Ruler, Protector, and a Fairy Prince: the Everlasting Deeds of Grand Duke Vytautas as Related by the Lithuanian Tatars and Karaites

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This paper is concerned with the image of Grand Duke Vytautas[1] of Lithuania (b. ca. 1350, d. 1430, r. 1392 – 1430) as revealed through the oral tradition of the Lithuanian Tatars and Karaites. While religion and historical faith separate Tatars and Karaites, their common Turkic origins and, most importantly, the legend of their settlement in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania firmly unite them.

Tatar presence in the Lithuanian lands becomes notable after the mid-fourteenth century. As everywhere in Europe, Lithuanian tradition associates Tatars exclusively with warfare. However, there is a major difference between the general European and the Lithuanian perception of Tatars: in Lithuania they are regarded as allies rather than enemies. Such a view is understandable given Lithuanian heathenism, which lasted until 1387. Naturally, collaboration with "Saracens" did not evoke any religious connotations. One would expect a change in attitude after the adoption of Catholicism; paradoxically, the most intensive phase of the Lithuanian-Tatar cooperation falls onto Christian times, that is, on the reign of Grand Duke Vytautas. Having occupied the grand ducal seat in 1392, Vytautas started extending his powers eastwards. He successfully subjugated Ruthenian principalities and by 1397 reached the Tatar hordes.[2] Polish historian Jan Długosz describes this encounter as follows: "Vytautas, in hope of gaining recognition as Christian prince, organises his first campaign against Tatars. His troops march beyond the rivers of the Don and even the Volga. Meeting no opposition, the grand duke reaches the land of the Tatars called Horde. There he captures many thousands of Tatars together with their wives, children, and cattle, and brings them to Lithuania. Half of the captives he sends to the king of Poland, while he retains the rest in Lithuania. Tatars, who arrive in Poland adopt the

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[1] Vytautas is a Lithuanian version of the grand duke's name; he is also known as Witold in Polish and as Vitovt in Russian. Depending upon the choice of the author, all the three versions of the name are equally used in the English language. Henceforth, I shall use the Lithuanian version of the grand duke's name.

[2] For Vytautas' life and activities see Josef Pfitzner, *Großfürst Witold von Litauen als Staatsmann* (Brno, Prague, Leipzig, and Vienna: Rohrer, 1930).

Christian faith and gradually merge with local people. The ones left in Lithuania continue to worship Muhammad and live according to their godless beliefs."[3]

In contrast to quite extensive sources mentioning the Tatar arrival, the story of Karaite settlement in the grand duchy is related only by their own tradition. It tells that Vytautas brought them from Crimea in the year 1218. Such a discrepancy in chronology urged scholars to question the entire issue of Karaite resettlement.[4] Circumstantial evidence ascribes the resettlement of 383 Karaite families to the year 1398.[5]

As to the reason for the resettlement, it is believed that Vytautas' military interests determined Tatar and Karaite arrival. Sources explicitly demonstrate that Tatar military exploits and warfare in general constitute the base for their self-perception as well as social standing.[6] As far as Karaites are concerned, the evi-

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[3] "Alexander Vithawdus Lithwanie dux aliquantulum quietis ab intestino et extemo bello nactus, primam katcholicum se demosntrans principem, in Thartaros agit expedidionem. Et notabili exercitu ex Polonis, Lithwanis et Ruthenis congesto terras et regiones ingreditur Thartarorum. Quos esti ultra fluvium Don, qui Latine Thanaÿs, et prope maximum fluviorum Volham vastando peragrasset, nullam tamen resistenciam reperiens in Thartarorum stacionem, que Orda appellatur, irruens plura milia Thartarorum cum uxoribus, parvulis et peccore cepit et usque in Lithwaniam deduxit; quorum medietatem Wladislao regi et prelatis baronibusque Polonie in victorie signum pro munere misit, reliquam medietatem sibi retinuit. Et Thartari quidem in Poloniam translati, deposito gentilitatis errore, fidem Christi professi sunt et unus populus, cum Polonis iungendo invicem matrimonia, effecti. Hii vero, qui in Lithwania resederant, secta spurcissimi detinentur Machmeti atque in uno angulo terre Lithwanie a Withawdo duce locati suis moribus suosque detestando ritu vivunt," *Joannis Dlugossii annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, 12 bks., eds. Stanisław Gawęda et al. (Warsaw: PWN, 1978 ff.), vol. X: *1370–1405* (1985), p. 221.

[4] Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, 2 vols. reprint introduced by Gerson D. Cohen (New York: Ktav, 1972), vol. II: *Karaitica*, p. 556.

[5] A. Szyszman, "Osadnictwo karaimskie i tatarskie na ziemiach W. Księstwa Litewskiego" (Tatar and Karaite settlement in the lands of the G[rand] Duchy of Lithuania), *Myśl karaimska*, 10 (1932/34), pp. 29-37; idem, "Osadnictwo karaimskie w Trokach za Wielkich Książąt Litewskich" (Karaite settlement in Trakai during the reigns of the Lithuanian grand dukes), *ibid.*, 11 (1935/36), pp. 40-69. Simon Szyszman, *Les Karaïtes d'Europe* (Uppsala: Centre d'études multiethniques de l'Université de Upsal, 1989), pp. 38-46, *passim*; Halina Kobeckaitė, *Lietuvos Karaimai* (Lithuanian Karaites) (Vilnius: baltos lankos, 1997), pp. 42-53.

[6] For the outline of Tatar military history see Jan Tyszkiewicz, "Stanisław Kryczyński i jego 'Kronika wojenna tatarów litewskich'" (Stanisław Kryczyński and his 'Military chronicle of the Lithuanian Tatars'), *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 2 (1984), pp. 117-149. As to the social status, it is commonly assumed that the Lithuanian Tatars were gradually enobled. Such a view is supported by the number of noble families of Tatar origin, see Stanisław Dziadulewicz, *Herbarz rodzin tatarskich w Polsce* (Coats of arms of Tatar families in Poland) (Wilno: Nakładem autora z zasiłkiem Komitetu Funduszu Kultury Narodowej, 1929; reprint Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1986). However, the entire issue is rather complicated. On the one hand, most of the Tatars remained Muslim, and only a Christian could enter the ranks of the gentry. On the other hand, the so-called "hospodar" or landed Tatars possesed all but the political rights of a boyar; hence, there was no vivid difference between them. In addition to the landed Tatars, there was a huge number of commoners who had no military

dence is quite limited. The grand ducal jurisprudence usually employs the same term "Jew" to denote both Karaites and Jews proper. The distinction is that Karaites are referred to as our, meaning grand ducal, Jews.[7] Karaite documents themselves frequently call them grand ducal warriors or colonels.[8] Tradition sometimes ascribes Karaites the service as grand ducal bodyguards.[9] The

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duties. These, even if baptised, could not enter higher strata of society. Summarised from Andzej B. Zakrzewski, "Położenie prawnie tatarów w Wielkiem Księstwie Litewskim (XVI – XVIII w.)" (Legal Position of the Tatars in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 16th–18th Centuries), in *Kipčakų tiurkų orientas Lietuvoje: istorija ir tyrimų perspektyvos. Tarptautinės mokslinės konferencijos skirtos profesoriaus dr. Ananiaszo Zajączkowskio 90-osioms gimimo metinėms, medžiaga. Vilnius, 1993m. spalio 14-15 d.* (The Kipchak-Turkish orient in Lithuania: history and research perspectives. Proceedings of the international scholarly conference dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Prof. Ananiasz Zajączkowski, Vilnius 14-15 October 1993), eds. Tamara Bairašauskaitė and Halina Kobeckaitė (Vilnius: Danielius, 1994), pp. 118-129. For an in-depth study on the issue see Jacek Sobczak, *Położenie prawnie ludności tatarskiej w Wielkim Księstwe Litewskim* (The legal situation of the Tatar people in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) (Warsaw and Poznań: PWN, 1984). The issue of Tatar enoblement received a great deal of scholarly attention, see the following discussion: Piotr Borawski, "Położenie prawne Tatarów w Wielkim Księstwe Litewskim" (The Legal Situation of the Tatars in the Great Duchy of Lithuania), *Lituano Slavica Poznaniaensia. Studia Historyczne*, 2 (1987), pp. 187-211 and Jacek Sobczak, "Z problemtyki położenia prawnego ludności tatarskiej w Wielkim Księstwe Litewskim" (Some Problems of the Legal Situation of the Tatar Population in the Great Duchy of Lithuania), *ibid.*, pp. 212-226.

[7] Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė, "Ką rado Trakuose Žiliberas de Lanua, arba kas yra *Trakų žydai*" (Whom did Ghillebert de Lannoy discover in Trakai and who were the Jews of Trakai?), *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, 7 (1999), pp. 28-37. Sometimes Jews were referred to as Rabaites and Karaites as Karaim, e. g., *Akty otnossiashchiesia k istorii Zapadnoj Rosii sobranyje i izdanyje Arkheograficheskoj Kommisssieju* (Acts concerning the history of the Western Russia, collected and published by the Archeographie Commission), 5 vols. (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii II Otdelenija Sobstvennoj E. I. B. Kantseliarii, 1846-1853), vol. II: *1506 –1544* (1848), no. 5, p. 4.

[8] V. Raudeliūnas and R. Firkovičius, "Teisinė karaimų padėtis Lietuvoje (XIV – XVIII a.)" [Karaite legal situation in Lithuania (fourteenth-eighteenth centuries)], *Socialistinė teisė*, 4 (1975), pp. 48-53 (pp. 48-49).

[9] There is no evidence that Karaites either served as Vytautas' body guards, or that they had similar duties in the service of the later dukes. The entire story seems to have been invented by Szyszman, who wrote that the Karaite garrison tried to prevent the murder of Grand Duke Sigismund in 1440. Szyszman referred to Syrokomla, while the latter referred to Stryjkowski, cf.: "die bewaffnete Intervention zur Verteidigung des Großfürsten Sigismund Kiejstutowicz bei der durch den Fürsten Czartoryski organisierten Verschwörung," Simon Szyszman, "Die Karäer in Ost-Mitteleuropa", *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 6 (1957), pp. 24-54 (n. 56, p. 41); see also idem, *Les Karaïtes*, n. 94, p. 42. Syrokomla writes as follows: "żołnierze spiskowych zajęli zamek i rozpędzili załogę. Nikt im niestawił oporu: Chreścijanie byli w kościołach; Karaimi na hasło trwogi zbiegli się do zamku, lecz, znaleźli bramy zamknięte;" Władysław Syrokomla, *Wycieczki po Litwie w promieniach od Wilna* (Trips in Lithuania around Vilnius), 2 vols. (Wilno: Nakładem księgarza A. Assa, 1857), I, p. 116. Stryjkowski tells nearly the same story: "Ale Żydowie co w mieście mieszkali usłyszawszy onę trwogę, naprzód się do zamku jako na gwałt rzucili, bo inszy mieszczanie wszyscy jako chrześcianie tej godziny

Lithuanian perception of both minorities also associates them with military service.

Although there are quite extensive Karaite and Tatar written records, for the most part they dwell upon religious issues. Therefore, historical memory of these people was transmitted orally not to be put in writing until the eighteenth century. As to the reflections upon the Grand Duke Vytautas, one should emphasise that in the Kipchak dialect, that is the native tongue of Tatars and Karaites (today retained only by the Karaites) the grand duke is called Vatad Bij, that is 'king destroying enemies.'[10]

The earliest testimony to the Tatar oral tradition is a speech addressed to King Sigismund the Old in 1519. As recorded, this appeal reads as follows: "We do not have the blessed memory Vytautas any more. He did not allow us to forget the Prophet; thus, when looking towards the holy places we repeat his name as we repeat the names of our caliphs. We swear on our swords that we do love Lithuanians, this land, these waters, and these trees are precious to us. There by the salted lakes [i.e., in the Crimea], everybody knows that we are not strangers in this land and our children know about him [i.e., Vytautas]."[11]

The other source to be considered here is the story told by an anonymous Muslim pilgrim to Sultan Suleyman and recorded under the title *Rissalei Tatari Leh* (1558).[12] It tells that Tatars in Lithuania worship the great king Wattad,[13] who

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nabożeństwem się bawili," Maciej Stryjkowski, *Kronika Polska, Litewska, Zmódzka i wszystkiej Rusi* (The Polish, Lithuanian, Samogitian, and the Whole-Rus' chronicle), 2 vols. (Warsaw: Naklad Gustawa Leona Glückberga, 1846; reprint, Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe. 1985), vol. II, p. 204. – Interesting evidence about Jewish (Karaite?) solders among the Lithuanian troops comes from from a description of the battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg (15 July 1410) as given in the Bavarian chronicle: "scilicet Tartarorum, Samagitarum, Litoviensium, et etiam Judaeorum quasi totam Prussiam devicit," *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum. Die Geschichtsquellen der Preussischen Vorzeit bis zum Untergange der Ordensherrschaft*, eds. Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen, and Ernst Strehlke, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1861-74; reprint, Frankfurt a. M.: Minerva, 1965), vol. III, p. 418.

[10] Kobeckaitė, *Lietuvos karaimai*, p. 43.

[11] The *Lithuanian Metrica* (unpublished) as quoted in *Dzieła Tadeusza Czackiego* (Works of Tadeusz Czacki), ed. Edward Raczyński, 3 vols. (Poznań: w Drukami J. Łukaszewicza, 1843-45), III (1845), p. 311.

[12] "Zdanie sprawy o Tatarach Litewskich prez jednego z tych Tatarów zlozone sultanowe Sulejmanowi w r. 1558" (Account on the situation of the Lithuanian Tatars written by one of these Tatars for Sultan Suleiman in 1558), ed. A. Muchliński, *Teka Wileńska*, 4 (1858), p. 241-272. Rowell doubts about the authenticity of this text. His arguments are the following: (1) it is the only historiographic text of the Lithuanian Tatars; (2) it is written in good Turkish; however, stylistically, it is more European than Asian; (3) it frequently repeats inscriptions from the *Lithuanian Metrica*, published by Muchliński; however, not all the originals have been found so far; (4) the account calls Lithuania Poland and avoids the toponym 'Lipka/Libka,' which was generally used to refer to the Lithuanian Tatars; and (5) it expresses ideas of Sarmatism, not yet popular in the mid-16th century, Stephen C. Rowell, "Lietuva, tėvyne mūsų? Tam tikrų XVI a. LDK raštijų pavyzdžiai" (Lithuania Our Ancestral Home? Variations on a Theme from Certain 16th-Century Literary Traditions), in *Senosios raštijos ir tautosakos sąveika: kultūrinė*

resettled them in the grand duchy. This king is like a column supporting the Muslim faith in the northern countries; therefore, annually one day is dedicated to his memory. Muslims living in the grand duchy visit their shrines and remember him in prayers.[14]

Besides these rhetorical speeches, the grand duke is mentioned in Tatar folklore and tales of the origins of families and settlements. One of the popular legends says that Vytautas had permitted Tatar polygamy in order to increase the number of his favoured subjects.[15] Such an explanation of Muslim life style clearly illustrates the power of Vytautas' image. The grand duke's desire cloaks the practices subject to religious regulations.

The origin stories constitute the largest group of Tatar sources. As with most of the tales of this genre, usually there is a material proof of a story's validity, which sometimes goes beyond traditional *lieux de mémoire* and offers a *chose* or *temps de mémoire*. The legend of the beginnings of the village Studzianka ('little well' in Polish) is the following: Once upon a time, Grand Duke Vytautas admired the place called Dolina (i.e., 'valley'). He used to visit this valley on his way home from campaigns in far-away countries. Most of all, the duke enjoyed drinking clear and cool water from the local spring. Later the spring was cased into a little well. In memory of Vytautas, Tatars living there call the entire place Studzianka.[16]

Quite a number of stories pertain to the establishment of a Tatar village known as Sorok Tatary[17] (i.e., 'Forty Tatars'). One of them relates about Vytautas: the grand duke had awarded Tatar warriors with vast, yet uninhabited lands. In

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Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės patirtis (The Interaction of Old Literature and Folklore: Cultural Experience of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), ed. Rita Repšiene (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 1998), p. 123-137 (p. 132). Rowell's arguments are well-based, however, this question should be answered by a linguist. As to historical and circumstancial arguments, several pieces of Muchliński's evidence are suspicious; nevertheless, I lack the explication of the motives for creating a forgery. (Romantic spirit is not enough). Moreover, the "Lipka/Libka" argument does not have a strong basis, especially when it concerns the 16th c. Having analysed the usage of this term, Łapicz concluded that it is certain that the denomination Lipka refers to Tatar rebels, who abandoned the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for the Ottoman Empire in 1672, Czesław Łapicz, *Kitab tatarów litewsko-polskich (Paleografia. Grafika. Język)* (Khitab of Lithuanian-Polish Tartars. Paleography. Graphy. Language) (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 1986), p. 24.

[13] Muchliński suggested that originally the name could have been "Witud," however, it was changed while copying into "Wattad," the word meaning column, "Zdanie sprawy", n. 1, p. 253.

[14] "Zdanie sprawy", pp. 252-253.

[15] Kričinskis, *Lietuvos totoriai. Istorines ir etnografinės monografijos bandymas* (Lithuanian Tatars: an attempt of a historical and ethnographic monograph), transl. Tamara Bairašauskaitė (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1993), p. 120.

[16] Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje. obrzędy. legendy. tradycje* (The Polish Tatars: history, rites, legends, and traditions) (Warsaw: Iskry, 1986), p. 231.

[17] Keturiasdešimt Totorių, Lt / Pl, Czterdzieście Tatarów / Kirkalary in Tatar.

order to populate his possession, one of these Tatars married four women at the same time. They bore him forty sons. When the brothers grew up they established a settlement known in Byelorusian as Sorok Tatary.[18]

As to the family origins, these not only refer to Vytautas, but also consider another key event of medieval Polish-Lithuanian history, the battle of Grunwald/ Tannenberg (15 July 1410). Many families indicated that their forefathers arrived to Lithuania with the troops of Khan Dzhelal-al-Din, who lead victorious Tatar forces against the Teutonic Knights.[19] Sometimes the military motif is exploited more thoroughly. For example, the Bielak family associates their origins with an ancient bow, which once belonged to their ancestor Kara Mirza. The latter participated in numerous battles against Lithuania, until Vytautas overcame the Tatar troops. Heavily wounded, Kara Mirza became the grand duke's captive. Vytautas, a merciful ruler and a brave knight, turned these prisoners into his solders, granting them lands of his realm. Kara Mirza also received his share. The grand duke changed his name into Bielak (i.e., the white) as opposite to Kara, which means black in the Tatar tongue. Bielak faithfully served Vytautas, earning numerous favours from the grand duke.[20]

The nobility confirmation issued for the Dovgial family includes the following story: during the times of Vytautas, Lithuania was frequently at war with her neighbours. The grand duke invited Crimean Tatars to assist him in warfare. This was the time when the forerunners of the Dzhalair Murza Dovgial family arrived in Lithuania. Having acknowledged their heroism, Vytautas granted the family lands.[21]

To summarise the Tatar evidence, the motif of resettlement constitutes the basis for the most of the stories. Interestingly enough, Karaite folklore does not address the issue of origins. These are mostly fairy tales; hence, Vytautas appears as a fairy hero. Tradition says that whenever Karaite texts mention the duke's name, the blessing formula, let him rest in peace, always follows it.[22]

Most of the Karaite folklore originates from the town of Trakai/Troki, which once housed Vytautas' favourite residence and still remains the principal Karaite settlement in Lithuania. One of the stories tells that some time in the early stage of Karaite arrival in Trakai, it was raining so heavily that the waters of the lake Galvė flooded Karaite Street severely endangering the survival of the entire community. Karaite men were fighting in far-away battles; thus, there was no one to protect women and household. In the face of such a disaster, people realised

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[18] Borawski, Dubiński, pp. 232-33.

[19] Ibid., pp. 241-242 and "Zdanie sprawy", p. 252.

[20] Borawski, Dubiński, p. 242.

[21] Tamara Bairašauskaitė, *Lietuvos totoriai XIX amžiuje* (Lithuanian Tatars in the nineteenth century) (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), p. 52.

[22] A. Mukhlinski, *Izledovamie o proiskhozhdenii i sostoyanii Litovskikh tatar* (Research on the origins and the current state of the Lithuanian Tatars) (St Petersburg: v tipografii Eduarda Veimara, 1857; reprint Minsk: Adradzhen'ne, 1993), p. 14.

that only Vytautas could help them. Women assembled and approached the grand duke in search of support and protection. Vytautas looked through the window of his castle and addressed the ladies in their own tongue. He calmed the women saying that he would definitely find a means to help them and prevent the troubles. Without the slightest hesitation, Vytautas mounted his white horse and galloped to the place of disaster. There he ordered the horse to drink the waters of the flood. The horse immediately obeyed the order. As it drank, the waters diminished, and people prayed. Soon the flood was over and Karaites returned home to tell everyone about the glory of the duke and his horse. Meanwhile, the horse rose as if a mountain and slowly moved to the fields. In the place where he stopped the lake Puvus (i.e., rotten) was formed. Even today, says the legend, the waters of this lake on the edge of the town have a strange scent of sweat, reminding the townsmen of the miraculous horse of Vytautas.[23]

In sight of the ruins of the grand ducal castles, the Karaite community reflected upon themselves as the only guardians of Vytautas' memory.[24] Moreover, Karaites of Trakai explain their specific architecture, that is, three windows on the street side, as being a replica of Vytautas' palace, which also has three windows on its side walls.[25]

Another motif frequent in Karaite folklore is the link with their ancient motherland in the Crimea. Actually, Karaites never forgot their oriental origins and emphasised them by wearing oriental armour. Oral culture also maintained an oriental connection. One legend tells about the son of Vytautas' councillor Zarakh and reveals Karaite service to the grand duke. Vytautas ordered the young man to travel to Crimea and deliver presents as well as forward regards to the khan. On the way southwards robbers attacked the travellers in an attempt to steal the carriages loaded with precious furs. The young man started fighting with the chieftain of the robbers. When his father noticed that the son would soon win, he warned him not to kill the enemy, but rather to cut his ear. The winner followed the advice. Moreover, he bandaged the enemy's head. Impressed by the young man's virtue, the chieftain gave him a ring, which protected the carts throughout their way to Crimea. The messengers handed the khan the gifts from Vatad Bij and

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[23] Kobeckaitė, *Lietuvos karaimai*, pp. 81-82, for the rhymed version of the legend see Simon Firkovič / Simonas Firkovičius, "Batyr bijniń tamaša akty / Stebuklingas didžiojo kunigaikščio žirgas" (The miraculous horse of the grand duke), *ibid.*, pp. 115-118. A slightly different version of the legend (the horse spits the waters and forms the lake Galvė) is given by Grzegorz Pełczyński, *Najmniejsza mniejszość. Rzecz o Karaimach polskich* (The smallest minority: A study on Polish Karaites) (Warsaw: Stanisław Kryciński and Towarzystwo Karpackie, 1995), p. 45.

[24] Kobeckaitė, *Lietuvos karaimai*, p. 80.

[25] Pełczyński, p. 50. For the architecture of Trakai see Algirdas Baliulis, Stanislovas Mikulionis, and Algimantas Miškinis, *Trakų miestas ir pilys. Istorija ir architektūra* (The city and the castles of Trakai: history and architecture) (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1991).

forwarded his regards. The young man was acknowledged for his excellence and received the name of Alankasar, meaning 'the hero.'[26]

Karaite stories demonstrate a strong bond and express mutual favor between Vytautas and the community. Although Tatar and Karaite evidence differ in themes concerned with the grand duke, the ruler is always revealed as a powerful sovereign and the protector of the resettled people.

An extremely positive image of the grand duke is neither a Karaite nor a Tatar invention. Vytautas spared no endeavours in building up his image and his efforts were crowned with success; according to Długosz, having learned of the grand duke's death, the Lithuanian people lamented as if burying the father of their nation.[27] Thus, Tatars and Karaites could easily absorb and develop the existing tradition. Although credible, this observation does not pertain to oral culture. Legends about the isles of Lamentation ("Raudinė" in Lithuanian) in the lakes around Trakai testify to massive executions once performed there. Even the lake Galvė, which surrounds Vytautas' castle, is said to have received its name from the head of a knight decapitated by the grand duke (the word for head in Lithuanian is 'galva').[28] Moreover, written sources also confirm to the image of Vytautas as a tyrant.[29] Looking from today's perspective, tyranny accords well with the idea of resettlement: it still happens that people or even entire nations change their living places upon someone's desire. Viewed in this light, it is outstanding that Vytautas' image as resettler is a genuinely positive construction. Moreover, it has been thoroughly exploited until the present: after the Word War I Karaites paralleled their return from evacuation to the arrival of 1398. Later this motif was staged during various historical occasions[30] and profoundly performed in 1997 during the events dedicated to the 600th anniversary of Tatar and Karaite settlement in Lithuania.

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[26] Kobeckaitė, *Lietuvos karaimai*, pp. 80-81.

[27] "Omnes illum, velut parentem patriae, lamentabantur absumtum," *Joannis Długosz Senioris Canonici Cracoviensis Opera Omnia*, ed. by Alexander Przezdziecki, 14 vols. (Cracow: Czas, 1863-87), vol. XIII (1877), p. 415.

[28] For the legends see Galina Bogdel, *Trakų krašto legendos ir pasakos* (The legends and fairy tales from the Trakai area) (Trakai: n. p., 1996), pp. 24-25.

[29] E.g., "Vitoldus huic praefuit Vladislai frater, qui relicto Deorum cultu cum regno Poloniae Christi sacramentum acceppit. Magnum Vitoldi nomen sua temestate fuit, quem subditi adeo timuerunt, ut iussi laqueo se suspendere parere potius quam in principis indignationem incidere voluerint; detrectantes imperium insutos ursina pelle viventibus ursis, quos eam ob causam nutriebat, dilaniandos obiectavit crudelibusque aliis affecit suppliciis. Equitans acrum semper tensum gestavit. Si quem conspicatus est aliter incidere quam voluit, confestim sagitta confodit, multos quoque per ludum interemit. Sanginarius carnifex, ut esset inter populares et ipsium principem certum faciei discrimen, radere barbam omnibus imperavit. Id ubi non successit – facilius enim cervicis quam barbae iacturam Lituani ferebant – tonsus ipse mentum et caput prodiit, capitale interminatus, is quis provincialium pilos faciei capiti suo deponeret;" "V. Aeneas Sylvius Preussen betreffende Schriften", ed. Th. Hirsch, in *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, IV, p. 237.

[30] For the inter-war events see Kobeckaitė, *Lietuvos karaimai*, pp. 56 and 119.

To conclude, the diverse and contradictory image of Grand Duke Vytautas has been shaped by many people and numerous authors. However, the tradition of the Lithuanian Tatars and Karaites adorned him with an eternal aura inspired by the duke's initiatives of resettlement, thus, constituting the base for the Tatar and Karaite legacy in Lithuania.

ORAL HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE AGES
THE SPOKEN WORD IN CONTEXT

Edited by Gerhard Jaritz and Michael Richter

MEDIUM AEVUM QUOTIDIANUM

SONDERBAND XII

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VOLUME 3

Oral History of the Middle Ages
The Spoken Word in Context

Edited by Gerhard Jaritz and Michael Richter

Krems and Budapest 2001

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER ABTEILUNG KULTUR UND WISSENSCHAFT DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

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Cover illustration: The wife of Potiphar covets Joseph: "... erat autem Joseph pulchra facie et decorus apectu: post multos itaque dies iecit domina oculos suis in Ioseph et ait dormi mecum." ("... And Joseph was [a] goodly [person], and well favoured. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me."), Gen. 39: 6-7 (KJV). Concordantiae Caritatis, c. 1350. Cistercian abbey of Lilienfeld (Lower Austria), ms 151, fol. 244v (detail). Photo: Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit (Krems an der Donau).

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Preface

Oral culture played an instrumental role in medieval society.[1] Due to the lack of any direct source evidence, however, research into the functions and importance of oral communication in the Middle Ages must confront a number of significant problems. Only indrect traces offer the opportunity to analyze phenomena that were based on or connected with the spoken word. The 'oral history' of the Middle Ages requires the application of different approaches than dealing with the 20th or 21st century.

For some decades Medieval Studies have been interested in questions of orality and literacy, their relationship and the substitution of the spoken by the written word.[2] Oral and literate culture were not exclusive and certainly not opposed to each other.[3] The 'art of writing' was part of the 'ars rhetorica' and writing makes no sense without speech.[4] Any existing written statement should also be seen as a spoken one, although, clearly, not every oral statement as a written one. Authors regularly wrote with oral delivery in mind. 'Speaking' and 'writing' are not antonyms.

It is also obvious that "the use of oral communication in medieval society should not be evaluated . . . as a function of *culture populaire* vis-à-vis *culture savante* but, rather, of the communication habits and the tendency of medieval man

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[1] For the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, cf. Willem Frijhoff, "Communication et vie quotidienne à la fin du moyen âge et à l'epoque moderne: réflexions de théorie et de méthode," in *Kommuniation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut Hundsbichler (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), p. 24: "La plupart de gens vivait encore pour l'essentiel dans une culture orale et les procédés d'appropriation des idées passaient de préférence par la parole dite et écoutée, quand bien même on était capable d'une lecture visuelle plus ou moins rudimentaire."

[2] See Marco Mostert, "New Approaches to Medieval Communication?" in *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, ed. Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 15-37; Michael Richter, "Die Entdeckung der 'Oralität' der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft durch die neuere Mediävistik," in *Die Aktualität des Mittelalters*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: D. Winkler, 2000), pp. 273-287.

[3] Peter Burke calls the construct of "oral versus literate" useful but at the same time dangerous: idem, "Mündliche Kultur und >Druckkultur< im spätmittelalterlichen Italien," in *Volkskultur des europäischen Spätmittelalters*, eds. Peter Dinzelbacher and Hans-Dieter Mück (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1987), p. 60.

[4] Michael Clanchy, "Introduction," in *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, ed. Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), p. 6.

to share his intellectual experiences in the corporate framework."[5] Oral delivery was not "the sole prerogative of any socioeconomic class."[6]

For all these reasons, it is important to analyze the extent of and context, in which 'speech acts,' auditive effects, and oral tradition occur in medieval sources .[7] Research into the use of the spoken word or references to it in texts and images provides new insight into various, mainly social, rules and patterns of the communication system. It opens up additional approaches to the organization and complexity of different, but indispensably related, media in medieval society, and their comparative analysis.[8]

The spoken word is connected with the physical presence of its 'sender.' Speech may represent the authenticity of the given message in a more obvious way than written texts or images. Therefore, the use of 'speech acts' in written or visual evidence also has to be seen in context with the attempt to create, construct, or prove authenticity. Moreover, spoken messages contribute to and increase the lifelikeness of their contents, which may influence their perception by the receiver, their efficacy and success. Being aware of such a situation will have led to the explicit and intended use and application of the spoken word in written texts and images – to increase their authenticity and importance, too.

If one operates with a model of 'closeness' and 'distance' of communication with regard to the level of relation of 'senders' and 'receivers,' then the 'speech acts' or their representation have to be seen as contributors to a 'closer' connection among the participants of the communication process.[9] At the same time, however, speech might be evaluated as less official. One regularly comes across 'oral space'

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[5] Sophia Menache, *The Vox Dei. Communication in the Middle Ages* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 19.

[6] Ibidem, p. 21. Cf. also Jan-Dirk Müller, "Zwischen mündlicher Anweisung und schriftlicher Sicherung von Tradition. Zur Kommunikationsstruktur spätmittelalterlicher Fechtbücher," in *Kommunikation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut Hundsbichler (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), p. 400: "Offensichtlich sind schriftliche und nichtschriftliche Tradierung von Wissen weiterhin relativ unabhängig voneinander, nachdem die Schrift längst dazu angesetzt hat, Inseln der Mündlichkeit oder praktisch-enaktiver Wissensvermittlung zu erobern. Die Gedächtnisstütze kann die Erfahrung nicht ersetzen, sondern allenfalls reaktivieren. Sie ist sogar nur verständlich, wo sie auf anderweitig vermittelte Vorkenntnisse stößt."

[7] Cf. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, ed., *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1995).

[8] See, esp., Horst Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen, Schrift und Bild. Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1995), passim.

[9] See also Stefan Sonderegger, ">Gesprochen oder nur geschrieben?< Mündlichkeit in mittelalterlichen Texten als direkter Zugang zum Menschen," in *Homo Medietas. Aufsätze zu Religiosität, Literatur und Denkformen des Menschen vom Mittelalter bis in die Neuzeit. Festschrift für Alois Maria Haas zum 65. Geburtstag,* eds. Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde and Niklaus Largier (Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 1999), p. 665: "Jedenfalls darf man sich bewußt bleiben, daß auch in den Texten des deutschen Mittelalters die Reflexe gesprochener Sprache eine bedeutende Schicht ausmachen, die besonders dann immer wieder hervortritt, wenn es um einen direkten Zugang zum Menschen geht, um einVerstehen aus unmittelbarer Partnerschaft heraus ..."

that has become institutionalized or more official by the application of 'written space.'[10] Simultanous employment of such different levels and qualities of messages must often have had considerable influence on their efficacy.[11]

The papers in this volume are the outcome of an international workshop that was held in February, 2001, at the Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest. Participants concentrated on problems of the occurrence, usage, and patterns of the spoken word in written and visual sources of the Middle Ages. They dealt with the role and contents of direct and indirect speech in textual evidence or in relation to it, such as chronicles, travel descriptions, court and canonization protocols, sermons, testaments, law-books, literary sources, drama, etc. They also tried to analyze the function of oral expression in connection with late medieval images.

The audiovisuality of medieval communication processes[12] has proved to be evident and, thus, important for any kind of further comparative analysis of the various levels of the 'oral–visual–literate,' i.e. multimedia culture of the Middle Ages. Particular emphasis has to be put on methodological problems, such as the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches,[13] or the question of the extent to which we are, generally, able to comprehend and to decode the communication systems of the past.[14] Moreover, the medievalist does not come across any types of sources in which oral communication represents the main concern.[15] Instead, she or he is confronted, at first glance, with a great variety of 'casual' and 'marginal' evidence.

We would like to thank all the contributors to the workshop and to this volume. Their cooperation made it possible to publish the results of the meeting in the same year in which it took place. This can be seen as a rare exception, at least in the world of the historical disciplines. The head, faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Medieval Studies of Central European University offered various help and support. Special thanks go to Judith Rasson, the copy editor of

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[10] This, e.g., could be well shown in a case study on the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela: Friederike Hassauer, "Schriftlichkeit und Mündlichkeit im Alltag des Pilgers am Beispiel der Wallfahrt nach Santiago de Compostela," in *Wallfahrt und Alltag in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, eds. Gerhard Jaritz and Barbara Schuh (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), pp. 277-316.

[11] Cf. Bob Scribner, "Mündliche Kommunikation und Strategien der Macht in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Kommunikation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut Hundsbichler (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), pp. 183-197.

[12] Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen*, p. 292.

[13] Cf. Ursula Schaefer, "Zum Problem der Mündlichkeit," in *Modernes Mittelalter. Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche*, ed. Joachim Heinzle (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1994), pp. 374 f.

[14] Frijhoff, "Communication et vie quotidienne," p. 25: "Sommes-nous encore en mesure de communiquer avec la communication de jadis?"

[15] Michael Richter, *Sprache und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen zur mündlichen Kommunikation in England von der Mitte des elften bis zu Beginn des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1979), p. 22.

this volume, who took particluar care with the texts of the many non-native speakers fighting with the pitfalls of the English language.

Budapest, Krems, and Constance
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Gerhard Jaritz and Michael Richter