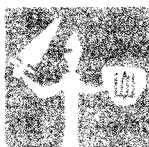


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# Living in the Borderland: The Case of Polish-Lithuanians

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DARIUS DAUKŠAS

Since the ninth decade of the twentieth century, those engaged in the humanities and social sciences have held the notion of nation as an imagined community.<sup>1</sup> A number of scholarly works have been written regarding how that image of community is constructed (e.g., through language, traditions, the press, and other methods), although there is another equally important aspect in discussing an imagined community in today's world: affiliation to a state and nation through citizenship. Citizenship is the main legal bond between citizens and the state, indicating membership in a political community. At the same time, citizenship also creates a feeling of membership in a common group. Belonging to a state on the basis of citizenship is often done using a notion of nationality that contrasts with the understanding of ethnicity, which points to an imagined community based on the categories of nature and birth origins.

The purpose of this article is to explore the meaning of national/citizen identity in present-day Lithuania and to explain national identity in relation to ethnic identity. The case of Polish-Lithuanians living in the Šalčininkai area is offered, with the prior hypothesis that the age of an informant is relevant to defining one's membership in a state. The choice of Šalčininkai for the study is not accidental, since it reflects the complicated

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

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meaning of ethnic/national identity in a borderland. During field studies, using a semi-structured interview method, it was intended to clarify how the inhabitants of Šalčininkai understand their ethnic and national identity. Results collected during several field studies in 2005, 2009, and 2012 are used in this report.<sup>2</sup>

According to the 2001 census, 79.9 percent of those living in the Šalčininkai area describe themselves as Poles, making it a dense Polish-Lithuanian area.<sup>3</sup> The historical context in this region (we are referring to the town of Šalčininkai) plays an important role. During the first years of Lithuanian independence, debates transpired regarding the various levels of declared Polish autonomy, and the Šalčininkai area was one of the most active participants in this cause.<sup>4</sup> The presumption is that, even after a relatively short period (about twenty years), historical events can have an effect on the construction of Polish-Lithuanian identity and their identification with the state (states). The Poles living in Šalčininkai and in the Vilnius area could be described as unusual and perhaps not representative of greater Lithuania's Poles, especially those living in Middle Lithuania.<sup>5</sup> Polish-Lithuanians living in Vilnius area are often described in Lithuanian historiographic literature using the *paribis* (borderland) concept.<sup>6</sup> However, it is not the intention here to demonstrate or prove the differences or similarities of

<sup>2</sup> The first field study, completed in 2005, was part of the project "Normative and folk understanding of kinship and ethnicity" (financed by Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation). Another field study was completed during September and October 2009 in Šalčininkai. The last field study was completed in 2012 as part of the project "The Impact of Globalization and Transnationalism on the Fragmentation of State and National Identity" (the project was financed by the Research Council of Lithuania).

<sup>3</sup> See *Lietuvos apskritys*, 63.

<sup>4</sup> See Budrytė, *Taming Nationalism: Popovski, National Minorities*.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the Polish Lithuanians living in the Kėdainiai and Panevėžys areas are seen as fully integrated into Lithuania's political and social life.

<sup>6</sup> Kasatkina and Leonicikas, *Lietuvos*.

Polish-Lithuanians, but to examine the essential self-understanding of the Polish-Lithuanians as reported by the informants in Šalčininkai.

### *Ethnic and National Identity in a Borderland*

In today's world, a state is generally described as national, i.e., a nation-state.<sup>7</sup> In this conjunction of concepts, a nation, according to Benedict Anderson, defines an imaginary community bound by nationalism as a homogenizing force.<sup>8</sup> National identities in this paper are understood as a national ideology seeking to connect all the individuals living in the nation's territory as an "imagined community." The essence of nationalism can be explained in a few sentences. Nationalism is an ideology whose essence is: the sovereign state must be connected with the nation within its boundaries, that is, with people who differ from other nations. Nationalism, as one of a nation-state's ideologies, underscores that political boundaries must coincide with national boundaries.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, the question of boundaries has great significance for the ideology of nationalism, stressing the importance of a clearly defined state territory, without which nationalism would be impossible.<sup>10</sup> In other words, "The idea of 'the state' legitimates the fact of rule, nationalism legitimates who controls the state, for whom, and to what general ends."<sup>11</sup>

The described concurrence of a nation and a state's boundaries should be understood as an ideal model. In most states, there exist groups of people who are considered culturally different. The concept of ethnicity is often used in describing these people. Ethnic theories in anthropology describe "social relationships between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups."<sup>12</sup> Using

<sup>7</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Williams, *A Class Act*.

<sup>9</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 108.

<sup>10</sup> Ferguson, "Introduction."

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 12.

this definition, it would be difficult to discuss the differences between ethnicity and nationality, because both underscore collective commonality and at the same time define the boundary of the "other." Current scholarly literature stresses that the main difference between ethnicity and nationality lies in the latter's relationship to the state.<sup>13</sup> As mentioned earlier, nationalistic ideology seeks to integrate the political and cultural boundaries of a nation, while ethnicity is most often not seen as seeking influence in the state. On the other hand, ethnicity can be ideologized and become nationalism in the political mobilization process.<sup>14</sup> In the event that ethnicity is presented as ideology, it is often referred to as ethnonationalism as opposed to civic nationalism.<sup>15</sup> The latter stresses "civil rights rather than shared cultural roots."<sup>16</sup> Ethnonationalism is based on the ideal of a monoethnic nation, on which account, one would think, arise the basic present-day conflicts in a state defining the relationship between the dominant national group and national minorities.

In discussing national minorities, the anthropologist Gerd Bauman stresses that current nation-states can be understood in two ways. First, they represent themselves as postethnic, because, through the notion of citizenship, they attempt to show that the earlier ethnic divisions are a thing of the past and the idea of a nation should unite the imagined people's community on the basis of citizenship.<sup>17</sup> However, although it may seem strange, nation-states are also super ethnonations and may be considered a large ethnic group.<sup>18</sup> This scholar holds that most of the nation-states were unsuccessful in creating a nation based totally on citizenship and that ethnic divisions are still an important factor in discussing why one group assumes a dominant position and leaves no room for others in a nation-state

<sup>13</sup> Banks, *Ethnicity*.

<sup>14</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 107.

<sup>15</sup> See Giordano, "Affiliation"; Čiubrinskas, "Forging."

<sup>16</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 119.

<sup>17</sup> Bauman, *The Multicultural Riddle*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

project. Those groups that are marginalized or do not enter the dominant nation because of their ethnic differences are forced to become minorities.<sup>19</sup>

The aspect of a dominant majority or minority is perhaps best seen in a country's borderlands, especially if the country's borders have changed relatively recently (as, for instance, in the Vilnius region, which had been a part of Poland until 1939).

The so-called anthropology of borders, which chose the borderlands territories and the processes acting on them as the subject of its studies, became established in political anthropology relatively recently. Two noted anthropologists in this field, Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, characterize it as the interaction between a state and a nation, and demonstrate how this interaction is reflected in people's daily lives.<sup>20</sup> According to the description offered, a state's borders are comprised of three elements: The state borderline that separates two countries; the state's physical structures that mark and guard the country's boundary; and the frontier territories, which can be of varying extent and not necessarily directly connected to the state's borderline. These are the zones where the inhabitants question their place within the nation and the state.<sup>21</sup>

From this description, it becomes evident that borders are much more than lines separating two states; they are a cultural range, a borderland without clear boundaries. It is important to keep in mind not only a concrete functioning border, which separates two or more nation-states, but also that border "in the past, present and future."<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the borderland is understood not just as an institutionalized space in the present, but also as a cultural range, a zone of cultural overlap. Historically, cultural overlap zones arise most often in borderlands, in which questions of national identity and people's loyalty to a state are less than clear.<sup>23</sup> In discussing the identity of people

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Donnan and Wilson, *Borders*, 63.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson and Donnan, "Nation," 9; Donnan and Wilson, *Borders*, 15-16.

<sup>22</sup> Wilson and Donnan, "Nation," 7.

<sup>23</sup> Kaplan, "Territorial Identities," 37.

living in borderlands, the researchers think it is most useful to analyze them through the prism of ethnicity and nationality, while at the same time understanding that "these identities cannot be studied in a political vacuum, however, no matter how hard some anthropologists try to portray them as local isolates."<sup>24</sup>

A nation-state could not exist without a territory or without a national idea connecting the state and the territory. In an ideal situation, the three criteria should coincide.<sup>25</sup> However, there are many situations where the three criteria do not build on each other. More precisely, the state, as a product of the territory, functions within clearly defined borders, but the nation's borders do not always coincide with the physical borders of the state. This is especially true of nations formed after the fall of earlier multiethnic empires, where the borders of the newly formed states were drawn without regard to the identity of the population. For this reason, the identity of the people living in the borderlands is often described as multidimensional and unstable, dependent on the state's political program, because the people are not bound to the state by blood or cultural ties.<sup>26</sup>

According to H. Donnan, it is precisely within these border regions that ethnic and national interpersonal tensions are felt most acutely. In his words, "state nationalism and citizenship, draw border people inward, away from the border, toward the centers of culture and power within the state, similar ties of ethnic and national affinity simultaneously pull them in the opposite direction, across the border."<sup>27</sup>

### *Šalčininkai: Between Lithuania and Poland?*

Before discussing the identity issues of Polish-Lithuanians living in the Šalčininkai area, it is necessary to give a short description of some of the specifics of this region.

<sup>24</sup> Donnan and Wilson, *Borders*, 63.

<sup>25</sup> Wilson and Donnan, "Nation."

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–13.

<sup>27</sup> Donnan, "Material Identities," 70.

In beginning a discussion about Polish-Lithuanians, one must keep in mind the regional differences that manifest themselves quite clearly, both in language and identity.

The Vilnius region (which also includes the Šalčininkai area) belonged to Poland throughout almost the entire period between the wars (1920–1939). For a short time in 1939, the region belonged to Lithuania, and later, together with the occupied Republic of Lithuania, the region was incorporated into the Soviet Union. When Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, the region became part of the Republic of Lithuania.

During the period of Lithuania's reestablishment, one of the clearest and most pressing issues was the problem of autonomy for Polish-Lithuanians.<sup>28</sup> Some of the questions related to them have still not been addressed, as witnessed by the public discourse on such issues as the posting of street names in Polish, the spelling of Polish names in Lithuanian passports, and the issuance of a Polish identity card. The media often characterize the Polish card as fostering lack of loyalty to the Lithuanian state.

Quite often, the Šalčininkai region is described as "distanced" from Lithuania proper, both economically and culturally. It is noteworthy that the press clearly contributes to the formation of this discourse, because Šalčininkai and its region are portrayed as an example of "distancing" from the rest of Lithuania. People interviewed during the research period also stress this sense of distance. Comments of this type seem to be part of daily discourse and are used to explain their supposedly harder economic situation, for example, their claim that more money is allotted to "there, in Lithuania," while "here, in Šalčininkai," even the budget office employees are allegedly paid lower salaries. People explain that because of this apparent discrimination, they are unable to integrate successfully into Lithuania's cultural and economic life, and the main reason is the lack of proficiency in the national language. The demographic makeup of this region is also important. According to statistical

<sup>28</sup> See Popovski, *National Minorities*; Budryte, *Taming Nationalism*.

data, 39,282 persons live in the Šalčininkai region and, of those, 31,223 consider themselves Poles.<sup>29</sup> During the field studies, however, it was noted that one often heard Russian spoken on the streets, instead of Polish or Lithuanian. The use of Russian could be partially explained by the Soviet policy of forced assimilation, when many Russian-speakers from all over the Soviet Union were moved into this region and the surrounding areas, and because of the aggressive Soviet educational policy of establishing Russian schools. Another influence in the spread of Russification was the fact that, after World War II, around 170,000 people were repatriated to Poland.<sup>30</sup>

It appears that this cultural “distancing” is not as acute for the younger generation; this is reflected by the numbers attending Lithuanian universities and trying to establish themselves in the Lithuanian work force (this was often mentioned in the interviews). The younger generation also doesn’t face a language problem, owing to the favorable Lithuanian educational policy, because Lithuanian language classes are required even in Polish-language schools.

#### *Ethnic Identity: its Roots and Place*

Before we begin to discuss the national/civic identity of the Polish-Lithuanians living in Šalčininkai, it is essential to examine just how important ethnicity is to them, since the mere concept of a Polish-Lithuanian already ascribes a certain “otherness” from Lithuanians.

As mentioned earlier, the concept of ethnicity points to a certain commonality. Certain cultural elements, such as language, dress, and food, delineate the differences between “us” and the “other.” From the results of our field studies, one could conclude that family descent, and not cultural factors, is understood as the strongest element indicating who is Polish. It is also significant that age is not a determining factor; both the older and the younger generations used family descent as

<sup>29</sup> *Lietuvos apskritys*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> See Kalanius, *Etniniai*.

a basis for their interpretation. The following interview with a man, age 31, indicates why he considers himself a Pole:

*“Why do you call yourself a Pole?”*

Well... that depends on the roots. Let’s say, well ... at the time of our great-grandparents. They were all Polish, well, let’s say Polish-Lithuanians, and my parents are Polish, and I am Polish, and we have a lot of relatives in Poland proper. And let’s say, earlier, in Vilnius and the region. Well, one can’t say that it was all Polish, but the majority were Polish. So I am from this area, was born here; so that is why I can say that I am Polish. (Male, 31)

In this interview excerpt, besides family origin (the parents and grandparents were Polish), there is another important element: the territory; or, more precisely, in that territory, Poles compose or have composed the majority of inhabitants, and that in itself acts as a certain guarantee in determining who is Polish. Many of the other informants also use the territory in which they live, as well as family origins, as grounds for defining their ethnic identity. An excerpt from another interview more clearly indicates the relationship between family origin and territory by a description of a cemetery and ancestors buried there:

You know, I don’t know history, I just think our history begins with the cemetery. Our ancestors lie there, when I go to our cemetery – I don’t know, they say this was Russia, or that we were Lithuanian and then we were Polonized – but I can only say, that, for instance, all the surnames are Polish: my great-grandmother’s surname is Polish; all our surnames in the cemetery are written in Polish. We don’t have a single surname, I have in mind old gravestones, which means that my ancestors considered themselves Polish; and that’s in my blood, and I also consider myself Polish. (Female, 50)

It is of interest that cultural factors, such as language, are not mentioned as strong determinants of being Polish. On the contrary, during our field studies, we met many people who consider themselves Poles, but do not speak the language, or for whom Polish was not the only language in which they interacted at home or in public places. Often people stressed that,

in Šalčininkai, people communicate in three languages. In the following interview, a young woman who considers herself Polish and uses Polish language at work, describes her use of language in the following way:

*And how do you communicate with your parents, which language do you use in general?*

Polish, Russian and Lithuanian quite often. Well, let's say the three languages simultaneously.

*But most often?*

Most often Russian: at home, in the shops in town; for instance, with friends it happens that we also use Lithuanian, if the Lithuanians don't understand Polish.

*But Russian most often in town?*

Well, yes, most often.

*And you use Russian within your family?*

Yes.

*Sometimes, or...?*

Russian most often.

*Why?*

Well, you see my mother is Polish, but she graduated from a Russian school; well, it's all the same to her. I, for instance, attended a Russian kindergarten; for some reason, they sent me there. Well, with my brother we speak Lithuanian, but that is rare. (Female, 24)

As mentioned earlier, the Polish-Lithuanians suffered rather greatly from Soviet assimilation policies, which is why Russian is frequently heard on the streets of Šalčininkai, while Polish is apparently used rarely in public.

There are many Poles here, but it does not feel that there are any Poles because everyone speaks Russian. If you were to go to Eišiškes, they speak Polish, but here it is difficult to hear Polish spoken; it is very complicated.

*And your daily language here, in town?*

Russian.

*And within your family?*

Yes. (Male, 27)

With the reestablishment of the Republic of Lithuania, the Lithuanian language also began to be used, which was not the case during the Soviet period. For this reason, many older people still struggle with speaking it. Lithuanian, however, is notably growing in popularity, especially among the younger generation. In the next interview, a woman who had completed Lithuanian schools confirms that, with friends who had also finished Lithuanian schools, they speak Lithuanian among themselves:

*And your friend's nationalities, if you were to name them?*

Polish, Russian, Lithuanian.

*Mostly which one?*

Probably Polish.

*And you among yourselves in Lithuanian...*

Lithuanian.

*And why do you use Lithuanian?*

Simply because we practically all attended Lithuanian schools, and those from Polish schools go along with the majority. (Female, 18)

The same woman reasoned that speaking Lithuanian was based on the fact that she lives in Lithuania, where the Polish language isn't necessary:

Well, if you live in Lithuania, then why the Polish language? If I lived in Poland, and I were Polish, then obviously I would know Polish; I would have to know it. But I live in Lithuania, and I know the Lithuanian language, and Polish is not very necessary in Lithuania. (Female, 18)

On the other hand, according to several younger informants, they are more inclined to speak Russian with their friends and other people, and not Lithuanian or Polish:

*And why don't you converse in Polish?*

Because we live in Lithuania; simply, it's that country.

*But you converse in Russian?*

It's that sort of country. Everyone understands Russian. For example, we study in Lithuanian, they in Polish, but we speak



Russian because everyone understands that language. In every country almost everyone understands it.

*When you go into a store, if you don't know the salesperson, which language do you use?*

If they speak to me in Lithuanian, then I answer in Lithuanian.

*What if you want to ask a question?*

If I am in Šalčininkai, then I ask in Russian; but if in Vilnius, then in Lithuanian. (Female, 18)

The younger generation that was born and grew up in free Lithuania, like the older generation who graduated from Russian schools, stress that it is easier for them to communicate in Russian than either in Lithuanian or Polish:

*And in Russian with whom?*

I have a few friends.

*Are those friends Russian or Polish?*

Polish.

*So why do you speak Russian with them?*

Maybe it's easier to communicate. (Female, 18)

Sometimes this sort of language mixture is explained using the concept of being trilingual:

You know, both Polish and Russian are very – it becomes trilingualism. I would say it's both a plus and a minus. On the one hand, you speak Russian, Polish and Lithuanian – forced almost, but from the point of view of grammar, it's very much in one or another language. And when you begin to write documents – we have many partners from Poland – you get confused, then you're not sure what the word is. (Female, 46)

These examples allow one to conclude that, in the local context, for the Polish-Lithuanians, the primary basis for ethnic identity is family origin (being Polish is passed from generation to generation), and language is not ascribed as much ethnic importance.

### *The Polish-Lithuanians' Construed Relationship with Lithuania and Poland*

The aforementioned fluctuation in the borders (Šalčininkai belonged to Poland, to Lithuania, and later to the Soviet Union) is undoubtedly also reflected in public memory. Depending upon the age of the informants, various explanations are given for these border changes. The older generation, which directly or indirectly remembers when the area belonged to Poland, are more inclined to stress the influence of Poland on their identity. The following is typical of responses from the older generation:

...I was born when this was Poland, which means my nationality too [Polish] (Male, 76).

This excerpt from an interview illustrates that the older generation, depending on when a person was born, has remained strongly connected with the historic state in which one was born, and the current state in which one resides is considered foreign:

...the Lithuanians have their nation here, because they have their own territory, borders, money and other [things]. While we Poles living here – we don't have a nation, because our nation is Poland. We don't have our own money, nothing. We just live here on foreign soil [Lithuania's] – although historically, it's still not at all clear. This land always belonged to the Vilnius region [to Poland]; I consider it occupied. There were Russians once upon a time, after that Lithuanians, Russians again, and Poles again, and Lithuanians once again. (Male, 70)

These two excerpts confirm our chosen perspective on the borderland theory, according to which the state's changing borders create ranges of cultural transmutation, in which the people's construed self-identity is measured by its relationship with the state or with past or present states. As was mentioned in the introduction, life in the borderlands determines multifaceted relationships with a state or states. Historical memory is one of the basic elements influencing one's relationship to the state of residence at that moment. However, if the territory had formerly belonged to another state, it leaves an influential

mark on one's relationship with the current state and probably with states this territory had formerly belonged to as well.

On the other hand, the younger generation (born during the Soviet era or later) does not emphasize life in the borderland, or more precisely, their identity with the state or states is limited to the Soviet Union and Lithuania – not Poland:

I enjoy living in Lithuania. When I was born, there was no Poland here. I was born in 'forty-four: I lived in Russia, now I live in Lithuania. (Female, 61)

In this interview, Russia means the Soviet Union. And this illustrates that, while living in the Soviet Union, Lithuania was not seen as a separate state; it was only after the reestablishment of independence that people began to understand they live in Lithuania.

Those of the youngest generation, having spent most of their lives in independent Lithuania, tend not to emphasize the Soviet past. They simply state that Lithuania is their country, unless they want to emphasize some region (such as the Vilnius region or Šalčininkai) as their birthplace:

One could call this my little birthplace [the Vilnius area], but my large birthplace then is the state of Lithuania, because I was born in its territories and I grew up here; all my relatives are here. (Female, 26)

Moreover, from these interviews it was apparent that even though the informants consider Lithuania their country, they also note the imagined differences between "there" – that is, in Lithuania, and their own region (in speech people often use the concept of region, describing their differences from "there," meaning Lithuania proper). The same woman also added she feels the rest of the Lithuanians have a somewhat negative perspective regarding the Poles living in the Vilnius region:

maybe from say, Mažeikiai, there they consider us, they're Poles there – we're total dullards here, we don't even know how to speak Lithuanian. (Female, 26)

### *Two Native Countries?*

As mentioned earlier, to the older generation, being born in the Poland of that time remains a strong basis for self-identity. In the meantime, the younger generation, especially those who were born and grew up in free Lithuania, consider their relationship with the Polish state in more multilayered ways. The strategy of the official Polish-Lithuanian political party,<sup>31</sup> which has a large majority in the area's local government, of fostering relationships with Poland, adds to this multilayered picture's construction. An informant with a high position in Šalčininkai's town government, who was elected from the party's list, mentioned looking for various means to enable the children from Polish schools to visit Poland:

[...] common history: Poland's, Lithuania's – we were a common state for many years. So as the native land of their ancestors, it's imperative that they become familiar with both the present and the past. (Male, 48)

The same informant later added that children should maintain relations with Poland because it is one of their native lands:

No, our fatherland is Lithuania, it was and is, but there was a common state. We say this in Polish: that Poland is our *macierz* – how would it be in Lithuanian? Lithuania is *ojczyzna*, fatherland. Everyone of us has a *tevyinė* [Lithuanian, fatherland], the one and the other. Of course, that here we are citizens of Lithuania, no one is debating that point. (Male, 48)

The concept of *macierz* (motherland) is often used by Polish-Lithuanians to indicate their relationship with Poland as the ultimate country of origin; they use the concept of *ojczyzna* (fatherland) to indicate their relationship with Lithuania:

[...] we often say about Poland that it is our *macierz*. We call it that in Polish, that it is our, well, anyway our second native country. We have two native countries, but I think everyone loves Lithuania the most. Here are our roots; our parents live

<sup>31</sup> Known as "Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija (The Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania)."

here; our ancestors lived here. The surroundings are more familiar. (Female, 41)

Poland is understood as a native country historically. Although there is discussion about two native countries, stronger emotions are more often associated with Lithuania, arising from living in a common territory and familiarity with the surroundings. In underscoring their relationship to Lithuania, Polish-Lithuanians quite often use the concept of patriotism:

Culturally, we are Polish; we consider ourselves Poles; maybe in another life we weren't Poles, but if a person considers himself – he wants to talk in Polish, he wants to sing in Polish – then why shouldn't he be allowed to? There is nothing wrong with that. The more people live here with us in Lithuania, the better. For instance, basketball, the comments about why Real [the Madrid basketball team] did not want to release Darius Lavrinovičius, but he decided himself. And Ilgauskas, as they say, it was the same situation, it was decided, but he had to make the decision himself, and he didn't make it. We may be greater Lithuanian patriots than you, brother Lithuanians. Take emigration, for example, there aren't as many of us Poles who have left the country to earn money abroad – not as many in terms of percentage. Why? Because our parents, our grandparents remain in this land, remain in this land, their land. I say there's nothing wrong, if there's a place in Lithuania where Polish will be spoken. (Male, 53)

Even though differences from the dominant culture are stressed, that does not prevent one from considering oneself a Lithuanian patriot, at the same time understanding oneself as of "that land," the land of one's parents and grandparents, culturally different from the rest of Lithuania. It is important to note that Polish-Lithuanians feel they are culturally different from Poland's Poles. Often people who visit relatives in Poland are referred to by the Poles as Lithuanians and even, sometimes, as Russians:

I, for instance, often visit Poland, my grandmother and grandfather are buried there. And when I travel to Poland, I feel I am a Pole because I speak Polish; but in spite of that, my relatives say: "Mariusa came here from Lithuania; she's Lithuanian."

They consider us, since we are from Lithuania, Lithuanians. (Female, 50)

The youngest generation, which has grown up in independent Lithuania, tends to call Poland a neighboring country:

Oh Poland, Poland – that's my neighboring country. [...] I wouldn't say I have any special sentiments for Poland. Lithuania is my native country, and I try harder here, I work, and let's say, Poland's over there; present-day Poland, it doesn't interest me very much, let's say. We have friends there and acquaintances; we travel there quite often; we give concerts there, so we often travel to Poland. I like to sing in Polish and to read books in Polish – all the classics. But that it would be like my second native country? Well, I wouldn't say that. (Female, 31)

Nevertheless, a pragmatic relationship can be discerned working among those of the youngest Polish-Lithuanian generation. Many of the eighteen-year-olds interviewed did not reject the possibility of studying in Poland because there are very favorable conditions there, such as scholarships, being provided by various Polish organizations. However, these favorable conditions notwithstanding, the youngest generation considers Poland a foreign country:

I was born here, and Poland does not mean anything; it's just a foreign country. It's not all that different from Lithuania. (Female, 18)

The study shows that, for the younger generation, being born in Lithuania constitutes the basic factor that determines one's relationship with the Lithuanian state; even though, at the same time, one identifies oneself ethnically as a Pole. On the other hand, the study shows that people who were born when the territory belonged to Poland tend to identify with the historic Polish state.

### *Conclusions*

The analysis of the results from our field studies reveal a complex and multilayered relationship between Polish-Lithuanians from the Šalčininkai area and the Lithuanian state. On the one hand, Polish-Lithuanians tend to identify with the state

where they reside, that is, Lithuania, on the basis of citizenship, even though their historic native land, Poland, remains a strong identity factor. The historic native country, *macierz*, does not conflict with their concept of Lithuania as *ojczyzna* (both terms refer to a native land). On the other hand, genealogy and family origin, more than language, are the primary criteria used by Polish-Lithuanians to determine identification with the state, outweighing even citizenship. One of the most important criteria for determining their relationship, with either Lithuania or Poland, is the informants' age. The older informants tend to identify to a lesser degree with the state of Lithuania and to see themselves as more loyal to Poland, while the younger informants tend to portray Poland as a foreign country and to identify themselves as Lithuanian citizens, at the same time stressing that they consider themselves Poles ethnically. In this case, the ethnic and national/civic identity do not interfere with each other; they are clearly separate.

*Translated by Birutė Penkiūnas-Tautvydas*

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