

## LOVERS OF VILNIUS ANTIQUITY AND SCIENCE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

### Summary

The monograph is devoted to several scientific societies of Vilnius or those that supported science and were established at the turn of the 19th and the 20th century. They were as follows: the Society of Lovers of Antiquity and Ethnography (Towarzystwo Miłośników Starożytnictwa i Ludoznawstwa), the Vilnius Department of the Society of Promoters of Russian Historical Education dedicated to the memory of Emperor Alexander III (Виленский Отдел Общества Ревнителей Русского Исторического Просвещения в память Императора Александра III), the Society of Science and Art Museum (Towarzystwo Muzeum Nauki i Sztuki), the Society of Friends of Science in Wilno (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie) and the North-West branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (Северо-Западный Отдел Императорского Русского Географического Общества). All of them contributed to a lesser or greater extent to the investigations of the history and culture of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the preservation of its cultural heritage and to the formation and strengthening of the national identity of the nations that lived on these lands.

The aim of the present work is to show when and how these societies came into being, who their founders were, what goals they had, what difficulties they had to overcome seeking to obtain a permit from the Tsar administration for their activities. Another important task was to show the internal structure of the societies under discussion, the main fields of their activities, sources of financing and achievements in the spheres of the preservation and investigation of cultural heritage. Publications issued by these societies are also examined, their authors, contents, a circle of readers and means of their dissemination are indicated.

Special attention is devoted to the personal composition of these societies trying to determine, as far as the sources available allow, the number of their members and workers, their names and surnames, their class origin, education, profession, religion they followed and their nationality. The relationships between these societies, as well as their members, and the society, their attempts to form the world view of the society (through the press, libraries, reading-rooms, public events) are addressed. Also, the relationships between the above-mentioned societies and other establishments of culture and science in the Russian Empire and abroad, the nature and significance of these relationships are studied.

Chronologically, the study, in essence, encompasses the first quarter of the 20th century. This comparatively short period of time can be divided into two periods: the first one including the last years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century when the regime established after the 1863–1864 uprising was in power, and the second period that lasted from 1905 to the beginning of the First World War when as a result of

the revolutionary events the Tsar's authority was forced to make a number of essential concessions in the domestic policy. During the first period, the Russian authorities, in pursuing political aims, encouraged the creation of Russian societies, including the Vilnius Department of the Society of Promoters of Russian Historical Education dedicated to the memory of Emperor Alexander III under discussion in the book, provided financial support to them; however, at the same time they watched their activities and exerted ideological pressure on them. Simultaneously they prohibited the creation of Lithuanian and Polish societies devoted to studying the history of these nations and did not allow them to engage in the activities related to protecting cultural heritage. Unable to act legally, in 1899, Polish intellectuals founded the secret Society of Lovers of Antiquity and Ethnography.

After 1905, after the occupation regime had become less strict, political and cultural life that had been suppressed prior that was restored to life in the so-called north-western region, many educational, art and scientific societies were created, including the Science and Art Museum Society and the Society of Friends of Science in Wilno under discussion in the present work. In 1910, North-West branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society that functioned between 1967 and 1875 was restored.

The Society of Lovers of Antiquity and Ethnography functioned for seven years and in 1907 it merged with the Society of Friends of Science in Wilno. In 1914, the Society of Science and Art did the same. The Society of Friends of Science in Wilno lived through the First World War and difficult years of fights with Bolshevik Russia and continued its activities successfully until the autumn of 1939; however, the present work deals with the first period of its activities only (1907–1914). The Vilnius Department of the Society of Promoters of Russian Historical Education and the North-West branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society went out of existence in the summer of 1915 after Russian institutions had been evacuated from Vilnius.

The monograph consists of the Introduction, six Chapters and the Final Conclusions. In their turn, the Chapters are divided into sections. The subject of the investigation and the aim of the work are defined, the main reference material and sources are surveyed in the Introduction. Chapter One gives a brief outline of the conditions under which Vilnius scientific societies pursued their activities at the end of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th century. Other five Chapters are devoted to separate societies, such as the Society of Lovers of Antiquity and Ethnography (1899–1907), the Vilnius Department of the Society of Promoters of Russian Historical Education dedicated to the memory of Emperor Alexander III (1899–1915), the Society of Science and Art Museum (1907–1914), the Society of Friends of Science in Wilno (1907–1914), the North-West branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (1910–1915). On the basis of literature and sources studied the significance of each society discussed and its contribution to the development of cultural life of Vilnius in the first half of the 20th century are highlighted in the Final Conclusions.

*Transled by Aldona Matulytė*