

The research project *Lithuania and Lithuanians in the Grand Duchy of Posen in the years 1831–1914* aims to systematically examine and explain the unprecedented contribution of Poznań and the part of Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) that was under Prussian rule in the 19th century, to the development of knowledge and the formation of the image of Lithuania and Lithuanians. This contribution has not yet been studied in Poland, Lithuania, or elsewhere. Apart from a few articles loosely related to this topic, there is no literature on the subject. Today hardly anyone knows that nineteenth-century Poznan was an unusually important centre of interest for Lithuania. Just bringing this fact to light arouses both surprise and curiosity. Our own preliminary research already provides a staggering amount of evidence of the prominent role played by Poznan and the Poznan region in this respect. The outcome of the detailed research should confirm that we are dealing with a bona fide discovery. A review of library catalogues, Poznan archives, and Greater Poland periodicals reveals a wealth of interesting material on Lithuanian themes, ranging from source editions, literary works and newspaper articles to private notes and letters. Some of their authors lived in Lithuania, unable to publish there due to strict Russian censorship, while others lived outside Lithuania, often as political emigrants. The first objective of the research is to reconstruct the network of interdependencies between them, to establish their relationships with the aristocracy and cultural elite of the Grand Duchy of Posen – writers, historians, publishers, as well as patrons or relatives. It aims to identify those who were most important and active in addressing or promoting Lithuanian issues. The second objective is to trace the development of knowledge and perceptions of Lithuania over the more than eighty years that the research covers. The literature mentioned above, ranging from editorial, historical and philosophical works to personal documents, will be examined in detail. The analysis, at the end of each stage of the research, will be accompanied by a multifaceted interpretation, leading to further hypotheses and claims. The third objective is to find traces of Poznan publications in Vilnius and other Lithuanian centres, especially in the local book collections and archives - in connection with the process of forming a modern national self-consciousness of Lithuanians. Finally, the fourth goal is to summarize all the material collected and to generalise the hypotheses, as well as to compare the role of Poznan with that of such important centers of interest in Lithuania as Königsberg or Prague. Against this background, it will be possible to characterize better the role of Poznan, as well as to make postulates for future studies of the analogous, though in our opinion, lesser role of Krakow or Lviv.

The project will involve Polish, Lithuanian and German historians and philologists, with the support of Lithuanian and German consultants. The work undertaken by this nine-member team will be based on the study of sources: press, book publications, and documents remaining in manuscripts. The analyses, which will make extensive use of modern digital tools, especially the Topic Maps database, as well as the interpretative tools of contemporary humanities, will produce a comprehensive picture of the Grand Duchy of Posen, and especially its capital, as a publishing, scientific, intellectual and literary centre forming the knowledge and ideas about Lithuania. The works resulting from the research will be published in four renowned periodicals (Polish, Lithuanian, German and English), as well as in a collective book, to which authors from outside the team, mainly consultants, will also be invited to contribute. Access to the database will also be open.

This research will significantly change existing convictions about the centres that were instrumental in shaping views and perceptions of Lithuania and Lithuanians in the 19th century, including the formation of modern Lithuanian self-consciousness. The team's preliminary findings have already aroused the interest of specialists in Lithuania, Poland and Germany. The final outcome of the research will also undoubtedly draw the attention of regionalists in Wielkopolska, and by uncovering a hitherto unknown part of the history of national liberation and emancipation movements that spanned the entire continent at the time, it should also stir up a response across Europe.