Lithuanian and identified themselves with Polish culture. New national intelligentsia was formed on the ground of peasant origin, and this resulted in further fate of the Lithuanian state, culture and political awareness. This may be one of the reasons why the first protected territory in Lithuania was founded only in 1938.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Summing up the Baltic period, the earliest written information on the region constantly identified the area as characteristic of swampiness and woodedness. Balts defined the unity with nature through their polytheistic religion. Likely, such attitude could be formed in the first–fourth centuries, in the times of hunting and collecting natural goodies, when provision of a tribe with food and survival of its members depended on success and productivity of nature. Along with the growth of agriculture and stock-raising, the role of hunt decreased. Sacred groves and protected sacral natural objects separately protected by Balts can be relatively attributed to the protected territories in their purpose close to the ethics of nature conservation.

2. Assessing the medieval period from the nature conservation point of view, it was found the feudal law of the GDL related to caste interests restricted the use of natural resources and protected single economically valuable natural resources. Conditions set in the Statutes contributed to conservation of natural landscapes: they prohibited the alteration of the purpose of

forests suitable to hunting into landed properties (state estates were the exception). The influence of the changed religion on perception of the environment and use of natural resources is obvious. Differently from the Balts' movement, Christianity lifted man above nature, perceiving it as a means to meet man's needs.

3. While being incorporated in the tsarist empire, the most rapid extinction of Lithuanian forests and decrease of region's woodedness took place. Deforestation proceeded for the sake of income from timber and aiming to increase the areas of cultivated land. Attention should be focused on the fact that there was no need to develop ideas on nature conservation. Majority of population of the country were agriculturalists, the impact of their activities on environment was minimal and industry did not develop. Occupation of the tsarist Russia as well as abolition of national-cultural autonomy of education had significant influence on transformation of society. Basically, the new national intelligentsia was formed; it put other issues to the first place instead of focusing on nature conservation.

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