Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

DOI:10.17951/sb.2020.14.171-201
Studia Białorutenistyczne 14/2020 LITERARY STUDIES
ISSN: 1898-0457 e-ISSN: 2449-8270 Licence: CC BY 4.0

Iryna Bahdanovich

Belarusian State University, Minsk (Belarus)
Email: ibogdana@yandex.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3468-7088

Jan Kazimir Pashkevich's Poem *Poland prospers with Latin*... as a Literary Mystification

Wiersz Jana Kazimierza Paszkiewicza „Polska kwitnie łaciną…" jako mistyfikacja literacka

Верш Яна Казіміра Пашкевіча „Польска квітнет лациною..." як літаратурная містыфікацыя

Abstract

The article offers a new interpretation of the famous Belarusian poem of the 17th century *Польска квитнет лациною...* (Poland prospers with Latin), the author of which is considered to be Jan Kazimir Pashkevich, and the date of writing is August 22, 1621. The poem is canonized in Belarusian literature as a sample of civil and patriotic lyrics and a hymn to the native Belarusian language, but the article questions the authenticity of the work as a monument of the literature of the 17th century; the circumstances that make the poem mysterious and anachronistic in the context of its era are also revealed. The author of the article suggests a hermeneutic reconstruction of an alternative history of the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich *Польска квитнет лациною...*: namely, substantiates the hypothesis that the poem is a successful literary mystification created in the 40`s of the 19th century by Vilnius Governor-General and lover of antiquities and A. V. Semenov to reinforce the ideology of 'panrusism' and to legitimize, with the help of cultural projects, the domination of the Russian Empire on the occupied after the partitions of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lands of historical Lithuania-Belarus. Semenov had the opportunity and reason to realize such an ideological project by getting acquainted with the ancient documents of the subordinate region, especially with the handwritten Slutsk manuscript of the First Lithuanian Statute of 1529, which was created in old Belarusian and which contained many documents unrelated to the main text, various records, as well as

* Financing: Funded from the budget of the Institute of Modern Languages and Literatures and the Institute of History of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, from the funds of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for activities promoting science (contract no. 615/P–DUN/2019) and under the 'Support for Academic Journals' programme (contract no. 331/WCN/2019/1).
Publisher: Wydawnictwo UMCS

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

empty pages. The practical conditions for making copies and the necessary changes on the corresponding page of the manuscript were created by an easy-to-use lithography technology.

Keywords: the poem *Польска квитнет лациною...* (Poland prospers with Latin), Jan Kazimir Pashkevich, Slutsk manuscript of the First Lithuanian Statute of 1529, a hermeneutic reconstruction, literary mystification, ideology of 'panrusism'

Abstrakt

W artykule została zaprezentowana nowa interpretacja słynnego białoruskiego siedemnastowiecznego (datowanego na 22 sierpnia 1621 r.) wiersza *Польска квитнет лациною...* (Polska kwitnie łaciną...), za autora którego uważany jest Jan Kazimierz Paszkiewicz. W literaturze białoruskiej utwór uznawany jest za przykład tekstu o charakterze patriotycznym oraz jako hymn ku chwale rodzimego języka białoruskiego. Jak dowodzi przeprowadzona analiza, przynależność poematu do swojej epoki nie jest kwestią oczywistą, czego dowodzą dodatkowe, uwzględnione w artykule czynniki decydujące o tajemniczości i anachroniczności poematu. Autor proponuje hermeneutyczną rekonstrukcję alternatywnej historii powstania wiersza Jana Kazimierza Paszkiewicza *Польска квитнет лациною…*, opartą na hipotezie, że badany utwór stanowi pochodzącą z lat 40. XIX w. udaną mistyfikację literacką wileńskiego gubernatora generalnego i miłośnika antyków A.W. Siemionowa, zaplanowaną w celu utrwalenia na okupowanych po rozbiorach Rzeczypospolitej ziemiach historycznej Litwy i Białorusi ideologii panslawizmu i legitymizacji dominacji Imperium Rosyjskiego. Realizacja tego projektu była możliwa dzięki dostępności dokumentów archiwalnych a zwłaszcza znajomości napisanego w języku starobiałoruskim i zawierającego wiele niepowiązanych dokumentów różnego rodzaju wpisów oraz pustych stron rękopisu spisu słuckiego pierwszego Wielkiego Statutu Litewskiego z 1529 r. Kopiowanie i dokonywanie zmian w manuskryptach umożliwiała dostępna wówczas technika litografii.

Słowa kluczowe: poemat *Польска квитнет лациною…* (Polska kwitnie łaciną...), Jan Kazimierz Paszkiewicz, spis Słucki I Wiekiego Statutu Litewskiego z 1529 r., rekonstrukcja hermeneutyczna, mistyfikacja literacka, ideologia panslawizmu

Анатацыя

У артыкуле прапанавана новая інтэрпрэтацыя вядомага беларускага верша XVII ст. *Польска квитнет лациною...*, аўтарам якога лічыцца Ян Казімір Пашкевіч, а датай напісання 22 жніўня 1621 г. Верш кананізаваны ў беларускай літаратуры як узор грамадзянска-патрыятычнай лірыкі і гімн роднай беларускай мове, аднак у артыкуле ставіцца пад сумненне аўтэнтычнасць твора як помніка літаратуры XVII ст., выяўляюцца акалічнасці, якія робяць верш загадкавым і анахранічным у кантэксце сваёй эпохі. Аўтарам артыкула прапануецца герменеўтычная рэканструкцыя альтэрнатыўнай гісторыі ўзнікнення верша Яна Казіміра Пашкевіча *Польска квитнет лациною...*: а менавіта абгрунтоўваецца гіпотэза, што верш з'яўляецца ўдалай літаратурнай містыфікацыяй, створанай ў 40-я гады XIX ст. віленскім генерал-губернатарам і аматарам старажытнасцей А.В. Сямёнавым з мэтай замацавання ідэалогіі „панрусізму" і легітымізацыі панавання Расійскай імперыі

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

на захопленых пасля падзелаў Рэчы Паспалітай землях гістарычнай Літвы-Беларусі пры дапамозе культурніцкіх праектаў. Магчымасцю і нагодай для рэалізацыі такога ідэалагічнага праекту для Сямёнава стала знаёмства са старажытнымі дакументамі падпарадкаванага краю, асабліва з рукапісным Слуцкім спісам першага Літоўскага статута 1529 г., які быў створаны на старабеларускай мове і ў якім былі досыць шматлікія, не звязаныя з асноўным тэкстам дакумента, запісы рознага характару, а таксама пустыя старонкі. Практычныя ўмовы для выканання копій і ўнясення патрэбных зменаў на адпаведнай старонцы рукапісу стварала даступная ў прымяненні тэхналогія літаграфавання.

Ключавыя словы: верш *Польска квітнет лаціною...,* Ян Казімір Пашкевіч, Слуцкі спіс Першага Літоўскага Статута 1529 года, герменеўтычная рэканструкцыя, літаратурная містыфікацыя, ідэалогія „панрусізму”

A Mysterious Masterpiece: The History of the First Publications

The canonical corpus of ancient Belarusian poetic works seems to have been discovered long ago and firmly fixed in the history of national literature. It is clear that almost every work from that era is perceived as a masterpiece. Well, of course, the old texts are worth their weight in gold, especially in the old Belarusian language! Not in Polish, not in Latin, which were most often used in beautiful writing in those distant centuries, starting from the 16th century, but in the old Belarusian language! Exactly eight years before the birth of Symeon Polotsky, and long before he began composing his famous ‘meters’, ‘rhymes’ and ‘rhymed poems’, in 1621 the unique poetic work *Полска квитнет лациною...* (Poland prospers with Latin…) shone on the Belarusian poetic sky; the poetic work which no one knew about for a long time – for almost two centuries. The work does not leave indifferent generation after generation of Belarusian researchers from the time of its remarkable ‘discovery’ and the first publication in 1842 to the present day. The text of this verse has long been canonized and has become a textbook; it is well known to all those familiar with beautiful Belarusian writing as the only surviving poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich. However, we should immediately note that ***the text of the first publication of the work does not coincide with the later ones*** (why this happened, we will discuss a little later).

And now I would like to present the text of the poem in accordance with the very first source of its publication in the Vilnius *Гаспадарскі Календар на 1842 год* (*Месяцословъ хозяйственный на лето Христово 1842)* (Economic Calendar for 1842 (Monthly Economic Publication for the Summer of Christ 1842)):

Польска квитнетъ Лациною,
Литва квитнетъ Русчизною;
Той латына языкъ даетъ,
Та безъ Руси не вытрваетъ,
Ведзьже южъ Русь, ижъ тва хвала,

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

По всемъ свете южъ дойзрела
Веселижъсе ты Русине,
Тва слава никгды незкгине[1].
(Mesâcoslov, 1842, p. 29).

The following note accompanied the publication of the text[2]:

Ныне въ 1841 году найдены въ древней тоже рукописи на русскомъ языке Литовскаго Статута, хранящейся въ Библіотеке Виленской Римско-Католической Духовной Академіи, стихи на русскомъ языке, писанные въ первой половине XVII века, подтверждающіе сей историческій фактъ[3]. Вотъ точное ихъ изложеніе: Янъ Казимиръ Пашкевичъ рукою власною писалъ. Року тысеча шестьсотъ дватцать перваго, месяца Августа дватцать втораго дня[4] (Mesâcoslov, 1842, p. 29).

This was followed by the text of the poem itself, given above, followed by short palaeographic explanations and a strong ideological emphasis on the use of Russian as the literary and spoken language in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:

Буквы и почеркъ письма означенныхъ стиховъ совершенно сходны съ теми, которые употреблялись въ XVII веке и въ восточной части Россіи; но въ языке заметны некоторые слова, заимствованныя изъ польскаго, какъ то: рокъ (годъ) квитнетъ (процветаетъ) невытрваетъ (не выдержитъ, не можетъ обойтись). Изъ стиховъ сихъ видно, что языкъ русскій въ XVII веке нетолько былъ употребляемъ въ судопроизводстве и въ изданіи законовъ Литовскаго Княжества, но что онъ былъ въ Литве языкъ книжный и разговорный, что Казимиръ Пашкевичъ, который написалъ означенные стихи, бывъ уроженецъ Литовскаго края, гордился возникающей славою руси и признавалъ тогда[,]

[1] ‘Poland prospers with Latin,
Lithuania prospers with Russian.
To that one Latin language gives,
This one without Russia cannot stand,
You must know Russia, that your praise,
Around the world is already known
Have fun, Ruthenian,
Your glory will never end’.

[2] Here and further in the transfer of citations, the graphic letter ‘яць’ is transferred by the letter ‘е’; the rest of the features of the graphics and spelling of the time are preserved. – I.B.

[3] The fact that ‘Russian language... was common and dominant among the landowners of the Duchy of Lithuania’ (Calendar, 1842, p. 29). – I.B.

[4] ‘Now in 1841 the poems in Russian, written in the first half of the 17th century, confirming this historical fact, were also found in an ancient manuscript of the Lithuanian Statute in Russian, which is stored in the Library of Vilnius Roman Catholic Theological Academy. Here is an exact summary of them: Jan Kazimir Pashkevich wrote in his own hand. Year one thousand six hundred and twenty-first, month of August twenty-second day’.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

> въ XVII веке, языкъ русскій необходимостью для литвы; следовательно въ XVII веке, языкъ русскій въ Литве былъ общій и господствующій для всехъ обывателей[5] (Mesâcoslov, 1842, pp. 29–30).

Immediately after the first publication, the second one also took place in Vilnius in 1843 – in the article *Замечанія касательно исторіи Литвы* (Remarks on the History of Lithuania), contained in the preface to *Собранія древнихъ грамотъ и актовъ городовъ Вильны, Ковна, Трокъ…* (The Collection of Ancient Charters and Acts of the Cities of Vilna, Kovna and Trok...) (Sobranie, 1843, p. XXII). Some corrections to the spelling of words were made in the text of the poem: in the first line the word *Лациною*, and in the fourth line the word *Руси* were written with a small letter - *лациною*; *руси*. In addition, the text of the explanation-commentary to this poem was slightly shortened.

Thus, in the first Vilnius publications of 1842 and 1843, the poem *Poland prospers with Latin…* had **eight** lines. There were no such lines in it: 'Без той в Полсце не пребудешь, / Без сей в Літве блазном будзешь'. And in all subsequent publications, starting with *Гісторыя беларускае літаратуры* (The History of Belarusian Literature) by Maxim Garetsky, which went through four editions in the 1920s, the poem had **ten** lines, and it was in this number of lines that it was canonized as a textbook. M. Garetsky wrote rather uncertainly about the source of the text as follows: An old handwritten Lithuanian Statute contained the following poem: 'Jan Kazimir Pashkevich wrote with his own hand. The year one thousand six hundred and twenty-first, August – twenty-second day' (Garèckì, 1992, p. 145). Next, there was the text, in which, as has been already mentioned, there were 10 not eight lines, and there were minor differences in spelling.

It is unlikely that M. Garetsky knew the publications in the *Calendar…* 1842 and the *Collection…* 1843, or used them, because at the first Vilnius publications, as I have already noticed, there were no the third and the fourth lines, which subsequently appeared in later publications.

There is a natural and mysterious question: why were the mentioned third and fourth lines omitted in the first two publications of the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich? And why are they present in all the following publications if the poem clearly has the same

[5] 'The letters and handwriting of the above-mentioned poem are quite similar to those used in the 17th century and the Eastern part of Russia; but some words borrowed from Polish are noticeable in the language, such as рокъ (year) квитнетъ (thrives) невытрваетъ (can't stand, can't do). From this poem it is evident that the Russian language in the 17th century was not only used in legal proceedings and in the publication of the laws of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but that it was the literary and conversational language in Lithuania; and that Kazimir Pashkevich, who wrote the above-mentioned poem, a native of the Lithuanian region, was proud of the emergent glory of Russia and recognized then[,] in the 17th century, that the Russian language was a necessity for Lithuania; consequently, in the 17th century, the Russian language in Lithuania was the common and dominant language for all inhabitants'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

original ***manuscript*** source – the Old Lithuanian Statute, and the poem in it consists, according to photocopies, of ten lines? In the following discussion, I will try to find an answer to this question.

But first let me turn to the textual structure of other, more recent, 'complete' publications of the work.

Canonization of the Poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich: Text Overview

As you know, the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich was canonized and became a textbook in a later, full-text edition, which had ten lines of verse connected by a related rhyme.

Alyaxandr Korshunav, the author of the *Хрэстаматыя па старажытнай беларускай літаратуры* (Anthology of Ancient Belarusian Literature) (1959), gave a more accurate source of the publication of the poem than M. Garetsky. The text of the poem itself in this edition was as follows:

Полска квитнет лациною,
Литва квитнет русчизною;
Без той в Полсце не пребудешь,
Без сей в Литв[е][6] блазнем будешь.
Той лацина езык дает,
Та без Руси не вытрвает,
Ведзь же юж Русь, иж тва хвала
По всем свете юж дойзрала;
Весели ж се ты, Русине,
Тва слава никгды не згине![7]
(Koršunaŭ, 1959, p. 335).

[6] In A. Korshunav's publication at the end of this word is 'яць', not 'е' – I.B.

[7] 'Poland prospers with Latin,
Lithuania prospers with Russian.
Without that one, you will not be in Poland,
Without this one, you will be a clown in Lithuania.
To that one Latin language gives,
This one without Russia cannot stand,
You must know Russia, that your praise,
Around the world is already known
Have fun, Ruthenian,
Your glory will never end'.
(Koršunaŭ, 1959, p. 335).

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

In the footer linked to the poem on the same page, it was indicated that the work was printed in accordance with a handwritten copy of the Lithuanian Statute of the first edition, which is kept in the Manuscripts Department of the State Public Library of Leningrad named after Saltykov-Shchedrin. Thus, the place of storage of the manuscript was clearly marked, and the poem itself was firmly included in a relatively small canonical corpus of old Belarusian works.

Hereinafter, the text of the poem with small differences in spelling of individual words (for example, with the use of 'і' and 'и', or with the presence and absence of 'ь', etc.) is printed in all textbooks and anthologies of ancient Belarusian literature. There are four text samples of this poem below, arranged in chronological order in the most scientifically important modern publications, paying particular attention to the designation of the source of the publication and the opinions of researchers about the work and its author.

The main academic publication of the beginning of the 21st century was *Анталогія даўняй беларускай літаратуры: XI–XVIII стагоддзя* (Anthology of Ancient Belarusian Literature: 11th–18th centuries) (Čamâryckì, 2003) edited by Vyachaslav Chamyarytsky. The poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich here is close to the text version in the *Anthology*... of A. Korshunav, although there are some differences in the editing of individual words ('Полска', 'Полсце' і 'Польска', 'Польще'; 'блазнем' і 'блазном'; 'Русіне' і 'русіне'):

Пол(ь)ска квитнет лациною,
Литва квитнет русчизною;
Без той в Пол(ь)ще не пребудзеш,
Без сей в Литве блазном будзеш.
Той лацина езык дает,
Та без руси не вытрвает,
Ведзь же юж русь, иж тва хвала,
По всем свете юж дойзрала
Весели ж се ты, русине,
Тва слава никгды не згине![8]
(Čamâryckì, 2003, p. 691).

[8] 'Poland prospers with Latin,
Lithuania prospers with Russian.
Without that one, you will not be in Poland,
Without this one, you will be a clown in Lithuania.
To that one Latin language gives,
This one without Russia cannot stand,
You must know Russia, that your praise,
Around the world is already known
Have fun, ruthenian,
Your glory will never end'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

The editorial preparation of the text was done by Syargey Garanin, who states that the text 'was published according to a photocopy of the autograph'. The publication has stresses-accents. The researcher gives the following information about the author and briefly describes the specifics of the poem itself:

> Біяграфічных звестак пра гэтага паэта амаль не захавалася; магчыма, ён паходзіў з ашмянскай шляхты. Верш Яна Казіміра Пашкевіча па сваім змесце належыць да грамадзянска-патрыятычнай лірыкі. Твор напісаны правільным чатырохстопавым харэем, што паказвае: ужо вельмі рана паэзія пачынала адыходзіць ад неарганічнай для беларускай мовы сілабікі, замяняючы яе сілаба-танічнай сістэмай вершаскладання. Верш захаваўся ў Слуцкім спісе Статута ВКЛ 1529 г. і датаваны 1621 г. Там жа змешчаны яшчэ 5 аўтографаў Яна Казіміра Пашкевіча і запісы іншых асоб, паводле чаго даследчыкі мяркуюць, што твор быў складзены ў Вільні[9] (Čamârycki, 2003, pp. 690–691).

Soon the academic *Гісторыя беларускай літаратуры XI–XIX стагоддзяў. У 2-х тамах.* Vol. 1. (History of Belarusian Literature of the 11th–19th centuries in 2 volumes. Vol. 1). (2006) was published under the editorship of V. Chamyarytsky, where the full text of the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich was given in the detailed article *Паэзія* (Poetry) by Ivan Saverchanka:

> Полска квитнет лациною,
> Литва квитнет русчизною.
> Без той в Полще не пребудзеш,
> Без сей в Литве блазнем будзеш.
> Той лацина езык дает,
> Та без руси не вытрвает,
> Ведзь же юж русь, иж тва хвала,
> По всем свете юж дойзрала
> Весели ж се ты, русине,
> Тва слава никгды не згине[10].

[9] 'Biographical information about this poet is almost not preserved; perhaps he came from the Ashmyany nobility. The poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich belongs to civil and patriotic lyrics. The work is written in the correct four-foot chorus, which shows that the poetry very early began to move away from the non-organic for the Belarusian language syllabic system, replacing it with a syllabic-tonic system of verse composition. The poem is saved in the Slutsk manuscript of the GDL Statute of 1529 and dated 1621. There are also five more autographs of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich and records of other persons, according to which the researchers believe that the work was composed in Vilnius'.

[10] 'Poland prospers with Latin,
Lithuania prospers with Russian;
Without that one, you will not be in Poland,

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

(Čamâryckì, 2006, p. 619).

As you can see, this publication combines the textual versions of A. Korshunav and S. Garanin, so the researcher sought to create a more perfect academic version of the text of Pashkevich's poem. In his article, I. Saverchanka gave a rather detailed academic interpretation of the work, emphasizing its belonging to the 'patriotic movement':

> У беларускай паэзіі XVII ст. паўстала патрыятычная плынь, найбольш яркай праявай якой з'яўляецца вершаваны твор Яна Казіміра Пашкевіча пад назвай *Полска квитнет лациною*, датаваны 1621 г. Паэт стварыў сапраўдны гімн роднай мове. Адстойваючы права беларускай мовы на існаванне і падкрэсліваючы яе неперaходзячае значэнне ў жыцці ўсяго Вялікага княства Літоўскага, Я.К. Пашкевіч з аптымізмам глядзеў на будучыню беларускага народа, што пацвярджаюць некалькі радкоў ягонага верша. […] У гэтым адзіна вядомым творы Я.К. Пашкевіча, напісаным у панегірычным стылі, упершыню прагучала актуальная і сёння думка аб тым, што народ жыве да таго часу, пакуль жыве, яго мова[11] (Čamâryckì, 2006, pp. 618–619).

In my opinion, this interpretation, although very attractive, is still a great stretch and does not correspond to the spirit of the time in which the work was written. At the beginning of the 17th century, such language problems were not relevant at all in the territory of our country, people and language were in an organic unity, the language performed its natural communicative function, and the glory of Ruthenians–Litvins was gained mainly on the battlefield. The final conclusion of the respected researcher is obviously more related to the situation typical of the 19th and 20st centuries when the Belarusian language was really under the threat of extinction, and people were under the threat of losing their identity.

A year later I. Saverchanka became the author of the volume *Старажытная беларуская літаратура (XII – XVII стст.)* (Ancient Belarusian Literature (12th–

Without this one, you will be a clown in Lithuania.
To that one Latin language gives,
This one without Russia cannot stand,
You must know Russia, that your praise,
Around the world is already known
Have fun, ruthenian,
Your glory will never end'.

[11] 'In the Belarusian poetry of the 17th century a patriotic movement appeared, the most striking manifestation of which is the poetic work of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich *Poland prospers with Latin…*, dated 1621. The poet created a real hymn to his native language. Defending the right of the Belarusian language to exist and emphasizing its permanent importance in the life of the entire Grand Duchy of Lithuania, J. K. Pashkevich was optimistic about the future of the Belarusian people, which is confirmed in several lines of his poem. […] In this only known work by J. K. Pashkevich, written in the style of a panegyric, for the first time the idea, relevant today, sounded, that the people live as long as their language lives'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

17th centuries)), published in the series Belaruski knigazbor in 2007. In this edition, the poem by J.K. Pashkevich was printed in accordance with the modern Belarusian Cyrillic graphics and with some other features of spelling (for example, the word *весяліся* had already taken into account the phonetic phenomenon akanye / yakanye):

> Полска квітнет лаціною,
> Літва квітнет русчізною.
> Без той в Польсце не пребудзеш,
> Без сей ў Літве блазнем будзеш.
> Той лаціна язык дает,
> Та без русі не вытрвает.
> Ведзь жэ юж, русь, іж тва хвала,
> Па ўсім свеце юж дойзрала.
> Весяліся ж ты, русіне,
> Тва слава нігды не згіне![12]
>
> (Saverčanka, 2007, p. 391).

The source of the origin of the poem was accurately given by the author:

> Верш друкуецца паводле рукапіснага арыгінала – Слуцкага спіса Статута 1529 г., які захоўваецца ў Санкт-Пецярбургскай Дзяржаўнай публічнай бібліятэцы, аддзел рукапісаў, фонд ОЛДП. № 368. Арк. 13[13] (Saverčanka, 2007, p. 598).

It should be noted that in this edition, information about the source of the text for the first time referred directly to the handwritten original of the Slutsk copy of the first edition of the GDL Statute of 1529, namely to page 13, on which the poem was placed. To the publication of the poem, I. Saverchanka added his own arguments, similar to those that he had made in the *Гісторыя беларускай літаратуры XI – XIX стагоддзяў* (History of Belarusian Literature of the 11th–19th centuries)*:*

[12] 'Poland prospers with Latin,
Lithuania prospers with Russian.
Without that one, you will not be in Poland,
Without this one, you will be a clown in Lithuania.
To that one Latin language gives,
This one without Russia cannot stand,
You must know Russia, that your praise,
Around the world is already known
Have fun, ruthenian,
Your glory will never end.'

[13] 'The poem is printed according to the original manuscript - the Slutsk copy of the Statute of 1529, which is kept in the St. Petersburg State Public Library, the Department of Manuscripts, fund OLDP) No. 368. P. 13.'

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

> Асноўны матыў верша – ухваленне роднай мовы, падкрэсліванне яе выбітнага месца ў жыцці грамадства і кожнага чалавека. Паводле канцэпцыі аўтара, менавіта мова – зарука вечнай славы, падмурак сацыяльнага і нацыянальнага аптымізму беларусаў-літвінаў[14] (Saverčanka, 2007, p. 391).

Such a patriotic interpretation of the 'main motive of the poem' certainly has a right to exist, but it is not, as we have noted, organic to the ideological worldview space of the 17th century, and its pathos corresponds more with the ideas and desires of Belarusians of the late 19th–20th centuries.

It is worth paying attention to another publication of the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich in the representative anthology *Славянамоўная паэзія Вялікага княства Літоўскага XVI–XVIII стст.* (Slavonic Poetry of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania of the 16th–18th centuries). (Brazgunoŭ, 2011) compiled by Ales Brazgunov. Textologically, it combines the spelling elements of all previous editions in which the modern scientific canonization of the text took place, and differs slightly from each of them (using 'и' instead of 'і'; *блазном* instead of *блазнем*; *Русине* instead of *русине*):

> Полска квитнет лациною,
> Литва квитнет русчизною:
> Без той в Полсце не пребудешь,
> Без сей в Литве блазном будешь.
> Той лацина езык дает,
> Та без Руси не вытрвает,
> Ведзь же юж, Русь, иж тва хвала
> По всем свете юж дойзрала;
> Весели ж се ты, Русине,
> Тва слава никгды не згине![15]
>
> (Brazgunoŭ, 2011, p. 74).

[14] 'The main motive of the poem is the approval of the native language, emphasizing its outstanding place in the life of society and each person. According to the author's concept, language is the guarantee of eternal glory, the foundation of social and national optimism of Belarusians-Lithuanians'.

[15] 'Poland prospers with Latin,
Lithuania prospers with Russian.
Without that one, you will not be in Poland,
Without this one, you will be a clown in Lithuania.
To that one Latin language gives,
This one without Russia cannot stand,
You must know Russia, that your praise,
Around the world is already known
Have fun, Ruthenian,
Your glory will never end'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

In the commentary to the publication, the compiler also indicated the exact source according to which the text of this poem was printed: *Собрание древних грамот и актов городов Вильны, Ковна, Трок, православных монастырей, церквей и по разным предметам…* (The Collection of Ancient Charters and Acts of the Cities of Vilno, Kovno, Troki, Orthodox Monasteries, Churches and on Various Subjects…) Vilna, 1843. P. 1. L. XXII–XXIII. Note 31 (Brazgunoŭ, 2011, p. 843*)*. The paradox, however, is that, as we have already noted, in the mentioned edition of 1843 there are no lines in the poem: 'Без той в Полсце не пребудешь, / Без сей в Литве блазном будешь'[16]. In the anthology, the poem is given in full, with these lines included.

Let me once again draw your attention to the mystery of this poem, which is first of all seen in the fact that the ideas it contains do not actually correspond to the epoch in which it was created. According to the poem, the widespread fame of 'русіна' is due to the fact that 'русчізна' (language) prevails in Lithuania, which is metonymically correlated with 'усім светам' (the whole world); that is why it is necessary to 'весяліцца русіну' (to have fun for), which, is in fact, an ideological manifestation of 'panrusism', which is characteristic of more recent times. However, there was no such tendency in the time of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich, and it is impossible to connect it with the Belarusian patriotic motivation to preserve the native language, as it does not fit into the ideology of 'panrusism'.

A certain incompatibility of the poem with the style and spirit of the 17th century was also noted in our time by other researchers, emphasizing the uniqueness of the work and paying attention to some important nuances in its understanding. Let us look at their arguments.

About the Uniqueness of the Poem, or What Is 'Wrong' with It? Opinions of Researchers

You have already seen that the poem *Poland prospers with Latin…* is mysterious. Why is it also unique? Because it is a poem, unlike any other, shrouded in mystery. What is known about its author? It is only known, that it was a certain Jan Kazimir Pashkevich and nothing more. Except, perhaps, for the undeniable fact that he once owned the Slutsk copy of the First Lithuanian Statute of 1529 and made several handwritten notes in this famous manuscript. Thus, this is a name shrouded in legend, this is a work that fascinates researchers with its patriotic sound, because it is obvious how eloquently and significantly the author raised the prestige of 'русчызны'[17] in Lithuania (in the then understanding of the old Belarusian language), poetized it, and associated it with the glory of 'русіна', which 'will never end'. Therefore, the idea that in the poem the poet created a real hymn to the native language, its immortality and

[16] 'Without that you will not be in Poland, / Without this, you will be a clown in Lithuania.'

[17] 'rusczyzna – the Russian language'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

glory, has become established as a generally accepted one in literary studies. At the same time, it was clearly understood, that the poem refers to the Belarusian language in its then old Belarusian version. The poem, as we wrote above, took an honourable position in a small corpus of old Belarusian works of that time as a sample of civil and patriotic lyrics.

Nevertheless, the perception of the work was not unambiguous. At least in my perception, the poem aroused not only admiration, but also an increasingly definite feeling that something was wrong with this masterpiece, the idea that this poem was a little strange became stronger: it is too 'correct' in its patriotism, especially from the modern point of view, and too 'incorrect' in the context of its time, not organic to this time. These doubts correspond to some extent to the views of other researchers.

So, back in the 1970s, Mikola Grynchyk, a researcher of Belarusian poetry, expressed his opinion about the rhythmic and intonation features of this poem, making several very important observations:

> Можна сказаць, што адзіным дайшоўшым да нас узорам васьміскладовіка ў беларускай паэзіі пачатку XVII ст. з'яўляецца верш Яна Казіміра Пашкевіча, напісаны ў час, калі пануючае месца як у польскай, так і ў беларускай версіфікацыі займаў 13-складовік і яго розныя сумежныя ці блізкія формы[18] (Grynčyk, 1973, p. 48).

Then the researcher quotes the poem with reference to the *Anthology*... by A. Korshunav, but you can see the difference in spelling (in the first line, the word *лациною* is replaced by *лацизною*, obviously for more complete harmony of rhyme with the word *русчизною* in the next line).

M. Grinchik further criticizes the poem as a sample, which is as late as imperfect in comparison with the best achievements of the time. For example, the researcher quotes Jan Kahanovsky's eight-line poem *Pieśn świętojańska*... (Sventoyan song…) in Polish, emphasizing the different levels of versification culture of both authors and reflecting on why Kahanovsky's poem is perfect and Pashkevich's is imperfect. Summing up the arguments, the researcher carefully states that it is difficult to draw conclusions based on one verse, 'but you can say with confidence that in the early 17th century this poem (we are talking about the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich – I. B.) in the form (and content) was largely an **anachronism** (*assigned by us* – I. B.), an echo of an earlier stage of the Belarusian versification. And its only advantage over the Belarusian poems of that time, perhaps, in one – in the desire to rhythmize the poetic line written in the so-called 'short phrase'. Indeed, it is easy to establish a scheme close

[18] 'We can say that the only extant example of an octo poem in Belarusian poetry at the beginning of the 17th century is the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich, written at a time when the dominant place in Polish and Belarusian versification was occupied by the thirteen-line poem and its various related or close forms'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

to trochee here. However, in some cases, especially in the last lines, this scheme is broken, showing a tendency to amphibrachic rhythmics (Grynčyk, 1973, pp. 49–50).

An interesting opinion is expressed by Zhanna Nekrashevich-Karotkaya who writes about the 'apprenticeship', 'discipleship' of the poem by J. K. Pashkevich. First, the researcher quotes Mikola Prashkovich, who says that the poem is 'a true praise of the native language and native culture' (Barysenka, 1968, p. 36). It is obvious that M. Prashkovich's interpretation was the earliest in time and was later taken into account by other researchers. Then Z. Nekrashevich- Karotkaya notes:

> Вядома, што адзіны спіс гэтага верша захаваўся ў першай рукапіснай рэдакцыі Статута ВКЛ 1588 г.[19] Прасцей кажучы, хтосьці, каго звалі Ян Казімір Пашкевіч (ніякай канкрэтнай інфармацыі пра гэту асобу няма), акуратна запісаў на 13-м аркушы рукапіснай кнігі верш уласнага сачынення. Пры гэтым папярэдзіў тэкст самога верша такімі словамі: 'Ян Казимер Пашъкевич рукою властною писал року тисеча шестс[о] т двадцат первого м[е]с[я]ца августа двадцат второг[о] дня'. Ці не нагадвае гэта надзвычай дысцыплінаваная форма запісу выкананне хатняга задання шкаляром[20] (Nekrašèvìč-Karotkaâ, 2015, p. 86).

The two above-mentioned observations of authoritative researchers about 'anachronism' and 'apprenticeship' lead us to the only conclusion that the artistic versification qualities of the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich are not very high, and no special poetic abilities were required to write such a poem. You should also pay attention to the fact that Z. Nekrasevich-Karotkaya, as well as I. Saverchanka, clearly indicate the number of the sheet, namely number 13 in the archive document, according to which the work is printed, supposedly located on this sheet. This is an important circumstance, because just as the number of lines in the poem do not match, so, as it turns out, the sheet number on which the poem is written does not match either. Let us take a look at this phenomenon below, and let us just consider this discrepancy, which further deepens the feeling that something is 'wrong' with the poem.

[19] Apparently, a typographical error was made in the book: not 1588, but 1529 – I.B.

[20] 'It is known that the only copy of this poem remained in the first handwritten version of the Statute of the GDL of 1588. In simple terms, someone named Jan Kazimir Pashkevich (there is no exact information about this person), carefully wrote a poem of his own composition on page 13 of a handwritten book. At the same time, before the text of the poem, he wrote the following words: 'Jan Kazimir Pashkevich wrote with his own hand in the year one thousand six hundred and twenty-first month of August the twenty second day'. Does not this extremely disciplined form of writing recall a schoolboy's homework?'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

The Poem as an 'Ideological Project' of the Russian Empire

The mysterious and enigmatic poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich at a certain stage made us doubt its authenticity.

The first thing that caused doubt was the obvious tendentiousness of its idea, which did not correspond to the atmosphere of that time in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and to the situation of 'Russianness' in the territory of historical Lithuania (Belarus). In reality, Ruthenian-Belarusian of that time did not have any 'panrusism' but had its own worthy history with its problems of socio-political, cultural, and other nature. At that time, it would be too much to say that the glory of Russia (Belarus) resounded 'all over the world' for the reason that 'Russianness' dominated in Lithuania. The fact that 'Russianness' prevailed in Lithuania was perceived as appropriate, not as something extraordinary, because here in 'Russianness', and not 'all over the world', they had the Bible and a Code of laws. The poem cannot be taken as a certain 'prophecy' about the future immortal glory of the 'Ruthenian' (Belarusian), because if we remember the historical vicissitudes associated with the history of the Belarusian statehood and the status of the Belarusian language, the situation here looks rather painful and difficult, intermittent and sacrificial rather than glorious and ceremonial.

On the other hand, if we transfer the ideological content of this poem to the Russian history and language of the then Russian Empire, which from the end of the 18th century ruled in the territory of Lithuania – Belarus, we will see that the ideological 'panrusism' of the work fits well into the ideological atmosphere of the 1840s, when the first publications of the poem appeared in Vilnius editions. At that time, the glory of the Russian state was spreading 'around the world' because of the capture of vast territories, including the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The urgent task of the Russian Empire was to justify and secure in historical Lithuania (Belarus) the rights to the so-called 'native Russian lands', and the language of ancient monuments in our country – 'the Russian' language or ancient Belarusian gave grounds for this. The reference was made not to the rights and status of the Belarusian language, but to the 'Russian' language – in the sense of the official language of the Russian Empire, which should justify its domination here.

The second reason for doubt is the discrepancy in the number of lines of the poem (eight in the first two publications and ten in all the subsequent ones, which refer to the manuscript of the first edition of the Statute of GDL of 1529, which is stored in the Manuscripts Department of the Saint Petersburg State Public Library, with the relevant page as an illustration, which can be used to make sure that the verse consists of exactly ten lines). Why then were two lines omitted in the Vilnius editions of 1842 and 1843?

The discrepancy in the numbering of the page of the manuscript on which the poem was written also contributed to the deepening of doubts: if it is the same manuscript, then the page must obviously coincide. However, some sources name the 13th page of the manuscript, which contains the poem, others – 25/27, which is clearly seen in

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

the illustrative photocopy in an authoritative scientific publication (*Pirmasis Lietuvos*, 1983, p. 85).

The third reason for doubt lies in the most mysterious history of the 'discovery' of the work, the history of its subsequent publications and the distorted fate of an authentic manuscript source – the Slutsk copy of the First Lithuanian Statute of 1529, which will be discussed below.

Now, on the basis of the expressed doubts, it is possible to formulate the following research hypothesis: there is a certain mystery of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich's poem, and its solution is that: 1) this work is not an authentic poem of the beginning of the 17th century, 2) its 'linguistic' patriotism is not related to the Belarusian language, but rather to conscious apologetics of the 'Russian world', 3) 'the Russian language' ('rusczizna') of Lithuania, which is glorified by the author in the poem, is not the language of Skaryna (not the old Belarusian literary language), but the language of the Russian Empire, which was looking for ways to justify its domination in the annexed lands, justify their conquest and the validity of the separation of Lithuania – Russia from the Polish language discourse. From this point of view, the poem was not written in 1621 and not by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich, but was attributed to him much later with a very transparent and practical ideological goal: to prove that in the lands of Lithuania (Belarus), the 'Russian' language, which was identified with the then Russian language, has been dominating for centuries as a literary and colloquial language, and, consequently, the rule of the Russian Empire there is quite justified and appropriate.

Thus, the case concerns a rather successful mystification, so successful that the poem was included in the prophetic masterpieces of the beautiful national writing and was firmly entrenched in textbooks and anthologies. This mystifying 'ideological project' of the Russian Empire was successfully carried out by a Russian official, Alexey Vasilyevich Semenov, who was sent to Vilnius in 1840 as a civilian Governor-General, and who later received appropriate awards for his service: 'monarchical benevolence', an order, and an academic title.

How could this happen? The answer to this question can be found by analysing the materials related to the discovery of the first publications of the poem. Therefore, it is necessary address the corresponding sources and try to make a hermeneutic reconstruction of the history of its origin.

The Case on the Poem…, or the History of a Special Mystification

Several sources can help to unravel the mystery of this poem. The first source is an article by Genadz Kisyalyov *Як знайшлі верш* (How the Poem Was Found) in his book *Героі і музы: Гісторыка-літаратурныя нарысы* (Heroes and Muses: Historical and Literary Essays) (1982).

In this article, as always in the works of G. Kisyalyov, there is a lot of important specific information based on archival materials. The article began with the case of

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

the Vilnius office of the civil Governor for 1841–1842, under the title *On the Poems Found in Ancient Manuscripts of the Lithuanian Statute*, the researcher's reference indicated that the case was stored in 'ЦДГА Літ. ССР, ф. 380, воп. 80, спр. 260'[21] (Kìsâlëŭ, 1982, p. 23). A few years ago, following in the footsteps of G. Kisyalyov, I also got acquainted in Vilnius with this archive case, which in the original had the title: *Дело. О стихахъ найденныхъ въ древнихъ рукописяхъ Литовскаго Статута* (The Case. On the Poems Found in Ancient Manuscripts of the Lithuanian Statute). The documents of this archive case, on which G. Kisyalyov bases his work, speak precisely about the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich. Here are some key points of his article.

First of all, the researcher rightly draws attention to the fact that after the defeat of the uprising of 1830–1831 and after the revelation of the conspiracy of Symon Kanarsky in 1839, the tsarist authorities began to exercise more vigilant and strict control over the Lithuanian-Belarusian region, having decided to use historical facts for this purpose. At that time, 'the civil Governor of Vilnius since October 1840 was a former Decembrist, a member of the Union of Prosperity Alyaxey Vasilyevich Syamyonav' (Kìsâlëŭ, 1982, p. 23). Further, G. Kisyalyov describes Semenov's historical and bibliophilic interests, that he worked in archives and libraries in Vilnius, and 'with great interest got acquainted with the history of the region' (Kìsâlëŭ, 1982, p. 24). In my opinion, Semenov's interest in the history of the Lithuanian-Belarusian region, where he turned out to be a 'civil Governor', was still caused not so much by the desire to expand his cultural range, but by his desire to justify his stay in a responsible state position.

At this stage, it was not weapons, but culture that became the means of subjugating the lands annexed to the Russian Empire. Semenov quite successfully fulfilled the task of justifying the annexation of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the Russian Empire from the cultural and historical point of view, for this purpose he got acquainted with locally written monuments in the old Belarusian language. At the same time, 'ruschizna' (old Belarusian), which was really the spoken and literary language in Lithuania – Belarus at that time, was tendentiously identified by Semenov with the official language of the Russian Empire, which justified the latter's 'rights' to these lands. It is this ideological imperial approach that *The Case on the Poems*… testifies to ... Semenov willingly and with impetus set to work, which also gave an excellent opportunity to curry favour with the Emperor.

'Па ініцыятыве і, здаецца, нават на сродкі Сямёнава быў падрыхтаваны і выпушчаны двухтомны *Збор старажытных грамат і актаў гарадоў Вільні, Коўна, Трок*" (складальнікі А. Марціноўскі і В. Нарбут)'[22]– writes G. Kisyalyov,

[21] 'CISA of the Lithuanian SSR, f. 380, inv. 80, file no. 260.'

[22] 'At the initiative and, it seems, even at Semenov's expense, a two-volume *The Collection of Ancient Charters and Acts of the Cities of Vilno, Kovno, Troki* (compiled by A. Martinovsky and V. Narbut) was prepared and published'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

and further quotes in his translation Semenov's report to the Minister of Internal Affairs of April 8, 1841:

> У старажытным рукапісе Літоўскага статута, які зберагаецца ў бібліятэцы Віленскай каталіцкай духоўнай акадэміі, знойдзены мною верш на рускай мове, пісаны ў першай палове XVII стагоддзя, вельмі выдатны ў гістарычных адносінах. Адлітаграфаваўшы некалькі здымкаў з яго, абавязкам палічыў прадставіць пры гэтым тры экземпляры на меркаванне вашага сіяцельства. Верш гэты, як маеце ласку бачыць, пацвярджае гістарычны факт, што мова руская ў XVII стагоддзі не толькі ўжывалася ў судаводстве і ў выданні законаў Літоўскага княства, але што яна была ў Літве мовай кніжнай і гутарковай, што Казімір Пашкевіч, які напісаў згаданы верш, будучы ўраджэнцам Літоўскага краю і католікам (як сведчыць яго імя), ганарыўся ўзнікаючай славай Русі і прызнаваў тады, у XVII стагоддзі, мову русскую неабходнасцю для Літвы; значыць, у XVII стагоддзі мова руская была агульнай і пануючай у Літве для ўсіх абывацеляў, нягледзячы на розніцу веравызнанняў. […]. Ці не пажадана будзе вашаму сіяцельству дазволіць згаданы рукапіс Літоўскага статута як старажытны і выдатны ў гістарычных адносінах даставіць у імператарскую Санкт-Пецярбургскую публічную бібліятэку?[23] (Kìsâlëŭ, 1982, p. 24-25).

Further peripeteias in the narration of G. Kiselev are as follows:

> У пісьме ад 24 красавіка 1841 года упраўляючы міністэрствам граф Строганаў „пажадаў", каб рукапіс даслалі яму. Сямёнаў забраў каштоўны манускрыпт у біскупа Клангевіча, але чамусьці перасылка рукапісу ў Пецярбург затрымалася ажно да сакавіка 1842 года, нягледзячы на шматлікія напамінкі канцылярыі міністэрства ўнутраных спраў і віленскага біскупа"[24] (Kìsâlëŭ, 1982, p. 25).

[23] 'In an ancient manuscript of the Lithuanian Statute, kept in the library of the Vilnius Catholic Theological Academy, I found a poem in Russian written in the first half of the 17th century, very remarkable in historical terms. After lithographing a few pictures of it, I felt it my duty to submit three copies to your Majesty's discretion. This poem, as you can see, confirms the historical fact, that in the 17th century the Russian language was used not only in the judicial system and the publication of laws of the Principality of Lithuania but also that in Lithuania it was a literary and spoken language. It also proves that Kazimir Pashkevich, who wrote the above-mentioned poem, being a native of the Lithuanian region and a Catholic (as his name implies), was proud of the growing glory of Russia and recognized then, in the 17th century, the Russian language as a necessity for Lithuania. In other words, it confirms, that in the 17th century, the Russian was common and dominant in Lithuania for all citizens, despite the difference in religions. […] Wouldn't it be desirable for your Excellency to allow the above-mentioned manuscript of the Lithuanian Statute, as an ancient and historically remarkable one, to be delivered to the Imperial St. Petersburg Public Library?'

[24] 'In the letter dated April 24, 1841, the Head of the Ministry, Count Stroganov, 'desired' that the manuscript should be sent to him. Semenov took the valuable manuscript from Bishop Klangevich, but for some reason, the sending of the manuscript to Saint Petersburg was delayed until March

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

Thus, the real intrigue unfolds around a 'valuable manuscript', which provides a basis for reflection and comparison. What does this, in your opinion, indicate?

As you know, Bishop Klangevich died in 1841, without waiting for the return of the manuscript. Bishop Tsyvinsky, his successor, wrote several letters to Semenov asking him to return the manuscript, but in vain. In his third letter, the Bishop asked to send the manuscript directly to the Ministry, which was obviously in Semenov's interest, since it allowed the forgery to be hidden: no one who had seen Semenov's manuscript and knew its true state could ever see it again. It is not also surprising that there was a delay in sending the manuscript to the Ministry, which is also mentioned in *The Case on the Poems*…, since it took some time and technological skills to prepare lithographic prints of the fake poem. The technology of lithography at that time had been already well developed and available for execution. With its help, it was possible to make appropriate copies-prints, each of which would be considered the original.

G. Kisyalyov in his article gave another explanation of why there was a delay:

> Хутчэй за ўсё так сталася таму, што Сямёнаў хацеў спачатку надрукаваць верш Пашкевіча ў Вільні, а таксама зняць дакладную копію з усяго рукапісу. Верш з'явіўся ўпершыню ў віленскім календары *Месяцеслов хозяйственный на 1842 год*, у тэксце артыкула *Пра ўсеагульнае ўжыванне рускай мовы да XVIII стагоддзя ў Віленскай і іншых заходніх губерніях*. У артыкуле, які з'яўляецца як бы каментарыем да верша, прыводзіліся цытаты з Літоўскага Статута пра „рускую" мову – дзяржаўную ў межах Вялікага княства Літоўскага – і адзначалася: „Архіў былога Літоўскага трыбунала (які быў галоўным судом) і архівы іншых судоў гэтых губерняў гэта самае пацвярджаюць, бо ўсе справы ў іх да 1697 года, гэта значыць, да пачатку XVIII стагоддзя, пісаны на адной рускай мове"[25] (Kìsâlëŭ, 1982, p. 25).

G. Kisyalyov further mentioned that the poem was published twice in Vilnius – the second time in 1843 in the preface to *The Collection of Ancient Charters*... under the title *Замечания касательно истории Литвы* (Remarks on the History of Lithuania).

Kiselyov's conclusion was very apt:

1842, despite numerous reminders from the Chancellery of the Ministry of the Interior and the Bishop of Vilnius'.

[25] 'Most likely, it happened because Semenov first wanted to publish Pashkevich's poem in Vilnius, as well as to make an exact copy of the entire manuscript. The poem first appeared in the Vilnius calendar *Monthly Economic for 1842*, in the text of the article *On the General Use of the Russian Language until the 18th Century in Vilnius and Other Western Provinces*. The article, which was a commentary on the poem, contained quotes from the Lithuanian Statute on the 'Russian' language, the official language in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and it was noted: "the Archives of the former Lithuanian Tribunal (which was the main court) and the archives of other courts in these provinces confirm the same, because all their cases before 1697, that is, before the beginning of the eighteenth century, were written only in Russian"'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

> Як мы бачылі, царскія ўлады (і губернатар Сямёнаў не быў у гэтых адносінах выключэннем) зацікавіліся вершам Пашкевіча перш за ўсё як дадатковым гістарычным доказам правоў Расіі (чытай: царскага ўрада) на Літоўска-Беларусі край. „Руская мова" Літоўскага статута, „русчизна" верша Пашкевіча атаясамліваліся з рускай мовай у цяперашнім разуменні. Гэтаму спрыяў слабы ўзровень тагачаснай навукі. Спроба палеаграфічна-лінгвістычнага аналізу верша Пашкевіча, дадзеная ў згаданым артыкуле з *Месяцеслова* і паўтораная потым у прадмове да *Збору старажытных грамат*, – даволі бездапаможная: "Літары і почырк пісьма згаданага верша зусім падобныя на тыя, якія ўжываліся ў XVII стагоддзі і ва ўсходняй частцы Расіі, але ў мове прыкметны некаторыя словы, узятыя з польскай, напрыклад: рок (год), квитнет (процветает), не вытрвает (не выдержит, не может обойтись)[26] (Kisâlëŭ, 1982, pp. 25–26).

Further in his article G. Kisyalyov explained that Pashkevich's poem was written in the old Belarusian language, not identical to the Russian language in the modern sense; emphasized that it was 'an excellent example of ancient Belarusian literature'; mentioning the merits and further fate of Semenov, who was finally in 1853 elected an active member of the Society of Russian History and Antiquities at Moscow University.

A natural question arises: was Pashkevich's poem in the Slutsk copy of the Lithuanian Statute of 1529? I have already expressed my doubts above, and now I am additionally convinced that such a poem (quite primitive in artistic terms) could be written by the same Semenov, for whom it was not a very difficult task both artistically and technically: Semenov was an educated humanist, and at that time lithography technology had already been invented, which, although it required special tools, was nevertheless affordable and cheap to perform.

I will not claim that the civilian Governor-General immediately set himself the goal of writing a fake poem in the spirit of the ideology of 'panrusism'. But such a thought could naturally have arisen in him when studying the historical documents of the conquered land, especially when he got acquainted with the Slutsk copy of the Lithuanian Statute of 1529, taken from Bishop Klangevich, and saw that there were quite a lot of blank sheets, not filled with the main legal text, but filled sometimes completely unrelated to this text records made by different authors at different times.

[26] 'As we have seen, the tsarist authorities (and Governor Semenov was no exception) were interested in Pashkevich's poem, primarily as an additional historical proof of the rights of Russia (read: the tsarist government) to the Lithuanian-Belarusian region. 'The Russian language 'of the Lithuanian Statute, 'rusczizna' of Pashkevich's poem was identified with the Russian language in the modern sense. This was facilitated by the weak level of science at the time. The attempt of a palaeographic-linguistic analysis of Pashkevich's poem, given in the above-mentioned article from *The Calendar* and repeated later in the preface to *The Collection of Ancient Charters*, is quite helpless: 'the letters and handwriting of the letter completely coincide with those used in the 17th century and the Eastern part of Russia, but some words taken from Polish are noticeable in the language, for example рок (год) (year), квитнет (процветает) (prospers), не вытрвает (не выдержит, не может обойтись) (will not stand, cannot do)'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

If you believe that the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich was actually written in 1621 on the pages of a manuscript, and Semenov only 'found' it and published it, then the whole set of above-mentioned doubts becomes relevant. After all, if such a poem was not originally in the manuscript, and the idea of its 'creation' was embodied by Semenov, then all doubts disappear, and inconsistencies become clear and acquire a logical explanation.

Thus, it might seem insufficient to Semenov, that the local documentation monuments were written in a literary 'Russian writing', he also had to prove that the 'rusczizna', which he identified with the Russian language of the time, was used in everyday life by the entire population of ancient Lithuania (Belarus). He successfully fulfilled the set ideological task, not only 'finding' a poem in the appropriate language in the Slutsk copy of the first Lithuanian Statute, but what was most important, pompously promoted it in two editions – in *The Economic Calendar* ... (Monthly ...) for 1842 and the *Collection of Ancient Letters* ... 1843.

For the preparation and publication of the *Collection*... which specially credited Semenov, as this was indicative of the successful implementation of the Russification mission, he received officially announced to him on May 19, 1843 the 'Monarch's favour' (LVIA, f. 378, ap. 840 d. 1477, p. 47), and on May 27, 1843 by letter from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he was informed that 'the Emperor has graciously deigned to award him the Knight of the Order of Saint Anna, 1st Class' (LVIA, f. 378, ap. 840 d. 1477, p. 48).

As for the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich, published in its original version in the editions of 1842 and 1843, as evidenced by these publications, consisted of eight lines. Why were there 10 of them in later publications? Perhaps Semenov was so inspired during the technical preparation of the lithographic prints that he added two more lines to the work to improve and strengthen his idea. This supplemented version was included in the manuscript. It was not very difficult to forge the handwriting, because of numerous inscriptions and inserts in the handwritten text and the presence of blank pages, what created the conditions for forgery and gave adequate space for inspiration.

The date of the poem's writing also deserves special attention. Let us return in this connection to the letter-report of Semenov dated April 8, 1841, quoted above from the book of G. Kiselyov, about the remarkable discovery of the poem as the proof of the widespread use of the 'Russian' language in Lithuania. In the original of this letter (clean copy with edits), which is kept in *The Case on the Poems...,* there is, omitted by G. Kisyalyov but very eloquent fragment, testifying to the special efforts of Semenov to get in favour with the Emperor. Let us quote the fragment in the original:

> Замечательно также, что стихи сіи, въ коихъ изложено какъ бы предсказаніе о будущей славе Россіи, писаны въ 1622 году 22 Августа, то есть слишкомъ за 200 летъ въ то число, въ которое ныне Россія празднуетъ [залогъ своей славы и благоденствія] день

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

коронованія ныне благополучно Царствующаго Государя Императора[27] (LVIA, f. 380, ap. 80, d. 260, p. 3).

Emperor Nicholai I was crowned on August 22, 1826. Thus, according to the document, the date of writing the poem – the day and month – was not accidental, but symbolic: the poem was specially timed to this day of the imperial and royal glory of Russia, to which Semenov in the letter draws special and particular attention to the addressee. The only surprising thing is why in the letter he inaccurately, because of a mistake or carelessness, indicates the year of writing the poem (1622 instead of 1621, according to the autograph).

The very idea of the mystification was ingeniously simple, and its implementation was only a matter of time and 'technique', which explains the delay in the 'return' of the manuscript, and later its delivery to the Ministry. It is quite possible that Bishop Klangevich passed away before his time, partly because of his worries about the priceless manuscript, which was irrevocably in the hands of an influential imperial official - a representative of the then 'rulers of life'.

According to the hermeneutical reconstruction, this is how the story of the creation of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich's poem may look like – as a legendary 'fake' of the 19th century, especially executed for ideological purposes by the Russian official A. Semenov. This conclusion is supported by some additional arguments that can be found in other printed sources. Let us turn to these sources.

Slutsk Copy of the First Lithuanian Statute of 1529 Through the Eyes of Ignat Danilovich and Modern Historians

Ignat Danilovich, a well-known professor at the University of Vilnius, was one of the first to take the historiographical study of various copies of the First Lithuanian Statute of 1529, including the Slutsk copy. He prepared for publication a consolidated edition of the monument in Cyrillic but did not receive the permission from the tsarist authorities to publish it in the Russian Empire and then published it in Poznan in 1841 in the 'Polish alphabet', with the help and editorial work of Joachim Lyalevel, taking as a basis the Dzyalyn copy, as one of the most authentic and appropriate in his opinion. The Poznan publication could probably have been an additional stimulus for the acceleration of Semenov's 'enlightenment' activities, who would soon make his publications in Vilnius in 1842 and 1843 with the sensational discovery of a poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich.

[27] 'Remarkable also, that this poem, in which it is presented as if the prediction of the future glory of Russia, written in 1622, August 22, that is, 200 years ago, on the same day that Russia celebrates now [pledge of its glory and prosperity] the day of the coronation now successfully Reigning Emperor.'

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

Back in 1823, I. Danilovich in the Vilnius periodical *Dziennik Wilenski* made a detailed bibliographic description of the Slutsk copy of the First Lithuanian Statute, as well as additional inscriptions in it in an article in Polish entitled *Opisanie bibliograficzne dotąd znanych exemplarzy Statutu Litewskiego, rękopiśmiennych i edycyy drukowanych, tak w ruskim oryginalnym, jako też polskim i łacińskim języku* (Bibliographic description of currently known handwritten and printed copies of the Lithuanian Statute, both in the Russian original and in Polish and Latin).

Here is what he wrote about Pashkevich's autographs, which he saw with his own eyes when the manuscript had not yet reached Semenov:

> У Бібліятэцы Віленскага ўніверсітэту […] рукапіс Статуту першага Літоўскага, […] пісаны ест на паперы простай, характарам прапарцыянальным, кшталтным і чытэльным, па-руску, чорным атрамантам, без ніякіх аздоб, верагодна, адразу пасля року 1564, са з'яўленнем другой рэдакцыі, скапіраваны: бо на тытуле ужо старым называецца; належаў да нейкага Яна Казімежа Пашкевіча, які пустыя старонкі пасля кожнага раздзелу, каля року 1654, ***канцэптамі забазграл*** (highlighted in bold by us – I. B.). Пазней перайшоў да бібліятэкі Казімежа Клакоцкага…[28] (Daniłowicz, 1823, p. 388).

As you can see, about Pashkevich's poem *Poland prospers in Latin*…, as well as about the date of August 22, 1621, when it was written, Danilovich does not mention anything, noting all Pashkevich's writings as 'concepts', and using a stylistically rather contemptuous expression *zabazgrał*, which literally means *scribbled doodles*, and did so 'about the year 1654'. For the notes of the next owner, Ludwik Damaradsky, were dated 1654. It seems unbelievable to assume that Danilovich would not have paid attention to the poem, would not have mentioned it separately if the poem actually existed, and even more than that, would not have mentioned the date 1621, immediately going to 1654. There is only one explanation: when I. Danilovich in 1823 made a description of the Slutsk copy of the First Lithuanian Statute, the date 22. VIII. 1621 and the poem *Poland prospers in Latin*…, as well as the autographs of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich were not there!

In 1983, an extensive academic publication in Lithuanian and Russian *Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas… = Первый Литовский Статут: Палеографический и текстологический анализ списков* (First Lithuanian Statute: Paleographic and Textual Analysis of Manuscripts), prepared by S. Lazutka and E. Gudavicius, was published in Vilnius. The publication describes all known manuscripts of the First Lithuanian Statute, including a detailed description of the Slutsk copy. According

[28] 'In the Library of Vilnius University [...] the manuscript of the first Lithuanian Statute, [...] written on simple paper, with a character proportional, similar and legible, in Russian, in black ink, without any decorations, probably immediately after 1564, with the appearance of the second edition, copied: for the title is already called old; belonged to a certain Jan Kazimierz Pashkevich, who scribbled concepts (highlighted in bold by me – I. B.) on the empty pages after each chapter, around 1654. Later, it got to the library of Kazimierz Klakocki'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

to the preface, the names of manuscripts were given by I. Danilovich, based on the identification of their place of origin or name of the owner: for example, the Slutsk manuscript was named after an initial stay in the library of the Jesuit College in Slutsk, where the manuscript was kept from the late 17th century until 1816, after which it was in Vilnius (*Pirmasis Lietuvos*, 1983, p. 14).

A special article dedicated to the Slutsk manuscript covers the history of its origin and storage, paleographic and textual features; the information about Pashkevich's poem was given, described as being on page 25/27 of the manuscript (and not on page 13, as indicated in modern Belarusian commentaries on the poem); a photocopy of the corresponding sheet with a poem was given, on which the number of the sheet was clearly visible – 25/27.

The article also contains interesting references to the peculiarities of page numbering: the last two blank pages with later (1622)[29] records of private affairs of different persons are not numbered, as well as two blank pages inside the book, one of which is torn, and the other is later numbered in another ink (in the order of pages numbered 25–26, that is why the numbers of these pages are repeated twice). The numbering, according to the authors of the article, was probably carried out in the Slutsk Jesuit College before binding (*Pirmasis Lietuvos*, 1983, pp. 77–78).

According to the authors of the article, the manuscript arrived in Saint Petersburg after the Roman Catholic Academy was moved there in 1844 from Vilnius, and it was first mentioned among the manuscripts of the Imperial library in a report for 1857. In my opinion, the manuscript of the Slutsk copy of the first Lithuanian Statute could not have got there with the relocation of the Vilnius Roman Catholic Theological Academy, because at that time the manuscript was not there. Maybe it got to the St. Petersburg Library after March 1842, because Semyonov's report to the Minister of Internal Affairs of March 31, 1842, indicated that he had already sent the manuscript (LVIA, f. 380, ap. 80, d. 260, p. 12). However, it is most likely that the manuscript reached the northern capital of the Empire in another way and much later, having already passed through the hands of A. Semenov, perhaps after 1854, when Semenov made another, this time in Moscow, publication of the Old Lithuanian Statute of 1529 – in the 18th volume of *Временник Императорскаго Московскаго общества истории и древностей россійскихъ* (The Annales of the Imperial Moscow Society of Russian History and Antiquities), but more on this later.

Now we will pay special attention to how the autographs of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich are described in this article:

> На бывшей чистой странице 24 – шесть надписей – автографов Яна-Казимира Пашкевича, видимо, тогдашнего владельца рукописи; первые четыре автографа написаны кириллицей, а последние два – по-польски. После первых полных двух

[29] It is possible, that this date was the reason for the 'slip-up' in the letter quoted above by Semenov, because he may have initially seen it in the manuscript.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

собственноручных подписей: «Ян[ъ] Казимер[ъ] Пашкевич[ъ]» следует надпись: «рукою своею пописал[ъ]». Почерк четырёх последних автографов несколько отличается от первых двух, а также от автографов, даты (22.VIII.1621) и стихотворения на следующей 25–й странице бывшего чистого листа (оборотная 26–я страница которого так и осталась чистой), сделанных рукою Я.-К. Пашкевича. Стихотворение широко известно в литературе, неоднократно печаталось его факсимиле. Автографы сделаны в стилизованной размашистой манере. Что автор был весьма образованным для своего времени человеком и хорошо владел искусством письма, показывают особенно витиеватые инициалы автографов на странице 24. […] Рукописью Пашкевич пользовался долго, возможно, около 30 лет. Об этом могут свидетельствовать автографы и надписи Людвика Домарадзкого. […] На странице 25 рядом с автографами и стихотворением Я.-К. Пашкевича 30.I.1654 г. оставил свой автограф Людвик Домарадзкий[30] (*Pirmasis Lietuvos*, 1983, pp. 84–86, 88).

What does this information indicate? The fact that six autographs of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich, the authenticity of which cannot be doubted, was placed on page 24 of the manuscript. On page 25 the same two autographs were **repeated** (‘Ян[ъ] Казимер[ъ] Пашкевич[ъ]’ i ‘рукою своею пописал[ъ]’) and the day, month and year were added – 22.VIII.1621, which dates the writing of the poem, and the text of the poem itself. On the side right, on the same page, there were already Damaradsky's autographs, marked in 1654.

The situation described above looks phantasmagorical because it does not have any logical answer to two questions. First: why did Pashkevich have to repeat his name and surname, as well as proof of ownership of the record on the next page, if they have already been recorded on the previous one? Second: why did Domaradsky have to squeeze more than thirty years later on an almost filled page if there were blank pages in the manuscript? Let us note that these questions have a logical explanation only if we take into account the possibility of falsification.

[30] ‘On the former blank page 24, there are six autographic inscriptions by Jan-Kazimir Paszkiewicz, apparently, the then owner of the manuscript; the first four autographs are written in Cyrillic, and the last two in Polish. After the first two full handwritten signatures: “Ян[ъ] Казимер[ъ] Пашкевич[ъ]” (‘Jan Kazimer Pashkevich’) follows the inscription: “рукою своею пописал[ъ]” (‘wrote with my own hand’)”. The handwriting of the last four autographs differs somewhat from the first two, as well as from the autographs, the date (22.08.1621) and the poem on the next 25th page of the former blank sheet (the reverse 26th page of which has remained blank), made by J-K. Pashkevich. The poem is widely known in the literature and copies have been repeatedly printed. The autographs are made in a stylized sweeping manner. The fact that the author was a highly educated man for his time and was well versed in the art of writing is shown by the particularly ornate initials of the autographs on page 24. […] Pashkevich used the manuscript for a long time, perhaps about 30 years. This can be evidenced by the autographs and inscriptions of Ludwik Domaradzky. […] On page 25 next to the autographs and the poem by J.-K. Pashkevich on 30.I.1654 Ludwik Domaradzky left his autograph’.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

The phantasmagoria is complemented by another remark in this article, which is important in the light of the above-mentioned arguments: 'it is necessary to take into account the practice of the then clerks to change the style of writing, the proof – J-K. Pashkevich's inscriptions' (*Pirmasis Lietuvos*, 1983, p. 88). Thus, Pashkevich's 'style of writing' has been described by modern researchers as 'changeable'. What does that mean? The fact is that on page 24 there was one 'manner of writing', and on page 25 it was different! I am not afraid to say that in this case, the mention of the 'variability' of the letter may indicate not only the real possibility of falsification but even the very fact of its commission.

At the end of the article, there is also a description of the copy of the Slutsk manuscript kept in the Leningrad Library of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, which was made by librarians of the St. Petersburg Library shortly after it got there. The copy was not made mechanically, the text of the manuscript was rewritten in the Russian script of the middle of the 19th century in a format close to the original, on paper made in 1837, which is confirmed by the relevant filigree. The copy was made no later than the late 40s – early 50s of the 19th century, but not earlier than 1844 – the year when the Vilnius Theological Academy moved to Saint Petersburg. 'There can be no doubt that the manuscript is a copy of the Slutsk manuscript. This is confirmed by the absolute coincidence of the texts' (*Pirmasis Lietuvos*, 1983, p. 93–94).

Let us remember that at one time it was A. Semenov who was going to make an exact copy of the Slutsk manuscript of the First Lithuanian Statute, keeping it at home for a long time. Therefore, it is doubtful that this copy was made by the 'librarians of the St. Petersburg Library', and not by Semyonov, who contributed to its creation. The presence of the copy described above confirms the fact that A. Semenov carried out his intention, which gave him the opportunity to confuse even more the case with the original copy of the Slutsk manuscript and the authenticity of the poem by Jan Kazimir Pashkevich.

And here there is another unclear circumstance that increases the confusion around the ancient manuscript: there is a new, so-called 'Vilnius' copy, which is supposed to be 'the same' Slutsk manuscript, just revised. Thus, in the preface to the academic publication *Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas*..., which is discussed here, the study of the Polish scientist M. Bernstein is mentioned, who for the first time in 1915 'tried to analyse the differences and to determine the authenticity of various manuscripts of the First Statute'; he drew attention to the fact that the Slutsk manuscript had undergone 'significant revision and addition by the scribes'. Scientific intuition suggested to the scientist that the Slutsk and Vilnius copies 'should represent the same manuscript', but M. Bernstein, as the authors of the preface note, 'did not specify that there is no Vilno copy at all' (*Pirmasis Lietuvos*, 1983, p. 17).

Another question arises: if the 'Vilnius' copy does not exist, then, according to modern researchers, where did the mention of it by the authoritative Polish researcher M. Bernstein in 1915 come from? Let's try to explain this. The next 18 volumes of *Временник императорскаго Московскаго общества истории и древностей*

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

россійскихъ (The Annales of the Imperial Moscow Society of Russian History and Antiquities) were published in 1854 in Moscow, where at the suggestion of Semyonov and with his Preface *The Old Lithuanian Statute of 1529* was printed as evidence of the dominance of the 'Russian' language in Lithuania. It was in Semyonov's Preface that the concept of 'Vilno manuscript of the Old Lithuanian Statute' first appeared, which 'was accepted as the original in this edition' and which 'is the one edition with the Slutsk manuscript'. The Preface simply strikes with the scope of the free 'creative' treatment of historical material that Semenov allowed himself and which summed up the results of his fruitful 'scientific' activities in Vilnius, for which in 1853 he was awarded admission to the full membership of the Imperial Moscow Society of Russian History and Antiquities.

The Preface begins with the following testimony[31]:

> При настоящемъ изданіи Стараго Литовскаго Статута, 1529 года, Редакція Временника имела оригиналомъ списокъ сего статута отчетливо и верно снятый съ рукописи XVII столетія, хранящейся въ бывшей Виленской Академіи. Списокъ сей доставленъ въ Моск. [овское] Общество Исторіи и Древностей Россійскихъ Действительнымъ Членомъ Общества Алексеемъ Васильевичемъ Семеновымъ. Варіантами при изданіи употреблены списки Дзялынскаго, Фирлея и Слуцкой, напечатанные Польскими или Латинскими буквами въ Познани въ 1841 году[32] (Vremennik, 1954, p. I).

Here is what is written next about the Vilnius manuscript itself:

> Виленская рукопись Стараго Литовскаго Статута, принятая за оригинал при настоящемъ изданіи, одной редакціи съ Слуцкою рукописью, которою пользовался для варіантовъ Гр. Дзялынскій при своем изданіи, вероятно обе рукописи сіи были списаны съ одной древнейшей рукописи и представляютъ очень не много варіантовъ другъ другу. Въ нихъ древній Русскій языкъ Статута менее подвергся вліянію Польской речи, нежели въ рукописяхъ Дзялынскаго и Фирлея очевидно писанныхъ въ техъ областяхъ Литвы, въ которыхъ сильно преобладала Польская речь[33] (Vremennik, 1854, p. I).

[31] The text is given in the original, with the exception of the letter 'яць'.

[32] 'In the present edition of the Old Lithuanian Statute, 1529, the editorial Board of The Annales had an original copy of this Statute clearly and correctly copied from the manuscript of the 17th century, kept in the former Vilno Academy. A copy of this document was delivered to the Moscow Association of Russian History and Antiquities by a Full Member of the Society, Alexey Vasilievich Semenov. The Dzyalynskaya, Firley and Slutsk copies are used as variants of the publication, printed in Polish or Latin letters in Poznan in 1841'.

[33] 'The Vilno manuscript of the Old Lithuanian Statute, accepted as the original in the present edition, is of the same edition as the Slutsk manuscript, which was used for the versions by Gr. Dzialynski in his edition, probably both manuscripts were written off with one of the most ancient manuscripts and are not very much variants of each other. In them the ancient Russian language of the Statute was less influenced by Polish speech than in the manuscripts of Dzyalynsky and Firley obviously written in those regions of Lithuania, in which the Polish language strongly prevailed'.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

In the Preface, it was further emphasized that the editorial board, having accepted the 'copy from the Vilno manuscript' as the original, printed the entire text in accordance with this copy, without additions in accordance with other manuscripts, except in cases when the Vilnius manuscript lacked full articles. Then the additions were made in the same font but marked Dz. (Dzialynsky), Fir. (Firley), Slutsk. (Slutsk) for the corresponding fragments.

Thus, only one conclusion can be drawn from the above information about the *Vilno manuscript*: Semyonov deliberately and purposefully confused the case with the identification of the ancient Slutsk manuscript, which turned into an unnamed ancient manuscript of the 17th century, from which a copy of the *Vilno manuscript*, owned by Semyonov, was allegedly made. The statement that the Vilnius manuscript was of 'one edition' with the Slutsk manuscript, which was used by Dzyalynsky when preparing the Poznan edition, and that both were 'written off from one of the oldest manuscripts', further confused this issue. What was the purpose of all these pseudo-scientific games around the original Slutsk manuscript? The answer is obvious: to hide the traces of the reworking. The complexity of the case with the copies of the Slutsk manuscript is confirmed by the description of it by modern researchers, who write, referring to M. Bernstein, that the closest to the original copies of the First Statute are the Dzyalynsky, Firley and Pulavsky manuscripts, and the Slutsk and Ostrabramsky manuscripts 'have undergone significant processing and additions by scribes' (*Pirmasis Lietuvos*, 1983, p. 17).

Thus, the question arises: is the copy that is now kept in St. Petersburg the 'Vilno' (Slutsk) manuscript or an authentic Slutsk manuscript that Semyonov was supposed to send to the Ministry in 1842? After all, if we admit that the Vilnius manuscript does not really exist, then it follows that in Moscow Semyonov continued to use the original, which would appear in the library later, after the publication of the 18th volume of the *Vremennik...* not in 1854, but 1857 when it would already be recorded in the library catalogue of manuscripts. If, after all, the original reached the library in 1842, then the copy supposedly made by librarians may be exactly the one that Semyonov called the 'Vilno' manuscript.

Conclusions

It is unlikely that the poem of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich *Poland prospers in Latin*…, placed in the Slutsk manuscript of the First Lithuanian Statute of 1529, is an authentic work of the first half of the 17th century. Most likely, the poem appeared as a result of a forgery-mystification committed by the Governor-General of Vilnius Alexey Semenov in 1841 in order to justify the domination of the Russian Empire in Lithuania – Belarus as 'native Russian lands'. The reason for this justification was the acquaintance with the monuments of ancient Belarusian writing, namely the Lithuanian Statute of 1529 (its Slutsk copy), other monuments of clerical paperwork and jurisprudence of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Since the official literary language of these monuments

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

was, as you know, the old Belarusian language (then known as 'рускай'('Russian')) and not Polish or Latin, Semenov took advantage of this and called it similar to Russian, which was the state language of the Russian Empire. G. Kisyalyov mentioned this in his article, linking this approach with the short-sightedness of Semenov, who could not or did not want to avoid differences in languages. In my opinion, Semenov did this deliberately: fulfilling a certain ideological order, he composed a poem, weak enough in artistic and poetic terms, but with a clear idea of 'panrusism' to prove that the 'Russian language' was not only bookish (artificial), but also a spoken (natural) language, in which poems were 'scribbled' spontaneously, even in ancient manuscripts.

The reasons for doubt about the authenticity of the poem were as follows: the absence of two lines in the early editions and their presence in the next; a long delay by Semenov of the copy of the Slutsk manuscript; there was no mention of the poem and the date of its writing in the description of the Slutsk manuscript by I. Danilovich; referring to modern researchers about the 'variability' of handwriting autographs of Jan Kazimir Pashkevich in the manuscript and their repetition; confusion with page numbering and copies of manuscripts and much more. The analysis of the first publications of the poem, the textual review of academic publications according to which the poem was canonized in the history of Belarusian literature, the study of the history of the discovery of this poem and the historiography of the Slutsk copy of the first edition of the Lithuanian Statute of 1529 confirmed the validity of doubts and made it possible to substantiate, with the help of the hermeneutic reconstruction, an alternative to the generally accepted version of the origin of the poem and, accordingly, to give a new emphasis to its interpretation.

First of all, the hermeneutic reconstruction provides a logical answer to the question: why does the poem look anachronistic in the context of its time? Precisely because the poem was not created then, it was written much later: not in the 17th century, but the 19th century. The fact that the poem is most likely a counterfeit of the 19th century and was created for ideological purposes is confirmed by many facts: the difference in handwriting, 'anachronism' and 'apprenticeship', the long holding of the manuscript by Semenov until it was time to send it directly to the Ministry, and not allowing the manuscript to reach the environment where its contents were well known to the owners (at that time, Bishop Klangevich was no longer alive). From the point of view of artistic qualities, the poem looks rather primitive and apologetic. This is the time of the Baroque, and the poem cannot impress with a special Baroque metaphor or symbolic encryption of writing. Thus, it can be stated that the Slutsk manuscript of the First Lithuanian Statute became an intellectual tool for justifying the Russification policy of tsarism in the Belarusian-Lithuanian lands in the middle of the 19th century, which was an urgent task after the suppression of the uprising of 1830–1831 and exposing the conspiracy of S. Kanarsky. It was in all respects a successful ideological project carried out by the civil Governor Alexey Vasilyevich Semyonov, for which he received from the tsarist government 'the most gracious favour' and other appropriate awards.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

In Belarusian literature, the poem has become canonical and is interpreted as a sample of civic and patriotic lyrics, and its patriotic pathos is presented in support of the Belarusian language and its glorification. It happens in history that beautiful myths sometimes do not coincide with the true reality.

Translated into English by Marharyta Svirydava

List of sources

LVIA – Lithuanian State Historical Archives in Vilnius: F. 380, ap. 80, d. 260; f. 378, ap. 840 d. 1477.

Brazgunoŭ, Ales′ (compiled). (2011). *Slavânamoŭnaâ paèzìâ Vâlìkaga knâstva Lìtoŭskaga XVI–XVIII stst.* Mìnsk: Belaruskaâ navuka. [Бразгуноў, Алесь (уклад., прадм. і камент.). (2011). *Славянамоўная паэзія Вялікага княства Літоўскага XVI–XVIII стст.*. Мінск: Беларуская навука].

Čamâryckì, Vâčaslaŭ (ed.). (2003). *Antalogìâ daŭnâj belaruskaj lìtaratury: XI–XVIII stagoddzâ*. (2003). Mìnsk: Belaruskaâ navuka. [Чамярыцкі, Вячаслаў (рэд.). (2003). *Анталогія даўняй беларускай літаратуры: XI–XVIII стагоддзя*. (2003). Мінск: Беларуская навука].

Čamâryckì, Vâčaslaŭ (ed.). *Gìstoryì belaruskaj lìtaratury XI–XIX stagoddzâŭ. U 2-h tamah*. (2006). Vol. 1. Mìnsk: Belaruskaâ navuka. [Чамярыцкі, Вячаслаў (рэд.). *Гісторыя беларускай літаратуры XI–XIX стагоддзяў. У 2-х тамах*. (2006). Т. 1. Мінск: Беларуская навука].

Garèckì, M. (1992). *Gìstoryâ belaruskae lìtaratury*. Mìnsk: Mastackaâ lìtaratura. [Гарэцкі, М. (1992). *Гісторыя беларускае літаратуры*. Мінск: Мастацкая літаратура].

Koršunaŭ Alâksandr. (compiled). (1959) *Hrèstamatyâ pa staražytnaj belaruskaj lìtaratury. Vučèbny dapamožnìk dlâ filalagìčnyh fakul'tètaŭ vyšèjšyh navučal'nyh ustanoŭ*. Mìnsk: DZâržaŭnae vučèbna-pedagagìčnae vydavectva Mìnìstèrstva asvety BSSR]. [Коршунаў Аляксандр. (compiled). (1959) *Хрэстаматыя па старажытнай беларускай літаратуры. Вучэбны дапаможнік для філалагічных факультэтаў вышэйшых навучальных устаноў*. Мінск: Дзяржаўнае вучэбна—педагагічнае выдавецтва Міністэрства асветы БССР].

Mesâcoslov hozâjstvennyj na leto Hristovo 1842. = Kalendarz Gospodarski na rok Pański 1842. Vil′no. [*Месяцословъ хозяйственный на лето Христово 1842. = Kalendarz Gospodarski na rok Pański 1842*. Вильно].

Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas… (1983). *Pervyj Litovskij Statut: Paleografičeskij i tekstologičeskij analiz spiskov*. Part 1. S. Lazutka and È.Gudavičûs. Vil′nûs: Mintis. [*Pirmasis Lietuvos Statutas…* (1983) = *Первый Литовский Статут: Палеографический и текстологический анализ списков*. Ч. 1. С. Лазутка і Э. Гудавічюс. Вильнюс: Минтис].

Saverčanka, Ivan (ed.). (2007). *Staražytnaâ belaruskaâ lìtaratura (XII–XVII stst.)*. Mìnsk: Knìgazbor. [Саверчанка, Іван (рэд.). (2007). *Старажытная беларуская літаратура (XII–XVII стст.)*. Мінск: Кнігазбор].

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 16/11/2026 02:28:57

Sobranie drevnih gramot i aktov gorodov Vil'ny, Kovna, Trok, pravoslavnyh monastyrej, cerkvej, i po raznym predmetam. (1943). Part. 1. Vil′no. [*Собраніе древнихъ грамотъ и актовъ городовъ Вильны, Ковна, Трокъ, православныхъ монастырей, церквей, и по разнымъ предметамъ*. (1943). Ч. 1. Вильно].

V*remennik imperatorskago Moskovskago obŝestva istorii i drevnostej rossijskih*. (1854). Book. 18. Moskva. [*Временникъ императорскаго Московскаго общества исторіи и древностей россійскихъ*. (1854). Кн. 18. Москва].

References

Barysenka, Vasìl′; Berkaŭ, Pavel; Pšyrkoŭ, Ûlìân; Čamâryckì, Vâčaslaŭ (eds.). (1968). *Gìstoryâ belaruskaj dakastryčnickaj lìtaratury*. Vol. 1: *Z staražytnyh časoŭ da kanca XVIII st.* Mìnsk: Navuka ì tèhnìka. [Барысенка, Васіль; Беркаў, Павел; Пшыркоў, Юліян; Чамярыцкі, Вячаслаў (рэд.). (1968). *Гісторыя беларускай дакастрычніцкай літаратуры*, т. 1: *З старажытных часоў да канца XVIII ст*. Мінск: Навука і тэхніка].

Daniłowicz, Ignacy. (1823). Opisanie bibliograficzne dotąd znanych exemplarzy Statutu Litewskiego, rękopiśmiennych i edycyy drukowanych, tak w ruskim oryginalnym, jako też polskim i łacińskim języku. *Dziennik Wileński*,vol. I, pp. 377–398.

Grynčyk, Mìkalaj. (1973). *Šlâhì belaruskaga veršaskladannâ*. Mìnsk: Vydavectva BDU. [Грынчык, Мікалай. (1973). *Шляхі беларускага вершаскладання*. Мінск: Выдавецтва БДУ].

Kìsâlëŭ, Genadz′. (1982). *Geroì ì muzy: Gìstoryka-lìtaraturnyâ narysy*. Mìnsk: Mastackaâ lìtaratura. [Кісялёў, Генадзь. (1982). *Героі і музы: Гісторыка-літаратурныя нарысы*. Мінск: Мастацкая літаратура].

Nekrašèvìč-Karotkaâ, Žanna. (2015). *Šmatmoŭnaâ lìtaratura Belarusì ŭ kantèksce aktual'nyh lìtaraturaznaŭčyh kancèpcyj: dapamožnìk*. Mìnsk: BDU. [Некрашэвіч-Кароткая, Жанна. (2015). *Шматмоўная літаратура Беларусі ў кантэксце актуальных літаратуразнаўчых канцэпцый: дапаможнік*. Мінск: БДУ].

Article submission date: 09 January 2020